

# Senate seeks to reverse primaries setbacks as 40 senators miss re-election tickets

CAROLINE AMEH

## ABUJA

President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, has moved to calm tensions among senators who lost their party tickets in the recently concluded primary elections across the country, amid efforts to reduce the number of politi-

cal casualties ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Akpabio made the intervention on Thursday while welcoming senators back from a three-week recess, during which many lawmakers participated in their respective party primaries.

While some members of the Senate leadership secured their

re-election tickets unopposed, the primaries produced significant upsets, leaving an estimated 40 serving senators unable to clinch their party nominations, while about 60 others were successful across different political platforms.

In his remarks, Akpabio congratulated those who emerged victorious and urged

affected lawmakers to remain committed to the broader democratic process despite their setbacks.

"I know that there will always be victories and disappointments, yet above every individual triumph stands a greater triumph, the triumph of democracy itself," he said.

However, behind the con-

ciliatory tone, the Senate President hinted at behind-the-scenes efforts aimed at assisting some of the affected senators to regain party tickets, noting that the leadership was actively engaging political stakeholders.

He also disclosed that the Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, was working to "re-

duce the level of casualties" and explore possible pathways for reconciliation and re-nomination for some of the affected lawmakers.

Akpabio's remarks come amid growing political uncertainty within the upper chamber as lawmakers brace for intense party negotiations ahead of the next election cycle.

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#200

# School abductions: NUT demands immediate release of pupils, teachers

● Akpabio calls for unity of purpose to defeat banditry

● Reps call for rescue of abducted Oyo kidnap victims

## ABUJA

Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) on Tuesday demanded for the immediate, unconditional and safe release of all teachers and pupils/students in captivity across the country.

The union made the de-

mand in Abuja during its nationwide rally in solidarity with all teachers and learners in captivity across the country.

Also yesterday, the House of Representatives called on security agencies to urgently rescue the abducted teachers and school children in Oyo State.

Moving the motion under

urgent national importance, the member representing Ogbomoso North/Ogbomoso South/Oriire Federal Constituency, Olamijuwonlo Alao-Akala, said that the victims needed freedom.

Leading the the Abuja rally, NUT's National President, Mr Titus Amba, expressed dismay over the delay in the rescue of

the seven teachers and 39 pupils/students kidnapped from their schools in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State since May 15.

Amba also said that on the same day, more than 40 pupils/students were abducted from Mussa Primary and Secondary Schools in Askira Uba Local

Government Area of Borno.

According to him, for over two weeks now, the innocent teachers and learners are still in captivity under inhumane conditions, leaving their fami-

lies to live in fear and anguish.

While stating that the situation had become worrisome, considering the fact that the

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## MARITIME:

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (7 left), as reviewing officer, on Monday, commissioned vessels: NNS Oloibiri, NNS Mambila, and NNS Gurara, at the 2026 International Fleet Review held at the Eko Atlantic Waterfront, Lagos, as part of events to commemorate the Navy's 70th Anniversary. Here is a cross section of dignitaries at the event.

## Edo Chief Judge pledges support for The Nigerian Observer

ESE AMADASUN

## BENIN CITY

The Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice Daniel Iyobosa Okungbowa, has pledged the support of the state judiciary for The Nigerian Observer, saying government-owned institutions should patronise and strengthen what belongs to them.

Justice Okungbowa gave the assurance when the management of Bendel Newspapers Corporation, BNC, led by its General Manager, Hon. Peter Odiboh, paid him a courtesy visit in his office.

Welcoming the team, the Chief Judge said it was only proper for government establishments in the state to support The Nigerian Observer, being a media organisation owned by the Edo State Government.

According to him, the judiciary would endeavour to

use the corporation for official publications, including probate notices, land use matters, change of name and other publication needs.

He also indicated the judiciary's readiness to extend its patronage to the corporation in the area of printing services.

Earlier, the General Manager of Bendel Newspapers Corporation, Hon. Peter Odiboh, said the purpose of the visit was to inform the Chief Judge that The Nigerian Observer had returned to the newsstand and to explore areas of partnership with the judiciary.

Odiboh noted that, in addition to publishing news and reports, the corporation has well-equipped printing machines for the production of books, diaries, flex and other materials.

The highlight of the visit was the presentation of copies of The Nigerian Observer to the Chief Judge by the General Manager.

**Adeleke dismisses school kidnapping rumours in Osun**

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**Alleged ₦1.35bn fraud: Sule Lamido, EFCC disagree over subpoenaed witness**

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**Ukraine rescuers pull dead from rubble after Russian strikes kill 22 people**

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**FedCup 2026: Edo Queens thrash Delta Queens FC to secure quarter final spot**

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# Army plans indigenous innovation in campaign against insecurity

UYO

The Nigerian Army says it will harness the power of indigenous innovation in the campaign against insecurity in some parts of the country

The Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, made the expression at the opening of the Nigerian Army Combat Support Arms Training Week 2026, in Uyo on Tuesday.

Represented by Maj.-Gen. Adewale Adekeye, the Chief of Personnel Management, Shaibu said that the event was meant to strengthen the combat readiness of personnel.

Our correspondence reports that the theme of the event is: "Strengthening Combat Support Arms Adaptability and Resilience Through Indigenous Innovations for Integrated Operational Support Within a Joint and Multi Agency

Framework"

According to him, the army was committed to using indigenous innovations to fight insurgency and other violent crimes in the country.

The army chief thanked President Bola Tinubu for being 'strategically committed' to the provision of logistics, and promotion of personnel welfare.

The chief of army staff charged the officers to always adhere to the rules of engagement in order to ensure the safety of Nigerians.

He commended the Akwa Ibom Government for hosting the event, and described the hospitality and planning as 'superb'

Gov. Umo Eno, described security as the foundation for

sustainable progress and development of every nation.

Represented by Capt. Iniobong Ekong (Rtd), the Commissioner for Trade and Investment, Eno stated that the military had continued to play significant roles in the unity of the country.

He commended the army for emphasising the use of indigenous approach to tackle

insecurity, saying, "this is timely and well-intended"

The governor assured the army of the state government's continued support to the campaign against insecurity.

Eno urged the participants to take advantage of the training to improve themselves, and contribute to the progress of the army.

## School abductions: NUT demands...

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teachers were attacked and kidnapped while on duty, he noted that it was the responsibility of the government to protect lives and property.

"Government should intensify efforts in making sure that our environments, schools, property and lives are safe.

"It is heartbreaking to note that two of our colleagues have been gruesomely murdered in cold blood by the bandits in Oyo State, while the fate of the remaining abductees hangs in the balance.

"We hear the trembling voices of our teachers crying for help from the government and well-meaning Nigerians to secure their release from the kidnappers," he added.

Amba said that in view of the continued detention of the teachers and learners in the captivity, the NUT leadership had directed all primary and secondary school teachers in Oyo State to withdraw their services with effect from Monday until further notice.

According to him, teachers remain the only professionals working in all nooks and crannies of the country in spite of the unsatisfactory working conditions because theirs is a noble profession and a selfless service to humanity.

"They mould characters, nurture dreams, prepare future leaders and build the nation.

"It is therefore, unimaginable that those who dedicate their lives to the education and future well-being of Nigerian children can become victims of such horrific, callous, barbaric and despicable acts.

"We gather with one accord to state unequivocally that the safety of teachers and learners must never be treated with levity.

"We stand with one voice to insist that an attack on teachers is an attack on education, and an attack on education is an attack on the future of Nigeria.

"Today, we cry for justice and demand action. We refuse to accept the attacks on our schools, and the kidnapping of educators and school children as normal ways of life," he said.

The NUT national president lamented that every day spent in captivity is another day of pain, trauma and uncertainty for the abducted teachers, learners and their families.

He, therefore, called on government and security agencies to act swiftly, decisively and responsibly to rescue all the abducted teachers and pupils/students and

ensure they are reunited with their families and loved ones.

Amba also noted that any attack on schools was not only a serious setback to quality education delivery but a drift of the nation into a bleak, hopeless and miserable future for its citizenry.

He, however, assured their colleagues and children in captivity of the union's support and prayer, saying that NUT would continue to speak, advocate and demand their freedom until their safe return.

Amba prayed God to protect the victims, comfort the affected families and grant the country lasting peace and security.

Members of the union displayed placards with such inscriptions as: "No teacher should die in service to humanity", "Teachers need protection, not condolences", "Our schools are for learning, not mourning", among others.

Meanwhile, Representative Alao-Akala in moving the motion, condemned what he called an unrelenting siege on the people of Ogbomoso and Oriire Local Government Areas, said no fewer than 30 children and teachers were abducted.

He also condemned what he described as the barbaric beheading execution of a Mathematics teacher, Mr Michael Oyedokun by his abductors.

The lawmaker, while commending the military for the efforts being made to rescue the abducted teachers and children, called for more efforts to secure their freedom.

"This is a savage act that has shocked the conscience of our nation and demands an immediate and decisive response from every arm of government," he said.

Alao-Akala re-echoed calls for the decentralisation of Nigeria's security architecture and the establishment of a truly federal system of policing, anchored on state police and local government policing units.

He expressed concern over the continuous captivity of the victims, stressing the need to expedite action in rescuing them.

The lawmaker, however, called for the establishment of military forward operating base the affected areas.

The Speaker, Rep. Abbas Tajudeen, consequently referred the motion to the House Committees on Defence, Interior, Police Affairs and National Security for further Legislative attention.

The House also observed a minute silence for the late Oye-

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SEIZURE:

Suspected illicit drugs recovered by the NDLEA from drug syndicate at a shrine in Edo State.

## Edo NDLEA arrests 47 suspects with over 541kg of drugs

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State Command, has recorded the arrest of forty-seven suspected drug traffickers with a seizure of 541.47 kilograms of narcotic drugs in its ongoing war against drug trafficking and abuse. Commander of Narcotics Mitchell Ofoyeju, PhD, who is the Edo State Commander, made the disclosure while presenting the May 2026 monthly progress score sheet for the command.

The commander revealed that the arrests comprised 25 males and 22 females nabbed during intelligence-led operations at various drug flashpoints across

the state. A breakdown of the seizures showed that Cannabis sativa dominated the haul, with 540.6253 kg. Other substances seized included 0.2701 kg of psychotropic substances, including tramadol, Swinol, diazepam, and Rohypnol; 0.1415 kg of methamphetamine; and 1.4 litres of codeine syrup.

The Command's legal unit recorded three convictions in court as five new cases were charged, while 94 cases are pending at the Federal High Court in Benin City.

In the area of drug demand reduction, the command counselled 31 clients comprising 24 males and 7 females. All have been released to their families, while eight others are currently undergoing rehabilitation. The unit also carried out five sensi-

tisation programmes during the month. These include the Benn City Teens and Youth Invasion programme, where the commander spoke on the topic Drug Abuse Among Youth: Causes, Effects and Preventive Measures.

Some of the suspects arrested are Lucky Omen, 38; Joseph Osin, 53; Prince Aniete, 22; and Esther Okes (female), 48, caught at drug hotspots in Ekpoma town, Esan West Local Government Area. Various quantities of illicit substances were recovered from them. The most significant seizure came from Lucky Omen, from whom a giant bag of cannabis sativa weighing 27.3kg was recovered. Joseph Osin was found with 743 grams of Cannabis sativa. Prince Aniete was caught with 373 grams of Loud, 11 grams

of Tramadol, and 3 grams of Swinol. Esther Okes was found in possession of 194 grams of Cannabis sativa.

In a similar operation, officers raided drug hotspots within Auchu town, Etsako West Local Government Area of the state. The raid led to the arrest of two suspected drug traffickers: Abdulmalik Sunday, 30, and Abayomi Precious, 29. Items recovered from Abayomi Precious include 238 grams of Loud, 3 grams of Colorado, 22 grams of Tramadol (100mg), 23 grams of Swinol, and 2 grams of Rohypnol. Abdulmalik Sunday was found with 18 grams of Loud, 58 grams of Colorado, 14 grams of Tramadol, 5 grams of Swinol, and 53 grams of methamphetamine.

## Suspected drug baron abandons 498kg cannabis in Edo shrine

A suspected drug baron has reportedly abandoned four hundred and ninety-eight kilograms (498kg) of dried weeds that tested positive for skunk cannabis inside a shrine in Edo State. The Edo State Commander of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Commander of Narcotics Mitchell Ofoyeju, PhD, said that narcotic agents recovered the illicit drugs abandoned by some members of the drug syndicate operating in the Owan East Local Government Area.

The seizure was made while acting on a credible intelligence report that led to a coordinated raid at Igwe Community on 22

May 2026. The operation led to the recovery of 59 bags of skunk cannabis weighing 489 kilograms, as well as 9 kilograms of cannabis seeds. The exhibits were found abandoned by the prime suspect, a notorious drug baron known as Asrenre, who is at large inside a shrine.

Although there was resistance from some youth members of the community who claimed that the location was the sacred home of their deities, the officers insisted on conducting the search only to discover the bags of cannabis, Mitchell explained.

Mitchell warned that the agency will continue to hunt drug barons and their deadly drugs notwithstanding the lo-

cation. The NDLEA Act empowers us to search anywhere narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances are believed to have been concealed. We will continue to be steps ahead of drug criminals through superior intelligence and compliance with the standard operating procedures.

Meanwhile, the command has immediately launched a manhunt for the fleeing drug suspect. In a related operation within the same community, our officers arrested Sunday Oghaimen, a 50-year-old male, in possession of 945 grams of cannabis and 19 grams of Tramadol.

Also apprehended was 33-year-old Esther Igbafe, a fe-

male suspected drug trafficker. She was found in unlawful possession of 874 grams of cannabis, 19 grams of Tramadol, and 3 grams of Swinol. All suspects have been taken into custody, and exhibits have been properly documented and secured.

The investigation into the source of the drugs and the criminal network involved has already commenced. We are working to track all links to the fleeing drug baron, Asrenre, and ensure he is brought to justice.

The NDLEA remains resolute in its commitment to rid Edo State of illicit drugs. Together, we can protect our communities from the scourge of drug trafficking and abuse.

# C/Rivers NUT says public schools prone to attacks

## CALABAR

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Cross River chapter, has said that many public schools in the state are vulnerable to attacks due to absence of security guards.

The Chairman, Mr Gregory Olayi, made the statement in Cal-

abar on Tuesday while speaking to our correspondence after a protest organised by the union.

Olayi also said that many public schools in the state were not fenced, and had no security guards.

"The public schools operate in wide-open premises, this is a security risk to both the teachers and students," he said.

He said that the protest was in solidarity with the NUT, Oyo chapter, saying, "we are concerned about the brutal kidnap of teachers and stu-

dents in Oyo State"

The union leader urged the political leadership to give priority attention to the lives and property of the citizenry.

"No state in the country should feel comfortable, we should show commitment to the campaign against insecurity," he said.

Olayi urged the Cross River

Government to immediately employ trained security personnel, and construct fences in order to protect public schools in the state.

## Police burst illegal firearms manufacturing network, nab 2 suspects in A'lbom

### UYO

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom has uncovered illegal firearms fabrication and maintenance network and arrested two suspects.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Timfom John disclosed this in a statement in Uyo on Tuesday.

John said the operatives of the command, acting on credible intelligence raided the identified locations suspected to be used for the local fabrication, servicing, and repair of firearms within the Okobo and Eket axes of the State.

"The success was achieved by operatives of the newly established Violent Crime Response Unit (VCRU), a strategic initiative of the Inspector-General of Police designed to aggressively tackle the menace of violent crimes and other emerging security threats.

"The operation, which was carried out in the early hours of Tuesday at about 03:00hrs, yielded significant results," John said.

John added that during the raid, operatives recovered some exhibits including three

English-made double-barrel guns, two English-made single-barrel guns and 10 locally fabricated single-barrel guns

Other items recovered include four iron bars used in gun fabrication, two gas cylinders, two toolboxes containing various fabricated implements and tools used for the construction, servicing, and repair of firearms.

She said that the recovered items strongly showed the existence of an illegal firearms fabrication and maintenance network operating within the affected areas.

The police spokesperson said preliminary investigations were ongoing to establish the full extent of their involvement and to identify and apprehend other members of the criminal network.

She reiterated the command's unwavering commitment to dismantling illegal arms manufacturing and trafficking syndicates in the State

The PPRO urged members of the public to continue supporting the police by providing timely and credible information that would assist in preventing crime and apprehending offenders.



### INSURANCE BROKERS:

Governor Alex C. Otti of Abia State (left), at the opening ceremony of the 2026 CEOs retreat office the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia on Tuesday, June 2, 2026.

## Adeleke dismisses school kidnapping rumours in Osun

### OSOGBO

Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun has urged residents to disregard false alarms about alleged school kidnappings in parts of the state, describing the reports as fake news.

In a statement issued on Tuesday in Osogbo by his spokesperson, Malam Olawale Rasheed, the governor assured citizens that the government had taken proactive measures to secure schools across the state.

Adeleke described the kidnapping rumours as the hand-

work of mischief-makers, noting that fact checks conducted in border communities and other parts of the state confirmed that no such incidents had occurred.

"I urge our people to go about their normal activities without fear. Our government has taken decisive steps to secure our schools.

"The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with relevant security agencies, has developed and is implementing a comprehensive security strategy," he said.

He reiterated that parents

and guardians should remain calm, stressing that the alarm was false and intended to create panic and destabilise the state.

The governor also provided an update on armoured vehicles abandoned by the previous administration, stating that Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) had been fully refurbished and were ready for deployment.

According to him, his administration inherited the damaged APCs, which had been left in states of disrepair, but has since rehabilitated them for use in joint security operations.

"The previous administration inherited these APCs but failed to maintain them.

"We have now restored them, and the public will soon witness a strengthened security architecture to protect lives and property across the state," he said.

Adeleke warned against acts capable of inciting criminal behaviour, adding that local intelligence networks were actively monitoring border towns and identified hotspots.

"No stone will be left unturned to guarantee the safety of our schools, pupils, residents, and property," he said.

## School abductions: NUT demands...

### «CONTINUED FROM PG 2

dokun, the Mathematics teacher beheaded by the terrorists.

In the same vein, President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, has urged unity of purpose among Nigerians to defeat banditry, declaring that those who terrorise communities do not distinguish between party, faith or ethnicity.

Akpabio made the call in his welcome address delivered on resumption from the Sallah recess at plenary on Tuesday in Abuja.

The Senate President, who was reacting to recent case of abductions in the country, said that the Senate resumed plenary under the mournful shadow of a tragedy that has shaken the nation.

He said the abductions of school children and teachers in Oyo was not merely an attack on innocent citizens, but an assault on the collective humanity of the nation.

"We mourn because if we cannot protect our children we imperil our future.

"We mourn because a nation that cannot guarantee the safe-

ty of its teachers weakens the very foundations upon which education rests.

"And we mourn because, for as long as those children remain in captivity, our nation remains captive with them.

"Today, we grieve the loss of two dedicated educators, Mr Michael Oyedokun, who died in captivity, and Mr Adesiyun Adegboye, who lost his life during the attack.

"We also mourn the child whose life was cut short before its promise could be fulfilled we share the pain of the bereaved families; their loss is our loss," Akpabio said.

He expressed hope that through the determined efforts of the government and security agencies, those still in captivity would be safely rescued and reunited with their loved ones.

After the senate observed a minute silence in honour of the victims, Akpabio also on behalf of the Senate condoled the bereaved families, the affected school community, and the government and people of Oyo.

"At moments such as these,

## FG inaugurates committee for 27th Democracy Day celebration

### ABUJA

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Sen. George Akume, on Tuesday inaugurated the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the 27th Democracy Day celebration and charged members to commence preparations immediately.

According to a statement by Mr Yomi Odunuga, Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to the SGF, Akume described Democracy Day as an opportunity to reflect on the resilience, courage and determination of Nigerians who made sacrifices in the struggle for democratic governance.

He paid tribute to the heroes of the June 12, 1993 democratic struggle and late Chief Moshood (MKO) Abiola, whose sacrifice and commitment to democracy led to the recognition of June 12 as Democracy Day.

The SGF said the democratic values and institutions being

strengthened across the country were founded on the sacrifices of patriots and democrats who fought for the enthronement of democratic rule in Nigeria.

Akume said the annual celebration also provided an opportunity for the Federal Government to showcase its achievements and reaffirm its commitment to democratic ideals, institutional strengthening and national development.

He added that the celebration would enable the administration of President Bola Tinubu to demonstrate progress made in consolidating democracy, strengthening institutions and repositioning the country through various reform initiatives despite prevailing socio-economic challenges.

The SGF said that with only 10 days to the June 12 anniversary, members of the committee must begin work immediately to ensure the successful execution of all planned activities.

He said that in line with the

mood of the nation and government's commitment to fiscal responsibility, activities for the celebration would be modest but purposeful.

Akume listed the approved activities for the celebration to include a World Press Conference on June 4, Special Juma'at Prayers on June 5, a Special Inter-denominational Church Service on June 7, a Democracy Day Public Lecture on June 9, and Youth and Women-Oriented Programmes on June 10.

Others, according to him, are a Presidential Broadcast, a Joint National Assembly Address by President Tinubu and a Democracy Day Gala Night, all scheduled for June 12.

The SGF disclosed that the committee had been divided into various sub-committees to handle different aspects of the celebration, adding that the terms of reference and membership of the sub-committees would be communicated by the secretariat.

Akume directed all

sub-committee secretaries to submit their budgets promptly for consideration and approval to ensure seamless implementation of the programmes.

He said the committee's terms of reference include planning, organising and executing all approved activities for the anniversary, co-opting relevant organisations or individuals where necessary, documenting activities undertaken during the celebration and carrying out other assignments required for the successful implementation of the programme.

The SGF expressed confidence in the ability of members of the committee to deliver a successful and memorable celebration.

He urged all stakeholders to work together to ensure that the 27th Democracy Day celebration serves as a worthy tribute to Nigeria's democratic heroes and a reaffirmation of the nation's commitment to democratic governance.

## NEWS

# Wife of suspected drug trafficker submits fake death affidavit in court

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State Command, has re-arrested and brought before the Federal High Court in Benin City a suspected drug trafficker, Ibrahim Yusuf Lawal, 50 years old, who had earlier jumped bail and whose wife fraudulently submitted an affidavit claiming

he had died while they were living together at Iruvuchebeba, Okene, Kogi State.

NDLEA Edo State commander, Commander of Narcotics Mitchell Ofoyeju PhD, disclosed that Lawal was originally arrested on February 5, 2022, at Ugbekun Junction, Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, while transporting various quantities of psychotropic substances.

He was found in possession of 0.257kg of Lexotan, 1kg of Diazepam, and 5.4kg of Pheno-barbital, all concealed in a white Toyota bus with registration number Abuja BWR401XC.

Ibrahim was subsequently charged on a three-count charge of unlawful transportation of controlled substances, contrary to the NDLEA Act Cap N30, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004. Count one specifically stated that Ibrahim Yusuf Lawal, on or about the 5th day of February 2022, without lawful authority, transported 0.257kg

of Lexotan, a psychotropic substance similar to cocaine, heroin, and LSD.

After pleading not guilty to the charges, Lawal was granted bail by the court. However, he absconded and failed to appear for his trial. In a desperate attempt to evade justice, his wife, one Ibrahim Nana Hawa, swore to an Affidavit of Facts as to the Demise of the Husband, dated October 2024, claiming that Lawal had died on October 3, 2024, following a protracted illness diagnosed as tuberculosis. The affidavit, which

was submitted to the court, stated that she was a citizen of Nigeria residing in Iruvuchebeba, Okene Local Government Area, Kogi State, and that the husband was buried according to their religious rites.

The NDLEA, upon receiving this information, launched a thorough investigation. In the words of Commander Mitchell, "Our operatives, working on an intelligence report, uncovered the truth that Ibrahim Yusuf Lawal was very much alive. He was recently apprehended in a covert operation and taken into custody."

Today, Tuesday, May 26, 2026, Lawal was brought before Honourable Justice B. O. Quadir of the Federal High Court, Benin City. The court proceedings were brief, as the

matter was adjourned to June 22, 2026, for further hearing.

This incident was a clear attempt to pervert the course of justice. The use of a false death affidavit to evade prosecution is a serious offence, and the command will not hesitate to sanction all parties involved, including the wife, for her role in this fraudulent scheme, Commander Mitchell stated.

He added that the case would serve as a warning to all drug traffickers and their collaborators that no amount of deception can hide them from the long arm of the law. I commend the officers in Edo and those in Kogi State for their diligence and persistence in ensuring that this suspect is held accountable for his alleged crimes.



HOLY PRIMAGE:

Edo pilgrims visiting historic sites in Makakkah ahead of return to Nigeria.

## Food Prices Increase in April 2026

ABUJA

The National Bureau of Statistics says prices of tomatoes, beans, garri, onions, ginger, and other food items recorded month-on-month increases in April 2026.

The NBS stated this in its Selected Food Prices Watch report for April 2026, released in Abuja on Tuesday.

The report showed that the average price of 1kg of tomatoes increased by 6.60 per cent on a month-on-month basis, from N1,104.85 recorded in March 2026 to N1,177.92 in April 2026.

"However, on a year-on-year

basis, the price of 1kg of tomatoes decreased by 8.23 per cent from N1,283.57 recorded in April 2025."

Similarly, the report said the average price of 1kg of brown beans increased by 0.99 per cent on a month-on-month basis, from N1,325.85 in March 2026 to N1,338.93 in April 2026.

"On a year-on-year basis, however, the price decreased significantly by 44.89 per cent from N2,429.39 recorded in April 2025 to N1,338.93 in April 2026."

It also showed that the average price of 1kg of white garri increased by 0.93 per cent on a month-on-month basis, from

N801.54 in March 2026 to N808.96 in April 2026.

"However, on a year-on-year basis, the price dropped by 39.86 per cent from N1,345.10 recorded in April 2025."

The report said the average price of 1kg of onion increased by 0.98 per cent from N1,153.14 recorded in March 2026 to N1,164.39 in April 2026.

"On a year-on-year basis, 1kg of onions decreased by 22.56 per cent from N1,503.56 recorded in April 2025."

The report also said the average price of 1kg of fresh ginger increased by 0.73 per cent on a month-on-month basis, from

N5,541.25 recorded in March 2026 to N5,581.82 in April 2026.

"On a year-on-year basis, 1kg of ginger increased by 12.30 per cent from N4,970.66 recorded in April 2025."

It said the average price of one litre of palm oil increased by 0.12 per cent on a month-on-month basis, from N2,393.38 recorded in March 2026 to N2,396.32 in April 2026.

"On a year-on-year basis, it also increased by 4.77 per cent from N2,516.36 recorded in April 2025."

The report showed that in April 2026, the highest average price of 1kg of tomatoes was recorded in Bayelsa at N1,600.73, while the lowest was recorded in Plateau at N730.48.

## A'ibom: Navy reiterates commitment to host community dev't

IBAKA (AKWA IBOM)

The Commanding Officer, Forward Operating Base (FOB), Ibaka, Capt. Adebowale Omotosho has reaffirmed Nigerian Navy's commitment to promoting the wellbeing and development of its host communities.

Omotosho made the expression while donating reading desks and chairs to Ibaka Community Secondary School on Tuesday.

He said that the gesture was in commemoration of the Nigerian Navy's 70th Anniversary celebration.

The naval officer stated that the base would continue to promote the educational advancement of its host community residents.

Omotosho stated that the donation was aimed at supporting the educational development of Ibaka people.

The commanding officer further described the move as capable of strengthening the relationship between the navy and the people

"This initiative is part of our corporate social responsibility programmes, it is in line with the policy direction of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Adm. Idi Abbas," he said.

He commended Ibaka people for their cooperation and continued support to the activities of the base.

The naval officer stated that the collaboration between the navy and the community had contributed significantly to the security and stability of the base's operations.

Mr Andu Paul, the school Principal, thanked the navy for its numerous supports and interventions in the community.

Paul urged the navy to sustain the tempo in the interest of the wellbeing of Ibaka people.

## Man bags 15-year jail term for N26m car fraud

IKEJA

An Ikeja Special Offences Court on Tuesday sentenced a man, Abdulrahman Raji, to 15 years imprisonment for a N26 million car fraud.

Justice Ismail Ijelu held that the prosecution proved the charges of conspiracy and obtaining by false pretence against the convict beyond reasonable doubt.

Ijelu stated that Raji falsely presented himself as a customs officer to obtain the money from the complainant, Mr Olaide Ibidapo.

He said the convict claimed that the funds were for the purchase of an auctioned Toyota Hilux vehicle from the customs office, a representation he knew to be false.

Consequently, the judge found Raji guilty and sentenced him to 10 years' impris-

onment on count one, without an option of fine.

The court further sentenced the convict to five years imprisonment on count two, also without an option of fine.

Ijelu ordered that the sentences should run concurrently.

He also ordered the convict to make restitution of N26 million to the nominal complainant.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned Raji on Nov. 9, 2023.

Raji had pleaded not guilty to the charges, which prompted a full trial.

During the trial, EFCC counsel, Mr Ebuka Okongwu, called four witnesses and tendered several documents, which were admitted in evidence.

The defence called two witnesses.

The prosecution proved that the convict and another person, now at large, defrauded the complainant between March 20 and March 21, 2023.

## Energy insecurity hindering Nigeria's industrial growth —Expert

ABUJA

Mr Tony Attah, Managing Director, Renaissance Africa Energy Company Ltd., says energy insecurity remains one of the biggest challenges affecting development in Nigeria and across Africa.

Attah, represented by Mr Igo Weli, the company's Vice-President, Relations and Sustainable Development, said this on Tuesday in Abuja at an Oil and Gas Seminar organised

by Renaissance Africa Energy Company.

The event was organised in collaboration with the Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN) and attended by directors and senior government officials.

He said access to reliable energy was critical to industrialisation, economic growth and improved livelihoods, noting that millions of Africans still lacked adequate access to energy.

"Energy security is key. Whether it is a barber, salon

owner or small-scale manufacturer, access to reliable power is essential for productivity and competitiveness.

"If you consider how much businesses spend on diesel alone to generate electricity, you will understand the burden energy insecurity places on production costs," he said.

Attah said Renaissance was committed to supporting efforts to address Africa's energy challenges and promote industrialisation across the continent.

He described the company

as a Nigerian firm with continental ambitions.

"We are made in Nigeria but built for Africa. We want to become the leading energy company in Africa and play a key role in addressing energy security challenges on the continent," he said.

He said the company was also focused on driving industrialisation through increased energy supply, noting that economic growth depended on the availability of reliable energy.

# IOM urges ethical reporting of returned migrants

## LAGOS

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has urged journalists to protect returned migrants from harm when conducting interviews and reporting migration-related matters.

The Senior Communication Assistant at IOM, Mr Elijah Eliagwu, made the call during a lecture on media ethics, data protection principles and reporting techniques at an ongoing three-day training programme for journalists in Lagos.

Eliagwu stressed the need for journalists to minimise foreseeable risks to the safety,

dignity, privacy and mental well-being of returnees and other vulnerable migrants.

He said reporting should not expose individuals to stigmatisation, discrimination or renewed trauma.

According to him, consent must be voluntary, informed and fully understood by migrants before interviews are conducted.

He said journalists should clearly explain how information obtained would be used and where it would be published.

Eliagwu noted that minors under the age of 18 could not legally provide consent on their own and would require approval from parents or guardians.

He warned that seemingly insignificant details could reveal a person's identity, urging journalists to avoid publishing information that could unintentionally identify returnees, trafficking survivors and other vulnerable migrants.

The communication expert also advised journalists to collect only information necessary for their reports and to adequately protect interview recordings,

notes and images containing sensitive personal information.

According to him, photographs can expose identities through faces, documents or identifiable locations.

"Journalists are encouraged to use alternative angles or symbolic images where necessary," he said.

Eliagwu also cautioned against the use of terms such as "illegal migrants," recom-

mending the use of "irregular migrants" instead.

He urged journalists to be transparent about how stories would be used and to promptly correct inaccuracies when they occur.

According to him, transparency helps to build trust between journalists, sources and audiences.

Eliagwu said ethical reporting requires balancing public

interest with human dignity, noting that every story involves real people whose welfare should not be compromised.

"Every story is a human being first. If the reporting is strong but the source is harmed, then journalism has failed," he said.

He said the principle should guide journalists covering returnees, trafficking survivors, migrants and other vulnerable populations.

## Kidnappings: ADC commends military, calls for swift action on victims

### LAGOS

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) on Tuesday applauded the Nigerian military's efforts in addressing the nation's security challenges while calling for swift action in rescuing victims of recent abductions by terrorists.

The Lagos State ADC Chairman, Mr George Ashiru, in a statement, expressed the party's deep concern and heartfelt sympathy over the abduction of innocent children in the country.

He said: "This disturbing development is not only an attack on the affected families but also a direct assault on our collective humanity and the safety of every Nigerian child.

"As parents, community leaders, and citizens, we share the pain, anxiety, and emotional trauma currently being experienced by the families of these children.

"No parent should have to endure the agony of not knowing the whereabouts or safety

of their child.

"The Lagos State Chapter of the ADC stands in solidarity with the affected families and calls on all security agencies to intensify efforts towards the immediate rescue of the children and the apprehension of those responsible for this heinous crime."

According to him, the perpetrators must be brought to justice in accordance with the laws of the land.

He added: "We commend the security personnel currently working on the matter and urge them not to relent until every child is safely reunited with their family.

"We also call on community leaders, religious institutions, civil society organizations, and well-meaning Nigerians to cooperate with security agencies by providing useful information that may aid rescue efforts.

"The recurring incidents of kidnapping across the country demand a renewed commitment from government at all levels to strengthen intelligence gathering



### ANNIVERSARY:

President Bola Tinubu, about to commission three vessels: NNS Oloibiri, NNS Mambila, and NNS Gurara, at the 2026 International Fleet Review held at the Eko Atlantic Waterfront, Lagos, as part of events to commemorate the Navy's 70th Anniversary.

## Enugu warns against self-medication amid Ebola alert

### ENUGU

The Enugu State Government has urged residents to avoid self-medication and promptly report anyone showing signs of illness to health facilities as part of measures to prevent the spread of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD).

The Commissioner for Health, Prof. George Ugwu, made the appeal in a statement issued on Tuesday in Enugu following the inauguration and activation of the Enugu State Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (EOC).

The activation of the centre forms part of proactive measures by the state government to prevent the importation and spread of Ebola following the outbreak reported in Uganda.

Ugwu reaffirmed the state

government's commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of residents through strengthened surveillance, preparedness and rapid response mechanisms against potential public health threats.

He said that the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) had classified Enugu as a high-risk state for possible Ebola importation because of the presence of the Akanu Ibiam International Airport.

According to the commissioner, the state cannot afford complacency and must remain vigilant to ensure early detection and effective response to any suspected Ebola case.

"As part of its preparedness strategy, the government has designated a dedicated isolation facility to manage any suspected Ebola case that may be

identified in the state."

Ugwu said surveillance activities had been intensified at all points of entry, particularly the Akanu Ibiam International Airport, where health officials were collaborating with stakeholders to monitor travellers.

He explained that the monitoring process was aimed at promptly identifying potential health risks and preventing the spread of infectious diseases within the state.

The commissioner also said that the government had scaled up risk communication and public awareness campaigns to educate residents on Ebola prevention and response measures.

According to him, the Ministry of Health will engage communities, healthcare workers, traditional rulers, religious leaders and the media

to disseminate accurate information on Ebola symptoms and reporting procedures.

He urged residents to maintain proper hygiene practices and immediately report any suspected symptoms to health authorities for prompt assessment and necessary medical intervention.

The World Health Organization (WHO) State Coordinator, Dr Adaye Ugwu, commended the state government for its timely intervention and strong preparedness measures against potential Ebola threats.

Ugwu expressed confidence that the coordinated efforts of the Emergency Operations Centre, surveillance teams, healthcare facilities and residents would strengthen the state's readiness and response capacity.

## Woman docked for allegedly receiving N600,000 stolen from POS operator

### ABUJA

A woman, Ms Happiness Nwafor, was on Tuesday docked in a Magistrates' Court in Dutse, Abuja, for allegedly receiving N600,000 stolen from a Point Of Sale (POS) operator.

The police charged Nwafor who lives in Zuba, Abuja, with criminal conspiracy and theft.

The defendant however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecuting Counsel, Mr Babajide Olanipekun, told the court that the complainant, Mr Sabastine Amediegwu, who lives in Zuba, Abuja, reported the incident at the Zuba

Police Station on March 27.

Olanipekun told the court that the defendant benefited from an illegal transfer of N600,000 from the complainant's POS attendant.

During police investigation, he said, Nwafor couldn't give a satisfactory explanation of how she got the money.

The Defence Counsel, Okara Brutus, pleaded with the court to admit his client to bail, citing the provisions of Section 168 of the Administration of Justice Act and Section 35 sub-section I of the 1999 Constitution As Amended.

The police said the offence contravened the provisions of Sections 97 and 288 of the Penal Code Law.

Magistrate Evelyn Gara admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N500,000 with one surety in like sum.

She ordered that the surety must most have a valid identification card and must live within the jurisdiction of the court.

## Anambra govt vows to arrest attackers of Soludo's aide convoy

### AWKA

The Anambra Government has said it is intensifying efforts to track down gunmen who attacked the convoy of Mr Ben Nwankwo, Chief of Staff to Governor Chukwuma Soludo last Sunday, May 31.

The gunmen reportedly shot dead four persons including two police personnel during the attack which took place between the hours of 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. at

the border of Orumba North and Orumba South areas of the state.

Nwankwo was returning to Awka from official assignment when the gunmen opened fire on his convey resulting to four deaths.

Dr Law Mefor, the state Commissioner for Information and Value Reorientation disclosed the position of the government in a statement made available to journalists in Awka on Tuesday.

Mefor described the attack as 'shocking,' saying that the situa-

tion needed decisive action.

"The attack was more than an attack on one person. It was an attack on the peace, security and democratic order of the state, as well as the government and people of Anambra," he said.

Mefor disclosed that four people lost their lives during the attack, noting that the deceased persons deserved justice and would surely get it.

He noted that government had sent its deepest condolenc-

es to the families of those who died and shared in their grief.

The commissioner hinted that the police and other security agencies were already working round the clock to unmask those involved in act and bring them to justice.

Mefor said that the isolated incident after more than one year of peace and security in the state will not deter government in its determination to fight all forms of crimes across the state.

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I, formerly known as MRS ITOHAN LILIAN AHANNISI, now wish to be known and addressed as MRS. ITOHAN LILIAN GUOBADIA. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

## NEWS

# INEC launches investigation into alleged unauthorised access to CVR database

ABUJA

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has launched investigation into allegations of unauthorised access and disclosure of information from its Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) database.

The commission disclosed

this in a statement issued by Mohammed Haruna, National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee (IVEC), on Tuesday in Abuja.

The probe followed social media reports claiming that the voter data of a candidate in the recent Federal Capital Territory (FCT) political party

primaries was leaked, using of official access credentials.

Haruna said that while INEC's preliminary findings showed no evidence of an external cyber-attack, the commission took the allegation seriously and had immediately commenced a thorough investigation to establish the facts surrounding the incident.

He explained that as part of the ongoing CVR exercise nationwide, authorised INEC Registration Officers were granted controlled access to specific components of the CVR system.

This, according to him, is to enable them register new applicants, process requests for transfer of registration and update voter records, where necessary.

He added that such access was restricted to official duties only and withdrawn at the con-

clusion of the exercise.

Haruna, however, said that the audit trail from the preliminary investigation had enabled the commission to identify the user-account through which the information was accessed.

"Accordingly, relevant personnel have been questioned, and all units connected with the incident are cooperating fully with the investigation.

"The commission is also examining all technical, administrative and operational factors associated with the matter in order to establish individual responsibility," he said.

Haruna added that the investigation was to determine the circumstances surrounding the use of those credentials and identify any breach of internal access-control protocols before taking appropriate action against anyone involved.

"Preliminary findings from the commission's audit trail so far, however, indicate that there was no external breach of the CVR database, no hacking incident, and no unauthorised external access to the commission's ICT infrastructure.

"Rather, the information in question was accessed through valid user credentials assigned to personnel participating in the ongoing CVR exercise but released without authority," he said.

Haruna said that the incident under investigation related to the retrieval of a specific voter record.

He added that it did not also indicate any compromise of the commission's broader voter registration infrastructure or the personal data of more than 90 million registered voters.

"The commission wishes to state categorically that it takes the security, confidentiality and integrity of voter data with the utmost seriousness and remains committed to transparency, institutional integrity and the protection of voters' personal information," he said.

Haruna added that the Department of State Services (DSS), on its own accord, had also commenced an independent investigation into the matter.

He said that INEC would continue to cooperate fully with all relevant security agencies and would not hesitate to refer any person found culpable for appropriate legal action.

Haruna urged on members of the public and the media to disregard unfounded speculations while investigations were ongoing.

He said that INEC would continue to keep the public informed of its final findings and any measure taken in response to the incident in due course.



VISIT:

Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan, SAN (2nd right), when he led members of the INEC delegation on a visit to the South Korean National Election Commission (NEC) Headquarters and the Korean Civic Education Institute (KOCIE) on Monday, 1st June 2026.

## Global shocks: AfDB plans emergency support package for African countries

ABUJA

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is considering an emergency support package to help African countries mitigate the economic impact of rising global uncertainties, including the ongoing Middle East crisis.

Prof. Kevin Urama, the bank's Chief Economist/Vice President for the Economic Governance and Knowledge Management, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja.

He said the proposed pack-

age would provide budget support and trade financing to countries facing fiscal pressures arising from higher food, fuel and fertiliser prices triggered by global tensions.

According to him, the bank is studying measures similar to those deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic to help governments manage short and medium-term economic shocks.

"We are putting together a package of a crisis response programme, which will have to be considered by the board of the AfDB and the president of the bank.

"One is emergency crisis-response budget support, similar to what we did during COVID-19 as well as trade financing to help countries facing challenges associated with importing food, fuel and fertiliser," he said.

Urama said Africa's economy remained resilient in spite of global disruptions, noting that the continent's growth was projected at 4.2 per cent in 2026 if current tensions subsided within three months and 4.0 per cent if they persisted for six months.

He added that growth was expected to rebound to 4.4 per

cent in 2027, remaining above the global average.

The economist said that the AfDB was also promoting the New African Financial Architecture for Development (NA-FAD).

According to him, this will help to strengthen cooperation among African financial institutions and mobilise capital at scale for the continent's development.

He said the initiative would address challenges such as fragmentation and weak coordination among development finance institutions, enabling them to respond more effectively to Africa's growing financing needs.

## 2027 Polls: Women leaders rally support for female candidates nationwide

KADUNA

Women leaders and advocacy groups across Nigeria have intensified calls for greater support for female candidates ahead of the 2027 general elections.

They urged women to unite across political, ethnic and religious lines to boost female representation in elective offices.

The National President of the Women Wing of the Peace Revival and Reconciliation Foundation of Nigeria, Hajiya Ramatu Tijjani, made this known to the newsmen in Kaduna.

Tijjani congratulated women who emerged victorious in their respective party primaries and appealed to Nigerian women to support female candidates regardless of political affiliation.

She said increasing the number of women in elective positions was essential for strengthening democracy, promoting inclusive governance and accelerating national development.

According to her, many African countries and nations across the world have successfully elected women into top leadership positions, including the presidency, adding that Nigeria should not be left behind in advancing women's political participation.

"Women constitute a significant percentage of the country's population and voting strength.

If women unite and support one another, more female candidates will emerge victorious and contribute meaningfully to national development," she said.

Tijjani urged women to turn out in large numbers during the 2027 elections and vote for competent female candidates, noting that women had consistently demonstrated commitment, dedication and integrity in leadership and public service.

She disclosed that the foundation was preparing to launch a campaign tagged "Women for Women" to mobilise support, resources and advocacy for female candidates who secured party tickets for the forthcoming elections.

The women leader added that increased female participation in politics would help advance girl child education, reduce poverty and unemployment, and address other social challenges affecting women and vulnerable groups.

Also speaking, the Chairperson of Jamiyyar Matan Arewa, Hajiya Rabi Saulawa, expressed concern over the relatively low number of women who secured victories in the recently concluded party primaries.

Saulawa called on women across the country to support and encourage female candidates seeking elective offices, describing women's solidarity as crucial to achieving meaningful political representation.

## Planting season: Farmers weigh impact of rainfall, inputs on production

ABUJA

Farmers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and its environs have expressed mixed feelings over the impact of rainfall patterns and the rising cost of farm inputs on agricultural production.

The farmers spoke in interviews with newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja.

They said that while the early rains had encouraged many of them to begin culti-

vation, the high cost of seeds, fertilisers, agrochemicals and labour remained a major challenge.

Mrs Blessing Emenike, a vegetable farmer, said the rising cost of fertiliser had forced many farmers to reduce the size of land under cultivation.

"Last year, a bag of fertiliser sold for about N32,000, but this year it is about N50,000 and not everyone can afford it.

"Even seeds have doubled in price compared to what we

paid last year.

"All the chemicals we use on the farm are very expensive. If there is any way the government can subsidise them, it will make farming easier for us.

"Some farmers are considering planting fewer hectares because they cannot afford enough fertiliser and chemicals," she said.

Also speaking, Mr Williams Abalaka, a maize farmer in Dutse Alhaji, said he had commenced planting following the

onset of rainfall.

According to him, the rains have been relatively favourable so far, although frequent downpours in some areas have slowed farming activities.

"The rainfall has helped soften the soil and made planting easier. However, there are days when the rains are too heavy, preventing us from going to the farm.

"Erosion is seriously affecting us because of poor drainage systems.

**JUDICIARY****NEWS**

# Court acquits man in 12-year-old defilement case over absence of witnesses

**IKEJA**

An Ikeja Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court on Tuesday discharged and acquitted a man, Dauda Salami, accused of defiling and abducting a 12-year-old girl.

Justice Rahman Oshodi, in his judgment, held that the prosecution failed to prove the two-count charge of defilement and abduction against Salami beyond reasonable doubt.

Oshodi held that the prosecution's case collapsed due to the absence of crucial witnesses, including the alleged survivor, her mother, and investigating police officers.

The judge observed that securing the attendance of witnesses before criminal courts in the state remained a serious and recurring challenge.

He said while the prosecution listed nine witnesses, only one testified, in spite of witness summonses issued to compel the attendance of the others.

"The prosecution's original nine witnesses never came to court. The availability of witnesses is central to the fair and proper resolution of any criminal trial.

"Yet, witnesses who made statements to the police during investigations frequently cannot be found or compelled to testify," Oshodi said.

The court held that although witness summonses were issued to secure the attendance of four police officers, none appeared before the court.

According to the judge, one of the officers, Insp Onyike Aleihunu, was granted permission to testify virtually but failed to attend.

Oshodi held that the prosecution

relied on the testimony of a single witness, a nurse-midwife with the Women at Risk International Foundation.

The witness presented and interpreted a medical report relating to the alleged survivor.

The court held that the witness did not witness the alleged incident and could not directly link the defendant to either offence.

"The prosecutrix and her mother were not called, and no police officer testified.

"The witness's account of what the child and her mother allegedly told medical personnel amounted to hearsay and cannot be relied upon.

"The accounts of the prosecutrix and her mother were not given on oath before this court.

"They were not tested by cross-examination and cannot, therefore, be received as proof

of the truth of their contents," Oshodi said.

The court held that the prosecution was required to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt, and not for the defendant to prove his innocence.

Oshodi held that the defendant's decision to rest his case on that of the prosecution was justified in the circumstances.

"In this case, the defendant took no risk at all. The prosecution's evidence was so plainly insufficient that it required no answer," he said.

The judge expressed concern over the recurring failure of witnesses to attend criminal proceedings.

He pointed to the unimplemented Lagos State Victim Assistance and Witness Protection Law as part of the broader challenge facing the criminal justice system.

# Alleged N1.35bn fraud: Sule Lamido, EFCC disagree over subpoenaed witness

**ABUJA**

Former Governor Sule Lamido of Jigawa and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Tuesday disagreed over the subpoenaed witness brought to court by the commission.

The development occurred before Justice Ijeoma Ojukwu of the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja shortly after the trial resumed.

The EFCC is prosecuting Lamido on alleged money laundering to the tune of N1.35 billion.

The former governor is being tried alongside his two sons – Aminu and Mustapha; Aminu Wada Abubakar and their companies – Bamaina Holdings Ltd and Speeds International Ltd.

The defendants, through their lawyer, Joe Agi, SAN, had applied that the EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, be summoned or any other staff, to give evidence in their defence, after their no-case submission was dismissed.

The defendants had opted for a no-case submission after the prosecution closed its case by calling 17 witnesses.

Although the case was initially reassigned to Justice Peter Lifu by the chief judge after the Supreme Court judgement which upheld the trial court ruling, the commission insisted that Justice Ojukwu, the earlier trial judge, concluded the matter.

The case was subsequently reassigned to Justice Ojukwu.

When the case was called on Tuesday, Kayode Oyetunde, a staff and an investigator, was called by the lawyer to the an-

ti-graft agency, Chile Okoroma, SAN, to testify.

But Agi sought an adjournment to allow him to interface with the subpoenaed witness.

Okoroma, however, opposed the application for adjournment.

The prosecution lawyer, instead, prayed the court to stand down proceedings to allow the defence assess the witness as all documents produced by the subpoenaed witness had already been frontloaded before the court as evidence.

The judge, therefore, refused to adjourn the matter and threatened to strike out the subpoena if the application for adjournment was granted.

She later stood down the case for an hour to allow the defence interface with the subpoenaed witness.

After proceedings resumed, the witness was called into the witness box.

The witness admitted in court that he was not part of the investigative team and was only directed to search for documents requested in the subpoena.

The defence lawyer, therefore, stated that he cannot proceed with the matter as the witness knew nothing about the case.

Agi submitted that the witness cannot give evidence in case he knows nothing about and urged the EFCC chairman to make available a witness relevant to the case.

However, Okoroma disagreed with Agi's submission.

He said that all documents requested in the subpoena had been made available and the EFCC is a corporate entity and anyone could represent it.

**VISION 2028:**

CBN Governor, Mr Olayemi Cardoso (5th left), at the unveiling of Nigeria Payments Systems Vision 2028, to deepen infrastructure, expand inclusion, accelerate innovation, and enhance Nigeria's integration with regional and global payment systems.

# ADC crisis: Aregbesola asks new judge to withdraw from Gombe's suit

**ABUJA**

Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, the National Secretary of African Democratic Congress (ADC), has asked Justice Peter Lifu of the Federal High Court in Abuja to recuse himself from the party's leadership crisis suit reassigned to him.

Aregbesola's application came barely less than a day to the hearing in the suit filed by Mr Nafiu-Bala Gombe to stop Sen. David Mark-led leadership of the ADC from parading themselves as valid leaders of the party.

Justice Lifu had fixed Wednesday (today) for the hearing of the case after the Chief Judge (CJ) of the court, Justice John Tsoho, reassigned the matter to him.

The case, filed by Gombe, the aggrieved former National Deputy Chairman of ADC,

was earlier before Justice Emeke Nwite of a sister court.

The matter was, however, reassigned to Justice Lifu, after Nwite's name was announced among the 12 new justices whose names were sent to President Bola Tinubu for approval as judges of the Appeal Court.

Meanwhile, Aregbesola, in a motion on notice dated June 1 but filed June 2, asked Justice Lifu to withdraw from the case and transfer the suit back to the CJ for reassignment to another judge.

The ADC national secretary, through his lawyer, Mohammed Sheriff, cited lack of confidence in the judge, in his seven-ground argument.

He submitted that the 1999 Constitution (as amended) guarantees every litigant a hearing before an independent and impartial panel.

"Certain circumstances have arisen in this matter which creates a reasonable apprehension of lack of confidence by the 3rd defendant which may undermine public confidence in the administration of justice."

Aregbesola said the court, in a suit number: ABJ/CS/2637/2026 between the Incorporated Trustees of the National Forum of Former Legislators Vs. INEC and six others, where his party (ADC) was the 3rd defendant in the suit, had shown a likelihood of lack of confidence.

He said this was so because the court, "had given rulings against established principles of law and adverse to the applicant and his party in that suit.

"Ordered an accelerated hearing when the matter was not in fact a pre-election matter or a matter of urgency.

"Refused two motions for stay of proceedings and directed parties to enter their defence,

adopt their processes and adjourned for judgment, despite being informed of a pending appeal entered before the Court of Appeal and an affidavit of fact showing same before it."

He said at the proceedings of May 22 in Appeal Number: CA/ABJ/CV/569/2026, "counsel for the appellant informed the Court of Appeal of this court's refusal to stay proceedings, and in complete indignation and irritation at this court's refusal to stay further proceedings, the Court of Appeal granted an order for stay of further proceedings.

"The applicant has no confidence in this court to administer justice in these proceedings.

"It is in the interest of Justice that the matter be heard by another judge.

"The applicant believes that a fair-minded observer would reasonably apprehend a lack of confidence in proceedings before this honourable court."

# Court delivers judgment in Owo church attack case on Wednesday

**ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja has fixed June 3 for judgment in the trial of five men being prosecuted for the terrorist attack in Owo church that killed no fewer than 41 worshippers.

The Department of State Services (DSS) had filed terrorism charge against the suspects for their alleged involvement in the June 5, 2022 attack on St. Francis Catholic Church in Owo, Ondo State.

Justice Emeke Nwite had, on May 26, reserved judgment after lawyers to the prosecution and the defence adopted their final written addresses and presented their arguments for and against the case.

Justice Nwite had said that judgement would be reserved to a date to be communicated to parties.

It was however, gathered on Monday that the matter is now fixed for June 3 for judgment.

In his final submission in the last adjourned date, lawyer to the prosecution, Ayodeji Adedipe, SAN, urged the court to convict the defendants and impose the maximum sentence of death in view of the enormity of the crime they allegedly committed.

On his part, the defendants' lawyer, Abdullahi Mohammad, prayed the court to discharge and acquit his clients on the grounds that the prosecution was unable to establish its case against them.

A total of 41 worshippers were killed during the terror attack on the church, while over 140 others suffered various injuries.

The DSS had called 11 witnesses to establish the allegations against the defendants in the trial that began on Aug. 1, 2025.

The trial court had admitted the confessional statements of the defendants following the conclusion of the trial- with-in-trial conducted to establish that the witnesses' statements were voluntarily given.

## NEWS

## Foreign

## Two people shot dead amid Kenya protests against US Ebola quarantine centre plan

Two people have been shot dead in the central Kenyan town of Nanyuki amid protests against US plans to establish an Ebola isolation centre at a military base nearby, the BBC has learnt.

One of the victims was shot in an area close to the Laikipia Airbase where a demonstration was taking place. He died after being brought to the town's hospital by friends.

The other victim was already dead when he was taken to the hospital by soldiers.

The circumstances of their deaths are not clear, and officials have not commented on the matter. A police spokesman told the Reuters news agency he was not aware of any deaths.

On Monday, hundreds of demonstrators marched through the town's streets, blocking roads and burning tyres, with police firing tear gas

to disperse them.

One of those killed has been identified by his family as Charles Mang'aro Mwangi. They say the 27-year-old was not involved in the protests and was going about his daily life when he was shot.

He was not part of the protests... he was just on the road, minding his own business when he was shot"

Joyce Wangari Charles Mang'aro Mwangi's mother

"He was going to see a friend briefly" at around 18:00 (16:00 GMT) after returning from work, his mother Joyce Wangari said.

"He was not part of the protests. He did not carry stones and was not throwing anything at the police. He was just on the road, minding his own business when he was shot," she said.

Mwangi's family say they have not received any communica-

tion from the police regarding the circumstances of his death.

The BBC has been unable to confirm the circumstances in which the second man died. Both bodies, which are in the hospital morgue, appear to have gunshot wounds - one in the chest and the other on the shoulder.

The town was calm on Tuesday morning and there was a heavy security presence on the streets.

The US plan to establish an Ebola treatment facility in Kenya has sparked public concern about cross-border infection risks.

The 50-bed isolation centre is to be staffed by US medics and is intended to treat US citizens affected by the current outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Kenya has not recorded any Ebola cases so far.

Last Friday, the High Court said the opening of the centre should be halted after a rights

group opened a case alleging the facility posed "grave and imminent risks" to public health.

Speaking for the first time about the issue on Monday evening, President William Ruto defended the plan saying that Kenya had "deployed every arsenal" to protect the country.

He told journalists that the US government had requested Kenyan support in dealing with the virus, which he had promptly accepted, describing it as a "mutual agreement".

"When President [Donald] Trump asked Kenya to support them by having a centre in Laikipia Airbase I gave the ok because it was an agreement with friends who have walked with Kenya for 30, 40 years," he said.

He called on Kenyans not to politicise a matter "so serious" as Ebola, asking politicians to avoid "reckless" talk about it.

## Israel strikes southern Lebanon but partial truce with Hezbollah appears to hold

Israel continued its attacks in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, but did not strike Beirut following a partial ceasefire agreement with the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah.

Lebanon said that, under an agreement announced by US President Donald Trump late on Monday, Israeli forces would not bomb the capital in exchange for Hezbollah not attacking Israel.

It came after Iran said Israeli action in Lebanon jeopardised talks on a deal to end its war with the US.

Following the ceasefire announcement, the Israeli military said it had intercepted two projectiles fired into northern Israel. Hezbollah said it had attacked Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, where officials reported deadly Israeli strikes.

The Lebanese health ministry also said four people had been killed and 127 injured when Israeli air strikes hit buildings next to Jabal Amel hospital in the city of Tyre on Monday afternoon. Thirty-nine hospital staff were among the injured, with four in a critical condition.

What remained in the area outside the hospital on Tuesday was utter devastation.

Chunks of concrete and twisted metal were scattered across the area. The beeping of damaged cars and the crackle of downed electrical wires echoed through streets that were otherwise eerily quiet.

Apart from a handful of local journalists, almost no-one was outside.

A woman stood in tears, staring at an apartment build-

ing that was half gone.

"I live there," she said, pointing at the wreckage, before adding: "Used to."

Dr Wael Mroueh, the hospital's director, had spent the evening dealing with the aftermath.

"We were working with patients and displaced people. Business was as usual, and suddenly, 'boom'," he said. "It happened without any prior warning. Pictures speak volumes."

He also denied that there was a military target in the vicinity.

"The Israeli enemy targets journalists, ambulance workers, medical staff. It makes no difference, and all it wants is to kick us out of our country," he said.

Lebanese authorities said Israeli strikes next to Jabal Amel hospital killed four people. The Israeli military said it struck "Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure"

Inside the hospital, corridors were littered with broken glass. Ceiling panels had collapsed onto the floors. A row of incubators stood cracked and damaged by the force of the blast.

Just four hours earlier, baby Fares had been born in the maternity ward. He lay swaddled in a blue furry blanket and asleep, while his mother recovered nearby.

His grandmother, Amal, proudly showed him off.

"It's true life is very hard, but we need to bear it," she said, gazing down at her grandson. "This is his country and land, and he [Fares] needs to defend it. This is a responsibility."

The Israeli military said it struck "Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure" in the area.



### KENYA PROTESTS:

The US plan to establish an Ebola quarantine centre has sparked concerns in Kenya.

## Ukraine rescuers pull dead from rubble after Russian strikes kill 22 people

A Russian missile and drone attack killed at least 22 people across Ukraine overnight, including two children, marking one of Moscow's largest assaults in recent months.

An eight-year-old boy and three women pulled from the rubble of apartment blocks were among 16 people killed in Dnipro, regional officials said. In the capital Kyiv, six people were killed.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said civilian infrastructure and energy facilities had been targeted across the country, with more than 100 people injured.

The Kremlin said on Tuesday it was carrying out the "systematic strikes" it had pledged after accusing Kyiv of a deadly attack on a student dormitory in an occupied part of eastern Ukraine in late May.

Kyiv said it had hit a Russian military unit.

"This practice will continue," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday, claiming the strikes were targeting Ukrainian military infrastructure.

Zelensky had warned a "massive strike" was possible in his nightly video address on Monday, and urged residents to pay special attention to air raid alerts.

On Tuesday morning, he said Russia had launched 656 strike drones and 73 missiles of various types - ballistic, cruise,

and anti-ship - in the overnight attack.

"We urgently need help from the United States in supplying missiles for Patriot systems", the Ukrainian president said, referring to interception hardware used to intercept Russian missiles.

Patriot missiles have been in short supply, exacerbated by the US and Israeli war against Iran.

Since returning to power last year, US President Donald Trump has also stopped direct supplies to Ukraine, so Kyiv's European allies have been buying them from the US before sending them to Ukraine.

"The main strike was on Kyiv, where dozens of residential buildings and other purely civilian infrastructure were damaged again," Zelensky said. Rescuers searching through

the rubble of apartment buildings in the central city of Dnipro where 16 people were killed recovered the bodies of an eight-year-old boy and three women, regional head Oleksandr Hanzha said, adding that another child had been killed in the blast.

The attack "essentially demolished" part of the building, Zelensky wrote on X.

More than 90 people were injured across both cities, while Kharkiv in the north-east - which also saw its energy facilities and civilian infrastructure hit - reported 10 injured, including a child.

An industrial facility was also attacked further south in Zaporizhzhia as regions across the country were targeted, the president said.

## British couple lose Iran jail sentence appeal, family says

A British couple jailed in Iran on espionage charges have lost an appeal against their 10-year sentence, according to their family.

Lindsay and Craig Foreman were arrested in January 2025 while passing through Iran on a round-the-world motorcycle trip.

They were accused of spying - charges they adamantly deny - and were sentenced in February. Both are currently on hunger strike in Tehran's Evin prison.

A member of their legal team in the UK told the BBC no reason was given for the rejection of their appeal. Lindsay's son, Joe Bennett, said they were "not permitted to attend their own appeal hearing".

He added: "It is a serious human rights violation, and it is one more reason why two British citizens, with no other options left, are now starving themselves in protest."

A Foreign Office spokesperson said: "We are disappointed by the appeal decision and will continue working to ensure that Craig and Lindsay are re-

turned safely to the UK."

Bennett said his mother and step-father had been asked to sign documents in Farsi which they could not read, and refused.

Barrister Haydee Dijkstra, part of their legal team in the UK, said: "Craig and Lindsay are innocent tourists who are arbitrarily detained and who have had their fundamental rights severely and consistently violated throughout their detention."

Their case has now been passed to the Supreme Court, according to Bennett, although the family do not understand the legal process or the timeline of what might happen next.

"It's really tough, I don't know where to turn now," he told the BBC. "I'm massively worried for them. But it's hard because I can't talk to them."

The couple have been prevented from calling their family in the UK since they gave an interview to the BBC more than a month ago. They began a hunger strike shortly after their communications with the outside world were cut.

**Foreign****NEWS****South Africa police investigate killing of two Mozambican men**

South African police on Tuesday said they were investigating the killings of two men from Mozambique.

Two men from Mozambique were killed in South Africa's Mossel Bay, authorities have said.

In an earlier statement, the Mozambican government said five of its nationals had been killed "as a direct consequence of xenophobic attacks". But the police in South Africa did not give a motive and an investigation is ongoing.

Tensions have been rising in South Africa in recent weeks following protests calling for tougher action against illegal migration. Some African nations say it has resulted in violence against their citizens, which South African authorities have not confirmed.

The deaths of the men aged 27 and 43 on Saturday follows violence in the Western Cape the day before.

In releasing these details, the South African police said on Tuesday that they wanted to "set the record straight".

In a separate incident, officers said an 18-year-old South African man was stabbed to death in the early hours of Sunday, in what was possibly a botched robbery. No arrests have been made.

On Friday, violent unrest swept through a settlement in KwaNonqaba, during which more than 50 shacks were set on fire.

Five people have been ar-

rested in connection with the arson, authorities have said.

One Mozambican woman told local media she and her family were "still inside when people started burning down" their house.

"They said we should leave or we'll get hurt," Dolinda Mabunda said, adding they took what they could and "ran".

While the South African police statement confirmed the killings of the two Mozambican men, Maputo said five of its citizens had been killed.

The Mozambique government alleged that 800 of its citizens had been "victims of xenophobic attacks" during Friday's violence.

It added 300 people had left South Africa on Saturday to return to Mozambique and the remaining 500 were due to follow. Two people died in a road accident.

"Given the volatility of the situation... it is expected that the current situation will worsen," the Mozambican government warned.

South African protesters have accused undocumented migrants of placing pressure on public services, as well as being involved in crime, and have called on the government to strengthen immigration enforcement, resulting in rising anti-foreigner sentiment.

Several African countries including Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho and Zimbabwe have advised their citizens to remain vigilant.

**New Jersey alleges 'unsanitary' conditions in migrant facility rocked by protests**

New Jersey has sued the operator of an immigration detention centre that has become a flashpoint over allegations of inhumane conditions for detainees.

The lawsuit demands the facility's owner, GEO Group, a private contractor, allow state health inspectors more access to the facility in the city of Newark, alleging "unsanitary food and drink preparation and storage".

The New Jersey health department also received a report of "potentially inadequate Tuberculosis infection control practices", according to the legal action.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said health inspectors had already been granted access to the facility and the lawsuit was "frivolous".

Protesters and police clash outside Delaney Hall detention centre in Newark on 30 May.

"ICE is committed to transparency, and Delaney Hall complies with all required state and local laws," the DHS statement said.

The agency also said that

four representatives of the New Jersey State Health Department had been allowed into the facility on 28 May and they "inspected the foodservice department".

But New Jersey alleges their access did not go far enough.

The state attorney general's lawsuit alleges that GEO Group turned away inspectors on 27 May, citing a high number of congressional visitors.

Access granted the following day to health department inspectors was "severely limited", the lawsuit alleges.

The legal action also says the officials were denied access to Delaney Hall's medical unit that day.

"If the GEO Group - with a \$1 billion government contract - has nothing to hide and the conditions inside Delaney Hall are as safe and as sanitary as this private corporation and the Trump Administration claim, then there is no legitimate reason why my health inspectors are being kept from full access throughout the building," New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill, a Democrat, said in a statement.

**PRESIDENT MAHAMA:**

Ghanaian President John Mahama's comments came during a visit to the UK.

**Canada formally requests renewal of North American free trade pact**

Canada has formally requested a renewal of the North American free trade agreement with the US and Mexico, called the USMCA, as the July deadline to renegotiate the pact looms.

In Tuesday's notice of renewal, Canada-US trade minister Dominic LeBlanc requested that the deal be renewed for another 16 years, calling the agreement "highly beneficial" to all three countries.

It comes as LeBlanc is in Washington for a meeting with US trade representative Jamie-Greer.

Greer has concluded the latest round of formal bilateral talks with Mexico, but negotiations with Canada have lagged behind, with the two sides appearing at odds over sector-specific tariffs and auto-

mobile manufacturing.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has said publicly that he wants sector-specific tariffs imposed on Canadian steel, aluminium, automobiles and lumber removed or lowered, while Greer has indicated that Canada may have to accept some form of US tariffs.

The US, meanwhile, has cited multiple trade irritants with Canada, including the decision by most Canadian provinces to remove American liquor from shelves due to tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump.

It also wants greater access to Canadian markets for American businesses, specifically dairy, where Canada has strict control over production quotas and imports to support local farmers.

Last week, Greer said that he will also be discussing increas-

ing the percentage of US content in North American-made cars, as well as co-ordinating external tariffs on other countries with Canada and Mexico.

In its talks with Mexico, the US has asked that vehicles made in North America contain at least 50% American-made content, according to Reuters.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Carney said that cars made in Canada already contain around that amount of US content.

In a speech in New York last week, he said a stronger Canadian economy would also support growth in US.

"Canada Strong will help make America great again," he said.

Domestic pressure has been building on the prime minister to reach a deal, with the Conservative opposition citing Canada's lagging economic

growth and high youth unemployment rate.

"What is the plan?" asked Jasraj Singh Hallan, a Conservative MP at a news conference on Tuesday morning, calling Carney a "grand illusionist" who has failed to deliver on his promise of growing Canada's economy.

Greer has blamed the slower pace of Canada-US negotiations on Canada's decision to retaliate against the US for its tariffs, compared to Mexico.

"Two countries in the world retaliated against us: The People's Republic of China and Canada," he told reporters last week. "So they're just in a different spot, and it's hard to see necessarily where that ends."

If all three countries do not agree to extend the USMCA by 1 July, the pact would have to be renewed annually until 2036.

**Ghana's anti-LGBTQ+ bill to be scrutinised before approval, president says**

Ghanaian President John Mahama's comments came during a visit to the UK

Ghana's new bill criminalising LGBTQ+ activities will undergo scrutiny before it is officially approved, the president has said.

Speaking during a visit to the UK, John Mahama said his legal council and attorney general would "sit on it because it was a private members' motion... [and] not a government bill".

The bill - passed by parliament on Friday - proposes up to three years imprisonment for identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer, and a "duty to report" prohibited acts to police.

"We will look at it and make sure that everything is in order," Mahama said, adding that the bill would be referred to the

Council of State - his advisors - if there were any problems.

Since coming into power last year, Mahama has been pressured by religious leaders to strengthen anti-gay measures, which ban same-sex relationships under laws dating from the British colonial era.

Discussing the bill during a question-and-answer session at the Chatham House think tank in London on Monday, Mahama also said there were some procedural lapses in its passage, which are being addressed by the Speaker of parliament.

It is the second time such legislation has been backed by MPs.

A similar bill was first introduced to parliament in August 2021 after an LGBTQ+ resources centre was shut down in the capital, Accra.

Mahama's predecessor, former President Nana Aku-

fo-Addo, failed to give his assent to that version of the bill before leaving office last year.

When it passed in 2024, it was challenged by multiple lawsuits at the Supreme Court, which Akufo-Addo used as a reason for not approving it.

The bill was reintroduced in parliament this year by a cross-party group of MPs.

Parliamentary members of Ghana's minority party said they preferred the version of the bill passed in 2024, claiming that amendments to the current legislation have watered it down.

"The bill appears, and not only appears, substantially has lost the force and the bite and the thrust, the deterrence, the efficacy that it contained and carried in 2024," minority spokesperson John Ntim Forjour explained.

The current version exempts punishment for legal, healthcare and media professionals who provide medical treatment and other services for gay people, or report on LGBTQ+ news.

Meanwhile, anyone who identifies as an "ally" - a supporter of LGBTQ+ people - could face a prison sentence.

Both forms of the legislation have been widely criticised by rights groups for infringing on the rights of sexual minorities.

Human Rights Watch recommended the bill be abandoned in a formal submission to the constitutional and legal affairs committee scrutinising the legislation in the capital, Accra.

But advocates of the bill argue it will help preserve Ghanaian family values.

Several African countries have cracked down on LGBTQ+ rights in recent years.

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**EFFECTIVE FROM APRIL 14, 2026**

# Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Golf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

## StarTimes unveils World Cup coverage, ₦50m subscriber rewards

StarTimes Nigeria has unveiled plans for football fans to enjoy live coverage of all 104 matches of the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

At a press briefing in Lagos on Tuesday, the pay-TV company also revealed a ₦50 million prize pool, including a ₦10 million grand prize.

The company said the promotion would be open to both new and existing subscribers nationwide.

One subscriber will win the ₦10 million grand prize in a live draw on the tournament's

final day, July 19.

Existing and new subscribers will also benefit from discounted subscription packages and promotional offers.

Oke Umurhohwo, Marketing Director of StarTimes Nigeria, said the addition of seven StarTimes H30 Solar Home Systems and 14 StarTimes S130B plus 32-inch TV bundles raised the prize pool to ₦50 million.

Umurhohwo said dedicated channels had been created to ensure subscribers enjoyed comprehensive World Cup coverage.

"We are one of the official broadcasters of the FIFA World

Cup 2026 and all 104 matches will be live on StarTimes.

"We have dedicated channels for this tournament and all the matches will be available on our platform. The good times are back again," he said.

He added that subscribers on the Basic Bouquet would have access to all matches and announced a nationwide 'Watch and Win' promotion.

"It is not just about watching the World Cup. We want our customers to watch and win.

"A lucky subscriber will go home with ₦10 million, while many others will win solar

products and accessories.

"We believe ₦10 million can make a significant difference in somebody's life, and this is our way of giving back to our loyal customers," he said.

Umurhohwo said StarTimes had also reduced decoder and accessory prices to make premium sports content more accessible during the tournament.

Onyebuchi Uchefuna, Sales Director, StarTimes Nigeria, Lagos Zone, said subscribers would enjoy pre-match analysis, half-time discussions and post-match reviews from the company's World Cup studio.

"We also made provisions on

the StarTimes ON mobile application, which will enable our football-loving subscribers to watch matches on their mobile devices.

"The company also has plans to organise watch parties in selected cities during the knockout rounds, semi-finals and final.

"This is to deepen fan engagement and create opportunities for advertisers and sponsors," he said.

Seun Oyedokun, Advert Sales Director, StarTimes Nigeria, said subscription fees and equipment prices had been reduced for subscribers.

"Intending subscribers will

enjoy significant reductions in decoder and accessory prices.

"For new subscribers, the old price for the Direct-to-Home (DTH) satellite decoder and accessories is ₦35,000, but they will now pay ₦20,000.

"The DTH decoder without accessories will cost ₦8,900 instead of ₦16,000.

"For those who want Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) with accessories, they will pay ₦13,900 instead of ₦17,000.

"The same product without accessories will cost ₦7,900 instead of the old price of ₦14,000," he said.

## 14 countries to participate in 2026 NASCO/ITF J30 World Tennis Championship

The Nigeria Tennis Federation (NTF) says 14 countries, including host nation Nigeria, will participate in the 2026 NASCO/ITF J30 World Tennis Tour Junior Championship taking in Abuja.

The participating countries are Nigeria, Cameroon, China, Great Britain, Canada, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Lithuania, India, Togo, Benin Republic, the U.S., Sweden, and France.

The prestigious junior tennis tournament will kick-off from June 2 to June 13, at the Tennis Complex of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

The two-week competition provides a premier platform for talented young players aged 13 to 18 to compete for official ITF World Tennis Tour Junior ranking points while gaining valuable international exposure.

Saidu Musa, Technical Director of the Federation and Tournament Director, said this at a news conference ahead of the championship on Monday in Abuja.

He described the tournament as a major milestone in the federation's grassroots tennis development programme.

According to him, the ITF Junior World Tennis Tour programme began in Nigeria in 2019 and has grown into one of the federation's most successful

talent development initiatives.

"This is about the sixth edition of the ITF Junior World Tennis Tour that we are organising in Nigeria.

"The programme is independently run by the NTF, and we are delighted that this year NASCO Group has joined us as a sponsor.

"We hope this marks the beginning of a long-term partnership that will further enhance grassroots tennis development in the country," he said.



## Super Eagles: Brentford officially promotes Benjamin Fredrick to first team!



BENJAMIN FREDRICK

English Premier League side Brentford has officially promoted Nigeria international defender Benjamin Fredrick to the first team ahead of the start of next season.

Last season, Fredrick who was voted the Player's Player Of The Year For The B Team Of The Club, was on loan to Belgium side FC Dender, but it was cut short in November

after he picked up a meniscus injury.

Now back in full training and ready for next season, he will team up with the first team directly for pre-season training in view of winning a spot in the team for next season.

Brentford has made it clear that he won't be made available for any loan unlike last season.

Coach Keith Andrew has made it clear that he will be a permanent face in the first team squad.

A full international for Nigeria with eight straight starts in his first eight competitive games, he is back in Nigeria and training with Simoiben Football Academy to keep fit.

## Multichoice rolls out special FIFA World Cup offers on networks

MultiChoice, a CANAL+ company, has introduced special World Cup bundle offers on DStv and GOtv to give more Nigerians access to football's biggest event.

The offer comes as anticipation builds for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada.

The tournament, the biggest in FIFA World Cup history, will feature 48 national teams, including 10 African nations, competing across 104 matches over 39 days.

Beginning from June 1, their new DStv customers can purchase an HD decoder, dish kit and a one-month DStv Yanga subscription for ₦15,000.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, popularly known as the Mundial, will begin on June 11 and conclude on July 19.

The opening match will be played in Mexico City, and the tournament will be the first in World Cup history to feature 48 teams from the previous 32-team format.

The customers on new GOtv can get a GOtv decoder, antenna and one-month GOtv Jolli subscription for ₦15,000.

Commenting on the offer, Chief Executive Officer of MultiChoice Nigeria, Kemi Omotosho, said the company was focused on making the FIFA World Cup experience more accessible to football fans.

"The FIFA World Cup is more than just a tournament – it's a shared global moment. Our goal is to ensure that fans in Nigeria can experience every goal, every story and every unforgettable moment as it happens.



## Wrestling: Akuh assures NWF president of good performance in Mongolia



NIGERIAN WOMEN WRESTLING

Akuh Purity, the Nigerian women wrestling coach, has assured Adewale Adeniyi, President, Nigeria Wrestling Federation (NWF) of good performance at the upcoming third ranking series in Mongolia.

Akuh gave the assurance on Tuesday in Abuja that the president covered all logistics and participation arrangements for the team.

Team Nigeria wrestlers arrived in Mongolia today ahead of this year's 3rd ranking series while they departed Nigeria on Monday night aboard Turkish Airline.

The NWF has registered four wrestlers to showcase their mettle on the global stage in Mongolia.

Four female wrestlers will represent the country in different categories, Mercy Genesis 50kg, Tolulope Ogunsanya

53kg, Esther Kolawole 62kg, and Hannah Ojo 76kg.

According to the coach, the team will fight to earn points, establish world rankings, and secure top seeds for World Championships.

He thanked Adeniyi for his invaluable investment in the wrestling team and immense contribution to wrestling development in Nigeria.

Akuh, who is also the chair-

man of the Federation Technical Committee, said the support is a deliberate effort to ensure wrestling continue to make global impact and success.

"On behalf of athletes and the entire wrestling community, I express profound appreciation to the Federation President for his unwavering support and dedication to wrestlers' welfare," he said.

## FedCup 2026: Edo Queens thrash Delta Queens FC to secure quarter final spot

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Former WAFU- B Champions Edo Queens FC of Benin yesterday thrashed Delta Queens FC 4-0 in the round of 16 of the 2026 President Federation Cup to secure qualification to the quarter finals stage of the tournament.

The highly anticipated game, played at the Akwa Township Stadium Akwa Anambra State became an easy ride for the Benin girls as the task was comfortably executed before halftime.

Hatrick hero Adeshina Tumuninu was the potent weapon that destroyed the Niger Delta neighbours as she opened scoring for Edo Queens in

the 12th minute of actions. She scored another classic Goal for Edo Queens in the 34th minute to get a brace.

The goals thirsty babe sliced in another unstoppable short to record her hatrick in the 38th minute.

Edo Queens went into the half-time break with 3-0 lead courtesy of Adeshina Tumuninu's heroics.

Goal poacher Kafayat Maferere completed the route in the 54th minute of the game for Edo Queens, taking the game beyond the reach of Delta Queens.

The Moses Aduku tutored Edo Queens will be heading to Port Harcourt for the NWFL Super Six holding next week



EDO QUEENS FC OF BENIN

## 2026 President Federation Cup: El-Kanemi Warriors edge Akwa United 4-3 on penalties

El-Kanemi Warriors Football Club advanced to the round of 16 of the ongoing 2026 President Federation Cup after a 4-3 penalty shootout win over Akwa United FC on Monday in Abuja.

The match ended 1-1 after 90 minutes of tight, cagey football that saw both sides cancel each other out in midfield for long spells.

The match played at the FIFA Goal Project football Pitch of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja, saw El-Kanemi keeping possession and forcing Akwa United to sit back.

Akwa United's first real chance came in the 7th minute when Gotom Daniel drove from the right and crossed into the six-yard box, but the ball struck the side net.

In the 17th minute they won a free kick 26 yards out, which resulted in a corner, but El-Kanemi's defence stood firm.

Both teams then settled for midfield possession exchanges until the halftime ended goalless.

On resumption of the second half, both teams followed a similar pattern until the 71st minute when El-Kanemi broke the deadlock.

A free kick from the right flank swung in by Risilanu Ismail found its way into net to put the Borno side 1-0.

Akwa United responded with urgency. In the 83rd minute, Ubong Sunday rose highest to head in from a free kick

and leveled the scores at 1-1 till the final whistle to force the game to penalties.

In the shootout, El Kanemi Warriors goalkeeper saved one penalty, while Akwa United's keeper also made one save. Akwa United missed two spot kicks in total, handing El-Kanemi the win and a place in the next round.

Speaking after the match, Paul Offor, head coach of Akwa United, admitted his side failed to take their chances.



El-Kanemi Warriors 2026 win 2026 President Federation Cup

## NVBF to intensify grassroots drive, targets more international success

Musa Nimrod, President of the Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF), said the federation is intensifying grassroots programmes to strengthen Nigeria's competitiveness and achieve greater international success.

Nimrod said on Tuesday in Abuja that the federation remained committed to discover-

ing young talent in spite of funding challenges.

He said the federation has sustained grassroots initiatives through Under-17, Under-18 and Under-19 national championships across the country.

"We have players from our grassroots competitions. About 40 are now playing abroad," he said.

Nimrod said youth development investment is yielding results, with Nigeria winning gold and silver medals at African Youth Championships.

He noted that several players from the grassroots programmes have turned professional and are boosting Nigeria's volleyball profile.

Nimrod highlighted the "Nimrod Six-Sixteen" project, a talent programme for girls aged 16 and below who are at least six feet tall.

"Three years ago, we held an Under-17 programme for 100 girls. This year is the third edition," he said.

"We provide accommodation, transport, feeding and a conducive environment to help them develop their talents," he added.



NIGERIA VOLLEYBALL TEAM

## 350 golfers to participate in Ibom Open Tournament

Over 350 golfers are to battle for laurels in Uyo, Akwa Ibom, as the 2026 edition of Ibom Open Golf Tournament gets underway.

Usenobong Akpabio, the Organising Committee Chairman, said in Uyo on Tuesday that the tournament would hold between June 4 and 7.

Akpabio said that the tournament provided a platform for participants to seek greater achievements in golfing.

He said that the tournament promised to be unique, saying, "one of our sponsors, Uganda Air, has promised a business class return ticket for winners"

The chairman said that the tournament had attracted more participation because of the success recorded in 2025 edition.

"We were targeting 300 participants, but in just one week,

we had about 350 registrants. We still have people seeking to be part of the tournament," he said.

Akpabio further said that about 40 trophies would be won in different categories during the four-day event

Speaking during the briefing, the Captain, Ibom Golf and Country Club, Isuah Archibong, said that the tournament had become one of the vehicles in driving the Akwa Ibom Government's ARISE Agenda.

Archibong thanked Ship Afrika for sponsoring the event in the past three years, saying, "this event is showcasing Akwa Ibom as a golf destination"

Ubong Ekwere, the Representative of Ship Afrika, said that the essence of the event was to promote tourism, and accelerate economic growth in the state.



IBOM OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT

## WGD: Lady Golfers urge women to embrace golf for healthy living



LADY GOLFERS IN ENUGU STATE

Lady golfers in Enugu State have called on women across the country to embrace golf, describing the sport as a therapeutic activity that promotes physical fitness, mental wellness and discipline.

They made the call on Tuesday during the 2026 International Women's Golf Day (WGD) celebration held at the Enugu Golf Club, Enugu.

WGD 2026 is being celebrated globally from May 26 to

June 2, 2026, with the official Women's Golf Day event taking place on Tuesday, June 2.

Justice Nnenna Madu, the Vice Lady Captain, Ladies Section of the Enugu Golf Club, said the annual global event was aimed at encouraging more women to participate in the game.

Madu said "golf offers enormous benefits, including physical exercise, mental concentration, social interaction and

character development.

"We are using this opportunity to promote golf and encourage more women to become part of the golfing community and enjoy the benefits of the game.

"Golf exercises both the mind and body. It requires total concentration and presence. Your eyes and mind must be focused on the ball and your game.

"It is also a game that promotes integrity because players

are expected to keep accurate scores and play honestly. It helps to build morality, social skills and discipline."

According to her, golf also provides therapeutic escape from daily pressures.

"My advice to Nigerian women is to golf more. It is almost therapeutic because while playing, you forget every worry and focus entirely on the game. It is fun, competitive and rewarding," she added.

# SPORTS



## 2026 World Cup: Controversy as Ishowspeed drops unofficial Anthem “World Cup (Champions)”

American internet sensation and streaming personality, Darren Watkins Jr., popularly known as IShowSpeed, has thrown the global football community into a frenzy following the release of his self-acclaimed tournament anthem, “World Cup (Champions).”

The high-energy music video, which premiered on YouTube on June 1, racked up over 3.3 million views and hundreds of thousands of likes in less than 24 hours.

The track heavily features infectious crowd chants representing various footballing nations, with a distinct spotlight shone on Ghana, a country where he holds honorary citizenship, complete with massive flags and traditional dancers.

Following the immediate viral success of the video, Watkins publicly tagged the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) on digital platforms, requesting that the track be adopted as the tournament’s official melody.

In a swift response that sent shockwaves through the internet, FIFA’s veri-

fied handle replied, “We will be in touch.”

The development has triggered massive debates online, with football fans and digital commentators aggressively drawing comparisons between IShowSpeed’s indie anthem and the official FIFA soundtrack, “Goals,” by Lisa, Anitta, and Rema, ahead of the global showpiece kicking off on June 11 across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Reacting to the viral release, an X user, @yetunede, praised the content creator’s cultural representation, posting: “IShowSpeed putting Ghana on his back for this World Cup video is everything.”

The energy, the flags, the dancers—this feels more organic and alive than the actual official song. Ghana to the world!”

Another commentator, @hindsilencio, echoed the sentiment, writing: “FIFA needs to stop overcomplicating things and just make this the official anthem.”

Over 3 million views in less than a day for an independent release show exactly what the streets want to hear when the matches start.”

However, the track’s raw, chaotic in-

ternet style drew heavy criticism from sections of the music community who defended the artistic merit of the official soundtrack.

Expressing counter-views, @Dany-flamez3 tweeted: “People comparing this Speed video to Rema, Lisa, and Anitta’s ‘Goals’ must be joking.”

One is a globally produced, multi-million dollar masterpiece by Cirkut, and the other is just streaming noise. Let’s keep standard music separate from content creation.”

On his part, @lawizzzygotswag raised concerns over the governing body’s response, stating: “FIFA saying ‘we will be in touch’ is hilarious but risky.”

You can’t sideline established global artists who spent months crafting a multilingual anthem just to chase clout with a YouTube’s viral video at the eleventh hour.”

FIFA is yet to release an official press statement regarding any formal adjustments to its musical lineup or opening ceremony schedule as of the time of filing this report.



### NIGERIAN ATHLETES WITH SUB-10S

1	KANYISOLA AJAYI	9.84s
2	OLUSOJI FASUBA	9.85s
3	DIVINE ODUDURU	9.86s
4	GODSON BRUME	9.90s
5	SEUN OGUNKOYA	9.92s
=	UDODI ONWUZURIKE	9.92s
7	DAVIDSON EZINWA	9.94s
=	FAVOUR ASHE	9.94s
9	OLAPADE ADENIKEN	9.95s
=	DEJI ALIU	9.95s
11	RAYMOND EKEVWO	9.96s
12	FRANCIS OBIKWELU	9.97s
=	UCHE EMEDELU	9.97s
14	DANIEL EFFIONG	9.98s
=	ENOCH ADEGOKE	9.98s
16	ISRAEL OKON	9.99s

## AFN fixes date for 2026 Commonwealth Games trials

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) has fixed June 20 to June 22 for the national trials that will determine the country’s track and field representatives at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

The Athletics Federation disclosed this in a statement issued yesterday in Lagos by Maxwell Kumoye, Chairman of the AFN Media Committee.

Kumoye said the trials would hold at the Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) Sports Complex, Lagos, and would bring together some of the nation’s finest athletes.

“This is a crucial stage in the qualification process for athletes seeking to represent Nigeria at the Commonwealth Games.

“The AFN has made it clear that participation in the trials is mandatory for any athlete hoping to secure a place in Team Nigeria.

“This makes the Lagos event a make-or-break opportunity for both established stars and emerging talents,” he said.

According to him, the Commonwealth Games offer athletes an opportunity for national pride, international exposure and glory, with preparations already intensifying across the country.

“The trials will be one of the most competitive national championships in recent years.

“The three-day event will feature

32 track and field events for both men and women, providing opportunities for athletes to showcase their skills and abilities to earn their place in the selection process.

“Participation in the men’s and women’s 100 metres, 200 metres and 400 metres will be restricted to athletes who have achieved the prescribed qualifying standards.

“All other track and field events will remain open for participation,” he said.

He noted that the arrangement was designed to ensure that only athletes in top form compete in the sprint events, while maintaining broad participation in other disciplines.

Kumoye also said that athletes were expected to arrive in Lagos on June 19 and depart on June 23.

He added that the federation would provide accommodation for athletes who had achieved the required standards during the qualification period.

According to him, the list of athletes who have met the stipulated benchmarks will be released in the coming days.

“The trials are expected to produce thrilling contests across several events as athletes seek to impress selectors and secure places on Team Nigeria for Glasgow 2026,” he said.

AFN President, Tonobok Okowa, called on athletics stakeholders, enthusiasts and fans to support the athletes during the championship.