

Dangote Cement hits new high as revenue for 2025 peaks at N4.3trn

● Pays N3.3trn dividends in 15 years ● Targets 80Mta capacity, 10 Mt export by 2030 ● Increased installed capacity across Africa to ----tonnes annually

LAGOS

Driven by robust sales and improved cost efficiency, the performance of Dangote Cement has ballooned, hitting N4.3 trillion with attendant spike in earnings by N1.9 trillion.

The Chairman of the com-

pany, Mr Emmanuel Ikazoboh, who disclosed this at the 17th Annual General Meeting of the company on Thursday in Lagos, said the company is accelerating its pan-African expansion, targeting 80 million tonnes annual production capacity and 10 million tonnes of cement and clinker exports by 2030.

He stated that the expansion strategy was driven by rapid urbanisation, infrastructure development, housing deficits and population growth across Africa.

According to him, the company is positioning itself to play a leading role in Africa's industrialisation.

He said the commissioning

of its three million tonnes per annum grinding plant in Côte d'Ivoire in 2025 increased the company's installed capacity across Africa to 55 million tonnes annually.

He added that construction of the six million tonnes per annum Ilori Integrated Cement Plant in Ogun was

progressing as scheduled and would strengthen domestic supply and export capacity.

"We are positioned not just to participate in Africa's growth, but to shape it.

"Our target of 80 million tonnes annual capacity by 2030 will contribute billions in annual revenue, generate foreign

exchange through exports and demonstrate operational excellence across multiple African markets," he said.

Reviewing the company's 2025 performance, Ikazoboh said group revenue rose by 20.3 per cent to N4.307 trillion,

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#200

Edo acquires 10% stake in 100MW power project to drive economic benefits

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has secured a 10 per cent equity stake for the state in a proposed 100-megawatt power plant, describing the development as a landmark investment that will generate revenue, create employment opportunities and guarantee a more reliable

electricity supply for residents.

Governor Okpebholo disclosed this in Benin City, Wednesday, while receiving the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of First Bank of Nigeria Limited, Mr. Olusegun Alebiosu, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of CCETC, Mr. Di Xiaohui, and their respective delegations at the Government House in Benin City.

Speaking during the meeting, the governor said the agreement marked a departure from previous arrangements by ensuring that Edo State would not merely have the authority to provide land for the project, which will be located at Ologbo but would become an equity partner with long-term economic benefits.

According to him, although the state is not investing financial resources directly in the project, it negotiated a 10 per cent equity stake in exchange for providing land and creating an enabling environment for the investment.

The governor said, "Edo State does not have the money to invest in this power plant.

But we have land, and we will provide security to ensure that your business thrives."

"I also told them that we can not just give them our land; we have to be part owners too. They agreed to consider 10 percent equity. That is the agreement we are going to sign today."

Governor Okpebholo said the arrangement would deliver mul-

tiple benefits to the state beyond improved electricity supply.

"I am happy with this development. One, we will now have light. Two, we will also have a stake in the project. Not just a stake, we will also be receiving revenue from it. Our own children will also be employed by them. To me, this is more than enough."

The governor noted that the 100MW power plant is expected to be operational by November and expressed satis-

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Oba Ewuare II lays curses against violent crimes in Edo

MONDAY OISE

BENIN CITY

Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin, led traditional priests, priestesses and physicians (Ewaise), on Thursday, laid deadly curses against violent crimes in Edo State and Nigeria.

The development was in response to the previous summon of Oba Ewuare last week Wednesday, directing traditional worshippers of various classifications in Benin Kingdom to revert to the ancient traditional ways of resolving the security challenges in the state.

The spiritual exercise meant to complement the effort of government in tackling the

menace of insecurity, began with a procession from the Oba palace ground.

Decked in their regalia and with traditional spiritual weapons, the worshippers, converged at the main entrance of Oba of Benin palace in Benin City, where they poured libations on the items and invoked ancestral spirits to bear witness against those seeking to destabilise the peace of Edo State.

The event also featured fortification of the land against any invasion by bandits and other criminal elements and prayers for the well-being of people who seek the good and development of Edo State and Nigeria.

Speaking in an interview, the

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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP:

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (right) receiving the MD and CEO of First Bank of Nigeria limited, Mr. Olusegun Alabiosu (2nd right), the MD and CEO of CCETC, Mr. Di Xiao Hui (2nd left) and their respective delegation at the Government House in Benin City on courtesy visit on Thursday.

Edo Special Criminal Court 1 kicks off

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Bol disburses N644.9bn, records 1.68m jobs

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South Africa and Ghana in diplomatic row over alleged killing of migrant

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Nigeria Football and lessons from Morocco

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NEWS

Edo Special Criminal Court 1 kicks off

● **Remands 3 in correctional centre over cultism, kidnapping**

BENIN CITY

The Edo Special Criminal Court sitting in Benin on Thursday ordered the remand of two men, Owen Osarumwense, 42, and Austine Oshumogo, 29, in a correction-

al centre over alleged cultism.

The order followed an ex parte motion filed by the police prosecutor, Polycarp Odion.

After citing relevant provisions of the law, Odion urged the court to remand the suspects for an initial period of

14 days pending legal advice from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Edo State Ministry of Justice.

Odion told the court that Osarumwense, on November 15, 2009, at Ekiadolor Community within the Benin Ju-

dicial Division, allegedly conspired with others now at large to commit a felony.

He further alleged that Osarumwense is a member of the Supreme Eiye confraternity.

The prosecutor also alleged

that Oshumogo, on March 24 within the Benin Judicial Division, conspired with others now at large to commit a felony.

According to him, Oshumogo is also a member of the Supreme Eiye confraternity, was in unlawful possession of firearms, and had control of a locally made cut-to-size gun.

He added that Oshumogo allegedly robbed one Samson Yemisi of an Intel and a Tecno mobile phone while armed with a gun.

Odion said the defendants are facing a seven-count charge bordering on conspiracy, cultism, unlawful possession of firearms, and armed robbery.

He stated that the alleged offences contravene Section 412(2) of the Criminal Law of Edo State, 2022; Section 3(2) of the Secret Cult and Other Similar Activities (Prohibition) Law, 2025; Section 1(2)(a) of the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Act, Cap R11, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004; and Section 3(1) of the same Act.

The presiding judge, Justice Terry Momodu, granted the application and ordered the remand of the defendants.

The case was adjourned to July 15.

Meanwhile, the State Special Criminal Court sitting in Benin on Thursday ordered the remand of Kingsley Aliyu, 28,

in a correctional centre over alleged kidnapping and rape.

The order followed an ex parte motion filed by the police prosecutor, Emmanuel Ekibade.

After citing relevant provisions of the law, Ekibade urged the court to remand the defendant for an initial period of 14 days pending legal advice from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Edo State Ministry of Justice.

The prosecutor told the court that Aliyu, on June 6 at Useh Community Forest within the Benin Judicial Division, allegedly attacked a 29-year-old woman with two long cutlasses and charms and forcefully had sexual intercourse with her without consent.

He further alleged that the defendant kidnapped the woman, held her in captivity in the forest, and demanded a ransom of N12 million before she was rescued.

Ekibade said the two-count charge contravenes Section 7(1) of the Kidnapping Prohibition (Amendment) Law of Edo State, 2025, and Section 4(1), punishable under Section 5(1) of the same law.

The presiding judge, Justice Terry Momodu, granted the application and ordered the remand of the defendant.

The case was adjourned until July 15.



INSECURITY:

Traditional priests, priestesses and native doctors (Elaine) in Benin Kingdom led by the Oba of Benin, Ewuare 11, launched spiritual warfare against violent criminality in Edo State from the Oba Palace ground in Benin City, Edo State on Thursday.

Customs generate N3.35trn revenue in 5 months

—Maiwada

ABUJA

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) generated N3.35 trillion in revenue between January and May 2026 while intensifying anti-smuggling operations, trade facilitation and border security across the country.

The service disclosed this on Thursday at a joint security news briefing by defence, security, response and law enforcement agencies organised by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), in Abuja.

Presenting the briefing on

behalf of the National Public Relations Officer of the NCS, DCC Abdullahi Maiwada, CSC Titus Omajali said the service processed 698,817 Single Goods Declarations (SGDs) and issued 112,202 Pre-Arrival Assessment Reports (PAARs) during the period.

Omajali said the service also recorded exports valued at 1.218 billion dollars through 21,376 containers, reflecting improved trade performance.

According to him, export performance rebounded after declining to 171.76 million dollars in March, rising to 274.83 million dollars in April before peaking at 275.90 million dollars in May.

He added that container throughput more than doubled from 2,847 in March to 6,144 in April, indicating increased export activities.

On anti-smuggling operations, Omajali said the service recorded 122 illicit drug seizures involving 375,457 units of narcotics with a Duty Paid Value (DPV) of N24.33 billion.

He said narcotics accounted for more than 91 per cent of the total quantity of seized items, with March recording the highest volume of interceptions following major enforcement operations that led to the seizure of over 248,500 units.

The customs spokesperson said the service also intercept-

ed approximately 789,550 dollars in undeclared and falsely declared currencies in six major currency declaration violation cases.

According to him, the offences included concealment of cash in baggage, under-declaration and non-declaration of foreign currencies, as well as the discovery of multiple ATM cards allegedly intended for illicit financial transactions.

Omajali further said the NCS recorded 17 endangered wildlife trafficking cases involving 104 live animals and 21 wildlife species and products, including pangolins, African Crowned Cranes, worked ivory, buffalo horns and hyena skins.

We're building FCT for inclusion, safety, growth in FCT —Tinubu

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu says his administration is not slowing down in the ongoing infrastructural development for inclusion, safety and growth across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Tinubu, represented by the Senate President, Sen. Godswill Akpabio, made the remarks in Abuja on Thursday, while inaugurating the rehabilitated 17-Kilometre Old Keffi Road, from Kado Village to Dei-Dei.

The president described the dividends of democracy as "government showing up

where citizens live" saying: "We identify the pain, we fund the solution, and we deliver."

"This road is more than a carriageway. It is an economic artery. By linking Kado, Saburi, Gwagwa, Idu, Karmo, and Dei-Dei directly to the Outer Northern Expressway, we have cut travel time and cut costs for residents.

"Goods will move, markets will breathe and workers will get to their jobs with less stress.

"We are not slowing down. Across the FCT, from the centre to the area councils, we are building for inclusion, for safety, and for growth.

"Every district deserves ac-

cess and every citizen deserves to feel the impact of government where they are."

He commended the FCT Minister, Mr Nyesom Wike, for turning the FCT into a site of visible results and for leaving no community behind.

He said that Wike saw a strategic economic lifeline that had become a daily ordeal for commuters, traders, and families in Kado, Saburi, Gwagwa, Karmo, Idu, and Dei-Dei.

"He brought the report to me and we acted," he said.

Tinubu added that through the Light Up Abuja initiative, Wike had integrated streetlights

on road corridors "so that movement at night is safer and commerce can extend beyond sunset".

He urged the benefiting communities to guard the infrastructure, stressing that a road maintained by its community lasts for a generation, while a road abused by its community dies early.

In his remarks, Wike explained that the road was rehabilitated following a request by traders operating along the road corridor.

"Today, July 2, we are here to inaugurate the road. We are very happy that all the promises Mr President made to the people in this area have been fulfilled," he said.

NDLEA dismantles largest meth lab, arrests 9,769 suspects in 5 months

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) says it dismantled Nigeria's largest clandestine methamphetamine laboratory, arrested 9,769 suspects and secured 1,778 convictions between January and May.

The Director of Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Femi Babafemi, disclosed this on Thursday during a joint security news briefing by defence, security, response and law enforcement agencies in Abuja.

The briefing was organised by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA).

Babafemi said operatives conducted 1,106 operations nationwide, dismantled 144 criminal gangs and seized more than 517 tonnes of illicit drugs without recording any casualty among its personnel.

He said its most significant operation was the destruction of a transnational methamphetamine laboratory jointly operated by Nigerian traffickers and Mexican chemical specialists in Ogun and Lagos states.

According to him, simultaneous raids on May 16 led to the arrest of 10 cartel members, including the alleged kingpin, Ano-

chili Innocent, and three Mexican methamphetamine technicians.

The NDLEA spokesman said operatives recovered 2,419.48 kilogrammes of precursor chemicals, industrial solvents and crystallised methamphetamine valued at about 362.9 million dollars, approximately N480 billion.

He said operatives also intercepted 4,173.5 kilogrammes of high-potency cannabis worth N10.4 billion concealed in vehicles at Tin Can Island Port after months of international intelligence tracking.

Babafemi added that another operation in Lagos recovered about 4.3 million bottles and tablets of codeine syrup and tramadol valued at N16.9 billion from interconnected drug warehouses.

The agency spokesman said a joint international operation also led to the arrest of alleged drug cartel leader, Amadi Simon, in Switzerland, with authorities freezing assets and seizing three hotel properties linked to money laundering.

He said that additional operations recovered 2,326 kilogrammes of imported cannabis worth N5.8 billion in Lekki and 1.83 million tablets of Tapentadol valued at N2.19 billion at Lagos Airport.

Okpebholo welcomes return of Benin bronzes, Says artefacts belong to Oba's Palace

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has described the return of the Benin bronzes as a historic milestone for the Benin

Kingdom, insisting that the artefacts belong to the Oba of Benin's Palace and should not be politicised.

Governor Okpebholo stated this on Wednesday when he received the Director-General

of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Olugbile Holloway, alongside the Consul General of Switzerland in Lagos, Conny Camenzind; Director of the Ethnographic Museum of the

University of Zurich, Professor Dr Alice Hertzog; Curator at the museum, Dr Alex Malafakis; and other members of the delegation at the Government House in Benin City.

The governor commended the Swiss government and other stakeholders involved in the restitution process, describing the return of the artefacts as a

significant moment in the history of the Benin Kingdom.

He said: "First of all, let me thank you for this moment because this is a defining history in our land. To me, there is no point in playing politics with what belongs to the palace."

"We have culture here. I believe in our culture. Those bronzes are not just bronze; they are symbolic and spiritual to our kingdom. Wherever they are, they will all find their way back to Nigeria to Edo State."

Governor Okpebholo stressed that the Benin Bronzes represent the cultural heritage of the Benin people and should remain under the custody of the traditional institution.

"There is no point playing politics with them. They all belong to the Oba's Palace. We have only one Oba Palace in Edo State," he said.

Reflecting on the history behind the removal of the artefacts, the governor said the British expedition to Benin was driven by the global recognition of the greatness of the Benin Empire.

"The British that came here came for a reason. They heard something about the Benin Empire. That is why they came here. They found these things very interesting and took them out of this country to theirs."

"So now, I am happy that the Swiss Government has decided to say, 'Yes, let's return these back to the owners.' I want to thank your government for taking this initiative in bringing these bronzes back to our palace."

He added that the gesture, though significant, would attract

greater goodwill and blessings.

"It might look small to you, but the blessings ahead are huge," the governor said.

Earlier, the NCMM Director-General, Olugbile Holloway, said the visit was to strengthen collaboration with the Edo State Government and mark another step in the international restitution of Benin artefacts.

"As you are aware, with the topic of restitution and the return of the Benin Bronzes, Benin is ground zero when it comes to that aspect, and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments is at the forefront of the battle for restitution," Holloway said.

He added that the commission was working with the Palace and His Royal Majesty, the Oba of Benin, to ensure that more artefacts taken abroad are returned.

"We are working with the palace and His Royal Majesty to ensure that as many of these bronzes that found their way into foreign museums begin to come home," he said.

Holloway disclosed that the delegation would proceed to the Oba's Palace to symbolically present some of the returned artefacts to the Oba of Benin for ceremonial blessings.

He said all the artefacts returned by Switzerland had arrived in Nigeria and were currently in Lagos.

Speaking on behalf of the Swiss Government, Consul General Conny Camenzind described the restitution as a major milestone in the relationship between Switzerland and Nigeria.



ANTI-KIDNAPPING:

The demolition of the building of suspected kidnap kingpin in Obagie-N'Evuosa community, Ikpoba-Okha LGA by Edo State Government alongside security agencies.

Edo govt demolishes building linked to suspected kidnap kingpin ● *Summons community heads for profiling*

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has demolished a building allegedly owned by a suspected kidnap kingpin in Obagie-N'Evuosa Community, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, as part of its crackdown on kidnapping and other violent crimes.

The demolition was carried out by the Principal Security Officer to Governor Monday Okpebholo, alongside security agencies and the Edo State Security Squad, codenamed Op-

eration Flush Out Kidnappers and Cultists.

The squad's spokesperson, Noah Idemudia, said the building had been identified as a hideout where kidnapped victims were allegedly kept before being moved to other locations.

"We are here to demolish this building identified as a den where kidnappers keep their victims. It served as a hideout before they were moved elsewhere," he said.

According to Idemudia, the property belongs to the alleged leader of a kidnapping syndicate operating in the area. He identified the suspect as Solo-

mon Johnson, who he said is from Delta State and is currently in police custody.

He alleged that the suspect and his gang had terrorised residents of Obagie-N'Evuosa and recently demanded an N11 million ransom for the release of a kidnapped victim. He added that the gang allegedly planned to abduct the victim's wife before security operatives arrested the suspect.

Idemudia said the demolition was intended to serve as a warning to others involved in criminal activities.

He also alleged that while

many of the suspected kidnappers operating in the state were non-indigenes, they often received support from local collaborators.

"Edo State is no longer a safe haven for criminals. Anyone who wishes to live peacefully is welcome, but those with criminal intentions should leave the state," he said.

Idemudia further disclosed that the government would soon invite Okaigheles (community heads) across the state to Government House for discussions on resident profiling and community security.

JOSEF advocates family empowerment to tackle insecurity

JUDE EHEBHA

EKPOMA

The Josemaria Escriva Foundation (JOSEF) has advocated the empowerment of families as a key strategy for achieving safer communities and addressing insecurity in Nigeria.

The Chief Responsibility Officer of JOSEF, Dr. Jude Obasanmi, made the call while speaking with journalists during the Foundation's 8th Annual Lecture Series, themed "Household Haven: Forging Safer Nigerian Communities Through Empowered Families," held in Ekpoma, Edo State.

Dr. Obasanmi explained that the lecture was designed to promote the integration of the family structure into the nation's security architecture, stressing that Nigeria could only effectively address insecurity by involving families in the process.

According to him, the programme also aimed to create widespread awareness that every citizen has a role to play in ensuring a secure environment where people can live and move freely without fear.

"We are witnessing a situation where some families even expect or encourage their members to

engage in criminal activities. When families are empowered, such tendencies and support for crime will be drastically reduced, if not completely eliminated.

"Criminals emerge from families. When families are empowered through employment opportunities, access to quality education, healthcare and other social services, they will be better positioned to raise children who will become responsible members of society," he said.

Delivering the keynote lecture, public affairs analyst and columnist, Mr. Austine Isikhuemen, lamented that insecurity had be-

come a major threat to families and communities across Nigeria.

He observed that violence, kidnapping, displacement and economic hardship were weakening household stability, increasing poverty, worsening unemployment and accelerating rural-urban migration.

He disclosed that between 3.6 million and 4.0 million people are internally displaced in Nigeria, while more than 26.5 million citizens are experiencing severe food insecurity. He also noted that between 3,000 and 4,500 officially tracked abductions occur annually across the country.

FG connects 23,516 graduates to work in NFP

BIRNIN KEBBI

The Federal Government says it has enrolled 23,516 unemployed graduates out of a 24,000 target under the Nigeria Jubilee Fellows Programme (NJFP) as of June.

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Delivery and Coordination, Office of the Vice President, Mr. Akubo Adegbe, disclosed this on Thursday in Birnin Kebbi during the NJFP 2.0 engagement with employers and fellows.

The programme, themed: "Employer and Fellow," is aimed at building a skilled workforce for the nation.

Speaking at the event, Adegbe said: "We have achieved 97.3 per cent of the 24,000 graduates targeted when the programme was launched by Vice President Kashim Shettima in October 2024."

"When NJFP 2.0 was launched last October by His Excellency, Vice President, we set an ambitious target to get 24,000 graduates on the portal by the end of June this year."

"By the deadline, two days ago, we had 23,516 graduates across the country. That is about

97.3 per cent of our target. We are almost there," he said.

According to Adegbe, Nigeria has abundant talented youths, but lacks sufficient opportunities.

"In Nigeria, we do not have a shortage of talent. What we have is opportunity deficit. Our youths are talented, but they have not been given the chance to do what they are capable of doing."

"Therefore, this programme is to connect our youths to opportunities. Talented young people should be linked to unlimited opportunities," he said.

He added that at the national level, the Federal Government is working to grow Nigeria's economy to \$1 trillion, having already reached about \$500 billion.

He said achieving that goal would require strong human capital to drive economic growth.

Adegbe commended the Kebbi Government for its agricultural initiatives and said the programme was designed for state-level implementation so that each state could address its specific challenges and leverage its comparative advantages.

"This programme is designed to provide the workforce we need today and the workforce we will need tomorrow."

Edo command centre powers Okpebholo's security —Braimoh

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the state's security architecture through the ongoing revitalization and modernization of the Edo State Command and Control Centre, describing the facility as a critical pillar in Governor Monday Okpebholo's strategy to combat crime and improve public safety.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Public Affairs, Hon. Haruna Braimoh, made

the clarification while putting the record in proper perspective on the administration's investments in security infrastructure, noting that the Command and Control Centre remains central to the government's intelligence-led security framework under the SHINE Agenda.

According to Braimoh, Governor Okpebholo's administration has adopted a practical and proactive approach to security by prioritizing intelligence gathering, rapid emergency response, inter-agency collaboration, and the deployment of modern technology to

protect lives and property.

"The Edo State Command and Control Centre is not just a physical facility; it is the operational nerve centre of the state's intelligence-driven security architecture. It represents Governor Monday Okpebholo's unwavering commitment to building a

safer Edo State through technology, coordination, and proactive governance," Braimoh stated.

He explained that the ongoing modernization of the Centre is designed to improve real-time surveillance, emergency communication, and co-

ordinated responses to security incidents across the state.

"The administration is investing significantly in digital communication systems, surveillance technology, and integrated monitoring platforms to ensure that security agencies receive credible intelligence promptly and respond

swiftly to emergencies," he said.

Braimoh further noted that the Command and Control Centre is fully integrated into the SHINE Agenda's security framework, enabling seamless collaboration among security agencies while encouraging active community participation in crime prevention.

Edo acquires 10% stake in...

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faction that the project would become a reality during his administration.

He explained that the decision to establish a new power project followed the collapse of efforts to sustain previous partnership arrangements.

Governor Okpebholo further disclosed that his administration has adopted a policy of encouraging direct partnerships between investors and the Edo State Government rather than private individuals, a move aimed at protecting public interest and ensuring greater accountability.

Looking beyond the current project, he said the state government plans to decentralise power generation by developing additional power plants in Edo Central and Edo North Senatorial Districts to improve electricity access and support economic growth across the state.

Earlier, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer

of First Bank of Nigeria Limited, Mr. Olusegun Alebiosu said the bank was pleased to support investments capable of driving economic transformation in Edo State.

He noted that CCETC already operates a 15-megawatt power plant in the state and is now constructing the 100MW facility at Ologbo, which he said would significantly boost industrialisation and economic development.

"We know that CCETC has a 15-megawatt power plant in the state, and they are also building a 100-megawatt power plant as part of what we believe will be a strong economic development and transformation initiative for Edo State," Alebiosu said.

The Edo State Commissioner for Power commended Governor Okpebholo for his leadership and commitment to strengthening the state's energy sector, noting that the project would improve electricity supply, stimulate investment, create jobs and expand the state's revenue base.



RESTITUTION PROCESS:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, (right); Director-General, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Olugbile Holloway, (left); Consul-General of Switzerland in Lagos, Conny Camenzind (2nd right), and Director of Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich, Professor Dr. Alice Hertzog (2nd Left), during the visit of the delegation to government house in Benin City on Wednesday.

First ever Edo flyover: Nigerians push for CCTV cameras

BENIN CITY

As Edo State celebrates the near completion of its first-ever flyover at Ramat Park in Benin City, residents have appealed to Governor Monday Okpebholo to ensure that a comprehensive Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance system is installed around the landmark infrastructure if such provision is not already captured in the project's contract.

The residents said the installation of modern surveillance cameras would not only protect the multi-billion-naira public

investment from vandalism but also enhance security, improve traffic management, and support law enforcement agencies in responding to emergencies.

The Ramat Park Flyover, widely regarded as a significant milestone in Edo State's infrastructure development, is expected to ease traffic congestion at one of Benin City's busiest intersections while boosting economic activities and improving road transportation.

Speaking on the development, a Benin City resident and transport operator, Osahon Eweka, said the flyover deserves the same level of security atten-

tion given to similar projects in major cities across the country.

"This is a landmark project that every Edo citizen is proud of. Installing CCTV cameras around the flyover will discourage vandalism, improve public safety, and provide useful evidence whenever accidents or criminal activities occur. It is an investment that will protect another important investment."

A trader at Ramat Park, Mrs. Grace Omoregie, said surveillance cameras would also reassure businesses operating around the area.

"The presence of CCTV cameras will make traders, commut-

ers, and visitors feel safer. It will also help security agencies monitor activities around the flyover and respond quickly whenever there is an incident."

Similarly, a youth leader, Efe Igbinoia, urged the state government to adopt technology-driven infrastructure management.

"Modern infrastructure should be supported by modern security systems. If CCTV installation is not already part of the contract, we respectfully appeal to Governor Monday Okpebholo to consider adding it. It will benefit present and future generations."

Dangote Cement hits new high as...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

while earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) grew by 43.4 per cent to N1.981 trillion.

He said Nigerian operations recorded stronger performance, with EBITDA increasing by 62.2 per cent to N1.764 trillion, driven by robust sales and improved cost efficiency.

"In spite of a complex operating environment, 2025 stands as the most successful year in Dangote Cement's history."

"Our performance demonstrates that strategic positioning and operational excellence enable us to capitalise on improving economic conditions," he said.

Ikazoboh said cement and clinker exports from Nigeria increased by 18.6 per cent to 1.4 million tonnes in 2025.

He expressed optimism that the African Continental Free Trade Area would deepen regional trade and reward producers that invested ahead of demand.

He said the company would continue expanding exports while maintaining cost leadership through innovation, operational efficiency and cleaner energy solutions.

Ikazoboh said Dangote Cement had deployed more than

3,000 compressed natural gas (CNG) trucks and over 1,000 dual-fuel trucks to improve logistics.

According to him, the fleet, the largest CNG deployment in Africa's cement industry, has significantly reduced operating costs while supporting environmental sustainability.

He said the company would continue strengthening corporate governance, sustainability, innovation and stakeholder engagement to create long-term value for shareholders.

Also speaking, the Group Managing Director, Dangote Cement Plc, Mr Arvind Pathak, attributed export growth to improved operational efficiency, enhanced logistics infrastructure and rising regional demand.

Pathak said clinker shipments increased from 10 vessels three years ago to 34 in 2025, representing a five-year compound annual growth rate of 33 per cent.

He said the Apapa and Onne export terminals had strengthened the company's capacity to serve regional markets while reducing Africa's dependence on cement imports from Europe and Asia.

According to him, investment in CNG-powered trucks has reduced fuel costs by more than 60 per cent compared with diesel-powered vehicles.

Bol disburses N644.9bn, records 1.68m jobs

ABUJA

The Bank of Industry (BoI) has unveiled its maiden 2025 Annual Development Impact Report, with Managing Director Dr Olasupo Olusi describing the year as a defining mo-

ment in the Nigeria's bank history.

Olusi, at the unveiling of the report on Thursday in Abuja, said the 2025 marked the first full year of executing BOI's 2025-2027 Corporate Strategy.

According to him, it is also the year the institution delib-

erately shifted from measuring success by disbursement volumes to measuring the development impact created.

He disclosed that the bank disbursed a total of N644.9 billion to nano, micro, small, medium and large enterprises across Nigeria in the year under review.

"Over 30 per cent of the financing went to nano and MSMEs, while more than 20 per cent was directed to gender and youth-focused enterprises to ensure inclusive growth."

"The interventions translated into a job impact of 1.68 million jobs, comprising direct, indirect and supported jobs across value chains nationwide."

"Financing cut across 14 industrial sectors in line with Nigeria's industrialisation priorities," he said.

He said that BOI strengthened value chains, expanded access to finance, and invested in critical infrastructure to enhance national

productivity and competitiveness.

Olusi said the interventions translated into tangible impact.

"Most importantly, our interventions translated into tangible impact by supporting millions of jobs, reducing carbon emission, strengthening digital and other infrastructure, and empowering women and youth," he said.

According to him, BOI exceeded its 2025 targets across six thematic priorities: Infrastructure, MSMEs, Digital, Youth, Gender and Climate.

He said that the bank strengthened value chains, expanded access to finance, and invested in critical infrastructure to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

He said BOI's nationwide presence was key to delivery, with 37 offices in 34 states enabling capital deployment in urban and underserved areas.

The bank also achieved over 95 per cent disbursement as the implementation agency for the Federal Government's N200 billion MSME industrialisation Fund.

Oba Ewuare II lays curse against...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

head of Ewaise palace group, Chief Osemwonta Iguezigbon and the Chief Priest of Ayelala deity, Clement Edegebe, expressed optimism that the move will end the menace of violent crimes and their collaborators.

"A lot of things have been going wrong in Benin. Some people no longer respect elders and there has been a lot of kidnappings and others," according to Chief Edegebe.

Chief Iguezigbon added, "what happened today was

directed by the Oba of Benin, considering what is happening not only in Edo State, but also in Nigeria. Our Oba thought it wise to put a stop to it"

Chief Isaac Oghafua Ogiemwense Oghafua (the Oyeoba of Benin), said the essence of the spiritual assignment is to fortify the land against insecurity in a traditional way."

On their part, Priest and Priestess, Constance Eguavoen, commended Oba Ewuare's resolve for deploying ancient rituals and spiritual forces against criminality.

500 persons to benefit from Lions International free Cartaract surgeries, says District Governor

BENIN CITY

Lions International District 404-A4 is soon to launch a N200 million sights saving appeal fund to help vulnerable persons within its catchment area to regain their sights

in the new service year.

The funds expected to be raised at a luncheon slated for August 29, in Benin, according to the District Governor, Dr Doris Ken-Otokiti, would be deployed to restore the sight of some 500 persons through cat-

aract surgeries at no cost to the beneficiaries.

Addressing newsmen at the commencement of a new service year, and assumption of office, Dr Ken-Otokiti said the district would utilise the funds raised strictly to execute the

strategic cataract surgeries project and a few other projects if they gained excess funds from the luncheon.

She however noted that the District's core project for the service year centres deeply on clinical vision care and the eradication of avoidable blindness.

She however said that any excess funds would be spent on strengthening of the youth skills acquisition centre in Eyae, Benin City.

"Any surplus realised will be channeled directly into completing our highly critical youth de-

velopment landmark: the Youth and Skills Acquisition Building Project at Eyae, ensuring that the groundwork initiated by past administrations is successfully actualised for our youth".

"We are launching an extensive humanitarian effort to provide comprehensive vision screenings, surgical interventions, and the free distribution of reading glasses across the regions.

"Specifically, we plan to give out 10,000 reading glasses and carry out 500 free cataract surgeries within the Lions year ending in August 2027", Dr

Ken-Otokiti explained.

Speaking on Lion's global service footprints, the District Governor said communities must profoundly feel the presence of the Lions vest through intensification of impact across its global cause, including hunger relief, diabetes awareness, childhood cancer support, environmental sustainability, and youth empowerment.

To achieve this footprint, she said they plan to serve a total of 1.5m people across the district, and urged members to donate generously towards the project.

NUC approves unbundling of UNN Mass Comm programme

NSUKKA (ENUGU)

The National Universities Commission (NUC) has approved the unbundling of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) into five new undergraduate programmes with effect from the 2026/2027 academic session.

This is contained in statement issued on Thursday in Nsukka by Mr Inya Egwu, the acting Public Relations Officer of UNN.

According to him, the newly approved programmes for full-time are B.Sc. (Advertising), B.Sc. (Broadcasting), B.Sc. (Development Communication Studies), B.Sc. (Journal-

ism and Media Studies) and B.Sc. (Public Relations).

The statement said the approval was conveyed to the university in a circular dated June 19, 2026.

"The decision followed a comprehensive resource verification visit conducted by a panel of experts to assess the human and material capacity available for the proposed programmes.

"The approval according to NUC, strictly applies to full-time mode of delivery, any plan to introduce part-time or postgraduate components for these programmes will require further notification and approval by the commission.

"The programmes should

retain their approved titles and nomenclature, as any modifications will be subjected to regulatory clearance," Egwu said.

He said the Head of Department of Mass Communication, Prof. Michael Ukonu, expressed gratitude to the Vice-Chancellor for his support throughout the resource verification by NUC.

He also thanked to the Director of Academic Planning, Prof. Anthony Attama, for guiding the department throughout the verification.

According to him, the unbundling will align the university's ambition to maintain its world-class standards and transformational vision.

FG applauds suspension of strike by teachers in Oyo

ABUJA

The Federal Government has expressed delight over the suspension of strike embarked upon by teachers in Oyo State, describing the development as a victory for dialogue and a step toward restoring uninterrupted learning.

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, said the suspension followed sustained engagement among the Federal Ministry of Education, the Oyo State Government and the leadership of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) at the national, zonal and state levels.

Alausa's position is contained in a statement issued by the ministry's Director of

Press and Public Relations, Mrs Folasade Boriowo, and made available to journalists on Thursday in Abuja.

"I am glad to report today that the strike has been suspended. Teachers are now returning to school to educate their students.

"This is the result of our collaboration and coordination with the leadership of the Nigeria Union of Teachers and the Government of Oyo State," he said.

The minister commended Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, for resolving the dispute through dialogue.

He also appreciated the leadership of the NUT at the national, zonal and state levels for working toward an amicable resolution of the matter in

the interest of learners.

Alausa reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to ensuring uninterrupted access to quality education despite security challenges in parts of the country.

"Our children will remain in school and we will continue to educate them. We will not succumb to terror," he said.

He also commended teachers across the country for their resilience and dedication to educating future generations.

The minister said that the federal government would continue to work with state governments, teachers' unions, security agencies and other stakeholders to strengthen school safety, promote dialogue and protect every child's right to quality education.

Enugu Govt seeks media support for health programmes

ENUGU

The Enugu State Government has urged media practitioners to deepen awareness of its free and inclusive healthcare programmes, particularly free malaria testing and treatment and the subsidised health insurance scheme across communities statewide.

The Commissioner for Health, Prof. George Ugwu, made the call on Wednesday during the Malaria Elimination Programme, Advocacy Communication and Social Mobilisation (ACSM) Quarterly Media Chat held in Enugu State.

Ugwu, represented by Dr Ifeyinwa Ugwunweze, Health Secretary of Enugu East Local Government Area, said free

malaria testing and treatment, alongside the subsidised annual N12,000 health insurance scheme, were available statewide.

He said the programmes were being implemented in all government-owned health facilities, including Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), general hospitals and teaching hospitals, as well as selected private healthcare facilities statewide.

"As a state, we are grateful for the wonderful work the media is doing in constantly projecting health initiatives, programmes and projects.

"However, there is an urgency to do more, especially targeting well-tailored message to rural areas to take advantage of health programmes, initiatives

and interventions.

"Our free malaria testing and treatment as well as the subsidised health insurance scheme is important to our health-loving governor, His Excellency Dr Peter Mbah, as flagship programmes he initiated."

The commissioner said the programmes were designed to reduce the socioeconomic burden of healthcare on individuals and families while improving access to quality medical services across the state.

Earlier, the Programme Manager of the State Malaria Elimination Programme, Dr Ifeoma Otiji, commended development partners, including the Islamic Development Bank and JH-PIEGO, for supporting malaria elimination efforts statewide.

Troops arrest suspected armourer in Imo

OWERRI

Troops of Joint Task Force (JTF) South-East, Operation UDO KA, have arrested a suspected armourer and logistics courier linked to attacks on oil installations and security personnel in Imo.

The Nigerian Army disclosed this in a statement on its verified Facebook and X Handles on Thursday.

It said the operation was conducted by troops of the 34 Artillery Brigade following credible intelligence.

The army said troops carried

out a search-and-raid operation along the Akpe Aggah-Egbema Forest axis in the early hours of July 1, leading to the arrest of the suspect at Obiakpu Forest.

According to the post, preliminary investigations indicate that the suspect served as principal armourer for a criminal group responsible for attacks on oil installations and troops deployed to the Ohaji-Egbema area.

It said the operation led to the recovery of one AK-47 rifle, one M4A1 carbine, one M16A2 rifle, six magazines, five pump-action guns, a locally fabricated pistol and a large quantity of assorted

ammunition.

The army said the recovery had significantly disrupted the operational capability and logistics network of the criminal group.

It added that the suspect remained in custody and would undergo further investigation to facilitate follow-on operations, aimed at apprehending other members and collaborators of the network.

The army reaffirmed commitment to sustaining aggressive operations against criminal elements threatening national security and economic assets.



EDO STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION BOARD

Education Hub, Iyaro, Benin City, EDO STATE

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS

1.0 INTRODUCTION
Edo State Universal Basic Education Board on behalf of Edo State Government is desirous of Carrying out procurement of construction and renovation of school buildings for basic school delivery. Consequently, the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders.

2.0 SCOPE OF WORK
Scope of Work for the Construction and Renovation of School Buildings at Okah Secondary School, Egoro Na-Oka, Ekpoma, Esan West, in Edo State includes the following:
Renovation of a block of 2 classrooms with hall and 2 stores, construction of a block of 4 classrooms with office and toilet, Construction of a block of 4-unit toilet, Construction of perimeter fence and security post, Construction of water harvester.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
You are required to submit a detailed profile which should contain the following:

- Certificate of incorporation/registration with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)
- Evidence of registration with Edo State Public Procurement Agency.
- Evidence of payment of tax by the company for the immediate past 3 years (i.e. 2023, 2024, 2025)
- Company's audited financial account (indicating turnover) and funding information over the past 3 years endorsed by a firm of chartered accountants.
- Company Profile including organization structure, key professional staff with their names and registration with appropriate regulatory bodies (COREN, QRBN, ARCON, CORBON etc.) with their current practicing license.
- Evidence of previous/similar work done in the past three (3) years showing the following:
 - Letter of Award of the previous work done.
 - Completion certificate obtained from previous work done.
- A sworn affidavit indicating that:
 - None of the Directors of the Company has been convicted in any court for any criminal offence including fraud and financial impropriety.
 - The Company is not in receivership, insolvent or bankrupt.
 - No officer of SUBEB is a former or present Director, shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the company.
- Bank Reference.

I. All documents for submission must be transmitted with a covering letter on the company's letter head paper bearing all necessary details:

- Equipment and technology capacity, with evidence of ownership or lease.
- Letter of consent to allow verification of documents submitted.
- Evidence of payment of a non-refundable tender fee of **₦100,000.00 only**

4.0 COLLECTION/SUBMISSION OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS
Set of bidding documents can be picked up at the procurement office at the address below or received by email upon submission of an evidence of payment of a non-refundable fee of **₦100,000.00 (One Hundred Thousand Naira Only)** into the following Edo State Government Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) bank account domiciled with the following banks:

Bank Name: Premium Trust Bank
Account Number: 0080050728
Account: EDSG Internally Generated Revenue A/C

All bids shall be submitted in a sealed envelope, addressed to the Executive Chairman, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and marked boldly at the right-hand corner **"BIDDING DOCUMENT"** and to be submitted at the address below. All bids are to be submitted on or before 12:00 noon, 17th July, 2026.

5.0 OPENING OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS
Bidding documents shall be opened immediately in the presence of the Bidder's designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below after the close of bid submission deadline by **12:00 noon, 17th July, 2026.**

6.0 NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

- Electronic Bids will not be permitted.
- Late submissions will not be accepted.
- This invitation shall not be construed to be commitment on the part of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) for contract award nor shall it entitle the bidder to make any claims whatever and seek indemnity from the Board by virtue of having responded to this advertisement.

7.0 The address referred to above is:
Edo State Universal Basic Education Board, Education Hub,
Iyaro, Benin City, Edo State.

Signed: Hon. Sonia Ebanehita Omonzane
Executive Chairman

NEWS

Senate urged to intervene as erosion threatens communities in Edo Central

OBOH SYLVESTER

BENIN CITY

The Senator representing Edo Central Senatorial District, Senator Joseph Igiagbe Ikpea, has called for urgent federal government intervention in addressing the worsening ecological crisis ravaging communities across Esan Land in Edo State.

Raising a motion on the floor of the Senate, Senator Ikpea expressed deep concern over the alarming rate of gully erosion, environmental degradation, and deforestation affecting several communities within the district. He warned that if immediate remedial measures are not taken, many towns and villages could face

displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and severe economic hardship.

The lawmaker noted that years of unchecked erosion has created deep gullies that continue to expand during the rainy seasons, threatening residential buildings, farmlands, roads, schools, and other critical public facilities.

According to him, the environmental disaster has reached an emergency level, requiring urgent attention from relevant federal agencies.

Senator Ikpea emphasized that the ecological challenges confronting Edo Central are not only environmental issues but also humanitarian and economically concerning. He explained that thousands of resi-

dents depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and that the continued loss of arable land due to erosion poses a serious threat to food security and rural development in the area.

The senator further lamented the increasing rate of deforestation across parts of Esan Land, noting that the indiscriminate felling of trees has weakened the natural ecosystem and exacerbated the impact of flooding and soil erosion. He stressed that the destruction of forest cover has left many communities vulnerable to environmental disasters and climate-related challenges.

While presenting the motion, Ikpea highlighted several erosion-prone communities where roads have been cut off, homes

endangered, and economic activities disrupted. He urged the Federal Government, through the Ecological Fund Office, the Federal Ministry of Environment, and other relevant agencies, to undertake comprehensive erosion-control projects and environmental restoration programmes in the affected areas.

The senator also called for the deployment of technical experts to conduct detailed assessments of the affected communities with a view to implementing sustainable solutions, including afforestation programmes, construction of drainage systems, and rehabilitation of degraded lands.

He warned that failure to act promptly could result in the loss of more communities,

increased displacement of residents, and significant damage to public infrastructure worth billions of naira.

The motion received the attention of fellow lawmakers, who acknowledged the severity of the ecological challenges facing many parts of the country and underscored the need for coordinated efforts to mitigate

environmental degradation and protect vulnerable communities.

Observers believe that Senator Ikpea's intervention has brought national attention to the environmental challenges confronting Edo Central and may pave the way for urgent federal action to safeguard lives, property, and livelihoods across the zone.

PSC promotes 13 CPs, 80 other senior officers

ABUJA

The Police Service Commission (PSC) has approved the promotion of 13 Commissioners of Police (CPs) to Assistant Inspectors-General of Police (AIGs) and 80 other senior officers to their next ranks.

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

Kalu said that the senior officers were promoted following their success in the recently concluded written examination and oral interview conducted by the PSC.

He also said that the promotion approval was part of the high points of the commission's decisions at its plenary meeting.

He listed the 13 CPs promoted to the rank of AIG to include Itam Obono, Bassey Ewah, Osagie Agans-Irabor, Monday Agbonika, Iyamah Adebora, Isa Nda, Akaninyene Ezima and Livingston Orutugu.

Others he said were Afegbua Rashid, Edozie Azuka, Haruna

Yahaya, Emenari Innocent and Betty Otimenyin.

The PSC spokesman said 17 Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs) were promoted to their next rank of CP.

According to him, the 17 newly promoted DCPs to CP are Nelson Nwamanna, Bolanle Murtala, Danbaba Labbo, Ajayi Oluyemi, Oki Oyintare, Ibrahim Zungura, Iya Mohammed, Darna Na'aliyu, Nurudeen Sabo and Tijjani Murtala.

He said others are Yakubu Mohammed, Ibrahim Usman, Akingbade Adeyinka, Mohammed Ahmed, Samuel Ahmed, Adedeji Taiwo and Zainab Pembi.

He added that 28 Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACPs) were also promoted to the rank of DCP while 33 Chief Superintendents of Police (CSPs) were promoted to the rank of ACP.

Kalu said that the commission also approved the confirmation of appointment of 162 Assistant Superintendents of Police II (ASP II) to the substantive rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police I (ASP I).

Edo Tourism Agency unveils plans to strengthen arts, culture sectors

RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Tourism Agency has reaffirmed its commitment to developing tourism, arts, and culture in the state to drive economic growth.

This came as the agency launched its first-ever Fashion Show aimed at boosting tourism and the creative economy in the state.

Speaking at the event, Director General Vivian Elabor

said the agency was working to reposition Edo State as a leading tourism and creative destinations in Nigeria and across Africa.

She also noted that the agency has remained committed to laying a solid foundation for a vibrant tourism industry by successfully developing the Edo State Tourism Calendar, which will run from January to December, covering activities ranging from festivals, carnivals, events, and music shows involving teaming youths and stakehold-

ers in the creative industry.

She further stated that the agency has established tourism clubs across secondary schools to nurture future ambassadors of Edo State and had also developed a prototype ICT tourism portal to digitally showcase the state's tourist attractions.

She added that the agency has also commenced the Edo State Road Cleaning Project as part of efforts to preserve the state's historical assets.

Lady Vivian Elabor urged investors, financial institutions,

members of the organized private sector, and the Edo diaspora community to collaborate in unlocking the enormous opportunities in tourism, hospitality, fashion, entertainment, arts, and culture, stating that Edo was open for business in sector.

She appreciated the sponsors, exhibitors, development partners, media representatives, members of the organizing committee, and every other stakeholder whose dedication contributed to the success of the event.

Ebonyi Women Affairs Commissioner assures of zero tolerance for child trafficking

MAXWELL OKECHUKWU

ABAKALI

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Ebonyi state, Mrs. Felicia Nwankpuma has assured the people of the state government's zero-tolerance for child trafficking, exploitation, sexual abuse, and other forms of gender-based

violence affecting the society.

Mrs. Nwankpuma gave this assurance against the backdrop of a recent viral online video regarding an anti-Child exploitation operation carried out in Oromo, Nnewi North Local government area of Anambra State, where a number of vulnerable children from Ebonyi state were identified among the rescued victims.

The Commissioner said upon receiving the official information, she immediately swung into action in collaboration with the first lady of the state Mrs. Uzuamaka Mary-Macdaline Nwifuru to arrange for the immediate repatriation of the children back to Ebonyi state.

She said that action was also commenced to ensure their rehabilitation, safe reunification with their families and their enrolment in meaningful skills acquisition programmes.

The response according to her demonstrated the willingness to give effect to the Governor Nwifuru People's Charter of Needs designed to

protect women and children, a key priority in his administration, through sustenance of investments in the protection of children and providing for their welfare and development.

Government remains resolute in ensuring that every child in Ebonyi State grows in safety.

"Members of the public are advised to be more vigilant and continue to support the Ministry of Women Affairs by promptly reporting any case relating to child trafficking, abuse, exploitation, or any other forms of violence against women and children,

"In togetherness we can build a safer and more secure environment for our Children in the State", she said.

Lagos moves to tackle abandoned buildings through coordinated enforcement

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government says it is strengthening inter-agency collaboration to address the growing number of abandoned buildings across the state.

The collaboration seeks to strengthen public safety, promote environmental sanitation and expand access to habitable housing.

The Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Housing, Mr Abdul-Hafis Toriola, said this in a statement issued by the

Deputy Director, Public Affairs of the ministry, Mr Ganiu Lawal, on Wednesday in Lagos.

The statement said that Toriola made the assertion during an inter-agency stakeholders' meeting convened by the ministry on Tuesday at Alausa, Ikeja.

Toriola said the initiative was aimed at ensuring more habitable housing units, promoting sustainable urban development and enforcing existing laws on abandoned properties.

He described abandoned buildings as a complex urban challenge with far-reaching implications for security, environmental health, neighbourhood development and residents' wellbeing.

"Our collective mandate is to protect Lagosians through effective collaboration built on professionalism, accountability and respect for the law.

"Our objective is not simply enforcement; it is to restore safety, improve neighbourhoods, preserve property values and ensure that every community reflects the vision of a Greater Lagos," he said.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **SHAIBU IDRIS EGGAH**, not **IDRIS SHUAIB EGGAH**. Also, my correct date of birth is **24/1/1996**, not **24/1/1994** as was wrongly written on my BVN. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **IRIA JEFFERY**, now wish to be known and called **IRIA MONDAY JEFFERY**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **BEATRICE OGHENERUME ERHURHU**, now wish to be known and called **MRS. BEATRICE ERHIEYOVWE UWADONE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OBIORA NKACHUKWU GODWIN** and **GODWIN NKACHUKWU OBIORA**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known and addressed as **OBIORA NKACHUKWU GODWIN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **QUEEN EGUAIKHIDE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. QUEEN HAUWA AHMED-YUSUF**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

REMOVAL OF MIDDLE NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **GOODLUCK LAWRETTA**, no longer **LAURETTA OMOH GOODLUCK**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MOSES IWU A.**, now wish to be known and addressed as **UZOECHI MOSES ANOCHIRIMONYEANYA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **MRS. IKHELOWA ZULIAT, AHMED ZUWERA, AHMED ZUHAIRA** and **AHMED ZURIATU**, are one and the same person as was wrongly written in some of my documents. Henceforth, I wish to be known and called **MRS. IKHELOWA ZULIAT**.

PUBLIC NOTICE

MISSING TITLE DOCUMENT

The general public is hereby notified that I, **IZIEGBE OMO AMADASUN** is the lawful owner of a piece/Parcel land measuring 50ft by 100ft, situated and lying alone **Alaghdaro Street, Ohoube village, Benin City, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, Edo State**.

The land was documented in a deed of transfer between the seller and **IZIEGBE OMO AMADASUN** and is demarcated by beacon No **NSK/ED/1778/2024**. The Deed of transfer and other attached documents was discovered missing except the survey plan. All efforts to trace it has proven 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 BY: **IZIEGBE OMO**

Court grants Ozekhome permission for 6-week medical trip to UK

ABUJA

An Abuja High Court on Thursday granted Mike Ozekhome permission to travel to the UK for medical reasons for six weeks.

On February 27, the office of the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) arraigned Ozekhome and his co-defend-

ant, Ponfa Useni, on 12 counts of forgery and impersonation, which stemmed from a messy battle over property ownership in the UK.

Ruling on the application for release of Ozekhome's passport, Justice Chizoba Oji ordered that he must return his International passport to the court on or before August 26.

It came to the judge's knowledge on Tuesday that the prosecution had withheld and failed to deposit the defendants' passports as part of the bail conditions the court granted in February.

This prompted the court to order the prosecution to present the passports in court un-failingly on Thursday.

The prosecution, adhering to the court's instruction, produced the international pass-

ports of the defendants.

After the defendants confirmed that the passport produced belonged to him, the judge asked the prosecution counsel, C.L Asonta, to confirm again if there was no objection.

Asonta stated there was no objection but requested a condition: that Ozekhome should submit his international passport "within three working days upon his return."

The court ruled, "having

considered the motion and no objection, I hereby grant the request and temporary release of the first defendant's international passport to enable him go for his medical trip."

Justice Oji held that Ozekhome's six-week request starts from July 9 and ends on August 20.

Justice Oji then adjourned trial until September 28 for continuation.

Ponfa, the second defendant, is the son of the late Lt-Gen. Jeremiah Useni, who was the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) during the military

regime of the late Sani Abacha.

The prosecution in the charge, alleged that the defendants conspired in 2020 and made "a false Nigerian International Passport No. A07535463 with the name Tali Shani.

The prosecution further alleged that Ozekhome helped Ponfa to impersonate Tali Shani in 2020.

EFCC claimed that together, they allegedly created a fake "Irrevocable Power of Attorney" to help Ozekhome claim the property.

They however, denied all the allegations against them.



INAUGURATION OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT:

L-R: Representative of the Minister of Youths Development, Mr Anthony Chuwuka; Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke; President of Air Force Wives Association (NAFOWA), Mrs Ngozi Aneke and representative of the Minister of Women Affairs, Princess Jummai Idonije, during the inauguration of the Chief of Air Staff Youth Empowerment Programme in Abuja on Thursday.

Court affirms Mark-led leadership of ADC, dismisses Abejide's suit

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Thursday affirmed Sen. David Mark-led leadership of the African Democratic Congress (ADC).

Justice Musa Liman, in a judgment, also dismissed the suit filed by Rep Leke Abejide challenging Mark and Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola as national chairman and national secretary of the party for lacking in merit.

Justice Liman upheld the preliminary objections filed by ADC, Chief Ralph Nwosu, Mark and Aregbesola which challenged Abejide's suit.

The judge held that the court lacked the jurisdiction to dabble into the internal affairs of ADC, as the suit was non-justiciable.

He also held that Abejide lacked the legal right to have

instituted the suit, having failed to show to the court that his rights had been violated in any way as a result of the emergence of Mark-led leadership.

He equally held that Abejide, who is a member of House of Representatives, failed to explore the party's internal mechanism for dispute resolution.

Justice Liman also resolved the three issues in the substantive suit in favour of the defendants.

On whether Mark, the former Senate president and Aregbesola, who was former Governor of Osun, emerged as leaders of the party in compliance with the enabling laws, the judge resolved this against Abejide, the plaintiff in the suit.

He held that the handing over of the leadership of the party by Nwosu to Mark did not violate the provisions of

the party's constitution.

The judge agreed that the disputed July 2, 2025 meeting of the party was a stakeholder meeting which preceded the party's National Executive Council (NEC) meeting held on July 29, 2025, that produced Mark and Aregbesola as party's leaders which was monitored by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Justice Liman, therefore, declared that the emergence of Mark and Aregbesola as leaders of ADC was valid and in accordance with the constitution, the Electoral Act, 2026 and party's law.

The judge consequently awarded a fine of N2 million each in favour of all the defendants which shall be paid by Abejide.

He also awarded a N10 million fine against Abejide's lawyer in compliance with the Electoral Act, 2026.

Abejide had instituted the

led leadership of the ADC.

In the originating summons, marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1637/2025 filed on Feb. 15 by Idris, the law-maker sued ADC, Ralph Nwosu, Mark, Aregbesola and INEC as 1st to 5th defendants respectively.

Nwosu was the former national chairman of ADC who stepped down for Mark, the ex-Senate president.

Abejide, among the eight reliefs, sought an order nullifying Nwosu's handover or transfer of ADC's leadership to Mark and Aregbesola as interim national chairman and interim national secretary respectively on July 2, 2025, at Shehu Musa Yar'adua Centre, Abuja for being illegal, unlawful, null and void.

He sought an order of perpetual injunction restraining Mark and Aregbesola from parading themselves as leaders of the party "as their purported appointment, selection or election was unlawful, illegal, null and void."

Sales rep docked for allegedly stealing 105 planks of wood from employer

ABUJA

A sales representative, Emmanuel Effiong of Kubwa, was on Thursday docked in a Magistrates' Court in Duste, Abuja for allegedly stealing 105 planks of wood from his employer.

The police charged Effiong with criminal breach of trust, theft and cheating.

The defendant however pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecution Counsel, Juliana Atinko, told the court that the defendant committed the offence in February.

She said that Mr Ogbonna Chijioke, the shop owner reported the matter at the Kubwa Police station.

The police said the defendant was employed in Chijioke's shop where he sells building materials

as a sales representative.

She said that the defendant stole 105 planks of wood and other items all worth N850,000 and sold them to some unknown persons.

The prosecutor informed the court that during Police investigation and interrogation, the defendant could not give a satisfactory account of his actions.

The offence, she said, contravene the provisions of sections 312, 288 and 321 of the Penal Code Law.

Senior Magistrate Ibrahim Alkali admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of one million Naira and two sureties in like sum.

He ordered that the sureties must have a reliable means of identification and must reside within the jurisdiction of the court.

The senior magistrate adjourned the matter until Aug. 3 for hearing.

Court declines to grant bail to suspected terrorist, oil bunkering kingpin

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday refused to admit an alleged terrorist and oil bunkering suspect, Ugochukwu Lucky Ibekwe, to bail.

Justice Salim Ibrahim, in a ruling on Ibekwe's application, held that though the defendant was said to be a kidney transplant patient, nothing was placed before the court to show that he cannot receive medical attention while in custody during trial.

According to Justice Ibrahim, upon considering the nature of the offence on the charge sheet before this court, I am then persuaded by the grounds given by the complainant/respondent for this court not to exercise the discretion to grant bail as prayed by the defendant/applicant.

"I have also carefully considered the exhibits before the court, particularly Exhibit 6 in the further and better affidavit dated 13th June, 2026, which is a medical report from ZE-

NITH MEDICAL AND KIDNEY CENTRE signed by one Dr Ade E. Faponle.

"It is therefore my opinion that even though the defendant requires medical attention, this can be done while in custody during his trial.

"This application is consequently refused and is hereby struck out," the judge ruled.

Justice Ibrahim, however, ordered the Federal Government to ensure that Ibekwe is afforded adequate medical care through his medical consultant and be given unrestricted access to his lawyer, Damian Okoro, SAN, and his family members in view of the nature of his ailment.

After the ruling, counsel who appeared for the Federal Government, Victor Alma, informed the court of a motion on notice filed by the Director of Public Prosecutions for the Federation, Rotimi Oyedepo, SAN.

Alma said the motion sought an order directing the court to be vacated during Ibekwe's trial and for witness protection.

Four Remanded in Custodial Centre Over Alleged Murder

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

Four persons have been remanded in a custodial centre by a court in Benin City over alleged conspiracy and murder.

The defendants are Believe

Uyiegu, Osasere Uyie, Monday Amadasun, and Osugie Osaro.

The Police Prosecutor, Dike Divine, Esq., informed the court that the defendants allegedly conspired on February 26, 2026, at Green Park School, opposite College Road, Benin City, to commit the offence of

murder, an offence punishable under the relevant laws.

The prosecutor further alleged that on the same date, at the same time and place, the defendants unlawfully caused the death of one Omorotionwan Okunmafiyi, an offence punishable under the Criminal

Law of Edo State, 2022.

The four defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges when they were read to them.

Following their pleas, the court ordered that they be remanded in a custodial centre and adjourned the case to a later date for the commencement of hearing.

NEWS

Man docked for alleged cyberbullying, kidnap threats

ABUJA

A 19-year-old man, Aliyu Saidu, was on Thursday docked in a Life Camp Chief Magistrates' Court in Abuja for allegedly sending offensive messages to a woman and threatening to kidnap her. The police charged Saidu, who lives in Dutse Alhaji,

Abuja with criminal intimidation, harassment, cyber stalking, cyberbullying and extortion.

The defendant however, pleaded not guilty to the charge. The Prosecution Counsel, Charity Nwachukwu, told the court that the complainant, Miss Gladys Raza, of Brains and Hammer City Estate Karmo

Abuja, reported the matter at the Karmo Police Station on June 8.

Nwachukwu said on June 6, the defendant sent grossly offensive messages to the complainant's phone.

She said the defendant told the complainant to send N2 million, one brand new Bajaj motorcycle, 16 bottles of Co-dein, 20 packs of Tramadol and

one carton of Condom.

Nwachukwu said the defendant further threatened to kidnap the complainant and her children if she failed to comply with his requests.

The police said that the defendant's action placed the complainant and her family in fear.

Nwachukwu said during police investigation the defendant

made a confessional statement, admitting that the messages were sent from his phone.

The prosecutor informed the court that the offence contravened the provisions of Sections 18, 4, 14 and 46 of Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 and Section 24 and 58 of Cyber Crime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc)

Act 2015.

The Chief Magistrate, Mr Musa Jobbo, admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N500,000 with one surety in like sum.

Jobbo ordered that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction and adjourned the case until July 27 for hearing.

Anambra communities decry devastating erosion, urge state, FG's intervention

AWKA

The residents of Enugwu-Agidi and Ogidi communities in Njikoka and Idemili North Local Government Areas of Anambra have appealed to both the state and Federal Governments to intervene in the worsening and life-threatening erosion in the area.

They made the appeal during an assessment visit by officials of the Anambra State Erosion, Watershed and Climate Change Agency (ANSEWCCA) to flood and erosion-affected communities in the two local government areas.

At Enugwu-Agidi, residents said the erosion had severely affected Mgbachala and Irugaga areas in Ifite Village, making movement difficult during the rainy season.

Speaking, Mr Benjamin Ejnaga, Vice Chairman of Ifite village, said the worsening land degradation could eventually displace residents, if urgent remedial measures were not taken.

"During rainy seasons, it becomes very difficult to pass

through the affected areas.

"If nothing is done, the erosion will continue to worsen and may force people to abandon their ancestral lands," Ejnaga said.

The ANSEWCCA delegation also visited the Iyenu University Teaching Hospital, being threatened by erosion which has destroyed parts of the hospital's perimeter fence, 10 buildings, including male and female hostels and administrative blocks of the institution.

Mr Humphrey Udechukwu, Legal Secretary of the Diocese on the Niger, told the delegation that the erosion was caused by illegal stone mining activities behind the institution by unauthorised persons.

Udechukwu said the mining activities had continued despite being reported to the appropriate authorities.

He said: "We urge the state government to stop the illegal miners and address the damage already caused, as the lives of students, lecturers, management staff and other residents are at risk."

Experts seek stronger legal framework for handling repentant terrorists

ABUJA

Some defence experts have called for reforms to Nigeria's deradicalisation and reintegration programme, saying stronger legal safeguards, community participation and support for victims are essential to achieving lasting peace.

The experts, Dr Sani Abubakar, a military scholar and defence expert, and Dr Steve Okwori, a defence analyst, made the call during interviews with newsmen in Abuja on Thursday.

Abubakar said that it was imperative to ensure a stronger legal and institutional framework to improve the effectiveness of Operation Safe Corridor and other deradicalisation programmes.

He noted that though the deradicalisation programme had recorded measurable successes by encouraging defections and rehabilitating low-risk former combatants, it however required broader government ownership to achieve lasting impact.

According to him, the programme should move beyond military custodianship to involving justice institutions, psychologists, traditional rulers and affected communities in the reintegration process.

He identified weak post-reintegration monitoring, inadequate livelihood support and limited community acceptance as major challenges undermining the programme's long-term effectiveness.

He also advocated a victims-first approach that balanced rehabilitation with justice through community reconciliation, stronger vetting mechanisms and sustained support for victims of insurgency.

"Reintegration should be conditional on good behaviour, community acceptance and effective monitoring to reduce the risk of recidivism," he said.

Similarly, Okwori said the operation had encouraged defections and generated valuable intelligence for security agencies in spite of its mixed long-term outcomes.



TSE-TSE FLY SURVEILLANCE:

Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD) Tse-tse fly surveillance and control team, setting up a tsetse fly trap near Micheal Okpara University of Agriculture's Cattle Shed, in Abia State on Wednesday.

Flooding: Bayelsa Govt, NGO begin campaign against blockade of drains

YENAGOA

The Bayelsa Government and the Environmental Conservation, Agriculture and Rural Development (ECARD), an NGO, have begun a campaign against blockade of natural water channels in the state.

Chief Alagoa Morris, Technical Adviser on Environment to Bayelsa Governor, made the disclosure at an advocacy meeting with the Directorate of Flood and Erosion Control in Yenagoa.

Morris said that his office would work with ECARD to deepen the knowledge of ef-

fective water channels clearing across the state.

The governor's aide called for a legislation to protect the state directorate of flood and erosion control from unnecessary policy changes by future administrations.

He urged the Bayelsa House of Assembly to empower the directorate to remove structures that blocked natural water channels.

Morris commended the directorate for its commitment towards clearing natural water channels and creeks, saying, "your efforts have enhanced free flow of rainwater"

"There is need to collaborate

with relevant bodies to construct elevated shelters for residents displaced by flooding.

"Flood control projects should be extended beyond Yenagoa to other flood-prone local government areas the state," he said.

Chief Omuso Wilson, the Director, Flood and Erosion Control, identified blockade of natural water channels as a major cause of flooding in the state.

Wilson said that effective clearing and maintenance of natural waterways remained critical to the campaign against flooding.

"We thought that Yenagoa had only about nine natural wa-

ter channels, but with modern technology, about 54 additional channels have been identified.

"The Epie Creek is Yenagoa City's major natural drainage route, it is worrisome that blockages have reduced its capacity to discharge floodwaters," he said.

The ECARD Programme Manager, Mr Henry Adike, said that Bayelsa's fragile ecosystem required careful environmental planning and sustained stakeholder collaboration.

Adike expressed the need for long-term solutions to the challenge of flooding in the interest of the affected communities.

He urged the authorities to identify and preserve Bayelsa's natural drainage networks and its biodiversity.

ASUU urges Kebbi, Katsina, Zamfara to implement agreement, threaten strike

SOKOTO

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Sokoto Zone, has urged Kebbi, Katsina and Zamfara state governments to implement the 2025 Federal Government/ASUU Agreement to avoid industrial action.

The Zonal Coordinator, Prof. Abubakar Sabo, made the call in Sokoto, saying that the union would embark on an indefinite strike in the five state-owned universities, if its demands were not met.

He said Kebbi was the worst state affected, as Earned Academic Allowances (EAA) from 2014 to date for Academic Staff of Abdullahi Fodiyo University of Science and Technology, Aliero (AFUSTA) remained unpaid.

Other institutions were Umaru Musa Yaradu'a University Katsina (UMYUK), and Zamfara State University, Talata Mafara (ZAMSUT).

"It may interest you to know that despite the public presentation of the Agreement in January 2026 and notifying our various

State Governments and University Management, the matter did not yield any positive response.

"(This is) creating room for bureaucratic delays, inconsistencies and lack of willingness to implement the agreement.

"The NEC and Zone observes that several State universities are yet to fully implement the salary components of the Agreement, including the mainstreaming of Consolidated Academic Tool Allowances (CATA), Earned Academic Allowances (EAA), and Professorial Allowances into the month-

ly salary structure as agreed.

"We wish to bring to your notice that several State Universities have enjoyed the implementation of the 2025 ASUU-FGN agreement namely: SAZU, EKSU, BOUESTI, UNIOSUN, BSU, OOU, SSU and SSUES among others," Sabo said.

Sabo urged the governments of these three affected states to emulate Sokoto State Government and urgently do the needful by implementing the agreement to avert the unpalatable consequences of an eventual strike.



LEGAL RUDIMENTS

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Statutory marriage or Marriage under the Act

Most people often describe or call this type of marriage as “Court marriage, Church or Registry marriages”. They are not often too far away from its description as it is not defined by the Marriage Act or the Matrimonial Causes Act. Recently, this type of marriage has become the cynosure and admiration of most spouses in our society with little or no knowledge that marriage is for better for worse.

There is nothing like Court marriage or Church marriage but Statutory marriage or Marriage under the Act which commences at the Marriage Registry office with only one witness signing for each of the spouse. After the contraction of the marriage, the couples will be issued a Registrar's Certificate and the marriage celebrated at a Licensed place recognised by the Minister of Interior before it can be regarded as a valid marriage.

Nevertheless, the church marriage has no force in Law as it only gives blessing to customary marriage. The mere celebration of marriage in the church does not connote the flavour to a Statutory marriage, as the describes it in the case of *Nwangwu v Uban*.

In the last edition, we examined the three legal types of valid marriage in Nigeria to include statutory, customary or traditional and the Islamic marriage. The legal framework of these types of marriage governs the different areas of the society, family law, inheritance and succession. In today's assertion, we are mainly going to be concerned with the Statutory Marriage or Marriage under the Act, its meaning, implication, dissolution, application of the law among others that may not be exhaustible in this edition.

However, Section 18 of the Interpretation Act, Cap 123, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2024 describe a monogamous marriage as a “marriage which is recognised by the law of the place where it was contracted as a voluntary union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others during the continuance of the marriage”. It is the voluntary union for life of one man, one woman to the exclu-



A COUPLE

sion of all others, *Hyde v Hyde*.

To enter into the contract of Statutory marriage, the couples must first of all apply to the Marriage Registry where at least one of the parties must have been resident within the district where the marriage will be celebrated for a minimum period of 15 days. Subsequently, the Registrar enters the notice into marriage book and a notice of the marriage will be placed on the Notice Board outside or at the door of the Registrar's office for a period of 21 days.

We must also be guided that there are criteria to be fulfilled by the couples before reaching the peak of the celebration of the marriage, such as consent, attaining the marriageable age of not less than 21 years old which varies from state to state and if the bride is a minor, the consent of the parent or guardian must be sought, and none of them must be validly married to another person, among others.

It must be noted however that where a caveat is entered into at the Notice of Marriage displayed on the board by a caveator or caveatrix with the word “FORBIDDEN” at the front

of the names of the couples, meaning there are issues that must be resolved or dismissed at the High Court Judge of a State or the Court in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja before the caveat will be granted the permission to contract the marriage, but when there are issues and the party is not able to clear it or the Judge is not satisfied with his submission, the Judge will not grant the marriage, *Awobokun v Adeyemi*.

Meanwhile, the Minister's license gives an authority to either the Registrar or a recognised Minister of a licensed place of worship to celebrate a marriage. The Minister of Interior must be satisfied that there is no iota of impediment in law to the celebration of the marriage in terms of capacity, consent, age among others.

The Statutory marriage must also be devoid from the degree of consanguinity and affinity, that is relation by blood and marriage of the spouses. Most people however, may also want to convert their customary marriage to statutory marriage, the parties must consciously take absolute step to adopt the procedure in the Marriage Act after

the divorce of the previous marriage.

Also, the celebration of marriage as enshrined in Section 27 Marriage Act can take place in either of two venues viz: the Marriage Registry, or in a licensed place of worship. At the Registry, the Registrar is the sole person that celebrates marriages between the hours of 10am and 4pm, *Ijioma v Ijioma*, while Section 13 Marriage Act states that marriage celebrated at a Licensed place must be within between the hours of 8 O' Clock in the forenoon and 6 O' Clock in the afternoon.

The Registrar request to the couples to take the vow which is a major implication of a Statutory marriage that cannot be done in proxy and that any breach of the enterprise while the marriage is still subsisting while alive amounts to bigamy an offence punishable by law under Section 370 of the criminal code.

Furthermore, the celebration of marriage abroad in a Nigerian Diplomatic Mission is encapsulated in Section 50 Marriage Act which empowers every Nigerian Diplomatic or Consular Officer of the rank of Secretary or

above in Nigerian Embassy abroad shall be as a marriage officer in the country to which they are accredited.

The couples have no need to go to a Foreign Registry to contract his marriage in as much as he or she is a Nigerian. Such marriage is valid in Law whether in Nigeria or the country the marriage was contracted. There is no need for a special place for the celebration of the marriage as it can take place at the consular's office where the marriage was performed.

It must be understood that Section 13 Marriage Act is the license issued by the Federal Minister of Interior. However, the Registrar's Certificate is a condition precedent to a marriage whether in the Marriage Registry or Licensed place of worship. The only exception is where a license is issued under Section 13.

Before we round up this week, we shall quickly bring to our notice that Section 47 Marriage Act states that once you are married under the Act, it will be illegal and punishable under the law to further marry another person under the Statutory Act or the customary law, *Chukwuma v Chukwuma*.

Similarly, Section 46 Marriage Act says a person married under the Native Law and Custom cannot marry any other person under the Act except the one he or she is married to under native law and custom.

These types of marriages are considered as valid which have the full weight and implementation of the law in Nigeria. The institution of marriage is a serious business, not that of a boyfriend and girlfriend because both families have to be involved, as well as the entire society socio – milieu you evolve that will keep watching your other side.

We will try as much as possible to bring the other side of marriage which deals on the divorce, process, service of petition, defence, jurisdiction, judgment on marriage institution. No matter the cause of impatience and imbued anger, marriage remains the sweetest honey in life if there is mutual understanding, tolerance, patience among others. Thank you, see you next week.

The ‘logo’ of controversy, What does the law says

As the nation prepares for the 2027 general elections, political parties have planned out their strategies on how their candidates can emerge winners of the game, particularly on who becomes the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Party's candidates for various seats are trembly working hard to build sympathy on the minds of the electorates who have the will to give their votes to those that will lead them for next four years.

An Indian author, Angadipuram Appadorai (1902-1990) in his book, *The Substance of Politics* described the game politics as “war and crisis” meaning that political association is imbued with imbrolios arising from internal wrangling which of course are usually resolved by leaders of the party or through legal adjudication.

The author, an eminent Indian Political Scientist, historian and International Relations Scholar, did not only see politics as an association of people to wrestle power in the political sphere of the world but also arrived

at a strategy candidates must employ to outsmart their opponents who are also in the struggle to emerge.

In the case of Africa, particularly in the countries that pretends to practice representative government through the ballot system are yet to understand the game when oppositions are being given the showdown whenever they offer the gauntlet. This is thus far from other political analyst like that of the aforementioned author, when they postulated that power should reside with the people who gave out the trust to manage.

The problem with the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) may not be far from the candidates who were recently absolved into the party. The party is said to have gain more trends and popularity with the spread of their logo sign allegedly stolen from Peace Movement Party, (PMP). This issue is being contested at the Federal High Court and Appeal Court sitting in the Confluence Town, Lokoja.

Similarly, the All Democratic Alliance have also approached the court



Is this the 'logo' of controversy?

to urge the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to de-register the NDC from its registration portal as it failed to complete with INEC's registration requirement.

Earlier, the All Progressive Congress (APC), had also gone to court to seek the removal of NDC's logo as it was similar to its own. However, the legal battle had been put aside.

The question is what is in the logo? We have seen various logo in political parties

with all having different signs, colour or shape from each other but this particular one has become a logo of controversy that will be genuinely resolved by the court. This controversial logo was a sign used by the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo that depict a sign of victory which many people have adopted as the sign of being victorious, but it has turned the sign of crisis or controversy.

On the 10th of December, 2025, the Federal High Court presided over by Justice Isah Dashen adjudicated on the controversy and gave the NDC victory to carry out its registration and filed all its requirement into INEC's official portal.

On 26th June 2026, the same court headed by Justice Dashen overturned its previous ruling on NDC that the earlier judgment of December 2025 affected the rights of the Peace Movement Party (PMP), which was not included in the case despite claiming ownership of the logo used by the NDC.

The court has ordered all parties to return to the position they occupied before the judgment of December

10, 2025, and directed the claimants to join all necessary parties to ensure the issues in dispute are effectually and completely determined. It has also urged INEC not to recognize the party nor the issuance of certificate of registration, its inclusion in its record and appearance on ballot papers arising from that judgment should be withdrawn pending the final determination of the substantive suit.

Now, what does the law says, when a judgment had been delivered, the Judge now becomes a “functus officio” - a latin word meaning that the Judge legal authority over a matter is terminated and it cannot alter, rehear or modify its decision. Any other issue arising from that judgment will be instituted at the higher court of jurisdiction.

My friend Anthony in Ikorodu, Lagos State asked me if I filed the hands of Esau and heard the voice of Jacob in this matter? I answered in the negative that we are just onlookers to see how the eagle will fall at the market place. He giggled and shouted “One Nigeria”.

ACCI urges SMEs to adopt mediation rules for cheaper, faster dispute resolution

ABUJA

The Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), has urged Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to adopt its Mediation Rules 2019 for faster, cheaper debt recovery and commercial dispute resolution.

Mrs Hauwa Usman, Registrar-General, Nigerian Chambers of Commerce Dispute Resolution Centre (NCCDRC/ACCI), gave the advice in an interview with newsmen on Thursday in Abuja.

She said the Mediation Rules 2019 of the NCCDRC/ACCI

was designed to provide a swift, cost-effective and alternative dispute resolution and the rules outline a structured framework for resolving disputes out of court.

Usman said that the mediation rules offered affordable route for small business disputes, adding that the rule also provided a fast, confidential and legally enforceable pathway.

The registrar-general described the rules as an underutilised resource for the SMEs seeking to recover debts, resolve supply chain disagreements and enforce commercial obligations without resorting to costly and protracted litigation.

"The rules also provide the pathway to resolve commercial disputes that most Nigerian businesses currently abandon rather than pursue in court.

"A significant number of commercial disputes involving modest sums, ranging from unpaid invoices and service fee disagreements to tenancy and supply disputes abound in our society.

"These disputes go unresolved in Nigeria each year because the parties involved consider the cost and duration of court proceedings disproportionate to the amounts at stake.

"There is a widespread but

mistaken belief that justice is only accessible to those with large claims and deep pockets. Our mediation rules were designed precisely to dismantle that assumption," she said.

Usman explained that a party could initiate mediation proceedings at the NCCDRC by sending a simple written request.

She said that such requests could be through email, setting out the nature of the dispute and the relief sought.

According to her, there are no complex filings, no mandatory legal representation at commencement and no prohibitive upfront costs.



AFRICA CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA:

Chairman AfCFTA Council of Ministers Responsible for Trade and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Jumoke Oduwole (M); Secretary-General, AfCFTA, Wamkele Mene (2nd L); Director, Coordinator and Programmes, AfCFTA, Dr Mohammed Saleh (L); Senior Legal Council, AfCFTA, Marie-Clarisse Avore-Bekale, and others, during the 18th meeting of Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Council of Minister of Trade in Abuja.

Kano launches police duty solicitor scheme to strengthen justice system

KANO

The Kano State Government has commenced the implementation of the Police Duty Solicitor Scheme (PDSS) aimed at strengthening criminal justice administration and improving access to legal representation for suspects.

The Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Abdulkarim Kabiru-Maude, made this known during the Police Duty Solicitor Scheme On-Boarding Session held in Kano.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Thursday by the Senior Special Assistant on Media to the Attorney-General, Dr Abubakar Tijjani-Ibrahim.

According to the statement, the onboarding session was organised by the Kano State Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee (ACJMC) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Kabiru-Maude described the initiative as a landmark reform that would strengthen

the administration of criminal justice and improve access to justice for residents of the state.

He said that although the scheme was conceived by the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACON), its implementation by the ACJMC in Kano reflected the committee's commitment to translating justice reforms into practical outcomes.

The Commissioner said the scheme will provide suspects with early access to legal representation at police stations, safeguard their constitutional rights, reduce unnecessary detention and help decongest custodial facilities.

He added that the initiative would also facilitate timely referrals for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, promote compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Law and strengthen collaboration among justice sector institutions.

"The scheme will promote a more efficient, transparent and accountable justice system in Kano State," he said.

Kabiru-Maude reaffirmed the commitment of the Ministry of

Justice to supporting reforms and strategic partnerships that promote access to justice, uphold the rule of law and strengthen public confidence in the justice system.

The statement added that the event attracted stakeholders from across the justice sector, including the Commissioner of Police and representative of the

Chief Judge of Kano State.

Others were officials of the Ministry of Justice, representatives of the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria, the Nigerian Bar Association, development partners, civil society organisations and the 10 Police Duty Solicitors selected for the pilot phase of the programme.

LASCAFAN targets 500 youths for aquaculture training in 2026

BIRNIN KEBBI

Lagos: The Lagos State Catfish and Allied Farmers Association of Nigeria (LASCAFAN) says it aims to train and equip 500 youths in aquaculture and fish farming before the end of 2026.

The LASCAFAN Chairman, Mr Olatoye Fajimi, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Thursday in Lagos.

Fajimi said the association had intensified efforts over the past three years to attract young people into aquaculture

to address the ageing workforce in the sector.

"As a business and as an association, we have prioritised training young people in aquaculture because we have identified a significant skills gap among the younger generation.

"Currently, about 70 per cent of fish farmers are between 50 and 60 years old. We are therefore encouraging more young people to join the sector.

"We have partnered with several training institutions to provide practical, hands-on

Police confirm 18 killed in Niger land dispute

MINNA

The Police Command in Niger has confirmed the killing of 18 people following a land dispute in Angwan-Baago community, Katak District, Rafi Local Government Area of the state.

The Police Public Relations Officer, SP Wasiu Abiodun, disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen on Thursday.

He said the crisis, which began on Monday, escalated on Wednesday.

According to him, suspected armed men, on Monday, shot dead a 25-year-old man, Ibrahim Musa, in Godoro village.

He said that some local vigilantes, popularly known as Yansakai, in a suspected reprisal attack, blocked the road and killed a 28-year-old man, Bashir Mazi.

Abiodun explained that the initial attack, which was linked to a lingering land dispute between two tribes in the area, escalated into further violence, resulting in the deaths of 16 additional people and bringing the total death toll to 18.

"On 30/6/2026 at about 2 p.m., a report was received from the Katak District area of Rafi LGA indicating that on 29/6/2026 at about 11:30 p.m. at Godoro village, suspected armed men fired gunshots at one Ibrahim Musa, 25, who died on the spot.

"As a result, a group of Yansakai blocked the road and killed one Bashir Mazi, 28. This attack was allegedly linked to a lingering land crisis between two tribes in the area," the police spokesperson said.

He added: "Furthermore, on 1/7/2026 at about 10 p.m., a report was received indicating that 15 persons were burnt to death in a two-bedroom flat at Angwan-Baago via Godoro village, while one other person was also killed at another location, bringing the death toll to 18."

Abiodun said a reconciliation committee led by officials of the local government council was working with security agencies to address the crisis.

He added that joint security operatives comprising the Police and the military had been deployed to the area to restore peace.

APC unity critical to reclaiming Oyo in 2027, says Alli

IBADAN

Governorship Candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Oyo State, Sen. Sharafadeen Alli, has appealed to aggrieved members and stakeholders of the party to embrace reconciliation and unity ahead of the 2027 election.

Alli, in a statement in Ibadan, urged aggrieved groups and members, after APC primaries, to place the collective interest of the party above personal ambitions.

The governorship candidate noted that the APC could not afford to remain in opposition in Oyo state after eight years.

He stressed that unity remained the only pathway to electoral victory.

According to him, all party members must close ranks and work together to reclaim pow-

er from the Gov. Seyi Makinde-led administration in the state.

"All contests naturally produce winners and aggrieved parties, but at a critical time like this, the greater interest of our party and the future of Oyo state must supersede personal grievances.

"We cannot continue to remain in opposition when our people are yearning for purposeful leadership, inclusive governance and sustainable development.

"This is the time to unite our structures and work collectively to reclaim Oyo state for the APC," he said.

Alli said that the forthcoming election was beyond individual aspirations, describing it as a collective effort to secure victory for President Bola Tinubu, APC candidates and progressive governance in the state.

He stressed that reconciliation within the party must be genuine, sincere and rooted in fairness, mutual respect and commitment to progressive ideals.

The APC candidate also assured party leaders, youths, women and supporters that his administration, if elected, would be inclusive and accommodating to all interests within the party.

"I extend my hands of fellowship to everyone. There is no victor and no vanquished in this struggle.

"What matters most now is the victory of our great party and the liberation of Oyo State.

"I want to work with all stakeholders to build a greater Oyo State where development, security and prosperity will flourish for all citizens," he said.

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —



Cultural protectionism or empowerment

If we look at history in regards to the effects of how we have been able to protect and preserve it, I am sure if we do this against the backdrop of the Westerners, we would then realise that we have deliberately and intentionally deviated from the principles and norms of preserving our cultural philosophy which has in adversely affected how we view protectionism. Which part of our cultural heritage is protected? From the Nok culture to the bronze casting, ivory carvings, wood carvings, sculptures of the Benin Empire, which once stretched from Ogbé to Ghana, but now squeezed into a minority state called Edo State. Where are its once prided moats compared only to the walls of China?

If we again take this same path to the film industry, we can only laugh or cry at our high level of ignorance about how the culture of a people is preserved and protected. I am sure

many were not lucky to watch the films of Eddie Ugbomah, Ola Balogun and their colleagues of their own era. If not for anything else but academic purposes, how can other generations watch these films, critically analyse them, appreciate and theorise their creative abilities in relation to filmmaking in their era and then compare to further eras after that?

If a child's plan is to build a castle with sand and at the point people are beginning to notice his efforts, the sand castle is brought down, how do you appreciate the child's creativity or ability to make something out of nothing? I am sure if we do a little maths on the years gone by since "Living in Bondage" was shot as a movie, many parents were not born. I was not surprised when our discussion on the film "Rattlesnake" took a different route when a contributor was talking about the same film from the one shot

again only recently. He even argued, from his own perspective, that we do not create time for research, when he was asked which of the "Rattlesnake" films he was referring to. He became quiet after he used google and therein realised he just faltered.

Today, films made by filmmakers and enjoyed by the film lovers, breaking box offices, like well trained athletes on the track are only preparing to run off the tracks into oblivion if necessary steps are not deliberately and intentionally taken to preserve and protect them. We are a people who are smart at distorting facts and history, taking pages off books written in 1920 and replacing the same pages with the history of 2025. Moreover, we conduct research about ourselves and our culture from books in London libraries, written by white people just to authenticate ourselves and our cultural identity and philosophy. What an irony. If

we must sustain the uniqueness of our organic film culture, we must begin to see the need to digitally preserve and protect our film culture.

Is it not sad that many Nigerian scholars think that the Nigeria film industry actually kick-started with "Living in Bondage"? It took a great fight, argument, research before the language changed from the era film started in Nigeria to either the coinage of the word Nollywood or most commercially successful film. Does that mean films shot in the era of Eddie Ugbomah, Ola Balogun and their contemporaries were not commercially successful? What parameters did these persons used to measure "successful"? If Nigeria as a nation was intentional about preservation and protection, all the plenty of times used in debating how to define when the Nigeria film industry started would never have surfaced. It

won't be long before the generation of Zoomers to Betas would say the Nigerian film industry started in their era and probably make references to the most successful movies in the cinema box offices. It would certainly end in a chain circle until we ultimately do the right things, and if we are slow to make it happen, so much water would have rushed past before the bridge of preservation and protection is built. The form of preservation and protectionism I am dealing with here is proper record keeping of all our creative works for future generations to access, evaluate, appreciate and build upon as a form of advancement in defining a firm cultural philosophy for Nigeria. We must know that if we do not make a shift in strategy, the Nigeria film industry may end up all dressed with nowhere to go, but simply idling in a driveway while the rest of the world's cinema speeds pass us.

Edo State Tourism Agency unveils plans to strengthen arts and culture sector

RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

The Edo State Tourism Agency launched its first-ever maiden Fashion Show to boost tourism and the creative economy of the state.

The agency has reaffirmed its commitment to developing tourism, arts, and culture in the state to drive economic growth.

Speaking at the event, Director General Vivian Elabor said they are working to reposition Edo State as a leading tourism and creative destination in Nigeria and across Africa.

She also noted that the agency has remained committed to laying a solid foundation for a vibrant tourism industry by successfully developing the

Edo State Tourism Calendar, which will run from January to December, covering activities ranging from festivals, carnivals, events, and music shows involving teaming youths and stakeholders in the creative industry.

She further stated that the agency has established tourism clubs across secondary schools to nurture future ambassadors of Edo State and developed a prototype ICT tourism portal to digitally showcase the state's tourist attractions.

She added that the agency has also commenced the Edo State Road Cleaning Project as part of efforts to preserve the state's historical assets.

Lady Vivian Elabor extended an invitation to investors, financial in-

stitutions, members of the organised private sector, and the Edo diaspora, stating that Edo State is open for business and urging them to collaborate in unlocking the enormous opportunities in tourism, hospitality, fashion, entertainment, arts, and culture.

She ended her speech by appreciating sponsors, exhibitors, development partners, media representatives, members of the organising committee, and every stakeholder whose dedication contributed to the success of the event, thanking them for their support. She stressed that every investment in creativity is an effort to preserve the economy and cultural heritage of Edo people, and Nigeria in general.



ArtsWorld

with Francis Odupute
08023680030

Cultural heritage and national identity

RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

The identity of our country lies in its culture and traditions which have been preserved for many generations till now.

Our cultural heritage refers to the total way of life of our people, including beliefs, languages, customs, arts, monuments, festivals, and historical sites passed down from generation to generation. This includes buildings, artefacts, heritage sites, festivals, oral traditions, dances, rituals, and beliefs.

Before colonial rule, Nigeria had diverse ethnic civilisations such as:

The Nok culture - which is one of the oldest known civilisations in West Africa. It was famous for its terracotta sculptures.

The Benin Kingdom - known for bronze casting and a sophisticated governance system.

The Oyo Empire - known for its highly organized political and military structure.

The Hausa-Fulani emirates - Islam-

ic governance and scholarly tradition.

Each of these civilizations had strong traditional religions and ancestral worship, indigenous political systems, rich oral storytelling traditions, festivals tied to agriculture, gods, and worship.

During the British colonial rule, western education and Christianity were introduced. Some traditional practices were discouraged or modified, and indigenous governance systems were weakened. However, cultural identity remained strong through resistance and preservation of festivals and customs.

From independence till now, many things have changed, from revival and promotion of indigenous culture to government recognition of cultural festivals and heritage sites, tourism development around cultural landmarks, global recognition of Nigerian music, fashion and film, in creating cultural blending while maintaining ethnic diversity.

Nigeria's cultural heritage has shaped its national identity by its cul-

tural diversity which includes over 250 ethnic groups. This cultural heritage contributes by promoting unity in diversity, strengthening national pride, preserving history, influencing governance and leadership, boosting tourism and the economy.

There are many heritage sites in Nigeria which include:

Sukur Cultural Landscape - This is Nigeria's first UNESCO world heritage site, inscribed in 1999. It is famous for its ancient terraced fields, traditional settlements, and the palace of the Hidi (traditional ruler).

Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove - inscribed in 2005, one of the last remaining sacred forests of the Yoruba people and an important center of traditional worship.

Benin Moat - one of the largest man-made earthworks in the world, symbolizing the power of the Benin kingdom.

National Museum Lagos - preserves Nigerian artifacts such as Nok terracotta and Benin bronzes.

All these heritage sites preserve historical memory, educate younger generations, reinforce cultural pride and continuity. They also show Nigeria's ancient civilisations to the world.

There are several customs and traditions in Nigeria:

Marriage rites - where the men are expected to pay bride price and also come for introduction before marriage or during the process of marriage. This tradition is practiced by most tribes in Nigeria, just in different ways. In some tribes some men are given a list of things for the bride price while in some tribes they are just expected to pay money. This tradition has existed since the time of our forefathers, because the lady is seen as a jewel of the family.

Naming ceremonies - This happens when a child is born and is being given a name. This custom is to celebrate the birth of a child and also to give names to the newborn baby into the new world.

Kingship Coronations - This event happens when the throne has been

empty, or when a king passes away and a new person is being appointed to take over and rule the community, village, or city.

Respect for elders and ancestral worship - This is when they give respect to the gods of their land, and sometimes honouring an elder for his service and diligence.

Traditional dress - These are attires that represent one's culture, tradition, town, or village. Examples include: Agbada for Yoruba men and buba and wrapper for the women. Other tribes use kaftan, ipele, Isiagu etc.

All these play a role in Nigeria's identity because they maintain moral values and social order, they strengthen family and community bonds, they preserve ethnic identity within national unity. Example: when a Yoruba man wears agbada in Igbo land, people will immediately know that he is Yoruba.

All these are not just our culture and traditions; they are our identity, who we are, and it cannot be easily erased. Generations may change, but our identity does not easily change.

There are several cultural festivals in Nigeria, some of which include:

Argungu Fishing Festival - This festival is celebrated by the Hausa people, it symbolises unity, fishing tradition, and harvest celebration.

Osun-Osogbo Festival - This festival is dedicated to the river goddess Osun and it reflects Yoruba spiritual and cultural preservation.

Eyo Festival - known as the "Adamu Orisha Play", celebrated by royalty and ancestral spirits.

New Yam Festival - performed by the Igbo people in Igboland. This marks a harvest season and thanksgiving to deities.

These festivals promote unity among ethnic groups, attract tourism and cultural exchange, preserve traditional beliefs and practices, and strengthen community belonging. Nigeria's cultural heritage is the foundation of its national identity, from ancient kingdoms to modern festivals. Heritage sites, customs, and traditions connect Nigerians to their history and to each other.

Despite modernisation, cultural heritage continues to shape values, unity, pride, and the international recognition of Nigeria as a diverse and culturally rich nation. We are Nigeria; we are the "Giant of Africa."



LOUD ROOM

The sound of a new underground movement in Benin City

CHUKWUMA GERALD OKAFOR

On June 28, 2026, music lovers, creatives and nightlife enthusiasts gathered at Limoh Suite Hotel in Benin City for another edition of LOUD ROOM, themed Rise of the Rave Rebels.

What began as an alternative nightlife concept is gradually evolving into something larger: a growing community built around Afro House, Afro-tech, Amapiano and underground

electronic sounds.

In a city traditionally known for lounges, parties and mainstream entertainment, Loud Room has carved out a different lane. The platform places music at the centre of the experience, creating an environment where sound, energy and self-expression take priority.

Founded by Samuel Adrian Orobo-sa, Loud Room was created to provide a dedicated space for people who connect with alternative dance music and rave culture.

"We wanted to build a room where the music leads the experience," Oro-bosa explained. "A place where people can express themselves freely, discover new sounds and connect with others who share the same energy."

Unlike conventional nightlife events that often focus on status and visibility, Loud Room has built its identity around community, discovery and immersion. DJs, selectors and producers are placed at the forefront, while attendees become active participants in

shaping the atmosphere of the room.

The June edition brought together a diverse audience from within and outside Edo State. Throughout the night, guests experienced extended DJ sets, networking opportunities, creative interactions and a shared appreciation for underground music culture.

As interest in alternative nightlife continues to grow across Nigeria, platforms like Loud Room are helping introduce new audiences to sounds and experiences that have long thrived in

other parts of the world.

For many attendees, Rise of the Rave Rebels was more than a theme. It represented a growing movement of individuals seeking new ways to experience music, community and nightlife in Benin City.

Whether Loud Room remains a niche community or grows into a larger cultural platform, one thing is becoming increasingly clear: a new sound is emerging in Benin City, and people are beginning to listen.

'CartoonAFRICA' Females-only free cartoon and comics course resumes

Francis Umendu Odupute, founder of the African Press Cartoon, and chairman of the Francodus Art Foundation (FAF), leads the 'CartoonAFRICA' Females-only Free Cartoon and Comics Course. Before now, the sponsored online cartoon course for interested African females had trained over 25 African females art and media enthusiasts, development communication workers and journalism students.

Recently, Francodus, as he is popularly called by fans and friends, resumed physical and virtual free cartoon training and media-grooming with some female journalism in-

terns from the University of Benin (UNIBEN) at The Nigerian Observer Newspapers in Benin City.

Tagged "Cartooning for the Media: why female voices must be heard", Francis Odupute told the students, "As an investigative journalist and editorial cartoonist, I want to see how we can collaboratively help girls and women - African females - come into the mainstream media cartoon space. There are no female cartoonists in Nigeria and Africa. They are very few, very scarce. It's all a man's thing and I want to see how that can change. But there has not been enough people

who show interest because we're not yet visible enough to get our targeted prospective beneficiaries."

Interestingly, all female student journalists currently undergoing the free "CartoonAFRICA Females-only Free comics and cartoon course/training are enthusiastic and have begun to shun out some audacious pictorial storytelling contents that speak to some vital issues of public interest graphically, from the lenses of females.

The growing interest and enthusiasm of some of the female student journalists and university interns, validates the CartoonAFRICA initiative and actions

aimed at bridging gender gaps in the ideation, creation and distribution of cartoons and comedic art within Africa's cartoon industry and mainstream media. Amplifying female voices in Nigeria's present dicy socio-political landscape cannot be overemphasised.

HOW TO MAKE CARTOONS:

1. Have interesting ideas. You have to be very imaginative, creative and possess some basic drawing abilities. Idea is the name of the game as far as cartooning is concerned. Make sure you have a good idea...

2. Write down your ideas.

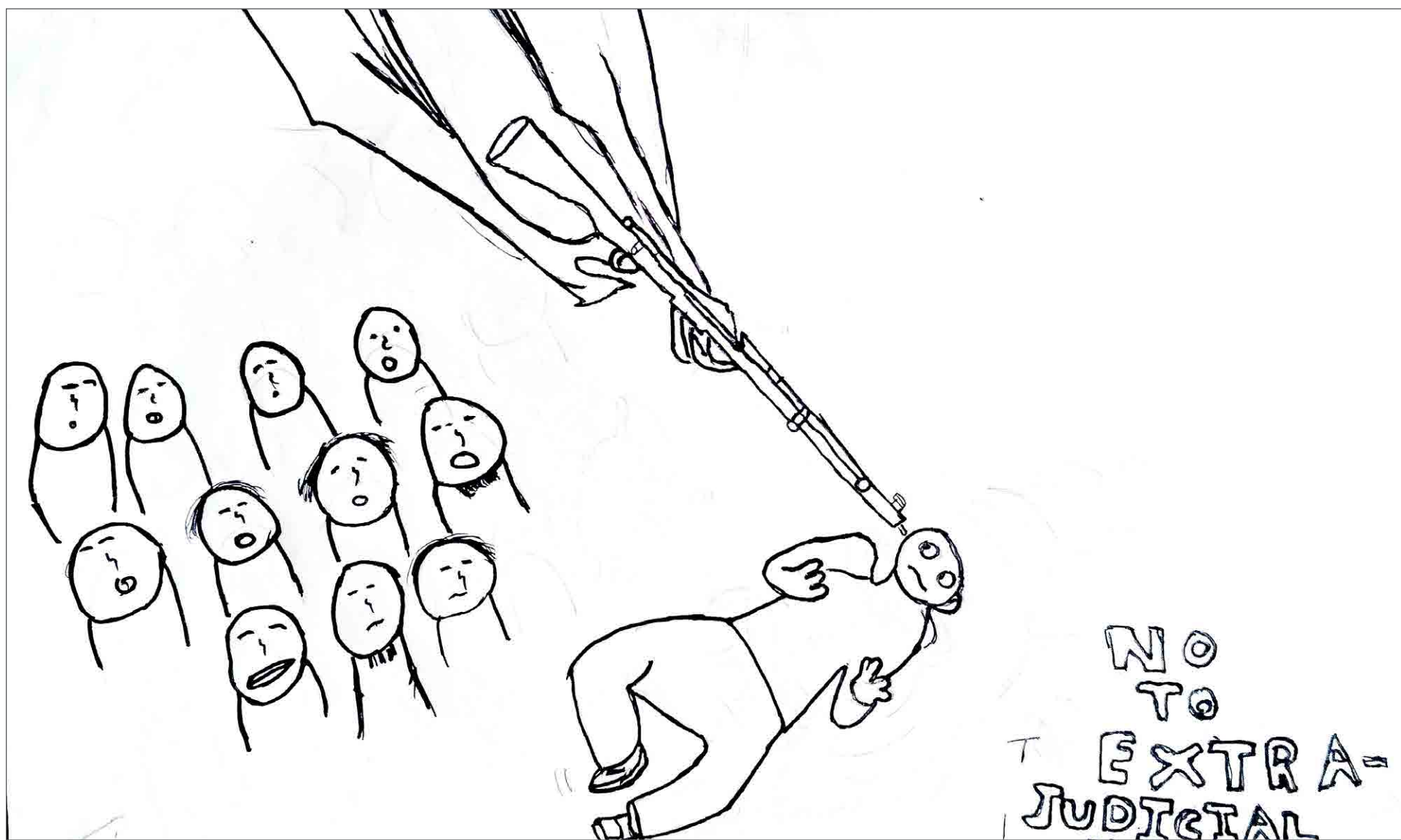
3. Get your art materials together and sketch down your ideas. You would need a pencil, an eraser, a ruler, felt pen, poster color, correction fluid, color palette, marker pen, drawing books or printing papers.

SOME TIPS FROM ODUPUTE'S TRAINING:

WHAT IS CARTOONING?

Cartooning is simply a funny and interesting way to express oneself or to tell a story pictorially through drawing. Usually, a cartoon tells a story through words, images and humour.

(To be continued)



NEWS**Foreign****China says pilot crashed small plane into skyscraper for 'personal reasons'**

The pilot who crashed his small plane into Beijing's tallest skyscraper last week was suffering from "chronic insomnia and anxiety" and did so for "personal reasons", authorities said Thursday.

The crash had killed the pilot, officially identified only by his surname Liu, and wounded 13 others.

Liu, a 66-year-old Beijing resident, was a divorced freelancer who lived alone, the Chaoyang district government said in a statement, adding Liu's diary contained "multiple expressions of ending his life".

"The comprehensive investigation concluded that this was a case of endangering public safety caused by personal reasons," the statement said.

One of the injured has been discharged from the hospital, officials said.

Videos of the crash at the CITIC Tower had been widely circulated on social media before being scrubbed off the Chinese internet, as authorities investigated what many observers viewed as a huge security breach.

The 109-storey CITIC Tower, also known as China Zun, is located just a few kilometres from Zhongnanhai, the Communist Party's headquarters.

The building has long been treated by many locals as a lucky charm. But shortly after the crash last Friday, even unrelated photos and memes of the skyscraper were taken down from Chinese social media platforms.

In the days after the crash, at least three aviation firms told the BBC that they had been told to suspend light aircraft operations.

On the afternoon of the crash, Liu had taken off from an airport in Pinggu district and conducted both accompanying and solo flights, the Chaoyang government's statement said.

"During his solo flight, he deviated from the designated area and lost contact with the airport, subsequently colliding with the high-rise building and dying at the scene," the statement said.

According to authorities, Liu had obtained his sport pilot's licence in 2021 and his private pilot's licence in 2024.

The plane he flew last week was a two-seat, single-engine Aurora SA60L manufactured by Chinese company Sunward Aircraft, according to flight tracking service Flightradar24.

At 6.9m long, with a wingspan of 8.6m, it is designed for touring, aerial photography and recreational aviation.



VENEZUELA QUAKE SURVIVOR:

Rescuers spent more than 100 hours inching closer to Gil before they were finally able to rescue him.

'Most massive' Russian attack on Kyiv kills at least 20

Russian forces launched a major drone and missile attack on Kyiv overnight, killing 20 people, in what the city's mayor has described as the "most massive attack" on the Ukrainian capital.

Vitaly Klitschko said around 90 people were injured. He said an ambulance station was among the places hit in the strikes and declared Friday a day of mourning.

Although previous attacks have killed more people, this latest barrage deployed the largest number of weapons on the capital and hit locations over a very wide area of Kyiv.

Several neighbourhoods were evacuated as strikes rocked buildings throughout the city, hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Russia was preparing an attack.

Moscow said its forces hit what it called military plants

in retaliation against attacks on Russian civilian infrastructure.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Thursday that Russia would "continue to increase pressure on the Kyiv regime in order to achieve our set goals".

Ukraine accused Moscow of targeting civilian areas and said it would be wrong to equate the actions of the "aggressor and a country defending itself".

Children were among the "significant number" of casualties, Tymur Tkachenko, the head of Kyiv's military administration, said.

"The enemy is once again deliberately targeting residential areas and killing civilians," he said early on Thursday.

Kyiv's metro authorities said 52,500 people, including 4,500 children, sheltered in underground stations overnight, which they said was the highest number in "recent years".

Among the places hit by the strikes was a high-rise block of flats on the city's left bank, in Darnitskyi district in south-east Kyiv, where two missiles caused devastation.

"This is not retaliation"

One missile left a giant crater next to a kindergarten and the buildings all around have been gutted by fire, their metal balconies twisted.

The second missile landed a few steps away and hit the end of a nine-storey block of flats. It has collapsed, sliding off the face of the building, into a heap of concrete. One local told the BBC that several people were missing and they may have been sheltering in the basement.

There are smashed cars, shattered windows and a thick layer of grey ash coating everything and everyone.

Rescuers have been trying to dig through the rubble to reach

them as relatives watch, in tears.

Svitlana, who lives next to the building that was hit, told the BBC she was hiding in the corridor during the air raid and heard the explosions.

"It wasn't scary," she shrugged, "because I've been through it all before." She then revealed that she had been badly injured in another Russian strike on another town which killed her mother. Two years later, her son was killed in action fighting for Ukraine.

Oleksiy, his face covered in cuts and blood, told the BBC he had stepped outside to smoke after he heard the first missile, then the second one landed and he was hit by flying glass.

"This is not retaliation by Russia for Ukrainian strikes," he said, dismissing Moscow's explanation for its latest attack. "They started this war. This is a residential area. And they targeted it."

Vatican excommunicates hundreds of thousands of splinter sect followers

More than half a million Christians who are part of a conservative Catholic splinter sect, the Society of Saint Pius X (SSPX), have been excommunicated by the Vatican.

On Wednesday the sect, named after Pope Pius X known for his resistance to modernisation, consecrated four new bishops in Geneva against Pope Leo XIV's direct instruction.

In response, the Society's total of six bishops were excommunicated - and, in a highly unusual move, the Vatican said all the group's lay members "are to be considered schismatic and excommunicated".

It added, however, that those who left the group and wished to return to the Roman Catholic Church would be welcomed back "with sincere affection".

Controversial bishops ordained as Pope warns of 'schism' in Catholic Church

Who is Robert Prevost, the new Pope Leo XIV?

The SSPX was founded in 1970 in opposition to the modernising reforms made by the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s, at what was known as the Second Vatican Council. The Society is thought to number around 600 000 worshippers globally.

In response to the Vatican's decree, Rita Reid, an SSPX

worshipper from Jersey in the Channel Islands, said: "It actually makes me feel quite strong."

"Before the consecrations yesterday I said to my husband, 'Do you know what? Even if they excommunicate us, go ahead, bring it on, it's not going to make one bit of difference.'"

The Society rejects changes made to how Mass is celebrated - for example it still holds its services in Latin rather than everyday language, and priests face the altar rather than the congregation.

In SSPX Masses the communion bread has to be given straight into the mouths of kneeling worshippers by the priest, as opposed to churchgoers being able to stand and hold it themselves.

Women in the group also tend to cover their heads for services and followers of SSPX tend to be more socially conservative in general.

The SSPX also opposes the modern Catholic Church's stance on more dialogue with other Christian denominations and other faiths.

For Rita, 76, SSPX ceremonies are much more "profound", where she feels "the true presence of Jesus".

She says there is no comparison with the standard Catholic Mass, which she describes as "so weak and wishy-washy".

Venezuela quake survivor pulled out alive after eight days

A man has been rescued alive after being trapped for eight days in the rubble of a building that collapsed after twin earthquakes in Venezuela.

Emergency workers managed to free Hernán Gil more than 100 hours after they had first located him under 140 tonnes of rubble.

A Chilean firefighter had earlier described the rescue operation as "without doubt the most complex and technically difficult which I've had to tackle".

Almost 2,300 people are confirmed to have died in the quakes which hit Venezuela on 24 June, and tens of thousands are still missing.

Rescuers spent more than 100 hours inching closer to Gil before they were finally able to rescue him

Hundreds of rescuers had been working against the clock to free Gil.

Teams from Venezuela, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Portugal and the United States helped to free him.

Parts of the access ducts rescuers built to reach him collapsed several times, highlighting the dangers the work poses to the rescuers as well as Gil.

Overnight, the search teams were finally able to establish visual contact with Gil.

In footage recorded by a small camera inserted into the rubble where Gil was trapped, a Chilean firefighter could be heard asking Gil to turn his head towards the camera.

One of his eyes was blood-shot and he was wearing a face mask, which rescuers had earlier passed to him through a

small hole to protect him from the dust and debris created by their efforts to free him.

The firefighter also asked him to don goggles to protect his eyes as rescuers continue to carefully dig away at the rubble surrounding him.

Ricardo Arias from the Costa Rican Red Cross told local journalist Joan Camargo that Gil was in a stable condition.

He added that they had been able to give him water and attach him to an intravenous drip. Arias said that Gil appeared to have miraculously escaped being crushed when the shopping centre collapsed.

"He has told us that he does not even have a crushed nail," he said. "He is fine."

Marco Antonio Franco from the Mexican Red Cross described Gil as "a cheerful man".

He told Mexican news site Milenio that the survivor "even asked for hydration drinks of specific flavours he likes", adding that "of course we indulged him".

"He himself drives us on, telling us to carry on. He recognises our team members, saying 'how nice that you came back and that you're with me again!'"

According to Franco, the rescuers and Gil kept up a steady chatter about his family and about the challenging rescue.

Gil had been on duty in a small concrete booth in the basement of the parking lot adjacent to the Galerías Playa Grande mall in Catia La Mar when the twin quakes struck.

It appears that the booth created a shell around him, protecting him from the 140 tonnes of rubble which collapsed around and on top of him.

Foreign

NEWS

South Africa and Ghana in diplomatic row over alleged killing of migrant

A diplomatic row has erupted between South Africa and Ghana, over claims that a Ghanaian man was killed during anti-migrant protests, which South African officials deny.

Ghana's Foreign Affairs ministry said it had received with "profound shock" reports that Bashiru Isak, 40, had been shot dead on Tuesday in Cape Town's Khayelitsha township. It said it had sent a formal protest note and filed a complaint with the police.

South Africa's justice minister responded by expressing concern "that Ghanaian authorities continue to communicate false information about South

Africa regarding developments on irregular migration".

The police said they had "no record of the Khayelitsha murder".

They did say they were investigating the killing, a day earlier, of 35-year-old Ghanaian Kwabena Boagen allegedly in extortion-linked crime in a different Cape Town township, Nyanga.

South African police said Boagen lived in Khayelitsha area but worked in Nyanga, where the crime occurred. It said a post-mortem was being done in line with its protocols.

The police had earlier told the BBC that suspects allegedly entered the barbershop where Boagen was working and de-

manded money from him before he was shot. The suspects fled the scene and so far no arrests have been made.

Referring to the statement by Ghanaian authorities, the police said: "An earnest plea is made to the authorities in question to provide details of the Khayelitsha incident to the [police] in order for the matter to be probed further."

South African foreign ministry official Clayson Monyela told the BBC that claims linking the Ghanaian's death to the anti-migrant protests were a "fabricated tale".

"We have to prioritise South Africans: Anti-migrant movement blocks foreigners from

healthcare Tuesday was the unofficial deadline set by South African anti-migrant groups for all undocumented foreigners to leave the country, with thousands marching across main cities.

Ghana, Malawi and Nigeria are among the African countries that have been repatriating some of their citizens seeking to escape violence and intimidation in South Africa ahead of the deadline. Some 25,000 people have left so far.

The police said Tuesday's protests were largely peaceful. They said about 900 people were arrested, mostly for immigration-related offences and looting.



SOUTH AFRICA PROTESTERS:

Anti-migrant sentiment has been rising in South Africa

Nine Thai monks killed after 11-year-old driver crash into procession

Nine Buddhist monks were killed and several others in their procession injured when they were hit by an 11-year-old boy driving his parents' pickup truck in north-east Thailand, police said.

The group of 35 monks and five lay followers were walking along a road in Mukdahan province during a pilgrimage when the incident occurred.

Footage posted online shows saffron robes and belongings scattered by the roadside, and a wrecked vehicle. Five of the monks died at the scene and four others later in hospital, according to police.

They said the boy took the pickup without permission before losing control and crashing into the monks, according to Agence France-Presse.

Police Major General Pairoj Thaiphutsa said they were still determining the legal process

for the boy going forward.

"The suspect is a child. The vehicle has been taken for forensic examination to determine the cause," he said.

Later, Thaiphutsa told BBC Thai the boy was still being cared for by a team of officials, including his guardians and his doctor.

Preliminary information indicates that he is a child with special needs, but no further details are available yet, Thaiphutsa said.

Mukdahan Hospital has appealed for urgent blood donations to help the injured monks.

Three monks remain in a critical condition and at least five others were seriously hurt. More are being treated for lighter injuries, health authorities said.

Phra Sompong, who was a monk in the group, said he was chanting the meditation mantra "Buddho, Buddho" before

the crash happened.

"I saw a boy driving a pickup truck approaching ... then suddenly the truck hit at full speed and crashed us," he said in a video posted online by local rescue workers.

"Luckily another monk and I managed to jump out of the way in time.

"The first nine monks in line survived, but others who were hit were thrown into the air."

Buddhist monks are highly respected in Thailand as they are entrusted with preserving and passing on the Buddha's teachings.

Public processions are not uncommon, with members of the public often giving monks alms of goodwill - such as food and basic necessities - as a sign of respect.

Police further said initial inquiries have found that no one was home before the incident except the child suspect, who

did not go to school because he was unwell.

When the boy's guardians realised the car was missing they notified police.

Mukdahan provincial governor Worayan Bunnarat said the case should serve as a wider warning for road safety in Thailand.

Papuan rebels say they shot dead US pilot and burned his plane

Separatist rebels say they have shot dead a US pilot and set his plane on fire in Indonesia's Papua region.

The West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB) say they killed Nicholas F Gosselin after he landed in the Highland Papua province on Thursday. The separatists claim civilian pilots have been ferrying Indonesian troops into the region, and said Gosselin's death sent "a message".

Indonesian officials confirmed that Gosselin's plane had been found burnt, but said it was unclear what happened to him or his seven passengers on board.

The killing comes after years of conflict between the Indonesian government and West Papua's indigenous people over independence for the resource-rich region.

Indonesian officials said a plane with an American pilot carrying seven passengers was found burned at an airport in the Yahukimo region.

The country's civil aviation authority said there were no security concerns raised as the

flight came in to land, but communications were lost shortly after it touched down.

Initial reports, from the director of the airport where the flight took off, state that pilot has died, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation statement said.

"The suspected cause of the incident is still awaiting further confirmation from the relevant authorities."

Yusuf Sutejo, a spokesperson for Indonesia's joint police-military operations, could not confirm whether the plane had been attacked by rebels or what had happened to those on board.

The US embassy in Jakarta and the State Department have been contacted for comment.

In a statement, TPNPB spokesman Sebby Sambom said the group had banned all flights across the disputed region because civilian aircraft had been used to support Indonesian military activities.

"We immediately fired upon and burned the plane because it had violated the TPNPB ultimatum," he said.

Malawians returning from South Africa face uncertain future

Ahamadi Assani has returned to his home in Malawi after fleeing growing anti-immigrant hostility in South Africa.

The continent's biggest economy, South Africa is a magnet for migrants from neighboring countries.

"I left Malawi for South Africa in search of job opportunities so that I could support my family," Assani says. "I left on 22 February 2025 and when I got there everything was fine."

But in recent weeks, citizen-led groups have targeted undocumented foreigners, blaming them for rising unemployment and increased pressure on public services. They set an unofficial deadline of June 30 for those migrants to leave the country.

"Even if the situation normalises, there is no way I can go back there," Assani says. "We

used to run away from the police, and some migrants ended up being hit by cars. I would rather die here in poverty than go back to South Africa."

"Luckily, I was among the people who were offered free transport to return home, but now we have nothing to do here for a living. I ran away from poverty and now I have come back to it again."

For many returnees, rebuilding a livelihood in Malawi will be a major challenge after abandoning their jobs and lives across the border.

"I have returned home with nothing and I don't know how my children and I will survive," says returnee Hawa Troko.

Troko isn't alone. Nearly 15,000 Malawians returning from South Africa are facing the same uncertainty in a country where 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Tanzania deploys security forces to major cities ahead of planned protests

Tanzania has deployed military personnel and police in Dar es Salaam and other major cities ahead of planned protests over last year's contested election.

The government last week announced a ban on all political rallies citing security threats, without saying how long it would be in place.

Youth-led protesters plan to gather on 7 July to call for dem-

ocratic reforms and justice for those killed in last year's election violence.

A government-appointed commission found that at least 518 people died in the unrest, but opposition and religious groups say security forces killed thousands.

The protests were driven by the exclusion of leading opposition candidates from the election which was won by

President Samia Suluhu Hassan with nearly 98 per cent of the vote.

She claimed the unrest was an attempt to overthrow her government. The authorities have denied allegations by human rights groups that security personnel used excessive force.

Next week's demonstrations are set to coincide with the government-organised Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair.

Opinion

Why roads are critical to economic development in Edo



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

There is rapid transformation going on today in Edo state and it is changing the dynamics of what people are used to in the past.

A new Edo is fast emerging from the old with massive infrastructural development across the state.

What the people are witnessing are results of the aspiration of a man who wants to bring development and prosperity to the nook and crannies of the state to make life worth living by translating home grown ideas into action.

Interestingly, before entering the corridors of power, Senator Monday Okpebholo who started to make impact within his community, local government and Senatorial District constructed several water bore hole

projects for his people as well as rendered assistance, including scholarships and philanthropic gestures to the people.

The passion of the Governor to improve human life may have spurred him to seek the people's mandate to represent them at the National Assembly as senator representing his constituency, Edo Central Senatorial District.

To advance societal growth with practical solutions and make his lifetime dream come to pass, there was the need to be at the centre of governance and Okpebholo got the space required to accomplish the mission at the government house on Dennis Osadebe Avenue, Benin City.

Today, people who have followed his excellent track records are testifying of the robust energy bubbling inside him to proffer solutions to issues that need attention.

Obviously conversant with the fact that no meaningful development can be achieved without acknowledging the physical state of the infrastructure, especially motor able roads, there have been massive and deliberate investments to connect the state with a diverse network of roads, including two Flyover bridges.

The governor has continued to receive commendations for bringing

practical governance to the state because the people are truly feeling the dividends of democracy.

Several roads under construction across the three senatorial districts, Edo North, Edo South and Edo Central Senatorial Districts are described as critical to economic development, as they are linking several communities to ease transportation of farm produce and open up rural areas for trade, investment and growth.

Observers say the scale of ongoing construction works going on across the state reflects the Okpebholo administration's commitment to infrastructure development, improved socio-economic activities and increased revenue generation for the state.

The governor's unscheduled inspection visits to these construction sites on regular basis are part of his strategy to keep contractors on their toes and ensure projects are delivered on time and to standard.

With the way the Governor is driving the project SHINE agenda of his administration, Edo will soon become a smart city and investors destination.

When you hear "Smart City," many Edo people think of Dubai towers or Lagos tech hubs. But a smart city is not about glass and steel. It's about a city that uses good planning to make

life easier, safer, and cheaper for ordinary citizens.

Governor Monday Okpebholo is getting this right and Edo is moving from the "Heartbeat of the Nation" to the "Brain of the Nation."

With a little patience and prayers for the administration, Edo people should be looking up to a state where they get good returns in social services for their taxes.

They should be looking forward to an era where the proactive government will be using information to prevent problems, not just reacting to them.

There are already handsome rewards for the whistle blower that can give actionable information to prevent crime in the state, especially kidnapping.

We all know that there are three urgent pressures confronting any state government and Governor Okpebholo has been able to tackle them with appreciable results so far.

We can all see that in the area of security, unemployment, and infrastructure the government is proffering sustainable solutions.

Governor Okpebholo has already shown decisive action on security, employment building of schools across the state.

As at today, the state is not owing any teacher or any government worker be-

cause salaries and emoluments occupy first line charge by the administration.

Over 5000 teachers who were casuals and 2000 health workers have been employed, in addition to 2500 members of the Edo State Security Corps.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua who addressed Journalists in Benin City recently emphasized that the Governor is developing every aspect of Edo state, including Udomi, in Esan Central local government area, taking projects that will impact the people to the rural communities.

According to him, "people want to go to the rural areas to invest and the Governor is driven by the conviction that Edo has eighteen local government areas and the enabling environment has been created in those areas with the potential for investors."

Now, that same urgency and attention should apply to systems that will make the state a smart city.

A smart Edo will not be built in one budget cycle, but there are indications that the people are happy with the transformation going on across the state, including Benin city, the state capital.

The truth remains that Edo can become Nigeria's model smart state when the construction works are completed across the state.

Akara, Kulikuli, corn roasting: Argument for sustainable poverty

ACHILLEUS-CHUD UCHEGBU

It is often said that the pharmacist only manages sickness. He does not cure. Cure would mean a permanent solution. Knowing that your ailment can only be managed, not cured, suggests a certain kind of mental cruelty. But there exists another kind of cruelty which wears the mask of generosity. This sort presents itself at political rallies, distributes cash in small denominations, smiles warmly for the cameras, and then tells the assembled poor that their destiny lies in frying akara or roasting corn by the roadside. This is exactly the sort that our amiable First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, delivered to Nigerian women when she publicly recommended Akara frying, Kulikuli production, and corn roasting as viable pathways out of poverty.

Those may not be bad after all. Many of us were raised by mothers who hacked kulikuli or sold roasted corn. But for a nation sitting atop the largest crude oil reserves in Africa, endowed with vast arable land, a vibrant and tech-savvy youth population, and vast untapped mineral wealth, the First Lady's vision for the Nigerian woman is the tray, the charcoal stove, and tripod burner in the street corner under excruciating sun or downpour, often without umbrella or shed. This is not a development agenda. It is an

insult dressed as compassion.

Note that Mrs Tinubu's remarks were not made in isolation. They came amidst the distribution of N50,000 as grants to groups of women. For her, that was a gesture of support. To her admirers, it was philanthropy in action. But to any serious student of Nigerian political economy, it was something far more familiar and far more sinister. It was the latest version of a vote-buying infrastructure that has defined APC's relationship with Nigeria's poor since 2019. The name has changed, and the packaging has evolved to larger sizes, but the logic remains the same. The consequences? Devastating!

Come with me! Cast your mind back to 2019, when the Muhammadu Buhari administration, in the months preceding the 2019 general election, launched what it called the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme, a flagship of the National Social Investment Programme Agency (NSIPA), which evolved such schemes as TraderMoni. The scheme promised interest-free loans of between N10,000 to petty traders and artisans across the country. Alongside it came ArtisanMoni and MarketMoni, each targeting a slightly different demographic of the economically chastised. Billions of naira were mobilised and shared at political rallies. Crowds gathered. Money changed hands. Pho-

tographs were taken. Politicians smiled. But the poor sank deeper into poverty.

What followed those billions? An audit commissioned by the incoming Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration conceded that the social investment programmes of the Buhari era were poorly targeted, riddled with duplication, and incapable of demonstrating measurable poverty reduction outcomes. The World Bank, in successive Nigeria Development Updates, documented that extreme poverty in Nigeria actually increased during the same period these schemes were operational. By 2023, Nigeria had overtaken India to become the world's poverty capital, with over 140 million Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). As a matter of fact, TraderMoni did not lift Nigerians out of poverty. It only purchased temporary political support and left the structural roots of destitution entirely undisturbed. In May 2026, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) declared the woman who supervised the ministry, Sadiya Umar Farouq, wanted over her alleged involvement in a N37.1 billion fraud case linked to alleged embezzlement of humanitarian and social intervention funds.

Fast-forward to Mrs Tinubu, who approached her fellow women with N50,000 grants. In the current inflationary environment imposed on the coun-

try by her husband's economic policies, N50,000 cannot sustain a family of four for more than 24 hours, with all necessary expenditures calculated, including medicine, food, shelter, clothing, and utility bills. Interestingly, she pegs this grant with advice to fry Akara, kuli-kuli, or roast corn. The continuity is not accidental. It is architectural. The APC has mastered the art of substituting spectacle for substance, of making the performance of poverty alleviation serve the interests of those in power while changing nothing for those in need. The N50,000 is not a development intervention. It is perpetuation of poverty masked as empowerment. It is proof of the instrumentation of the poor.

Look at it this way: Nigeria earned over \$35 billion in oil revenues in 2023 alone as a petro-dollar economy. The country sits on commercial quantities of gold, lithium, bitumen, iron ore, and coal. Its agricultural potential, with about 84 million hectares of arable land, is the envy of the continent. Nigeria has produced intellectual giants, world-class surgeons, technology founders, and globally recognised professionals in every field imaginable. Its women, in particular, have demonstrated remarkable resilience and enterprise in the face of systemic neglect. They have shown dexterity in running businesses, raising families, and holding communities together, often without the support

of the state. Their vision cannot be corn roasting as recommended.

The suggestion, to my mind, is that for all the rhetoric of women's empowerment, the administration's actual imagination of the Nigerian woman's economic future extends no further than the roadside kiosk. It says that the policies required to create the conditions for genuine female economic participation, such as accessible credit, functional power supply, digitised land titling, publicly funded vocational training, gender-responsive procurement, and industrialisation, are simply not on the agenda. What it is, its merely a photo opportunity.

Get my meaning! Small-scale informal trade is not inherently demeaning. Millions of Nigerians sustain themselves through it with dignity. My mother did too. The problem, however, is when a government, rather than building the infrastructure and policies that allow these traders to scale, formalise, and prosper, treats informal petty trade as the ceiling of aspiration for the poor. When the state's answer to women's poverty is to hand them a frying pan rather than fix gas supply to their homes, extend credit facilities, or create technical schools for women, it has not empowered them. Rather, it has institutionalised their marginalisation while wearing the face of benevolence.

Feature

Cultural heritage and national identity

RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

The identity of our country lies in its culture and traditions which have been preserved for many generations till now.

Our cultural heritage refers to the total way of life of our people, including beliefs, languages, customs, arts, monuments, festivals, and historical sites passed down from generation to generation. This includes buildings, artifacts, heritage sites, festivals, oral traditions, dances, rituals, and beliefs.

Before colonial rule, Nigeria had diverse ethnic civilizations such as:

The Nok culture - which is one of the oldest known civilizations in West Africa. It was famous for its terracotta sculptures.

The Benin Kingdom - known for bronze casting and a sophisticated governance system.

The Oyo Empire - known for its highly organized political and military structure.

The Hausa-Fulani emirates - Islamic governance and scholarly tradition.

Each of these civilizations had strong traditional religions and ancestral worship, indigenous political systems, rich oral storytelling traditions, festivals tied to agriculture, gods, and worship.

During the British colonial rule, western education and Christianity were introduced. Some traditional practices were discouraged or modified, and indigenous governance systems were weakened. However, cultural identity remained strong through resistance and preservation of festivals and customs.

From independence till now, many things have changed, from revival and promotion of indigenous culture to government recognition of cultural festivals and heritage sites, tourism development around cultural landmarks, global recognition of Nigerian music, fashion and film, in creating cultural blending while maintaining ethnic diversity.



OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Nigeria's cultural heritage has shaped its national identity by its cultural diversity which includes over 250 ethnic groups. This cultural heritage contributes by promoting unity in diversity, strengthening national pride, preserving history, influencing governance and leadership, boosting tourism and the economy.

There are many heritage sites in Nigeria which include:

Sukur Cultural Landscape - This is Nigeria's first UNESCO world heritage site, inscribed in 1999. It is famous for its ancient terraced fields, traditional settlements, and the palace of the Hidi (traditional ruler).

Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove - inscribed in 2005, one of the last remaining sacred forests of the Yoruba people and an important center of traditional worship.

Benin Moat - one of the largest man-made earthworks in the world, symbolizing the power of the Benin kingdom.

National Museum Lagos - preserves Nigerian artifacts such as Nok terracotta and Benin bronzes.

All these heritage sites preserve historical memory, educate younger generations, reinforce cultural pride and continuity. They also show Nigeria's ancient civilizations to the world.

There are several customs and traditions in Nigeria:

Marriage rites - where the men are expected to pay bride price and also come for introduction before marriage or during the process of marriage.

This tradition is practiced by most tribes in Nigeria, just in different ways. In some tribes some men are given a list of things for the bride price while in some tribes

they are just expected to pay money. This tradition has existed since the time of our forefathers, because the lady is seen as a jewel of the family.

Naming ceremonies - This happens when a child is born and is being given a name. This custom is to celebrate the birth of a child and also to give names to the newborn baby into the new world.

Kingship Coronations - This event happens when the throne has been empty, or when a king passes away and a new person is being appointed to take over and rule the community, village, or city.

Respect for elders and ancestral worship - This is when they give respect to the gods of their land, and sometimes honoring an elder for his service and diligence.

Traditional dress - These are attires that represent one's culture, tradition,

town, or village. Examples include: Agbada for Yoruba men and buba and wrapper for the women. Other tribes use kaftan, ipele, Isiagu etc.

All these play a role in Nigeria's identity because they maintain moral values and social order, they strengthen family and community bonds, they preserve ethnic identity within national unity. Example: when a Yoruba man wears agbada in Igbo land, people will immediately know that he is Yoruba.

All these are not just our culture and traditions; they are our identity, who we are, and it cannot be easily erased. Generations may change, but our identity does not easily change.

There are several cultural festivals in Nigeria, some of which include:

Argungu Fishing Festival - This festival is celebrated by the Hausa people, it symbolizes unity, fishing tradition, and harvest celebration.

Osun-Osogbo Festival - This festival is dedicated to the river goddess Osun and it reflects Yoruba spiritual and cultural preservation.

Eyo Festival - known as the "Adamu Orisha Play", celebrated by royalty and ancestral spirits.

New Yam Festival - performed by the Igbo people in Igboland. This marks a harvest season and thanksgiving to deities.

These festivals promote unity among ethnic groups, attract tourism and cultural exchange, preserve traditional beliefs and practices, and strengthen community belonging. Nigeria's cultural heritage is the foundation of its national identity, from ancient kingdoms to modern festivals. Heritage sites, customs, and traditions connect Nigerians to their history and to each other.

Despite modernization, cultural heritage continues to shape values, unity, pride, and the international recognition of Nigeria as a diverse and culturally rich nation. We are Nigeria; we are the "Giant of Africa."

Being a 9-to-5 worker

AISHAT MUHAMMED

Being a 9-to-5 worker means operating on a traditional, structured employment schedule. It provides reliable income, professional growth, and built-in work-life boundaries. While it offers financial security, navigating this lifestyle requires proactive habits to prevent burnout and maximize personal freedom.

For decades, the phrase "9 to 5" has stood as a cultural shorthand for the traditional working life—a steady job, predictable hours, and the familiar rhythm of Monday to Friday. But in a world where work is rapidly evolving, what does it truly mean to be a 9-to-5 worker today?

A STRUCTURE BUILT ON ROUTINE

A 9-to-5 job represents stability. It is a work schedule built around fixed day-time hours, offering employees a clear sense of routine. For many, this structure provides a comforting balance: work during the day, rest and personal life in the evenings, and weekends free for family, leisure, or rest.

THE CULTURAL SYMBOLISM

Beyond the literal hours, the term has taken on a symbolic meaning. It often evokes images of office desks, coffee breaks, and the steady hum of corporate life. In popular culture, the "9-to-5" is sometimes portrayed as monotonous or restrictive—the daily grind that people dream of escaping.

CHANGING REALITIES IN A DIGITAL AGE

The modern workplace, however, is reshaping the traditional 9-to-5. Remote work, flexible schedules, and digital communication tools have blurred the boundaries of time and place. Many employees now work beyond the classic eight-hour window, responding to emails at night or joining virtual meetings across time zones.

In Nigeria today, even though the 9-to-5 job still thrives among the working class, it is slowly losing grounds because Nigerian youths are increasingly moving away from traditional 9-to-5 jobs because they see them as unstable, low-paying, and misaligned with their desire for flexibility, purpose, and multiple income streams. This shift is driven

by economic hardship, high youth unemployment, and the rapid rise of gig and digital work opportunities.

For many young Nigerians, the classic 9-to-5 job no longer represents stability or success. Instead, it symbolizes limitation in a rapidly changing economy. The younger generation is embracing flexibility, digital work, entrepreneurship, and global opportunities, reshaping Nigeria's labour landscape in the process.

COMMON CHALLENGES

- **ROUTINE FATIGUE:** The routine can sometimes feel monotonous (repetitive), leading some workers to feel they are building someone else's dream instead of their own.

- **LIMITED FLEXIBILITY:** Strict working hours can make it difficult to run errands (get side hustles) or manage emergencies during standard business hours.

- **INCOME CEILING:** Unless you are steadily climbing the corporate ladder, your income is often fixed, requiring extra effort to build alternative revenue streams.

Why People Still Choose It

For all its criticisms, the 9-to-5 model continues to appeal to millions. It offers:

- **Consistency/Consistent Income:** A 9-to-5 job offers the worker the advantage of consistent income. Simply put, it means that income is fixed and is received at a fixed or stipulated time. It also supports a predictable routine that supports long-term planning.

- **Work-Life Boundaries:** It offers a clearer separation between professional and personal time. There is a clear distinction between working hours and personal or leisure time.

- **Benefits and Protections:** 9-to-5 jobs also offer employees some benefits which they enjoy from the companies they work with. These benefits include health insurance, paid leave, job security and additional training for workers. This is an added advantage for the workers to improve in their various fields.

- **A Sense of Belonging:** It also gives the workers a sense of belonging by being part of a team or organization, thereby creating a mutual understanding among the workers.

THRIVING IN YOUR ROLE

- **MAXIMIZE YOUR OFF-HOURS:** Treat your evenings and weekends as protected time to explore creative hobbies, side hustles, or upskilling. Attend seminars and webinars, go for further training.

- **SET FIRM BOUNDARIES:** Set clear boundaries for work hours and leisure time. Turn off work notifications and disconnect completely to prevent burnout.

- **FOCUS ON LONG-TERM WEALTH:** Leverage your steady paycheck to build financial independence, whether through investing in the stock market or funding entrepreneurial ideas.

To be a 9-to-5 worker today is to participate in a long-standing work tradition that continues to evolve. It represents stability and structure, yet also reflects the changing expectations of a modern workforce. Whether embraced as a source of balance or critiqued as outdated, the 9-to-5 remains one of the most recognizable symbols of working life — a rhythm that has shaped societies, families, and careers for generations.

Why women must be visible: Reclaiming our stories and recognizing our power

I arrived at the hall an hour and thirty minutes late and quietly searched for a seat at the back. As soon as I sat down, a woman I had met at a conference I hosted the previous week reached out to greet me.

Then she asked a question that immediately stirred the advocate in me: "Why are there no women on the panel?"

I wanted us to approach the organizers and raise the issue, but she had to leave unexpectedly and asked me to do it instead. As I considered how best to address the matter, the organizers opened the floor for comments, creating the perfect opportunity to raise the concern.

That moment reflected a reality we face perpetually. Despite significant progress in civilization, women are often underrepresented in spaces where ideas are exchanged, decisions are made, and influence is exercised. The issue is not simply about occupying seats; it is about ensuring that women's contributions, experiences, and perspectives are visible and valued.

Part of the challenge lies within. Many women have been conditioned to focus on what they lack rather than what they bring to the table. They wait until they feel fully prepared, fully qualified, or fully confident before stepping forward. Yet no one reaches perfection before taking on responsibility. Growth happens through participation, not before it.

This tendency to hold back is reinforced by long-standing social expectations. For generations, women

have been encouraged to be humble, accommodating, and self-effacing. While humility is a virtue, it becomes harmful when it prevents women from acknowledging their achievements or sharing their experiences which results in invisibility.

A striking example appeared in a social media post about a high-level meeting involving two global powers. The posted image showed a room full of men. When concerns were raised about the absence of women, someone responded by asking where women were when great discoveries were being made by famous male scientists.

The problem with that argument is not that women failed to contribute. It is that many of their contributions were never documented, recognized, or preserved. Throughout history, women have made discoveries, led movements, built communities, and shaped societies, yet their stories were often omitted from the records.

If stories are not told, contributions disappear. Future generations look back and assume women were absent when, in reality, they were simply invisible.

Across science, politics, business, and community development, women have played significant roles, yet many of their stories remain absent from mainstream narratives. As a result, future generations often inherit an incomplete picture of who contributed to progress.

Cultural expectations also continue to shape how women perceive visibility. In many societies, women who publicly celebrate their achievements are

viewed differently from men who do the same. Ambition may be interpreted as arrogance, confidence mistaken for aggression, and leadership viewed as a departure from traditional roles. These perceptions cause many women to downplay their accomplishments, even when sharing their journeys could inspire and empower others.

The cost of invisibility is substantial. When women's stories remain untold, young girls grow up with fewer role models. Workplace challenges affecting women remain poorly understood. Communities lose valuable lessons that could inform better policies and practices. Most importantly, many women begin to believe that their struggles are isolated experiences rather than shared realities that deserve attention and solutions.

Through my work with Hapiwify, I have seen firsthand how powerful visibility can be. Women who participate in our trainings and empowerment programs often describe the relief of hearing experiences that mirror their own. They discover that challenges they once considered personal shortcomings are, in fact, common experiences shared by many women.

A story about overcoming workplace bias may encourage organizational change. A story about balancing motherhood and leadership may help another woman pursue opportunities she once thought impossible.

Women's stories also serve a broader social purpose. They reveal realities that statistics alone cannot capture. They provide insight into healthcare,

education, economic participation, care-giving, leadership, and community development. A society that fails to listen to women's experiences loses valuable knowledge needed to address its most pressing challenges.

We must also broaden our understanding of whose stories deserve attention. Visibility should not be

reserved for celebrities, executives, or public figures. It should include community organizers, teachers, caregivers, entrepreneurs, mothers, and grassroots leaders whose contributions shape lives every day. Their experiences are equally valuable and equally deserving of recognition.

The absence of women on that conference panel was not merely a representation issue. It was a reminder that progress requires participation. Change begins when women step forward, share their expertise, and claim space in conversations that shape the future.

So tell your story.

Document your experiences. Share your lessons. Speak about your successes and your challenges. Use whatever platform is available to you, whether it is a professional network, a community gathering, a publication, or a conversation with a younger woman seeking direction.

Your story does not need to be extraordinary to be important. It only needs to be authentic.

When women make themselves visible, they do more than preserve their own experiences. They expand possibilities for others, strengthen communities, and ensure that the contributions of women are not lost to silence.

Because if women do not tell their stories, history will never be fully told.

Awunli Eghosasere is a professional writer, women's advocate, and founder of Hapiwify, a social impact platform advancing women's leadership, visibility, empowerment, and storytelling.

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They reveal realities that statistics alone cannot capture. They provide insight into healthcare, education, economic participation, care-giving, leadership, and community

Loud Room: The sound of a new underground movement in Benin City

CHUKWUMA GERALD OKAFOR

On June 28, 2026, music lovers, creatives and nightlife enthusiasts gathered at Limoh Suite Hotel in Benin City for another edition of LOUD ROOM, themed Rise of the Rave Rebels.

What began as an alternative nightlife concept is gradually evolving into something larger: a growing community built around Afro House, Afro-tech, Amapiano and underground electronic sounds.

In a city traditionally known for lounges, parties and mainstream entertainment, Loud Room has carved out a different lane. The platform places music at the centre of the experience, creating an environment where sound, energy and self-expression take priority.

Founded by Samuel Adrian Oro-bosa, Loud Room was created to provide a dedicated space for people who connect with alternative dance music and rave culture.

"We wanted to build a room where the music leads the experience," Oro-bosa explained. "A place where people can express themselves freely, discover new sounds and connect with others who share the same energy."

Unlike conventional nightlife

events that often focus on status and visibility, Loud Room has built its identity around community, discovery and immersion. DJs, selectors and producers are placed at the forefront, while attendees become active participants in shaping the atmosphere of the room.

The June edition brought together a diverse audience from within and outside Edo State. Throughout the night, guests experienced extended DJ sets, networking opportunities, creative interactions and a shared appreciation for underground music culture.

As interest in alternative nightlife continues to grow across Nigeria, platforms like Loud Room are helping introduce new audiences to sounds and experiences that have long thrived in other parts of the world.

For many attendees, Rise of the Rave Rebels was more than a theme. It represented a growing movement of individuals seeking new ways to experience music, community and nightlife in Benin City.

Whether Loud Room remains a niche community or grows into a larger cultural platform, one thing is becoming increasingly clear: a new sound is emerging in Benin City, and people are beginning to listen.

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Loud Room has built its identity around community, discovery and immersion. DJs, selectors and producers are placed at the forefront, while attendees become active participants in shaping the atmosphere of the room.

DE CAVE PRESENTS
LOUD ROOM
AFROTECH HOUSE AMAPIANO BENIN TRIPAL HOUR AFROHOUSE
RISE OF THE RaveREBELS
EARLY ACCESS SOLD OUT N4,999
FIRST RELEASE N6,000
STANDARD N8,000 FINAL RELEASE N10,000 GATE ACCESS N15,000
28 JUNE 7PM
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OFF BOUNDARY GRA BENIN CITY
07088021850 | 05151158495 | decavemgt@gmail.com
www.decavemgt.com/events/Loud-Room

FEATURE

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

New generation of Eziawa Youths demanding accountability and an end to decades of Neglect

FRANCIS UMENDU ODUPUTE

Operation See something, and say something!" That is a regular slogan you would hear on the Whatsapp platform of THE NEW FACE OF EZIAWA CLAN YOUTHS, a social media engagement platform with over 410 members.

Poised to challenge the establishment, question status quo, and change the narrative of underdevelopment in their homeland, Eziawa clan youths, in Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State, have begun to "say something" after one of their own apparently "saw something." They had demanded for a virtual engagement and interactive session with the Honourable Councillor representing Eziawa ward, over money meant for their community development; the youths wanted to know how the money was used or would be used...but their requests met deaf ears.

Somehow, the Councillor in the thick of the storm, after a closed Whatsapp meeting with the Admins of Eziawa Clan youth, fixed Sunday night, 9:00pm of June 21, 2026, for the long expected virtual engagement and interactive session to clear the air on the money in question. Alas! Few minutes into the planned virtual interaction session, message came that the government appointee had suddenly reneged on his promise, snubbing the over 410 avid and inquisitive youths of Eziawa who had cleared their schedules for the day and had gathered online, by sending an embarrassing message through the lead group Admin, announcing an indefinite postponement of the virtual interaction session.

Feeling insulted by this action of their appointed representative, Eziawa clan youths went wild online, resorting to all manner of accusations and counter accusations against the Whatsapp group Admins for what they perceived as leadership failure and possible complicity with the politician avoiding accountability. Two days later, precisely on Tuesday, 23rd June, 2026, an advertorial publication appeared on a mainstream media in Nigeria – The Nigerian Observer Newspapers – written by one of the angry concerned youths of Eziawa clan, with the catchy caption: EZIAWA CLAN YOUTHS DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY ON GOVERNOR'S N10 MILLION APPROVAL TO COUNSELLORS IN ORSU LGA, IMO STATE."

THE PUBLICATION READS IN WHOLE:

"The Eziawa Clan Youth Platform notes with concern the lack of engagement from our appointed Councillor, Hon. Pst. Freeman C. Okafor, regarding the N10 million approved by His Excellency, Governor Hope Uzodimma, to each Councillor in Imo State for constituency projects. It will be recalled that the Governor publicly announced the release of N10 million to every Councillor across the



EZIAWA YOUTHS PROTESTING

27 Local Government Areas for developmental projects in their respective wards. In the spirit of brotherhood and good governance, the Eziawa Clan promptly extended an invitation to our Councillor, Hon. Okafor, for an interactive session with the community so he could brief us on the planned utilisation of the funds and how our ward would benefit. Regrettably, the first official invitation was rejected barely 20 minutes after the scheduled interactive session time. Despite this setback, the community has demonstrated good faith by preparing a second official invitation in his official capacity as our appointed representative. We wish to state clearly that:

"We are not in any confrontation with our Councillor as a person.

"We value the bond of brotherhood and unity in Eziawa Clan.

"What we demand is simple transparency and accountability on public funds meant for our people.

"As responsible citizens and youths of Eziawa, we urge our Honourable Councillor to kindly honour the second official invitation and engage with us. This will enable him to share his plans for the N10 million and strengthen confidence between the representative and the represented. We remain committed to peaceful and lawful means of engagement. However, continued silence or refusal may leave the community with no other option than to explore all legitimate avenues, including formal redress, to ensure our ward benefits from the Governor's intervention as intended. We call on well-meaning stakeholders, traditional rulers, other elected officials, and the good people of Imo State to support the call for transparency and accountability at the grass-roots level.

"Signed: IBEMERE ISIDORE CHI-

MA (Member) Eziawa Clan Youth Platform. Contact: 08100141254 Email: chimaibemere@yahoo.com. Date: 23rd June, 2026".

This publication by Ibemere Isidore Chima, apparently written with the support of many members of the Eziawa Clan Youth platform, sparked unprecedented reactions of approval and support on the whatsapp platform when the writer shared the publication online. The youth reactions to the publication reinforced their resolve to follow the alleged 'missing' money meant for community development.

The ensuing drama on the Eziawa Clan youth platform brought it home to keen observers that their group slogan, "Operation see something and say something" was finally yielding some fruits for a generation of people who are sick and tired of bad leadership, who are desperate for change and accountability in public service.

According to the Coordinator of the Eziawa Clan Youths, Nze Emmanuel Chekwubechuckwu Awoh, the youth leadership had invited their appointed councillor to the virtual interactive session to explain how the funds was used or would be utilized for the benefit of Eziawa ward.

Nze Emmanuel Chekwubechuckwu Awoh emphasized that "...what happened in Eziawa before can never happen again, no matter what happens. People have vowed that instead of anybody to bring problem in Eziawa again, let the Heaven and Earth pass away. It's not possible. Wherever the person wants, he will see us..."

In the words of the youth coordinator, "...the youth excos met again, and we have given the Coordinator two days to come and address this platform, or we will make this address by ourselves..."

Another online interactive session

was finally scheduled for the same time on Sunday, 28th of June, 2026, and this time around the Honourable Councillor representing Eziawa ward in Orsu LGA, Imo State, Hon. Pst. Freeman C. Okafor, was finally in attendance to field questions from over 410 inquisitive Eziawa youths. Unfortunately, the Councillor, Hon. Pst. Freeman C. Okafor, was unable to convincingly answer many of the questions asked him by both the leadership and some members of the Eziawa Clan Youths, during that night's virtual interactive session. From that night's heated interactive session, the long journey to following the money meant for Eziawa development began with the N10 million saga.

Why follow the money? Eziawa youths are not merely asking about one allocation. They are challenging a culture of silence and cowardice that they believe has contributed to decades of underdevelopment in their homeland. Their demand reflects a growing realization among younger generations that development is not only about attracting Government presence through political appointments. It requires transparency, accountability, community participation, and leaders who can translate political opportunities into measurable improvements in people's lives. It is about carrying the people along, and this new generation of Eziawa youths is insisting that things must be different henceforth.

The new Eziawa youths are sending out a clear message: "Enough is enough! Every kobo meant for our community must be accounted for, either directly or indirectly." To their elites, public office holders and their cohorts in the land, the youths are now saying IT WON'T BE BUSINESS AS USUAL and that they are now out

to follow the money meant for the development of their community, be it in the past, in the present, and in the future.

Why is this stance critical for Eziawa? Because Eziawa's case is the sorry story of a community betrayed by its own elites and left behind in 'perpetual' underdevelopment. Like many rural communities in southeastern Nigeria, Eziawa's development story is marked by unrealized potentials. For decades, indigenes and residents have consistently identified poor road infrastructure, inadequate educational facilities, insufficient healthcare services, youth unemployment, and very scarce government presence as major obstacles to progress in the community.

Across many parts of Orsu Local Government Area, accessibility has historically been hindered by deteriorating rural roads that become difficult to navigate during rainy seasons. Poor transportation infrastructure affects every aspect of community life. Farmers struggle to transport produce to markets. Children face difficulties accessing schools. Pregnant women and emergency patients often encounter delays reaching healthcare facilities.

Infrastructure experts have long noted that roads are not merely transportation assets; they are economic lifelines. Communities connected by reliable roads generally attract more investment, enjoy higher agricultural productivity, and experience better access to education and healthcare. Yet Eziawa continues to battle challenges that should have been addressed decades ago.

For many communities across rural Nigeria, underdevelopment is often blamed on distant governments, grossly inadequate funding, or difficult geographical circumstances. But in Eziawa Clan, Orsu Local Government Area of Imo State, to the discomfort of the establishment, a growing number of young people are asking a more uncomfortable question: after decades of producing political actors, government appointees, influential stakeholders and community leaders, why does Eziawa still struggle with many of the same development challenges that existed generations ago?

The question has returned to public discourse following this present demand by the Eziawa Clan youths for accountability over the N10 million reportedly approved by the Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma for each councillor in the State to execute constituency projects.

A 13-man committee, christened "Eziawa Clan Investigation Committee" was subsequently set up by the leadership of the Eziawa Clan Youth executives, on Tuesday, 30th June, 2026, with a mandate to, amongst other terms of reference, investigate if the Councillor actually received N10 million for constituency project from the Imo State, as reported in the media.

• (To be continued)

Crime with Mike Osarogiagbon

Kidnappers forced to flee, fake abduction exposed, Pipeline Vandals Nabbed in Edo



SUSPECTED KIDNAPPERS

MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

It was another eventful week on Edo's crime beat, with security agencies keeping busy rescuing kidnap victims, exposing a fake abduction, arresting suspected pipeline vandals and recovering vehicles reported stolen years ago.

As the saying goes, "Crime may look clever at the beginning, but it usually runs out of ideas before the law does." That appeared to be the case in several successful operations carried out across the state.

The biggest breakthrough came in Iyahmo, Etsako East Local Government Area, where operatives of the Edo State Police Command, supported by local vigilantes and hunters, rescued 11 kidnapped farmers after a fierce gun battle with suspected kidnappers.

According to the police, the

victims were kidnapped on June 25 while working on their farms at Ogbido Community, Iyahmo, Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Unable to withstand the combined assault, the gunmen fled into the forest, abandoning their captives. The victims comprising nine males and two females identified by police as Braimah Destiny, 46, Aruna Idris, 38, Abudu Sharafadeem, 38, Godwin Elizabeth, 28, James Favour, 28, Nonso Ana, 30, Abdulilia Ozigi, 26, Lambo James, 27, Wasia Abdul, 48, Lucky Emmanuel, 24, and Suleman Aliyu, 25, were rescued unharmed, treated and reunited with their families, while police intensified efforts to track down the fleeing suspects.

In Igarra, detectives uncovered what could best be described as a kidnapping that never was. Two men, Lucky

Alabi, 48, and Taiye Enahoro, 37 were arrested for allegedly staging the abduction of one of them and demanding a N4 million ransom from his relatives.

Police said the suspects confessed during interrogation and would be arraigned after investigations. No wonder the saying, "When greed writes the script, investigation often spoils the ending."

The week also saw the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps arrest two suspected pipeline vandals Kadiri Isah, 55, and Mustapha Naphiyu, 27, in Ekpoma. Acting on intelligence, operatives tracked down the suspects, who are alleged to be linked to the vandalism of NNPC pipelines and other critical national assets.

The NSCDC said investigations were ongoing to dismantle the wider network behind the economic sabotage,

warning that surveillance and enforcement operations would continue across the state.

Meanwhile, a routine stop-and-search operation in Benin City yielded another breakthrough as police recovered vehicles reportedly stolen in 2024. Two suspects, Ezekiel Aguele, 46, and Emmanuel Afolayan were apprehended after officers discovered forged vehicle documents, leading to the recovery of another suspected stolen vehicle.

The operations, no doubt, has reinforced an old policing lesson, "A routine check may seem ordinary, but many extraordinary arrests begin with one."

If the week's scorecard is anything to go by, Governor Monday Okpebholo's security push is gathering momentum. For criminals in Edo, the space to operate is shrinking, and the law is closing in.

Police recover vehicles stolen since 2024, arrest two in Benin

Operatives of the Edo State Police Command have recovered vehicles allegedly stolen two years ago and arrested two suspects, including a driver found with forged vehicle documents, during a stop-and-search operation in Benin City.

The Command's Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, disclosed this to journalists in Benin City.

She said the suspects had confessed to the offences and would be arraigned in court upon the conclusion of investigations.

According to her officers attached to the Textile Mill Road Division intercepted a Daihatsu Hijet mini bus, bearing registration number GBZ 646 YK, at a checkpoint along Siluko Road on June 22, 2026.

She explained that preliminary checks revealed that the documents presented by the driver were forged.

"Further investigation disclosed that the vehicle belongs to one Dr. Timothy Etinosa, who had earlier given the vehicle to one Emmanuel Afolayan on a hire-purchase agreement. However, Emmanuel Afolayan absconded with the vehicle in 2024 to an unknown destination, forged its documents, and subsequently sold it," ASP Ikoedem stated.

She also said the driver, 46-year-old Ezekiel Aguele, was arrested and led detectives to the arrest of the principal suspect, Emmanuel Afolayan, as well as the recovery of another vehicle allegedly stolen in a similar manner.



STOLEN RECOVER VEHICLES BY POLICE

Delta man who allegedly killed brother over slippers still at Large



FEJIRO



JOSEPH



SP BRIGHT EDAFE

The Delta State Police Command has intensified a manhunt for 21-year-old Fejiro, who allegedly stabbed his younger brother, Joseph, to death following a dispute over a pair of bathroom slippers in Delta State.

The Command's spokesman, SP Bright Edafe, confirmed on Wednesday that the suspect remains on the run.

"The suspect is still on the run. The killing is confirmed," Edafe said.

Joseph, a 19-year-old 100-level university undergraduate, reportedly died after he was allegedly stabbed multiple times by his elder brother during the incident.

According to Edafe, the brothers initially quarrelled over the slippers, but neighbours intervened and separated them. However, they later resumed the fight behind their house, where Fejiro allegedly armed himself with

a kitchen knife and repeatedly stabbed Joseph before fleeing.

The victim later succumbed to his injuries, while the suspect remains at large. Police said he will be charged with murder once apprehended.

Describing the incident as tragic, Edafe said the family had suffered a double tragedy of losing one son to death while the other now faces prosecution.

He dismissed speculation that the killing was spiritually motivated, saying preliminary findings point more to possible drug abuse or cult-related influence.

"It could be drug abuse or cultism. When he is arrested, he will have the opportunity to explain what happened," he added.

The police spokesman also urged parents and guardians to pay closer attention to their children's behaviour, lamenting that a minor disagreement had escalated into a fatal confrontation.

COLUMN

When leaders rub salt into the wound



Words matter. They matter even more when they are uttered by those entrusted with the responsibility of leading a nation. A careless remark from an ordinary citizen may provoke a few reactions, but an insensitive statement from a public official can deepen national despair, widen the gulf between the government and the governed, and reinforce the perception that those in power have become detached from the harsh realities confronting ordinary people.

Nigeria has been passing through difficult periods in its post-independence history. The cost of living has risen astronomically. Food prices have become prohibitive. Transport fares have become unbearable. Businesses are folding up under the weight of inflation, while unemployment continues to rob millions of young Nigerians of hope. Families that once managed to survive on modest incomes now struggle to afford two meals a day. Across the country, many parents are unable to pay school fees, settle hospital bills or even provide basic necessities for their children.

In moments such as these, citizens expect empathy from their leaders. They expect words of reassurance, policies that inspire confidence and actions that demonstrate genuine concern. Unfortunately, what Nigerians have often received are comments that appear to ridicule their suffering rather than acknowledge it.

During a Senate plenary in 2024, the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, made a comment that drew widespread condemnation against the backdrop of nationwide protests over hunger and the rising cost of living. He reportedly remarked, in a jocular manner, that while poor Nigerians were free to continue protesting, the senators would continue to eat. Although the comment was later dismissed by some as a joke, many Nigerians considered it insensitive and ill-timed, arguing that it trivialised the plight of millions grappling with severe economic hardship.

More recently, the Special Adviser to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Information and Strategy, Mr. Bayo Onanuga, stirred public outrage when he reportedly stated that he did not see the hunger Nigerians were complaining about. Whether his remarks were misunderstood or taken out of context is no longer the principal issue. The perception created was that someone occupying such an influential position could not relate to the daily struggles of millions of Nigerians.

Expectedly, the reaction was swift. Many Nigerians wondered how anyone could fail to see what has become glaringly obvious. Hunger is no longer hidden behind closed doors. It is visible in our markets where shoppers now buy food in tiny quantities. It is evident in schools where children struggle to concentrate because they attend classes on empty stomachs. It

is reflected in hospitals where malnutrition is becoming increasingly common among vulnerable groups. Hunger is not an abstract concept. It is a painful reality confronting millions of households.

Before public outrage over those comments had subsided, another statement emerged that generated widespread debate. Speaking at a public event, the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, encouraged Nigerians, particularly women, to become self-reliant by frying akara, selling kulikuli and roasting plantain.

Without doubt, there is dignity in honest labour. There is absolutely nothing degrading about selling akara, roasting plantain or engaging in any legitimate enterprise. Indeed, countless Nigerians have built respectable livelihoods from small businesses. Entrepreneurship deserves encouragement and should remain an important component of national economic development.

However, context is everything. The concern expressed by many Nigerians was not about the occupations themselves but about the appropriateness of such advice coming from the country's highest office at a time when millions of graduates roam the streets in search of meaningful employment. The average Nigerian youth does not spend years acquiring education only to be told that the ultimate solution to unemployment is roadside trading. Such advice, however well-intentioned, can easily be interpreted as reducing the aspirations of an entire generation.

The tragedy is not that Nigerians sell akara or kulikuli. The tragedy is that a country blessed with enormous natural and human resources has failed to create sufficient opportunities for its citizens to maximise their talents.

Nigeria ought not to be a nation where highly qualified engineers become commercial motorcycle riders, where university graduates hawk sachet water or where medical professionals flee abroad because they cannot earn a decent living at home. These are not signs of economic resilience; they are symptoms of systemic failure.

This is why public officials must exercise greater caution in their public utterances. Leadership is not merely about making policies; it is also about communicating hope. Every statement made by those in authority sends a message about how seriously they understand the plight of the people.

History teaches us that insensitive comments often leave lasting scars. Around the world, governments have suffered enormous reputational damage because leaders appeared disconnected from the suffering of their citizens. Even when policies are well-intended, poor communication can undermine public confidence.

Empathy is perhaps the most underrated quality of effective leader-



ship. Citizens can forgive mistakes more readily than they can forgive indifference. They may endure temporary hardship if they genuinely believe that their leaders understand their pain and are making sincere efforts to alleviate it. What they find difficult to accept are comments that suggest their suffering is exaggerated, imaginary or unimportant.

The economic hardship facing Nigerians is real. It is not opposition propaganda. It is not a social media fabrication. It is experienced daily by traders, artisans, pensioners, civil servants, students and even members of the middle class who previously considered themselves financially secure.

Markets tell the story. Transport parks tell the story. Hospitals tell the story. Religious centres where increasing numbers seek financial assistance tell the story. The evidence is overwhelming.

This is why every public statement coming from government officials must be weighed carefully before it is delivered. A single insensitive remark can erase months of painstaking efforts aimed at rebuilding public con-

fidence.

The responsibility extends beyond ministers and presidential aides. Every elected official, political appointee and government spokesperson must recognise that they speak not merely as individuals but as representatives of the Nigerian state. Their words carry enormous symbolic weight.

Governments must also appreciate that citizens are not merely asking for survival; they are asking for dignity. People do not simply want opportunities to exist; they want opportunities to flourish. They want jobs that reflect their education, skills and aspirations. They want businesses that can thrive without multiple taxation, unstable electricity and poor infrastructure. They want a nation where hard work is rewarded rather than punished.

It is often said that Nigeria is too richly endowed to be poor. Indeed, our nation possesses abundant crude oil, vast agricultural land, solid minerals, an energetic youth population and some of the brightest professionals anywhere in the world. Yet, despite these blessings, poverty continues to expand while prosperity remains concentrated in the hands of a privileged few.

The principal obstacle has never been the absence of resources. Rather, corruption, poor governance, policy inconsistency and weak institutions have prevented the country from translating its enormous wealth into widespread prosperity.

This is perhaps the greatest irony of contemporary Nigeria. The acclaimed Giant of Africa increasingly resembles a giant struggling to stand on its own feet. A nation with extraordinary potential continues to disappoint both its citizens and the international community.

Still, there is reason for hope. Nigerians remain among the most resilient people on earth. They continue to innovate despite daunting challenges. They establish businesses with little or no government support. They excel wherever opportunities exist. Their

resilience, however, should never be mistaken for an unlimited capacity to endure hardship.

Resilience should not become an excuse for governmental complacency. Our leaders owe Nigerians more than motivational speeches. They owe them sound, economic policies, accountable governance, improved security, functional education, quality healthcare and an enabling environment where businesses can prosper.

Most importantly, they owe Nigerians respect. Respect begins with recognising the pain of the people. It begins with speaking words that heal rather than hurt. It begins with acknowledging that millions of citizens are making extraordinary sacrifices just to survive.

No government gains anything by appearing dismissive of public suffering. On the contrary, empathy strengthens leadership, while insensitive rhetoric weakens it.

The greatest leaders in history were remembered not merely for the policies they implemented but for their ability to connect emotionally with the people they governed. They understood that compassion is not a sign of weakness; it is a mark of statesmanship.

As Nigeria continues its difficult journey towards economic recovery, those occupying positions of authority must choose their words with wisdom. Public communication should unite rather than divide, encourage rather than discourage, and inspire rather than provoke resentment.

The Nigerian people deserve honesty. They deserve compassion. Above all, they deserve leaders whose words reflect the seriousness of the times.

For a nation burdened by economic hardship, careless remarks are not merely unfortunate, they rub salt into the wound, causing excruciating pain.

• Dr. Odaro is a lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi.

The greatest leaders in history were remembered not merely for the policies they implemented but for their ability to connect emotionally with the people they governed.

Sports

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

Bendel Insurance's Dominion Osaghae Leads three other Edo players in Golden Eaglets squad for China

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club midfielder young star Dominion Osaghae and



GOLDEN EAGLETS SQUAD

three other young footballers from Edo State have been included in Nigeria's Golden Eaglets(U-17) squad for the 2026 China International Youth

Football Tournament.

Dominion Osaghae of Bendel Insurance and Emmanuel Obasohan of Namo Football Academy headline the Edo contingent, just as Osifo Believe and Samuel Idor of Delight FC also made the team.

Osaghae Dominion who recently graduated from the Benin arsenas youth team and the other three players are among the 20-man squad selected by Head Coach Uwejamomere Eboboritse for the trip to China.

The Golden Eaglets are expected to depart Nigeria on Thursday night for the tournament, which will be held in Yinchuan from July 5 to 11.

Hosts China, Australia and Tanzania are the other teams taking part in the four-nation competition.

According to the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), the tournament is part of the team's preparations for the 2026 WAFU B U-17 Championship in September, which will serve as the qualifying tournament for next year's Africa U-17 Cup of Nations.

The call-up marks an important step in their development as they prepare to represent Nigeria on the international stage. Their inclusion is also another positive development for football in Edo State.



NPFL confirms August 28 kick-off for 2026/27 season

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The 2026/27 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season will officially kick off on Friday, August 28, with the campaign scheduled to conclude on May 30, 2027.

The league management body and premier league clubs representative reached the agreement during their stakeholders meeting in Abuja on Tuesday.

The league's calendar also makes provision for the President Federation Cup, with the state qualifying playoffs scheduled for early February 2027.

The first half of the season is expected to be wrapped up after Matchday 19 in December, before clubs head into a mid-season break from December 23 to January 6.

The January transfer window will remain open throughout the month, allowing clubs to strengthen their squads ahead of the resumption of league action in the second half of the season.

Speaker Abbas Commends NIS boss on decentralization initiative

● **Pledges Annual sponsorship of Kaduna Coaches refresher**

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas has commended the Director General of the National Institute for Sports (NIS), His Excellency Comrade Philip Shaibu, for the ongoing transformation of the Institute, particularly the decentralization of its programmes to the grassroots through the establishment of zonal centres across the country.

The commendation was conveyed to the NIS Director General by the Speaker's Senior Special Assistant and former President of the Kaduna State Football Association, Hon. Magaji Abdul Alhassan.

According to Hon. Magaji Abdul Alhassan, Speaker Abbas described the establishment of the North-West Zonal Centre in Kaduna as a significant milestone that is bridging the gap in coaching education and strengthening sports development in the region and across Nigeria.

In further demonstration of his commitment to sports development, the Speaker announced his decision to sponsor the training of 20 coaches from Kaduna at the National Institute for Sports.

He also pledged to increase the sponsorship to 25 coaches annually, ensuring sustained capacity building for coaches in the state.

Responding to the Speaker's commendation and support,

Comrade Philip Shaibu expressed deep appreciation to Rt. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas for his confidence in the vision of the National Institute for Sports and his commitment to the development of sports in Nigeria.

Shaibu noted that the Speaker's support would further encourage the Institute to expand its reach and continue delivering quality coaching education and professional development opportunities across the country.



HON. TAJUDEEN ABBAS

Norway court declares Daniel Daniel not guilty over sexual misconduct

Former Flying Eagles midfielder, Daniel Daga, who plies his trade with Molde Fc of Norway, has won his appeal case and he has been found not guilty by seven appeal court judges that sat on the matter, reports.

Daga was initially found guilty of sexual misconduct in a

case handled by three judges, of which two found him guilty of the allegation filed against him.

But in a dramatic twist of fate in his favour, the appeal court judges has discharged and acquitted him of any crime.

A close associate of Daga said that justice has been done and it is a welcome relief.



DANIEL DAGA

"This is a welcome development. The earlier trial was made of three judges. Two of the judges found him guilty and he was sentenced to six months imprisonment," the close associate said.

"We had to appeal. We went back to the trial court and showed reason the court must approve our appeal request.

"It was granted and fixed for 25th, 26th of June and the appeal was successful. The appeal court was made of seven judges and they all found him not guilty.

"Daniel Daga was then discharged and acquitted of allegation of rape and any sexual misconduct.

"Another good thing with this favourable judgement, is that his club (Molde) has asked him to join the team," he affirmed

Rivers' SWAN scores Momimichelle high on Yakubu Gowon Stadium renovation, wants befitting office

The prayers and expectations of Rivers people, mostly the sports family, are coming to fruition as the Port Harcourt Liberation Stadium, now known as the Yakubu Gowon Stadium, will be completed and handed over to the Rivers State government in a month time.

Yakubu Gowon Stadium is currently undergoing total renovation after being in a dilapidated state for close to fifteen years.

It is the present administration led by Sir Siminialayi

Fubara that saw it necessary and imperative to renovate the stadium with deliberate intentions to develop sports in the state; hence, one of his priorities was to develop sports and never to allow significant infrastructures to rot away under his watch.

The governor took a bold and significant step to contract the total renovation of the stadium to a very reputable, world-renowned sports facilities and construction company called Monimichelle.



YAKUBU GOWON STADIUM

Nigeria Football and lessons from Morocco

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

Nigeria and Morocco share a footballing history defined by talent, passion, and periods of underachievement. For years both were seen as African giants on paper. Yet in the last decade, their trajectories have diverged. Morocco went back to the basics and began rebuilding process quietly while Nigeria debated and speculated about getting things started. The difference is not talent. It is simply process and will.

Morocco had a decent domestic league for decades. Clubs like Raja and Wydad Casablanca were continental names, and their individual players thrived in Europe.

But from France '98 to Russia 2018, the Atlas Lions missed four consecutive World Cups. That is 20 years in the wilderness. The problem was never a lack of footballers but getting the right men and vision to restructure its football.

Missing tournaments was not about "poor players." It was about structure, administrative coherence, and player recruitment strategy. Without a system to identify, develop, and retain talent, even golden generations fade. Morocco admitted this publicly after 2018 and changed their course.

The failure to get out of the group at Russia 2018 became the catalyst. The Royal Moroccan Football Federation, FRMF, under Fouzi Lekjaa, treated it as an institutional reset and not just a coaching change. The mandate was simple: build from the bottom up, with a 10-year horizon.

Opened in 2009 but scaled aggressively post-2018, the Mohammed VI Football Academy in Salé became the centerpiece. It is a full-time residential school combining elite training with academics. UEFA-licensed coaches, sports science, nutrition, and psychology are standard. It is not a camp. It is a school for professional footballers.

FRMF also invested in mass coach education. Hundreds of local coaches were taken through CAF A, B, and UEFA-equivalent courses, and a unified curriculum was rolled out from U-13 to U-20. The goal was that every Moroccan youth team would play with the same tactical principles, regardless of the coach on the bench. Eric Chelle has been assigned the role of managing Nigeria's National and Olympic teams. It is a welcome development but also an indictment of the quality of coaches in the country.

The Moroccan domestic league was pushed toward professionalism as well. Club licensing, stadium facility upgrades, better broadcast deals, and stricter financial oversight followed. Academies at Raja, Wydad, AS FAR, and RS Berkane were audited and supported. A decent league became a developmental league, not one run by politicians and unqualified administrators.

In the case of our country Nigeria, rhetorics remain in the front burner instead of action.

Recently, the Bayelsa State Government announced the sack of all coaches and players in one clean swoop. This is meant to be a sporting brand but is now run like a government parastatal. Haba! Kilode?!

Morocco stopped waiting for Europe-born players to "choose" them



MOROCCO PLAYERS CELEBRATING



WALID REGRAGUI

late. They built a proactive recruitment unit, with staff embedded in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain to track Moroccan-heritage players from U-15 level. Relationships were built with families early, not at senior-team crisis moments. The idea of using Morocco as a second option after waiting in vain is not tenable. In Nigeria's case, players who wait for a few years to get the call-up of their country of birth will keep Nigeria as a second choice and jump on the train when they have passed their prime years. Shola Ameobi is a sad example of a player who kept waiting for England but didn't show up until his glory years on the pitch had faded.

Identifying talent was only step one. FRMF invested in integration through language, culture, frequent youth call-ups, and clear pathways to the senior team. Players like Achraf Hakimi, Azzedine Ounahi, and Sofyan Amrabat did not feel like mercenaries. They felt like projects that matured.

Before the senior team's success, the youth teams delivered proof of concept. Morocco U-23 won the 2023 U-23 AFCON. The U-17s reached the World Cup quarterfinals in 2023. The U-20s became consistent qualifiers. Winning at youth level built belief and created a pipeline, not just a squad. And the U-20 team won the World Cup in 2025, which marked a first World Cup win for Morocco at any age-group level in the country's history.

Walid Regragui's 2022 World Cup team was not accidental. It was compact, athletic, and tactically disciplined. Morocco became the first African team to reach a World Cup semifinal. They did it with a clear plan: defend as a unit, fast transition, and rely on technically secure midfielders bred in the new system. Four years later they have maintained the same level of consistency with Mohamed Ouahbi, who took over from Regragui after failing in the AFCON final against Senegal.

Frequent federation sackings and coach churn stopped. FRMF gave technical staff time and targets. Budgets for youth tournaments, friendlies, and training camps were ring-fenced. In football, continuity is a competitive advantage that Nigeria has rarely enjoyed.

Morocco also invested in the women's game. The Atlas Lionesses reached the 2023 Women's World Cup knockout stage and hosted the 2022 WAFCON final. A rising women's programme expands the talent base; improves coaching standards, and signals a federation thinking long-term.

From 2018 onward, Moroccan teams have integrated performance data, GPS tracking, and medical protocols at youth and senior levels. Injury management improved, player load was monitored, and small margins repeated across 500 players became a structural edge.

Clubs were not treated as adversaries. FRMF worked with Botola sides

to protect young players from burn-out and early retirement and unregulated transfers. Compensation mechanisms and solidarity payments were enforced. When clubs profit from development, they invest more in it.

Morocco's leaders communicated a decade-long project. They did not promise instant World Cup glory after 2018. They promised better academies, better coaches, and better pathways. By 2022, the world saw the result. By 2023-2024, youth trophies confirmed the pipeline.

They did not blame the league for everything. They did not abandon Europe-based players. They did not rotate coaches every 12 months. They did not confuse "activity" for "progress." They focused on fewer things, and did them well for longer.

Nigeria has more registered players, more football history, and more global exports than Morocco had in 2018 but could not do much with the resources. What we lack is the same institutional patience and discipline. Our NPFL is underfunded, our academies are fragmented and used to trade players. Our diaspora engagement is ad hoc, and our technical plans rarely survive an election cycle.

The lessons Nigeria can take, starting now are clear. First, fund and audit 3-4 regional elite academies to Mohammed VI standards. Second, unify the youth curriculum and retrain coaches at scale. Third, create a dedicated diaspora unit that tracks U-15 to U-20 players early. Fourth, protect the NPFL with club licensing and broadcast revenue reforms. Fifth, give a technical blueprint of 8-10 years, not 8-10 months.

Morocco's rise from 2018 to date is not magic. It is a design. A decent league did not make them a global force. Structure, administration, and deliberate recruitment did. If Nigeria remembers the process, and respects the timeline, the next 24 years do not have to look like the last 24. The talent is already here. The system must catch up. Time to act is now.



2026 World Cup: Belgium stun Senegal 3-2 with late comeback

Belgium defeated Senegal 3-2 after extra time in a thrilling 2026 FIFA World Cup Round of 32 encounter. The result saw Belgium overturn a two-goal deficit to secure a dramatic place in the

Round of 16. Senegal started strongly and took control after Habib Diarra opened scoring in the 25th minute. The Teranga Lions displayed energy and discipline, keeping Belgium under pressure through-

out the opening exchanges. Senegal doubled their advantage in the 51st minute through Ismaila Sarr's close-range finish.

Moussa Niakhaté provided the assist as Senegal moved 2-0 ahead and appeared set for victory.

Belgium struggled to match Senegal's intensity, forcing coach Rudi Garcia into tactical adjustments.

Romelu Lukaku replaced Charles De Ketelaere, while Nicolas Raskin came on for Kevin De Bruyne.

Dodi Lukebakio also entered the game, replacing Jérémy Doku in Belgium's search for a comeback.

Diego Moreira was later introduced for Hans Vanaken as Belgium continued pushing

forward.

The match became increasingly physical, with both teams fighting fiercely for midfield control.

Brandon Mechele received a yellow card for Belgium, while Lamine Camara was booked for Senegal.

Senegal coach made further changes, introducing Ibrahima Mbaye and replacing goalscorer Habib Diarra.

Belgium's pressure eventually produced a breakthrough late in the second half. Lukaku reduced the deficit in the 86th minute, giving Belgium renewed belief.

"Romelu's goal changed the momentum and gave us the confidence to keep fighting," the Belgian coach said.



BELGIUM VS SENEGAL MATCH

Commonwealth Games: Tinubu urges Team Nigeria to win clean, break record at Games

President Bola Tinubu has urged Team Nigeria to compete with integrity and surpass the country's best-ever Commonwealth Games performance at the 2026 edition in Glasgow, Scotland.

The President also warned athletes against doping, urging them to depend on talent, discipline and hard work to achieve success on the global sporting stage.

Tinubu gave the charge on Thursday at the State House, Abuja, while receiving Team Nigeria athletes and officials before their departure for the Games.

The President was represented by his Chief of Staff, Mr Femi Gbajabiamila, during the farewell ceremony attended by sports administrators and government officials.

Tinubu recalled Nigeria's record haul of 35 medals at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, challenging the contingent to establish a new national benchmark.

He reminded the athletes that millions of Nigerians would be following their performances with hope, pride and high expectations throughout the competition.

"Whenever our athletes wear the green and white, they carry the hopes, pride, prayers and expectations of over 200 million Nigerians," he said.

The President stressed that sporting success should never come at the expense of integrity, insisting that clean victo-

ries carried greater value than medals obtained dishonestly.

"Winning is important, but winning clean is more important. Medals are valuable, but integrity is priceless," he declared.

He urged the athletes to compete courageously while remaining faithful to fair play and the anti-doping rules governing international sports.

"Go to Glasgow and compete with courage, but also compete clean. Let your performance be driven by talent, training, discipline and the Nigerian fighting spirit," he said.



TEAM NIGERIA

King Amakree, GSS Gboko win Milo Basketball Championships

King Amakree Academy, Obuama, Rivers, defeated Father O'Connell Science College, Minna, 56-54 to win the boys' title at the 26th Nestlé Milo Secondary Schools Basketball Championship.

The final produced a thrilling

contest, with both teams displaying exceptional skill, determination and resilience throughout the fiercely contested encounter.

King Amakree Academy edged the opening quarter 15-14, but defending champions Father O'Connell Science College responded strongly

to seize control of the contest.

The Niger side dominated the second and third quarters, extending their advantage to 31-25 before leading 47-39 heading into the decisive final period.

Their disciplined defence, quick transitions and accurate three-point shooting kept the Rivers team under pressure for much of the game.

However, King Amakree Academy mounted a remarkable comeback in the fourth quarter with aggressive defending, improved ball movement and unwavering determination.

The Rivers boys forced the scores level at 54-54 with only two seconds remaining after sustained pressure unsettled their opponents.



MILO BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

2026 NHSL: Asumah charges Police Machine to bounce back after Kada Stars defeat

Samson Asumah, Captain of Police Machine Men's Hockey Club, has charged his team to remain focused and bounce back stronger in their subsequent matches at the ongoing 2026 Nigeria Hockey Super League (NHSL) in Abuja.

Asumah stated this on Wednesdays in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) at the National Hockey Pitch of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium.

He said that the team remained disciplined and united in spite of the result, and that they would improve in subsequent games.

"We are well organised as a team, and we remain so. In sports, when two strong sides meet, one must give way."

"We thank God for the matches so far. It was a good game, but not the result we wanted," he said.

He admitted that his side fell short against defending champions Kada Stars Hockey Club after trailing 2-0 in the first quarter, but insisted the team gave their best but Kada Stars won 5-1.

"We tried everything possible, but it didn't work out. However, I charge my team to stay focused."

"We have experience and skill, and we will come back stronger in the next match," he said.

The Police Machine side started their campaign recording mixed results in the competition, including a 9-1 win over I-GP Flickers Hockey Club; 0-0 draw with Plateau Tigers; a 3-2 win over Yobe

Desert Rollers and a 2-0 victory over South West and today, a 5-1 loss to Kada Stars.

In a separate reaction, Abubakar Ndana, Team Manager of Kada Stars and Kada Queens Hockey Clubs, said his players were initially disappointed after conceding a goal but quickly regained composure.

"The players were not happy conceding a goal, but I told them that it is part of the game."

"They have the experience and are still maintaining an unbeaten run," Ndana said.

Other results in the men's category saw I-GP Flickers drew 2-2 with Adamawa State, South West shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw with Stallions, while Niger Flickers Hockey Club secured a convincing 5-0 win over Yobe Desert Rollers.

In the women's category, Kada Queens recorded a 3-0 win over Delta Queens, Edo Queens played out a 1-1 draw with Yobe Desert Queens, while I-GP Babes fell 1-3 to South West.

NAN reports that Police Machine will play Stallions Hockey Club on Thursday by 4 p.m., While Kada Stars will face Adamawa State by 2 p.m.

A total of nine teams including Kada Stars, Plateau Tigers, Police Machine, Niger Flickers, Stallions, Adamawa State, Yobe Desert Rollers, I-GP Flickers, and South West are competing in the men's category of the tournament.

The 2026 Nigeria Hockey Super League, which began on June 26, is scheduled to end on July 5 in Abuja



SAMSON ASUMAH