Oriire school abduction: 3 men get life sentences

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Thursday convicted and sentenced three terrorists linked to the recent kidnapping of school children and teachers in Oriire Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State, to a life imprisonment.

Justice Salim Ibrahim made the order in a judgment after the three men pleaded guilty to some of the counts in a 10-count terrorism charge preferred against them by the Federal Government.

The judge, who gave them the maximum sentencing in count six which attracted life imprisonment, jailed them for 25 years in count four which attracted a minimum punishment of 20 years imprisonment in line with the law.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the three men are Abdulrazak Umar (a.k.a. Abu Khalifa/Abu Khalid), Yunusa Musa (a.k.a. Yunusa bin Musa) and Shamsu Adamu Sani (a.k.a. Abu Itisar).

NAN reports that the convicts, who were arrested by the Department of State Services (DSS), all hail from Suleja LGA of Niger State.

Earlier when the case was called, Rotimi Oyedepo, SAN, informed the court that the charge was 10 counts.

Oyedepo, who is the Director of Public Prosecutions for the Federation, prayed the court for the charge to be read to the defendants so they could take their plea.

Responding, counsel for the defendants, A.A. Shettima, a Deputy Director from Legal Aide Council, did not oppose the application.

After the charge was read to the defendants, they pleaded guilty to counts two and six but pleaded not guilty to counts one, two, three and five which had their names.

Also Umar, the 1st defendant, whose name was mentioned in counts seven, eight, nine and 10, pleaded guilty to the four counts.

Oyedepo, citing Section 274 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015, said if a defendant pleads guilty to a charge, the next thing is for the court to convict him or her

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The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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68 Passengers survive crash in Benin Airport as plane skids off runway

BENIN CITY

- *Airline says all passengers and crew members safely evacuated*
- *No injuries or fatalities recorded*

What could have been a major aviation disaster in Nigeria was on Thursday averted in Benin as an Enugu Airline skidded off the run way after landing at the Benin Airport.

It was gathered that the aircraft with Registration Number 5N-ENR, had 68 passengers on board aside its crew members.

A source at the Benin Airport who pleaded anonymity, said that the aircraft was on an Enugu-Benin-Lagos commercial flight when the incident happened.

The source further volunteered that the aircraft overshot the runway and entered the nearby bush.

According to the source, the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAN), and other emergency responders immediately swung into action and all the passengers were evacuated. No casualty was recorded.

It could not be immediately ascertained the actual number of crew aboard the aircraft at the time of the incident, neither was the cause of the accident known.

Some family members who had gone to the airport to receive their loved ones were seen shouting and singing praises to God and rushing some of the victims to the hospital.

None of the staff of the Enugu Air at the Airport were ready to talk when journalists visited the area but a staff of the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) said "I cannot tell you anything because investigation would be carried out by necessary authorities and the reports would be sent to our head office.

However, Enugu Air described the incident as a runway excursion that may result in temporary adjustments to some

CONTINUES ON PG 4»

Edo SHINE PHC Summit 2026 opens with renewed commitment to universal health coverage

BENIN CITY

Oliver Ijiogbe

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the primary healthcare system as a strategic pathway to achieving universal health coverage and improved health outcomes for residents.

The commitment was reiterated at the official opening of the EDO SHINE Primary Health Care Summit 2026 in Benin City, on Thursday, by Governor Monday Okpebholo, represented by the State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Cyril Adams Oshiomhole.

Declaring the summit open, the Governor affirmed the present administration's commitment to building a resilient, people-centred healthcare system that delivers quality and accessible healthcare services to every Edo citizen, irrespective of location.

Speaking on the summit's theme, "Strengthening Primary Health Care Systems to Accelerate Progress towards Universal Health Coverage and Improved Health Outcomes," the commissioner described primary healthcare as the foundation of an effective health system, noting that it remains the first point of contact for most citizens through services such as antenatal care, routine immunisation, disease prevention and early detection of disease outbreaks.

He said, under the EDO SHINE Agenda, the state is investing in modern health infrastructure, expanding the

CONTINUES ON PG 4»



AIR CRASH:
The aircraft belonging to Enugu Air involved in a runaway incursion after landing in Benin Airport yesterday evening.

AIG Zone 5, Dogo-Garba bows out, hails Edo, Delta support in fighting crime —Pg 2

LPPC approves conferment of SAN on 68 legal practitioners —Pg 4

US signs landmark nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia —Pg 14

Commonwealth Games: Okowa Confident As Nigeria Parades star-studded athletics squad —Pg 21

NEWS



Pull-out parade at the Police Training School, Ogida, Benin City



AIG Salman Dogo-Garba and his wife during his pull-out parade at the Police Training School, Ogida, Benin City, on Wednesday, July 22, 2026. Photo: MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

Bob Manuel Umoru's reckless falsehoods will not distract Governor Okpebholo — Edo Govt

BENIN CITY

Benedict Okate

The Edo State Government has dismissed as "false, mischievous, and laughable" claims made by the suspended factional Publicity Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Edo State, Mr. Bob Manuel Umoru, alleging that Governor Monday Okpebholo offered him N500 million to stop criticizing the administration.

In a statement issued by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Public Affairs and Media, Hon. Haruna Braimoh, the government described the allegation, contained in a viral video, as a complete fabrication designed to mislead the public and attract political attention through sensationalism.

"The claim is a blatant falsehood and a desperate attempt to gain political relevance. It exists only in the imagination of Bob Manuel Umoru and should be treated with the contempt it deserves," Braimoh stated.

He described it as unfortunate that an individual whose political credibility had allegedly suffered significant damage would resort to making what he called such an outrageous allegation.

Braimoh maintained that no responsible government would engage in negotiations with individuals whose "stock-in-trade is misinformation, propaganda, and the deliberate distortion of facts."

According to him, Governor Monday Okpebholo remains focused on delivering the mandate entrusted to him by the people of Edo State and fulfilling the promises made during his election campaign.

He noted that since assuming office, the administration has recorded measurable achievements in infrastructure, security, healthcare, education, agriculture, youth empowerment, and economic development across the state's three senatorial districts.

"These tangible accomplishments remain the administration's response to political distractions and baseless attacks," he said.

The statement described as preposterous any suggestion that the Governor, who is focused on transforming Edo State, would spend time attempting to buy the silence of political opponents.

"Senator Monday Okpebholo neither governs by intimidation nor inducement. His administration remains transparent, accountable, and committed to serving the people with integrity and purpose," Braimoh added.

The Edo State Government also cautioned Bob Manuel Umoru against the continued dissemination of what it described as falsehoods capable of misleading the public and unnecessarily heating the political atmosphere.

While acknowledging that freedom of expression is a fundamental democratic right, the government stressed that it does not include the freedom to manufacture falsehoods, spread malicious propaganda, or make defamatory allegations without evidence.

It warned that individuals who deliberately propagate false information should be prepared to face the consequences before the court of public opinion and, where necessary, the law.

The government urged Edo residents and the general public to disregard the allegations contained in the viral video, describing them as the desperate outbursts of an individual seeking to remain politically relevant.

It further advised Umoru to focus on rebuilding his political career rather than engaging in what it termed "fictional narratives and cheap blackmail," while allowing the Governor to continue his development agenda for the state.

The statement concluded by reaffirming that the administration of Senator Monday Okpebholo remains resolute, undistracted, and committed to delivering the dividends of democracy to every community in Edo State.



A cross section of dignitaries at the event

AIG Zone 5, Dogo-Garba bows out, hails Edo, Delta support in fighting crime

BENIN CITY

Mike Osarogiagbon

The Assistant Inspector-General of Police in charge of Zone 5, AIG Salman Dogo-Garba, has retired from active service, attributing the successes recorded in the fight against crime in Edo and Delta states to the interventions and support of the two state governments.

Dogo-Garba stated this on Wednesday during his pull-out parade held at the Police Training School, Ogida, Benin City, where he formally bowed out of the Nigeria Police Force after a distinguished career.

The retiring AIG said the support provided by the governments of Edo and Delta had strengthened the capacity of the police to confront security challenges and sustain peace and order across the zone.

He particularly commended the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, and his Delta State counterpart, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Francis Oborevwori, for their cooperation and timely interventions in the fight against crime.

"I also wish to sincerely appreciate the Executive Governors of Edo and Delta State, Your Excellencies, Senator Monday Okpebholo and Rt. Hon. Elder Sheriff Francis Oborevwori, through their support, cooperation and timely interventions, we were better equipped to confront security challenges, strengthen public confidence, and maintain peace and order across Edo and Delta State.

"I also wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to the good people of Edo and Delta States, traditional institutions, religious bodies, community leaders, the media, civil society organisations, and all stakeholders whose cooperation significantly contributed to maintaining peace and public safety within the Zone. Security is a shared responsibility, and your partnership has been invaluable", he said.

Dogo-Garba described his tenure as AIG Zone 5 as one of the greatest privileges of his policing career, saying the achievements recorded were products of collective efforts, teamwork and commitment by officers and men of the force.

AIG Dogo-Garba urged officers to wear the police uniform with pride and honour.

"To every officer still in service, I encourage you to wear the uniform with pride and honour. Let your conduct always reflect the core values of the Nigeria Police Force. Be courageous in the discharge of your duties, compassionate in dealing with members of the public, and resolute in protecting the lives and property of our citizens.

"Remember that the true legacy of an officer is measured not by rank, but by character, integrity, and the positive impact made on society," he stated.

The retired police chief also acknowledged the contributions of traditional rulers, community leaders, religious bodies, the media and other stakeholders, stressing that security remained a shared responsibility.

Dogo-Garba, who said he was leaving with cherished memories and a sense of fulfilment, pledged to continue supporting initiatives aimed at promoting peace, justice and national development even after his retirement from active policing.

The ceremony was attended by heads of sister security agencies, as well as traditional and religious leaders from Edo and Delta states.

NEWS

Apostle Azekhumen urges humility as pathway to 'baptism of favour

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government House Chapel has called on public office holders and citizens to embrace humility as a prerequisite for receiving divine favour and achieving leadership success.

The charge was delivered on Wednesday during the Chapel's Weekly Intercessory Service by Apostle Sule Faraday Azekhumen, Special Adviser to the Governor on Religious Matters and Chaplain of the Government House Chapel. The service held with the theme "Baptism of Favour."

Apostle Azekhumen said favour produces protection, promotion and opportunities beyond qualification, citing the biblical example of Joseph who, according to him, experienced favour in his father's house, in Potiphar's house, in prison and in government.

He cautioned against pride and manipulation, warning that favour could be lost where humility is absent. "When favour comes upon you and you are not humble, you may lose it. Don't pretend to be humble because that pretense will not last," he said.

The cleric further urged leaders to speak truth and righteousness in matters brought before them, stressing that blocking others' progress could truncate future possibilities. He referenced the biblical transformation of Saul to Paul to illustrate the need to preserve potential leaders.

Quoting Psalm 5:12, Apostle Azekhumen declared that "favour becomes a shield" for those who walk in humility and integrity.

The intercessory session concluded with prayers for peace, unity and progress in Edo State.



PRESS BRIEFING:
Minority Leader, House of Representatives, Rep. Fred Agbedi (4th, L); with the Spokesperson, House of Representatives Minority Caucus, Rep. Afam Ogene (4th, R) and other members of the caucus, during the press briefing on their request for the reconsideration of the State Police Constitutional Amendment Bill, at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Thursday.

Insecurity: Edo Assembly moves to make CCTV mandatory in public establishments, others

BENIN CITY

Raymond Osogbe

Members of Edo Legislature have readily, aligned with Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo's crave to stamp out criminalities in the state as the bill for CCTV in public places passed first reading, on Thursday.

This executive bill to make it mandatory for CCTV cameras to be installed in public places, institutions and others, was overwhelmingly passed by consensus after it was presented to the House.

The speaker described CCTV cameras as indispensable tools in combating crime, while commending the unanimous support received by the bill.

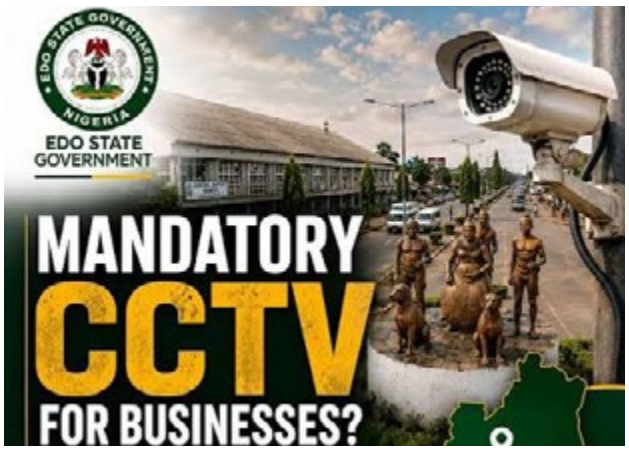
Similarly, the Assembly has received a bill seeking to harmonize and review all Edo State Laws into a compendium and assured that it would be given speedy passage by the majority of the members of the House.

The Attorney general of Edo State, Barr. Roland Otaru (SAN) alongside other key stakeholders in the judicial arm of government observed the House proceedings from the gallery.

The Speaker assured that the law makers would be subjecting the laws of the state to comprehensive review and harmonization for the first time in 10 years.

He applauded the State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo's political will to ensure that no sector would lag behind during his tenure.

Meanwhile, the House had adjourned proceedings to Monday, 17th August, 2026.



Edo Varsity's Prof. Usunobun urges return to medicinal plants, warns of toxic chemical

BENIN CITY

Edward Oseghe

A Professor of Environmental and Biochemical Toxicology at Edo State University, Iyamho (ESUI), Professor Usunomena Usunobun, has called for a national shift towards the deliberate use of indigenous medicinal plants and leafy vegetables, warning that increasing exposure to toxic chemicals in food, drugs and the environment is accelerating disease, ageing and premature deaths.

Delivering the university's 18th Inaugural Lecture at the Aliko Dangote Auditorium on Wednesday, the renowned biochemist advocated the compulsory inclusion of leafy vegetables such as bitter leaf and fluted pumpkin (ugwu) in daily diets, describing them as rich sources of antioxidants and pharmacologically active phytochemicals capable of protecting vital organs from toxic damage.

Speaking on the theme, "Back to Our Roots: The Panacea to Insults and Assaults," Professor Usunobun urged Nigerians to embrace scientifically validated medicinal plants for disease prevention and management, stressing that many modern drugs are themselves chemicals that may further burden the body.

According to him, the body is under constant attack from toxic substances found in food, air, water and the environment, leading to progressive damage to organs such as the liver, kidneys, heart and spleen.

"We live in a toxic world where our bodies are continually exposed to harmful substances despite nature's abundance of rich medicinal resources. This reality informed the choice of my inaugural lecture title, 'Back to Our Roots: The Panacea to Insults and Assaults,'" he said.

The professor explained that biochemical insults and assaults refer to chemical and molecular damage inflicted on cells, tissues and DNA by internal stressors and external toxins, often resulting in chronic diseases, cellular dysfunction and accelerated ageing.

He noted that toxic exposure occurs through inhalation of polluted air, consumption of contaminated food, skin contact and occupational exposure in industries and laboratories.

Professor Usunobun lamented that while many developed nations continue to invest heavily in medicinal plant research, Africans are increasingly abandoning traditional herbal resources in favour of synthetic drugs.

"Today, while the King of England is reportedly receiving treatment involving medicinal plants, many Africans continue to rely almost entirely on synthetic chemicals and drugs, exposing their bodies to more insults and assaults.

"Fortunately, scientific advancement is gradually taking us back to our roots as medicinal plant research is gaining global recognition and acceptance. We must rediscover and maximise the enormous benefits of our indigenous medicinal plants," he stated.

He emphasised that beyond their health benefits, medicinal plants and leafy vegetables are environmentally friendly, biodegradable and cost-effective, making them suitable alternatives in both human and animal nutrition while supporting Nigeria's environmental sustainability agenda.

Presenting findings from years of research, Professor Usunobun disclosed that commonly used Nigerian medicinal plants significantly reduced liver, kidney and spleen damage, corrected anaemia and provided remarkable hepatoprotective and nephroprotective effects due to their antioxidant properties.

Edo Specialist Hospital marks 7th anniversary with free eye care, clinches WACOG accreditation

BENIN CITY

Edward Oseghe

Edo Specialist Hospital (ESH) has marked its seventh anniversary with the launch of a free eye care programme, reaffirming its commitment to expanding access to quality healthcare while celebrating another major milestone with the presentation of its West African College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (WACOG) Accreditation Certificate.

The commemorative event attracted top government officials, healthcare administrators and stakeholders from across the state, underscoring the hospital's growing role in advancing healthcare delivery in Edo State.

The State Coordinator of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), Edo State, Dr. Theodore Ehannire, joined the Chief Medical Director of Edo Specialist Hospital, Associate Professor Enibokun Njoku; the Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee (CMAC), Dr. Victor Ohenhen; the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr. Iyamu; and the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Edo State Government, Dr. Alile, who represented the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, at the flag-off of the free eye care service.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Ehannire commended Edo Specialist Hospital for sustaining high standards of healthcare delivery over the past seven years, describing the institution as a critical partner in the drive towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

He said the hospital's decision to commemorate its anniversary with a free eye care outreach reflects a patient-centred approach to healthcare and aligns with the NHIA's vision of ensuring equitable access to quality and affordable health services for all Nigerians.

"The free eye care initiative is a commendable intervention because it takes essential healthcare directly to the people, particularly those who may not have the financial means to seek specialist eye services. It demonstrates that quality healthcare can be both accessible and impactful when institutions are committed to serving the public," he said.

A major highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the hospital's WACOG Accreditation Certificate by the Chief Medical Director, Associate Professor Njoku, to the Deputy Governor's representative, symbolising the institution's growing recognition as a centre of excellence for postgraduate medical training and specialist healthcare.

Dr. Ehannire congratulated the management of Edo Specialist Hospital on securing the West African College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (WACOG) Accreditation Certificate, describing the achievement as a significant milestone that would strengthen specialist healthcare delivery and medical training in Edo State and across the region.

Moniepoint disburses $700m, boosts MSME growth through first-time credit

LAGOS

Moniepoint Incorporated, a financial technology company, has disbursed over 700 million dollars to Nigerian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in 2025, with first-time borrowers recording stronger business growth, its inaugural Impact Report has revealed.

The report, titled 'Creating Financial Happiness', released on Thursday in Lagos, shows that three out of every four businesses that obtained loans from Moniepoint in 2025 received formal business credit for the first time.

According to the report, the company used proprietary transaction data to assess borrowers' cash flow and creditworthiness instead of relying on collateral and extensive documentation, enabling thousands of underserved businesses to access finance.

It stated that businesses that received Moniepoint loans recorded a 36 per cent increase in average transaction value, while enterprises banking with the company employed more than eight million people in 2025.

The report noted that Nigeria's MSME sector faces an estimated 32.2 billion-dollar funding gap, making access to affordable finance critical to business growth.

It also highlighted increased lending to women-owned businesses, stating that women accounted for 36 per cent of Moniepoint's loan portfolio in 2025, compared with an industry benchmark of between 15 per cent and 25 per cent.

According to the report, lending to women-owned businesses rose by more than 300 per cent during the year, while 62 per cent of female borrowers received their first formal business loan through the platform.

The report added that women borrowers recorded a default rate 2.5 times lower than their male counterparts, reinforcing the case for a more data-driven lending model.

Beyond lending, the report showed that Moniepoint's USSD banking service enabled users without smartphones or internet access to carry out transactions worth more than 170 million dollars.

It stated that the company's point-of-sale terminals operated across all 774 local government areas, facilitating payments for about 100 million people in 2025.

The report also indicated that 83 per cent of surveyed users said their quality of life had improved, while 85 per cent expressed greater confidence in achieving their financial goals.

The report also highlighted the company's expansion into East Africa through the acquisition of Sumac Microfinance Bank in Kenya and the launch of Moniebook, a platform integrating payments, bookkeeping and inventory management for small businesses.

Beyond financial services, the report also outlined Moniepoint's investments in education, entrepreneurship, technology talent development and financial literacy, as well as its support for government-backed food distribution programmes that reached no fewer than 800,000 people in northern Nigeria.

According to the report, Moniepoint now serves more than 20 million individuals and businesses, processes over 250 billion dollars in annual transaction value, and employs more than 3,300 people across 10 countries.

The company was named among TIME's 100 Most Influential Companies in 2025 and recognised by the Financial Times as one of Africa's Fastest-Growing Companies.

Edo SHINE PHC Summit 2026...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

healthcare workforce, strengthening disease surveillance, deploying digital health solutions, improving the quality of care, promoting data-driven decision-making and deepening collaboration with development partners and communities to build an efficient and sustainable healthcare system.

Governor Okpebholo acknowledged that while significant progress had been made, there was still the need to address workforce shortages, improve sustainable healthcare financing, strengthen infrastructure and encourage greater community participation in order to ensure that no community is left behind.

Earlier, the Executive Secretary of the Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency, Dr. Coulson Osoikhai, noted that the agency, in collaboration with its partners, had taken deliberate steps to strengthen the healthcare system, particularly for women and children.

He appealed to stakeholders to work collectively towards securing a future where every resident of Edo State has access to quality healthcare services.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Edo State Primary Health Care Development Board, Dr. Odiase Ehiabhi, said the board is working closely with relevant stakeholders to actualise the SHINE Agenda of Governor Monday Okpebholo through improved primary healthcare delivery across the state.



LATEEF JAKANDE MEMORIAL LECTURE:
From left: Chairman of the Occasion, Prof. Lai Olurode; President, Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE), Mr Eze Anaba; Wife of Late Lateef Jakande, Mrs Abimbola Jakande; Representative, Lagos State Governor/Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga Omotoso; Publisher, Vanguard News Paper, Mr Sam Amuka; Publisher, Newswatch Magazine, Mr Ray Ekpu and Guest Lecturer, Prof. Sylvester Akhaine, during the NGE 2026 Lateef Jakande memorial lecture in Lagos on Thursday.

3 men gets life sentences...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

accordingly after the case review.

"My lord, the three defendants all pleaded guilty to counts four and six. My lord, the 1st defendant (Umar) in addition pleaded guilty to counts seven, eight, nine and 10.

"In respect of counts four, six, seven, eight, nine and 10, I will want the DSS to state the facts of the case," he said.

The lawyer, however, prayed the court for a trial date in respect of counts one, two, three and five which they pleaded not guilty.

"We will be asking for a convenient date to put our evidence and witnesses together to prove our case in respect of those counts," he said.

Shettima said he did not object to a review of facts in the counts they pleaded guilty.

He urged the court to convict the suspects based on the counts they pleaded guilty to while their sentencing should be deferred until the conclusion of the trial in those counts they pleaded not guilty.

68 Passengers survive plane crash...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

flight schedule. It added that affected passengers would be contacted directly and provided with the necessary assistance.

An aircraft operated by Enugu Air veered off the runway after landing at Benin Airport on Thursday, triggering an emergency response at the airport.

In a statement, the airline confirmed that all passengers and crew members were safely evacuated and that no injuries or fatalities were recorded.

"The aircraft has been secured and the relevant aviation authorities have been notified in line with established procedures. An assessment of the aircraft and the circumstances surrounding the occurrence is currently underway," the airline said.

The incident temporarily disrupted flight operations at the airport as emergency responders secured the aircraft and aviation officials began assessing the situation.

The airline assured the public that the safety of its passengers, crew and operations remains its highest priority, noting that it is cooperating fully with the relevant aviation authorities as investigations into the incident continue.

Enugu Air also thanked passengers for their understanding and said further updates would be provided through its official communication channels.

Lagos Assembly confirms 3 LG Service Commission nominees, defers 2

LAGOS

The Lagos State House of Assembly on Thursday confirmed three nominees for appointment to the Local Government Service Commission and deferred consideration of two others forwarded by Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu for further legislative scrutiny.

The House confirmed Mr Hakeem Bamgbola, Mr Olaleye Samsudeen, and Mrs Olabanji Folashade, while deferring the confirmation of Mr Durosimi Yinka and Mr Seriki Ahmed pending further legislative consideration.

Presenting the report, the Chairman of the 12-member ad hoc committee on the screening of nominees, Mr Mojeed Adebola, said all the nominees appeared before the panel and were screened in line with constitutional provisions.

Adebola said the committee assessed the nominees' credentials, experience, performance, character, presentation, and responses to questions before recommending the confirmation of three nominees and further scrutiny of the remaining two.

"After reviewing the nominees and their documents, the committee recommended the confirmation of three nominees.

"The committee advised that the appointments of Mr Durosimi Yinka and Mr Seriki Bamu be stepped down to allow for further scrutiny," he said.

The Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa, thereafter put the committee's recommendations to a voice vote, and the House adopted the report, confirming three nominees, deferring two others, and adjourning plenary sine die.

LPPC approves conferment of SAN on 68 legal practitioners

ABUJA

The Legal Practitioners' Privileges Committee (LPPC) has approved the conferment of the Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) rank on 68 legal practitioners.

The LPPC, under the Chairmanship of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, approved the elevation during the committee's 174th Plenary Session.

This is contained in a statement issued by Mr Kabir Akanbi, Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court and Secretary of LPPC on Thursday in Abuja.

The rank of SAN is conferred as a mark of professional excellence upon legal practitioners who have demonstrated exceptional distinction either as advocates in the courts or as academics contributing significantly to the development of legal scholarship.

The committee refrained the conferees from publishing or encouraging advertisements, congratulatory messages, or goodwill notices related to their nomination or conferment as breaches may attract sanctions.

The newly appointed 2026 advocate appointees in order of seniority at the bar are Ibrahim Adamu, Jude Okafor, Achibong Umoh, Sunday Obende, Adebayo Adaralegbe and Jimson Okodaso.

Others are Olalekan Bade-John, Olaotan Olusegun, Philemeon Daffi, Adenrele David Adegborioye, James Agbonhese, Alexander Muoka, Okodiya Emmanuel Akomaye, Ikhide Ehighelua, Mas'ud Alabelewe and Ogunmuyiwa Balogun.

Others are Anthony Iroagalachi, Mohammed Mohammed, Odion Peter Odia, Gbemiga Adaramola, Moses Onyilokwu,Charles Obodozie, Hakeem Agaba, Bimbo Atilola, Okechukwu Emelieze. Joshua Olaniyan and Igonikon Adekunle

Others are Christian Nwokorie, Momoh Ilegieuno, Kolawole Idowu, Olujoke Aliu, Oliver Onyenucheya Amuzie, Adebisi Adeniyi, Faruk Abdullah, Sagir Suleiman, Ifeanyi Ezeuko, Adebayo Ologe and Sabiu Adamu

Also on the list are Eric Omare, Soibi Ovia, Peter Johnbull, Chinedum Umeche, Emmanuel Ekhasemomhe, Mohammed Sheriff, Junaidu Marshall, Olawale Fapohunda, Adebiyi Adetosoye, Sulyman Ibrahim and Agba Eimunjeze.

Move beyond criticisms, present alternatives, APC National Chairman tells opposition

ABUJA

The National Chairman of All Progressives Congress (APC), Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, has challenged opposition leaders to move beyond criticisms and present practical, well-articulated alternatives to addressing Nigeria's economic challenges.

This was contained in a statement by Yilwatda's Special Adviser on Media and Information Strategy, Abimbola Tooki, in Abuja.

Tooki quoted the national chairman as stating this at the 10th National Assembly Award Dinner Ceremony held on Wednesday night in Abuja.

Yilwatda, who was represented by Daniel Rejenieju at the event, said opposition leaders should desist from merely condemning government policies.

He said the removal of fuel subsidy by the President Bola Tinubu-led APC administration was an inevitable and necessary decision to rescue the nation's economy from imminent fiscal collapse.

The national chairman described the former subsidy regime as an unsustainable system that only enriched a privileged few, while denying the country the resources required for critical national development.

He urged Nigerians to remain steadfast in their support for the bold economic reforms being implemented by the Tinubu-led administration.

Yilwatda expressed confidence that the temporary hardship associated with the reforms would ultimately give way to sustainable economic growth, fiscal stability and shared national prosperity.

According to him, a courageous leadership is defined by the willingness to take difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions in the overall interest of the people.

He stated that Tinubu had demonstrated exceptional courage by implementing reforms that successive administrations acknowledged were necessary but lacked the political will to execute.

Yilwatda explained that the current economic difficulties represent the short-term consequences of reforms designed to correct years of structural distortions, adding that the long-term gains would far outweigh the present sacrifices.

Highlighting the positive impact of the administration's reforms, he identified the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) as one of the most transformative social intervention programmes under Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

He noted that millions of students across tertiary institutions had benefitted from the initiative regardless of ethnicity, religion or political affiliation, thereby expanding access to higher education and reducing the financial burden on Nigerian families.

The national chairman further stated that the reforms had promoted greater fiscal discipline among citizens by encouraging prudent spending, responsible financial planning and a renewed culture of productivity.

He also noted that increased allocations to states and other sub-national governments had strengthened their capacity to pay salaries promptly, undertake infrastructure projects and deliver meaningful development to their people.

While acknowledging the temporary hardship occasioned by the reforms, he appealed to Nigerians to remain patient and united in support of Tinubu's administration.

Yilwatda emphasised that lasting national transformation required resilience, sacrifice and collective commitment.

According to the statement, special awards were conferred on some deserving Nigerians at the event convened by Uko Miracle, who commended the president and the APC leadership for remarkable achievements since assuming office.

Miracle said his organisation undertook an extensive documentation of the administration's performance by engaging ministries, departments and agencies nationwide.

This, he said, culminated in the publication of a comprehensive magazine showcasing the Tinubu-led administration's ac-



MOSOGAR-OGHARA SECTION:
Failed section of the Mosogar-Oghara section of Warri-Benin Highway.

Delta begins emergency repairs on Mosogar-Oghara section

ASABA

The Delta State Government has commenced emergency repairs on the failed Mosogar-Oghara section of the Warri-Benin Highway after Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's directive.

The Delta State Governor, Mr Sheriff Oborevwori, had on June 22 directed that remedial works be carried out on the failed portions.

The Commissioner for Works (Urban and Highway), Mr Reuben Izeze, announced this at a news conference on Thursday in Asaba.

According to Izeze, the emergency intervention is aimed at restoring safer and smoother commuting on the ever-busy highway.

"The decision followed the increased concerns from motorists over the deteriorating condition of the busy route, where potholes and pavement failures had caused delays and safety challenges," he said.

He explained that the state had to carry out the emergency repairs even though it's a federal highway, due to its importance to regional commerce, public movements and economic activities across the South-South region.

The commissioner disclosed that Obakpor Engineering Construction Company had moved its equipment and materials to the site and had commenced work to repair the damaged portions of the highway.

He said the intervention would improve traffic flow while awaiting for a comprehensive reconstruction plans from the Federal Government and other long-term measures to restore the highway.

Izeze described the Warri-Benin Highway as a vital link connecting the South-South region with other parts of Nigeria, stressing that "it supports the movement of goods, agricultural produce and petroleum supplies.

NABTEB concludes 2026 FTC placement, opens admission process for successful candidates

ABUJA

Dr Mohammed Mohammed, The Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB), has announced the successful conclusion of the 2026 selection and placement exercise into Federal Technical Colleges (FTCs).

The Chief registrar disclosed this in a statement issued on Thursday, noting that the exercise followed the successful conduct and release of the results of the 2026 National Common Entrance Examination (NCEE) held on June 13.

He also directed candidates to check their admissions status and commence registration.

Mohammed said the exercise, conducted in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) and principals of Federal Technical Colleges, marked another milestone in the Federal Government Colleges.

He said that, the drive would help to strengthen technical and vocational education through a transparent and merit-based admission process.

He explained that the selection and placement process was carried out strictly in accordance with the approved admission guidelines to ensure fairness, transparency and equal opportunities for qualified candidates seeking admission into Federal Technical Colleges across the country.

Mohammed directed candidates who participated in the 2026 NCEE to check their admission status on the NABTEB website by visiting www.nabteb.gov.ng, navigating to the Media Centre and clicking on FTC Admission Status.

According to him, candidates who are unable to access the online platform can also confirm their admission status at NABTEB offices in the 36 states, the six geo-political zones and the board's national headquarters in Benin, Edo.

The Chief registrar said successful candidates should visit the NABTEB e-world portal on Friday, July 24, to print their notification of admission slips.

He explained that the notification slip would serve as the official document required for candidates to proceed to their respective Federal Technical Colleges to obtain their admission letters.

Court declines to hear Miyetti Allah president's plea to vary bail conditions

A Federal High Court in Abuja on Thursday declined to hear a fresh application by detained National President of Miyetti Allah Kauta Hore, Bello Bodejo, seeking an order varying his bail conditions.

Justice Inyang Ekwo, in a ruling, held that since the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is contesting the application, the court might be unable to conclude its proceedings before the court vacation commences.

The EFCC charged Bodejo with money laundering involving 2.63 million U.S. dollars.

Justice Ekwo had, on Monday, admitted Bodejo to a N2 billion bail with two sureties in the like sum.

The judge ordered that one of the sureties must present a three-year tax clearance evidence and must reside within the court's jurisdiction, while the second sureties must have a land worth N2 billion in Abuja.

When the case was called on Thursday, Bodejo's lawyer, Mohammed Sheriff, informed the court about the application by his client, seeking, among others, the variation of the conditions attached to the bail granted him.

The lawyer to the anti-graft agency, Fatai Erewunmi, said he was served with the application and had responded by filing a counter affidavit.

But the judge said upon looking at the tenure of the application, which is being challenged, the court might be unable to conclude proceedings in the application before the court's vacation.

Court sentences 3 men to life imprisonment for Oriire school abduction

ABUJA

A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja on Thursday sentenced three terrorists linked to the recent kidnapping of school children and teachers in Orire Local Government Area (LGA) of Oyo State, to life imprisonments.

Justice Salim Ibrahim sentenced the three men after they pleaded guilty to some of the counts in a 10-count terrorism charge preferred against them by the Federal Government.

The judge, who gave them the maximum sentencing in count six which attracted life imprisonment, sentenced them each to 25-year jail terms in count 4.

Abdulrazak Umar (a.k.a. Abu Khalifa/Abu Khalid), Yunusa Musa (a.k.a. Yunusa bin Musa) and Shamsu Adamu Sani (a.k.a. Abu Itisar), pleaded guilty to counts four and six.

Also, Umar, who was the only one mentioned in counts seven, eight, nine and ten, pleaded guilty to all the four counts.

The judge, in the judgment, equally sentenced Umar to a maximum sentencing of life imprisonment in counts seven, nine and 10 and committed him to a 20-year imprisonment in count eight.

Justice Ibrahim then adjourned the matter until September 16 and September 17 for commencement of trial in counts one, two, three and five where they pleaded not guilty.

The men, who were arrested by the Department of State Services (DSS), all hail from Suleja LGA of Niger State.

NEWS

2027: Northern Christians group seeks APC campaign D-G position

KADUNA

A group, Northern Christian Progressive Group, has urged the All Progressives Congress (APC) to appoint a Northern Christian as Director-General (D-G) of President Bola Tinubu's 2027 presidential campaign.

The group's Secretary, Rev. Hayap Danladi, made the appeal in a statement issued on Thursday in Kaduna.

Danladi said the appointment would demonstrate the loyalty and political strength of Northern Christians ahead of the 2027 general election.

He recalled that the APC appointed former Plateau State Governor, Solomon Lalong, as D-G of Tinubu's 2023 presidential campaign.

Danladi expressed confidence that Lalong's experience and widespread support contributed significantly to Tinubu's electoral victory.

He said appointing another Northern Christian would strengthen the campaign and counter claims of presidential bias by political opponents.

According to him, the move would promote political inclusion, mutual respect and national unity across religious and ethnic divides.

Danladi said Northern Christian politicians would work diligently for Tinubu's re-election in recognition of his administration's achievements and reforms.

He urged Nigerians to reject religious intolerance and ethnic divisions while embracing unity and national development.

Danladi said Christians were committed to nation-building and viewed all Nigerians as equal partners regardless of religious differences.

He added that Tinubu's leadership style reflected fairness, justice and respect for all citizens without discrimination.

Also, the Leader of Northern Christian Youth, Mr Zakaria Gwasshi, commended Tinubu for promoting national unity despite prevailing challenges.

Gwasshi said the administration had recorded progress in tackling insecurity, driving economic development and promoting peaceful coexistence across the country.

He added that religious crises in Bauchi, Kaduna, Plateau and Benue states had reduced without witch-hunts or religious bias under Tinubu's administration.



WOMEN DEVELOPMENT (MBNCWD):
Director General, Maryam Babangida National Centre for Women Development (MBNCWD), Dr Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi; Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Imaan Suleiman-Ibrahim and Permanent Secretary of the ministry, during the visit of the Minister to the centre in Abuja.

Africa should remain centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy – LP presidential candidate

ABUJA

The Labour Party presidential candidate, Dr Chibuzo Okereke, says Africa should remain the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy, notwithstanding the xenophobic attacks in South Africa.

Okereke stated this in an interview with newsmen on Thursday in Abuja.

The presidential candidate, who was reacting to questions on the xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa, emphasised that there is power in togetherness.

He recalled that in the days of apartheid rule in South Africa, Nigeria played a significant role in the liberation of the Blacks and should continue to play the "Big Brother" in Africa.

According to him, If Nigeria deploys its resources and strategically apply its foreign policy instruments, it will have better result and better influence.

Okereke said that should he emerge president in 2027, measures would be introduced to elevate the thinking of Africans in general.

He explained that the United States is regarded as the "melting pot" because everyone is free to pursue skills and achieve their dreams.

He said that Nigerians always celebrate compatriots who became successful or emerged lawmakers in America, Canada and other countries of the world.

"This (xenophobia) is a small mind issue. The South African government and people appear not to understand the power of togetherness.

"It is one of the banes of Africa where identity appears to be more important; where 'if you are not from us, you are against us' thought is prevalent.

"Our foreign policy will remain Africa as the centerpiece, but will elevate the conversation and the thinking to understand that nobody is coming to take away anything from you, that people who have resource competence and skills can contribute even better to the economy.

"This is what is making America, Canada, UK better off, because they are not talking of xenophobia; their immigration policies just state: come in the right way, but once you are in the country, nobody can accuse you.

"Almost all African countries have this idea of empowering their own people, it has to be our people. What can clear this is a more responsible government and better productivity.

"Respectfully speaking, African countries should respect Nigeria; their laws should apply to those who disobey them, but we should not have this kind of xenophobic attacks or what happened in Ghana.

"Nigeria should be able to have a kind of reciprocity that is also within governmental powers," he said.

Okereke, however, called for an end to the attacks on foreigners in South Africa.

Speaking on state police, the Labour Party presidential candidate, threw his weight behind the establishment of the new concept of policing in Nigeria.

FUT Daura gets first Africa's railway signal communication centre

DAURA (KATSINA)

The Federal University of Transportation, Daura (FUTD) in Katsina State has commenced the construction of Africa's first Centre for Railway Signal and Communication.

The facility is expected to strengthen transportation research and innovation.

Speaking at the foundation-laying ceremony on Wednesday in Daura, the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. Umar Adam Katsayal, said the centre was secured under the institution's 2026 Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) Annual Intervention.

He described the facility as the second Centre for Railway Signal and Communication in the world after China and the first on the African continent.

According to him, the centre will serve as a hub for research in intelligent and smart transportation, covering railway, maritime, aviation and road transport systems

He added that the facility would also have the capacity to monitor railway traffic across Nigeria and other parts of Africa.

The vice-chancellor commended TETFund for its sustained interventions in the university and praised the contractor handling the project for mobilising to the site before receiving project funds.

He urged the contractor and project consultant to maintain quality standards and ensure timely completion of the project.

"While construction is ongoing, the Chinese government is already shipping the equipment that will be installed in the centre.

"All the equipment will be donated by China Railway Signal and Communication (CRSC) under a tripartite agreement signed in August 2025 between the company, the Federal Ministry of Transportation and the university," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the consulting and contracting firms, the project consultant, Dr Lawal Salisu, thanked the university management for the confidence reposed in them.

He assured the university of quality execution of the project and commended the vice-chancellor for attracting high-impact projects to the institution.

Also speaking, the Director of Academic Planning and Monitoring in the university, Prof. Ahmad Abubakar, described the centre as a world-class project that would redefine transportation education in Nigeria.

Abubakar congratulated the university's Governing Council, management, staff and students on the achievement.

He expressed confidence that the facility would contribute significantly to the development of Nigeria's transportation sector.

Police nab 3 suspected cultists, recover 9 guns in Lagos

LAGOS

The Police Command in Lagos has apprehended three suspected cultists and recovered nine guns, ammunition and other dangerous weapons during an intelligence-led operation in the state.

The command's spokesperson, SP Abimbola Adebisi, disclosed this in a statement in Lagos

Adebisi said the operation followed credible information from members of the public on the activities of some suspected cultists in the Imota, Ikorodu area of the state.

"Acting on the intelligence, police operatives stormed the location and apprehended the suspects of ages 37, 42 and 60.

"Items recovered from them include one beretta pistol, one locally made pistol, seven dane guns, 10 live cartridges, seven expended cartridges, one stun gun, two handcuffs and four cutlasses, among other exhibits," she said.

The spokesperson said preliminary investigation revealed that the suspects were members of the Aiye Confraternity.

According to her, the recovered Beretta pistol allegedly belonged to a notorious cultist known as "Mayibone", who is currently at large.

Adebisi asserted that efforts were ongoing to apprehend other fleeing gang members and recover additional weapons.

She said that the Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr Fatai Tijani, reaffirmed the command's commitment to tackling cultism and other violent crimes across Lagos.

The spokesperson urged residents to continue supporting the police with timely and credible information to enhance crime-fighting efforts.

She encouraged residents to report suspicious persons, vehicles and activities to the nearest police station or through the command's emergency lines.

XX

NCS warns against fake recruitment update circulating online

ABUJA

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) says the purported recruitment update currently circulating on some social media platforms is fake and did not originate from the Service.

NCS's Spokesperson, Abdullahi Maiwada, made this known in a statement on Thursday in Abuja.

Maiwada urged members of the public to disregard the false information, saying the service would only communicate recruitment updates through its official channels.

He also advised the public to remain vigilant and verify information before sharing it.

"Members of the public are advised to disregard the publication and rely only on information disseminated through the official communication channels of the NCS.

"Official NCS Social Media Handles are Facebook: Nigeria Customs Service,Instagram: @customsng, X (Twitter): @customsng, Threads: @customsng and TikTok: @customsng," he said.

The NCS received 573, 523 applications during the first phase of its exercise after it advertised a total of 3,927 vacancies on Dec. 27,2024 across the Superintendent, Inspectorate and Customs Assistant cadres.

In 2025, various stages of the recruitment exercises were conducted but appointment letters were yet to be issued.

Ondo Assembly crisis: **Speaker acting like dictator, he should resign – Spokesperson**

AKURE

The Spokesman for the Ondo State House of Assembly, Mr Olatunji Ifabiyi, has explained that members of the Assembly called for the resignation of the Speaker, Mr. Olamide Oladiji, over alleged dictatorial leadership style.

Ifabiyi, in a chat with newsmen on Thursday in Akure, said that 21 of the 26 members of the Assembly had signed a notice giving the Speaker an ultimatum to resign or face impeachment.

The spokesman alleged that the Speaker submitted a resolution of reordering the budget of the Ondo State Oil Producing Development Commission (OSOPADEC) to the state executive without the knowledge of other members.

Ifabiyi cited the speaker's "dictatorial" and "undemocratic" practices as the primary reasons for the action of the lawmakers.

"There is budget rendering which does not emanate from the House of the Assembly, and the Speaker on his own did it without the consent of other members which is against the law.

"It is a criminal offence. We cannot continue on this way.

"We have resolved that he should go, and 21 of us have signed this resolution. But with the wisdom of the Assembly, we have asked him to resign or he will be impeached.

"He should stop lying that somebody is sponsoring us. The truth of the matter is that the members are fed up with Mr. Speaker's leadership style, and he should go.

"He should allow the House of the Assembly to breathe," he stated.

According to him, the speaker has failed in his responsibility to carry others along in the affairs of the parliament.

Oladiji, however, denied the allegation, describing it as false and politically motivated.



MEDIA FAMILIARISATIONVISIT::
From left: Air Component Commander, Operation Hadin Kai, Air Commodore Mohammed Ahmed; Director of Public Relations and Information, Nigerian Air Force, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame and Commander, 105 Composite Group Nigerian Air Force, Group Captain Kingsley Nwachukwu, during the media familiarisation visit to get the daily operation efforts and sacrifices of personnel serving at Air Component in support of ongoing counter-terrorism operations, in Maiduguri on Wednesday

Sanwo-Olu, Almaroof-Oloyede flag off 2026 MNCAH+N week in Oshodi-Isolo

LAGOS

The wife of the Lagos State Governor, Dr. Claudia Sanwo-Olu and Otunba Kehinde Almaroof-Oloyede, the Chairman of Oshodi/ Isolo have flagged off the 2026 MNCAH+N Week in Oshodi-Isolo.

The Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent, Health and Nutrition (MNCAH+N) week would provide free maternal, newborn, child and adolescent healthcare services.

According to a statement issued by the council, Sanwo-Olu, represented by Mrs Oluremi Hamzat, reaffirmed the Lagos State government's commitment to improving access to quality healthcare services for women and children across the state.

The week-long programme offers treatment for childhood malnutrition, deworming, routine immunisation, nutritional support, antenatal care, health education and other life-saving interventions for beneficiaries.

Almaroof-Oloyede described the initiative as a significant investment in residents' health and future, saying sustainable development depends on prioritising the well-being of mothers and children.

He reaffirmed his administration's commitment to accessible, affordable and quality healthcare, urging Oshodi-Isolo residents to utilise the free medical services throughout the week.

Traditional rulers, permanent secretaries, councillors, executive council members, development partners, the management team and residents attended the flag-off ceremony.

Troops rescue 11 kidnapped victims, arrest 21 terrorist suspects, collaborators

ABUJA

Troops have rescued 11 kidnapped victims and arrested 21 suspected terrorists, collaborators, logistics suppliers and drug peddlers in coordinated operations across Borno, Zamfara and Kogi.

This was contained in operational reports made available to newsmen on Thursday.

According to the reports, the operations, conducted under Operation HADIN KAI, Operation Fansan Yamma and Operation MESA between July 21 and 22, also led to the discovery and destruction of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted by terrorists.

The army said the troops of Operation HADIN KAI arrested three suspected ISWAP logistics suppliers around New Abbaram Resettlement Village in Bama Local Government Area of Borno.

It said the items recovered included 3.5 litres of groundnut oil, kola nuts, salt and 76 sachets of coconut flavouring believed to be destined for terrorists.

The army added that troops also received two teenage girls who escaped from the Grazah terrorist enclave in the Mandara Mountains and surrendered at Gwoza.

According to the report, troops discovered and safely detonated two primed IEDs planted by terrorists to target security forces and commuters along the Dambua-Bulabulin-Kumala road.

"Similarly, troops encountered another booby-trap IED along the Cross Kauwa-Kekeno-Monguno road, while fragments were recovered for further forensic analysis.

"In Monguno, troops arrested 12 suspected drug peddlers during raids on criminal hideouts, recovering quantities of cannabis, tramadol and other illicit substances," it said.

The reports further indicated that troops of Operation Fansan Yamma engaged terrorists along the Gamba-da-Gummi-Sokoto road in Zamfara, forcing them to flee and abandon 11 kidnapped victims and a motorcycle.

In Kogi, it said the troops arrested a suspected terrorist informant who confessed to working for a notorious terrorist kingpin identified as Kachallah Babangida.

The report added that security forces also apprehended three suspected terrorists during separate operations in Adavi and Lokoja Local Government Areas.

"Additionally, troops arrested two suspected logistics couriers transporting food items, drinks and cigarettes allegedly meant for terrorists operating within the state," it added.

Vandalism: **Police nab 2 suspects in Akwa Ibom, recover stolen property**

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom says it has apprehended two suspected vandals in separate incidents.

The Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Timfon John, disclosed this in a statement in Uyo on Thursday.

John said that one of the suspects was apprehended on July 19 for vandalism of aluminium window frames, electrical wires, and cables at Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua.

She said the police received a distress call from a vigilant member of the public of vandalism at one of the buildings at the Polytechnic and responded swiftly to arrest the suspect.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that the suspect specialises in the vandalism and theft of aluminium window frames, electrical wires, and cables.

"Exhibits recovered from him include; cut-to-size aluminium window frames and electrical cables.

"During interrogation, the suspect confessed to the crime, while investigation is ongoing," John said.

The police spokesperson said the second suspect stole an industrial block moulding machine vibrator, and was arrested at Ikot Ekpene International Market project site along Calabar–Itu Road.

She said that the stolen machine was successfully recovered, while efforts were being intensified to apprehend other accomplices who are currently at large.

She reiterated the command's unwavering commitment to protecting public infrastructure, safeguarding lives and property.

The Command further urges residents to remain security conscious and continue to partner with the Police by providing timely and credible information on suspicious activities within their communities.

PCRC supports state police creation

AWKA

The Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) has thrown its weight behind the Federal Government on plans to establish state police.

Alhaji Mogaji-Ibraheem Olaniyan, National Chairman of PCRC, said this during the election and inauguration of the new leadership at the Police Headquarters, Zone 13, in Ukpo, Anambra, on Wednesday.

The election produced 21 officers, with Mr Onyebuchi Okeke as chairman and Ken Iloanya as deputy chairman.

Olaniyan said PCRC was confident that state police would be effective and result-orientated under IGP Olatunji Disu because of his deep understanding of the concept of community policing.

He said the PCRC would be the watchdog on behalf of Nigerians to ensure it worked and would lead the campaign against it if it derailed.

"Our fears before now were that state governors would use state police as political weapons against opponents.

"But with the framework the Federal Government is putting in place and Disu as the pioneer IGP who will oversee it, we have confidence that it will work.

"PCRC is going to support states that operate state police just as we are supporting the Federal Police," he said.

Olaniyan congratulated the newly elected executive of PCRC Zone 13, describing the election as keenly contested and peaceful.

He charged the new leadership to work harmoniously and continue to support the police to help them deliver on the task of combating crime and ensuring a peaceful society.

"The election was keenly contested and peaceful; everybody is happy, and that is the mandate the IGP gave us to ensure everybody is involved," he said.

Mr Chukwuemeka Nweke, a member of the new leadership, said the role of PCRC in effective policing could not be overemphasised, as security was a shared responsibility.

Nweke said as Vice Chairman 1 of the new team, he would help to mobilise support for the police in the zone.

In his remark, Okeke described his emergence as a victory for all, adding that though he was the chairman, the task was for everyone and could only be achieved collectively.

He said the PCRC would continue to provide the Community support the Police needed to do their job.

"I appreciate the national chairman for conducting an election that is open and acceptable to everybody. I also thank all PCRC members under Zone 13 for believing in my vision," he said.

NEWS

FG empowers 300,000 Nigerians through skills programmes – Minister

ENUGU

The Federal Government says it has supported nearly 300,000 Nigerians through skills development programmes aimed at improving employability, entrepreneurship and economic growth.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Jumoke Oduwole, disclosed this at the 17th National Council on Industry, Trade and Investment (NCITI) in Enugu.

The council was themed, "Enhancing Competitiveness in Industry, Trade and Investment for Inclusive Growth and Global Market Integration."

Oduwole said the interventions were part of efforts to translate the reforms under President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda into increased production, investment, exports and job creation.

She said the ministry had facilitated more than 50 billion dollars in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) commitments, recorded about 6.1 billion dollars in non-oil exports and captured over 500,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in its national database.

"The Bank of Industry has disbursed over N600 billion to businesses and nearly 300,000 Nigerians have been supported through skills programmes.

"Our focus remains on converting training into jobs, enterprise and sustainable economic growth," she said.

The minister described the council as a platform for aligning national and sub-national strategies to transform Nigeria's economy.

She said competitiveness would depend on the country's ability to produce efficiently, improve logistics, regulate markets and attract quality investments.

Oduwole added that the ministry was implementing policies to strengthen manufacturing, agro-processing, industrial clusters, special economic zones, technology and skills development.

She said the National Talent Export Programme (NATEP) was also positioning Nigerian professionals to benefit from opportunities in the global services market.

The minister urged states to develop their comparative advantages into productive industrial clusters and investment-ready projects through partnerships with the private sector and development organisations.

She charged participants to ensure that council resolutions were supported with implementation plans, measurable targets and timelines.

Also speaking, the Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, Sen. John Enoh, said industrial competitiveness was critical to Nigeria's economic future amid changes in technology, trade, climate and manufacturing.



THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF CHEQUES:
From left: Chairman, House Committee on Lands, Lagos State House of Assembly, Mr Olayinka Kazeem; Executive Secretary, Land Use and Allocation Committee (LUAC), Dr Ajetunmobi Ololade; Permanent Secretary of Lands Bureau, Mr Kamar Olowoshago; Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; recipients of cheque on behalf of Iranlowo Oluwa Mosque, Mr Jamiu Yunus and Alhaja Kudirat Dalemo; Deputy Governor of Lagos, Dr Obafemi Hamzat and Secretary to State Government, Mrs Abimbola Salu-Hundeyin, during the public presentation of cheques to compensate the project affected persons on land acquired for overriding public interest in Lagos State on Monday.

Ebonyi govt urges residents on environmental cleanliness

ABAKALIKI

Maxwell Okechukwu

The newly appointed Commissioner, Ministry of Environment Hon. Sylvester Nwenugwu Nwite, has expressed his resolve to make Ebonyi State Cleaner and Greener to promote public health.

To achieve this, the Ministry has embarked on aggressive monthly environmental sanitation exercise to make the state free of avoidable disease burden capable of impeding the growth and development of the state.

The Commissioner therefore charged residents to corporate with the Ministry by participating fully in the State Clean up Exercise by clearing overgrown grasses, sweeping of compounds, scooping of gutters/drainages and most importantly, bagging the wastes generated before disposal at the Government approved dump sites at the appropriate time.

Hon Nwite explained that, that during the cleanup exercise there will be no vehicular or human movement, sporting activities, religious programmes, loading/offloading of goods, except persons on essential duties like health and security personnel, including the pressmen, who must display valid means of identification to the Environment Special Taskforce.

He added that any defaulters arrested will be prosecuted inline with the Ebonyi State Environmental Laws. He however assured that no innocent citizens would be molested as members of the task force have received training on best civility standards and practices.llll

Hon. Nwite however appealed to the people to cooperate and support the administration of Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru in this regard to maintain a healthy and conducive e younvironment for the good of everybody.

Bayelsa deputy governor urges women to champion social change

YENAGOA

Bayelsa Deputy Governor, Mr Peter Akpe, has urged more women to join patriotic Nigerians championing social change and building a better society.

Akpe made the call when the Diri/Akpe Women Support Group from Bayelsa West Senatorial District visited him in Yenagoa.

He said women played critical roles in nation building and could help address insecurity, crime and other societal challenges.

Akpe said women's involvement in behavioural change communication at family, community, state and national levels would promote positive transformation.

He also called for value reorientation and adherence to standards in private and public life to ensure sustainable societal progress.

"As women and mothers, we appreciate the role you play in society. You birth today for tomorrow," he said.

The deputy governor urged women to become agents of social engineering by promoting contentment, hard work, acceptable norms and responsible expectations.

He said entitlement mentality and excessive expectations had become major societal problems, while values remained essential to sustainable development.

Akpe advised the group against making political gains its primary objective, urging members to focus on relationships, capacity development and mutual support.

"If you want to have a long-lasting team, then don't build it totally on political grounds and high expectations," he said.

WHO: FGM prevalence drops to 20.4% in Ebonyi

ABAKALIKI

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says the prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Ebonyi has dropped from 74 per cent in 2024 to 20.4 per cent in 2026.

WHO Representative, Dr Douglas Ogbueli, disclosed this at the Ebonyi Women's Leadership Summit on FGM in Abakaliki.

Ogbueli described the decline as a major milestone in efforts to end FGM, assuring that WHO would continue supporting the state until the practice was eradicated.

The summit was organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Better Health for Rural Women, Children and Internally Displaced Foundation (BERWO).

The summit brought together stakeholders to strengthen advocacy and interventions against FGM in the state.

The wife of the Ebonyi Governor, Mrs Mary-Maudline Nwifuru, declared zero tolerance for FGM and warned local government officials to ensure its elimination.

Nwifuru also urged lawmakers to intensify public awareness campaigns against the harmful practice across the state.

UNFPA Resident Representative, Muriel Mafico, commended Ebonyi's progress and expressed confidence that sustained commitment would reduce FGM prevalence to zero.

A gynaecologist, Prof. Johnson Obunanna, described FGM as a violation of the rights of women and girls.

Obunanna urged traditional and religious leaders to sustain advocacy and community mobilisation against the practice.

The summit attracted traditional rulers' wives, religious leaders, women's groups, FGM survivors and development partners committed to ending FGM.

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a future free of female genital mutilation in Ebonyi.

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Ex-NMEC acting chief seeks staff support for new executive secretary

ABUJA

Dr John Edeh, Former Acting Executive Secretary, National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC), has urged members of staff to give their full support to the newly appointed Executive Secretary, Prof. Muhammad Shuuni.

Edeh made the call in a goodwill message to staff following the appointment of Shuuni as the substantive Executive Secretary of the commission.

He said the support to the newly appointed boss would ensure continuity and greater achievements in the commission.

He acknowledged that many members of staff had hoped that one of their own would succeed the immediate past executive secretary in order to preserve the institution's leadership tradition and institutional memory.

The former acting executive secretary, however, said the commission's progress should take precedence over individual expectations, urging workers to unite behind the new leadership.

According to him, with the collective support, dedication and commitment of the workforce, Shuuni will succeed in steering the commission to greater heights.

Edeh said members of staff must provide the responsibility of making a positive impact, noting that the future of the commission depended on the attitude and commitment of its workforce.

He urged staff not to allow the leadership transition to diminish the passion, dedication and commitment they had consistently demonstrated, particularly during the commission's literacy facilitation programmes across the country.

The former acting executive secretary encouraged its staff to remain focused on advancing NMEC's mandate of promoting mass literacy, adult and non-formal education in line with the Federal Government's objectives.

He further appealed to staff to extend the same loyalty, cooperation and unwavering support they gave to the immediate past Executive Secretary, Prof. Musa Maitafsir, and to him during his brief tenure as acting executive Smsecretary.

NEWS

Okpebholo's aide pledges stronger community security, global visibility for VGN after honour

BENIN CITY

EDWARD OSEGHE

The Edo State Government's Senior Special Assistant on Diaspora Matters, Amb. Osarodion Osagie, has reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening community security and advancing the global profile of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN) following an honour bestowed on him by the organisation.

In a letter of appreciation, Osagie expressed profound gratitude to the leadership and members of the VGN for the recognition, describing the honour as a demonstration of the confidence reposed in him.

He reserved special appreciation for the Edo State Commandant of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Mr. Segun Imafidon, commending his leadership and dedication to promoting peace, public safety and community security across the state.

According to Osagie, effective security is a shared responsibility that demands collaboration among government, security agencies, community leaders and citizens.

Drawing from his years of experience in private security and investigation, he pledged to deploy his expertise towards supporting intelligence gathering, community policing initiatives, crime prevention and other measures aimed at improving public safety in Edo State and beyond.

Osagie stated that his Diaspora Office is developing innovative, technology-driven solutions to support security operations, stressing that the team believes the deployment of technology in intelligence gathering, crime prevention and community policing represents a global best practice in tackling insecurity. He noted that leveraging modern technology would complement existing security efforts, strengthen intelligence-led policing and improve the overall effectiveness of community security initiatives across Edo State.

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo's aide also expressed optimism about forging closer collaboration with the Vigilante Group of Nigeria to enhance grassroots security and create safer communities capable of driving sustainable peace and development.

Osagie said the renewed commitment aligns with the SHINE Agenda of Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo, particularly the administration's focus on strengthening community policing, supporting grassroots security architecture and fostering a safer environment for residents, businesses and investors. He noted that the governor's sustained collaboration with conventional and complementary security agencies has continued to bolster public confidence, improve intelligence-driven policing and enhance the protection of lives and property across Edo State.

He added that while the administration has already recorded significant strides in improving security across the state, there remains even greater potential for expanding community-based policing, intelligence sharing and stakeholder collaboration to consolidate the gains achieved.

According to him, with the continued commitment of Governor Okpebholo, security agencies, the Vigilante Group of Nigeria and community stakeholders, Edo State is well positioned to record even greater security achievements, sustainable peace and accelerated socio-economic development under the SHINE Agenda.

Nigeria's UN Security Council bid deserves global attention – NAN boss

The Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali Muhammad Ali, has supported the move by Nigeria to aspire for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

Ali said Nigeria's aspiration for a permanent seat in a reformed UN Security Council is a legitimate and urgent call to address decades-old imbalances in the global governance system.

Ali made this known at the public presentation and launch of the book, "Nigeria's Aspiration for a Permanent Seat in a Reformed United Nations Security Council," authored by Brig.-Gen. Abubakar Alkali on Thursday in Abuja.

He described the publication as timely and a significant contribution to the ongoing global discourse on reforming the UN Security Council.

"This publication couldn't have come at a better time. The book provides fresh perspectives on the structure and membership of the United Nations Security Council and interrogates long-standing imbalances in the global system.

"It traces the issue of decolonisation of African states and argues that this historical context remains relevant to the current call for reform.

"The publication carefully examines both the prospects and challenges confronting Nigeria's quest for a permanent seat in a reformed Security Council," Ali said.

He noted that the central thrust of the book was Nigeria's legitimate demand for equitable representation in the world's foremost security body.

"It is a legitimate and urgent call by Nigeria to address the decades-old imbalance that continues to affect emerging countries, particularly those in the global South."

Ali commended the author for his bold intervention in an important national and international discourse, noting that his wealth of experience and credentials uniquely qualified him to write authoritatively on the subject.

"So much has been said about the author and his qualifications. He is eminently qualified to write and do justice to this subject matter," Ali said.

Presenting the book to the audience and the general public, Ali congratulated Alkali for making what he described as a bold and timely contribution to knowledge.

He also announced that the book would sell for N10,000 per copy and disclosed that NAN had committed to purchasing five copies in support of the publication.

"It is my privilege to present this book, Nigeria's Aspiration for a Permanent Seat in a Reformed United Nations Security Council, to this distinguished audience and to the general public.



INAUGURATING THE FACILITY:
Governor Alex Otti of Abia (middle) addressing some pupils of Umuomayiukwu Smart School in Isiala Ngwa North LGA, after inaugurating the facility, with his wife, Mrs Priscilla Otti (right) and Mr Kenechukwu Nwosu, his Special Adviser on Basic and Secondary Education (left).

NDDC completes 600km of roads in 3 years – Ogbuku

PORT HARCOURT

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) says it has completed more than 600 kilometres of roads across the Niger Delta in the past three years.

The Managing Director of NDDC, Dr Samuel Ogbuku, disclosed this during a visit by Heads of Service from across the country to the commission's headquarters in Port Harcourt.

Ogbuku's remarks were contained in a statement issued on Thursday by the commission's Director of Corporate Affairs, Mrs Seledi Thompson-Wakama.

Represented by the Executive Director, Finance and Administration, Mr Boma Iyaye, Ogbuku said the commission remained committed to transforming the Niger Delta through impactful projects.

"We have completed over 600 kilometres of roads, alongside several bridges, within the last three years," he said.

He added that the 1.2-kilomotre Kaa-Ataba Bridge, one of the country's longest bridges, was nearing completion and would soon be inaugurated.

According to him, the commission's infrastructure interventions have increased public confidence and improved connectivity across the region.

Ogbuku said the NDDC had also digitised its operations to improve efficiency and service delivery.

"The commission has gone paperless through the digitisation of its transactions, including procurement processes," he stated.

He said the commission had strengthened partnerships with state governments and development partners, including Shell, Nigerian LNG Limited (NLNG) and Chevron, to deliver landmark projects.

The managing director also highlighted the revitalisation of the foreign postgraduate scholarship scheme and the introduction of a local postgraduate scholarship programme.

According to him, the initiative expanded opportunities for about 600 additional beneficiaries across the Niger Delta.

Ogbuku disclosed that more than N6 billion had been invested in small businesses through the Niger Delta Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Trade, Mines and Agriculture.

"The intervention is aimed at stimulating economic growth and reducing poverty in the region," he said.

The NDDC boss also listed the construction and equipping of medical facilities, as well as free medical outreach programmes, among the commission's achievements in the health sector.

Sahara Group seeks practical path to Africa's energy transition

LAGOS

Sahara Group has called for a new approach to Africa's energy transition, infrastructure financing and energy journalism.

The company urged governments, investors, policymakers and the media to focus on practical solutions that reflect the continent's unique realities.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the call was made at the third edition of Asharami Square, Sahara Group's thought leadership platform on Wednesday in Lagos.

The platform has the theme, "Energising Africa's Future: Legacy, Impact and Transformation".

Speaking at the event, Director of Governance and Sustainability, Sahara Group, Mr Ejiro Gray, said the company's Beyond XXX vision is focused on shaping the future through innovation, collaboration and sustainable development.

Gray stressed that Africa's energy transition must be driven by local needs and supported by balanced, evidence-based journalism.

"Effective journalism should not only tell us what happened; it should help us understand why it matters, whose interests are affected and what perspectives are missing from the conversation," she said.

Delivering the keynote address, the Special Adviser to the President on Power Infrastructure, Mr Sadiq Wanka, said Nigeria's ongoing power sector reforms were creating significant investment opportunities across embedded generation, mini-grids, renewable energy, transmission infrastructure and industrial power.

According to him, the biggest challenge is no longer technology but attracting long-term investment.

"The issue is no longer technology. The real challenge is mobilising capital at scale, structuring bankable opportunities and creating an ecosystem that attracts long-term financing," Wanka said.

He also encouraged journalists to pay closer attention to energy policies, reforms and their impact on economic development.

Prof. Abigail Ogwezzy-Ndisika, Director of the Institute of Continuing Education, University of Lagos, called for more investigative and solutions-driven energy reporting.

"Energy reporting must go beyond headline events and announcements.

"Journalists need to ask deeper questions, examine the evidence and connect policy decisions to their impact on communities and everyday lives," she said.

NEWS EXTRA

Anambra to arrest, prosecute illegal traditional rulers

AWKA

The Anambra Government has threatened to arrest and prosecute anyone parading himself as the traditional ruler of any community without recognition and certification.

Chief Vincent Ezeaka, Commissioner for Local Government and Community Affairs issued the warning in a letter addressed to Presidents General of Town Unions on Thursday.

The statement was entitled "Unlawful Assumption of Office and Parading as Traditional Ruler by Persons not Recognized by the Anambra State Government".

Ezeaka said the government had received reports about persons who without recognition parade themselves, permit themselves to be addressed as and perform functions reserved for traditional rulers in some communities.

He said such acts were criminal offenses punishable with imprisonment under the Traditional Rulers Law of Anambra.

He said only a person duly selected, appointed and formally recognised by government in accordance with the law was entitled to function or hold himself out as the traditional ruler of a town or community.

"In view of the reports received so far, the Anambra State Government has taken a decision to prosecute every person who unlawfully parades himself as a traditional ruler, assumes a reserved title, or performs the functions of a traditional ruler.

"Accordingly, you are requested to submit complaints to this Ministry and the Ministry of Justice against any person in your community who is parading himself as a traditional ruler contrary to the provisions of the law," he said.

BUA Cement grows half-year revenue by 25.6%, posts ₦324.9bn profit

ABUJA

BUA Cement Plc has reported a 25.6 per cent increase in revenue to N728.9 billion for the half-year ended June 2026.

The company disclosed this in its unaudited financial results released on Thursday and made available to News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abuja.

It said revenue rose from N580.3 billion recorded during the corresponding period in 2025.

The company reported profit before tax of N384.4 billion, representing a 79 per cent increase from N214.8 billion recorded a year earlier.

It added that profit after tax grew by 79.6 per cent to N324.9 billion, compared with N180.9 billion in the corresponding period of 2025.

BUA Cement attributed the performance to growth in its new market segment, improved cost management, fiscal discipline and a stable foreign exchange environment.

It said the new market segment contributed more to revenue both year-on-year and compared with the preceding quarter.

The company said cost containment measures reduced direct cost per tonne by 4.4 per cent year-on-year and 0.6 per cent between the first two quarters of 2026.

It added that its operating ratio declined to 49.1 per cent in the first half of 2026 from 57.9 per cent in the corresponding period of 2025.

According to the company, return on assets improved to 21.4 per cent from 15.4 per cent, while return on equity rose to 52.4 per cent from 37.8 per cent.

It said earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation increased to 54 per cent from 46.3 per cent during the review period.

The company also reported earnings per share of N9.59, compared with N5.34 recorded in the first half of 2025.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the company, Yusuf Binji, expressed satisfaction with the company's performance despite prevailing operational challenges.

PUBLIC NOTICE
MISSING LANDED DOCUMENT

The general public is here by notified that I, **PATRICK NOSAYABA OSAGIE**. is the right owner of the parcel/ piece of land measurung 100ft by 100ft consisting a building of two flats, lying and situate at No. 23, Aiwerioba Street, off Stadium Road, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. That the above mentioned property devolved on me as the son of my late father, **PATRICK AGHAKU OSAGIE**, after I performed all the burial/ funeral rites according to Benin Native Law and Customs. That the documents, covering the said property was discovered missing after the death of my father.And all efforts made to trace the document proved abortive.Hence this publication for record purposes. The property is not for sale. Buyers Beware! Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Signed: **PATRICK NOSAYABA OSAGIE**

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby notified that I, **Miss IGIEBOR IBUDE SANDRA**, am the biological mother of **IGIEBOR HANNAH OSAHERUWEN**,bornon29July2018inBeninCity,EdoState,Nigeria.

The child's biological father, **Mr. EFIH OBARO**, abandoned me during my pregnancy and has had no contact with, nor provided any financial, emotional, or parental support for the child since her birth. His present whereabouts are unknown to me.

My father, **Mr. IGIEBOR ERNEST OSARUYI**, who is the child's maternal grandfather, has been the only consistent father figure in Hannah's life. He has assumed parental responsibility, care, and financial support for her from birth until now. In recognition of his role, I formally confirm that he acts jointly with me in matters concerning Hannah's welfare, education, and medical care.

This Public Notice is hereby issued to notify the general public and all concerned authorities of the above facts. The general public and all concerned authorities are kindly requested to take note.

Signed: **Miss IGIEBOR IBUDE SANDRA**

PUBLIC NOTICE
MISSING DOCUMENTS

The general public is hereby notified that, I **GEORGE KEHINDE OLU** is the bonfide owner of the following documents/ certificates listed below: May/June WAEC certificate (1980), Nov/Dec 1980 GCE Result Slip, B.Sc in Zoology, University of Benin issued 1988, NYSC Discharge Certificate 1988, Birth Certificate. The above mentioned certificates got lost sometimes in January 1 2023 in Lagos Island while I was on transit, and all efforts to recover then have proved abortive, hence this publication for record purposes. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Signed: **GEORGE KEHINDE OLU**

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **BLESSING URHIE**. now wish to be known and addressed as **BAYOGBONA BLESSING URHIE**. All Document Bearing **BLESSING URHIE**. remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **DESTINY CHRISTOPHER** now wish to be known and addressed as **EHIBOR OSARIEMEN DESTINY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **IYEKEKPOLOR IYESOGIE FAITH** now wish to be known and addressed as **PATRICK IYESOGIE MARVELLOUS**.All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EDOKPOLOR NOSAMUDIANA ABRAHAM**.now wish to be known and addressed as **BELLO EHIREMEN ABRAHAM**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME/CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that **EWEKA OSAIGBOVO AHANON DAVID** and **EWEKA OSIAGBOVO AHANON** are one and same person. Hence forth now wish to be known and addressed as **EWEKA OSAIGBOVO AHANON DAVID**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **ABERE GRACE OSHEMANIME**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS AMINU GRACE OSHEMANIME**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is here notified that my correct name is **EDOJAWENE GODDAY** and not **EDOJAWENE GODDEY ORIANEGBENA**. which was wrongly captured on my Bank account. henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **EDOJAWENE GODDAY**.All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **AYENI DORIS ADESUWA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **IDEMUDIA DORIS ADESUWA**. First name is **DORIS** and middle name is **ADESUWA**.Document bearing **AYENI DORIS ADESUWA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is here by notified that **AMOS FRIDAY** and **AMOS OGIEGA SABASTINE** are one and same person hence forth, now wish to be known and addressed as **AMOS OGIEGA SABASTINE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **FAITH ONOSETALE EIGBE** now wish to be known as **FAITH ONOSETALE IGOGONO–JOHNSON** Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **DANLAMI ONALO** now wish to be known and addressed as **YUNUSA ALHASSAN YERIMA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known and addressed as **AYENI DORIS ADESUWA**, I now wish to be known and addressed as **IDEMUDIA DORIS ADESUWA**. Surname is **IDEMUDIA**, First name is **DORIS**, and Middle name is **ADESUWA**. Document bearing AYENI DORIS ADESUWA remains valid.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as Miss **JIMOH ADESUWA JENNIFER**.Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs BUSARI ADESUWA JENNIFER**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that I was formerly known and addressed as **ITIOLA KEHINDE OPEYEMI** and I now went to be known and addressed as **OMENAI ROSEMARY AKWESE**. All former documents remain valid. Concern authorities, Nigerian Immigration should please, take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAMES

This is to inform the general public that **HELEN UGBOGBO** and **HELEN EVBIKHARE UGBOGBO** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as **HELEN EVBIKHARE UGBOGBO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **KWAZEMA IFEOMA DEBORAH**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS OKOME DEBORAH IFEOMA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as Miss **GRACE CHUKWU**.Now wish to be known and addressed as Mrs **NJOKU GRACE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **ADEBAYO JEFFREY NUIAMI**.Now wish to be known and addressed as **ADEBAYO TUNDE UNIAMI**.All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **IKHAYERE BLESSING EDEGHOGHO**. Now wish to be known and addressed as Mrs **EBHOTEMEN IKHAYERE BLESSING**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **CHUKWUNEME SABINA NNAJI**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **NNAJI SABINA CHINYERE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

PUBLIC NOTICE
DISCLAIMER

This is to inform the general public that **AMAKA CHIMA, VICTOR EZEUKWU ECHEZONA**, and **DESTINY EDET JACK** (a POS operator in the neighborhood),whose photographs appear above, had been involved in acts of fraud against **BUKA CODE RESTAURANT**, located at Shop 52, Opposite General practice clinic, University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), Benin City, Edo state.

The public is hereby notified that **AMAKA CHIMA** and **VICTOR EZEUKWU ECHEZONA** are no longer the employees, agents and representative of **BUKA CODE RESTAURANT** or its proprietress, **Miss PHILOMENA EKEVERE**. Consequently,any person who engages any of the aforementioned in business transaction on behalf of **BUKA CODE RESTAURANT** or **Miss PHILOMENA EKEVERE** dose so entirely at his/her own risk.

This notice is for the record, security purposes, and guidance of the general public.



Amaka Chima



Victor Ezeukwu Echezona



Destiny Edet Jack

Signed:
Miss PHILOMENA EKEVERE

FEATURE

It's a loss for Gangsterism and Criminality in Edo

Dr. Patrick Akhere Ebojele



Repentant cultist



Surrendered pistol

There was a time, not too long ago, when news out of Edo State was an evil cult war, bloodbath, and killings. Youths in their numbers were losing their lives as residents in particular communities hurried indoors before dusk. Business owners counted losses in silence. Parents watched helplessly as their sons drifted into cult groups, not always because poverty left them with no choice, but because criminality had become, for some, a badge of influence and power.

All that Edo is gradually changing.

In its place is an administration that has declared, through words and actions, that the era of tolerance for cultism and kidnapping is over. Governor Monday Okpebholo has made the war against organised crime the defining security policy of his administration. From demolishing criminal hideouts to setting up a Special Criminal Court and deploying a multi-agency security squad, the government is steadily tightening the space within which criminal gangs once operated.

Governor Okpebholo is determined to end the cycle. Speaking to youths from the state's 18 local government areas at the New Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City recently, he made his position unmistakably clear.

"There is no going back in the fight against cultism and kidnapping."

He followed the declaration with a warning to anyone providing shelter to criminals. "If you have a kidnapper in your house, ask him to leave because if we discover that house, we will demolish it."

This warning quickly translated into action.

Across Edo State, buildings identified by security agencies as criminal hideouts are being demolished. One such property in Obagie-N'Evbuosa Community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area was allegedly used by kidnappers to keep victims before moving them to other locations. In Uromi, another building linked to an alleged kidnapping kingpin suffered the same fate after investigators connected the property to a network of abductions involving collaborators from outside Edo State.

For Governor Okpebholo, the demolitions are intended to dismantle the infrastructure sustaining organised crime. "If I can eliminate cultism in Edo State, even if I don't do anything else, I will be satisfied." His message is simple: criminal gangs can not thrive without safe havens.

Driving much of the enforcement is the Edo State Security Squad operating under the codename, 'Operation Flush Out Kidnappers and Cultists'. The operation brings together personnel from the military, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), local hunters, vigilante groups, and even repentmembers providing intelligence on criminal networks. Its operations have been consistent.

It's coordinated raids on suspected cult hideouts in Isiohor, Iguosa, Oluku and the Ibiwe/Lagos Street axis of Benin City led to the arrest of over 20 suspects, while security operatives recovered weapons and illicit drugs.

Another operation at Asoro Hill in Uzebu Quarters resulted in the arrest of 12 suspected cultists from what security agencies described as a drug and cultism den. The squad also moved into the Iyanomo Community to prevent a brewing leadership dispute from degenerating into violence, while intelligence-led operations in Uromi and Auchi led to the arrest of two suspects allegedly found with pump-action guns.

Ahead of July 7, a date traditionally associated with cult "Founders Day" celebrations, the security squad publicly warned that no gathering linked to cult groups would be permitted anywhere in Edo State. The government has also directed business owners to install functional Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras before July 30, 2026, expanding surveillance across commercial districts and making it more difficult for criminal gangs to operate unnoticed.

Beyond arrests, Governor Okpebholo has moved to strengthen the prosecution of suspects. While addressing judicial officers, Governor Okpebholo argued that insecurity was undermining Edo's economic future. "Cultism and kidnapping are major setbacks to economic development. We must reduce them to the barest minimum so our people can feel safe, and investors can have confidence in Edo State."

On June 19, 2026, he formally requested the Chief Judge of Edo State to establish a special court dedicated to cultism and kidnapping cases. Within two weeks, Special Criminal Court 1 commenced sitting in Benin City, with the objective of ensuring that criminal trials no longer spend years moving slowly through the conventional judicial process.

The governor has also adopted a tougher public stance on punishment. While addressing journalists during the parade of suspected kidnappers by the Edo State Police Command in June 2026, he said: "It is better to live according to your means than to go into kidnapping or cultism. A kidnapper loses everything, including his life." He added that he was prepared to sign the death warrant of anyone convicted and sentenced to death for kidnapping.

Days later, while addressing officers and journalists at the Police Command Headquarters in Benin City, he appealed directly to young people. "Stay away from cultism and kidnapping. Those are dangerous paths that lead nowhere except an early grave."

While enforcement has been uncompromising, the administration has also offered rehabilitation to those willing to abandon criminal groups. The governor has announced an amnesty program for cult members prepared to surrender their weapons voluntarily.

"Any cultist who surrenders his weapons voluntarily will be compensated. Whatever the value of the weapon, we will pay double." The policy reflects the government's belief that some young people entered cult groups through peer pressure, manipulation, or desperation and could still be persuaded to abandon violence if offered a credible alternative.

Recall that in August 2025, the governor expressed confidence that his strategy was beginning to produce results. "Many people doubted us before we came into office, but those who believed in us have not been disappointed." Cultism was deeply entrenched over several decades, and dismantling those networks will require consistent effort beyond a single administration. Yet the signs of change are becoming increasingly visible.

Hideouts once considered untouchable are being identified and demolished. Suspects are being arrested through coordinated intelligence-led operations. Dedicated courts are ensuring faster prosecution, while communities are being encouraged to work with security agencies rather than shield offenders.

But for the first time in many years, the momentum is shifting. In Edo State, the advantage is increasingly moving away from criminal gangs and towards the institutions determined to dismantle them.

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

NEWS EXTRA

Communications minister unveils network to promote African languages in AI

ABUJA

The Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr Bosun Tijani has announced the inauguration of the Atlas Network, a continental artificial intelligence (AI) initiative.

The initiative is designed to accelerate the development of locally relevant large language models across Africa.

Tijani made the announcement on Wednesday in Abuja at the opening of the Ordinary Session of the Conference of Plenipotentiaries organised by the African Telecommunications Union (ATU).

He said the initiative would build on Nigeria's Atlas project, described as Africa's first government-led open-source large language model unveiled during the United Nations General Assembly.

He said the Atlas Network would bring together governments, researchers, academia, innovators and ecosystem partners.

That, the minister said, was to ensure Africa's languages, cultures and indigenous knowledge systems were adequately represented in emerging AI technologies.

He noted with concern that, less than two per cent of African languages were currently supported by modern AI systems, in spite of the continent being home to nearly one-tenth of the world's languages.

"This is our opportunity, not simply to adopt artificial intelligence, but to help shape its future for Africa and from Africa," he said.

Tijani acknowledged the contributions of Global Systems for Mobile Association (GSMA) and Awari to the initiative and invited all ATU member states to join the Atlas Network to collectively build Africa's AI future.

Speaking, the Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of Awari, Mr Sailas Adekunle, said Atlas Mojo evolved from N-Atlas.

Adekunle explained that Atlas Mojo was an AI language model developed in Nigeria to demonstrate Africa's capability to build globally competitive AI technologies.

He said the project had grown from a Nigerian initiative into a continental platform through collaboration with the GSMA and other partners.

"The name "Atlas" represents African Tongues and Languages at Scale, while "Mojo", derived from a Swahili word, symbolises unity.

"What started in Nigeria showed that an African start-up can build technology with global significance.

"Today, developers are already using N-Atlas to create digital tools that solve local problems, and Atlas Mojo takes that vision to the continental level," he said.

Adekunle said the initiative would enable African developers to build AI applications using indigenous technologies rather than relying solely on foreign AI platforms.

He noted that dependence on external AI systems often resulted in African data being exported to train foreign models, limiting value creation within the continent.

"This initiative is about building an African AI ecosystem where value stays in Africa, our developers have the right tools and our technologies reflect the realities of African communities," he said.

He disclosed that more than 5,000 developers had already built solutions using the N-Atlas platform.

Earlier, Ms Caroline Mbugwa, described Atlas Mojo as a strategic platform that would enable Africa to shape the future of AI instead of merely consuming it.

ArtsWorld with Francis Odupute 08023680030

Art and Your Child

Airhuoyuwaosahumen Elliot



TEEN ARTIST



KIDS ARTIST

Children naturally love art – painting, drawing, making music, the theater. Unfortunately, when schools cut back on budgets, the arts are usually the first to go. It seems that schools do not appreciate the importance of art in building a kid's brain.

Physiologically, the human brain consists of two parts, the left and the right hemisphere. The left brain is used in logical thinking and analytical processes. This is typically what is trained in school work that consists of math, reading and science. The right brain is used in emotional perception, intuition and creativity. It is the right brain that is mainly used when a person is involved in creative endeavors such as making art. It is this part of the brain that the typical school environment neglects to train.

It is shown that when gifted kids solve problems in their areas of giftedness, there is increased electrical activity in both hemispheres. It appears that for the brain to be efficient, the two hemispheres of the brains must work together. By stimulating and exercising the right hemisphere of the brain, the arts strengthen the connection between the hemispheres Kids should be exposed to the arts as their cognitive skills mature so that their right brain will be as developed as the left, and both hemispheres work in tandem, thus achieving the full potential of the mind.

In recent years, school curricula in the country have shifted heavily toward common core subjects of reading and math, but what about the arts? Although some may regard art education as an extravagance, simple creative activities are some of the building blocks of child development. Learning to create and appreciate visual aesthetics may be more important than ever to the development of the next generation of children as they grow up.

Many of the motions involved in making art, such as holding a paintbrush or scribbling with a crayon, are essential to the growth of fine motor skills in young children. According to the National Institutes of Health, developmental milestones around age three should include drawing a circle and beginning to use safety scissors. Around age four, children may be able to draw a square and begin cutting straight lines with scissors. Many preschool programs emphasize the use of scissors because it develops the skill children will need for writing.

For very young children, making art or just talking about it – provides opportunities to learn words for colors, shapes and actions. When kids are as young as your old, parents can do simple activities such as crumpling up paper and calling it a "Ball" By elementary school, students can use descriptive words to discuss their own creations or to talk about what feelings are elicited when they use different styles of artwork.

Researchers have found a very strong correlation between childhood engagement in the creative arts and measurable success later in life. Children who were exposed to a wide variety of arts and crafts were more likely to create unique inventions that are worthy of patents, come up with ideas good enough to start a new company, or publish provocative papers on science and technology. The researchers suggest that children exposed to arts and crafts are able to think "out of the box" since a lot of working with their hands involves figuring out how to solve problems creatively. After studying many scientists Co-authors Robert and Michele Root-Bernstein reached this conclusion: "The most eminent and innovative among them are significantly more likely to engage in arts and crafts avocations" than the average Joe.

According to a report by Americans for the Arts, art education strengthens problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. The experience of making decisions and choices in the course of creating art carries over into other parts of life. "If they are exploring and thinking and experimenting and trying new ideas, then creativity has a chance to blossom," says Mayrann Kohl, an arts educator and author of numerous books about children's art education.

Drawing, sculpting with clay and threading beads on a string all develop visual-spatial skills, which are more important than ever. Even kids know how to operate a smartphone or tablet, which means that even before they can read, kids are taking in visual information. This information consists of cues that we get from pictures or three-dimensional objects from digital media, books and television.

"Parents need to be aware that children learn a lot more from graphic sources now than in the past," says Dr. Kerry Freedman, Head of Art and Design Education at Northern Illinois University. "Children need to know more about the world than just what they can learn through text and numbers. Art education teaches students how to interpret, criticize, and use visual information, and how to make choices based on it". Knowledge about the visual arts, such as graphic symbolism, is especially important in helping kids become smart consumers and navigate a world filled with marketing logos.

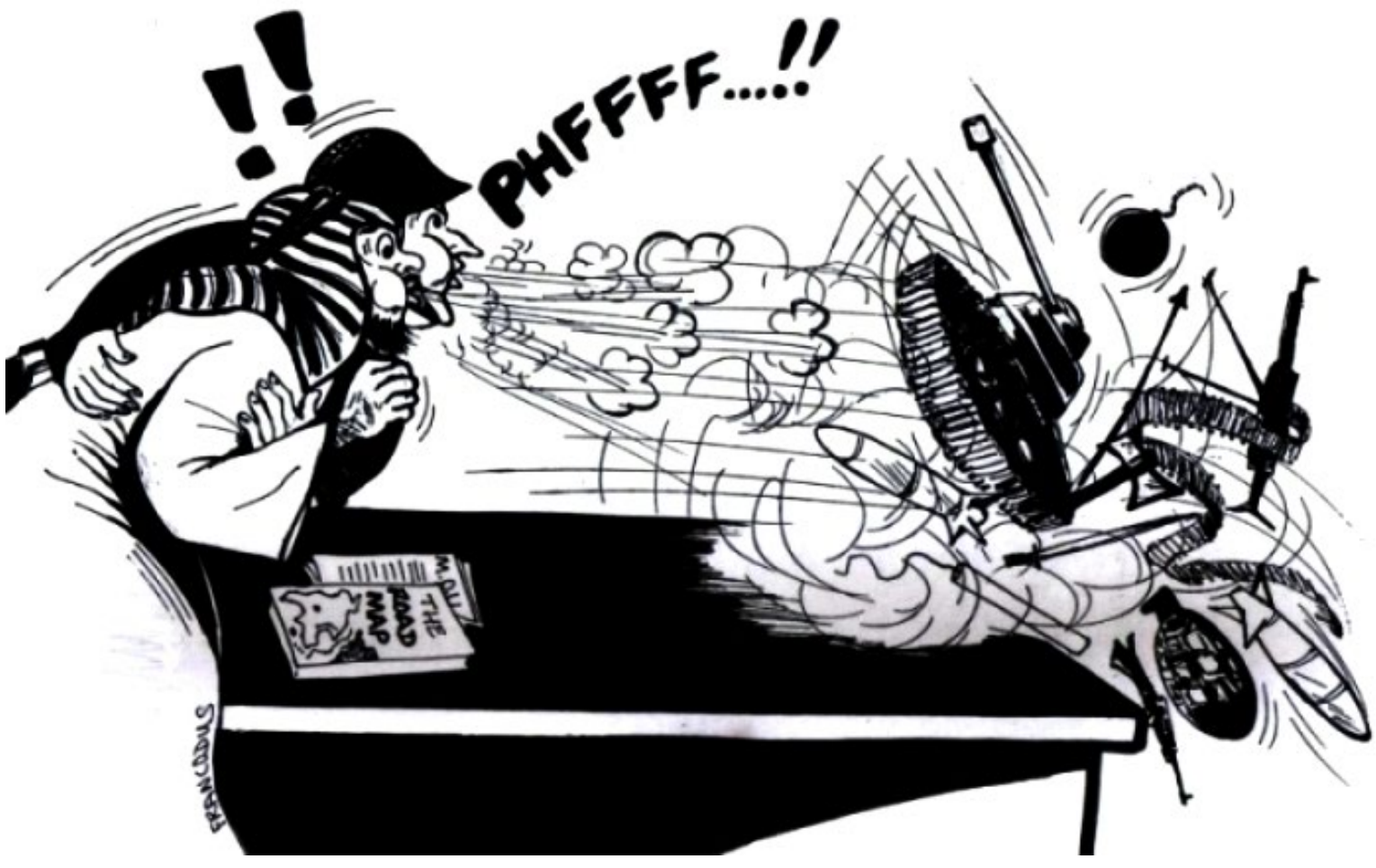
When kids are encouraged to express themselves and take risks in creating art, they develop a sense of innovation that will be important in their adult lives. "The Kind of people society needs to make it move forward are thinking, inventive people who seek new ways and improvements, not people who can only follow directions," says Kohl. "Art is a way to encourage the process and the experience of thinking and making things better!"

As we live in an increasingly diverse society, the images of different groups in the media may also present mixed messages. "If a child is playing with a toy that suggests a racist or sexist meaning, part of that meaning develops because of the aesthetics of the toy – the color, shape, texture of the hair", says Freedman. Teaching children to recognize the choices an artist or designer makes in portraying a subject helps kids understand the concept that what they see may be someone's interpretation of reality.

Studies show that there is a correlation between art and other achievements. A report by Americans for the Arts states that young people who participate regularly in the arts (three hours a day on three days each week through one full year) are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, to participate in a math and science fair or to win an award for writing an essay or poem than children who do not participate.

CARTOONS

By Francis U. Odupute



ET THERE BE PEACE!

Entertainment — *with* Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe

Is Film Quality Control a Blessing or a Curse for African Cinema?



NOLLYWOOD FILM MAKERS

Taking a deep look into the high-stakes world of global streaming for various film contents, where content is king, the Nigerian film industry stands at a transformative crossroads, and this is where Igodo Motion Pictures, the powerhouse behind over 70 percent ready new streaming platform igodo.tv, a rising force in film distribution will open roads to return on investments.

Filmmakers who once understood the strength of distribution, the need for great storylines to keep their diverse audiences at their film outlets, are the ones in the Board of this new streaming platform. Igodo isn't just looking for "content", it is looking for creative excellence. From high-stakes dramas of all genres to culturally rich animations, dances, documentaries and so on. As seasoned filmmakers themselves who are still in the frontline of the film industry in Edo State and beyond, their message to fellow filmmakers across the globe is loud and clear: Quality is the only passport to the global stage.

Setting the Bar For filmmakers eyeing a spot on igodo.tv, is a key to opening the door to a floodgate of African movies encased in revealing cultural philosophy, which therefore make the entry requirements to getting a film slot in the streaming company no longer a suggestion but a mandate.

We all know that there are never perfect movies convincing enough to detach any audience from its creation, but the focus by Igodo Motion Pictures from Edo State would deliberately and intentionally look out for and take out those unpardonable errors, whether technical or otherwise, that would affect consumption by the audience or the lifespan of the film title.

The major problem in the Edo State creative space is the continuous braindrain to Lagos where streaming platforms or opportunities to them abound. It is sad to know that key players in the Nigeria film Industry are from Edo State but taken by Lagos State. Most filmmakers presently in Edo State are marking time to also be taken by Lagos and other states prepared to utilize their creative talents. Every creative content is like any other product desirous of attention and financial appraisal from the public. The problem in Edo State is not content or talent but viable streaming avenue for potential investors and buyers. Therefore, for filmmakers in Edo State or extraction to survive the Igodo Motion Pictures litmus test, submissions in hitting high-water marks certainly would not be a problem.

I have always opined that the film industry is more lucrative than the oil and gas sector because it is not a business for the few but for all. There is the need for states to look inward in investing on all areas to make the creative business an attractive world class industry. There is no oil industry without at least a rig, so why can't Edo State or others have a functional international studios as their own rig to meet up global standards, and then follow up with streaming platforms as a marketing and distributing entity to sell local contents globally?

But as an upcoming streaming platform from Edo State, Igodo Motion Pictures has tighten the screws on talents approaching to creative works and technical requirements in the bid to set standards that can compete globally as well as generate revenue for Edo State. A polarizing debate has emerged in the halls of Nollywood: Is this rigorous Quality Control (QC) a blessing that elevates the craft, or a curse that stifles the creative spirit? The answer is not far fetched.

For decades, African cinema—specifically Nollywood— before our eyes battled a reputation for "quantity over quality." This led to a drop in sales then as buyers had to wait for other to buy, be sure the movies were good before attempting purchase on certain movies. This even led to some production companies standing tall amongst others in terms of quality. Therefore, the rigorous quality control (QC) acted as a much-needed filter. According to industry analysts, strict technical standards protect the Return on Investment (ROI). This may sound absurd until you become an investor. Have you asked why some banks today have more customers than others even without an advertisement? Institutional self regulation against lowering standards has stood them out.

By ensuring a film meets international broadcast standards, distributors ensure the movie remains viable on global platforms for decades. As the Igodo team suggests, that While awards and critical acclaim are needed, cinematic and global appeal from well crafted visual storytelling is a must. If a film product is not attractive, it won't survive in the cinema or any other streaming platforms.

Conversely, some analysts or young investors and filmmakers argue that the obsession with "4K and above or nothing" creates a financial wall for grassroots storytellers. They argue that shooting in 4K and above with professional sound design, equipments and crew requires a budget many emerging filmmakers and investors simply don't have. Critics also raised the bar of fear that by chasing global appeal, unique, raw, and experimental styles might be polished away to fit a safe commercial mold.

> "Let's make quality and originality our watchword as filmmakers while Igodo.tv connects your films with the world."

Is streaming platform as a distributing service a blessing or a curse? Most evidence points toward a blessing. In the modern era, where television, labtops, GSM screens and sound are high tech, poor technical quality is no longer tolerated or seen as charming but a liability. Research suggests that "perceived technical quality significantly impacts viewer retention and brand loyalty in SVOD (Subscription Video on Demand) services" (Lotz, 2017).

Furthermore, as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) opens its doors, Nigerian films from its diverse filmmakers with diverse cultural influences must compete with high-budget imports. Without QC, local films risk being sidelined.

As Igodo Motion Pictures moves to commission new genres, they are not just acting as critics; they are acting as brand managers for African culture against the backdrop of Edo State cultural diversified heritage. By demanding that Edo state government look towards the direction of its film sector for social-economic investment, Igodo Motion Pictures through igodo.tv with strict demand for quality and originality, would ensure that when the world clicks 'Play' on a Nigerian story, they will see it in its most brilliant light. As filmmakers of films of various genres, let's make quality and originality our watchword as filmmakers, while Igodo.tv connects our films with the world.

NEWS

FOREIGN



UNDER THE DEAL
Under the deal, US President Donald Trump has reportedly not required his Saudi counterpart Mohammed bin Salman to give diplomatic recognition to Israel

US signs landmark nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia

US signs landmark nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia

The US and Saudi Arabia have signed a landmark deal that will allow the Gulf kingdom to develop a civilian nuclear programme.

The deal is described as a "peaceful nuclear co-operation agreement" that will provide "great access for American companies in the Saudi nuclear energy program" by the US energy department.

Text from the deal has not been made public, but US media report that it could allow Saudi Arabia to enrich uranium in the future - which can be used as fuel for power plants, but also to make nuclear bombs.

Experts say that would mark a first for the US and could run the risk of future nuclear proliferation in an already unstable region.

The US Department of Energy said a "bilateral safeguards agreement" had been signed along with the co-operation deal.

"Together, these two agreements lay the legal foundation for a decades-long, multi-billion-dollar partnership that advances several priority economic and strategic objectives, including nuclear nonproliferation," the statement said.

The Saudi government also released a statement saying the deal "represents an extension of existing co-operation between the two countries in the energy sector", noting that it comes after the Saudi leader visited Washington last November.

Under the deal, US President Donald Trump has reportedly not required his Saudi counterpart Mohammed bin Salman to give diplomatic recognition to Israel.

The nuclear issue has been at the centre of the months-long US-Israeli conflict with Iran. The two nations say one of the reasons they attacked Iran in February was to prevent the country from ever developing a nuclear weapon - something that Tehran denies planning to do.

Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, told CBS News in 2018 that his own nation was not planning to acquire a nuclear weapon, but that "without a doubt if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible".

Wednesday's announcement came as fighting escalates between the US and Iran. Saudi Arabia, a longtime US ally, hosts several US bases that have been targeted by Iranian attacks. It also comes two days after Iran's allies in Yemen, the Houthis, announced a "maritime blockade" against the kingdom.

Specific details of the nuclear deal have not been given but earlier media reports suggested that, after undertaking a joint study with the US, Saudi Arabia may be allowed to enrich uranium on its soil to produce fuel at a US-built enrichment facility, instead of relying on imported fuel.

This could be worth billions of dollars to the US, whose companies could be involved in building a facility to produce enriched uranium, which can be used as fuel for power plants but also to make nuclear bombs.

"Rest assured, these agreements uphold the highest standards of nuclear safety and nonproliferation, while relying on the world's best nuclear technology and scientists, designed right here in the United States," US Secretary of Energy Chris Wright said.

The energy department said the deal would advance both "US and regional security", and would strengthen America's "competitive edge in civil nuclear technology".

Nuclear experts and former officials in Israel - the US's top ally in the Middle East - have voiced concern that the plan could ultimately lead to Saudi Arabia being able to develop a nuclear weapon - though other experts say that path would likely take decades and spark pushback from the international community.

Israeli Economy Minister Nir Barkat said his country "can manage it" if Saudi Arabia had nuclear power for peaceful means.

Israel itself is widely believed to have nuclear weapons, but it neither confirms nor denies that this is the case.

Rosemary Kelanic, the director of the Middle East programme at the US-based Defense Priorities think tank, said it would be "quite shocking" if the US were to allow Saudi Arabia uranium enrichment facilities.

Mamdani backs off pledge to arrest Netanyahu citing lack of authority

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who previously pledged to arrest Benjamin Netanyahu if he visited the city, now says he does not have the "authority" to do so.

In a video posted on social media, Mamdani instead called on US officials to act on the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant for the Israeli Prime Minister over alleged war crimes.

Technically, if Netanyahu set foot in an ICC member state, he could be arrested and handed over to the court - but the US is not a member of the ICC.

President Donald Trump has said Netanyahu would not be "arrested, in any way, shape or form" while in the US.

"He is fighting against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which recently killed 52,000 innocent protestors [sic], and has spent the last 47 years killing American Soldiers, and others," Trump said in a Truth Social post on Monday.

Trump was responding to comments Mamdani made in an interview with the New York Times on Saturday, in which the mayor said he was having "an active conversation" with law enforcement about the possibility of enforcing the ICC arrest warrant.

But on Tuesday, Mamdani said his team had reviewed "every avenue available" under the law, and concluded that "we do not have the independent legal authority to enforce this".

"The federal government, however, does," Mamdani stated. "And I call on them to join the ICC and execute this warrant."

Mamdani said in the social media video that Netanyahu was "not welcome" in New York City, where he is expected to travel in September for the UN General Assembly.

The ICC issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu in 2024 over alleged war crimes in Gaza, while also issuing an arrest warrant for a Hamas commander.

The ICC has the authority to prosecute those accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes on the territory of states party to the Rome Statute, its founding treaty.

During his campaign for New York City mayor, Mamdani repeatedly called Netanyahu a war criminal, and the war in Gaza a genocide.

British woman jailed for blackmail after accusing banker of rape in Hong Kong

A British woman has been jailed for six years in Hong Kong for blackmail and perverting the course of justice after a court found she made a false allegation of rape.

Isabel Rose, 26, from Hackney in east London, alleged that a British banker raped her after she travelled to Hong Kong to visit him in January 2024.

The man was arrested after she reported the incident but later released without charge. Rose was subsequently arrested and charged.

Local media reported that Rose was in Hong Kong's District Court on Wednesday for sentencing after being convicted in March. She had denied the charges.

'I didn't wanna have sex'

According to local press reports, Judge Adriana Tse sentenced her to five years in prison for blackmail and three years for perverting the course of justice, with one year to be served consecutively.

Prosecutors argued that Rose fabricated the allegation in an attempt to extort £100,000 ($134,000) from the man, whose identity was withheld. Rose denied the charges throughout the trial and has consistently maintained that she was raped.

Rose had travelled to Hong Kong on 31 January 2024 after meeting the man while in Thailand a month earlier, according to court documents.

At the centre of the prosecution case were WhatsApp messages exchanged between the pair in the hours and days after the alleged rape on 1 February at his apartment.

In one message sent the following morning, Rose wrote: "Are you annoyed I didn't want to have sex," to which the man replied: "What no of course not. Was impressed by your restraint."

Later that day, Rose wrote: "You violated me last night, I didn't wanna have sex."

He replied: "I'm really deeply sorry, I was slightly drunk and I misread your signals, it's no excuse and I know it doesn't make it any better."

In a later exchange, Rose wrote: "You basically raped me." The man replied: "That's not what I'm into at all and I feel sick."

The pair later exchanged messages about money. According to the written judgement of the verdict published in March, the man agreed to reimburse Rose for her travel and accommodation.

In one message, Rose wrote: "Send me the right amount you owe me for everything. Think about that. Think carefully."

He transferred £5,000 that day and tried to send a further £5,000.

Rose subsequently wrote: "You've given 10% of what I'm owed. 100% of my soul gone."

Tankers make sharp U-turns after Houthi shipping threat

At least seven oil tankers have made U-turns close to Yemen since the Iran-linked Houthi group announced a "maritime embargo" against Saudi Arabia on Monday, ship-tracking data shows.

All of the ships were travelling either to or from Saudi ports and made sharp changes of course after the embargo was announced.

Nearly 15% of global sea trade moves through the Red Sea, which connects the Mediterranean and Gulf of Aden through two choke points - the Suez Canal in Egypt and the Bab al-Mandab Strait between Yemen and the Horn of Africa.

The Red Sea has been a key route for exports of Saudi oil since the US-Israeli war with Iran led to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has severely restricted the flow of oil and gas from the Gulf.

This has played a "major role in relieving pressure to global markets" and if the Houthis further restrict trade then "prices will go up", said Rosemary Kelanic from the US-based Defense Priorities think tank.

The day before the Houthis announced their blockade, 20 vessels entered the Red Sea and 22 exited via the Bab al-Mandeb strait, according to maritime intelligence firm Kpler.

Kelanic told BBC Verify that any Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden "will suppress all international traffic not just Saudi-bound vessels".

The EU's naval force in the region Aspides recommended on Wednesday that "merchant vessels linked to Israeli, US or Saudi interests avoid transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden until the threat level decreases", according to an advisory seen by Reuters news agency.

Ship-tracking data from MarineTraffic shows the crude oil tanker Rodos, loaded with Saudi crude, departed for India from the Red Sea port of al-Muajiz on Monday evening. The Liberian-flagged ship set off south towards the Bab al-Mandab Strait but about nine hours later made a U-turn and began sailing north instead.

The Liberian-flagged oil and chemical tanker Mica departed Saudi Arabia's Jazan port on Monday afternoon and also headed south before reversing course.

Ship-tracking data shows at least eight ships bound for the Red Sea have made U-turns instead of entering the Bab al-Mandab Strait from the south as well.

FOREIGN NEWS

Thousands evacuated in France fires

Thousands evacuated in France fires

Around 12,000 people have been evacuated from the south-west of France as the country battles ongoing wildfires days after two firefighters died near Bordeaux airport, French media reported.

The Gironde region government said more than 2,400 hectares (5,900 acres) of land have been destroyed.

The use of internal combustion and electric engines have been banned in predominantly forested areas, and a number of roads have been closed. No injuries have been reported on Thursday.

Meanwhile in Italy, authorities have paid tribute to a firefighter who died tackling a wildfire in San Cataldo, as Sicily President Renato Schifani wished a "speedy recovery" to another involved in the same operation.

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi paid tribute to late firefighter Alessandro Marchi who he said died "in service to the community".

"He will not be forgotten," he said in a post on X.

In an update on Wednesday, head of the Sicilian Civil Protection Salvo Cocina said there had been more than 350 fires on the island including ten major ones which led to precautionary evacuations.

He said the fires had human causes - adding that firefighting has become a social and public order problem.

Meanwhile, in France, the AFP news agency reported that 10,000 tourists were among those evacuated.

The Gironde region remains under a red alert, with some leisure sites in exposed forest areas to be closed on Thursday afternoon and evening.

Yassmina de Freitas, 19, who lives in the coastal town of Le Porge, said she noticed smoke and the smell of burning at lunchtime on Wednesday.

By the afternoon "ash… [and] half-burned tree bark" were falling, the sky was "very dark" and the smoke was getting "thicker and thicker".

At around 20:00 local time (19:00 BST), her family was evacuated by law enforcement and taken to a gymnasium in a neighbouring town. They had to leave two of their cats and four chickens behind as they could not be found in the flurry to leave.

She said she could not sleep at all and was waking up every hour to check the fire's progress

"I could see the number of hectares burned rising steadily," she said.

Further evacuations took place on Thursday morning on the Lège-Cap-Ferret peninsula, south of Le Porge.

She said multiple people at the campsite who were very anxious about the situation had already left, and those staying have been warned to be prepared to evacuate.

The main road down to the south of the peninsula, which is normally filled with "nose to tail traffic", is empty and the supermarket is "unnervingly quiet", Kent added.

In the Var region in south-east France, evacuated residents were told they could go home to assess potential damage to properties on Thursday morning. However, it warned people to limit their movements in the area due to the risk of the fire re-igniting as the wind picks up through the afternoon.

Several French departments have been ravaged by wildfires during a series of unusual and prolonged heatwaves that have swept across Europe this summer.

Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez paid tribute to the two firefighters who died on Tuesday near Bordeaux airport. He posted photos from an event on Wednesday, saying the moment was filled with "immense emotion" as he expressed "infinite gratitude" and "unwavering support" to their families.

Ghanaians ask ICC to probe South Africa's anti-migrant violence

Following months of sometimes violent anti-illegal migrant protests in South Africa, two Ghanaians have petitioned the International Criminal Court.

They have asked the Hague-based institution to open a preliminary investigation into the attacks against foreigners which they said could constitute crimes against humanity.

Several African migrants have been killed in the violence, while others have been beaten or seen their homes and shops looted.

Tens of thousands of Africans have fled South Africa, many of them ahead of a unofficial 30 June deadline by anti-migrant groups for undocumented foreigners to leave.

Protesters blame migrants from elsewhere on the continent for problems at home, including crime, unemployment, and pressure on schools and public services.

The ICC petition, submitted to the court last week, alleges a "pattern of widespread and systematic attacks" against migrants.

It also accuses President Cyril Ramaphosa's government of failing to prevent or punish those crimes, including murder.

A spokesperson for South Africa's foreign affairs has described the petition as opportunistic.

Ramaphosa has previously condemned the attacks and warned against blaming immigrants for the country's problems.

Russia's businesses under strain from Ukraine's attacks on Wildberries

Ukrainian drones have hit several retail warehouses belonging to Russia's biggest online retailer, Wildberries, in a matter of days, dealing a blow to a large number of small and medium-sized businesses.

After months of drone attacks on oil depots and refineries, Kyiv says it is now targeting logistics hubs used by Russians to buy military equipment, and disrupting supplies to the Russian army.

But it has also frustrated hundreds of Russian sellers who depend on online marketplaces for their livelihoods, making the war feel closer to home after almost four and a half years.

"I am a mother of a disabled child, I've built the business myself," one woman complained on an expletive-laden social media post that went viral

"I've lost 1m roubles (£9,500; $12,700)... We're already getting screwed over from every direction as it is."

In Ukraine's first attack on Wildberries at the weekend, two warehouses were hit, at Elektrostal east of Moscow and in Kotovsk in the Tambov region, some 400km (250 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

Seven workers on a night-shift were killed in Kotovsk and one was fatally wounded at Elektrostal. Dozens more were injured and goods worth an estimated at £750m ($1bn) were destroyed.

Kyiv said it had struck "major logistics facilities" used to "supply sanctioned components for drone production and navigation equipment".

The company's owner Tatiana Kim said further casualties had been reported.

"We are, quite justly, bringing the war back home - to Russia," said Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Russia has targeted Ukrainian cities with drones and missiles since the start of the full-scale invasion in February 2022 and recent Russian attacks have hit Ukrainian warehouses and cargo terminals.

Sorting terminals for Ukraine's largest private postal operator, Nova Poshta, have come under attack, so too have warehouses owned by retail chain ATB and confectionery group Roshen.



WILDBERRIES WAREHOUSES:
Four Wildberries warehouses have been targeted, including this one in Nevinnomyssk early on Wednesday.

'I am still alive': Indian activist on hunger strike for 26 days loses 11kg

Activist Sonam Wangchuk has been on a hunger strike for over 25 days

Indian activist Sonam Wangchuk, who has been on hunger strike for 26 days in support of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), says he has lost 11kg (24lb) but is "still alive".

Popularly known as "Sonam sir", Wangchuk has been the main draw at the youth-led movement seeking education reforms and the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

He was forcibly removed from the CJP's protest venue at Delhi's Jantar Mantar site on Saturday and taken to hospital where he continues his fast.

Meanwhile, thousands continue to turn up at the protest venue even after the brutal police crackdown on Monday's march to parliament which left dozens of protesters and policemen injured.

The violence has stirred public anger and galvanised India's opposition, posing a challenge for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Modi has not commented directly on the protests or engaged with the protesters, but on Thursday, he posted a statement on X that is being seen as an attempt to reach out to students who have been frustrated with repeated exam paper leaks.

"Nothing is more important than the welfare and future of our youth," he wrote.

"We have decided to set up fast-track courts to ensure swift and stringent punishment for those involved in paper leaks... This continues our series of steps for safeguarding the interests of students... Those who try to harm the future of our youth will not be spared."

A CJP spokesperson, however, said the real questions to be addressed were why paper leaks happen and who benefits from it.

"You are applying medicine after an injury, but our struggle asks why the injury has to happen," Ashutosh Ranka said in a video on X, indicating that the protesters would not back down until their demands were met.

While Wangchuk is not at the protest site any longer, many of the placards and posters have slogans about his fast and drawings of him.

Before being taken to hospital, he endured 21 days in Delhi's scorching summer heat on nothing but salt and water.

In a statement on Wednesday, Medanta Hospital, Gurugram, said the activist was admitted to the ICU.

"He is being treated by a multidisciplinary team of doctors. At present, he is stable, oriented, and his vital signs are within accepted parameters. All treatment being administered to him is in accordance with his informed consent."

On Wednesday, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke, dozens of opposition MPs, activists and celebrities renewed their request to him to call off his hunger strike.

Health Minister JP Nadda, who had visited the activist at the hospital on Tuesday night, said he had also requested him to stop fasting.

"We inquired about his health and wellbeing. We also requested him to break his fast, join the mainstream, and guide the children in the right direction," he said, adding that the government was open to discuss the issues raised by Wangchuk.

But Wangchuk has refused all entreaties.

Health Minister JP Nadda visited the activist at the hospital and said he had requested him to break his fast

In a three-minute video statement from his hospital bed on Wednesday night, the activist said: "Many leaders, including ministers from the ruling party, have appealed to me to end my fast. I want to do that too because my work is important to me."

But, he said, he would not end his hunger strike unless the government gave him an assurance that no force or retaliatory action would be used against students.

"If I receive that assurance soon, I will end my hunger strike today. If not, I will unfortunately have to continue," he said.

The activist said he wanted "to salute all the students who conducted themselves with remarkable restraint" during Monday's crackdown on the CJP.

Opinion

Tony Enahoro's "Let My People Go" Independence Speech and Return of Regionalism



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

Like a prophet, Chief Anthony Eromosele Enahoro, the man who first moved the motion for Nigeria's Independence saw tomorrow when he Stood before the House of Representatives in 1953 to move that historic motion asking the colonial administration to " Let my People Go".

On March 31, 1953 The Federal House of Representatives was hot. Colonial officers watched from the gallery. The North said "wait". The West and East said "not yet". He was 29 years old when he demanded Nigeria's freedom and it nearly tore the country apart

When the young Enahoro stood up with a steady voice to move the motion ," that the House accepts as the primary political objective the attainment of self government for Nigeria in 1956" the British called it premature. Many Nigerian leaders called it risky. But to millions of Nigerians, it sounded like Moses in Pharaoh's palace: "Let My People Go."

Enahoro's motion did not grant independence. It was defeated 68 to 50. The North felt the South was rushing. But that was never the point. He gave Nigeria a deadline "1956." and that forced everyone to start planning and Independence came in 1960, just 4 years after his proposed date.

He proved age is not a barrier to nation-building. He was a former newspaper editor at 21. Courage, not title, moved that motion. He spoke for the ordinary Nigerian. The farmer in Agenebode, the trader in Benin, the clerk in Lagos. People who were tired of taxation without representation. That is why historians call him "The Father of Nigerian Nationalism."

Interestingly, Enahoro's words in 1953 were not just about leaving Britain. They were about freedom and today, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu is quietly restructuring the country with the creation of regional development commissions for all six geopolitical zones

The goal of Mr President is to accelerate infrastructural development, stimulate economic activities and improve social welfare in their respective zones under the Ministry of regional development created in October 2024 to coordinate them

The North West, South East, North Central, South West, South South and North East Development Commissions are described as economic development engines or grassroots focused commissions, a recognition that true development must begin from the grassroot

Now, it is very obvious that President Tinubu believes in fairness, equity and unity, equitable development and inclusive governance for all Nigerians no matter where they reside, taking into consideration the importance of restructuring the country

In 1953, Enahoro wanted political freedom. In 2026, Nigerians are asking for freedom from poverty and hunger in a country well endowed by God Almighty with vast fertile land.

Enahoro fought for self-rule. We must now fight for self-feeding. Let My People Go From Fear of the unknown

In 1953, the fear was colonial police. In 2026, the fear is kidnappers on our roads, cultists in our schools, and bandits in our farms because a section of the nation feels uncomfortable even though they have dominated the political scene for quite a while

True independence means a mother in Ibadan or Abuja can sleep with both eyes closed and every child can live peacefully in any part of the nation

Let My People Go From Broken Promises. Enahoro moved his motion and stood by it even when it failed. He believed in integrity, but today, too many promises are made and forgotten after elections. As a journalist and statesman, Enahoro loved truth and hard work.

If Enahoro was alive, he would tell the National Assembly to make laws that would be of benefit to the less privileged in the society and bridge the gap between the rich and poor.

He would no doubt tell our youth: "I was 29 when I moved that motion. What motion will you move as a youth? He would advise them not to wait for the government. Start the business, start the farm, start the change."`

Enahoro would tell all of us: "Freedom is not speech making or how eloquent you are, It is responsibility. Don't waste what the founders of the nation have laboured for."`

Unfortunately, Chief Enahoro did not live to see a perfect Nigeria which he laboured for. But the consolation is that the labour of our heroes past shall not be in vain.

The best gift we can give him is not an award or a statue in Uromi or Benin, like the one at the House of Assembly named after him in Edo state but to finish the work, especially his preference for a Parliamentary system of government which is less expensive. He would insist, "Let My people go back to their region of ethnic nationalities.

This was not only a message for the then colonial masters as he kept on advocating for true federalism before he died. Enahoro strongly believed that the military hurriedly handed down the 1999 constitution that makes over 250 ethnic groups sit on an illegal constitutional framework and previous governments disregarded the wishes of the people.

But today, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu is the only President who has listened to the people with the establishment of the Regional Development Commissions.

Let us build a Nigeria where no one is in bondage to hunger, a Nation where a 29-year-old's idea can still change a nation.

Let us build a Nigeria that is truly self-governing, self-feeding, and self-respecting. In 1953, Enahoro stood up and said "Let My People Go." In 2026, the question to us is "Are we ready to let ourselves go?

• Eubaldus Enahoro is former Editor of the Nigerian Observer

Oluremi Tinubu, wealth worshipping and the future of Nigeria

Dr. Austin Orette

A society that mocks honest labour is a society preparing for its own destruction. Nations do not become prosperous by celebrating wealth alone; they become prosperous by honouring the labour that creates wealth.

The dignity of labour is the foundation upon which every great civilization has been built. Whenever that dignity is eroded, corruption replaces productivity, greed replaces innovation, and society begins a slow but certain decline.

It therefore pains me whenever I hear politicians, senior government officials, opinion leaders, and even journalists ridicule Nigerians who engage in honest occupations simply to feed their families. Nothing is more heartbreaking than hearing legitimate work described as "menial," as though some occupations are reserved only for those whom society considers inferior.

The recent controversy surrounding the First Lady's encouragement of the Akara business exposed a dangerous mentality that has gradually become part of our national culture. Rather than appreciating the value of entrepreneurship, many people rushed to mock the idea, forgetting that every great business in the world started with a simple product that solved an everyday problem.

What exactly is wrong with selling Akara? Millions of Nigerians eat Akara every single day. It is affordable, nutritious, and woven into our national food culture. Why then should anyone be ashamed of making an honest living from providing a product that millions consume?

The answer lies in our warped understanding of success. We have become a society that measures dignity by appearance rather than productivity. We admire expensive suits more than skilled hands. We celebrate luxury cars more than thriving factories. We applaud sudden wealth without asking how it was acquired, while we ridicule those who wake before dawn every morning to earn an honest living.

This is not merely unfortunate; it is dangerous. Every multinational corporation that dominates today's global economy began with someone solving an ordinary human problem. McDonald's was built on hamburgers. KFC was built on fried chicken. Starbucks transformed an ordinary cup of coffee into a global brand worth billions of dollars. Italy turned pizza into a cultural export. France elevated bread and pastries into national symbols. India has built international food brands around ordinary local cuisine.

If these nations can create global industries from everyday food, why should Nigeria laugh at an entrepreneur who decides to commercialize Akara? Perhaps the problem is not Akara. Perhaps the problem is us. Our educational system has unintentionally produced graduates who see themselves as job seekers rather than problem solvers. Somewhere along the line we began to believe that obtaining a university degree automatically entitles one to an air-conditioned office, a government appointment, and a comfortable salary.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Education was never intended to be a passport to comfort. It was designed to equip the human mind with the capacity to think critically, solve problems, create opportunities, and improve society.A degree is not a crown. It is a tool. Like every tool, its value depends entirely on how it is used.

What is so special about possessing a university degree that one cannot clean floors, collect refuse, repair machinery, cultivate farmland, or engage in any other honest occupation? Does education diminish the dignity of work, or should it increase the quality of work? The irony is almost painful.

The engineers who designed air conditioners did not become engineers because they loved sitting inside cool offices. They became engineers because they identified a problem and applied knowledge to solve it. Every scientific invention, every technological breakthrough, every medical discovery, and every engineering marvel began with someone refusing to accept existing limitations.

Education creates thinkers. It creates innovators. It creates builders. It creates creators of value. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, education has increasingly become a badge of entitlement instead of a call to service. Instead of asking, "What problem can I solve?" many graduates ask, "Who will employ me?" Instead of wondering how they can create wealth, they spend years waiting for somebody else to create it for them. That mindset explains much of our national stagnation.

Across the developed world, educated people are respected because they create industries. They establish businesses. They invent technologies. They improve agriculture. They expand healthcare. They modernize manufacturing. They build companies that employ thousands of people.

In Nigeria, however, we often define success by proximity to political power rather than by productive enterprise. This explains why politics has become the fastest route to wealth. It also explains why public office has become more attractive than private innovation. The consequence is devastating.

We now live in a country where many politicians possess greater wealth than industrialists who have spent decades building businesses and creating employment. We celebrate consumption instead of production. We admire luxury instead of industry. We honour possession instead of contribution. That inversion of values is destroying the moral fabric of our nation.

We have created a culture in which those who genuinely work are looked down upon, while those whose wealth cannot be explained are treated like celebrities. This is perhaps Nigeria's greatest moral tragedy. Many of the individuals who shape public opinion openly ridicule occupations that require physical effort, yet they have never created sustainable employment for anyone. They mock the roadside food vendor while importing food from abroad. They laugh at artisans while living in houses built by artisans. They ridicule farmers while eating food grown by farmers. They insult mechanics while travelling in vehicles repaired by mechanics.

Without these workers, society would simply collapse. There is absolutely no shame in honest labour. The shame lies in dishonesty. The shame lies in corruption. The shame lies in stealing public resources. The shame lies in enriching oneself through fraud while looking down on those who work honestly.

One of the reasons Nigeria continues to experience massive migration of skilled workers is that our society has failed to appreciate labour. Doctors leave. Engineers leave.

Nurses leave. Teachers leave. Technicians leave. Farmers abandon agriculture. Young graduates leave in search of societies where labour is respected and rewarded according to merit.

Ironically, many Nigerians who considered certain occupations beneath their dignity at home willingly perform those same jobs abroad with pride because those societies attach honour to honest work.

There is no disgrace in cleaning offices in London. There is no shame in driving taxis in Canada. There is no embarrassment in caring for the elderly in Germany. There is no ridicule attached to construction work in Australia. Why? Those societies recognize that every honest occupation contributes to national prosperity.

Nigeria must learn this lesson. We must reward labour at all costs. Withholding the wages of those who toil is a gross violation of their fundamental human rights. Nigerian governments have become notorious for these violations through unpaid salaries, delayed pensions, poor remuneration, and the neglect of workers' welfare. This nonchalant attitude must stop at every level of government and within the private sector. We urgently need legislation that guarantees prompt payment of wages, protects workers from exploitation, and imposes severe penalties on employers who deliberately deny workers the fruits of their labour. A nation that cannot pay its workers on time cannot claim to value labour.

• Dr. Austin Orette, A Delta South Senatorial Candidate, Writes From Owhelogbo In Isoko North Local Government Area

FEATURE

Budget padding was born under Buhari, not Tinubu: A Call for Memory and Balance

Bagudu Mohammed



PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU



FORMER PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI

I first became conscious of the phrase "budget padding" under Buhari. Before then, it sounded like street slang. By 2016, it had become a household name, whispered in newsrooms, shouted on radio, and typed in angry caps across timelines. I still don't know if economists coined it or if Nigeria invented it to describe the quiet art of illegal insertions into the budget, but I do know this: once you hear it, you never unhear it.

While evil cannot be used to legitimize another evil, the current attempt to frame the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the worst since the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, especially amid the controversy around the "ghost agency" and fresh budget fraud allegations, feels like a one-sided narrative feeding on raw emotion. Political psychologist Irvin Janis called this "groupthink". The dangerous consensus where dissent is silenced and feelings replace facts. What we are witnessing now is exactly that: emotions running hotter than the price of rice, the kind of collective anger that once turned against Jonathan's PDP and was baptized as regional solidarity and a sacred calling. In that climate, stories get retold, numbers get exaggerated, villains are cast, and enemies are inherited like family heirlooms.

A post surfaced recently, shared even by otherwise respected voices: "only those benefitting from government, ex-convicts, bandits, drug addicts are APC supporters." Thousands liked it. Some laughed. I asked, what about the millions who voted APC in 2015, 2019, and 2023? Were they all criminals? Silence. Because the answer would break the script.

Then came another voice, a speaker who swore repeatedly that since 1914 Nigeria had never seen a president as bad as BAT, and urged Nigerians to "take their fate in their hands" if he wins again. That is textbook incitement, using fear and paranoia to prime resistance against an outcome that has already been declared tragic in the public imagination. I replied, perhaps naively, that despite all the allegations, ASUU has not been on strike for a full year, and we have not seen the kind of recruitment embargo that made government adverts disappear for years. Besides, Abacha, Jonathan, Buhari, Shagari, IBB… each at some point wore the crown of "worst president ever." History has a short memory and a loud mouth.

The tension rising in the country is not only about the cost of foodstuffs. It is about politics, and about wild emotions that cannot guarantee security. Sociologist Gustav Le Bon warned a century ago that crowds think in images, not arguments, and are easily swayed by repetition and exaggeration. That is why we need opinions that dilute subjectivism, that resist the seduction of absolute truth born from negative emotion. That is why a post attributed to Senator Shehu Sani struck me as patriotic.

Senator Shehu Sani said what many avoided saying: "You Kept Quiet Under Buhari, Don't Blame Tinubu Alone." Speaking in a viral video, Sani criticized northerners for tolerating insecurity for years under Buhari because of religious, ethnic and sectional calculations, only to turn the volume up now. He accused opposition politicians of playing politics with blood, of celebrating attacks on schools or mocking soldiers. He reminded us that Nigeria is not alone. Chad, Mali, northern Cameroon are all bleeding, and asked why international partners have done so little, except the United States. His conclusion was simple and uncomfortable: put politics aside, support the government, stand with the armed forces.

And yes, the case of budget fraud and the ghost agency is being rewritten with absolutism. But let us not pretend this is new. I first heard "budget padding" as a scandal under Buhari. Under that administration from 2015 to 2023, it became a recurring theatre between the Executive and the National Assembly. In 2016, President Buhari said the budget returned to him was "completely different" and "embarrassing." Former House Appropriation Chairman Abdulmumin Jibrin alleged that Speaker Yakubu Dogara and four others inserted personal projects. Figures flew: N40 billion, N280 billion, SERAP alleging N481 billion padded away. A Federal High Court even ordered prosecution and the publication of reports. In 2017, assent was delayed again over what was called a "perennial problem," with about 4,000 new projects reportedly smuggled in and another court order to stop the alleged theft of N40 billion from zonal intervention funds.

By 2022, Buhari himself lamented at the signing ceremony that 10,733 projects had been reduced while 6,576 new ones appeared, including N36.59 billion for NASS projects in the Service-Wide Vote. He called it a violation of separation of powers but signed anyway. Outside the legislature, the ICPC found N18.39 billion in inflated personnel costs across 300 MDAs between 2017 and 2018, driven by sham, backdated recruitments. Three billion naira had already been shared and 59 directors were arrested. Analysts kept saying the same thing: these insertions made budgets un-implementable, and partly explained why, since 2000, our budgets have never been fully executed. Buhari vowed culprits would not go unpunished and admitted he had never heard "budget padding" before 2016.

> ASUU has not been on strike for a full year, and we have not seen the kind of recruitment embargo that made government adverts disappear for years. Besides, Abacha, Jonathan, Buhari, Shagari, IBB… each at some point wore the crown of "worst president ever

If budget padding was the fiscal wound, IPPIS was the payroll bleeding. Introduced in 2017 to kill ghost workers, it became a new crime scene. In 2022 the EFCC arrested the Accountant-General Ahmed Idris over an alleged N80 billion fraud, and unions like COEASU said it vindicated their claim that IPPIS enabled "unilateral manipulations and cool fraud." By 2021 the ICPC was probing a billion-naira salary syndicate where civil servants and IPPIS officials inflated grades. A Level 7 officer on N60,000 somehow earning N400,000.

The Head of Service revealed over 1,500 illegal recruitments in one year, with IPPIS allegedly infiltrated by a gang running ghost workers. NSA Babagana Monguno announced 54,000 fraudulent payroll entries uncovered through BVN validation. In universities, ASUU cried "bribe-for-salaries" and alleged massive fraud, with lecturers owed 15 to 16 months. The Senate and House launched probes. In one case, salaries meant for University of Agriculture, Makurdi staff ended up in accounts in Jigawa. Even in 2025, ICPC arraigned an official forging a posting letter to restore salary on IPPIS. The patterns were consistent: salary inflation, ghost workers, bribery for capturing, diversion of salaries. The OAGF promised a forensic audit. The government insisted IPPIS was "inevitable."

This is not an attempt to exonerate the Tinubu government from the Femi Gbajabiamila and Prince Adeniyi Adeyemi Matthew scandal. On the contrary. I believe Gbajabiamila was caught, as academics would say, "with his pants down" in the alleged sex-for-grades matter. The SGF who allegedly wrote for office space for a phantom agency is also a suspect. People should be relieved of office the way Tinubu did with Betta Edu and some ministers. What goes around must come around. It is the only way to redeem credibility.

But we cannot fight one scandal by manufacturing another. We cannot cure budget fraud with mob justice, or answer IPPIS rot with sweeping generalizations that brand an entire voting bloc as criminals. Public opinion, as scholar Walter Lippmann noted, is shaped less by reality than by the pictures in our heads. Right now those pictures are being painted with the thickest brush. We need balance, tolerance, empathy, and memory. Because the moment we forget that padding was born under one administration, and fraud adapted under another, we become prisoners of the present, and democracies die that way.

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FEATURE

Mainland Vs Island: The cultural divide shaping modern Lagos Identity

Evans Uwakwe

Take a Danfo from Iyana-Ipaja to Victoria Island on a Friday evening and you'll travel through two different worlds in 2 hours.

On the Mainland: blaring Fuji music, suya smoke, agbero shouting _"O wa o! O wa o!"_ and hawkers selling Agege bread with ewa agoyin.

On the Island: quiet Uber rides, brunch at Eko Hotel, art openings in Ikoyi, and conversations about "connectivity" and "aesthetic."

Same city. Two cultures. One identity still being negotiated.

Lagos is called a "melting pot" and "no man's land." But the truth is, Lagos has a fault line running right through the lagoon. And it's called *Mainland vs Island*.

In Lagos, it's all about GEOGRAPHY THAT BECAME IDENTITY!

Historically, Lagos was one. The Portuguese named it "Lagos" meaning "lakes" in the 15th century. It became Nigeria's capital in 1914 and stayed so until 1991.

But as the city grew, water divided it. Bridges connected it, but economics separated it.

Mainland: Ikeja, Surulere, Yaba, Ikorodu, Mushin, Oshodi. Working class, dense, noisy, resilient.

Island: Lagos Island, Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki, Ajah, Epe. Commercial, diplomatic, upscale, global.

What started as geography became class. And class became culture.

LANGUAGE, FOOD AND HOW WE "DO" LAGOS

Language: Yoruba is the root language. But pidgin English is the real lingua franca. On the Mainland, pidgin is fast, loud, street. _"No gree for anybody."_ On the Island, it's softened, mixed with English. _"It's giving..."_

FOOD: Mainland owns street food. Amala and ewedu in Ogba. Pepper soup in Ikeja. Suya at night in Yaba. Island owns restaurants. Brunch spots in Lekki. Sushi in VI. A plate of jollof that costs N1,500 on Mainland is N7,000 on Island — with "ambience."

__FASHION__: Mainland sets trends — Aso-ebi, Ankara, streetwear. Island curates them — designer labels, thrift from London, "old money" aesthetic.

YOU'RE NOT MY CLASS: THE SOCIAL WALL

I once witnessed it. A girl from Ikorodu approached another girl at a Lekki lounge for friendship. The reply was cold: _"Sorry, you're not my class. There's no connectivity between mainland and island girls."_

That sentence explains Lagos.

Mainland culture* values hustle, community, and survival. Your neighbor knows your business. Owambe is loud. Owning a shop matters.

Island culture values privacy, networks, and branding. Your neighbor is a stranger. Events are by "invite only." Owning a startup matters.

Agbero culture vs Valet culture. Danfo vs Bolt. Face-me-I-face-you vs Estate.

But it's not just about money. It's about access — to schools, to hospitals, to light, to opportunity.

THE BEAUTY OF THE BLEND

Yet Lagos refuses to be boxed in. **MUSIC**: Afrobeats was born in the blend. Asake grew up in Mushin,



one wants to "cross over" to the Is- The future of Lagos culture isn't



The Rise of hustle culture among young people

Ejemogo Rebecca Anwuri

Mr. Efe, have you been able to repair the phone I gave you yesterday?" the curious lady asked.

"Oh! You mean the Samsung phone? I was almost done with it yesterday, but I noticed there is yet another thing to be fixed, which is what I am about to do today."

"Oh God! And I needed it so badly for work. My boss will query me for the delay in submission of the job. Can you kindly speed up the process of the phone repair?"

"I am afraid I can't. I don't like doing a haphazard job. But my dear, I thought I saw you working at Glamorous Eatery. Then why are you using your phone to do the job of a waitress?" Mr. Efe asked.

The young lady smiled and said, "Working as a waitress cannot cater to all my needs. That is the reason I engaged in a remote job as a freelancer to serve as a support. And Mr. Efe, with the way this country is going, if one clings to one job, then such a person has opened the door to hardship. Hence, I refuse to be in that category."

"Hmm! Food for thought," Mr. Efe nodded.

It is no longer news that many young persons at a particular stage in their lives develop a growing concern to have more than a job to cater for their needs, because for some, they believe clinging to only one source of income is considered as a threat to a good standard of living. Hence, they juggle multiple jobs, engage in online businesses, content creation, remote jobs, freelancing etc. These and many more gave rise to the advent of what is popularly known as "hustle culture".

Hustle Culture is a term used to describe the belief that working tirelessly and sacrificing your personal sleep, time, life, and well-being is the only path to success. It glorifies engaging in multiple jobs, side hustles and long hours of working to earn more pay at the expense of leisure time, burnout and mental well-being.

Hustle culture does not only revolve around working hard or extra hours, sacrificing personal resting time to earn a living and live a comfortable life. There Is also a belief that engaging in "side hustles" is admirable and the people who are into it are 'Strong and heroic'.

The rise of Hustle Culture among people, especially the youths, must have been sponsored by some salient factors. If it were not so, many persons would not have risked their well-being and state of mind just to be admired or seen as someone with various capabilities.

This raises the important question: Why is Hustle Culture Rising Among Young People?

First and foremost, economic hardship in the society they are situated in is the leading/major contribution to the development of 'Hustle Culture' in the first instance. This is as a result of high unemployment rates, rising cost of living such that people find it difficult to afford three square meals per day as well as financial insecurity. For instance, with the rate of fuel hike in Nigeria, it has placed a burden and pressure on people to seek alternatives that will help them survive in times like this. Hence, they venture into side gigs in order to support themselves.

Influence of social media is another factor that influences hustle culture among young people. For instance, constant exposure to success stories of people they truly admire, especially if they are likely to be in the same age bracket, will result in fear of being left behind and pressure to match the lifestyles they display online, youths then struggle to follow the trend in order to 'catch up' with the trend and happenings online, they pick up jobs or gigs alongside their main jobs to keep a good profile of themselves and earn the approval of people.

Also, the growth of the digital economy has given rise to hustle culture in the young generations. In time past, when technology had not fully taken its course or was rarely in use, people engaged in jobs where they physically submitted application letters or Curriculum Vitae (CVs). It was quite difficult for most persons to think of multi-tasking different kinds of jobs. However, through the rise of the digital economy, i.e. freelancing opportunities, Content creation, E-Commerce, remote job opportunities etc., it has made it a lot easier for young people to be able to handle two or three jobs at the same time, which will serve as a value-added advantage to them.

Financial Independence is another drive of hustling culture. There comes a stage in the life of an individual to become financially responsible and attain financial independence, which is mostly common among male children. For example, most students, in the bid to reduce overdependence on parents or guardians, can begin to engage in crafts i.e. hairdressing, barbing etc. in order to support themselves in school and have a better standard of living. Such factors will propel them to take the bold step to embrace the 'hustling culture.'

Hustle Culture among young people should be encouraged because it encourages hard work. When young people engage in productive jobs and activities that will add value to their lives and pockets, it will prevent them from lazing around and becoming the 'devil's workshop.' Hence, with hustle culture, it teaches the younger generations to work hard before they can reap from what they have laboured for.

Also, hustle Culture promotes entrepreneurship. There is no restriction to how one can engage in terms of hustling. By so doing, it will reduce the need for people to wait for jobs before venturing into establishing a one-man business which can also be known as sole proprietorship. Hence, it will help to reduce the increasing rate of unemployment in the society and reliance on the government to provide jobs for citizens.

FEATURE

A City Called Lagos

Chukwuma Gerald Okafor

Lagos is known as the _Center of Excellence_ — a fast-growing business hub with a population of over 20 million. It's one of the biggest cities in Africa, and also a city with a reputation: for hustle, for agbero, and for "shine your eye."

I paid another visit to Lagos in June, and I experienced a lot. From the scorching sun at Computer Village, to the no-nonsense approach of agberos, to the cramped, yellow-and-black Danfo buses. People say Lagos will teach you: _hold your bag tight, use the pedestrian bridge, don't cross the expressway — or face a N20,000 fine_. To me, Lagos runs on "London rules."

This ancient city is split in two: *Mainland* and *Island*.

Mainland — Iyana-Ipaja, Coker, Ijaye, Ikorodu — is often described as the place of the everyday people.

Island — Lekki, Ajah, Eleko, Victoria Island — is seen as the place of "timbers and calibers."

I once saw a girl ask another girl for friendship and get turned down with: _"You're not my class. There's no connectivity between mainland and island girls."_ That's Lagos for you.

But Lagos is also flavor. Agege bread with ewa agoyin, amala and ewedu, and fish barbecue on the street corners.

It's also landmarks: Tarkwa Bay, Elegushi Beach, Landmark Beach, the iconic Third Mainland Bridge, Lekki-Ikoyi Bridge, Freedom Park, Nike Art Gallery, and so much more.

Lagos is a city of hustle and bustle. A "no man's land" where people from every Nigerian tribe and other countries live together. Yoruba is the main language, but pidgin English runs the streets.

I love the saying: _"If you can make it in Lagos, you can make it anywhere."_ Lagos is truly a land of opportunity.

If Lagos were a country, it would have one of the biggest economies in Africa, with a GDP of about $90 billion. Most Nigerian banks and the headquarters of the Nigerian Stock Exchange are here. Geographically, Lagos is built on water and lagoons. You can also spend a whole day — and night — in the infamous go-slow, thanks to impatient, uncoordinated drivers.

Fun fact: Portuguese explorers named it "Lagos," meaning "lakes," in the 15th century. It was Nigeria's capital until 1991. Today it's one of the most expensive cities for rent and lifestyle. And yes — _the city never sleeps._

Las-Gidi is loud. But it's also where dreams get made.



Effective financial planning for a sustainable future

Uduagele Ikpehai John

Planning is the process of defining, analyzing and selecting the best course of action to achieve a specific goal. Proper planning enables individuals or organizations to set clear goals, define objectives, and ensure everyone is working to achieve the same target. It helps individuals and organizations to effectively allocate resources and minimize waste. Financial resources is the focus of this piece. Finance is the money used for personal or organizational expenses.

The subject of money is so significant but most people know little about it. Money is a life wire of an individual or organization. Many people do not have sufficient money for personal use due to impropriety. Every individual wants to be wealthy by having abundant resources but human wants are so many and difficult to satisfy. This is because the finance to meet all human wants are limited in supply. It is for this reason that engaging in effective financial planning should not be downplayed during active age in service as salaried employees.

In order to garner wealth and be financially viable at old age, there is the need to have multiple streams of incomes. This is done by harnessing different windows of investments in order to increase cash flow. Exploring diverse windows of investment requires risk-taking. The people who are not ready to take the risk of expanding financial investments often remain poor. There are many areas people can invest available money and build wealth, but the knowledge to do so is lacking. Many people refute the idea of preparing today for the tomorrow they want by saving certain proportion of their income for diversity of investments.

Most rich men today built wealth by taking time to save money for investments in the available business openings, which the poor were afraid of doing. The difference between the poor and the rich is that the poor work for money while the rich make their money work for them. Saving to invest is therefore the key to a wealthy life. Anyone who works, earns salary, and invests part of it to build wealth for future usage is planning for old age. Guaranteeing sustainable future requires learning how money works, having mastery of it, and concentrating on building wealth. A wise person is supposed to work like the ants that gather food for keep in the season of abundance so as to have enough to eat on the rainy day.

People should learn how to allocate their incomes to care of expenditures and savings on a 60% and 40% basis to allow for wealth accumulation. There is the need to classify expenses into various groups and allocate certain percentage to be expended on each category. Such groups may include electricity bill, house rent, food stuffs, school fees, and several other things. At the end the income will be spread to all aspects of needs that will be captured in the budget.

The following is a veritable technique to plan one's income. First is saving 10% of income. Second is 10% investment on capital projects. Third is committing 10% to charity or social responsibility. Fourth is reserving 10% for emergency cases. Fifth is setting aside 60% for the family upkeep. With this financial arrangement, planning for old age is effected.

A big question arising is how does financial planning protect one's future? Investment outputs replace salaries and wages when work stops at retirement from work. The investment on assets such as bonds and real estate, increase the money invested with the rising cost of commodities in the country. This therefore makes life easy and comfortable at old age. Furthermore, saving during work age makes medical bills or eventuality of job loss easy to handle.

There abound multiple benefits of financial planning. Foremost is its capacity to secure the future, especially at old age. Next is its amenability to turning income into assets. More so is its ability to protect against unforeseen contingency that may happen. Furthermore is its offer of insurance on health which covers hospital bill during old age. Moreover is its prevention of financial bankruptcy in old age particularly subsequent to retirement from work.

Effective financial planning against the future is indispensable. The earlier it is done, the better. In the bid to carry out financial planning, adoption of planning tools is essential. There will be a time in life when the present take home pay from work such as salaries and bonuses will be withdrawn. Once pay packets are gone what to rely on is the financial fortress of investments put in place while in office. The bridge leading from mere thoughts to huge accomplishments is discipline. Self-discipline is required for effective financial planning.

In conclusion, there are two great gifts at our disposal for effective financial planning. They are our time and mind. Whatever we do with our time and mind determines what we become or what becomes of us in the future in terms of financial buoyancy or bankruptcy.



COLUMN

The minister, the naked corpse and the unanswered questions





MARY HABILA

ENGR. DAVID UMAHI

The death of a young woman, Mary Habila reportedly linked to the residence of a serving Minister Engr. David Umahi has understandably generated widespread public concern.

Social media have been awash with speculation, accusations and counter-accusations. Yet, amid the torrent of perspectives, one principle must remain sacrosanct: every suspicious death deserves a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation, irrespective of the status of those who may be connected to the circumstances.

The deceased identified as a 26-year-old Nurse from Kaduna State was allegedly said to have been found dead naked with bruises on her mouth under circumstances that have raised numerous questions. Different versions of events have circulated online, while law enforcement authorities have indicated that investigations are ongoing. Until those investigations are concluded, it would be irresponsible to present allegations as established facts.

So intriguing is the fact that the deceased's father is opposed to conducting an autopsy to ascertain the true cause of her untimely death. As the Jamaicans would say in Patois, "Wha deh gwaan?" The father's opposition to an autopsy raises troubling questions. Wha mek di fada seh no?

Nevertheless, the incident raises broader issues that go beyond the individuals involved. It speaks to the persistent challenge of public confidence in Nigeria's criminal justice system, particularly where influential political office holders are involved.

Few events test the integrity of a nation more profoundly than the sudden and suspicious death of a citizen, particularly when the circumstances appear to involve, or are perceived to involve, a person occupying a position of authority. In such moments, grief is often accompanied by speculation, outrage and demands for justice.

The public naturally seeks answers, while rumours spread with astonishing speed, especially in the age of social media. Yet, amid the emotional turmoil, one principle must remain sacrosanct: every suspicious death deserves a prompt, impartial and transparent investigation, irrespective of the social status, political influence or economic standing of those connected to the circumstances.

Justice is not merely about determining guilt or innocence. It is equally about ensuring that every investigation is conducted professionally, objectively and without fear or favour. Public confidence in the criminal justice system depends not only on the eventual outcome of a case but also on the integrity of the process by which that outcome is reached. When citizens perceive that investigations are manipulated to protect the influential or persecute the powerless, confidence in public institutions inevitably erodes.

Across democratic societies, the rule of law rests upon a simple but profound principle: everyone is equal before the law. Constitutions may proclaim this ideal, but its true worth is measured not by elegant constitutional provisions but by their practical application. A nation demonstrates its commitment to justice when the law applies with equal force to the ordinary labourer, the university professor, the market trader, the business magnate, the governor and the minister alike.

This principle becomes particularly important whenever influential individuals are linked, directly or indirectly, to controversial incidents. Such situations often attract intense public attention because people understandably question whether the investigative process will remain independent. These concerns should neither be dismissed as mere cynicism nor accepted as proof of wrongdoing. Instead, they should serve as a reminder that transparency is indispensable in preserving public confidence.

Transparency should never be mistaken for a public relations exercise. It is not about releasing selective information or managing public perception. Rather, it is about demonstrating that investigative agencies are acting professionally, collecting evidence objectively and allowing facts—not rumours or political considerations—to determine the outcome. Transparency reassures the public that justice is being pursued honestly, even before the final conclusions are reached.

One of the greatest dangers in highly publicised cases is trial by social media. Digital platforms have transformed every smartphone owner into a commentator, investigator and judge. Within hours of an incident, countless theories emerge, many unsupported by evidence. Images, edited videos and anonymous posts circulate rapidly, often shaping public opinion long before investigators have completed even the preliminary stages of their work.

While citizen engagement is an important feature of democratic societies, public discourse must never replace due process. Social media possesses tremendous power to raise awareness, but it also possesses an equal capacity to spread misinformation. Responsible citizens must therefore distinguish between verified facts, informed opinion and mere speculation. Justice cannot be administered through hashtags, trending topics or viral posts.

Equally important is the constitutional principle that every individual remains innocent until proven guilty by a competent court of law. This principle protects not only public officials but every citizen. It prevents society from condemning individuals solely on the basis of allegations, however sensational they may appear. Abandoning this principle would endanger everyone because today's accused could easily become tomorrow's innocent victim of public prejudice.

Respecting the presumption of innocence does not diminish the seriousness of any suspicious death. On the contrary, it strengthens the credibility of the investigative process. An investigation that begins with predetermined conclusions is unlikely to discover the truth. Professional investigators must follow evidence wherever it leads, neither shielding the powerful nor targeting them merely to satisfy public sentiment.

At the same time, the rights of victims and their families deserve equal protection. Every family that loses a loved one under questionable circumstances deserves answers founded upon credible evidence. They deserve compassion from society, professionalism from investigators and fairness from the courts. Their legitimate search for justice should never become hostage to political interests, institutional rivalry or media sensationalism.

The Nigerian Police Force bears enormous responsibility in this regard. Modern criminal investigations require more than witness statements and confessional evidence. They increasingly depend upon forensic science, digital evidence, medical examinations, crime scene preservation and meticulous documentation. Professional competence is therefore as important as legal authority. A transparent investigation supported by credible forensic evidence is far more persuasive than one based upon assumptions or conjecture.

The judiciary equally occupies a central position in maintaining public confidence. Courts must remain insulated from political influence, public pressure and media campaigns. Judges are expected to evaluate evidence dispassionately, interpret the law impartially and deliver judgments grounded solely in facts established before the court. The courtroom remains the proper forum for determining legal responsibility, not social media platforms or television studios.

Nigeria's democratic development depends significantly upon strong institutions rather than strong personalities. Institutions endure beyond individual office holders. When investigative agencies function independently and professionally, they strengthen democracy itself. Conversely, whenever institutions appear compromised by political interference or selective justice, public confidence weakens, and democratic legitimacy suffers.

History demonstrates that nations flourish when accountability becomes a cultural value rather than an occasional political slogan. Transparency discourages corruption, deters abuse of power and reinforces ethical leadership. Public officials who willingly cooperate with lawful investigations demonstrate confidence in the institutions they serve. Such cooperation should never be interpreted as an admission of wrongdoing but rather as respect for the rule of law.

The media also occupies a delicate position in these circumstances. Journalists have both the right and the responsibility to inform the public. However, this responsibility demands accuracy, verification and fairness. Competitive pressures should never tempt news organisations to sacrifice factual integrity for sensational headlines.

The media best serves democracy by reporting verified information, distinguishing clearly between fact and allegation, and providing balanced coverage that respects both the public's right to know and the legal rights of individuals.

Communication scholars have long recognised that media framing influences public perception. The language employed in reporting sensitive incidents can shape attitudes, reinforce assumptions or promote restraint.

Responsible journalism therefore requires careful attention to words, context and evidence. Precision in language is not merely a stylistic preference; it is an ethical obligation.

Ultimately, transparency benefits everyone. It protects innocent individuals from unfounded suspicion while ensuring that genuine wrongdoing, wherever it exists, is exposed through lawful procedures. It strengthens confidence in public institutions, reassures grieving families that their concerns are taken seriously and reminds those entrusted with authority that public office carries corresponding public accountability.

A mature democracy is distinguished not by the absence of controversy but by the manner in which controversy is handled. Investigations must be independent, professional and transparent. Prosecutors must exercise sound judgment free from external influence.

Courts must administer justice impartially. The media must report responsibly. Citizens must resist the temptation to substitute speculation for evidence. Each institution and every individual has a role to play in safeguarding justice.

In the final analysis, the measure of a nation's civilisation is revealed not by how it treats the influential when circumstances are comfortable, but by how faithfully it upholds justice when difficult questions arise. Public confidence cannot be commanded; it must be earned through consistency, fairness and openness. Whenever tragedy intersects with power, transparency is not merely desirable—it is indispensable.

Nigeria's future as a constitutional democracy depends upon citizens believing that justice is administered without fear, favour or prejudice. Every investigation should therefore pursue one objective above all others: the truth. That truth may vindicate the innocent or expose the guilty. Whatever its conclusion, it must emerge from credible evidence, lawful procedure and institutional integrity.

Only then can justice be seen not merely as an abstract ideal, but as a living reality. Only then can bereaved families find meaningful reassurance that the law has worked as it should. And only then can society confidently affirm that, regardless of status or influence, no one stands above the law, and no victim stands beneath its protection.

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The Nigerian OBSERVER
That The People May Know

Sports

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

Commonwealth Games: Okowa Confident as Nigeria Parades star-studded athletics squad

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Chief Tonobok Okowa has expressed confidence in the formidable athletics squad of team Nigeria at the 2026 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, which officially opened yesterday, Thursday, 23rd July, 2026 in Scotland.

The athletic events in the games ,comprising track and field events have been scheduled to run for six days, beginning from Monday 27th July to Saturday 1st August, 2026 at the Scotstoun Stadium in Glasgow.



TONOBOK OKOWA WITH TEAM NIGERIA AT THE COMMONWEALTH

Okowa, leader of the AFN contingent has said that the arrival of big names as 100m hurdles women world record holder Tobi Amusan, reigning sprint sensation, Kanyinsola Ajayi, Favour Ashe, Olympics 400m men's finalist, Samuel Ogazi, Rosemary Chukwuma, Shot Put veteran, Chukwuebuka Enekwechi, Javelin thrower Chinecherem Nnamdi, had bolstered the seven gold medals hope by the Federation.

He said: "The number of top Nigerian athletes participating at the games is encouraging. This is an excellent spirit and it signaled a new spirit for them to represent their fatherland at international competitions. In camp, we also have US-based Alaba Akintola, Adekalu Fakorede, Udodi Onwuzurike, hurdler Nathaniel Ezekiel, Edidiong Okon Udo, Temitope Adeshina, Prestina Ochonogor, Ruth Usoro, veteran Patience George-Okon, Chidera Ezeakor, Oyesade Oyetade, Obiageri Amaechi, Jessica Orji and Jami Schlueter (Decathlon)."

He added that Schlueter, will be competing for the first time for Nigeria after he recently switched nationality from England. "The teenage sensation, Miracle Ezechukwu is also in the team. I feel very happy with the great spirit in camp and we can easily meet up our target of seven gold medals." Okowa assured.

Falconets target winning mentality, fitness for World Cup

Nigeria's Under-20 women's national team are focused on developing a winning mentality and achieving peak fitness ahead of the 2026 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Poland.

Falconets Head Coach Moses Aduku stated this after his team defeated Abuja-based Sunshine FC 10-0 in a friendly match on Wednesday.

The match was played at the FIFA Goal Project Pitch of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, Abuja.

The emphatic victory marked the Falconets' first friendly as preparations for the tournament gather momentum.

"It was an impressive start, but there are areas we still need to work on. We have to improve the way we play as a unit, both offensively and defensively.

"While we are preparing, other countries are also preparing, so we must continue to improve," Aduku said.

According to the coach, developing the right mentality and ensuring the players attain peak fitness remain the team's priorities.

"We want to instil a winning mentality in the players and ensure they are fully fit. Fitness will be one of our greatest strengths going into the World Cup," he said.

Aduku acknowledged that Nigeria would face tough opposition in Poland but expressed confidence in the team's ability to compete.

"Every match will be tough, but we are leaving no stone unturned in our preparations.

"Our opening game against Spain will be difficult, but we are determined to make a statement," he said.

The coach appealed to Nigerians to continue supporting the team as preparations for the tournament continue.

"We ask Nigerians to continue praying for us and supporting the team. We will do everything possible to make the country proud," he said.

The Falconets are currently in camp in Abuja ahead of the tournament scheduled to hold in Poland from Sept. 5 to Sept. 27.



Senate sports committee queries commission over failure to honour invitation

The Senate Committee on Sports Development, chaired by Sen. Abdul Ningi (Bauchi Central), on Wednesday expressed displeasure over the failure of officials of National Sports Commission to honour its invitation.

Ningi, while expressing displeasure during the committee's meeting, said invitation letters were addressed separately to the Chairman of the Commission and the Director-General to avoid any ambiguity over who should appear before the committee.

He rejected the explanations forwarded by the commission, describing them as unacceptable.

The senator warned that the committee would not tolerate attempts to frustrate its constitutional oversight responsibilities.

He said that the continued absence of key officials had prevented the committee from carrying out its legislative duties effectively, stating that such conduct undermined accountability.

"it's becoming a practice that requires senate's disciplinary action against these agents of government," Ningi said.



SEN. ABDUL NINGI

The committee members unanimously supported the chairman's position, insisting that the commission's leadership must appear before the committee to explain issues surrounding its finances and operations.

The committee directed the commission to submit evidence of the approved budgets for 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026.

It also requested details of budget releases for the same period and records of funds released to all sporting federations, including football, basketball, volleyball, boxing, judo and hockey, among others.

The lawmakers also directed the commission to present evidence of the Federal Government's statutory subvention to the various federations.

Ningi, however, directed the clerk of the committee to write to the Accountant-General of the Federation requesting for comprehensive records of all releases made to the commission from 2023 till date for verification.



EGYPT TABLE TENNIS TEAM

Egypt dominate ITTF Africa youth championships

Egypt won three of the four team titles at the 2026 ITTF Africa Youth Championships, reaffirming their dominance in African youth table tennis.

The finals were played on Wednesday at the Borteyman Sports Complex in Accra, Ghana.

The North Africans defeated Nigeria, Tunisia and Algeria to win the U-15 boys' and U-15 girls' titles, while retaining the U-19 girls' crown.

Defending champions Nigeria endured a difficult campaign before edging hosts Ghana 3–2 in the semi-finals.

However, Egypt proved too strong in the final, producing a commanding 3–0 victory over Nigeria.

Ahmed Elsabbagh opened the scoring with a 3–0 win over Marvelous Joseph, 11–8, 11–5, 13–11.

Egypt's talisman, Asser Sameh, then defeated Usman Ayoola 3–0, 11–9, 12–10, 11–7.

Hussein Eyad completed the rout with a clinical 3–0 victory over Samson Joshua, 11–9, 11–9, 11–8.

In the U-15 girls' division, Egypt defeated Tunisia 3–1 to reclaim the title they surrendered to Uganda in 2025.

The Egyptians also retained their U-19 girls' crown after overwhelming Algeria 3–0.

With three team titles secured, Egypt's campaign in Accra further underlined its depth and enduring supremacy in African youth table tennis.

AYC-ITTF: Atunwon inspires Nigeria to retain U-19 title

Nigeria's Quadri Atunwon produced a remarkable performance to help Nigeria defeat Egypt and retain the boys' U-19 team title at the 2026 ITTF Africa Youth Championships.

The finals were played on Wednesday at the Borteyman Sports Complex in Accra.

Nigeria trailed 0-2 after losing the opening two matches, but Sultan Agunbiade revived the team's hopes with a spirited victory to reduce the deficit to 2-1.

Matthew Kuti, who had earlier lost 2-3 to Yassin Gaber, redeemed himself with a 3-1 victory over Abdelmalk Elsayed to level the tie at 2-2 and force a deciding match.

The title was then decided by Atunwon and Gaber in a thrilling final contest.

The players shared the first four games to leave the match tied at 2-2.

Atunwon appeared on course for victory after taking an 8-2 lead in the deciding fifth game, but Gaber fought back to level at 8-8 before moving ahead 10-8 to earn two match points.



FEATURE

Sports

Unlocking NPFL's Market Value and Potentials (Part 1)



NPFL ACTION RECORDED BETWEEN ENYIMBA AND RIVERS UNITED.

Andrew Ikejiuba

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) possesses all the ingredients required to become one of Africa's most valuable domestic football competitions. With a population exceeding 230 million people, an enormous football-loving fan base, fierce regional rivalries, an abundance of talented players, and a rapidly expanding digital audience, Nigeria has a foundation that many leagues across the continent can only aspire to. Yet, despite these enormous advantages, the commercial value of the country's elite league remains far below its true potential.

Unlocking this value requires a fundamental shift in how NPFL clubs are managed. Clubs must stop operating merely as football teams and begin functioning as professional sports businesses. Unfortunately, many NPFL clubs continue to run as extensions of government ministries rather than commercially driven organizations. This governance model has significantly hindered both the growth of the clubs and the development of the league itself.

Every NPFL club should have a Board with competent professionals overseeing strategic decisions and policies. Equally important is the appointment of qualified Chief Executive Officers, Commercial Directors, Marketing Managers, Digital Media Teams, Fan Engagement Officers, and Business Development Executives. Sustainable football success is built on strong institutions, not merely on performances on the pitch.

It has been revealed that most government-owned NPFL clubs rely almost entirely on state government funding despite the potential to generate incremental revenues annually. This dependency creates numerous challenges, including unstable financing, political interference, weak accountability, and little motivation to generate independent revenue. Such a structure inevitably limits innovation and commercial growth.

To become financially sustainable, clubs must progressively diversify their revenue streams through sponsorships, merchandising, hospitality services, membership programmes, ticket sales, academy transfers, digital subscriptions, media content, and other commercial initiatives. All these can be achieved through verifiable metrics and analytics that are attractive to various local and international partners. Government ownership, where it exists, should target direct intervention in key strategic areas and create a conducive environment that will facilitate the accelerated growth and development of the Clubs.

Another significant opportunity lies in building stronger club brands. Although many NPFL clubs boast rich histories and passionate supporters, their brand identities remain underdeveloped. Every club should possess a clearly recognizable identity defined by its colours, logo, slogan, traditions, legends, and deep community roots.

Successful football clubs across the world sell identity before they sell football. Supporters do not merely buy tickets—they buy belongings. Consequently, every NPFL club should invest in a consistent visual identity, professionally managed websites, vibrant social media platforms, documentaries, podcasts, player profiles, and well-preserved historical archives. Football fans connect with stories just as much as they celebrate trophies.

Equally important is improving the matchday experience. Many NPFL venues still struggle with poor seating arrangements, inadequate parking facilities, poor sanitation, limited food and beverage options, weak security, and insufficient entertainment before and after matches. A football match should be an event that supporters eagerly anticipate, not simply ninety minutes of action. Creating enjoyable and memorable matchday experiences will strengthen emotional attachment between clubs and their supporters while increasing attendance and spending.

Digital media also presents one of the greatest opportunities for unlocking the league's commercial value. Today's football audience increasingly consumes content on mobile phones and digital platforms long before watching matches on television. Consequently, clubs must invest heavily in digital content creation.

> Many NPFL venues still struggle with poor seating arrangements, inadequate parking facilities, poor sanitation, limited food and beverage options, weak security.

Media departments should consistently produce engaging content, including training sessions, behind-the-scenes footage, player interviews, tactical analysis, academy updates, fan competitions, historical features, documentaries, and interactive social media campaigns. Around the world, digital engagement has become a significant source of commercial revenue through advertising, sponsorships, subscriptions, and fan monetization. The NPFL cannot afford to be left behind.

Another area requiring strategic attention is player development and transfers. Evidence from several emerging football leagues shows that player trading can become a major source of sustainable income when properly managed. Nigeria continues to produce exceptional football talent, yet too many players leave for relatively insignificant transfer fees.

NPFL clubs should strengthen their youth academies, offer longer-term contracts to promising players, improve scouting networks, negotiate favourable sell-on clauses, secure development compensation rights, and create attractive welfare packages to retain outstanding talent for longer periods. European clubs such as Red Bull Salzburg and Genk have built highly successful business models around player development and strategic transfers, an approach worthy of emulation.

In addition, club licensing regulations should enforce the requirement for every NPFL club to own and operate a functional youth academy that consistently feeds the first team. Such academies reduce recruitment costs, reinforce club identity, generate future transfer income, and strengthen community engagement. Beyond football, these academies should prioritize education, nutrition, sports science, psychology, and life-skills training to ensure the holistic development of young athletes.

Finally, clubs must begin to view their stadiums as commercial assets capable of generating revenue year-round, not merely on matchdays. Properly managed stadiums can host concerts, conferences, exhibitions, restaurants, museums, gyms, club shops, guided tours, and corporate events while also generating income through naming rights and other commercial partnerships.

In Part Two of this series, attention will shift to other critical drivers of football economics, including improved officiating standards, broadcasting rights, sponsorship development, data analytics, fan engagement strategies, and governance reforms.

Ultimately, the NPFL's greatest untapped asset is not merely the quality of football played on the pitch. A vast domestic market, an intensely passionate football culture, a large diaspora community, and an endless pipeline of talented players provide a foundation that very few African leagues can match. If these assets are strategically harnessed, the NPFL can emerge as one of the continent's most commercially successful and globally respected football leagues.

Sports

FEATURE

96 YEARS OF WAITING: Can Ajayi end Nigeria's Men's 100m curse in Glasgow?

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

Athletics historians can't wait for a better opportunity than now to believe Nigeria is on the verge of winning one of the most elusive gold medals in our sports history. Despite a rich avalanche of great sprinters, men's 100m gold medal at the Commonwealth Games has been embarrassingly elusive.

For 96 years now, the Commonwealth Games have rolled around like clockwork. The gun first cracked in Hamilton 1930, the steel city of Canada. Then it echoed in London 1934, and through the Commonwealth in cities like Sydney, Auckland, Cardiff, Kingston, Edinburgh, Kuala Lumpur, Manchester, Brisbane, Victoria, Delhi, and Birmingham 2022. Now, the circuit returns once again to Glasgow 2026, and with it, Nigeria's 96-year wait for men's 100m crown seems to be over.

Our women have already left their mark with pride .Mary Onyali gave us fire and fight, winning 100m gold in Victoria 1994. Blessing Okagbare gave us grace and dominance, winning 100m gold in Glasgow 2014 and setting the Commonwealth Games record at 10.85s on that same track. Tobi Amusan continued the tradition in the last edition, taking 100m hurdles gold in Birmingham 2022 and setting Games record of 12.30s.

The green and white has danced on the podium in the sprints before. The Nigerian women have answered the call.

And we have proven it can be done in para sports too.

Nigeria already holds a Commonwealth 100m mark, just not in the able-bodied category. Adekunle Adesoji stormed to gold and set the para sports 100m record of 10.76s in Manchester 2002. It was a reminder that speed runs in our DNA. That a Nigerian can go to the Commonwealth Games, face the world, and leave with the fastest time. If we could do it in para athletics, why not in the marquee men's 100m?

But the men's 100m? That has been our ghost story.

It was not always this way on the track. Some men have tried and pushed for the ultimate prize, but it never came home.

Nigeria first announced herself as a sprinting giant in the relays. Christchurch 1974 — Benedict Majekodunmi, James Olakunle, Kola Abdulai, Timon Oyebami won bronze in the 4x100m in 39.70s. Our first men's sprint medal at the Games and at international level.

Eight years later, Brisbane 1982 — Lawrence Adegbehingbe, Iziaq Adeyanju, Ikpoto Eseme, Samson Oyeledun took it further and won GOLD in 39.15s, beating a Canadian team with the great Ben Johnson (the fastest man in the 1980s and the first to break the 9.90 and 9.80 seconds barriers). That was the statement. Nigeria had sprinters. Nigeria could run. Nigeria could win.

The world took notice. But somehow, the magic never translated to the individual 100m - the stage where just one man is the leader and pride of the pack.

The 1990s once gave us hope, as it was a decade of fantastic sprinters.

Auckland 1990 was supposed to be the breakthrough. For the first and only time in Commonwealth history, Nigeria put three men into the same 100m final — Davidson Ezinwa, Osmond Ezinwa, and Abdullahi Tetengi. The country buzzed. Finally, we would have our man on the podium.

But the dream died on the line at Mount Smart Stadium in January 1990. Ezinwa finished 4th in 10.26s. Osmond was 6th. Tetengi 8th. Gold went to Linford Christie of Great Britain. The green and white left empty-handed again.

That Auckland final remains Nigeria's biggest showing in the event. It heralded hope, but also began a pattern: close, but not close enough. After 1990, it would be 12 years before another Nigerian — Uchenna Emedolu — won silver in 2002. Then Fasuba took silver again in 2006. Since then, only Enoch Adegoke made the final in 2018, finishing 7th.

Despite producing some of Africa's fastest men — Davidson Ezinwa who ran 9.94, Chidi Imoh, Seun Ogunkoya, Olusoji Fasuba who held the African record at 9.85, Deji Aliu with his Olympic bronze pedigree — no Nigerian man has ever stood atop that Commonwealth 100m podium. Not in 22 editions. Not once. We have been at the arena, smelt it, but never tasted victory.

It is the one gap in an otherwise proud sprinting CV. This is not the Olympics where the Americans hold sway, it is the Commonwealth Games. The Yorubas will say Kilode! What is our problem? And in Glasgow 2026, that gap may finally close.

Waiting in the blocks now is Kanyinsola Ajayi. As we say in local parlance, "our hope don rise, eyes dey shook." The expectations are palpably high and the National Sports Commission is already rehearsing its victory dance in anticipation of history making.

The boy from Oreyo, Ikorodu, is no longer running to escape schoolwork like he did in Secondary School in Lagos. He is running to make history. At 21, Ajayi has already done things Nigerian sprinting has begged for. He stands toe-toe with the world's best and, after making an Olympic semi-final in Paris 2024, he has been a phenomenon on the track.

He has broken Olusoji Fasuba's 20-year-old 100m national record of 9.85s with a time of 9.84s.

From Ikorodu to the world. He even beat an Olympic champion on the biggest stage.

And he may not stop at just winning gold in Glasgow.

The Commonwealth Games 100m record has stood at 9.88 seconds since 1998, set by Trinidad and Tobago's Ato Boldon in Kuala Lumpur. It is a mark that has survived 7 editions of the Games.

Kanyinsola Ajayi is entering the Games in hot form, and with the wind at his back, even Boldon's 28-year-old record could be under serious threat. With Ajayi already clocking 9.84s in London, pundits believe the Nigerian has both the gold and the record in his sights. "He can win it and rewrite the books."

The timing feels poetic. Glasgow, the city where Okagbare won gold and set the record in 2014, will host again in 2026. Nigeria, the nation that has watched others take our event, now has a genuine contender who can take both the title and the record.

From the 1974 relay bronze team, to the 1982 gold team, to Ezinwa, to Fasuba, to Aliu — the baton has been passed. The women have delivered gold and records. Now it rests with a kid from Ikorodu in Lagos state who grew up watching them on TV.

At the 2026 London Athletics Meet, held on 18 July at London Stadium — the eleventh leg of the Diamond League for the year — Kanyinsola Ajayi didn't just run. He announced himself with a legendary finish.

The United States-based sprinter stood tall among giants and produced another statement — 9.84 seconds to win it. He outpaced reigning world champion Oblique Seville of Jamaica, 9.87s, while home favourite Romell Glave of Great Britain chased in a personal best of 9.97s.

In one race, Ajayi turned hope into belief. He showed he can win outside Africa, win when the critics are watching;win against world champions and win when the lights are brightest.

For Nigerian sports enthusiasts, that 9.84 was more than a time. It was a promise. Eyes that had waited 96 years suddenly fixed themselves on Glasgow, daring to dream of an elusive crown in our nation's sports history.

After that blistering race, Ajayi now carries something else: the hunger of a nation that has waited 96 years.

Could this be the year Nigeria stops waiting... and starts winning?

In Glasgow, at Scotstoun Stadium, the gun will crack again. And for the first time in a very long time, Nigeria may just be the one crossing the line first — possibly with a new Games record to boot, from the boy Kanyinsola Ajayi who grew up in Ikorodu.



KANYINSOLA AJAYI

SPORTS

commonwealth games GLASGOW 2026 — 23 JULY TO 02 AUGUST

The Nigerian OBSERVER — That The People May Know

76 years after maiden showing, Nigeria is set for 20th C'wealth Games appearance at Glasgow 2026

The wait is finally over as the 23rd Commonwealth Games officially begis in Glasgow, Scotland, with Team Nigeria ready to begin its campaign alongside thousands of athletes from across the Commonwealth.

The Glasgow 2026 Games, which run from July 23 to August 2, mark a significant milestone in Nigeria's sporting history as the nation makes its 20th appearance at the Commonwealth Games, exactly 76 years after its debut at the Auckland 1950 Games in Australia. Since that first outing, Nigeria has grown into one of the competition's traditional sporting powerhouses, producing generations of Commonwealth champions across athletics, boxing, weightlifting, wrestling, para sports and other disciplines.



TEAM NIGERIA

Nigeria's full delegation is now on ground in Glasgow, with all 74 athletes settled in the Games Village ahead of the start of competition. The contingent is also accompanied by top sports administrators and distinguished personalities, including National Sports Commission Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko, Director General Hon. Bukola Olopade, Commonwealth Games Ambassadors, former Directors General of the National Sports Commission Gbenga Elegbeleye and Alhassan Yakmut, respected sports administrator Dr. Amos Adamu, and veteran broadcaster Victor Iroele. Demographics

As they march into the OVO Hydro for the Opening Ceremony, Nigerian athletes will be represented in their strikingly radiant green-and-white traditional ceremonial outfits, proudly showcasing the nation's colours and rich cultural identity before a global audience.

The elegant attire makes Team Nigeria one of the standout delegations during the Parade of Nations as the Green and White officially announces its arrival at Glasgow 2026.

The Commonwealth Games

AFN Auditor Says New Spirit of Patriotism is driving Nigerian Athletes, lauds NSC welfare Packages

Auditor in the board of Athletics Federation of Nigeria AFN, Dr. Kola Oredipe has hailed the growing spirit of patriotism among Nigerian athletes, saying their renewed commitment and dedication are boosting the country's sporting fortunes and inspiring future generations.

Dr. Kola, in an exclusive interview with MG News24 ahead of the Commonwealth Games, said the high level of enthusiasm and positive atmosphere in Team Nigeria's camp, particularly among the track and field athletes, is inspiring

Adding that the renewed sense of unity, determination, and patriotism among the athletes reflects their readiness to represent the nation with pride and compete for honours on the international stage.

The AFN Auditor throws his weight behind the Federation's projection of winning seven gold medals, expressing confidence in the quality and depth of Nigeria's track and field athletes.

He said the country's abundant talent, coupled with the athletes' renewed commitment and improved preparation, gives the federation every reason to be optimistic about achieving the target.

"I must say that under the current leadership of AFN, you must have seen the new order ensuring that our athletes who are abroad, professionals come back home to represent their country. The demonstration they have shown in this Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, the joy with which they reported to camp, the momentum that came with their arrival shows that they are proud Nigerians and they want to represent their country,"

"We have done our homework, we have looked at the athletes available in camp and their current form, and we've seen that this seven gold medal target is very possible and achievable. We had three gold in the last Commonwealth Games, and with the level of preparations and world-class athletes we have now, no doubt we will surpass that previous achievements." Kola said.

Elkanemi Warriors intensify preparations for CAF Confederation Cup, NNL season

Elkanemi Warriors have intensified preparations ahead of its CAF Confederation Cup campaign and the upcoming Nigeria National League (NNL) season.



ELKANEMI WARRIORS

Speaking after the team's training session on Wednesday, Team Manager, Coach Ibb, expressed confidence in the club's ongoing recruitment process.

"Alhamdulillah. I want to assure our fans that we are doing everything humanly possible to bring in quality players who will strengthen the team and make everyone proud. Experienced players from professional clubs have been invited. Some have already joined the team, while others are expected to arrive soon. By the grace of Allah, everything will go according to plan. We urge our fans to trust the process and have confidence in the positive changes that will soon begin, In Sha Allah."

Coach Ibb also appealed to supporters to rely only on official information from the club.

"I also want to call on our fans to disregard any news or reports that do not originate from the Media Unit of Elkanemi Warriors FC.



TOLU AROKODARE

Arokodare Denies Wolves training allegations, reaffirms commitment to Club

Nigerian striker Tolu Arokodare has broken his silence over reports concerning his conduct during training at Wolverhampton Wanderers, insisting that he has always maintained a professional attitude and remains committed to the Premier League club.

The forward expressed disappointment over recent media reports, describing several claims about his situation at Wolves as inaccurate.

"I was very surprised and disappointed to see the media reports today, many of which are inaccurate," Arokodare said.

The former Genk attacker stressed that professionalism and dedication have been key parts of his career, adding that he has always worked hard to maintain high standards on and off the pitch.

"Throughout my career, I have always taken great pride in conducting myself professionally and maintaining the highest training standards," he stated.

Arokodare explained that his priority has always been to prepare himself properly and contribute whenever he is given the opportunity to represent his teammates and the club.

Dikko assures Super Falcons of WAFCON 2024 cash reward

Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Mallam Shehu Dikko, has assured the Super Falcons that they will receive their cash rewards for winning the 2024 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON), despite the delay in the payment process.

Speaking with journalists in London, Dikko explained that the payment has been delayed due to government budgetary procedures but stressed that President Bola Tinubu had already approved the reward in August 2025.

"It's a government process. Those things are off-budget. It has to be included in the budget and so forth. But the president approved their payment since August 2025," Dikko said.

He added that the payment is currently being processed by the relevant government agencies. "It is with the finance people and the Accountant-General's Office. They are processing it, and they are working very hard on it. The Minister of Finance is working on it to make sure that money would drop, hopefully before the WAFCON," he stated.



SUPER FALCONS IN TRAINING

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