

NSA Commends Okpebholo over training of 500 Forest Guards in Edo

● **Highlights Govt's commitment to tackling terrorism, banditry, others**

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) has praised Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for the ongoing training of 500 forest guards aimed at improving se-

curity across the state.

The commendation came on Thursday when Maj.-Gen. Hilary Mabeokwu, Director of Defence Affairs at ONSA, led an evaluation team on a courtesy visit to the governor at Government House in Benin City.

Mabeokwu said the team

was in Edo to assess the training programme at the Police Training School, Ogida Barracks, where the forest guards are undergoing instruction.

He said the assessment covered the training environment, security at the camp, accommodation, feeding, medical facilities, instructors' welfare and

compliance with the training schedule approved by the National Security Adviser.

"We have just returned from the training camp, where we assessed the trainees using our evaluation templates. We are satisfied that the programme is progressing according to the approved standards," he said.

Mabeokwu said the team was particularly impressed by the trainees' weapon-handling skills, adding that about 65 to 70 per cent of the programme had been completed.

He described the initiative as part of the Federal Government's wider strategy to tackle terrorism, banditry and other

security threats by deploying trained personnel to protect forests and other ungoverned areas used by criminal groups.

He also commended Okpebholo's commitment to protecting lives and property, saying it had contributed to security

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The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,309

FRIDAY 17TH JULY, 2026.

#200

2027: Appeal Court sets aside judgment nullifying INEC's new election guidelines

ABUJA

The Court of Appeal in Abuja on Thursday, validated the Guidelines of the Independent National Electoral Commission INEC on the conduct of the 2027 general election.

In a unanimous decision, the court set aside the judgment of the Federal High Court which nullified part of guidelines.

The appellate court voided and set aside the May 20 judgment of the lower court which nullified the guidelines and barred its implementation.

Delivering the lead judgment prepared by Justice Adebukola Banjoko, Justice Okon Abang, held that the trial court erred in invalidating INEC's administrative discretion.

"The law gives INEC pow-

ers to conduct elections in the country," he said.

The court held that the Youth Party (YP) which instituted the case against INEC lacked the locus standi (legal power) to institute the suit.

The court further held that there was no deposition or threat that the respondent was prevented from conducting its primaries.

"The respondent can only invoke the powers of the court where there are heavy threats to its participation in the election.

"Where INEC acts within its power, the courts cannot get involved. The declarative reliefs of the trial court were wrongly granted and are hereby set aside," the court held.

Justice Banjoko said that the

party did not explain how the guidelines affected it and it's members in the conduct of its primary election for the nomination of candidates for the 2027 poll.

The panel of three justices unanimously agreed that by nullifying the guidelines on the grounds that it violated some provisions of the Electoral Act, Justice Umar erred resulting in

miscarriage of justice.

INEC which appealed against the high court's decision had argued that the lower court erred in law.

The electoral umpire contented the lower court erred when it failed to pronounce on the jurisdictional issue of the suit being hypothetical and

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FG courts businesses, investors to deliver Nigeria's \$1trn economic growth

LAGOS

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Taiwo Oyelede has urged businesses in Nigeria to support Federal Government reforms aimed at building one trillion dollars economy by 2030.

Oyelede made the call on Thursday at the 14th Annual BusinessDay CEO Forum in Lagos with the theme: "From Stability to Shared Prosperity".

He said government alone cannot deliver Nigeria's next phase of economic growth.

According to him, the country's economic future would be co-authored by businesses and investors.

Oyelede said that the government had identified growth sectors, priority actions and imple-

mentation timelines to support the one trillion dollars target.

He urged local and foreign investors to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the economy.

According to him, stable policies, strong institutions and regulatory certainty remain essential for attracting private capital.

Oyelede assured investors that Nigeria was committed to transparency, policy consistency and the rule of law.

He said businesses should match ongoing reforms with investment, innovation and expansion plans.

According to him, banks should prioritise financing productive sectors instead of short term trading activities.

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COURTESY VISIT:

Director of Defence Affairs office of the National Security Adviser (NOSA) Maj.-Gen. Hilary Mabeokwu in a handshake with the governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo during a courtesy visit to the governor in Benin City on Thursday.

Edo Chief Judge constitutes LG election petition tribunal

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Eleven people die in fire at Algerian children's care home

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NEWS

Edo Chief Judge constitutes LG election petition tribunal

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Chief Judge of Edo State, Justice Daniel Okungbowa, has constituted the Edo State Local Government Election Petition Tribunal.

The Chief Registrar of the Edo State High Court, Mr. B. O.

Osawaru, Esq., who made this known in a statement, said the constitution of the tribunal is in line with Section 78(2) of the Edo State Local Government Electoral Law, 2012 (as amended).

According to him, the tribunal would be chaired by Justice B. E. Oniha, while Justice O. A. Otamere and Justice G. J. Okundamiya would serve as

members. He said the tribunal is expected to entertain and determine petitions arising from the conduct of the local government elections in Edo State, in line

with the provisions of the law. The Chief Registrar noted that the constitution of the tribunal marked the commencement of the judicial process for the resolution of electoral

disputes arising from the local government polls; providing aggrieved candidates and political parties with the legal avenue to challenge the outcome of the elections.

He reaffirmed the state judiciary's commitment to the rule of law, the fair, impartial and expeditious determination of all petitions brought before the tribunal.

One billion Africans lack mobile internet access

● FG seeks African cooperation to bridge telecom gap

ABUJA

The Federal Government has urged African Nations to collaborate in bridging the telecommunication gap, revealing that nearly one billion people on the continent lack mobile internet access.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Nadungu Gagare, said this on Thursday in Abuja.

Gagare, who was represented by Mr Ahmed Alsukun, a Director in his office, spoke at the 7th Special Session of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) Administrative Council, a regional telecom meeting in Abuja.

"We believe that regional co-operation is essential if Africa is to build a strong, inclusive and innovative digital economy to empower our growing youth population.

"Working together, we can expand connectivity, improve

digital infrastructure, promote skills, strengthen cyber security, protect data and create opportunities for our people," he said

He said that a united Africa would have the greatest influence in international decision-making and would be better placed to protect continental interests.

In her remarks, the Chairperson of the ATU Administrative Council, Ms Nonkubela Jordan-Dyani, said building economic resilience must become a deliberate regional strategy through ICT.

Jordan-Dyani, who is also the Director-General of South Africa's communications department, urged member states to prioritise Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to drive continental integration.

"The DPI, which includes digital identity and electronic payment systems, acts as a catalyst to enable secure interactions across the region.



2026 NASS OPEN WEEK:

From left: Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Youth Development, Rep. Martins Esin; representative of the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rep. Julius Ihonvbere; Minister of Youth Development, Mr Ayodele Olawande, and the Special Adviser to President on Youth Initiative, Dr Titilope Gbadamosi, during the 2026 NASS Open Week Youth Town Hall Meeting at the National Assembly in Abuja on Thursday.

IHRC seeks partnership with NDLEA to strengthen anti drug campaign in Kaduna

KADUNA

The International Human Rights Commission Relief Fund Trust (IHRC-RFT), Kaduna Chapter, has expressed its readiness to partner with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to intensify the fight against drug abuse.

It also said it will partner with NDLEA on illicit drugs trafficking through grassroots awareness, advocacy and human rights promotion.

The State Director of IHRC-RFT, Amb. Musa Bawa, made this known on Thursday during a courtesy visit to the NDLEA Kaduna State Command.

Bawa said the visit underscored the need for stronger collaboration among government institutions, civil society

organisations and communities in addressing the growing challenge of substance abuse.

According to him, drug abuse is not only a security issue but also a public health, social and human rights concern that requires collective action.

He commended the NDLEA for its commitment to combating illicit drugs, rehabilitating victims and protecting young people from the dangers of substance abuse.

"We recognise that your mandate goes beyond arresting offenders and intercepting illicit drugs. You educate communities, rehabilitate victims and restore hope to individuals and families affected by drug abuse.

"Our visit is driven by one sincere question: how can the International Human Rights

Commission Relief Fund Trust support the work of the NDLEA?

"Through our volunteers, youth networks, schools, faith-based organisations and community structures across Kaduna State, we believe we can complement your efforts in taking anti-drug messages to the grassroots," he said.

Bawa said the commission was willing to collaborate with the agency in organising school awareness campaigns, community sensitisation programmes, youth engagement initiatives, human rights education and advocacy programmes.

He added that the organisation was also interested in supporting the reintegration of persons recovering from drug addiction into society.

The IHRC director stressed

that the commission was not imposing predetermined proposals but was ready to listen to the agency's priorities and identify areas where it could make meaningful contributions.

Responding, the NDLEA Kaduna State Commander, CN Maijama'a Muhammad, welcomed the proposed partnership, describing collaboration with civil society organisations as essential to achieving the agency's mandate.

"We cannot be everywhere, but through collaboration we can reach more communities.

"Human rights remain one of our major considerations because we deal with people.

"During arrests, investigations and detention, we ensure that respect for human rights guides our operations," he said.

Rivers pushes restorative justice to decongest prisons

PORT HARCOURT

The Rivers Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Council (ACJMC), has renewed calls for the adoption of restorative justice and non-custodial sentencing.

The Executive Secretary of the council, Chief Magistrate Ilanye Brown, made the call in an interview on Thursday in Port Harcourt.

She said the measures were vital to reducing prison congestion and speeding up criminal justice.

Brown said persistent overcrowding in correctional centres was fuelled by the growing practice of criminalising civil disputes that should ordinarily be resolved through the civil courts.

"Many people criminalise civil matters. Instead of filing a civil action, they hand the matter over to the police, and when nothing comes out of it, the case is taken to court and later abandoned," Brown said.

She explained that employer-employee disputes and other civil disagreements frequently entered the criminal justice system, where suspects were detained and prosecuted before complainants eventual-

ly abandoned the cases.

Brown warned that the trend left many accused persons in prolonged detention, while abandoned cases continue clogging the courts and worsening congestion in custodial centres statewide.

"The police should not turn complainants away, but after reviewing a complaint, they should advise where the matter is not criminal and direct the parties to the appropriate civil process," she said.

The ACJMC boss disclosed that the council was pursuing legal reforms to strengthen restorative justice through reconciliation, victim compensation and community service instead of imprisonment for minor offences.

"If the property cannot be returned, the offender should compensate the victim. In some cases, community service may be more beneficial than imprisonment," Brown added.

She acknowledged that the proposed reforms had been slowed by the prevailing political environment but remained optimistic that stronger collaboration would improve criminal justice administration.

Abbas, Akume applaud KSM's N2bn charity endowment

ABUJA

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), George Akume have commended the Knights of St. Mulumba (KSM) Nigeria for establishing a N2 billion humanitarian endowment fund.

They gave the commendation on Thursday during the unveiling of the fund and integrated charity initiative at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Durumi, Abuja.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), reports the initia-

tive is aimed at institutionalising sustainable humanitarian services across the country.

Abbas, represented by Hon. Festus Adefranje, Chairman of the House Committee on Christian Pilgrimage Affairs, described the initiative as a visionary step that demonstrated foresight and a commitment to long-term societal impact.

"The establishment of an endowment fund dedicated to sustaining humanitarian service demonstrates remarkable foresight.

"It reflects the timeless wisdom that charity should not merely respond to today's

needs but should be institutionalised to meet the challenges of tomorrow," Abbas said.

The speaker praised KSM for its over seven decades of service to humanity, highlighting its contributions to justice, compassion, and national unity.

Similarly, the SGF, represented by his aide, Mr Simon Tyungu, described the initiative as more than just a fund, but the "institutionalisation of compassion and deliberate investment in humanity."

Akume noted that the initiative aligns with President Bola Tinubu's "Renewed

Hope" agenda, which seeks to build an inclusive, prosperous, and compassionate Nigeria.

"Government alone cannot address every developmental challenge.

"Lasting progress can only be achieved through strong partnerships involving faith-based organisations, the private sector, and civil society," the SGF said.

Earlier in an opening address, the Supreme Knight of the Order, Sir Steve Adehi, explained that the N2 billion fund was established to move KSM away from reactive fundraising to a sustainable, endowment-driven model.

Oyo Rescue Operation: Senate donates ₦50m to families of slain 3 security personnel, 2 teachers

ABUJA

CAROLINE AMEH

The Senate has approved a donation of N50 million to the families of

five victims who lost their lives during the rescue operation that secured the release of abducted schoolchildren in Oyo State after 56 days in captivity. The beneficiaries include the families of three security

personnel killed during the operation and two teachers who were murdered while being held hostage with the pupils. Announcing the donation during Wednesday's plenary, Senate President Godswill Ak-

pabio said the gesture followed deliberations by the Senate leadership after lawmakers commended President Bola Tinubu and security agencies for the successful rescue mission.

Akpabio praised the efforts of the Armed Forces, the Department of State Services

(DSS), the Nigeria Police Force and the Ministry of Defence for their roles in securing the release of the victims.

He, however, noted that the operation came at a heavy cost, with an Army lieutenant, a police sergeant and a private soldier losing their lives, while several other personnel sustained injuries.

He also paid tribute to the two teachers who were killed while in captivity alongside the schoolchildren.

According to the Senate President, each of the five bereaved families will receive N10 million from the donation.

"Today, after discussions with the leadership, we resolved to support the families of those who paid the ultimate price.

We are donating a token of N50 million, to be shared equally among the five affected families at N10 million each," Akpabio said.

He directed the Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, alongside other designated senators, to present the financial support to the families.

The Senate President also appealed for sustained efforts by security agencies to ensure that every Nigerian held captive anywhere in the country is rescued safely.

The donation comes days after security operatives successfully rescued the abducted Oyo schoolchildren, ending nearly two months of captivity in an operation that claimed the lives of security personnel and hostages.



THE PARTICIPANTS:

Participants at a one-day workshop on developing the potentials of solid minerals for export competitiveness organised by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) in Owerri, on Wednesday.

Group extols EDSIEC's successful conduct of Saturday's LG poll

BENIN CITY

EDWARD OSEGHE

The Leadership Dynamics Empowerment Foundation (LDEF), a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), has expressed satisfaction with the conduct of last Saturday's local government election across Edo State.

In a congratulatory message, the Lead Convener of LDEF, Mr. Andrew West-Ebi, described the July 11, 2026, election as a significant milestone in deepening democratic governance, strengthening grassroots administration and fostering sustainable development in the State.

West-Ebi commended ED-

SIEC for the electoral process, culminating in the presentation of Certificates of Return to the newly elected chairmen and vice chairmen.

He urged the council leaders to justify the confidence reposed in them by the electorate through transparent, accountable and people-centred leadership.

According to him, the local government system remains the closest tier of government to the people and occupies a strategic position in delivering essential public services, promoting inclusive governance and accelerating socio-economic development at the grassroots.

He encouraged the newly elected chairmen to align their

policies, programmes and projects with the SHINE Agenda of Governor Monday Okpebholo, noting that the administration's development blueprint complements President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda in advancing national development and improving citizens' welfare.

"The media parley will serve as an important accountability platform where council chairmen can periodically showcase their achievements, interact with stakeholders and provide updates on projects and programmes that are positively impacting their communities," he said.

Recalled that while presenting the Certificates of Return at the commission's headquarters in Benin City, EDSIEC Chairman, Mr. Jonathan Aifuobhokhan, described the exercise

as the successful conclusion of the electoral process, reminding the elected officials that the certificates symbolise the mandate freely entrusted to them by the people.

He charged the new council leaders to govern with integrity, humility and fairness, ensure prudent management of public resources, promote peace and inclusiveness, and implement programmes that would improve the quality of life of residents.

Aifuobhokhan also commended the Edo State Government, security agencies, political parties, election observers, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, the media, electoral officials and residents for their contributions to the peaceful and successful conduct of the elections.

Azekhumen urges integrity, selflessness as Nigerian leaders' character

BENIN CITY

FRANCA OSAGIE

The Special Adviser to the Edo State Governor on Religious Matters and Chaplain of Government House Chapel, Apostle Sule Faraday Azekhumen, has urged public office holders and citizens to pursue integrity and genuine service if they desire lasting success.

Apostle Azekhumen said this on Wednesday during the weekly Intercessory Service at the Government House Chap-

el, Benin City.

Speaking on the theme of the service, "Divine Approval," he warned against pretense and eye-service in leadership, saying character is what ultimately sustains a person in positions of authority.

"Some people display fake humility when they are before those in authority. But people with discernment will know. In a short time, the truth will be exposed," he said.

The Chaplain cited historical and biblical figures such as David, Joseph, Esther and Daniel

as examples of individuals who rose from obscurity to national relevance because they remained consistent and dependable.

"From one generation to another, from one administration to another, those who stood out did so because of consistency. When you have the right backing and you do the right thing, you will beat the best and become the best," he stated.

Apostle Azekhumen added that leadership anchored on service attracts opportunities, trust, and promotion.

The weekly service was attended by government officials, political appointees, and

members of the public, who offered prayers for peace and development in Edo State.

Meanwhile, the Special Adviser to the Edo State Governor on Women - In - Christ, Pastor Courage Walter Aburime, had called on women in the state to intensify prayers for healing and restoration, saying innocent blood shed in Edo has attracted negative pronouncements that have hindered progress.

Speaking during the "Oh Lord, Heal Our Land" vigil at Government House Chapel on Monday, she said the only solution is to "superimpose the blood of Jesus" on the land through sustained prayer.

Police recruit 50,000 constables

ABUJA

The Police Service Commission (PSC) has released the names of 50,000 successful applicants for recruitment into the Constable cadre of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

The Head of Protocol and Public Relations of the PSC, Mr Torty Kalu, said this in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja.

Kalu said that the release of the list followed the successful conclusion of a comprehensive, inclusive, equitable and transparent recruitment exercise.

He also said that the exercise was conducted in collaboration with major stakeholders including the NPF, Federal Character Commission (FCC), Ministry of Police Affairs, States Career and Counseling Departments and the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC).

He urged all candidates who participated in the recently concluded written examination to login to the official recruitment portal on npfapplication.psc.gov.ng to check their recruitment status.

According to him, the portal will be opened by 12:00 am on Thursday.

He further said that successful candidates would also receive email and SMS notifications on the email addresses and phone numbers they provided

during the initial application.

"The successful candidates are expected to report to their designated police training institutions on dates and times to be communicated in due course for medical examination and documentation.

"Candidates who fail to report within the stipulated time will be considered to have declined the offer.

"Those who fail the medical examination that will be conducted by the police medical team on resumption of training will be declared unfit and shall be required to leave the training," he said.

Kalu said the candidates were to report with their training call-up slip, NIN slip, BVN slip, original and photocopies of their certificates and other required documents and items as would be listed in the recruitment portal.

He quoted the Chairman of the PSC, Mr Hashimu Argungu as commending the Federal Government for approving the recruitment of the 50,000 police constables as part of measures to strengthen the nation's security architecture.

The PSC Chairman enjoined the successful candidates to see the opportunity as a clarion call to serve the nation with dignity, integrity and unwavering commitment for a safe and secured Nigeria.

MISSING DOCUMENTS

The title documents of a parcel of land belonging to Engr. **AUGUSTINE EFOSA EBOIGBE** of No. 33 Oba Erediauwa Street, Off Ekewan Road, Benin City, have been declared missing.

The land is situated at Ward 43/B, Ogida Quarters, Benin City, and was transferred to **MR. E. ODIBO**.

It is covered by Survey Plan No. **JA0/ED2006/304**, with an area of **450.680** square metres, and Beacon Nos. **SC/EDC9660V** to **SC/EDC9663V**.

FG releases 2026 Common Entrance results

ABUJA

10 candidates emerge overall best

The Federal Government has released the results of the 2026 National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE), with 10 candidates emerging as the highest scorers after each recorded 202 out of the maximum obtainable 210 marks.

The Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Ahmad, announced the results during a ministerial briefing on Thursday in Abuja.

Suwaiba said that the examination remained the gateway for admission into Junior Secondary School One (JSS1) in the nation's 83 Federal Unity Colleges.

She said 60,357 candidates registered for the examination conducted on June 6, 2026, in Nigeria,

the Republic of Benin and Togo.

According to her, 56,950 candidates sat for the examination, while 3,407 were absent.

The minister disclosed that while 10 candidates scored the highest mark of 202, 82 candidates recorded the lowest score of one.

She also announced the results of the Federal Government Academy, Suleja, revealing that 2,071 candidates registered, 1,876 sat for the examination, while 195 were absent.

Ahmad said the highest score recorded in the gifted school examination was 187 out of 210, while the lowest score was four.

The minister reaffirmed that

admission into Federal Unity Colleges would continue to be based on the established criteria of 60 per cent merit, 30 per cent equality of states and 10 per cent exigency.

She directed the relevant department in the ministry to en-

sure that the admission process was concluded promptly in line with the approved guidelines.

Ahmad said the Federal Unity Colleges had remained the preferred choice for many Nigerian parents because of their role in promoting national uni-

ty and academic excellence.

She assured parents that the Federal Government would continue investing in infrastructure, students' welfare, quality feeding and teacher development to improve teaching and learning in the colleges.

Responding to questions from journalists, the minister explained that the NCEE was open

to Nigerian children between the ages of 10 and 12 years.

She added that the examination was conducted across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, while outstanding candidates would be considered for admission into the Federal Government Academy, Suleja, the country's only gifted school.

FG courts businesses, investors...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Oyedele also called on manufacturers to increase domestic production and export capacity.

He urged technology firms to develop solutions to real economic challenges and scale globally.

According to him, family owned businesses should pursue growth into global enterprises.

Oyedele said reforms in the credit economy alone could generate more than 100 billion dollars in additional economic value.

He added that tax reforms were already encouraging formalisation among small businesses.

He hinted that about 10,000 businesses are registering daily with the Corporate Affairs Commission.

Oyedele said supporting those businesses with finance, skills and market access would stimulate growth and jobs.

He identified technology, agro processing, energy, manufacturing and financial services as major growth drivers.

According to him, Nigeria had completed the difficult task of restoring macroeconomic stability.

Oyedele said the next challenge was converting stability into investment, productivity and higher incomes for Nigerians.

NSA commends Okpebholo over...

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and development in the state.

Edo State Commissioner for Public Safety and Security, Ebea Odianosen, said the evaluation team expressed satisfaction with the standard of training and facilities provided.

Responding, Okpebholo thanked President Bola Tinubu and the National Security Adviser for approving the re-

cruitment and training of the 500 forest guards for Edo.

He said the initiative would strengthen security in the state's forests, which have often been used as hideouts by criminal groups.

"Protecting lives and property remains our top priority. We will continue to do everything possible to keep Edo

State safe and free from crime," the governor said.

Appeal Court sets aside judgment...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

academic, and a denial of fair hearing.

INEC through its lead counsel, Mr Alex Izinyon had asked the appellate court to set aside the judgment of the lower court which nullified part of its 2027 election guidelines.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) recalls that the Youth Party had challenged the legality of INEC's guideline directing political parties to submit their membership registers and databases by May 10 at the Federal High Court.

This, the commission said was a condition for participating in the 2027 general elections.

In its judgment, the court held that INEC could not lawfully shorten the timeline provided under Section 29(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026, for the

submission of party membership records and candidates' particulars.

Displeased by the decision, INEC, through its counsel, Izinyon, filed an appeal dated May 25 urging the appellate court to set aside the judgment.

The commission argued that the trial court erred in law by failing to determine its objection that the suit was hypothetical and academic, and that the proceedings amounted to a denial of fair hearing.

INEC also contended that the trial court's judgment was against the weight of evidence before it and urged the Court of Appeal to allow the appeal, set aside the judgment and strike out the suit.

The electoral body further argued that the Youth Party lacked the locus standi to institute and maintain the suit, describing it as academic.

2027: INEC Seeks Deeper UK Support on Election Technology, Cybersecurity, Voter Education

CAROLINE AMEH

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has sought stronger collaboration with the United Kingdom on election technology, cybersecurity, voter education and election security as it intensifies preparations for Nigeria's 2027 general elections.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, made the appeal on Wednesday while receiving the British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Dr. Richard Montgomery, at the commission's

headquarters in Abuja.

Amupitan described the United Kingdom as one of Nigeria's longstanding democratic partners, noting that the relationship had grown beyond election observation and technical support to broader institutional cooperation aimed at strengthening democratic governance.

He said the commission had made significant progress in preparations for the 2027 polls despite the compressed electoral timetable, citing improvements in electoral technology, enhanced cybersecu-

rity systems and ongoing voter registration.

The INEC chairman disclosed that the commission recently extended the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise by two weeks to enable more eligible Nigerians to register before the statutory deadline.

According to him, the extension was necessary to ensure that no eligible voter is disenfranchised while allowing the commission sufficient time to compile and publish the voters' register in line with the Electoral Act.

"We decided to extend the registration to ensure that those who did not have the opportunity to register are not left out. At the same time, we must comply with the legal timelines for publishing the voters' register ahead of the elections," he said.

Amupitan also highlighted new digital innovations introduced by the commission, including an online pre-registration platform that enables prospective voters to initiate registration electronically before completing the process physically at designated centres.



COURTESY VISIT:

L-R United Kingdom (UK) High Commissioner to Nigeria, Dr Richard Montgomery and Chairman Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Joash Ojo Amupitan, during a visit of UK High Commissioner Dr Richard with his delegation to INEC Headquarter in Abuja yesterday.

Photo by Omoye Aminu

Zulum distributes 7,000 gas cylinders to teachers, others

MAIDUGURI

Gov. Babagana Zulum of Borno on Thursday distributed 7,250 gas cylinders with accessories and stoves to teachers and sanitation vanguards to promote clean energy in Maiduguri.

Zulum donated while launching the 2026 National Tree Planting Campaign as part of efforts to combat desertification and strengthen environmental sustainability in the state.

While unveiling a four-million-tree planting initiative, the governor said that 5,000 cooking gas cylinders would be given to primary school teachers, and 2,500 would go to sanitation vanguards of the Borno State Environmental Protection Agency (BOSEPA).

He also presented N12 million worth of gas refill vouchers to primary school teachers and sanitation vanguards to encourage the adoption of clean cooking energy and re-

duce reliance on firewood.

He said the initiative was aimed at addressing the twin challenges of climate change and desertification that have continued to threaten livelihoods and ecosystems across the state.

According to him, the planned planting of four mil-

lion trees will help restore degraded lands, curb desert encroachment and improve environmental resilience in vulnerable communities.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Environment, Malam Balarabe Lawal, reiterated the Federal Government's commitment to tackling cli-

mate change and environmental degradation across the country.

Lawal commended Zulum for providing alternative sources of cooking energy to residents, describing it as a practical and sustainable approach to reducing pressure on forest resources.

Sterling Bank, StarTimes target ₦2bn solar financing

LAGOS

Sterling Bank and StarTimes Nigeria have launched Sterling Solar Financing Hubs at StarTimes retail outlets to expand access to solar energy and accelerate Nigeria's clean energy transition.

A statement issued by the bank on Thursday in Lagos said the initiative will provide on-the-spot financing for solar solutions at StarTimes retail outlets, with both organisations targeting N2 billion in

renewable energy financing by the end of 2026.

According to the statement, the partnership has already facilitated more than N600 million in solar financing transactions over the past year.

It said the new target represented more than a threefold expansion and was expected to enable thousands of households and small businesses to adopt reliable and affordable solar energy.

The statement added that customers could visit any participating StarTimes retail out-

let to select solar solutions, receive financial guidance from Sterling Solar Financing Advisors and begin the financing process, subject to the bank's credit assessment.

It quoted Mr Darlington Nwankwo, Divisional Head, Renewable Energy and Mobility at Sterling Bank, as saying that the partnership would make clean energy more accessible to Nigerians.

"Sterling exists to enrich lives, and we believe that access to clean, reliable energy should be within everyone's reach.

PRP presidential aspirant lauds INEC for extending CVR

ABUJA

Dr. Yakubu Kingsley, the Presidential Aspirant of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in the 2027 general elections, has lauded the Independent National Electoral

Commission (INEC) for extending the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR).

NAN reports INEC extended the ongoing by two weeks, giving eligible citizens until July 26 to register ahead of future elections.

Kingsley, in a statement on

Thursday at the end of an emergency meeting of the leadership of the YMK Nigeria Project Movement, urged eligible Nigerians to take advantage of the remaining days to register.

He described the remaining days of the exercise as “a defining moment

in Nigeria’s democratic journey.”

“Every eligible Nigerian who truly desires positive change must understand that voting begins with registration.

“Without registering, there can be no Permanent Voter Card (PVC), and without a PVC, there can be no vote,” he said.

He stressed that the future of Nigeria cannot be entrusted solely to a small percentage of the population while millions of eligible

citizens remain on the sidelines.

“Democracy flourishes only when citizens actively participate in the electoral process.

“The YMK (Yakubu Mohammed Kingsley) Nigeria Project reiterates that every vote is powerful, but that power can only be exercised by citizens who are duly registered.

“The movement therefore calls on young Nigerians who have recently attained the age of 18, women, students, artisans, professionals, farmers, traders, persons living with disabilities and every eligible citizen who has not

yet registered to visit the nearest registration centre immediately before the exercise closes.

“The PVC is not merely a document. It is the democratic instrument through which citizens peacefully determine the quality of leadership that governs them.

“It is the voice of the people expressed through lawful democratic means,” he said.

According to him, the solution to many of our national challenges lies not in violence, hatred or despair, but in peaceful democratic participation.



THE PARTICIPANTS:

From left: AU-IBAR Regional Coordinator, Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Eradication West Africa, Dr Perdita Lopes; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Livestock Development, Dr Chinyere Akujobi and the Chief Veterinary Officer of Nigeria (CVO), Dr Samuel Anzaku, during the Review and Alignment of the National Strategic Plan for the Eradication of PPR in Nigeria, at the Veterinary Council of Nigeria headquarters in Abuja on Thursday.

Expert urges early detection to curb psychosis

ABUJA

Mental health expert, Prof. Taiwo Obindo, has urged Nigerians to prioritise early detection, public awareness and timely medical intervention to prevent psychosis.

He identified stigma and inadequate mental health services as major barriers to effective care and improved treatment outcomes.

Psychosis is a condition in which a person loses contact with reality and may experience symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions and disorganised thinking.

Obindo, a former President

of the Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria, made the call in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Wednesday in Abuja.

According to him, although many mental health conditions have no definitive cure, early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can prevent psychosis from worsening and significantly improve patients’ quality of life.

Obindo said psychosis often occurred when there was an imbalance in neurotransmitters, the brain chemicals responsible for transmitting information between nerve cells.

“These chemicals must have balance in the brain,

and if that balance is tilted for whatever reason, it may lead to an individual developing psychosis. The hormones must remain balanced or risk instability,” he said.

The psychiatrist added that psychosis could also be triggered by overwhelming emotions, persistent fear, grandiose thinking and mental health conditions such as schizophrenia.

He emphasised the importance of recognising symptoms early, noting that proper diagnosis was essential for determining the most effective treatment approach.

“You cannot know the means of approach without identifying the symptoms

of the illness, which is most important for proper diagnosis,” he said.

Obindo urged parents, relatives, friends and caregivers to monitor individuals at risk and seek professional guidance when behavioural changes or warning signs were observed.

“Observation must be firmly put into the process. Parents, family and friends must speak out and approach experts for directives,” he said.

He said professional assessment helped to ensure accurate diagnosis and prevent reliance on speculation, superstition and misinformation.

Solid minerals capable of transforming Nigeria’s economic future – NEPC D-G

OWERRI

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) says the country’s deposits of solid minerals are capable of changing her future economic outlook.

The Director-General of NEPC, Mrs. Nonye Ayeni, said this at a one-day workshop on developing the potentials of solid minerals for export competitiveness, organised by the NEPC in Owerri, on Wednesday.

Ayeni, represented by NEPC’s

Imo Coordinator, Mr. Anthony Ajuruchi said that as a cornerstone of Nigeria’s economic diversification agenda, the solid minerals’ sector’s contribution to export earnings needs to impact more positively to the country’s Gross Domestic Product.

She added that the NEPC was working hard to address the sector’s challenges in four core areas of trade regulations and compliance; standards, certifications and quality control; export documentation and finance for capital intensive exploration activities.

“At NEPC, we are fully committed to supporting Nigerian exporters by providing the necessary tools, training and resources to help you navigate this landscape in collaboration with key stakeholders and international partners.

“Nigeria’s economic future depends on our ability to diversify, and solid minerals export is a critical component of that strategy.

“This is why at the 16th National Council on Commerce, Trade and Investment held in May 2025, the inclusion of solid minerals as part of the One-State-One-

Product was approved”, she said.

Speaking, Mr. Ugochukwu Onyenwenwa, the Chairman, Miners Association of Nigeria, Imo chapter, said that although Imo was endowed with mineral deposits, relevant government agencies were not properly collaborating with miners in the state.

He added that the lack of a mining policy by the Imo Government was undermining the activities of private miners, and called for the creation of a mining development agency specifically overseeing the activities of miners.

Also speaking, Imo Dredgers and Excavators Association, rep-

Veterinary surgeon warns against ignoring dog bites

A Veterinary Surgeon with the National Park Service (NPS), Dr Abdulrahman Muhammad, has cautioned Nigerians against ignoring dog bites, urging prompt medical treatment and regular vaccination of dogs to prevent rabies-related deaths.

Muhammad gave the advice in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Thursday in Abuja, describing rabies as a deadly but preventable viral disease transmitted through infected animals.

NAN reports that rabies is a fatal viral disease that attacks the central nervous system and is commonly transmitted through the saliva of infected mammals, particularly dogs, bats and cats.

He said delayed medical intervention remained a major cause of avoidable fatalities, noting that many dog bite victims resorted to traditional remedies instead of seeking prompt treatment at health facilities.

According to him, such practices increase the risk of

developing rabies, a disease that is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, in spite of being preventable through timely medical intervention.

“Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, but it is completely preventable if victims immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water and seek post-exposure vaccination,” he said.

Muhammad advised members of the public never to disregard dog bites, regardless of how minor they might appear, emphasising that early medical intervention could significantly improve survival chances.

He identified dogs as the principal source of rabies transmission to humans in Nigeria, although cats, bats and other infected mammals could also spread the virus.

The veterinary surgeon urged dog owners to vaccinate their pets annually and ensure they were properly restrained to reduce the risk of transmitting the disease.

Oshodi-Isolo intensifies drainage clearing, canal dredging to curb flooding

ABUJA

The Oshodi-Isolo Local Government Area of Lagos State has intensified drainage clearing and desilting across the council to prevent flooding and protect lives and property.

The Council Chairman, Mr. Kehinde Almaroof-Oloyede, said this on Thursday during an inspection of the exercise at Oye-gunwa Street and other locations.

Almaroof-Oloyede said the exercise was aimed at removing silt, refuse and other materials obstructing the free flow of rainwater.

He said the intervention formed part of the council’s environmental management strategy as the rainy season intensified.

According to him, free-flowing drainage channels remain one of the most effective measures for mitigating flooding and protecting infrastructure,

homes and businesses from avoidable damage.

The chairman said the ongoing dredging of the Apakun Canal was also progressing steadily.

He said the canal passed through several communities before linking the Ogunoloko axis of the local government area.

Almaroof-Oloyede said the dredging project would improve stormwater discharge, reduce flooding risks and enhance environmental sanitation in affected communities.

He reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to creating a cleaner, safer and healthier environment for residents.

The chairman urged residents to support government efforts by refraining from dumping refuse into drainage channels and canals.

He said environmental sustainability was a collective responsibility that required the cooperation of all residents.

NEWS

Africa risks losing \$300bn blue economy potential, BRACED chair warns

YENAGOA

The Chairman of the BRACED Tourism Promotion and Development Initiative (BTPDI), Dr. Piriye Kiyaramo, has warned that Africa risks losing an estimated 300 billion dollars annually as a result of neglect of the blue economy.

Speaking with journalists in Yenagoa on Thursday, Kiyaramo blamed the low attention given to the maritime sector by Nigerian state governments and other African country for the likely loss.

He said the coastal states had failed to prioritise the sector despite its capacity to drive economic

growth, create jobs and strengthen climate resilience.

Kiyaramo described the blue economy as the sustainable use of oceans and aquatic resources to promote economic development improve livelihoods and protect the environment.

He said Africa's blue economy has an estimated annual value exceeding 300 billion dollars if properly harnessed.

According to him, Nigeria's coastal states of Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo and Delta stand to benefit immensely from the sector.

He explained that fisheries, aquaculture, ports, shipping, marine

tourism and marine energy could generate significant revenue and employment across the region.

Kiyaramo noted that the sector also supports food security for more than 200 million Africans and accounts for more than 90 per cent of the continent's trade by volume.

He added that coastal ecosystems, including mangroves, play a critical role in protecting com-

munities against climate change.

The BRACED chairman said landlocked African countries also benefit from a thriving blue economy through efficient ports and transport corridors.

He said that improved maritime infrastructure could reduce trade costs by as much as 50 per cent while boosting regional integration.

Kiyaramo cited the African Union's 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy and the African Continental Free Trade Area as key frameworks supporting mari-

time development.

He urged governments to treat investment in the maritime sector as a continental priority capable of delivering shared prosperity, cheaper trade and stronger regional integration.

Ahmad added that the adoption of CBT would ultimately improve the quality of education by promoting merit and integrity in examinations.

Also speaking, the Registrar of NECO, Prof. Ibrahim Wushishi, said the council recorded no tech-

nical hitch since the commencement of the examination.

"They assured me that since the commencement of this year's examination, they did not experience any technical glitch. The exams were ready, they started on time, no hiccups, no network problems, nothing like that."

He disclosed that 1,378,048 candidates registered for this year's Senior School Certificate Examination, with female candidates slightly outnumbering their male counterparts.

Navy nabs 2 suspects, disrupts pipeline vandalism network

ABUJA

The Nigerian Navy has intercepted suspected vandalised crude oil pipeline sections and arrested two suspected members of a pipeline vandalism syndicate in Oguta Local Government Area of Imo.

This is contained in an operational report by the Director of Naval Information, Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), on Thursday in Abuja.

Folorunsho said that the intelligence-led operation conducted by personnel of Naval Base (NB) OGUTA, resulted in the arrest of two suspects believed to be linked to the criminal network responsible for the vandalism.

He also said that the operation led to the interception of a Mercedes truck conveying 10 sections of crude oil pipeline suspected to have been illegally

removed from the Addax Petroleum pipeline network along the Osu-Obodo road corridor.

"One of the suspects was apprehended while escorting the consignment, while another suspected member of the syndicate was subsequently arrested during follow-on operations," he said.

The director said that efforts were ongoing to apprehend other members of the network still at large.

According to him, the timely interception denied the criminal syndicate the opportunity to evacuate the vandalised pipeline materials, thereby preventing further damage to critical national infrastructure and preserving evidence crucial to ongoing investigations.

He added that the operation underscored navy's sustained commitment to protecting Nigeria's strategic oil and gas infrastructure through intelligence-driven operations.

Okakhu Congratulates Dr. Mary Damisa on Medical Induction

ABUJA

Dr. Mary Ofure Damisa has been congratulated on her successful induction as a medical doctor following the completion of her medical training at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

The induction ceremony, held on June 22, 2026, marked a significant milestone in her academic and professional journey, formally admitting her into the medical profession.

In a congratulatory message, Citizen Emmanuel Okhakhu described the achievement as a testament to Dr. Damisa's dedication, resilience and commitment to excellence in the pursuit of her medical career.

He expressed confidence that the newly inducted doctor will make meaningful contributions to the health-

care sector through compassionate service, professionalism and ethical practice.

Citizen Okhakhu wished Dr. Damisa continued success in her medical career and prayed for wisdom, strength and divine guidance as she embarks on the noble responsibility of saving lives and promoting quality healthcare.



DR. MARY DAMISA



HUMANITARIAN TRANSITION WORKSHOP:

From left: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Country Representative, Mr. Arjun Jain, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Dr Bernard Doro and Director General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mrs Zubaida Umar at the Humanitarian Transition Workshop at the United Nations Office in Abuja.

Edo State Wins NAHCON Award for Outstanding 2026 Hajj Coordination

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

ABUJA

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) has honoured Edo State with a special commendation award in recognition of its patience, perseverance, and outstanding coordination during the 2026 Hajj operations.

The award was presented at the Stakeholders' Summit on the 2026 Hajj Review and the NAHCON Reform Agenda, held on Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at the NAF Conference Centre in Abuja.

The summit was themed, "Repositioning Nigeria's Hajj Industry as a Model of Service Excellence."

Receiving the award on behalf of the Edo State Government were the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, and the Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar. The Edo delegation was led by the Amirul Hajj, His Royal Highness Mallam Ali D. Sulayman, the Oghieaga of Iybie.

Presenting the award, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NAHCON, Ambassador Ismail Abba Yusuf, commended Edo State for its exemplary conduct and effective coordination throughout the 2026 Hajj exercise. He noted that the state's commitment to ensuring a smooth pilgrimage experience for

its pilgrims distinguished it among participating states.

Responding on behalf of the state, the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, expressed appreciation to NAHCON for the recognition. He dedicated the award to the Governor of Edo State, saying, "This award is dedicated to the Governor of Edo State, whose strong support occasioned this award."

He added that the recognition would further motivate the board to sustain excellence in the administration of Hajj operations and the welfare of Edo pilgrims.

The summit brought together key stakeholders in Nigeria's Hajj industry to review the 2026 pilgrimage operations and deliberate on reforms aimed at improving service

delivery and strengthening the administration of Hajj in the country.

The event attracted several high-profile dignitaries, including the Vice President Kashim Shettima who was represented; the Minister of State for the Federal Capital Territory, Dr. Mariya Mahmoud.

Also in attendance were the Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, His Eminence Alhaji Muhammad Saad Abubakar III, CFR represented; the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NAHCON, Ambassador Ismail Abba Yusuf; and the Secretary-General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Professor Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, who delivered the keynote address.

Oborevwo's economic drive boosts Delta revenue – Aide

ASABA

Mr. Austin Ayemidejor, Special Adviser to Gov. Sheriff Oborevwo of Delta on Transport and Aviation, says the government's policies have accelerated economic development, and placed the state on path of sustainable growth.

Ayemidejor said this in a statement on Wednesday in Asaba.

He said that Delta's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR)

rose from about N84 billion in 2023 to over N200 billion within less than four years.

He described the remarkable increase as evidence that the administration's 'M.O.R.E Agenda' is delivering measurable results through deliberate reforms aimed at strengthening the economy and reducing dependence on oil earnings.

He said: "The achievements recorded by Oborevwo within this short period have shown that purposeful leadership delivers results."

"In less than four years,

Delta has witnessed unprecedented economic growth, with its IGR rising from about N84 billion to over N200 billion without imposing additional tax burdens on the people.

"This is a clear demonstration that the governor is expanding economic opportunities, strengthening institutions and creating a more sustainable future for the state."

"The figures speak for themselves and confirm that Delta is moving in the right direction."

According to him, improved revenue administration, wider

tax compliance, agricultural investments, industrial expansion, infrastructure development and innovation have positioned Delta among Nigeria's leading states, pursuing economic diversification and sustainable growth.

Ayemidejor noted that the administration achieved higher revenue by expanding the tax net and improving collection efficiency instead of increasing personal income taxes, describing the approach as responsible and people-centred.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

Alleged defamation: Court threatens to foreclose Sowore's defence

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Thursday threatened to foreclose Omoyele Sowore, publisher of Sahara Reporters' defence in the ongoing trial over alleged defamation.

Justice Mohammed Umar gave the warning after the Department of State Services (DSS)'s lawyer, Ak-

inlolu Kehinde, SAN, made the oral application shortly after Sowore sought an adjournment over his lead counsel's absence.

Sowore, is also the presidential candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC).

He was alleged to have made false claims against the person of President Bola Tinubu by referring to him as "a criminal"

in a post he made on his "X" and Facebook accounts.

Against this development, the DSS charged him with criminal defamation, cyberstalking and incitement.

When the case was called on Thursday, though Sowore was in court, no lawyer appeared for him.

"Where are your legal team?" Justice Umar asked.

Responding, Sowore said: "Unfortunately, my lead counsel, Mr Adeyinka Olumide-Fusika, SAN, travelled to the UK with the knowledge of the court.

"Olumide-Fusika advised me to inform the court that he will not be available for today's hearing and he will like to handle this case because he is a skillful lawyer."

He said besides, the junior

lawyer, Reuben Adakole, was in another jurisdiction.

"I think the business of today is continuation of defence. That is my first submission my lord," he said.

The judge then asked Sowore what he wanted.

"Do you want to proceed?" Justice Umar asked.

Responding, Sowore said being a serious case, he would be asking for an adjournment.

"I will urge your lordship to adjourn the matter because it is a serious case and I will need lawyer to defend me," he said.

The defendant also begged the court to allow him make another application.

But the judge told Sowore that if he applied to make another application other than the issue of adjournment, that would mean that he has decided to represent himself in court.

"If you want to take up the

case let us know.

"If you have any application to make, it means you are planning to defend yourself.

"If you are seeking an adjournment that your counsel is not in court, that will be considered after hearing from the prosecution.

"But if you are making an application, it means you are telling this court that you are taking over the defence on your own," the judge said.

In his response, the DSS' lawyer said that Sowore's application for adjournment would be the 11th time the trial would be adjourned at the instance of the defence.

"With respect, this matter came up on July 13, 2027, and the defence counsel made an application for adjournment and the court adjourned to today because of the fact that their next set of witnesses are subpoenaed witnesses and your lordship signed the subpoena.



JOINT TRACKING REPORT CONDUCTED:

Chairman of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Dr Musa Aliyu (L) with the Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi, during a strategic high-level program focused on the Role of Parliamentarians in the Fight Against Corruption and the Launch of the Joint Tracking Report Conducted with Ministry of Works at the ICPC headquarters in Abuja in Thursday

Court sentences civil servant to life imprisonment for causing friend's death

ABUJA

An Abuja High Court on Thursday sentenced a 56-year-old Civil Servant, Philip Bassey to life imprisonment for causing the death of his friend, Emeka Nonyelu.

Delivering judgment, Justice Idris Mohammed held that the court found him guilty based on the evidence before the court and the statement of the defendant admitting to the crime.

"The eye witness' account who was present is sufficient and legally acceptable and an accused could be guilty of murder not withstanding the period that the death occurred.

"Once the prosecution counsel proves cause of death, autopsy is not an absolute requirement to a conviction for murder. Autopsy is strictly necessary when cause of death is unknown.

"The Prosecution Counsel, Adama Musa gave a clear pic-

ture of the tragic occurrence of the death of the victim but the act of the defendant did not intend to kill but rather his actions caused Nonyelu's death," he said.

Mohammed convicted Bassey under section 224 of the Penal Code and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

Section 224 states that whoever commits culpable homicide not punishable with death shall be punished with imprisonment for life or for any less term or with a fine or with both.

Earlier, Musa said that Bas-

sey had an altercation with Nonyelu.

"Bassey slapped Nonyelu on the face and pushed him, causing him to fall and hit his head on the concrete at Airlington Hotel in Kubwa on Jan.6, 2024.

"Bassey's actions left Nonyelu unconscious and caused his death days later," the prosecution said.

The offence, he said contravened the provisions of sections 220 (a), (b) of the Penal Code and punishable under 221.

Bassey in his allocutus begged the court for mercy.

Court orders complainant to perform community service over indecent dressing

IBADAN

An Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan on Thursday ordered a complainant, Bernard Elijah, to perform 30 minutes of community service for appearing before the court in indecent attire.

Elijah appeared in court wearing ripped jeans.

The Magistrate, Mrs Oluwaferanmi Raji, condemned

the dressing, describing it as inappropriate for a court environment.

She ordered Elijah to undertake 30 minutes of community service to serve as a deterrent to others.

"If everyone, especially the youths, learns to dress decently and conduct themselves properly, society will be a better place," Raji said.

Meanwhile, Elijah, through the police, charged a 23-year-

old man, Opeyemi Lawal, with alleged phone theft.

The Prosecutor, Insp Elisha Tellang, alleged that Lawal stole Elijah's itel phone valued at N120,000.

Tellang also alleged that the defendant stole another phone worth N185,000 belonging to one Miracle Emmanuel.

He said the offence contravened Section 390(4a) of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Lawal was arraigned on June 15 on a count of phone theft, to which he pleaded not guilty.

The court had adjourned the case until July 16 for hearing.

When the case came up, Tellang informed the court that a relative of the defendant had approached the complainants for settlement.

The magistrate subsequently adjourned the case until Aug. 26 for a possible settlement report.

Court discharges man accused of theft after complainant withdraws case

ABUJA

An Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan on Thursday discharged a 21-year-old man, Pelumi Yusuf, charged with alleged theft after the complainant withdrew the case.

The defendant, Yusuf, was arraigned on June 23 on charges of conspiracy and theft, to

which he pleaded not guilty.

The Magistrate, Mrs Oluwaferanmi Raji, had adjourned the case until July 16 for hearing.

When the case was called on Thursday, Raji discharged the defendant and struck out the case following the complainant's application for withdrawal.

She admitted the complainant's withdrawal letter and discharged the defendant, noting

that the discharge was not on merit.

Earlier, the Prosecutor, Insp Elisha Tellang, said the defendant allegedly committed the offences on June 21 at about 8.00 a.m. at Odo-Ona, Ibadan.

Tellang alleged that Yusuf and others still at large stole iron, a stabiliser, N50,000 cash and other items valued at N400,000.

He said the items belonged to the complainant, Mr Samson Abiola.

According to the prosecutor, the offences contravened Sections 516 and 390(9) of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Tellang said the complainant agreed to withdraw the case after the defendant paid part of the money involved.

Court remands teenager over alleged defilement of 8-year-old in Anambra

AWKA

An Anambra State Children, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Offences Court in Awka on Thursday remanded a 16-year-old boy over alleged defilement of an eight-year-old girl.

The teenager is facing a one-count charge of defilement.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs U.E. Onochie, ordered that the defendant be remanded at the Awka Correctional Facility.

She adjourned the case until Aug. 12 for hearing.

Earlier, the prosecutor, Insp Chinyere Okechukwu, told the court that the defendant allegedly committed the offence on June 22 in Achalla-Agu village, Umuoji, Idemili North Local

Government Area of the state.

Okechukwu said the girl, who lives with her guardian in the same compound as the defendant, was allegedly defiled by the defendant.

She said the matter came to light after the girl reported it to her guardian.

The prosecutor said a medical examination conducted at the Federal Medical Centre, Onitsha, confirmed that the girl had been defiled.

Okechukwu said the offence contravened Section 34(2) of the Anambra State Child Rights Law, 2004.

She urged the court to remand the defendant in a correctional facility pursuant to Section 130(2)(a)(b) of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law, 2022.

Court sentences civil servant to life imprisonment for causing friend's death

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NEWS

Elections should be a celebration of choice, not a season of fear – Cleric

ABUJA

Malam Fuad Adeyemi, Executive Director and National Chief Imam, Al-Habibiyyah Islamic Society, Abuja, urged Nigerians to take the democratic process of electing the country's leadership as a celebration of

choice, not a season of fear. Adeyemi said this at a One-Day Stakeholders' Workshop on Electoral Engagement and Peaceful Democratic Participation in Abuja.

The workshop was organised by Mambayya House, Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Studies, Bayero Uni-

versity, Kano and Al-Habibiyyah Islamic Society.

The cleric said, "As we look forward to our democratic future, the challenges of electoral engagement and peaceful participation loom large. Elections should be a celebration of choice, not a season of fear.

"Allah commands you to render back your trust to those to whom they are due. The way of rendering trust, it is in

the election and those that we have been elected. Our vote is a sacred trust (Amanah).

"How we cast it, how we secure it, and how we behave before, during, and after the process defines our character.

"We are here today to discuss how to educate our congregation and communities on their civic duties without bias, mitigate electoral violence by appealing to the conscience of

our youth and political actors."

The cleric said the purpose of the workshop was to discuss politics, which he described as a soul of the nation.

"We are here to promote the values of patience, tolerance, and respect for different perspectives, the very hallmark of mature democratic engagement.

"To all our distinguished stakeholders, scholars, community leaders, women leaders, youth representatives, religious leaders, and security agencies, your presence here is a pledge.

"You are the multipliers. The insights we share here

today must not remain within the walls of this hall. They must find their way into our mosques, our schools, our marketplaces, and our homes."

According to him, this workshop is a testament to what is possible when faith, academic rigour and civic responsibility align.

"The partnership between Al-Habibiyyah Islamic Society and Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Studies, Mambayya House, is a deliberate union designed to build a bridge between the moral persuasion and structured democratic education.



14TH ANNUAL BUSINESSDAY CEO FORUM:

L-R: Frank Aigbogun, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief BusinessDay Media Ltd. and the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Taiwo Oyedele during the 14th Annual BusinessDay CEO Forum on Thursday in Lagos.

Otti assures disengaged Abia workers of benefits

ABA

Governor Alex Otti of Abia has assured workers disengaged between 2011 and 2012 that they would receive their full entitlements after verification, acknowledging many are now beyond working age.

Otti gave the assurance on Wednesday while responding to an appeal during a grand civic reception organised in his honour by Ndi Imo in Abia, a sociocultural organisation, in Aba.

The governor said his earlier directive was not targeted at any ethnic group but applied equally to every disen-

gaged worker affected by the exercise.

He explained that many of those disengaged had since advanced in age, making their reabsorption into the civil service not practicable.

"We will calculate their entire entitlements and pay them. If you have not received your entitlement, present yourself for verification and you will be paid," Otti said.

Otti reaffirmed his administration's commitment to inclusiveness, stressing that appointments and employment were based strictly on competence rather than state of origin.

He said all law-abiding res-

idents, regardless of ancestry, deserved equal opportunities, benefits and protection under his administration without discrimination.

The governor described Abia and Imo people as one family with shared historical and cultural ties, promising to strengthen unity instead of encouraging division.

He also assured Imo indigenes residing in Abia of their safety and welfare, pledging that his administration would continue protecting their interests.

Imo Governor, Hope Uzodinma, commended Otti's performance, urging him to sustain good governance and

continue promoting peaceful coexistence among Abia residents.

Uzodinma, represented by his Special Adviser on Political Matters, Chief Perry Opara, said Abia and Imo had strengthened longstanding commercial, cultural and family relationships.

He urged Ndi Imo in Abia to remain law-abiding, support Otti's programmes and continue living peacefully with their host communities. Earlier, Ndi Imo in Abia appealed to Otti to consider reinstating Imo indigenes disengaged from the Abia Civil Service by the previous administration.

Nigeria joins global initiative to align food systems, climate action

ABUJA

Nigeria has joined 21 other countries in the Convergence Initiative to integrate food systems transformation with climate action as part of efforts to strengthen food security and address climate challenges.

The development was disclosed at a two-day National Dialogue on Nigeria's Convergence Initiative in Abuja on Wednesday.

The dialogue had the theme: "Bringing together stakehold-

ers to advance the alignment between food systems transformation and climate action, empowering national efforts to achieve the SDGs and Paris Climate Agreement targets".

Minister of State for Budget and Economic Planning, Dr Doris Uzoka-Anite, said the initiative aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2026-2030, which identified food security and climate resilience as strategic priorities.

Uzoka-Anite said Nigeria's participation in the initiative would promote evidence-based interventions, strengthen col-

laboration and ensure locally adaptable solutions for sustainable food systems.

"Nigeria is one of the countries selected to implement this initiative. It is built on a deliberate science-policy-society interface, ensuring that our interventions are evidence-informed, socially legitimate, economically viable and locally adaptable.

"It is about building a nation where no Nigerian goes to bed hungry, where farmers thrive, communities are resilient to climate shocks, and economic growth translates

to shared prosperity," she said.

The minister said Nigeria was facing the dual challenge of feeding a population projected to exceed 250 million by 2030 while adapting to climate impacts already affecting economic activities.

She said coordinated action, evidence-based interventions and shared accountability had enabled the country to make progress towards building food systems that were inclusive, equitable and capable of delivering improved nutrition, environmental sustainability and better livelihoods.

Police to conduct autopsy on woman who died in Umahi's residence

ABAKALIKI

The Police Command in Ebonyi has engaged the services of a pathologist to conduct a post-mortem examination on Miss Mary Habila to determine the cause of her death.

Habila, a nurse on secondment to the Ministry of Works, allegedly died at the Uburu residence of the Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi.

The command said the decision formed part of its ongoing investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of the young woman, who was reportedly attached to the minister's medical team.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Joshua Ukandu, disclosed this in a statement issued in Abakaliki on Thursday.

Ukandu said the command received a distress call on June 27 from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Ohaozara Division, informing it of a medical emergency involv-

ing Habila and requesting his presence at the David Umahi Federal Teaching Hospital, Uburu.

The Police spokesman said that upon the DPO's arrival at the hospital, he was informed by medical authorities that Habila had been brought in dead.

He said the DPO immediately briefed the Commissioner of Police, who directed that the matter be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for comprehensive investigation.

The police spokesman said preliminary investigations revealed that the deceased and another colleague were members of the medical team attached to the minister and had accompanied him to Uburu, where she later died in a room within his residential compound.

"The command has since commenced a comprehensive investigation. Detectives have visited the scene and obtained statements from relevant persons.

NGO empowers 100 vulnerable girls with educational materials in Benue

ABUJA

Plan International Nigeria, a non-governmental organisation, has empowered no fewer than 100 vulnerable girls with educational support kits (EduKit) in Makurdi, Benue.

Ms Sheila Ojei, Director of Philanthropy and Business Development, Plan International Nigeria, while distributing the kits, said the gesture was to commemorate the 2026 Day of the African Child.

Represented by Rufaidat Al-Siddiq, Ojei stated that each EduKit contains exercise books, pencils, rulers, stationery sets, journals, school uniform materials, water bottles, thermo flasks, backpacks and mini dignity kits.

The director of philanthro-

py and business development listed the targeted beneficiaries as girls from Government Girls' College, Makurdi, Mama Abayol Orphanage and the Children's Parliament.

She, however, called on governments, development partners and the private sector to intensify investments in girl child education.

Ojei said that educating the girl child was a strategic investment in the nation's future, adding that empowering girls creates lasting benefits for families, communities and the nation's economy.

The director added that investing in one girl was equivalent to investing in an entire nation because educated girls grow into women who positively transform society.

NEWS

Enugu Gov suspends 3 traditional rulers, 4 president – General over alleged misconduct

ENUGU

The Enugu State Government has suspended three traditional rulers and four President-Generals from Ezeagu Local Government Area of the state for alleged misconduct bordering

on security infractions.

The State Commissioner for Chieftaincy Affairs, Dr Charles Egumgbe, announced the suspension in a statement issued by the ministry's Public Relation Officer, Mr Emeka Nebeife, on Thursday in Enugu.

The erring suspended royal

fathers were Igwe C. Ozoigbokwe of Umuaji, imezi Owa Autonomous community, Igwe Leo Nechi of Imezi Owa Autonomous community and Igwe Benedict Adinde of Umuagba Autonomous community in Ezeagu Council Area.

The President Generals include

Chief Samson Ike of Umuagba Owa Town Union, Chief Remigus Ozoanya of Ezema Owa Town Union, Chief Peter Igwebuikwe of Imezi Owa Town Union and Chief Lazarus Ejim of Ogwumike Owa Town Union.

Egumgbe said that the government observed what it described as "serious acts of misconduct" bordering on security breaches in their autonomous communities.

The commissioner explained that the alleged conduct was contrary to Gov. Peter Mbah's zero-tolerance policy on insecurity in Enugu State.

He added that their actions were not a good reputation for the state affirming that it undermined its investments in the protection of lives and property.

"This has not only brought embarrassment to the state, sabotaged the huge investment of His Excellency in the security of lives and properties of Enugu people but also brought disrepute to the reversed traditional institution of the state," he said.

Solid minerals capable of transforming Nigeria's economic future – NEPC D-G

OWERRI

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) says the country's deposits of solid minerals are capable of changing her future economic outlook.

The Director-General of NEPC, Mrs Nonye Ayeni, said this at a one-day workshop on developing the potentials of solid minerals for export competitiveness, organised by the NEPC in Owerri, on Wednesday.

Ayeni, represented by NEPC's Imo Coordinator, Mr

Anthony Ajuruchi said that as a cornerstone of Nigeria's economic diversification agenda, the solid minerals' sector's contribution to export earnings needs to impact more positively to the country's Gross Domestic Product.

She added that the NEPC was working hard to address the sector's challenges in four core areas of trade regulations and compliance; standards, certifications and quality control; export documentation and finance for capital intensive exploration activities.

"At NEPC, we are fully committed to supporting Nigerian exporters by providing the necessary tools, training and resources to help you navigate this landscape in collaboration with key stakeholders and international partners.

"Nigeria's economic future depends on our ability to diversify, and solid minerals export is a critical component of that strategy.

"This is why at the 16th National Council on Commerce, Trade and Investment held in May 2025, the inclusion of solid minerals as part of the One-State-One-Product was approved", she said.

PRP presidential aspirant lauds INEC for extending CVR

ABUJA

Dr. Yakubu Kingsley, the Presidential Aspirant of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) in the 2027 general elections, has lauded the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for extending the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR).

INEC extended the ongoing by two weeks, giving eligible citizens until July 26 to register ahead of future elections.

Kingsley, in a statement on Thursday at the end of an emergency meeting of the leadership

of the YMK Nigeria Project Movement, urged eligible Nigerians to take advantage of the remaining days to register.

He described the remaining days of the exercise as "a defining moment in Nigeria's democratic journey."

"Every eligible Nigerian who truly desires positive change must understand that voting begins with registration.

"Without registering, there can be no Permanent Voter Card (PVC), and without a PVC, there can be no vote," he said.

He stressed that the future of Nigeria cannot be entrusted solely

to a small percentage of the population while millions of eligible citizens remain on the sidelines.

"Democracy flourishes only when citizens actively participate in the electoral process.

"The YMK (Yakubu Mohammed Kingsley) Nigeria Project reiterates that every vote is powerful, but that power can only be exercised by citizens who are duly registered.

"The movement therefore calls on young Nigerians who have recently attained the age of 18, women, students, artisans, professionals, farmers, traders, persons living with disabilities and

every eligible citizen who has not yet registered to visit the nearest registration centre immediately before the exercise closes.

"The PVC is not merely a document. It is the democratic instrument through which citizens peacefully determine the quality of leadership that governs them.

Turaki-led PDP Versus INEC, court delivers judgment today

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja is deliver judgment in a suit filed by Sen. Adolphus Wabara-led Board of Trustees (BoT) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) loyal to the leadership of Mr Kabir Turaki, SAN on Friday.

The judgment, which is before Justice Salim Ibrahim, will be delivered at 4 p.m.

Hearing notices had been sent to parties in the leadership crisis suit.

Justice Ibrahim had, on July 7, reserved judgment in the matter after counsel to the parties adopted their processes and presented their arguments for and against the suit.

The judge had said that judgment date would be communicated to parties 24 hours to the day.

NAN reports that members of the Wabara-led BoT had filed the fresh suit.

They are seeking an order of the court compelling the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to recognise the PDP interim National Working Committee (NWC)'s faction led by Turaki, on its official website.

The plaintiffs also sought an order directing the electoral umpire to, forthwith, update its records and publish on its official website the interim NWC of the party as forwarded to it by the plaintiffs and its National Executive Committee (NEC).

They said the names of members of the Turaki-led NWC were forwarded to the electoral umpire via their letters dated May 4.

NAN reports that the originating summons, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1159/2026, was filed on June 4 by a team of lawyers led by Chief Chris Uche, SAN.

The BoT members, who are plaintiffs in the suit, are ex-Senate President Adolphus Wabara; BoT Secretary, former Gov. Muazu Babangida Aliyu of Niger; ex-Minister of Information, Prof. Jerry Gana and PDP chieftain, Olabode George as 1st to 4th plaintiffs.

Others are former Minister of Women Affairs, Hajiya Maryam Ciroma; also an ex-Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajiya Zainab Maina; member of BoT and NEC, Dame Esther Uduhi and PDP as 5th to 8th plaintiffs respectively.

They sued INEC as sole defendant in the suit.

But the PDP faction, loyal to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, approached the court and challenged the jurisdiction of the court to hear the suit.

On the last adjourned date, although Uche announced appearance for the first to eighth plaintiffs, another lawyer, Sunday Ameh, SAN, who came from Wike's camp, also announced his representation for the eighth plaintiff (PDP).

RENOUNCIATION OF SECRET CULT

The general public is hereby notified that I, Okosun Okojie has renounced my membership of the Black Axe Confraternity aka Aye, which I was forced to join on March 4, 2023 in Benin City, Edo State. I renounced my membership due to the violent nature of the group. I am no longer a member and have ceased to engage in any of their meetings and activities. The general public, security agencies and concerned authorities should please take note

Signed: OKOSUN OKOJIE

MISSING DOCUMENTS

The title documents of a parcel of land belonging to Engr. AUGUSTINE EFOSA EBOIGBE of No. 33 Oba Erediauwa Street, Off Ekewan Road, Benin City, have been declared missing.

The land is situated at Ward 43/B, Ogida Quarters, Benin City, and was transferred to Mr. E. ODIBO. It is covered by Survey Plan No. JAO/ED2006/304, with an area of 450.680 square metres, and Beacon Nos. SC/EDC9660V to SC/EDC9663V. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note

Signed: ENGR. AUGUSTINE EFOSA EBOIGBE

AUTHENTICITY OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that **OSAIYA AMINU SEDI** and **DARLINGTON AMINU SEDI BELLO OSAIYA** are one and same person. As it appears in some of my documents hence forth now wish to be known as **OSAIYA AMINU SEDI**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **GREATNESS CHUKWUEMEKA** now wish to be known and addressed as **GREATNESS OSAGIE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS EGHOBOR OMONIGHO ANGELA**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS OMORAGBON OMONIGHO ANGELA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OKONGO PAUL**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **ISERE MONDAY GOODLUCK**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that the correct arrangement of my name is **OVIA ORHUE OSABUOHEN** and not **OVIA OSABUOHEN ORHUE** as was wrongly arrange in my international passport. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as miss **EKE AUGUSTA NKEM**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS AUGUSTA NKEM OYOKO**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **BLESSING IYANGBE**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS BLESSING IYANGBE-ATOE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that **OSAMUYIMEN IMARHIAGBE** and not **UYI IMARHIAGBE** are one and same person hence forth now wish to be known and addressed as **OSAMUYIMEN IMARHIAGBE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MRS OSAYANDE BLESSING UCHE**. now wish to be known and addressed as **MISS NNAMELO BLESSING UCHE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss OMORUYI UWAYEMWEN** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS IGIE UWAYEMWEN**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss OBANSA VICTORIA OREMEYI**. now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS EBOIYEHIMEN OBANSA VICTORIA OREMEYI**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that my correct name is **EZINANDO-UGORJI CHINAZOM LAWRENCIA**, and not **EZINANDO CHINAZOM LAWRENCIA**. All former documents remain valid authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss ATEWE BLESSING IMADE** now wish to be known as **Mrs JOHNSON UWABOR BLESSING**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that the correct arrangement of my name is **GASKIN OSABUOHEN EKHATOR** And not **EKHATOR GASKIN OSABUOHEN** as was wrongly arrange in my BVN. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that my correct name is **OMAMEH IFECHUKWUDE PETER** and not **OMAMEH CHUKS**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss ADAMS EYIMOFE** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS ADJEKPIYEDE EYIMOFE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss FESTUS BLESSING DEBORAH** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS AIGBEDO BLESSING DEBORAH**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

NEWS**EXTRA**

Tambuwal seeks stronger funding for FMBN, review of housing agencies

ABUJA

Sen. Aminu Tambuwal, Chairman, Senate Committee on Land, Housing and Urban Development, has called for stronger funding for the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) and a review of government housing policies.

Tambuwal made the call at the FMBN Day held during the 2026 Africa International Housing Show (AIHS) Legacy Edition, in Abuja.

He argued that inconsistent policies and inadequate funding had undermined the

FMBN and other key housing institutions.

He said successive governments had weakened the housing finance system by creating agencies with overlapping mandates instead of strengthening existing institutions such as the FMBN and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA).

Tambuwal questioned the rationale behind establishing additional housing intervention platforms while existing institutions remained underfunded.

He argued that government should channel available resources into strengthening the

FMBN and the FHA rather than duplicating functions.

"I believe that Federal Mortgage Bank has been suffering from what most of government institutions have been suffering from — inconsistencies of policies of governments.

"When you have an institution like FMBN, I wonder why you will introduce family homes. I wonder why you will create the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI) through its Real Estate Investment Fund (MREIF).

"I am yet to appreciate the wisdom behind establishing them. We oversight them. I

believe since you have FMBN, you have FHA, what you need to do is to strengthen them."

According to him, the Federal Housing Authority has not received budgetary allocations for years due to a policy introduced making it difficult for the agency to perform effectively.

He also disclosed that key shareholders, including the Federal Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI) and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), were yet to fully meet their capital contribution obligations to the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria.



PRESENTING RENOVATED CLASSROOM:

L-R: Representative of the Edo State Secondary Education Board, Gregory Anokwu, standing in for the Board Chairman, Dr. Rita Erewel; COO, Seplat Energy Plc, Samson Ezugworie; and Director External Affairs & Social Performance, Chioma Afe, at the commissioning of the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV newly renovated classroom block and modern learning facilities for students of the Visually Impaired Unit at Ihogbe College, Benin City, recently...

Counter-insurgency: Army, ICRC deepen partnership on human rights protection

ABUJA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has reaffirmed the Nigerian Army's commitment to protecting human rights and strengthening adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in military operations.

Shaibu gave the assurance while receiving the Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Nigeria, Miss Doris El Doueihy, in Abuja.

This is contained in a statement by the Acting Director, Army Public Relations, Col. Apollonia Anele, in Abuja.

The COAS said respect for human rights, protection of civilians and stronger civil-military relations remained critical to enhancing operational effectiveness and public confidence in the Armed Forces.

He described the ICRC as a trusted strategic partner whose longstanding collaboration with the Nigerian Army

had strengthened humanitarian action, operational professionalism and stability in conflict-affected areas.

Shaibu said the army had fully integrated International Humanitarian Law, human rights principles and standard rules of engagement into training programmes at all levels.

According to him, the Nigerian Army remains committed to implementing its Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Plan, improving detention management, facilitating humanitarian access and adopting global best practices that support mission success while safeguarding civilian lives.

He reiterated the Army's resolve to sustain collaboration with humanitarian organisations in line with international standards as well as Nigeria's commitment to protecting vulnerable populations.

Earlier, El Doueihy commended the Nigerian Army for its professionalism, trans-

parency and sustained cooperation with the ICRC.

She said the collaboration had significantly enhanced the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance and the protection of vulnerable communities af-

fectected by conflict.

She also acknowledged the Army's progress in detention management and its commitment to upholding internationally accepted humanitarian standards.

FG boosts global authentication of Nigerian passports

ABUJA

The Federal Government has strengthened the international authentication of Nigerian passports by successfully importing all the country's Country Signing Certificate Authorities (CSCAs) into the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Public Key Directory (PKD).

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) said this in a statement issued in Abuja by its Service Public Relations Officer, Deputy Comptroller of Immigration (DCI) Akinsola Akinlabi.

Akinlabi said the milestone was achieved on July 13 during a ceremony at the ICAO headquarters in Montreal, Canada, led by the Comptroller-Gener-

al of NIS, Kemi Nandap.

He said the exercise was aimed at addressing passive authentication challenges encountered by some Nigerian passport holders at selected foreign border control points around the world.

According to him, the integration of all Nigeria's existing CSCAs into the ICAO Public Key Directory has established a trusted verification chain for Nigerian travel documents.

"With the completion of the process, Nigerian passports can now be authenticated seamlessly by border control systems across all member states of the ICAO PKD," he said.

Akinlabi said the development would enhance the credibility and global acceptance of Nigerian passports while improving

Xenophobia: Air Peace ends South Africa evacuation

LAGOS

Air Peace has concluded the Federal Government's humanitarian evacuation from South Africa, returning the final batch of 308 Nigerians aboard its Boeing 777-200 aircraft.

The airline said the final flight increased the total number of evacuees to 1,393 Nigerians transported across five successful humanitarian evacuation missions.

This was contained in a statement issued in Lagos by Air Peace spokesperson, Mr Efe Osifo-Whiskey.

Osifo-Whiskey said the final evacuation flight arrived at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, on Wednesday, marking the successful completion of the operation.

He said the aircraft docked at the Cargo and Hajj Terminal, officially bringing the Federal Government's coordinated humanitarian mission with Air Peace to a close.

According to him, the operation represented another milestone in Nigeria's humanitarian response to the security situation affecting Nigerians in South Africa.

He said the exercise also

demonstrated the importance of strong public-private collaboration in protecting the welfare and safety of Nigerian citizens abroad.

"From the commencement of the operation, Air Peace deployed its Boeing 777-200 wide-body aircraft across five dedicated evacuation missions, safely airlifting 1,393 Nigerians.

"Each evacuation flight carried families back to loved ones, restored hope to those displaced by uncertainty and reaffirmed that Nigerians can rely on their nation," he said.

Osifo-Whiskey said the operation further strengthened Air Peace's reputation as Nigeria's leading humanitarian airline through its continued support for emergency response efforts.

He said the airline had undertaken more than 20 humanitarian and evacuation missions across Africa and beyond since commencing operations.

According to him, the missions supported emergency repatriations, humanitarian interventions and national response efforts whenever the need arose.

He disclosed that the returnees were received by Nigerians in Diaspora Commission Chief Executive Officer, Dr Abike Dabiri-Erewa, alongside senior immigration officials.

APC begins 2027 grassroots mobilisation in Kano

KANO

Governor Abba Yusuf of Kano State has launched a strategic grassroots engagement to strengthen the APC's support base ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The initiative brought together leaders and members of the APC Polling Unit Supporters Association, popularly known as 'Yan Akwatina'.

Yusuf said the engagement was designed to consolidate the party's structure and secure victories across elective positions in Kano and nationally.

A statement by his spokesperson, Sanusi Bature, quoted the

governor as saying the APC was mobilising from polling units.

"The party is mobilising from the polling unit level to secure victory for President Bola Tinubu and all APC candidates," Yusuf said.

The governor described Tinubu's re-election in 2027 as a key opportunity to consolidate economic reforms and infrastructure development.

Yusuf said continuity would enable Nigeria to sustain the gains recorded under the administration's policies and programmes.

As part of support for the association, the governor donated plots of land and N100 million to strengthen its operations.

Earlier, the governor's Political Adviser, Mustapha Buhari-Bakwana, said the event marked the beginning of APC's grassroots mobilisation strategy.

He said the Polling Unit Supporters Association could mobilise about 1,122,200 votes for Tinubu during the next presidential election.

"The association has the capacity to mobilise at least 1,122,200 votes for President Tinubu," Buhari-Bakwana said.

The association's leader, Mr Najib Salati, praised Yusuf for recognising members through appointments at state and local government levels.

Salati pledged the group's commitment to delivering "overwhelming victories" for the APC during the 2027 general elections.

FEATURE

For Governor Okpebholo, keeping promises is leadership

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

One of the biggest challenges facing public leadership in Nigeria is trust. Over its six decades of existence, many citizens have become disappointed because political promises are often made with enthusiasm but forgotten once those who made them take office. That is why Governor Monday Okpebholo's recent action is germane.

41 Edo indigenes were forced to return home from South Africa after the recent xenophobic attacks. They came back carrying painful memories and an uncertain future. Many had lost their jobs, businesses and the lives they had struggled to build. They needed more than sympathy. They needed practical support.

Governor Okpebholo welcomed them home and announced that each returnee would receive N1 million to help them settle down and start life again. Initially it sounded like another government promise that could take weeks or months to materialise.

Instead, within 24 hours, the beneficiaries began receiving credit alerts.

That single act spoke louder than any speech. It showed the kind of governor Senator Monday Okpebholo is. One who believes that government should respond quickly when its people are in need. At a time when many Nigerians have become used to waiting endlessly for official promises to be fulfilled, the prompt payment is a radical departure.

The excitement among the returnees is understandable. Some could not believe the bank alerts were real until they checked their phones themselves. Their reaction reflected genuine relief and appreciation for a governor that backed words with action; one that bypassed bureaucracy.

The gesture has not gone unnoticed. On Arise Television's The Morning Show, veteran broadcaster Dr Reuben Abati commended Governor Okpebholo and suggested that other governors should emulate the example. His colleague, Rufai Oseni, also praised the intervention, noting that the governor did more than receive the returnees with kind words; he immediately backed his promise with action.



Gov. Monday Okpebholo (middle) with Edo State returnees from S/Africa in Government House, Benin City on Monday.

Their comments highlight an important point. While the Federal Government often takes the lead in responding to emergencies involving Nigerians abroad, state governments also

have a responsibility to care for their citizens. Edo State has demonstrated that such support is both possible and necessary.

The governor's promise of soft loans

for beneficiaries who want to establish businesses is another positive step. Financial support can ease immediate hardship, but helping people rebuild sustainable livelihoods is what creates

”

Governor Okpebholo has shown that leadership is ultimately about action. By fulfilling his pledge without delay, he has given the returnees more than financial support.

lasting impact. If properly implemented, the programme could enable many of the returnees to become business owners and employers instead of remaining dependent on government assistance.

Leadership is often tested during challenging moments. Anyone can make promises, but not everyone keeps them. Governor Okpebholo has shown that leadership is ultimately about action. By fulfilling his pledge without delay, he has given the returnees more than financial support. He has given them hope and renewed confidence that government can still stand with its people.

In a political environment where public confidence has been weakened by broken promises, keeping one's word has become a powerful statement. Governor Monday Okpebholo has reminded both leaders and citizens that credibility is earned not through rhetoric but through timely action.

For the 41 Edo returnees, the N1 million grant is the beginning of a new chapter. For the rest of the country, it is a reminder that responsive and compassionate leadership is still possible.

• Dr. Ebojele has his PhD in Public Administration and is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.

NEWS EXTRA

NEPL/Seplat Energy JV empowers over 110 youths, strengthens inclusive education in Edo

MONDAY OISE

BENIN CITY

The NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL)/Seplat Energy Joint Venture (JV) has deepened its investment in local communities with the graduation of over 110 young Nigerians from its Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP), equipping them with practical renewable energy skills and start-up support to build sustainable livelihoods, serve their communities and contribute to Nigeria's clean

energy future.

The JV also commissioned an upgraded classroom block and modern learning facilities for the Visually Impaired Unit at Ihogbe College, Benin City, expanding access to quality education for underserved learners and reinforcing its commitment to inclusive community development.

Together, the initiatives demonstrate the NEPL/Seplat JV's strategic approach to creating long-term value in its host communities through education, enterprise development, youth empowerment, energy access and social inclusion.

Held under the theme, "Lighting Up the Nation: Empowering Youths in Renewable Energy Solutions," the YEP graduation ceremony featured exhibitions of practical solutions developed by participants during the programme, including solar home systems, mini-grid prototypes, solar dryers, biogas digesters and energy audit tools.

The programme is designed to help young people convert technical training into income-generating enterprises, while also addressing real needs in homes, schools, health centres and small busi-

nesses that require reliable, affordable and cleaner energy solutions.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chief Operating Officer, Seplat Energy Plc, Samson Ezugworie, described YEP as a strategic investment in people, communities and the nation's future.

"The Youth Entrepreneurship Programme is here to stay. We have sustained it over the years with our Joint Venture partner because we believe that investing in young people is fundamental to nation-building," he said.

Ezugworie said the pro-

gramme goes beyond skills acquisition by providing graduates with take-off grants to support the launch of their businesses and enable them to begin creating value within their communities.

"Today, we celebrate your achievement, but tomorrow, we want to celebrate your impact. Your contribution should extend beyond personal success to creating opportunities, solving problems and transforming communities," he added.

The Director, External Affairs and Social Performance of Seplat Energy Plc, Chioma

Afe, said the YEP reflects the JV's commitment to building community resilience by connecting young people with skills that are relevant to the future of work and the evolving energy landscape.

"Across Nigeria, families, schools, healthcare facilities and small businesses are seeking reliable, affordable and cleaner energy. By equipping young people with renewable energy skills, we are helping them create new sources of livelihood while empowering them to become problem-solvers in their communities," she said.

ArtsWorld

with
Francis Odupute
08023680030

Esther Esizimotor explains her “Anatomy and Physiognomy of the Mundane...” solo Art exhibition

I mumbled the title of this exhibition from my wakeful state from sleep and I continued the phrase until I got the full title, then I called for a sheet of paper and biro, knowing I was nursing an exhibition. Then my husband offered his phone and I typed in the same phrase, he mentioned an inaugural lecture topic upon reading what I had typed. I started wondering if I read the same topic somewhere?! I picked up an inaugural lecture series booklet to confirm if there was a topic like that. There was none.

I hadn't any images but I conceived it was going to be the facial expressions of women in joy and sorrow. Many stories erupted at that period - stories of women going through so much - as if it had to be discussed.

The conversations increased by the kidnap of the schoolchildren and their teachers in Oyo State...they were on their own. And while I was at the drawing stage, I then heard many more and more stories, even unsolicited stories came pouring. My colleague, Dr. Ken Nwabuku, told me one of my students had died and I was taken over by shock and a broken heart. I asked about his own student I heard about too. When he told me her circumstances at death, I was devastated by the fact that she died from complications arising from a friend who poisoned her. I knew then that my paintings were leading me by themselves to the direction they took... advocacy for women!

Sadly, the jealous friend disappeared into thin air; our dear kind hearted student, whose fault was being good to someone who became jealous of the man she crushed on, had feelings for her helper (our ex-student).

It occurred to me that women are at the heart of the human condition of being good, bad and ugly - all at once. I felt so much hurt that when I started rendering my paintings with the palette knife, I broke it from the hard handedness with which I handled the knife. My thoughts were so much that as I painted, the interpretations followed. The craquelure technique employed by Filippo Sciascia was suitable to depict my women, who have different invisible scars they carry. The burdens they bear, most of the time behind bright smiles and make up. The weight came up on me that if I should paint women smiling, sad, or with any of these expressions, it wouldn't carry the burden enough. Their bodily gestures needed to be reflected and the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery came to mind...kintsugi.

Women can be hurt and at the same time place a smile on their faces...that's golden.

I then decided not to leave the pain at defeat. I needed closure at repair as well. It therefore behoves on us to pray for healing for all women, good, bad, or ugly. Each woman desires repair, be it through repentance even when it's apparently too late - healing from battery, violence, rape or any unbecoming situation they find themselves.

The mundane and ephemeral pre-occupations distorting our reasoning became overcome by the extraordinary tale I heard, and then it occurred



THE NOOSE HE TIED



THE SPIRIT IS WILLING



SOLACE

to me that I had executed “The Anatomy and Physiognomy of the Mundane and the Extra in Ordinary Things.”

Using a palette knife reflected the kitchen knife as an ordinary tool to scar and shape the bodies of women who are scarred by the hurt and disillusionment they faced in their walk of life.

The ordinary rope has become the suicidal cord... for survival and life line for repair. The ordinary fabric has become an extraordinary linen by being pieced together to become a puzzle of repair with the stitch it received even in the dark and when it's in light, it looks like the coat of many colours, stitched with love, and now worth more than other linens.

The ordinary phone has become a space of solace for struggling hearts with high emotions. They can have multiple communications if they lack any where they've found themselves. The ordinary nail polish has become extraordinary as a sum of the strength and honour of the woman who should be regarded with care, love, and concern. She shouldn't be subjected to the state of raising her hands in defense but in admiration of her nail polish.

I will then take your hand and lead you through the works on display so that you can absorb each meaning as you consume the paintings with your eyes.

The cover page of my exhibition catalogue holds the painting with the title “The Noose He Tied.” Explaining “The Noose He Tied” is to state first that the whole exhibition is captured on the ‘Noose’ where women are subjected to different treatments by the relationships they found themselves.

For this woman presented in the most wretched of states, being tied wrist up with a rope and held captive by the partner who has made himself her shadow discovers that he too is held captive by the same rope which hooks his throat and that the jailer is also in the same prison. Treat your woman well, so you do not trap yourself. His obsession to be in control keeps him narcissistic with the ultimate idea of possession. He realizes, at the end, that his life, as a husband, is in his wife's hands. Treat her with love and you receive love right back in full. What a man gives his wife is what he receives in multiples.



ESTHER ESIZIMOTOR

“Dirty Linen” depicts the character of sordid things that happen in homes. We all know the phrase that we shouldn't spread our dirty linens in public...this time, even as dirty as the linen is, the woman still found a way to piece it together and not spread it as bad as it looks to the public. She has been able to stitch each piece together with strings to make it appear nice even if she has to sew them in the dark so that no one sees what it really looks like. It seemed to be pieced together leaving frills along its seams, making it shoop and trendy. The linen looks nicer and fits what is in Vogue... even every design becomes a style at one time or the other.

“The Anatomy of a Silenced Scream” is the picture of a woman who has decided to keep quiet about the hurt and pain she suffers. The scars on her are revealed in patches like injuries that may not heal...we understand that emotional trauma is also an avenue for cancer to develop. The moment she is able to speak up, she may find closure and start to heal...until then, the cords that tie her waist, feet and hands are reflecting colours of defeat. She is in a dark place...a place of suffering, shame, pain and defeat...she has light being reflected on her now, she should take the chance to speak up or forever hold her piece, if she lives long enough.

“Distorted Lotus.” This reflects several women who are going through different ugly situations in whatever facet of life they belong. The kintsugi tells us to fix ourselves despite our brokenness; we need to embrace repair and clothe ourselves in fine gold. There is no woman, including my humble self, who hasn't gone through shit in life, but repair comes the moment we embrace self-repair and take great care of ourselves by putting us first and stitching us back with fine gold and making ourselves up to be beautiful. Even though our features have been distorted we can still embrace beauty and call ourselves so.

“Dance with Me”: This is the fact that when a man comes with control and chooses to fight, the woman can use tact to change the narrative and use performance to turn the fight into a waltz. She takes the stance to creatively make peace where there is chaos.

“Breaking Loose,” This painting depicts a moment the woman chooses to break out of her situation, healing starts to appear...she must take a stand and break loose from whatever stronghold she's in. A woman must not remain tied down, else she perishes.

“You Have No Idea.” This is for every young girl who may have been violated in one way or the other as a child. The stories of child molestation are very prominent these days, and advocacy is in order. The child stays in that seemingly pink room where young girls are supposed to be safe. Children react in different ways to such unbecoming circumstances. All over Africa and the world this issue is rampant. We have no idea what such children are going through. If they can only say it and free themselves of whatever threat they have received to make them succumb and wallow in their pain with resilience.

They could speak up and be free. “Say a Prayer.” Every woman says a prayer, albeit softly or intensely...a prayer is said by every woman. We know that we can pray out our situations. The woman says a prayer and the light of God reflects upon her countenance to lighten her burden just like the

CONTINUES ON PG 13»

Entertainment — with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe

Can film master classes drive Film Development?

IZEGAEGBE IMOSIME DAVIDSON

Film development has been consistent in explorations towards its advancing its own potential, as well as our society. Many factors are responsible and not limited to important few. We have also witnessed how film industry is experiencing an unprecedented evolution globalised. We also know we can never rule out how the film industry is driven by the democratization of technology, the rise of streaming platforms, and an insatiable global appetite for diverse stories. Ultimately, cinema is no longer confined to Hollywood's traditional borders, as many countries have tailored their film industries to acronym related to their cultural identities. Yet, as the barriers to become a filmmaker drop, a critical question emerges: how does an aspiring filmmaker bridges the gap between his background knowledge, owning a camera and crafting a masterpiece from using his knowledge of the craft to tell a story through camera compositions?

However, the answer increasingly lies in the strategic intersection of film master classes and film development as solid bridges between an aspiring filmmaker, an established filmmaker to enable them to consistently be abreast with current technological developments and trends in film production. Together, they form the bedrock of modern cinematic infrastructure, acting as the ultimate catalyst for the next generation of visual storytellers, while retraining the already existing or established filmmakers.

Historically, filmmaking was an insular industry. Many are students of this era then and even now. Knowledge was passed down through exclusive apprenticeships or expensive film schools that do remained financially out of reach for many. This is where the film master classes came to the rescue. Many big film studios realised that for the film industry to thrive and consistently improve, there should not be a gap for mediocrity. They noticed that the hunger to learn and also the eagerness to continue and be emersed in the film competitive market must be created and sustained. Film master classes have fundamentally disrupted this gatekeeping between would-be filmmakers and the film industry.



FILM DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

By definition, a master class is a short, intensive course taught by an expert in a given discipline. In cinema, this means learning directing from persons vast in film directing, screenwriting from established storytellers and screenwriters, or cinematography from director of photography who have cut their teeth in the filmmaking process. These classes do not just teach the mechanics of a camera or the formatting of a script; they boldly, deliberately and intentionally demystify the creative process for these learners. The most valuable thing a master class provides is not just a mere technical tutorial, but an intense insight into a film master's mindset, how he or others problem-solve a scene when such is not working, or how they manage the immense pressure of a any film set.

Through these deep dives, filmmakers can now learn that genius is rarely accidental or by luck. They now are made to know that being a genius is the result of sustained rigorous discipline, structural understanding, and a relentless commitment to the film process narratives. By making this high-level expertise accessible, master classes now democratize the intellec-

tual capital of Hollywood, Bollywood, Nollywood and international cinema, thereby leveling the playing field for creators everywhere.

However, talent as an offspring of creativity is good but any form of inspiration without a defined architectural roadmap often leads to a dead end. This is where film development, the crucial first stage of the filmmaking process, comes into play. Development encompasses everything that happens before a camera even rolls: such as writing and polishing the script, securing financing, attracting talents, creating budgets, production, distribution and legal packaging. This is arguably the most vulnerable phase of a film's lifecycle. Countless brilliant ideas have languished in development hell, with echoes of their wailing fading in the labyrinth of complex life. This is so, because creators lack the industry know-how to push these creative ideas even near pre-production.

When master classes thereby focus heavily on this development phase amongst others, they provide filmmakers with the creative tools and business acumen required to survive in the world of art. They teach writers

how to construct bulletproof stories and screenplay structures and train producers on how to pitch to international film funds. In short, they transform passion projects into viable commercial properties.

The synergy between master classes and film development is particularly transformative for emerging film hubs outside the traditional Western paradigm. Across Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, local master classes conducted by visiting veterans or successful local pioneers are fueling a cinematic renaissance. The results abound around us when you see the role of technological advancement in film productions nowadays.

When a region invests in these intensive educational programs, it directly impacts the quality of local film development. Writers learn to anchor universal human emotions within their unique cultural contexts, creating stories that are distinctively local yet globally accessible and embraced. Investors, seeing a more structured and professional approach to development, become more willing to inject huge capital into local productions. We may not know it, but the result

is a sustainable ecosystem where high-quality training leads to robust development, which in turn yields compelling cinema that can compete on the world stage.

As we look toward the future, the integration of more robust educational master classes into formal film development pipelines will only deepen. Film festivals, streaming giants, and national arts councils are increasingly pairing grant funding now with mandatory workshops. They have recognize that funding a film without equipping the filmmaker with the tools to develop it properly is a risky gamble and bad investment.

No matter what, filmmaking will always be an art form rooted in passion and creative magic. But behind the magic is a meticulous craft and a complex business termed SHOW-BUSINESS. By prioritizing master classes and robust film development within the film scope, there is hope that the film industry ensures that filmmakers of tomorrow are not just day-dreaming of the silver screen, but full possessing the precise blueprint required to build, keep developing and sustaining it.

Esizimotor explains her "Anatomy and Physiognomy..."

«CONTINUED FROM PG 12

lightening of her skin on the upper body where the light permeates. "Say a Prayer" is an encouragement at supplication and the ability of invocation of God's intervention in each situation we are in as women.

"Living in Bondage." The women and children in captivity in Oyo are being advocated for. They are in a place where no one wishes for their enemies. They represent every woman living in bondage just as this single figure of a woman in captivity with the shadow of torment is by her and with her every day...huge like a pillar that cannot be destroyed. Women should not be found in such places. Anyone born of a woman should know what a woman, mother, or sister is to them. Those women and children held captive

may have also been violated...no one wants to experience such, not women especially. But the resilience of women must be praised.

"In Defense": This brings us to the defense of the woman. A woman should be loved and cared for; she should not be tormented to the point of her raising her hands to defend herself. She should only be caught in this pose because she wants to take a good look at her finger nails to admire the paint polish on them.

"Rupture" is in honour of my students who died. It is a collective grief knowing that one slept and didn't wake up, in the wake of her bloom. The other was poisoned, out of jealousy... Their mothers are still breathing. They would rupture when the community asks what happened.

Their broken hearts would spurt blood out of its ventricles over and over again... The hurt

and pain spotted here is difficult to heal. That's why the trail goes on as it connects to more and more people as they hear their stories.

"Solace" depicts a woman who takes solace in the space she has placed herself. She prefers to get lost in her phone and connect with the people or interests that matter to her rather than stay in reality of her torment or the difficulties she faces.

"Solitude" is a depiction of a woman who wants to heal and has started her journey to healing. She should either calibrate or evaluate, if she acted right with the decision she may have taken or made in her moment of hurt. Her head is still red hot with thoughts. Once she's able to put her thoughts in order and learn to forgive herself of whatever her reaction or decisions were, she will heal and become golden like the kintsugi repair technique. But until then...

"If..."! Gender issues are not monolithic in nature; men are also affected and just as the women suffer undue injustice, men also suffer the same or more.

This man may have been ruthless and careless with his partner, but he now sits in regret of his actions and wonders, what if...? Like Elvis sang in his song, "If I could turn back the hands of time, oh my darling you could still be mine". Here is "if..."

"The Spirit is Willing." This painting is about WILL; the will to live, the will to stand up for oneself. The shadow here represents the woman's strength which gingers her to get up and fight for her survival. Her flesh might be weak but the moment she realizes that she has the will power to move mountains, she will stand up for herself. Every woman has a will and must wield her inner self to do wonders in her own life.

NEWS

FOREIGN

Iran targets military bases as US launches wave of strikes

The US and Iran have continued to exchange fire as negotiations stall.

Tehran has launched fresh attacks on US military bases in neighbouring Gulf states, while Washington continued to strike sites across Iran overnight.

Tehran said it had struck targets in the region, including in Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain, as a sixth day of renewed hostilities strained their preliminary deal to end the war.

Meanwhile, the US military said it inflicted a six-hour wave of strikes in multiple locations to "degrade Iran's ability to threaten innocent mariners" in the Strait of Hormuz.

The latest exchanges came after US President Donald Trump warned Iran it had "better behave" or face further military action should Iran not return to negotiations.

On Tuesday, Trump threatened to target Iran's energy infrastructure if Tehran failed to return to talks.

Iran's top negotiator, Mo-

hammad Bagher Ghalibaf, told state media Tehran had "no reason" to abide by any agreement that did not benefit the country.

He added that Iran's national security depended on maintaining what he described as "Iranian arrangements" in the Strait of Hormuz.

In the latest attacks, the US targeted command centres, air defence sites, and coastal surveillance facilities across Iran - including in the port city of Bandar Abbas and Greater Tunb Island - US Central Command (Centcom) said.

Explosions were heard across Iran and air defences were triggered in Tehran, Iranian state media reported.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said a children's cancer treatment centre in the western city of Ahvaz had been evacuated after strikes on a nearby location.

BBC Verify has authenticated video footage of strikes on three coastal cities in Iran - Chabahar, Ahvaz and Bandar Abbas.

French PM Lecornu arrives in Rabat for talks amid diplomatic reset

Another milestone for France-Morocco relations as French Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu arrived in Rabat on Wednesday.

Lecornu and his team are scheduled to hold high level talks on security, defence, investment and economic cooperation.

The two-day visit is a sign of increasing French efforts to rebuild ties with its former North African colony.

After years of tensions, the two countries reset their diplomatic relations in 2024, when France recognized Morocco's claim over the disputed West-

ern Sahara territory.

With its influence in North Africa and the Sahel under pressure, Paris is eager to find reliable partners in the region, as Turkey, China and the US deepen their ties across Africa.

Last month, the African Development Bank placed Morocco top of Africa's industrialization rankings, thanks to "industrial upgrading, export diversification, and strong industrial policy."

Paris is hoping closer economic ties will help it recoup losses. For Morocco, the partnership offers access to investment and technology.



CENTRAL KYIV PROTESTERS:

Protesters gathered in central Kyiv on Thursday morning

Protests in Ukraine's cities against Zelensky's removal of defence minister

Protests have been taking place in several Ukrainian cities against President Volodymyr Zelensky's surprise dismissal of popular Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov.

A crowd of people - mostly young - gathered in Kyiv, holding up signs reading "Hands off Fedorov" and "Stop sabotaging victory!" and chanting "Shame!"

Zelensky has not yet explained his decision, which is causing significant upset among commentators and the military as well as parts of civil society.

Fedorov, 35, was appointed only in January but has been credited with energising the ministry, heading a drive against corruption and using data to analyse and try to

improve performance on the front line.

MPs were due to vote on Thursday on the proposed replacement as defence minister, Ihor Klymenko, who currently heads the interior ministry.

As part of Zelensky's reshuffle, parliament approved the appointment of state oil and gas boss Serhiy Korotkiy as prime minister, after Yuliia Svyrydenko resigned earlier this week.

There had been rumours that Mykhailo Fedorov's dismissal was linked to tensions between him and Commander-in-Chief Oleksandr Syrskiy.

At a press conference on Thursday, Fedorov all but confirmed that, saying he had suggested to Zelensky that Syrskiy and Chief of the General Staff

Andrii Hnatov should be replaced.

"When the president said he did not plan to replace Syrskiy, I... said I would learn to work with him," Fedorov said. But "all the initiatives we proposed were blocked," he added.

"Instead of finding a way of defeating Russia asymmetrically - which is the commander-in-chief's job - he's found a way of splitting our country," Fedorov said of Syrskiy.

Fedorov also revealed that Zelensky offered him to stay on his team as an adviser, but that he refused.

He was not seeking to antagonise the president, he explained, saying he was "confident" that Zelensky "hears the Ukrainian people, knows what to do, and the situation will be 100% resolved".

"I don't believe he has yet chosen a side in the Syrskiy matter. I spoke with him today and said that I am acting according to my conscience," he said.

Before joining the government, Mykhailo Fedorov set up a volunteer "IT Army of Ukraine"

"This is the worst mistake Zelensky has made during his entire presidency," Oleksandr, a Ukrainian soldier, told the BBC.

He had signed up to the army earlier this year because he trusted Fedorov's team and vision, he said: "I don't know anyone who supports the decision to replace him. Not within the army, not in society."

"I have lots of friends in the military. Lots of them died. I don't want this to go on," Maria Lavrynets, 31, told the BBC at a protest in Ivan Franko square in central Kyiv. "We see [Fedorov's] results. We see the motivation of the soldiers, we should stand for them."

When he was brought in, Fedorov set off to restructure the defence ministry, which many in Ukraine see as too bogged

down in bureaucracy and old Soviet-era attitudes.

A former minister of digital transformation, he was active from the early days of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 in setting up a volunteer "IT Army of Ukraine" to launch cyber-attacks against Russians.

Later, he led a successful fundraising campaign called the Army of Drones and brought in elements of "gamification" to the war, designing a system that awarded Ukrainian military units with credits for hitting Russian assets.

Two young protesters hold up signs reading "What are you doing, you idiot?" and "This is for all of those who couldn't be here"

Fedorov's focus on drones, high-tech warfare and procurement continued after he became defence minister.

In the early days of his tenure he also asked SpaceX founder Elon Musk to stop Russia from using Starlink satellites for drone attacks - a move that caused considerable disruption to Russia's frontline operations and advance.

His ministry also played a significant part in Ukraine's recent attacks on the Moscow-occupied Crimean peninsula, which last month Fedorov vowed to "cut off" from Russia entirely, with the use of mid-range drone strikes.

In a Facebook post shortly after his dismissal, Fedorov listed his achievements and said he would "continue... to defeat the enemy through asymmetry, speed of innovation, and organisational strength".

Prominent blogger Serhii Sternenko, whom Fedorov brought in as an adviser, hailed his former boss as "the best minister of defence in our entire history" and bemoaned the "bureaucratic obstacles and artificial delays" he said had stood in the way of deeper reform.

US military to start screening for testosterone deficiency, Hegseth says

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has announced that military personnel aged 30 and older will undergo testing for testosterone deficiency as part of annual health screenings.

In a video posted on X, captioned "High-T Department", Hegseth said he was authorising the screening programme for troops to ensure "you have the right testosterone levels to operate at your absolute best".

Troops with low testosterone levels will be offered voluntary hormone replacement therapy.

Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell said: "All Active Duty and Reserve Component personnel aged 30 and older will undergo mandatory screening for testosterone deficiency during their Periodic Health Assessment."

Personnel younger than age 30 would also be able to request

the screening voluntarily, Parnell added.

"We owe our warriors the absolute best medical care in the world, and this programme delivers on that obligation," Hegseth explained in Wednesday's video.

"Taking care of your long-term health means ensuring you remain strong, resilient and capable - not just for your next deployment, but for the rest of your life, so you can thrive long after you take off the uniform," he added.

Taking testosterone for non-medical reasons, like artificial muscle enhancement without a doctor's prescription, is strictly prohibited in the military.

Hegseth said in the video that the new programme was "not about artificial enhancement".

In his written statement, Parnell added: "The protocol will enable the Department to establish a comprehensive baseline

and offer targeted testosterone therapy, ensuring that it sustains a healthy, capable, and decisively dominant fighting force."

Asked whether both male and female troops would be tested, and if female troops would be able to be evaluated for oestrogen-based therapy as they enter perimenopause, the Pentagon said it had no comment to add to Hegseth and Parnell's statements.

Democratic Senator Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, an Iraq war veteran and member of the armed services committee, called on the defence secretary to make hormone testing available for both men and women.

Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan, a Pennsylvania Democrat and Air Force veteran, dismissed it on X as Hegseth's "latest culture-war obsession".

The truth about taking testosterone

Levels of testosterone in-

crease during puberty. The hormone helps boys to develop muscle strength and body hair as well as make sperm.

At some point during the window between ages 30 and 40, men's testosterone levels naturally start to decline.

Estimates vary, but low testosterone is thought to affect 10-40% of older men globally - which is thought to translate to about 13 million men in the US.

Those men may experience a low mood, reduced sex drive and loss of muscle mass.

A blood test can check the testosterone level and treatment can be given.

Dr Mohit Khara, who led a US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) expert panel last year on screening and testosterone utilisation in the military, told the BBC that all men over 30 should get screened because it is the top marker of a person's overall current and future health.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Eleven people die in fire at Algerian children's care home

Eleven people have died in a fire at a foster care facility in Algiers, Algeria's capital city.

The country's civil protection department said 19 others were injured in the blaze, which firefighters began to tackle at 03:30 local time (04:30 GMT) on Thursday.

They were still attempting to extinguish the fire just over three hours later, when the

authorities released an update on the situation.

The civil protection department's statement did not specify the cause of the fire, nor the ages of those killed or injured.

Ten fire engines and 16 ambulances were deployed to the facility in Mohammadia, an eastern suburb of Algiers.

Algeria has been experiencing a heatwave for several

days, and nearly 1,000 fires have been recorded in the space of a week, the AFP news agency has reported.

On Thursday morning, the civil protection department said it had recorded 115 wildfires over the past 24 hours.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune expressed his condolences following the fire at the children's home, calling the incident a "tragic loss".

Prime Minister Sifi Ghrieb travelled to two hospitals in Algiers to visit individuals injured in Thursday's fire, state media reported.

The report was accompanied by a picture of Ghrieb next to a child in a hospital bed.

Amid the fire, five people with special needs were "taken into care and transported to a safe location", the authorities said.



ALGERIA FIRE SERVICE:

Ten fire engines have been at the foster care home fighting the blaze.

Starmer pledges 'cast-iron support' for Ukraine on final visit as PM

Sir Keir Starmer has said the UK's "cast-iron" support for Ukraine will continue, as he makes a final trip to the country as prime minister.

He will meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in the capital Kyiv later on Thursday, ahead of Andy Burnham's installation as Labour leader and PM.

In comments ahead of his trip, Sir Keir said the "fortitude" of the Ukrainian people since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 had "preserved the security of Europe".

In his statement, Sir Keir highlighted Britain's contribution to the Ukrainian war effort during his two years in Downing Street.

Today is Sir Keir's last day as leader of the Labour Party, with Andy Burnham set to be declared leader on Friday, before meeting the King to be formally invited to form a new government as prime minister on Monday.

Sir Keir has overseen the signing of a 100-year partnership between the two countries, aimed at fostering closer defence and trade ties, and has

led efforts to establish a future peacekeeping force.

"When I became prime minister, I knew the UK must not simply stand with Ukraine in the moment, but help build the foundations of its long-term security and success," he said.

He said the UK had invested more in defence, as well as "leading the way in the war fighting technologies of the future".

Sir Keir added: "And we have brought others with us on that journey. As we showed at the G7 and Nato summits, in recent weeks, the UK and its allies are absolutely united

against Russian aggression."

Zelensky presses Nato for air defence systems after intense Russian strikes

Speaking at the Nato summit in Turkey last week, Zelensky urged allies to focus on air defence systems in the face of intense Russian strikes.

The Ukrainian leader was later granted permission to produce Patriot missiles by US President Donald Trump, which could help defend Kyiv against Russia's ballistic missile attacks.

The first of 150 British-made, artillery barrels are being provided to Ukraine to strengthen their defence under a £61m contract with BAE Systems.

"I am so proud of what Brit-

ain has contributed. That work will continue, and our cast-iron support for Ukraine will always endure," Sir Keir added in his statement.

The visit comes as Russia continues to target the port of Odesa, where the Kremlin said it hit port infrastructure, "used for the unloading of petroleum, oil, and lubricants".

Eight people were killed following Russian attacks on Black Sea oil tankers.

During Sir Keir's final Prime Minister's Questions in the House of Commons on Wednesday, he was praised by Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch for his work on Ukraine and his friendship with Zelensky.

While bidding farewell to MPs, Sir Keir fondly recalled the "emotional moment" when he had welcomed Zelensky to Downing Street in the days after his White House bust-up with US President Donald Trump in February 2025.

"I had a meeting with him to tell him that in this country we will stand with him and Ukraine," he said.

Sir Keir's successor Burnham will become Labour Party leader on Friday, and is expected to take over as prime minister on Monday.



Sir Keir Starmer (right)

'Moment of joy' as Uganda discharges last Ebola patient

The last patient being treated for Ebola in Uganda has been discharged from hospital, leaving the country with no active confirmed cases of the deadly disease.

A 42-day countdown now begins before Uganda can officially be declared Ebola-free, as long as no new infections emerge.

The first case in this outbreak of the Bundibugyo species of the virus in Uganda was confirmed in May. The patient was a man who had travelled from neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, the outbreak's epicentre, for medical treatment.

In all, Uganda recorded 20 confirmed cases, mostly among visitors from DR Congo, and two deaths.

There have been more than 2,000 confirmed infections and 796 deaths in DR Congo, according to government data.

Speaking after Uganda's last Ebola patient left hospital, Health Minister Dr Chris Baryomunsi described it as "a moment of joy".

"It demonstrates that with early detection, prompt treatment and a strong health system, Ebola can be defeated."

Nevertheless, the ministry of health has urged people to "remain vigilant".

"If you develop symptoms such as fever, vomiting, diarrhoea or unexplained bleeding, seek immediate medical care," it said in a statement on X.

Uganda has experienced several Ebola outbreaks over the last two decades and now

has well established protocols to deal with the virus. These include isolation of suspected cases and contact tracing as well as targeted public health messages.

Meanwhile, the authorities in DR Congo are still battling to get the spread of the virus under control.

It is thought that it could have been in the community undetected for months before the outbreak was officially declared two months ago. Earlier this week, a World Health Organization official said the true number of infections could be four times larger than recorded.

In response to the latest situation, the US has announced that citizens who have been in DR Congo and want to return home must spend 21 days in a third country before being allowed into America.

Previously, they had been able to enter at select airports, where they were went through a screening process.

The new rule could affect recruitment of US medics who want to work in Ebola-affected areas, Franklin Graham, the CEO of an organisation that operates Ebola treatment centres, told the Reuters news agency.

Ebola is caused by a virus which attacks the body's immune system and organs.

It normally infects animals, typically fruit bats, but outbreaks among humans can sometimes start when people handle infected animals. It is spread through bodily fluids like blood.

Fraud crackdown on Ghana ID cards makes digital checks compulsory - photocopies banned

All businesses and other institutions in Ghana must now use a biometric app scanner to check national identity cards under new rules aimed at strengthening security and curbing fraud.

Until now many of them have just visually checked or photocopied the card for their records, which has made it possible for criminals to impersonate someone.

All Ghanaian citizens and foreign residents in the country must carry a plastic biometric national ID known as the "Ghana Card".

Introduced over the last decade, the Ghana Card has become central to daily life in the West African nation and is needed to access banking services, register Sim cards and to obtain a passport or driver's licence.

The biometric data captured on the card by the country's National Identification Authority (NIA) includes 10 fingerprints, iris scans as well as a

photograph and signature.

In future those checking the card will have to use a mobile phone app that checks that data after scanning the card.

"It is now an offence to photocopy or visually inspect a Ghana Card for the purpose of transaction. Biometric verification is now mandatory," said Wisdom Yayra Koku Deku, the NIA chief, in a statement.

Organisations that continue using photocopies or visual ID checks risk prosecution, with fines of up to 24,000 Ghanaian cedis (about \$2,100 or £1,550). Individuals face fines of up to 6,000 Ghanaian cedis (about \$525 or £390), NIA said.

The agency urged organisations that were not yet connected to its digital identity verification app to begin the process immediately.

Deku said the government would, in the coming days, brief the public on the implementation of the amended regulations and measures to ensure compliance.

Opinion

Okpebholo's Investment in Scientific Agriculture is Food Security for Edo



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

It dawned on me yesterday that Nigerians are really suffering when a small ice fish in the market was sold for N8,000.

The prices of everything, especially food stuff have been on the increase beyond the reach of most people on nearly a daily basis.

A bag of rice in the Market costs more than a month's wage of some family breadwinner, and the situation is even pathetic for families with more children to cater for.

Items such as Garri, yam, and pepper have all doubled. Interestingly, while people are complaining of hunger, the vast fertile land coupled with favourable rainfall, with youths ready to work are idling away across the country.

This is why the Edo State Government has established 3 new campuses of the College of Agriculture and to push Agriculture into the system scientifically.

The Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has signed the bill amending the name and governing structure of the state school of Agriculture

to be known as the Edo state College of Agriculture, Science and Technology currently being operated in three campuses across the state

The school was formerly known as College of Agriculture and Natural Resources before it was amended by the Governor because Agriculture has gone scientific.

There is no doubt that the amended law will bring about a lot of improvement in the school and the state would benefit immensely from this development that will provide work force in the agricultural sector

This amended law is coming at the right time when every state has been charged with the responsibility of meeting its food consumption rate

The Governor no doubt believes that the state should be able to produce at least 95 percent of what is consumed and Agriculture should be used to increase internally generated revenue of the state.

This move by the state government if properly implemented, scientific agriculture can feed Edo people, cut food prices, and employ thousands of graduates.

Today, most farming in Edo is still done with cutlass and hoe. A farmer in Etsako East plants by guesswork. Another in Igueben loses 40% of his tomatoes to pests because he has no training. We rely on food from the North while our own land wastes.

There would be high food prices, youth unemployment, and importation of things we can grow here like rice, cassava, and vegetables.

The Governor has demonstrated his seriousness about what ever he wants to do. We are witness to the distribution of construction equipment to the eighteen local government areas to open up the rural communities and grade roads

that will assist farmers take their farm produce to the market.

When the Governor disclosed that Agriculture has gone scientific it was not just grammar. It means soil testing before planting. It means drip irrigation.

It means improved seedlings from research, pest control, and mechanization.

Provision of loans and grants to farmers to buy tractors and inputs.

It means taking farmers off the streets and training them in modern methods

Building storage, processing plants, and rural roads from farm to market, Partner with universities to develop crops that resist flood and drought.

The expectation therefore is that when a farmer in Agenebode, can produce 3 times more cassava on the same land, food prices must fall.

The creation of 3 campuses of the College of Agriculture which is the engine room for this vision will bring about a lot of improvement in the school and the state would benefit from this development

With the 3 campuses in Edo South, Edo Central, and Edo North a youth in Irrua or Igarra will not need to travel to Benin to study agriculture.

Edo South campus can focus on fishery and vegetables. Edo Central on cassava and palm oil. Edo North on rice and maize.

The colleges will produce graduates who become extension officers, agri-entrepreneurs, and researchers. Not job seekers, but job creators.

Each campus can run a demonstration farm and farmers in that zone will copy what works.

This is not a waste of money. It is an investment. For every N1 the government puts into agriculture education, the state will get N5 back

in food and jobs.

The answer is political will and Governor Okpebholo has demonstrated that If the government can fund new ministries, they can fund farms.

There is no doubt that people are hungry, but Edo land is not barren. The solution is in our hands and in our soil and Governor Okpebholo has taken the right steps in the right direction.

The Governor has signed the bill into law amending the name and governing structure of the state school of Agriculture to Edo state College of Agriculture, Science and Technology to create job opportunities for the teeming youths who will engage in farming, livestock rearing and agricultural husbandry.

The rebranded College of Agriculture, Science and Technology will operate across 3 campuses with Iguoriakhi the main campus focusing on Agriculture technology, Uromi Campus for Forestry and Agenebode campus for Aquaculture.

With this development by the state government it is expected that in 3 years, an Edo mother will buy a basket of tomatoes without crying and the fish which I bought so expensive will be cheap and affordable.

In 5 years, "Made in Edo" rice will be in every market. That is obviously the vision of Mr. Governor with the scientific agriculture and these 3 new colleges of Agriculture

The time to plant is now and the Colleges of Agriculture would educate the youths to focus on the breeding, care and daily management of livestock to produce meat, milk, fiber and eggs for Edo people.

• *Eubaldus Enahoro is former Editor of the Nigerian Observer Newspaper.*

The PFIPC scandal and the urgent reforms required

TUNDE RAHMAN

When Prince Adeniyi Adeyemi Mathew walked into Phase III Section of the Federal Secretariat in Abuja with a forged letter and emerged with an office, signage, and a semblance of government legitimacy, he did not act alone. GeographicReference

That is the uncomfortable truth of the "Presidential Foreign Intervention Promotion Council" saga. Adeyemi has been charged with eight counts of fraud and forgery. But the bigger scandal is not one man's alleged audacity. It is how a non-existent agency got close to N1.3bn in the 2026 budget, secured office space in the heart of government, hosted top government functionaries from Nigeria and abroad, and allegedly operated multiple accounts.

This is not a story about Chief of Staff Femi Gbajabiamila versus Prince Adeyemi. This is a story about systemic failure. And until the system is properly fixed, it is quite probable that the next Adeyemi is somewhere forging another letterhead.

There are several systemic breaches in the saga that public finance analysts and other commentators have already pointed out, but they nonetheless require restating. There is a failure of due diligence in budgeting. The 2026 Appropriation Act contained N1.3bn for the "Presidential Economic Advisory Council/PFIPC".

The problem, however, is that PFIPC has no legal backing and was never established by the Federal Government. Government

Top sources in the National Assembly claim the allocation entered "through a backdoor arrangement" without budget defence. For whatever his statement is worth, Adeyemi, in

his interview with social media influencer, VeryDarkMan, from his hideout, said he was detained for 23 days while the budget was being prepared. "I did not prepare or defend any budget, and nobody went to defend it on my behalf," he said. That means the appropriation to the fake agency bypassed the committees that should have asked probing questions such as: "Which agency is this?" What is its mandate? Who are its staff members?

Since the rebirth of democracy over 27 years ago, Nigeria's budget process has been criticised for "insertions" and "undue inflation". PFIPC is now the clearest example of why that matters. A ghost agency should not be able to get real money. If the Budget Office, House of Representatives, and Senate all missed this, our first line of fiscal defence needs a long, hard look.

There is also the issue of appointment and office verification. Adeyemi allegedly used a forged appointment letter bearing Gbajabiamila's purported signature and counterfeit presidential letterhead to present himself as DG. Gbajabiamila's lawyers insist he has "never had any contact whatsoever with Adeyemi". Yet somehow, that letter was "accepted at the civil service headquarters without adequate verification". It secured him an office in the Federal Secretariat for over a year. Up until this month, a sign for PFIPC was still up, directing visitors to the "council's purported office" inside the Ministry of Health wing. Africans& Diaspora

Just think about that. The administrative hub of the Federal Civil Service could not detect a fake appointment. If letterheads and signatures of top government functionaries are that easy to forge and accept, then no MDA is safe. Tomorrow, it could be a fake NCC or NDDC director.

And next week, possibly a fake university VC.

The third system failure is about banking and due diligence. Adeyemi allegedly opened an account with the Central Bank of Nigeria for the non-existent agency. Adeyemi himself asked the most damning question in a viral video: "The same acclaimed non-existent agency has a domiciliary account, a pounds sterling account and a Treasury Single Account, all domiciled in the Central Bank of Nigeria. Is it even possible to open an account with fictitious documents in a commercial bank in Nigeria today, let alone at the CBN?"

He also allegedly operated 34 bank accounts linked to fictitious agencies. Banks and government revenue platforms are required by law to conduct a KYC (know your customer) check. How did 34 accounts get opened? Who approved the TSA linkage? The EFCC has recovered items and made arrests, but the institutions that enabled the financial plumbing have not been named. Government

But how does the Chief of Staff come into all of this? Where does he fit into, for the life of me? Adeyemi alleged that Gbajabiamila demanded 48% of a N27.4bn take-off grant and collected N400m through proxies.

Gbajabiamila says he has never met Adeyemi in his life and no proxy has acted on his behalf. His lawyers call the allegations "false and gravely defamatory" and have slammed a N10bn suit on Adeyemi. Adeyemi himself admitted in the VDM interview that he never met Gbajabiamila.

Truth is, Gbajabiamila's office does not issue appointments. Presidential Spokesman Bayo Onanuga had pointed out that much in a statement. The matter of appointment is the prerogative of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, which is the clearing house for all

appointments made by the President. Even then, the CoS's letterhead and signature were also found to have been forged. Africans& Diaspora

It was the Office of the CoS that first "blew the whistle" about the fake agency after the Nigeria Investment Promotion Council flagged it. Gbajabiamila caused a disclaimer to be placed on Adeyemi following which he was arrested by the police and arraigned in court.

It is instructive that President Bola Tinubu has directed the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission to investigate the entire scandal. That is a commendable step. The President also did not leave the duration of the investigation open-ended; he ordered that the probe be concluded within a month. It was also gathered that KPMG may be brought in if there are larger accounting issues to untangle.

Also, whereas the House of Representatives has elected to launch its own investigations into the matter, the Senate has suspended its own probe, rightfully backing the President's action. ExecutiveBranch

My point is that the investigation and the legal process must run their course. The CoS should not be guillotined, literally. There should be a presumption of innocence until he is proven guilty.

But the more important point is this: even if every allegation against the CoS is false, as it appears to be, the fact that his name and signature could be forged, and used to access government property still suggests some vulnerability in the administrative controls.

All of that has made a reform of the system imperative.

• *Rahman is Senior Special Assistant to President Tinubu on Media & Special Duties.*

FEATURE

Behind the terminal: The unseen risks facing Nigeria's POS operators

USMAN ALIYU (NAN)

By 6 a.m., the Post Office motor park in Ilorin was already awake.

Commercial buses revved impatiently as conductors shouted destinations to Osogbo, Iwo and Ibadan, while hawkers threaded through commuters balancing baskets of bread, soft drinks and sachet water.

A few metres away, Halimat Opa-kunle arranged neat bundles of naira notes, switched on her Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal and prepared for what she expected would be another ordinary business day.

For nearly five years, the mother of five had followed the same routine. Unable to secure formal employment after graduation, Opa-kunle turned to agent banking, joining thousands of Nigerians who have built livelihoods by bringing financial services closer to communities where banks are scarce and ATMs frequently fail or are unavailable.

"There was no job after I graduated. That was why I started the POS business," she recalled.

However, nothing about June 2, 2025, suggested her life was about to change. Two young men approached her, saying they were travelling to Iwo in Osun, ahead of the Eid-el-Kabir celebration.

One withdrew N100,000, paying a N2,000 service charge. Moments later, they requested a transfer of N700,000, explaining that someone in Iwo needed to buy rams before prices rose.

One of the men produced a debit card, inserted it into the POS terminal himself and entered the correct Personal Identification Number (PIN). The terminal displayed a familiar message: APPROVED.

Opa-kunle transferred the money to the account they provided. The customers thanked her and disappeared into the morning crowd.

Nearly two weeks later, she received a police invitation. Investigators told her the debit card used in the transaction had allegedly been stolen.

"I didn't know it was a stolen card. They brought the ATM card themselves. They inserted it themselves and entered the PIN. How was I supposed to know it was a stolen card," she said.

That single transaction has since drawn Opa-kunle into a prolonged legal battle. Court appearances now compete with business hours, reducing her income and draining family savings.

Her father even paid N25,000 to obtain National Identification Number (NIN) records that investigators believed could help trace the recipient account.

When a suspect was reportedly identified in Abuja, the family offered to fund the logistics for his arrest, but the case instead proceeded to court.

"I've just continued going to court. There is nothing else I can do," she said quietly.

The Unseen Risk of Financial Inclusion

Opa-kunle's experience is not an isolated case. Her ordeal reflects a little-known consequence of Nigeria's digital payments revolution.

7 WHY NIGERIANS DEPEND ON POS OPERATORS

From cash to convenience: POS agents bring banking closer, faster and easier for millions of Nigerians.



Cash Withdrawals

Quick access to cash without long queues or travel to the bank.



Cash Deposits

Easy and convenient deposits for individuals and businesses.



Money Transfers

Send and receive money instantly across banks and accounts.



Bill Payments

Pay electricity, internet, cable TV, airtime and other bills with ease.



Banking in Underserved Communities

Bringing financial services to areas with no bank branches.



Alternative When ATMs Fail or Run Out of Cash

A reliable option when ATMs are unavailable or empty.

POS operators are the everyday heroes of financial inclusion, serving millions and keeping the cashless economy moving.

8 HOW EXPERTS SAY INNOCENT OPERATORS CAN BE PROTECTED

Stronger technology. Smarter policies. Better collaboration.

TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

- Smart POS Terminals**
Advanced devices with built-in security and fraud detection.
- BNV Verification**
Link transactions to the customer's Bank Verification Number.
- NIN Verification**
Use National Identification Number to confirm customer identity.
- Facial Recognition**
Match customer's face with verified identity records.
- Fingerprint Authentication**
Add fingerprint as an extra layer of verification.
- Liveness Testing**
Confirm a real person is behind the transaction.
- Camera-enabled Terminals**
Capture images/videos to support evidence in case of disputes.

POLICY & ECOSYSTEM REFORMS

- Better KYC Procedures**
Stronger customer verification, especially for high-value transactions.
- Continuous Agent Training**
Regular training for POS agents on fraud prevention and best practices.
- Faster Information Sharing**
Real-time data exchange between banks, agents and investigators.
- Stronger Collaboration Among Key Stakeholders**
Working together to protect customers, support honest operators and punish real fraudsters.

Protecting innocent operators means protecting financial inclusion. The right systems today prevent unnecessary arrests tomorrow.

While the rapid expansion of digital banking has driven unprecedented financial inclusion, interviews with the POS operators across the city, officials of the Kwara Association of Professional Point-of-Sale Agents (KAPPSA), law enforcement authorities, and fintech experts reveal a troubling tension at the heart of Nigeria's cashless revolution.

The same neighbourhood entrepreneurs driving financial inclusion are increasingly finding themselves under criminal investigation after fraudsters allegedly exploit gaps in the country's digital payment system. Over the past decade, POS operators have become the face of banking for millions of Nigerians, processing withdrawals, transfers, bill payments and deposits while creating livelihoods for thousands of unemployed graduates, women and young entrepreneurs.

In communities where bank branches are scarce, ATMs frequently run out of cash and internet banking remains unreliable, they have become the closest thing to a neighbourhood bank.

According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), more than 2.93 million POS terminals had been deployed across the country by the first half of 2024, up from 2.45 million six months earlier. During the same period, POS terminals processed 6.4 billion transactions valued at N85.9 trillion, reflecting Nigerians' growing reliance on neighbourhood agents for everyday financial services.

Yet for many operators, every transaction now carries an unseen risk.

Abubakar Ibrahim knows that feeling well too. After struggling to secure formal employment, the graduate built a thriving POS business, expanding from one outlet to three in Ilorin. Then one customer arrived carrying two debit cards. The first transaction failed. The second went through.

Months later, investigators informed him that the cards had allegedly been stolen. Determined to avoid prolonged litigation, Ibrahim eventually paid more than N200,000 to settle the matter – money he insists

he never benefited from.

"If I had used that money to feed my family, I would know they benefited from it. Instead, it felt like I threw my hard-earned money into fire," he said.

Gbenga Adaramola, a zonal chairman of KAPPSA, recalled rushing to the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) headquarters after one of his members was arrested over a N300,000 withdrawal allegedly made with a stolen card.

Ironically, the operator had borrowed cash from neighbouring POS agents to complete the transaction because he lacked sufficient liquidity.

"The commission he made was about N2,500. He didn't even have the money. He sourced it from other operators just to satisfy the customer," Adaramola said.

After more than a year in court, the case was dismissed when inconsistencies emerged in the prosecution's evidence.

For Oyewole Ariyo, the ordeal began when his business account was frozen months after a customer allegedly withdrew N158,000 using a stolen debit card.

Fortunately, Ariyo had kept handwritten records of large transactions. When investigators showed him photographs of suspects, he immediately recognised the customer.

Although investigators later identified the suspect, Ariyo said his account remained frozen for more than two months, disrupting his business.

The Legal Burden on Operators
Individually, each case appears unrelated. But together, they reveal a recurring pattern: a customer presents a physical debit card, enters the correct PIN, the banking system approves the transaction, and days or weeks later investigators arrive after the card is reported stolen.

To Ridwan Opa-kunle, Chairman of KAPPSA, the pattern exposes a gap in Nigeria's rapidly evolving digital payments ecosystem.

"Our members are not against investigations. If someone commits a crime, the law should take its course. But op-

erators who merely provide legitimate banking services should not bear the burden of proving their innocence simply because a transaction passed through their terminals," he said.

Most operators, he said, were young entrepreneurs or women running small businesses with limited capital.

"When an account is frozen or an operator is repeatedly attending court, it is not just the business that suffers, it affects families, children's school fees and the livelihoods of people who depend on that income," he said.

Opa-kunle said KAPPSA's more than 25,000 registered members have been affected by near-daily arrests, with several operators standing trial or refunding disputed sums over transactions linked to allegedly stolen debit cards.

He called for stronger collaboration among regulators, banks, fintech companies and security agencies to protect both victims of fraud and innocent operators.

"We all want fraudsters arrested. But we also need a system that identifies the real criminals without discouraging the people helping to expand financial inclusion across Nigeria," he said.

Meanwhile, while the affected POS operators alleged repeated arrests, extortion and unfair treatment by some security operatives, law enforcement authorities rejected claims that POS agents are automatically treated as suspects in cases involving stolen debit card transactions.

According to ASC Shola Ayoola, Public Relations Officer of the NSCDC in the state, investigations are driven by evidence, not assumptions.

Ayoola explained that unlike ATMs, which operate without direct human interaction, POS terminals are managed by identifiable individuals who may have physically encountered the customer.

"That makes the operator a vital point of inquiry," said the NSCDC spokesperson.

He stressed that investigators first analyse transaction records, interview

relevant persons and review available evidence before deciding whether an arrest is necessary.

The spokesperson of the police in Kwara, SP Adetoun Ejire-Adeyemi shared the same position.

According to her, POS operators are usually questioned because they represent the last known physical point where the disputed transaction occurred.

"The objective is to establish facts, not assumptions," she said, explaining that investigators rely on transaction records, witness statements, CCTV footage where available and other digital evidence before making arrests.

Both agencies acknowledged that investigations sometimes cleared people initially suspected and supported stronger technology to improve evidence gathering.

They also admitted that tracking financial fraud has become more difficult as criminals constantly change tactics, using stolen identities, multiple bank accounts, improperly registered SIM cards and rapidly moving funds across several accounts before victims discover the theft.

The absence of surveillance technology at many POS locations, they maintained, further complicates investigations.

That is where fintech experts believe Nigeria's digital payments ecosystem must evolve.

LAYERED BIOMETRICS AS A PATH FORWARD

Mr Hussein Olarewaju, founder, HAQ Technology Management Services, said financial institutions already deploy sophisticated fraud detection systems capable of monitoring unusual transaction patterns, unfamiliar devices and suspicious account activity.

He noted that the CBN had introduced liveness testing for certain high-risk transactions, enabling financial institutions to compare a customer's live facial image with existing Know Your Customer (KYC) records before approving payments.

When language fades, culture follows



People with different traditions and Language

RUKAYYA SALIHU

Language is far more than a means of communication. It is the repository of a people's history, culture, identity and worldview. Through language, societies preserve their traditions, transmit moral values, recount historical events and pass indigenous knowledge from one generation to the next. Proverbs, folktales, songs, rituals and oral histories all derive their meaning from the languages in which they are expressed. When a language disappears, an irreplaceable part of a people's cultural heritage disappears with it.

Today, however, Nigeria's rich linguistic heritage faces an unprecedented challenge. The rapid expansion of digital technology, coupled with the dominance of English across education, entertainment, social media and artificial intelligence, is steadily pushing many indigenous languages to the margins. Smartphones, streaming platforms, search engines and AI-powered communication tools increasingly shape how people interact, creating an environment where global languages flourish while many local tongues struggle for survival.

Nigeria is among the world's most linguistically diverse nations, with more than 500 indigenous languages spoken across its ethnic communities. This remarkable diversity has long been one of the country's greatest cultural assets. Yet urbanisation, migration, globalisation, changing educational priorities and the social prestige attached to English have combined to weaken the everyday use of many mother tongues.

In many Nigerian households, parents deliberately communicate with their children almost exclusively in

English, believing that fluency in the language offers better educational and economic prospects. While English undoubtedly remains important for national and international engagement, this shift often comes at the expense of indigenous languages. Increasingly, many young Nigerians understand their ancestral language but cannot speak it confidently, while others have little or no knowledge of it. Research has shown that language choices within educated bilingual homes are contributing significantly to the decline in intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, with many parents placing limited importance on raising children fluent in their native tongues.

The consequences extend far beyond vocabulary. Indigenous languages carry unique cultural concepts that cannot easily be translated into English or any other language. Traditional greetings, praise poetry, idiomatic expressions, oral literature, indigenous medicine and community values are deeply rooted in the linguistic structures that created them. As these languages decline, so too does access to centuries of accumulated knowledge and cultural wisdom.

Recognising this danger, language preservation efforts are gaining momentum. A 2026 report by *The Guardian Nigeria* highlighted the country's expanding language preservation drive, noting that organisations and researchers have documented more than 200 Nigerian indigenous languages in audiovisual formats. These recordings preserve oral histories, traditional knowledge, folklore and cultural practices in their original languages, ensuring that valuable linguistic heritage is not lost to future generations.

Digital platforms are also becoming powerful tools for language revitalisation. In his 2026 study, *The Role of Social Media in Preserving Indigenous Nigerian Languages*, published by the IRASS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr. Heavens Ugochukwu Obasi argues that social media has transformed from being merely a communication platform into an important space for sustaining indigenous languages. According to the study, Facebook,

X, WhatsApp, TikTok and YouTube now enable users to share proverbs, folk stories, translated content, indigenous music and cultural expressions with younger audiences, helping to strengthen language communities across geographical boundaries.

The technology sector is making equally significant contributions. Organisations working in African language technology, including the Centre for Digital Inclusion of African Languages (CDIAL) and similar initiatives, are developing multilingual keyboards, digital dictionaries, translation systems, speech-recognition software and artificial intelligence datasets designed specifically for underrepresented African languages. Their work seeks to ensure that indigenous languages remain functional in today's digital ecosystem rather than becoming excluded from emerging technologies. Research into low-resource Nigerian languages has also accelerated, with recent studies successfully developing English-Efik machine translation systems and pioneering text-to-speech models that establish a foundation for future AI applications in the language.

These developments underscore an important reality: the future of indigenous languages will depend not only on cultural pride but also on digital inclusion. Artificial intelligence systems learn from the data available to them. If Nigerian languages are absent from digital datasets, voice assistants, translation software and other AI-powered services, they risk becoming increasingly invisible in education, commerce, governance and everyday communication.

Preserving Nigeria's linguistic diversity therefore requires deliberate national action. Governments must

strengthen policies supporting mother-tongue education in the early years of schooling. Educational institutions should encourage bilingual literacy, ensuring that children become proficient in both English and their indigenous language. Media organisations can contribute by expanding programming in local languages, while technology companies should continue investing in language localisation, digital content creation and AI tools capable of understanding and processing Nigerian languages accurately.

Families also have a crucial responsibility. Language preservation begins at home, where children first learn to speak, listen and understand their cultural identity. Parents and grandparents who actively communicate with younger generations in their mother tongue help sustain traditions that no digital archive can fully replace.

Nigeria's linguistic diversity is not merely a cultural asset; it is a national resource that reflects the country's history, creativity and collective identity. Protecting indigenous languages should therefore be viewed as an investment in cultural sustainability rather than an obstacle to modernisation.

The digital age does not have to become the era in which Nigeria's indigenous languages disappear. Instead, it can become the period in which technology serves as a powerful instrument for their revival and global visibility. By embracing innovation while preserving tradition, Nigeria can ensure that its mother tongues remain living languages—spoken in homes, taught in schools, represented in digital platforms and understood by future generations.

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African languages. Their work seeks to ensure that indigenous languages remain functional in today's digital ecosystem rather than becoming excluded from emerging technologies

FEATURE

The day we start calling ourselves snakes

SULAIMAN ALEDEH

There is something far more dangerous than a gun. It is an idea.

An idea repeated so often that it begins to sound like the truth. An idea whispered in homes, shouted at political rallies, amplified on the radio, circulated on WhatsApp, rewarded on social media and eventually accepted by society.

The idea that some human beings are worth less than others.

Lately, I have watched with a heavy heart as Nigerians casually describe entire ethnic groups in language that should trouble every decent conscience. One comment in particular has refused to leave my mind. It declared that if one encountered a member of a certain tribe and a snake at the same time, the person should be killed before the snake.

Read that again.

Not because of anything that individual had done.

Not because of any crime committed.

Simply because of the tribe into which they were born.

If that does not frighten us, perhaps we have stopped paying attention to history.

Before Rwanda descended into genocide in 1994, hatred did not begin with machetes. It began with language. It began with labels. It began with the systematic dehumanisation of fellow citizens. Tutsis were repeatedly referred to as *inyenzi*—"cockroaches." Once people cease to be seen as human beings, violence becomes easier to justify.

In one hundred horrifying days, more than 800,000 lives were lost.

History is not merely something we read.

It is something we ignore at our own peril.

As a journalist, I have spent decades reporting on Nigeria. My work has taken me across communities, cultures and faiths. I have shared meals with strangers who became friends. I have been welcomed into homes by people who neither spoke my language nor worshipped the



SULAIMAN ALEDEH

way I do. Some of the most generous people I have ever encountered came from places I had never visited before.

I have also experienced disappointment from people who looked like me, spoke my language, and shared my background.

That is why I reject, completely and without apology, the dangerous habit of judging millions of people by the actions of a few.

Character has no tribe.

Integrity has no religion.

Compassion has no ethnicity.

Neither does wickedness.

When we say an entire tribe is dishonest, violent or untrustworthy, we are not making an observation.

We are manufacturing prejudice.

The tragedy is that our politics often encourages this poison.

Too often, elections are fought not on ideas but on identity, not on competence but on ethnicity. Citizens are persuaded to vote out of fear rather than hope. After victory, some leaders surround themselves almost exclusively with people from familiar backgrounds, leaving others to feel excluded from the promise of equal

citizenship.

Then, when another election approaches, they suddenly rediscover the language of unity.

Nigeria deserves better.

A governor is not elected to govern one town, one clan or one ethnic group. The oath of office does not recognise tribal boundaries. Every citizen deserves equal dignity, equal opportunity and equal protection.

The same principle applies in the National Assembly. While senators represent specific districts, the laws they debate shape the lives of over 200 million Nigerians. The national interest must always rise above ethnic loyalties.

This is why leadership that speaks to national concerns deserves acknowledgement. Senator Adams Oshiomhole, representing Edo North, has in recent times drawn attention for interventions on issues affecting Nigerians beyond his immediate constituency, including matters concerning citizens at home and in the diaspora. Whether one agrees with every position he takes or not, public service should consistently strive to

place the wider national good above narrow interests.

That is the kind of leadership Nigeria should encourage.

I also speak today to my own profession.

The media must never become an accomplice to division.

Our responsibility is not merely to report events but to protect truth from manipulation. A microphone can educate, but it can also inflame. A headline can unite, but it can also divide. Every editor, producer, presenter, publisher and media owner must recognise that words carry consequences far beyond today's news cycle.

We must never become another Rwanda because journalists abandoned ethics.

We must never become another Rwanda because politicians found hatred politically profitable.

We must never become another Rwanda because ordinary citizens chose silence.

As the 2027 elections draw nearer, we must ask ourselves a simple but profound question:

What kind of Nigeria do we want

to leave behind?

One where children inherit suspicion before they learn to be friends?

One where surnames determine opportunity?

One where faith decides citizenship?

Or one where merit matters more than ancestry?

Nigeria's diversity is not our greatest weakness.

It is our greatest strength—if only we have the wisdom to embrace it.

Our energies should be invested in building schools instead of stereotypes, hospitals instead of hostility, industries instead of insults, and institutions instead of intolerance. Every state capital should aspire to the highest standards of planning, infrastructure and public service. Nigerians deserve development, not division.

To every politician, I say this: stop feeding the fires you cannot control.

To every journalist, guard your credibility more jealously than your audience numbers.

To every religious leader, preach compassion louder than identity.

To every young Nigerian scrolling through social media tonight, refuse to inherit hatred from those who came before you.

Question it.

Reject it.

Rise above it.

No election is worth the blood of a single Nigerian.

No political ambition is greater than the survival of our Republic.

No tribe is our enemy.

Our true enemies are corruption, injustice, ignorance, poverty, intolerance and leadership that thrives on division.

One day, history will ask what we did when hatred knocked on Nigeria's door.

May it never be said that we opened it.

May we choose dialogue over division.

Justice over prejudice.

Citizenship over ethnicity.

And Nigeria over everything else.

May God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Oyo Abductees' Rescue and the Court of Public Opinion

CHUKWUFUMNAYAN ADIGWE

After 56 days of sustained public outcry over the abduction of teachers and pupils from schools in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State, there was finally relief in the air. On Friday, 10 July 2026, news of their rescue broke, and celebrations quickly filled homes, schools, and social media timelines. Videos circulating online showed tearful reunions, prayers of thanksgiving, and communities in Oriire, Yawota, and Esiele dancing in the streets. For families who had spent nearly two months in fear and uncertainty, the safe return of their children and colleagues felt like the lifting of a heavy cloud.

In any other era, such a rescue would have marked the end of the story. The public would have exhaled, offered prayers, and moved on. But in 2026 Nigeria, the government's announcement was met not only with joy but also with intense scrutiny. The

rescue became a referendum on trust, competence, and the state's responsibility to protect its citizens. What should have been a moment of unalloyed celebration turned into what many now call "the court of public opinion," where every official statement, every video, and every silence was examined, debated, and sometimes dismissed.

This article examines how the Oriire abduction unfolded, how public pressure shaped the response, and why the rescue, while welcome, has done little to restore confidence in the government's ability to secure lives and property.

The incident began in the early morning of Thursday, 15 May 2026, when heavily armed gunmen stormed three schools in Oriire LGA: Baptist Nursery and Primary School in Yawota, L.A. Primary School, and Community Grammar School in Esiele, also known locally as Ahoro-Esinle. Witnesses reported that the attackers

arrived on motorcycles, shooting sporadically to create panic before herding teachers and pupils into waiting vehicles.

During the raid, one teacher was killed on the spot. Several pupils and teachers were forced into the forest and taken toward the fringes of the Old Oyo National Park, a vast expanse that has become a known hideout for bandit groups operating across Oyo, Kwara, and Niger States. By midday, the news had spread across WhatsApp groups, radio stations, and community leaders' networks.

The immediate response from parents was anguish. Mothers gathered at school gates that were now empty. Fathers drove from farm to farm asking questions. Within 24 hours, the hashtag #BringBackOriireChildren began trending. Civil society organizations, parent-teacher associations, and traditional rulers issued statements condemning the attack and demanding urgent action.

56 Days of Pressure: From Classrooms to Concerts

What followed was nearly two months of relentless advocacy. The abduction did not fade from public consciousness because Nigerians refused to let it.

DIGITAL ACTIVISM

Throughout the period of captivity, social media became the primary town square. Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram were filled with daily posts demanding the release of the victims. AI-generated images depicting gaunt children in captivity, tearful mothers, and empty classrooms flooded timelines. While some criticized the use of AI as sensational, others argued it was the only way to keep the story visible in an overloaded news cycle.

Netizens tagged the Presidency, the Oyo State Government, security agencies, and international bodies

daily. Online petitions gathered tens of thousands of signatures. Influencers changed profile pictures to include the names of the missing teachers and pupils.

LABOR AND COMMUNITY ACTION

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) did not wait. Teachers across Oyo State embarked on a warning strike, later extended indefinitely. In Ibadan, Ogbomosho, and Oyo town, teachers marched with placards reading "Our Colleagues Are Not Numbers" and "Schools Are Not War Zones." The NUT warned that until the government guaranteed safety, many rural schools would remain closed.

Community leaders in Oriire organized nightly vigils. Churches and mosques held joint prayers. Market women in Akinmorin contributed money to support families who had lost breadwinners.

COLUMN

Beyond politics: Should the location of a new university matter?



I read with considerable consternation the reactions on social media to reports that the Edo State Government led by Governor Monday Okpebholo may establish a new university in Udomi, Esan Central Local Government Area. Long before any official details had been fully explained, the proposal had already become the subject of intense political debate, ethnic sentiments and personal attacks by netizens.

Rather than engaging in a thoughtful discussion about the merits and possible drawbacks of the project, many commentators appeared more interested in where the institution would be located than in what it could potentially achieve.

The controversy raises an important public policy question: should the location of a university be judged primarily by the hometown of the governor who initiates it, or by the benefits it can bring to society? This question deserves a calm and objective examination.

Universities are established to fulfil several critical functions. They provide access to higher education, develop skilled manpower, conduct research, promote innovation, and contribute to economic and social development. They are not merely clusters of lecture halls and administrative buildings; they are centres of knowledge creation and human capital development. Wherever they are situated, their ultimate purpose is to serve the wider public rather than a particular community or political constituency.

One of the strongest arguments advanced by supporters of new universities is the growing demand for tertiary education in Nigeria. Every year, hundreds of thousands of qualified candidates seek admission into universities across the country. A significant proportion of them fail to secure admission, not necessarily because they lack the required qualifications, but because available spaces are grossly inadequate.

This admission crisis has persisted for decades. Existing universities simply cannot absorb the growing number of applicants. As a result, many young Nigerians are either forced to abandon their educational aspirations or seek alternatives that may be beyond their financial reach.

Against this backdrop, the establishment of additional universities can be viewed as part of the broader effort to expand educational opportunities. Whether such institutions are located in urban centres or rural communities, their primary objective should be to provide more opportunities for learning and professional development.

Another important consideration is the economic impact of a university on its host community and surrounding areas. Universities often function

as catalysts for development. Their presence creates direct employment opportunities for lecturers, researchers, administrators, laboratory technologists, librarians, security personnel and numerous other categories of workers.

Beyond direct employment, universities stimulate economic activities that benefit a wide range of people. Accommodation providers, transport operators, food vendors, artisans, contractors, printers, bookshops and various service providers often experience increased demand for their services. Small businesses flourish, property values may appreciate, and infrastructure development frequently follows.

In many parts of Nigeria, communities that host universities have witnessed significant socio-economic transformation over time. Roads are improved, telecommunications services expand, commercial activities increase and the local economy becomes more vibrant. These benefits often extend beyond the immediate host community to neighbouring towns and villages.

This reality explains why many communities actively lobby governments to establish tertiary institutions within their areas. They recognise that universities are not merely educational centres; they are also engines of development.

Critics of the proposed institution, however, raise concerns that deserve consideration. Some argue that locating a university in the governor's local government area may create perceptions of favouritism or political patronage. Public perception matters in democratic governance, and governments must always strive to demonstrate fairness and inclusiveness in the distribution of public projects.

Yet perception alone should not become the sole basis for judging a project's merit. A university should be evaluated according to objective criteria. Is there sufficient land? Is the location accessible? Can the institution be adequately funded? Does it address a genuine educational need? Will it operate according to established academic standards? Will admissions and employment processes be transparent and merit-based?

These questions are far more important than assumptions based solely on geographical location.

There is no gainsaying the fact that every president, governor or council chairman seeks to leave an enduring legacy by attracting development to their immediate community and improving the quality of life of their people. It was, perhaps, this impulse that informed the decision of the former Edo State Governor, Chief Lucky Igbinedion, to relocate the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) orientation camp from Abudu to his hometown, Okada.



SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO, EDO STATE GOVERNOR

While I do not endorse that decision, one cannot deny that, after eight years in office, he could point to at least one tangible and economically significant project as evidence of his stewardship and commitment to his people. Let us call a spade a spade, not a factor of production.

By contrast, governors from the Edo South Senatorial District who completed their tenure without attracting a single meaningful development project to their communities have little to celebrate. Such a dismal legacy is hardly deserving of public commendation, let alone the prayers and adulation of the very people whose aspirations they failed to advance.

History offers useful lessons in this regard. Across Nigeria, many institutions that now enjoy national and international recognition were established in relatively small or rural communities. Over time, these institutions grew beyond their geographical origins to become centres of excellence serving people from diverse ethnic, religious and social backgrounds.

The value of a university is ultimately measured by the quality of education it provides, the calibre of graduates it produces and its contribution to society. Once operational, a university does not belong exclusively to its host community. Students, lecturers and researchers come from different parts of the country and, in many cases, from different parts of the world.

The experience of various states demonstrates that investment in higher education can contribute significantly to economic growth and human capital development. Delta State, for instance, has expanded its tertiary education landscape over the years through multiple institutions. While the state still faces developmental challenges, these institutions have undoubtedly created employment opportunities and enhanced educational access for many citizens.

The lesson is not that every state should establish universities indiscriminately. Rather, it is that higher education remains an important component of long-term development

planning. When properly managed and adequately funded, universities contribute to workforce development, research advancement and economic productivity.

It is equally important to acknowledge that establishing a university is only the beginning. The greater challenge lies in sustaining it. Nigeria already has numerous institutions struggling with inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, staff shortages and declining academic standards. Therefore, any proposal for a new university must be accompanied by a clear strategy for long-term sustainability.

Buildings alone do not make a university. Quality academic programmes, competent lecturers, modern laboratories, functional libraries, technological infrastructure and effective governance structures are essential. Without these components, a university risks becoming another institution existing in name rather than substance.

Consequently, public discussions should not focus solely on where a university is located. Citizens should also demand information about funding arrangements, academic vision, staffing plans, accreditation processes and governance mechanisms. These factors will ultimately determine whether the institution succeeds or fails.

There is also a broader issue concerning how development projects are viewed in Nigeria. Too often, public discourse is shaped by ethnic, regional or political considerations. Projects are sometimes judged not by their potential benefits but by who initiated them or where they are located.

This does not mean governments should be exempt from accountability. On the contrary, accountability becomes even more important when significant public resources are involved. Citizens have every right to ask difficult questions and demand explanations. However, those questions should focus on the project's viability, cost-effectiveness and expected im-

pact rather than assumptions rooted solely in political rivalry.

If a university can genuinely expand educational opportunities, create employment, stimulate economic activities and contribute to the advancement of knowledge, those potential benefits deserve serious consideration. Equally, if there are legitimate concerns regarding funding, planning or sustainability, those concerns should be openly addressed.

Ultimately, the debate surrounding any proposed university should transcend politics. Educational institutions are long-term investments whose benefits often extend across generations. Governors come and go, political administrations change, and electoral contests eventually fade into history. Universities, however, can endure for decades or even centuries, shaping lives and influencing societies long after their founders have left office.

The real question, therefore, is not whether a university is located in one community or another. The more important question is whether it will fulfil its mission as a centre of learning, research and development for the benefit of present and future generations.

If policymakers remain committed to quality, transparency and sustainability, and if citizens continue to hold them accountable, then the establishment of any new university should be viewed primarily through the lens of educational advancement and public benefit.

In the final analysis, development should be judged not by geography alone but by its capacity to improve lives, expand opportunities and strengthen society as a whole.

Hence, strike while the iron is hot, my indefatigable Governor Okpebholo. You have my full support to establish a university in your domain. Your kith and kin, indeed, all of us will forever applaud your magnanimity.

• Dr. Odaro is a columnist, and lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Nigeria.

FEATURE

Ta ló n pe Ìyá Alákàrà séré?

What the Yoruba were really teaching us about Labour, Poverty, and National Aspiration

LANRE OGUNDIPE

There are folk songs that entertain. There are others that educate. Then there are those rare compositions that outlive generations because they quietly preserve the philosophy of a people. One such timeless Yoruba folklore is the familiar refrain:

"Ta ló n pe Ìyá Alákàrà séré?"
Ìyá Alákàrà!
"Ó n ta sánsán, símí nímú."
Ìyá Alákàrà!
"Ó n ta dódò, símí ló fún."
Ìyá Alákàrà!
"Èmi ò ní pe Ìyá Alákàrà séré."

For decades, children sang those lines without pausing to interrogate their profound meaning. Yet, hidden beneath their playful rhythm is one of the finest statements on the dignity of labour ever composed in Yoruba oral tradition.

Contrary to popular assumption, the song is not about akara.

Neither is it about poverty.

It is about character.

It is about labour.

It is about how society should regard those who earn an honest living.

The opening question is itself an indictment.

"Who is mocking Ìyá Alákàrà?"

It is a question directed not at the woman frying bean cakes but at those who consider themselves too important to respect her vocation.

The response is even more remarkable.

The song does not curse the mocker.

It does not glorify the akara seller.

It simply describes her.

She fries akara.
Its aroma—sánsán—fills the air.
She fries dódò.
Its fragrance announces industry before her voice does.

She is busy.
She is productive.
She is feeding society.
Then comes the moral climax:
"Èmi ò ní pe Ìyá Alákàrà séré."
I will not mock the akara seller.
Notice the beauty of Yoruba ethics.
The lesson ends not by condemning others but by demanding a personal moral commitment.
"I shall not ridicule honest labour."
That is civilisation.
That is character formation.
That is moral education in its purest form.

It was against this cultural background that I reflected on the recent public debate generated by the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, encouraging enterprise through humble occupations such as selling akara and kuli-kuli.

Predictably, opinions became polarised.

Many dismissed the remarks as insensitive to the realities confronting millions of Nigerians.

Others defended them as a reminder that no honest occupation should ever attract shame.

Perhaps both sides have overlooked the deeper lesson contained in the old Yoruba refrain.

Our forebears never despised labour.

Indeed, Yoruba civilisation was built upon the nobility of work.



The farmer who tilled the land.
The blacksmith whose forge rang before sunrise.

The hunter who ventured into dangerous forests.

The cloth weaver.

The potter.

The carpenter.

The market woman.

The akara seller.

Every one of them occupied a place of honour because they contributed honestly to the welfare of society.

Among the Yoruba, wealth did not command respect simply because it was wealth.

Character did.

Industry did.

Integrity did.

That explains why another enduring proverb declares:

"Ìṣeṣ l'ògùn ìṣeṣ."

Work is the cure for poverty.

Again, the proverb deserves careful reading.

It does not celebrate poverty.

Neither does it romanticise hardship.

Rather, it presents labour as the instrument through which poverty is overcome.

That distinction is crucial.

Unfortunately, our national conversation has blurred that distinction.

To affirm the dignity of labour does

not require us to sanctify deprivation.

To respect the akara seller is not to conclude that selling akara should become the highest aspiration of a nation's youth.

The Yoruba never intended that interpretation.

If anything, Yoruba society believed passionately in social mobility.

The son of a farmer could become a kingmaker.

The apprentice could establish his own flourishing enterprise.

The child of a roadside trader could become a renowned scholar.

The daughter of Ìyá Alákàrà was never sentenced to inherit only her mother's frying pan.

She inherited something infinitely greater—the discipline of work, the dignity of enterprise and the freedom to dream beyond her circumstances.

That is why I believe the present debate should move beyond unnecessary political quarrels.

The real issue is not whether selling akara is honourable.

It certainly is.

The real issue is whether our economic policies sufficiently reward honest labour.

The woman selling akara deserves respect.

She equally deserves uninterrupted electricity.

Affordable credit.

Good roads.

Quality healthcare.

Security.

An economy in which enterprise is not suffocated by inflation and diminishing purchasing power.

From nothing to something: The tragic story of Maryam Usman

BAGUDU MOHAMMED

In recent weeks, the digital streets have not known peace. "Justice for Maryam Usman, the murdered Kogi school teacher" has refused to leave our timelines. It trends, it aches, it lingers. And behind the hashtags is a story so ordinary in its beginning and so catastrophic in its end that it forces the soul to pause.

Maryam Usman's story wakes something in you. It is sad, heartbreaking, and above all, avoidable. As I sat with it, one idea kept returning to me: the theory of conflict escalation. Scholars like Louis Kriesberg and Morton Deutsch have long argued that most conflicts do not begin as wars. They begin as sparks. Small, dismissible, even laughable.

I still remember a comment I saw once on a group platform. Two people were "catching cruise," bantering, and before anyone could trace how it started, words turned to blows. The netizen captured it in four words that have haunted me since: "from nothing to something." Life keeps vindicating that phrase. A friend once told me about a man who came to him fuming. His house had been burgled and N20,000 was stolen. Broke and furious, the man said he had just returned from a native doctor. He swore an oath: whoever took the money must die within seven days, or he would sell everything



MARYAM USMAN

he owned to fund the vengeance. My friend looked at him and asked one quiet question that has stayed with me for years: "You are complaining of a loss you cannot afford, and yet you want to spend more to chase vengeance. How does that bring the money back?" The native doctor had quoted N10,000 plus animals for rituals. In trying to recover N20,000, the man was willing to lose N30,000 and his peace. That is the psychology of escalation: pain demands payment, and ego refuses to let it go, even when the cost multiplies.

The case of Maryam Usman fits this

frame with chilling precision. From "nothing to something." From a disciplinary action to a funeral. From a moment of correction to a lifetime of consequence.

According to The Guardian of July 8, 2026, the Kogi State Police Command arrested three suspects in connection with her death. Maryam Usman, a 30-year-old teacher at Brains Minds Nursery and Primary School, Ugbamaka in Olamaboro LGA, died on June 25 after allegedly sustaining injuries from separate assaults. The police said the trouble began on June 17 when Abdullahi Isiaka allegedly

attacked her at her residence over discipline meted to his 11-year-old son. Later that day, Ramatu Isiaka Eleojo allegedly attacked her on her way to prayers. The next day, Ojonojima Mary, Ramatu's younger sister, allegedly stormed the school and assaulted her at work. She was first treated at Grace Clinic, Ugbamaka, then referred to Eleojo Clinic, Okpo, where she died. The Command said a prima facie case of criminal conspiracy and culpable homicide had been established. CP Naziru Bello Kankarofi commended the detectives and urged residents to avoid jungle justice and seek lawful resolution.

From protecting a child to orphaning that same child, because what school fees will be paid now, what future will not be bruised by this absence? What did the assault solve? Did it erase the discipline? Did it heal the child? Social psychologist Brad Bushman's research on retaliatory aggression tells us what happens when anger is not regulated: people act to restore pride, not to solve problems. And in that moment, "nothing" becomes "something" that cannot be undone.

And yet, I find it hard to meet this tragedy with only rage. Not because the act is excusable. It is not. But because criminologists and behavioral scientists keep reminding us that many violent acts are not born from premeditated evil. They are born from un-

checked emotion, wounded ego, and the illusion of control. Aristotle called it akrasia, acting against one's better judgment because passion overruns reason. Daniel Goleman, in his work on emotional intelligence, warned that without the ability to name and manage emotion, even love can become lethal. A man who beats his wife to death, as reported just days ago in Nasarawa, may not hate her. He may believe he is correcting her. But correction without restraint becomes catastrophe.

Maryam's death asks us a hard question: what do we gain when we refuse to let "nothing" remain "nothing"? Vengeance feels like justice in the moment, but research in restorative justice shows it rarely restores anything. It only adds loss to loss. The teacher is gone. The child has lost a teacher and, in a way, a parent to the law. The suspects have lost their freedom. A community has lost trust. All because a moment was not held in check.

May God grant us strength against provocation. May we learn, before it is too late, that the best defense of those we love is not our anger, but our ability to govern it. Because "from nothing to something" is not just a phrase. It is a warning. And Maryam Usman paid the price for a world that ignored it.

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Sports

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

2026 WAFU B U-20 Championship: Aba football fans urge Flying Eagles to defend title

Some Football fans in Aba have urged the Nigeria under 20 national team, the Flying Eagles to defend the title they won at the 2024 WAFU B U-20 Championship in Lome, Togo in 2024.

Some of the football fans

who spoke with the News Agency of Nigeria(NAN) in Aba on Wednesday urged the team not to underrate any team in the tournament.

The Flying Eagles won the 2024 edition in Lome, Togo with a 2-1 victory over Ghana

in the final.

Tony Ademodi, a sports presenter with Magic FM, Aba advised the players not to take the tournament for granted as teams keep improving yearly.

"Though, there are no World Cup ticket at stake this time but we need to upgrade our trophy carbinare to six at the under 20 level,"he said.

He expressed confidence on Coach, Abdul Maikaba to deliver at the tournament but advised him to play the best legs throughout the competition.

Victor Adindu on his part want the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to expose the players to high profile matches to give the coach a glimpse of what to expect at the tournament.

"We are lucky to have gotten away with victory against Ghana in the last edition but this time around, we need to ensure that our players are fit to play 120 minutes,"Adindu advised.

Kenneth Ngele, a trader said that Nigeria male teams need to start doing well at the World and Continental competitions.

He advised the football authority to ensure that the national teams utilises football windows, even when there is no competition around the corner.

Ndudim Isaac called on the coach to go for the best legs in the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) and expose them to high profile friendlies before the tournament.



FLYING EAGLES



NIGERIA TABLE TENNIS TEAM

Nigeria to miss 2026 African Table Tennis Championships

The Nigeria Table Tennis Federation (NTTF) says the country will not be participating in this year's continental championships scheduled to hold between Oct. 18 and Oct 25, in Morocco.

President of the federation, Mr Adesoji Tayo, disclosed this in a statement issued to newsmen on Thursday in Lagos.

According to him, this will be the first time Nigeria will be missing at the tournament.

The president explained that Nigeria's absence was as a result of non participation at the Western Region Championships in Conakry, Guinea.

He noted that the regional championships had served as the qualifying tournament for the continental showpiece.

"Nigeria's quartet of Matthew Kuti, Abdulbasit Abdulfatai, Favour Ojo and Khadijat Okan-

lawon had been scheduled to compete at the Conakry event.

"However, the trip was cancelled because of a lack of funds, as the NTTF could not meet the rising costs, including the ongoing training camp for junior players at Babcock University in Ogun," he said.

He added that in spite of the setback, the federation managed to send four cadet players; Umar Ayoola, Habeeb Adebayo, Emmanuella Shaibu and Elizabeth Emenike to Accra, Ghana, for the 2026 Africa Hopes Week and Challenge.

"In addition, a 16-man team led by both Kuti and Ojo is expected to depart for Accra this weekend to compete in the 2026 African Youth Championships and Cup.

Tayo expressed regret over Nigeria's withdrawal from the Guinea tournament.

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Tayo expressed regret over Nigeria's withdrawal from the Guinea tournament.

He explained that in spite of efforts to secure the team's participation, exorbitant flight costs and an alleged lack of support from the National Sports Commission (NSC) made the trip impossible.



Nigeria Beat Côte d'Ivoire to Extend Perfect Volleyball Run

Nigeria's senior men's volleyball team continued their impressive run at the 2026 African Nations Cup Zone 3 Qualifiers with a commanding straight-

sets victory over hosts Côte d'Ivoire on Wednesday, maintaining their perfect record in the competition.

The Nigerian side produced another disciplined perfor-

mance to seal a 3-0 win, taking the match 25-16, 25-20, 25-19 and strengthening their push for qualification to the African Nations Cup.

Playing in front of a partisan home crowd, Côte d'Ivoire struggled to match Nigeria's intensity as the visitors dominated all three sets with solid attacking play, effective blocking and consistent serving.

Reacting after the victory, Head Coach Taiwo Oladipupo expressed delight with the team's performance, describing the win over the host nation as a significant achievement.

"I'm very, very happy. It's not an easy job to beat the host country, but we showed that we can do it," Oladipupo said.



NIGERIA VOLLEYBALL TEAM

Bayelsa unveils Maikaba, targets swift premier league return

Bayelsa Government has unveiled Coach Abdul Maikaba as the new Technical Adviser of Bayelsa United FC, charging him to lead the club back to the Nigeria Premier Football League next season.

The Deputy Governor, Peter Akpe, performed the unveiling in Yenagoa yesterday.

He said that Gov. Douye Diri was disappointed by the club's relegation and had directed the interim management to secure immediate promotion.

Akpe urged the Peter Singabele-led Interim Management Board, alongside the new technical crew, to work tirelessly

and restore Bayelsa United's place among Nigeria's top-flight clubs before the end of the coming season.

Maikaba will be assisted by fellow experienced coach, Ngozi Elechi, a former Go-Round FC manager, as both men begin the task of rebuilding the club for a successful promotion campaign.

Widely regarded as an attack-minded tactician, Maikaba has previously managed Wikki Tourists, Plateau United, Akwa United, Enyimba, Rangers and Kano Pillars, bringing vast NPFL experience to Bayelsa United's rebuilding project.

2026 FCT FA League: Gbogboade's lone goal gives Kicker FC victory over Youthfull Ballers FA

Ibrahim Gbogboade scored the lone goal as Kicker FC defeated Youthfull Ballers FA 1-0 in the opening Group C fixture of the ongoing 2026 Federal Capital Territory Football Association (FCT FA) League yesterday in Abuja.

The match played at the Area 3 Football Pitch, saw both sides battled evenly in the first half, displaying discipline and tactical organisation, with neither team could break the deadlock in spite of creating several scoring opportunities.

On resumption of the second

half, Kicker FC returned with greater attacking intent as Stephen Abah, Taofeek Sanusi and Ibrahim Zakari repeatedly tested the Youthfull Ballers defence.

In the 50th minute, Abidemi Kayode found Ibrahim Gbogboade with a precise pass, but the

Youthfull Ballers defence stood firm and denied the striker.

Five minutes later, Gbogboade combined well with Kayode, who laid the ball off to Taofeek Sanusi before it was worked to Stephen Abah who crashed against the crossbar.

Youthfull Ballers responded in the 58th minute when Nathan Frank set up Gbenga David, whose effort sailed over the crossbar.

Kicker FC continued to threaten in the 61st minute when Kayode again released a cross pass to Gbogboade, but

his effort also went over the bar.

The breakthrough came in the 65th minute when Gbogboade made a determined run into the penalty area before hitting the ball that bounced into the net to give them the 1-0 lead.

Sports FEATURE



Repositioning Nigerian Football: The impact of Ibrahim Gusau's League calendar reforms

EDIDIIONG STEPHEN

Perhaps, one of the most significant reforms under the leadership of Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau as President of the Nigeria Football Federation - NFF, has been the deliberate effort to reposition Nigeria's domestic football leagues by aligning them with the international football calendar.

The initiative has marked a departure from years of uncertainty, inconsistent scheduling and administrative setbacks that often hindered the growth of the beautiful game in our country.

For many seasons and varying reasons, Nigerian leagues were plagued by delays, abrupt interruptions and prolonged campaigns that stretched beyond their expected timelines. These disruptions affected clubs' planning, discouraged sponsors and made it difficult for Nigerian teams to compete effectively on the continental stage.

Recognising these challenges, the NFF under Gusau's leadership worked closely with the various league bodies to restore order and predictability to the football calendar. The renewed emphasis on timely commencement and conclusion of league competitions has gradually whipped Nigerian football into global best practices.

Last season, for instance, the NPFL finished on the same weekend of May 24, as the EPL in England, La Liga in Spain, Serie A in Italy, and just one week after the conclusions of the French Ligue 1 and Germany's Bundesliga. The country's top flight is expected to commence its 2026/2027 proceedings on August 28, just one week after the kick-off of the EPL, Serie A, and Ligue 1.

Aligning the domestic leagues with the international calendar has delivered several tangible benefits.

Clubs can now prepare more effectively for CAF competitions, with adequate time for recruitment, pre-season preparations and club licencing. This has enhanced their competitiveness and provided a level playing field against their contemporaries.

The reforms have also created greater confidence among players, coaches, sponsors and investors. A predictable football calendar enables clubs to negotiate player contracts more efficiently, attract commercial partnerships and implement long-term development plans instead of operating under constant uncertainty.

For players, the impact has been equally significant. Regular and uninterrupted league action provides a consistent platform to showcase their



ALHAJI IBRAHIM MUSA GUSAU

abilities, increasing their chances of earning invitations to the national teams and securing transfers to clubs abroad. Scouts and agents also find it easier to monitor talent when competitions follow a structured schedule.

The benefits extend to supporters as well. Fans can now anticipate fixtures

with greater certainty, fostering stronger engagement and improving match attendance. Media professionals equally benefit from a reliable schedule that makes programming and commercial planning more efficient.

Perhaps most importantly, aligning with the international football calendar

enhances Nigeria's image within the global football community. It demonstrates a commitment to professionalism, accountability and organisational discipline—qualities that are essential for attracting investment and strengthening the country's football ecosystem. This new found confidence is directly reflected on CAF's recent decision to bring back both CAF-A and CAF-B coaching courses to the country.

Although challenges remain in infrastructure, financing and officiating, the calendar reforms represent an important foundation upon which further progress can be built. Sustainable football development requires consistency, and the effort to maintain an organised league schedule is a crucial step in that direction.

As Nigerian football continues its journey towards greater competitiveness, the repositioning of the domestic leagues stands out as one of the defining administrative achievements of Ibrahim Gusau's tenure. By bringing order, stability and international alignment to league football, the NFF leadership has laid the groundwork for stronger clubs, improved player development, enhanced commercial opportunities and a brighter future for the beautiful game in Nigeria.

Tinubu's new course for sports development and impact on Horse Race in Nigeria

KAYODE ADEBIYI

The 2nd Edition of the Renewed Hope West African Horse Racing Derby was a highly anticipated championship held in Kaduna State from July 8 to July 11 at the Murtala Mohammed Square.

The three-day equestrian event, organised by the Horse Racing Federation of Nigeria (HRFN), featured jockeys and horses from Nigeria and neighbouring West African countries.

The grand finale drew a massive crowd and was graced by high-profile government officials, traditional rulers, as well as captains of industry.

President Bola Tinubu, represented by Gov. Uba Sani of Kaduna State, delivered an address praising the sport's role in promoting youth empowerment, national unity, and economic growth.

It was at the event that the president promised a new direction in the development of sports with emphasis on interventions capable of promoting indigenous sports.

The president said his administration has prioritised clean sport and the protection of Nigerian athletes through the setting of national anti-doping programmes, through the enactment of the Nigeria Anti-Doping Act.

He also said the development of an independent national anti-doping centre that will operate in line with international standards is testament of the administration's determination to ensure integrity.

He said part of the efforts of his administration in driving fresh perspective in sports development is the engagement of relevant sports feder-



HORSE RACE

ations in the development of indigenous sports.

According to the president, support for national collaboration in positioning domestic leagues, expanding opportunities for athletes and coaches, and promoting stronger governance, integrity, and accountability across the sector have been priority areas.

"These interventions demonstrate unprecedented commitment from our administration to the development of Nigerian sports.

"They also reflect the determination of the National Sports Commission to translate presidential approval into measurable outcomes for athletes, coaches, investors, communities, and the Nigerian economy," he said.

President Tinubu said traditional

sports, including horse racing, form an integral part of this new direction.

He said they represent an intersection of culture, agriculture, tourism, entertainment, hospitality, lifestyle development, and commerce, and must therefore be developed as a complete sporting industry rather than treated merely as ceremonial or recreational activities.

"This administration will continue to support initiatives that preserve Nigeria's cultural heritage while transforming traditional activities into modern industries capable of creating wealth, generating employment, attracting investment and meeting internationally organised standards."

One of the impediments to sports development in Nigeria is inadequate

or obsolete sporting facilities. Stakeholders and enthusiasts say equestrian sport is not immune to the challenge.

Acknowledging this, Tinubu hinted at the revamping of the Zaria Horse Racing and Polo Club, which is one of the legacy horse racing arenas in Nigeria.

He said the Federal Government, through the National Sports Commission, decided to intervene in the project, and that it has already awarded the contract and that there's progress in the commencement of work.

He also said that similar interventions are being planned for national and community sporting facilities, where new partnerships are being developed.

He said such partnerships will lead to the establishment of modern sport

cities, high-performance centres, sports medicine facilities, and commercially viable sporting venues.

The president commended Gov. Sani for the ongoing reconstruction of the Ahmadu Bello Stadium in Kaduna, referring to it as a clear example of renewed commitment and collaboration.

He encouraged other states to align and support the growth of horse racing by providing sustainable land to the HRFN for the development of race courses and related facilities.

At the event, the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Yahaya Abubakar, urged Nigerian youths to embrace horse racing, describing it as a treasured cultural heritage deserving preservation for future generations.

Abubakar, who is the Life Patron of the HRFN, said horse racing remained an important aspect of Nigeria's cultural identity, fostering unity, recreation and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities.

According to him, equestrian events had existed throughout history, providing entertainment while contributing significantly to society's social, cultural and traditional development.

The traditional ruler said horse racing in Northern Nigeria dated back to the era of the Sokoto Sultans and had continued flourishing across the region.

He noted the sport gained prominence in historic cities including Bida, Kano and Zaria, where it became central to cultural festivals and traditional celebrations.

Abubakar encouraged young Nigerians to participate actively, stressing their involvement was vital to preserving the nation's rich cultural heritage and traditional sporting values.



NFF moves Super Falcons to Radisson Blu ahead of WAFCON 2026 title defence

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has relocated the Super Falcons to the five-star Radisson Blu Hotel in Casablanca City Center as preparations intensify for the team's Women's Afri-

ca Cup of Nations (WAFCON) title defence in Morocco.

The nine-time African champions had initially opened camp on Monday at the Casablanca Marriott Hotel, also a five-star facility in the

Moroccan city, before the federation opted to move the team to the Radisson Blu to provide an enhanced environment for the players and technical crew ahead of the tournament.

As of the time of reporting, 10 players had arrived at the team's camp in Casablanca, with more members of the squad expected to join from Wednesday.

Among the early arrivals are captain Rasheedat Ajibade, first-choice goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie and former CAF African Women's Player of the Year Asisat Oshola.

Also in camp are home-based goalkeeper Fatima Oloko, defenders Oluwatoshin Demehin, Glory Ogbonna, Shukurat Oladipo and Rofiat

Imuran, as well as midfielder Jennifer Echegini and Christy Ucheibe.

Nigeria will begin the defence of its WAFCON crown against Malawi on 28 July before facing Zambia on 1 August. The Super Falcons will conclude their Group C campaign against Egypt on 5 August, with all three matches scheduled to be played in Rabat.

Beyond continental glory, qualification for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil will also be at stake in Morocco. The four semi-finalists will secure automatic qualification for the global tournament, while the fifth-placed team will advance to an intercontinental playoff scheduled for early next year.



SUPER FALCONS

8 Days to Go: Team Nigeria Brims with Confidence as King Charles III Prepares to Grace Open Ceremony of Glasgow 2026

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

With just eight days to the start of the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games, excitement continues to build as Team Nigeria intensifies final preparations for one of the biggest multi-sport events in the Commonwealth calendar.

Nigeria's sprint star, Favour Ashe expressed confidence in Team Nigeria's chances of delivering strong performances in Glasgow, saying the athletes are motivated and determined to make the country proud.

"We have prepared well and everyone is focused on giving their best. Team Nigeria has a strong tradition at the Commonwealth Games, and we are confident we can compete for medals and make Nigerians proud," Ashe said.

The Opening Ceremony will take place on Thursday, July 23, at The Hydro in Glasgow, where Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla will join thousands of athletes, officials, volunteers and spectators from across the Commonwealth to officially launch the XXIII Commonwealth Games.

The Games will feature more than 3,000 athletes representing 74 Commonwealth nations and territories competing for 215 gold medals across 10 sports over 11 days of competition.

A major highlight of the Opening Ceremony will be the official declaration of the

Games by King Charles III, who will read the message placed inside the King's Baton on Commonwealth Day, March 10, 2025, at Buckingham Palace before the Baton Relay began. The ceremony will also feature British cycling legend Sir Chris Hoy, the first Batonbearer, celebrating the enduring spirit of the Commonwealth Games.

The King's Baton Relay has completed its historic 500-day journey through all 74 Commonwealth nations and territories, the longest relay in Com-

monwealth Games history.

For the first time, all 74 Batons will be reunited in Glas-

gow, symbolizing the unity, diversity and shared values of the Commonwealth.



TEAM NIGERIA

Eric Chelle adopts Morocco model to strengthen Super Eagles

Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle has intensified efforts to ensure more Nigeria-eligible players commit their international futures to the country instead of repre-

senting other nations.

It is no longer news that Nigeria missed out on qualification for the FIFA World Cup, while several players eligible to play for the Super Eagles fea-

tured for other nations during the tournament.

Amongst them were France winger Michael Olise and England trio Bukayo Saka, Ebere Eze, and Noni Madueke, all of whom progressed to the semi-finals with their respective teams.

Chelle is reportedly keen to reverse this trend, believing Nigeria can benefit from a strategy similar to Morocco's, which has successfully integrated players born abroad into its national team setup.

As part of the plan, the Malian tactician intends to use his additional role as Nigeria's Under-23 coach to identify and introduce talented overseas-born players at youth level before they graduate to the senior national team.



ERIC CHELLE



FG boosts global authentication of Nigerian passports

The Federal Government has strengthened the international authentication of Nigerian passports by successfully importing all the country's Country Signing Certificate Authorities (CSCAs) into the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Public Key Directory (PKD).

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) said this in a statement issued on Wednesday in Abuja by its Service Public Relations Officer, Deputy Comptroller of Immigration (DCI) Akinsola Akinlabi.

Akinlabi said the milestone

was achieved on July 13 during a ceremony at the ICAO headquarters in Montreal, Canada, led by the Comptroller-General of NIS, Kemi Nandap.

He said the exercise was aimed at addressing passive authentication challenges encountered by some Nigerian passport holders at selected foreign border control points around the world.

According to him, the integration of all Nigeria's existing CSCAs into the ICAO Public Key Directory has established a trusted verification chain for Nigerian travel documents.

Flying Eagles target AFCON ticket after tough WAFU B Draw

Nigeria's Flying Eagles have been drawn in Group B of the 2026 West Africa Football Union (WAFU) B U20 Championship, where they will face Ghana, Togo and Burkina Faso in the group stage of the regional tournament to be hosted by Côte d'Ivoire.

The draw, conducted on Wednesday, placed defending champions Nigeria alongside Ghana's Black Satellites, Togo's Junior Sparrow Hawks and Burkina Faso's Young Stallions. Hosts Côte d'Ivoire will compete in Group A alongside

Benin Republic and Niger Republic.

Head Coach Abdu Maikaba is expected to lead a 23-man squad to Côte d'Ivoire, with the team scheduled to depart Nigeria on Monday. The Flying Eagles will be aiming to secure one of the two qualification slots available for the 2027 U20 Africa Cup of Nations, which will be hosted by Ghana.

Nigeria enters the tournament as the defending WAFU B U20 champions after defeating Ghana 2-1 in the final of the 2024 edition in Lomé, Togo.



FLYING EAGLES TEAM