

EDSEIC presents Certificates of Return to newly elected Edo LG chairmen, councillors

BENIN CITY
The Edo Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) on Monday presented Certificates of Return to the chairmen and vice chairmen elected during Saturday's election into the 18 local government areas of the state.

Presenting the certificates at the commission's headquarters in Benin, the Chairman of EDSIEC, Mr Jonathan Aifuobhokhan, said the exercise marked the successful completion of the 2026 local government election. He congratulated all candidates, who took part in the election, especially those declared

winners, and urged them to serve the people with honesty, fairness and accountability. "The Certificate of Return is more than an official document. It is a mandate given to you by the people of your respective local government areas. "Public office is a sacred trust. Lead with integrity, humility and

fairness, and always work for the good of the people," he said. Aifuobhokhan urged the elected officials to promote peace and unity, carry everyone along regardless of political affiliation, religion or ethnicity, and use public resources wisely. He also urged them to focus on development that would

improve the lives of people at the grassroots. The EDSIEC chairman thanked the Edo government, security agencies, political parties, election observers, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, the media, election officials and residents for their support.

This, he said, contributed to the peaceful conduct of the election. Responding on behalf of the elected chairmen, the Chairman-elect of Oredo local Government area commended the commission for conducting what he described as a free, fair

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Abidjan Summit: African Union invites Edo Govt to showcase energy reforms

RICHARD EWEKA
COTE D'IVOIRE
The African Union Commission (AUC) has invited Edo State Commissioner for Power to speak at a high-level continental summit in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in recognition of the state's progress in the energy sector. The invitation was conveyed in a letter signed by Mr Regis Tade, Innovation Expert

in the Directorate of Industry, Mining, Entrepreneurship and Tourism (IMET), under the African Union Commission's Department of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals (ETTİM). According to the letter, the Commissioner has been invited to serve as an Inspirational Speaker on the Founder Stage during the Joint 9th Specialised Technical Committee (STC)

on Finance and the 5th STC on Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals. The event is scheduled to take place in Abidjan, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, from July 20 to 24, 2026. The Commission said the invitation was in recognition of the "notable progress achieved by Edo State in the energy sector," describing the state's experience as an example of innovation, vision and

results-driven leadership that could inspire other African countries. The summit will bring together government officials, policy-makers, development partners, private sector leaders and other stakeholders to discuss strategies for financing Africa's industrialisation and sustainable economic development. The African Union said it expected Edo State to share its

experience in advancing energy infrastructure and reforms, noting that the state's achievements would contribute to discussions on industrial growth and sustainable development across the continent. The Commission stated that details of the programme, participation format and other arrangements had been outlined in the formal invitation sent to the governor. It also expressed its

readiness to provide further clarification ahead of the meeting. A copy of the correspondence was also sent to the Edo State Commissioner for Power, Hon Paul Usenbo. The invitation marks a continental recognition of Edo State's efforts to strengthen its energy sector, which the state government has identified as a key driver of industrialisation, investment and economic growth.

Okpebholo pledges ₦41 million for Edo returnees from S/Africa

BENIN CITY
Edo State Governor Monday Okpebholo has pledged N1 million to each Edo indigene evacuated from South Africa following xenophobic attacks, saying the money will help them secure accommodation and rebuild their lives. The governor made the announcement on Monday while receiving the returnees at the Festival Hall of the Government House in Benin City. He said the state government would also provide soft loans to enable the returnees to start businesses and reintegrate into society. "Your success begins today. Many of you possess knowledge and skills in different

areas. Once you identify what you want to do, come to us. We will give you a soft loan to start with because we want you to fully reintegrate into society," Okpebholo said. He added that each returnee would receive N1 million within 24 hours to help with accommodation. "Between now and tomorrow, you will receive that money so you will not be stranded. There is no place better than home. Nobody will chase you away from here. We have peace here. Edo is safe, and Nigeria is safe," he said. The governor urged the returnees to focus on rebuilding their lives, saying their survival was more important than the

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

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NEWS

NUC approves medicine, 4 health programmes for Wellspring University

EDWARD OSEGHE

BENIN CITY

Wellspring University has entered a new phase in its academic development following the National Universities Commission's (NUC) approval of medicine and four new undergraduate health programmes

beginning from the 2026/2027 academic session.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Isaac Rotimi Ajayi, announced the milestone during a press conference at the University's Senate Chamber on Friday, describing the approval as a landmark achievement that reinforces the institution's commitment to producing globally competi-

tive healthcare professionals.

Professor Ajayi explained that the approval followed a comprehensive resource verification and assessment exercise conducted by a panel of NUC experts in April 2026, which evaluated the University's academic manpower, governance structure, physical infrastructure, laboratories, teaching

facilities and institutional capacity to deliver quality programmes in line with national and international standards.

The newly approved programmes are Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), B.Sc. Human Anatomy, B.Sc. Human Physiology, Bachelor of Health Information Management (BHIM), and Bachelor of Community Health Science (B.CHS.).

According to the Vice-Chancellor, the approval places Wellspring University among the se-

lect Nigerian universities licensed by the NUC to train medical doctors, while also producing professionals in anatomy, physiology, health information management and community health sciences to strengthen healthcare delivery across the country.

He disclosed that the University has made significant investments in modern laboratories, anatomy and simulation facilities, ICT-driven teaching infrastructure, research, staff development and other learning resources required to sustain quality medical education. He added that experienced professors, consultants and other medical specialists have been engaged to ensure effective delivery of the programmes.

Professor Ajayi further revealed that the University has put in place arrangements for students' clinical training through designated teaching and specialist hospitals, while efforts are ongoing to secure all necessary professional approvals, including accreditation by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) for the MBBS programme.

He assured that the institution would continue to comply with the quality assurance requirements of both the NUC and relevant professional regulatory bodies to maintain high academic standards.

Speaking on admissions, the Vice-Chancellor said the newly approved programmes would admit their pioneer students during the 2026/2027 academic session, urging qualified candidates to obtain admission details through the University's Admissions Office or via its official website, www.wellspringuniversity.edu.ng.

He noted that admission into the medical programmes would strictly follow the admission guidelines prescribed by the NUC, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and other relevant regulatory agencies.

Responding to questions from journalists, Professor Ajayi said the choice of the five programmes was informed by the University's strategic vision to contribute meaningfully to addressing Nigeria's growing shortage of doctors and other healthcare professionals, while meeting the increasing demand for quality health education.

He expressed confidence that the programmes would not only strengthen healthcare manpower in Edo State and Nigeria but also stimulate medical research, innovation and community-based healthcare interventions capable of improving public health outcomes.

The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that attaining the approval required years of careful planning, significant investment in infrastructure, recruitment of qualified personnel and strict compliance with regulatory benchmarks established by the NUC.

He described the approval as a vote of confidence in the University's academic quality and institutional readiness.

Professor Ajayi expressed profound appreciation to the National Universities Commission for its confidence in Wellspring University and commended the institution's Board of Trustees, Governing Council, Senate, Management, staff, students and stakeholders for their dedication and unwavering support in achieving the milestone.



DEVELOPMENT EFFORT:

The Commander Infantry Corps, Major General Godwin Mukut, Commissioning infrastructural projects during an operational assessment visit to the headquarters of 4 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Benin city, on Saturday.

Army Tasks Troops on Family Values, Commissions Projects in Edo

MIKE OSAROIGAGBON

BENIN CITY

The Nigerian Army has urged its personnel to uphold strong family values, saying a stable home front is essential for effective military service.

The Commander Infantry Corps, Major General Godwin Mukut, gave the charge on Saturday during an operational assessment visit to the Headquarters of 4 Brigade Nigerian Army, Benin City.

Addressing officers and soldiers after commissioning several infrastructural projects, Mukut said love, care and respect for family members would enhance discipline, commitment and efficiency in service.

He also conveyed the goodwill message of the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, and commended the troops for their loyalty, resilience, professionalism and unwavering commitment to duty.

The senior officer urged the

personnel to remain focused in the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities while upholding the core values and ethics of the Nigerian Army.

Mukut also praised the brigade's proactive operational posture, noting that it had contributed to improved security and peace across Edo State.

He commissioned a remodelled brigade conference room, a new operations room, a sick bay, an ultra-modern fire point, a quarter guard and a newly constructed brigade mascot and fountain.

The Commander, 4 Brigade,

Brigadier General Ahmed Balogun, thanked the Infantry Corps commander for the visit and reaffirmed the brigade's commitment to protecting lives and property while maintaining professionalism and operational excellence.

Captain Kennedy Anyanwu, Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 4 Brigade Nigerian Army, Benin City, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday.

The visit also featured a tour of facilities at the Nigerian Army Cantonment, Ekehuan, an interactive session with officers and soldiers, and the presentation of souvenirs.

Army intercepts illegal arms shipment, foils trafficking network in Kaduna

OBOH SYLVESTER

ABUJA

Troops of Sector 7, Operation ENDURING PEACE, have intercepted an illegal arms shipment in Kaduna State, recovering seven firearms and disrupting a suspected weapons trafficking network operating across Plateau and Niger states.

An operational report made available on Monday in Abuja said the intelligence-led operation followed credible information on the movement of illicit

arms from Jos, Plateau, to Niger.

The report said troops conducted a targeted stop-and-search operation in the early hours of Monday and intercepted an ash-coloured Mercedes-Benz at the Samaru Checkpoint in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

It said a thorough search of the vehicle led to the recovery of three locally fabricated AK-47 rifles and four submachine guns (SMGs) carefully concealed inside the vehicle.

According to the report, one suspect attempted to evade ar-

rest during the operation but was shot while trying to escape.

It added that the suspect was immediately evacuated to the Sector 7 Medical Centre in Kafanchan, where he is receiving treatment.

The report said preliminary investigations indicated that the weapons were allegedly supplied by two suspected arms dealers based in Jos and were being transported to an intended recipient in Niger State.

It said the successful interception underscored the Nigerian Army's resolve to

disrupt arms proliferation and dismantle criminal networks threatening national security.

The report added that the Army would continue to work in synergy with other security agencies and law-abiding citizens to deny criminal elements freedom of action across the country.

It also urged members of the public to continue providing timely and credible information to security agencies to support efforts at tackling criminality and safeguarding lives and property.

EDSEIC presents Certificates...

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and credible election.

He said the elected chairmen would support the development agenda of the Edo government and work for the welfare of the people.

He assured residents that

they would not disappoint the electorate but would work to deliver dividends of democracy at the grassroots.

Recall that candidates of the All Progressives Congress won in the 18 chairmanship seats as well as 192 councillorship positions.

Okpebholo pledges N41 million...

property they had lost.

"They may have taken everything away from you, but your life is more important than the things they took. As a government, we will continue to support our people wherever they are. If they are in distress, we will rescue them and ensure they do not go through such experiences again," he said.

Governor Okpebholo also reflected on the historical relationship between Nigeria and South Africa, saying Nigerians had previously protected South Africans and their businesses and would not retaliate despite the attacks.

Speaking on behalf of the

returnees, Riches Unubun thanked the Edo State and Federal Governments for facilitating their evacuation from South Africa.

"When we leave here, we have the civic responsibility to appreciate what the Edo State Government has done for us. Let them take us to where we can register and collect our voter cards because we want these great things happening in Edo to continue," he said.

The Director-General of the Edo State Migration Agency, Lucky Agazuma, commended the governor for supporting Edo indigenes facing hardship in other African countries.

Support Okpebholo's agenda, Idahosa tells Edo people

BENIN CITY

Edo State Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has urged residents of the state to embrace unity, cooperation and shared responsibility in support of Governor Monday Okpebholo's

development agenda, saying sustainable growth can only be achieved when government and citizens work together.

In a statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Friday Aghedo, Idahosa made

the appeal on Sunday at a thanksgiving service held in honour of the late mother of the Edo State Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Hon. Jerry Uwangue.

The thanksgiving service drew government officials, po-

litical leaders, clerics, family members, friends and other well-wishers, who gathered to celebrate the life and legacy of the deceased.

Speaking at the event, the Deputy Governor commended the Uwangue family

for choosing to honour their late matriarch with a thanksgiving service, describing the occasion as a befitting tribute to a woman whose life was marked by faith, sacrifice and selfless service.

He noted that beyond mourning loved ones, such occasions offer an opportunity for reflection on enduring values such as love, compassion, unity and peaceful coexistence.

Idahosa said Edo people must continue to rally behind the policies and programmes of the Okpebholo administration, emphasizing that meaningful development flourishes where there is mutual trust, collaboration and active citizen participation.

According to him, con-

structive engagement and collective responsibility, rather than unproductive criticism, are vital to achieving lasting progress, adding that every resident has a role to play in building a stronger and more prosperous Edo State.

The Deputy Governor reaffirmed the commitment of the Governor Monday Okpebholo-led administration to delivering people-oriented policies and impactful projects aimed at improving the welfare and living standards of citizens across the state.

He also called on residents to remain steadfast in supporting government initiatives while offering prayers for the continued peace, stability and sustainable development of Edo State



MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE:

A section of Ramat Park Flyover, Benin City, Edo State, just completed within the timelines publicly announced by Gov. Monday Okpebholo.

Ramat Park Flyover timely completion justifies public confidence in Okpebholo

BY BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

Residents of Benin City have continued to commend Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, following the completion of the Ramat Park Flyover, a major infrastructure project he flagged off in November 2024 with a pledge to complete it within 18 months.

Speaking with our cor-

respondent, an 85-year-old landlord on Jemila Road near the Ramat Park axis, Pa Ehigiatior Ibizugbe, said it is uncommon for elected public officials in Nigeria to complete major projects within the timelines they publicly announce. He noted that Governor Monday Okpebholo had distinguished himself by matching his words with action.

A commercial driver, Mr. Osagie Ekhatior, described the flyover and the associated

road in the vicinity as a major relief for motorists and commuters.

"When the Governor flagged off this project, many people doubted it would be completed as promised. Today, he has shown that leadership is about integrity. Governor Monday Okpebholo has proven himself to be a promise keeper and a leader the people can trust," he said.

Mrs. Grace Omoregie, a trader in the Ramat Park area, said the completed flyover is already boosting commercial

activities and ease the traffic congestion that had disrupted businesses for years.

"This project has also transformed the area. We are grateful to the Governor for keeping his word. It is not every day that politicians fulfil their campaign and project promises. This gives us hope that government can truly work for the people," she said.

Another resident, Mr. Kingsley Aigbokhan, described the project as a reflection of a new approach to governance in Edo State.

Appeal Court upholds judgment barring INEC from recognizing Mark-led ADC congress

ABUJA

The Court of Appeal in Abuja on Monday upheld the judgment restraining the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from recognising state congresses organised by committees appointed by the David Mark-led caretaker leadership of the African Democratic Congress (ADC).

A three-member panel of the appellate court, in a judgment delivered by Justice Okon Abang, said it found no reason to set aside the restraining order the Federal High Court in Abuja had issued against the Mark-led ADC on April 29.

It further upheld the order of Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, which restrained the Mark-led executives from interfering with the tenure and functions of the party's elected state executives.

The court concurred that responsibility for conducting state congresses of political

parties rests with elected state executive committees, not with the national leadership.

Justices Abang and Donatus Okorowo gave the majority verdict barring the electoral body from acknowledging the outcome of congresses held by the Mark-led leadership of the ADC.

The head of the appellate court's panel, Justice Abba Mohammed, gave a dissenting judgment.

In his minority decision, Justice Mohammed held that the case that precipitated the restraining order bordered on a non-justiciable internal affair of a political party.

He held that the trial court was wrong to have assumed jurisdiction to entertain the matter.

This judgment may jeopardise the presidential candidacies of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and other candidates who emerged through the national congress organised by the Mark-led faction of the ADC, ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Auchi Politechnic boasts quality academic staff, says Rector

AUCHI

The Rector of Auchi Polytechnic, Dr. Shehu S. Umar has said that over 230 of its teaching staff now has Masters and PhD degrees with half of the number sponsored by the polytechnic under his watch.

Dr Umar disclosed this while speaking with journalists in his office while highlighting his achievements so far as rector.

He further stated that the Polytechnic had less than 60 programmes which has now been increased to 96 programmes with additional new schools in the polytechnic.

The Rector said the Polytechnic's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) was basically based on student's enrollment, hence, he decided to establish revenue generating projects such as the Polytechnic's Micro finance bank; the remodeling

of the institution's guest house into viable PPP initiatives.

Others he said were the pure water and bread bakery factories; paint and blocks industries; Printing press; Welding and fabrication; Mechanic and automobile workshop equipped for commercial viability, all of which have tremendously improved the IGR of the Polytechnic.

Dr Umar whose tenure expires in February 2027, used the opportunity to thank and appreciate the management, staff and students of the Polytechnic for their unwavering support and cooperation.

He equally thanked the host communities and its environs for the peaceful coexistence between the school, staff and students. "I want to say I have virtually lived my life in Auchi first as a youth corps member, then as a staff and now as a rector of the Polytechnic, because of the good relationship, our highly respected

traditional ruler, HRH Alhaji H. A. Momoh, Ikelebe II, the Otaru of Auchi Sacred Kingdom graciously given me the title of Giwa of Auchi Sacred Kingdom", he added.

Dr Umar who has well over 80 verifiable projects however listed some of his achievements as, the Establishment of Micro Finance Bank; Construction of 1.1km road linking campus 2 and 3 for the safety of students; establishment of National Skills Qualification (NSQ) with well equipped materials.

He also listed the historic launching and commencement of the Open, Distance and Flexible E-learning centre; additional 10 degrees programmes in affiliation with Federal University Lokoja; creation of students portal for results and ID cards registration; construction of 250 twin capacity lecture theatre and computer laboratories; con-

struction of 250 twin computer e-learning centre; remodeling of the school of ICT and sponsorship of over 150 staff for their Masters and PhDs for staff development among others.

Customs, NMDPRA auctions seized petrol worth N38m

LAGOS

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has auctioned 20,500 litres of petrol worth N38 million intercepted by Operation Whirlwind in the Lagos - Ogun axis.

The National Coordinator of Operation Whirlwind, Deputy Comptroller, Abubakar Aliyu, said this while addressing stakeholders on Monday at the Customs Training College, Ikeja.

Aliu said that the exercise was carried out on the directive of the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adeniyi.

He said the Nigeria Customs

Service remained committed to its constitutional mandate of safeguarding the national economy, protecting critical assets, and dismantling all networks involved in smuggling and economic sabotage across the country.

According to him, surveillance, intelligence gathering and enforcement have been intensified along major routes notorious for the illegal diversion and cross-border smuggling of petroleum products to neighboring countries.

Aliyu said that operation Whirlwind was established as a strategic national initiative to combat the illegal diver-

sion of petroleum products, protect Nigeria's energy security, and ensure that products meant for domestic use reach legitimate consumers.

"Acting on credible intelligence, operatives dismantled a coordinated smuggling syndicate and intercepted 820 jerry-cans of 25 litres each, totaling 20,500 litres of petrol across flashpoints.

"These include Imeko, Ilara, Ilaro, Idiroko and Seme-Badagry," he said.

He said that in addition to the seized products, five vehicles used for conveying the PMS were also impounded.

Edo LG Poll: APC records landslide victory... wins all 18 chairmanship, 192 councillorship seats

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) has declared candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as winners of the chairmanship election in the 18 local government areas of the state, held on Saturday.

Mr Jonathan Aifuobhokhan, Chairman of the Commission, who announced this at a news conference on Sunday in Benin, said the party also won all 192 councillorship seats in the election.

The chairman noted that the election was successfully conducted across the 18 local government areas and 192 wards in the state.

According to him, accreditation, voting, sorting, counting, collation and declaration of results were carried out in accordance with the Edo State Local Government Electoral Law 2022, as amended in 2026, and

other applicable regulations.

"Following the completion of collation process at the various ward and local government collation centres, the duly appointed ward and local government returning officers announced and declared the results in their respective jurisdictions.

"Based on the official results declared by the returning officers, the commission hereby declares that the All Progressives Congress won the 18 local government chairmanship positions and all the 192 councillorship seats contested in the election," he said.

The EDSIEC chairman expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the returning officers, saying they discharged their statutory responsibilities professionally, impartially and in accordance with the law.

He noted that the election was conducted peacefully across the state, in spite of minor operational challenges

in a few locations.

"Overall, the election was conducted peacefully across the state.

"While there were minor operational challenges in a few locations, these did not substantially affect the overall conduct or outcome of the election," he said.

Aifuobhokhan said the com-

mission would continue to improve future electoral processes through periodic reviews and stakeholder engagement.

He lauded Gov. Monday Okpebholo for providing what he described as an enabling environment for the commission to discharge its constitutional responsibilities.

The chairman also commended political parties, candidates, traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society organisations, community leaders, youths, women groups and the electorate for their peaceful conduct during the election.

He further praised the Nigeria Police Force and other security

agencies for maintaining law and order throughout the exercise.

Aifuobhokhan also acknowledged the role of the media, election observers and EDSIEC members of staff, including electoral officers, returning officers, presiding officers, ICT personnel and logistics teams, for ensuring the successful conduct of the poll.



LEADING BY EXAMPLE:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, casts his ballot during the Local Government elections at his polling unit in Udomi, Esan Central Local Government Area, reaffirming his commitment to grassroots democracy and the election of council chairmen and councillors across Edo State's 18 local government areas.

Photo by Government House, Benin City

Edo LG Chairmen - elect pledge to tackle insecurity

BENIN CITY

The newly elected Chairmen in Edo have pledged to address insecurity, improve infrastructure, healthcare and education in their respective Local Government Areas.

The chairmen made the pledge on Monday in Benin, shortly after they received their Certificates of Return from the Edo Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC).

The certificates were presented at the commission's headquarters by EDSIEC Chairman, Mr Jonathan Aifuobhokhan, following the recently concluded local government elections.

Speaking after collecting his certificate, Robert Akande, Chairman-elect, Akoko-Edo local government council, described his victory as a mandate to serve the people and promised to make security one of his administration's top priorities.

He said his administration would work closely with security agencies, traditional rulers and other stakeholders to tackle insecurity, while also rehabilitating dilapidated schools, health facilities, court buildings and other public infrastructure across the council area.

Akande also pledged to unite residents irrespective of political affiliation, saying he would govern for everyone in Akoko-Edo.

"I am now the chairman-elect for the entire Akoko-Edo local government area, not just the APC. We are going to bring our people

together, irrespective of political differences, and ensure they enjoy the dividends of democracy.

"On security, we will partner with security agencies, traditional rulers and other stakeholders to reduce insecurity to the barest minimum," he said.

Similarly, Romeo Alaoye, chairman-elect, Etsako West local government area, also promised prudent management of public funds.

His administration, he said, would focus on improving security, healthcare and basic education in collaboration with the state government.

According to him, investing in primary education and delivering meaningful development at the grassroots would remain key priorities of his administration.

"We are going to make sure taxpayers' money is used for the benefit of our people. We will work with the state government to improve security, strengthen healthcare and give more attention to basic education because that is where every child's future begins," Alaoye said.

Aifuobhokhan had while presenting the certificates of return, congratulated the elected chairmen and councillors, urging them to justify the confidence reposed in them by the electorate through dedicated service, accountability and respect for democratic principles.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) recalls that the All Progressives Congress won in all the 18 local government areas of the state, where elections were held on Saturday.

Okpebholo scores voter turnout high as observer hails peaceful Edo LG poll

UDOMI

Governor Monday Okpebholo, has described voter turnout in the local government elections as encouraging, while accredited election observers said voting had been peaceful and orderly across the state.

The governor spoke after casting his ballot at Ward 2, Udomi Primary School, in Esan Central Local Government Area, where voting commenced early with electoral officials and security personnel on ground.

The Governor arrived at his polling unit at about 10:24 a.m. and joined other voters in the queue before exercising

his civic responsibility at exactly 10:40 a.m. He then spent several minutes interacting with stakeholders before speaking to journalists covering the election.

He commended voters for their orderly conduct and said reports reaching him from other parts of the State indicated that the election was progressing peacefully.

"This election is very peaceful and it is going smoothly based on the feedback we are getting from the field," he said. "The turnout is very high. This is a demonstration of grassroots democracy. It shows that our people are interested in choosing those who will administer the af-

fairs of their local governments. By the grace of God, a winner will emerge at the end of today's election."

He urged residents to continue conducting themselves peacefully throughout the voting process and to await the official declaration of results by the Edo State Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC).

Some accredited election observers also gave a positive assessment of the conduct of the poll.

Speaking with journalists in Udomi, the Executive Director of the Initiative for Awareness of Civic Education for Citizens, Comrade Fidelis Nwoke, said many observer groups deployed across the state did not record any major security breach or disruption as voting progressed.

According to him, his organisation, alongside other accredited observer groups, monitored polling units in Udomi, Igueben and found the process to be generally peaceful.

"My organisation and several other observer groups have been fully accredited to monitor the Edo State local government election. Reports coming in from different parts of the state indicate that the process has been peaceful so far," Nwoke said.

"We have monitored Udomi, Igueben and other locations. We have observed that the exercise has been peaceful, orderly and smooth. Electoral officials arrived, voters have been able to cast their ballots and, at the end of the exercise, winners and losers will naturally emerge."

N1.8b transfered into my account during Ishaku's tenure - Witness

ABUJA

A Prosecution Witness, Mr Taiwo Jones told an Abuja High Court that N1.8billion local government funds was transferred into his private company account during the tenure of former Governor Darius Ishaku.

Jones, an assistant cashier in the Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs of Taraba, made this known while testifying in the

trial of Ishaku.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) charged Ishaku and a former Permanent Secretary, Bureau for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs in the state, Bello Yero, with criminal breach of trust, conspiracy and conversion of public funds to the tune of N27billion.

The defendants pleaded not guilty to the charge.

Led in evidence by the

EFCC counsel, Rotimi Jacobs, SAN, the witness said he received a total of 69 transfers from Gassol Local Government Area of Taraba.

When asked to estimate the total amount, he replied, "about N1.7 to 1.8 million."

Jones said he received the funds on "the instructions of the permanent secretary (Yero) of the Director of Finance."

"I inform them when the money hits my account and

they will give me further directives to send it to Prince in Abuja or to withdraw some.

"After withdrawal, Dare Lawal the first prosecution witness and others will confirm the money.

Justice Sylvanus Orij, asked the witness, "Who are they?"

He replied, "PS (Yero), the driver and Lawal."

The witness added that Yero sometimes takes the cash to Taraba Government House.

ADC dismisses rival nomination portal claim, urges INEC to probe alleged forgery

ABUJA

African Democratic Congress (ADC) has dismissed claims by a rival group of uploading presidential nomination details to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) portal, describing it as false.

Consequently, the party has urged INEC to investigate what it described as forgery and unauthorised use of documents it purportedly issued.

The party's National Pub-

licity Secretary, Mallam Bollaji Abdullahi, in a statement issued on Monday in Abuja, said it was not true that a group, led by Nafiu Bala, uploaded names of presidential and other candidates into the INEC nomination portal.

According to him, INEC cannot issue nomination portal access or nomination codes to a leadership it does not officially recognise under the Electoral Act.

He said that the commission would not issue separate

nomination portal codes to different groups claiming leadership of the same registered political party.

"The claim is a blatant lie. INEC does not issue nomination portal access or nomination codes to a leadership it does not recognise," Abdullahi said.

He challenged those making the allegation to provide credible evidence showing that an unrecognised group successfully accessed and up-

loaded nominations on the commission's portal.

The spokesman said the party had formally notified INEC of what it considered apparent forgery and unauthorised use of documents bearing the commission's identity.

"We trust that the commission will investigate this matter and take necessary steps to correct this blatant misrepresentation," he said.

Abdullahi declared that ADC was not factionalised, insisting that INEC recognised only one leadership which had completed its nomination process lawfully.

He said the party had already uploaded details of its presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and vice-presidential candidate, Rotimi Amaechi, on the INEC portal.

"Our focus remains firmly on presenting Nigerians with a credible alternative that can restore security, revive the economy and create jobs in 2027," he said.

The spokesman urged party members, supporters, the media and the public to disregard contrary claims and rely only on official communications issued through authorised ADC channels.

Choose natural foods for better health, Mrs. Soludo urges Nigerians

AWKA

Wife of Anambra Governor, Dr Nonye Soludo, has urged Nigerians to embrace natural foods instead of highly processed alternatives to promote healthy living and reduce the risk of lifestyle-related diseases. Soludo made the call on Monday while speaking to newsmen when she was harvesting maize from her farm at the government house in Awka.

She noted that local fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, roots and tubers contained essential nutrients needed to keep the body healthy and strong.

"Returning to nature is one of the greatest gifts people can

give their bodies, because natural foods help to strengthen immunity, improve digestion, maintain healthy body weight and provide energy for daily activities.

"Choosing wholesome foods over highly processed alternatives contributes significantly to better health outcomes and overall well-being," she said.

The governor's wife said healthy eating did not require expensive meals or strict dieting but rather consistent, wise food choices.

She urged Nigerians to embrace the goodness of nature by engaging in backyard farming and filling their plates with wholesome foods.

According to her, every healthy meal is an investment in a longer, stronger and happier life.



THE LATTER'S VISIT:

First Lady of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu with the APC Gubernatorial Flagbearer for Nasarawa State, Sen. Aliyu Wadada during the latter's visit to the First Lady at the State House, Abuja.

Navy, NDLEA joint operation disrupts illegal drug trade in Delta, nabs suspect

ABUJA

The Nigerian Navy and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in a joint operation in the fight against illicit drug trafficking has disrupted illegal drug activities across parts of Delta.

This was contained in an operational report by the Director of Naval Information, Capt. Abiodun Folorunsho, made available on Monday in Abuja.

Folorunsho said that the operation was conducted by personnel of the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) DELTA and operatives of the NDLEA as part of the ongoing efforts to sanitise the Nigerian Navy's area of operation.

He said that the efforts aimed to deny criminal elements the freedom to traffic and distribute illicit substances in the area.

"The joint team carried out coordinated raids across the Urchie, Uvwiamuge, Orthokpor, and Usiefrun axes of Warri.

"The operation led to the arrest of one suspect and the seizure of various illicit substances, including Molly, Can-

nabis, and Skuruchi.

"It also dealt a significant blow to the local drug distribution network," he said.

The director of naval information said that the successful operation underscored the strong collaboration between the navy and the NDLEA in addressing the nexus between illicit drug trafficking and other forms of criminality.

By MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

BENIN CITY

The Nigerian Army has urged its personnel to uphold strong family values, saying a stable home front is essential to effective military service.

The Commander Infantry Corps, Major General Godwin Mutkut, gave the charge during an operational assessment visit to the Headquarters of 4 Brigade Nigerian Army, Benin City.

Addressing officers and

soldiers after commissioning several infrastructural projects, Mutkut said love, care and respect for family members would enhance discipline, commitment and efficiency in service.

He also conveyed the goodwill message of the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu, and commended the troops for their loyalty, resilience, professionalism and unwavering commitment to duty.

The senior officer urged the personnel to remain focused

in the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities while upholding the core values and ethics of the Nigerian Army.

Mutkut also praised the brigade's proactive operational posture, noting that it had contributed to improved security and peace across Edo State.

He commissioned a remodelled brigade conference room, a new operations room, a sick bay, an ultra-modern fire point, a quarter guard and a newly constructed brigade mascot and fountain.

The Commander, 4 Bri-

gade, Brigadier General Ahmed Balogun, thanked the Infantry Corps commander for the visit and reaffirmed the brigade's commitment to protecting lives and property while maintaining professionalism and operational excellence.

Captain Kennedy Anyanwu, Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 4 Brigade Nigerian Army, Benin City, disclosed this in a statement in Benin City.

The visit also featured a tour of facilities at the Nigerian Army Cantonment, Ekehuan, an interactive session

2026 UTME: Deeper Life High School Benin produces top Scorers, Ranks among Nigeria's best

BENIN CITY

Deeper Life High School (DLHS), Benin City Campus, has recorded an outstanding performance in the 2026 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), producing two of the highest-scoring students among all Deeper Life High School campuses nationwide.

Master Umukoro Oghenevovwero Gift emerged as the highest-scoring student in the Deeper Life High School network with an impressive score

of 367, ranking as the ninth highest scorer in Nigeria. Closely behind him was Master Agbonmamwen Odibosa Adriel, who scored 363 to emerge the second-best performer among all DLHS campuses.

The exceptional students attributed their remarkable success to God, the unwavering support of their parents, and the dedication of their teachers. They also credited disciplined study habits, consistency, determination, and self-belief for their outstanding performance. Sharing his experience, Umuko-

ro revealed that he devoted at least seven hours daily to studying but stressed that effective learning is driven more by focus than by the number of hours spent reading.

"As a science student, I studied consistently with a clear understanding of my goals and dreams. I remained disciplined, paid close attention to details, and refused to be discouraged," he said.

Agbonmamwen, on his part, praised the school for providing the right academic and moral foundation that shaped their success. He described the institution as a guardian that continually guides students toward excellence.

"The school has consistently lived up to its motto, Leadership with Distinction. The standard here remains high, with equal emphasis on moral values and academic excellence. We are truly fortunate to be students of Deeper Life High School," he said.

He also expressed appreciation to the Proprietor and Founder of the institution, Pastor (Dr.) William Folorunso Kumuyi, for his commitment to mentoring and nurturing students to become responsible leaders.

Speaking on the achievement, the school's JAMB Coordinator, Mr. Charles Sule, explained that students with exceptional

academic potential were identified early and placed in special competition classes, where experienced teachers closely monitored and mentored them.



Master Umukoro Oghenevovwero Gift

NEWS

Police confirm abduction of headmaster in Oyo as NUT seeks urgent rescue

OSHOGBO

The police command confirmed the abduction of a headmaster, Mr. Matthew Owode, 60, in Igbojaye, in Itesiwaju Local Government Area of Oyo State.

The Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Olayinka Ayanlade, confirmed the abduction in a text message sent to newsmen in Ibadan on Monday.

According to Ayanlade, Owode, the Headmaster of Nomadic Basic School (NBS), Ogodu, Igbojaye in Itesiwaju

was reportedly abducted at 6:00 p.m., on Saturday, while returning from his farm at Budo Aare.

He confirmed that efforts were ongoing to rescue the headmaster and apprehend those behind the abduction.

"The victims son, Mr Abiola Owode explained that the gunmen intercepted and whisked his father away to an unknown destination

"The son further said that the abductors had contacted the family and demanded for N30 million ransom," the police spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT), Oyo

State Wing, has expressed concern over the abduction of the primary school headmaster and called for his immediate rescue.

The Chairman and Secretary of the union, Mr Fatai Hassan and Mr Salami Olukayode, respectively, made the appeal in a statement made available to newsmen in Ibadan on Monday.

The union identified the victim as Mr M.K. Owode, Headmaster of Nomadic Basic School, Ogodu, Igbojaye, who was reportedly abducted by gunmen while working on his farm at about 5:00 p.m., on Saturday.

According to the statement, the incident was brought to the attention of the state leadership of the union through an urgent report from its Itesiwaju Local Government branch.

The union described the incident as disturbing, saying it highlighted the growing security challenges confronting teachers and other education workers across the country.

It urged the Federal Government, the Oyo state government, security agencies and other relevant authorities to intensify efforts to secure the immediate release of the abducted headmaster and strengthen security in schools and communities.

Lagos Intensifies crackdown on illegal structures along Badagry Expressway

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has intensified the removal of shanties, illegal structures and other environmental nuisances along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway as part of efforts to restore environmental order.

The Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Mr Tokunbo Wahab,

disclosed this in a post on his X handle on Monday.

Wahab said the enforcement exercise, which had been ongoing for the past three weeks, targeted illegal structures and activities obstructing public spaces along the corridor.

According to him, the operation will be followed by sustained surveillance and continuous monitoring to prevent a return of environmental infractions.

"Over the past three weeks, our enforcement team has intensified the clearance of shanties, illegal structures and other environmental nuisances along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway.

"This exercise will be followed by sustained surveillance and continuous monitoring to ensure that environmental order is restored and maintained along the corridor," he said.

The commissioner urged residents and traders to desist from

converting public spaces into illegal markets or using them for unauthorised private activities.

He warned that anyone found encroaching on public spaces or using them for unlawful purposes would be arrested and prosecuted in accordance with Lagos State laws.

"We urge members of the public to respect and preserve our environment by refraining from converting public spaces into illegal markets or for any unauthorised private use.

UNIBEN to honour Ambassador Eshioramhe with Award of Excellence

BENIN

The Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin (UNIBEN), has nominated Ambassador Bello Eshioramhe for its Award of Excellence in recognition of his outstanding contributions to community service and human development.

In a statement jointly signed by the Chairperson of the Planning/Organising Committee, Prof. Obose Angela Oriazowan-

lan, and the Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences, Prof. Sunny O. Igbinosa, the organisers said the award would be presented during the Professor Adebayo Akerele 9th Memorial Lecture Series.

The memorial lecture, themed "Financial Planning and Retirement Dilemma: The

Focus of Nigerian Employees," is scheduled to hold on Wednesday, July 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the Akin Deko Auditorium, Ugbowo Campus, University of Benin.

According to the statement, the Award of Excellence is reserved for individuals who have distinguished themselves

through exceptional service and made significant contributions to community and human development.

The organisers noted that Ambassador Eshioramhe was selected in recognition of his enduring commitment to humanitarian causes and his positive impact on society.

Family, friends celebrate Barrister Damisa on Call to Bar

LAGOS

Family, friends and well-wishers have extended warm congratulations to Barrister Ruth Oyenmen Damisa on her successful Call to the Nigerian Bar. The ceremony, held on June 8, 2026, at the Nigerian Law School, Abuja, marked her formal admission into the legal profession after successfully completing the required legal education and training.

In a goodwill message, Citizen Emmanuel Okhakhu described the achievement as a remarkable milestone, commending the new lawyer's dedication, perseverance and commitment to excellence throughout her academic and professional pursuits.

He expressed confidence that Barrister Ruth Damisa would distinguish herself in legal practice by upholding the principles of justice, integrity and

respect for the rule of law, while making meaningful contributions to national development.



OYENMEN DAMISA



ESHIORAMHE

Prioritise knowledge before crypto investment, expert advises young Nigerians

LAGOS

A cryptocurrency expert, Sunusi Danjuma Ali, has urged young Nigerians to acquire adequate knowledge of blockchain technology and risk management before investing in digital assets.

Ali gave the advice in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Abuja, while highlighting strategies for safe participation in the cryptocurrency market.

He said prospective investors should understand how blockchain technology works, study market trends and evaluate projects based on their use cases.

He said the investors should also understand development teams, token omics, roadmaps and community support before

committing funds.

According to him, sound risk management remains essential, urging investors to invest only funds they can afford to lose, diversify their portfolios and avoid emotional decisions driven by fear or greed.

"Traders should protect their digital assets by using reputable exchanges and wallets, enabling two-factor authentication, safeguarding private keys and remaining vigilant against

phishing attacks and other cyber threats," he said.

Speaking on global economic developments, he said inflation, interest rate decisions,

geopolitical tensions and regulatory changes had increased the cryptocurrency market's sensitivity to macroeconomic events.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EDOBOR OKUNBOR GRACE EGHOSA** now wish to be known as **GRACE EGHOSA OKUNBOR**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OMUSI SYLVESTER** now wish to be known as **OMUSI SYLVESTER EDO**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS BLESSING IYANGBE** now wish to be known as **MRS BLESSING IYANGBE-ATOE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

REMOVAL OF NAME/CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **YAKORO VICTOR OBUKOWHO** and **YAKOVO VICTOR** are one and same person hence forth now wish to be known and addressed as **YAKOVO VICTOR** and also my correct date of birth is 22nd October, 2000. And not 22nd October 1999, and not 22nd August, 1999. which was wrongly captured on my BVN account. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME / DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that I, formerly known as **OLANIYI EMMANUEL** now wish to be known as **OLANIYI JEREMIAH**. Also my correct date of birth is 23/01/2006 and not 23/01/2004. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

MISSING DOCUMENTS

I, **REGINA NKECHI CHUKWU** wished to notify the general public that I am the owner of property lying and situated at No 32, Dr Chris Madu Crescent, World Bank Housing Estate, Owerri, IMO State. The documents of purchase of the property were left in custody of my In-law by name **Mr. Ibeawuchi Ugo**. Sometimes in 2024, I was told by Mr Ibeawuchi Ugo, that the said documents were mistakenly burnt along side the waste he gathered during sanitation process in his apartment at Awaka, Close to New Road, Round about, Port-Harcourt. That all efforts to trace the said documents proved abortive. All concerned authorities, Police, and the general public should please, take note.

Signed: **REGINA NKECHI CHUKWU**

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE PROSPEROUS CHRISTIAN FAITH MINISTRY

This is to inform the General Public that the above-named Ministry Has Applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission for Change Of Trustee Under Part F of the Companies And Allied Matters Act 2020

OLD TRUSTEES

Idahosa Director Lawson

Salome Idahosa – Secretary

Caleb Ehihamatalor – Removed

NEW TRUSTEES

Idahosa Director Lawson – Chairman

Salome Idahosa – Secretary

Elder Thomas Eromosele Ilenikhena.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES REMAIN THE SAME.

Any objection to the Change of Trustees should be forwarded to the Registrar, Corporate Affairs Commission Plot 420, Tigris Crescent, Off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama Abuja, within 28 days of this Publication.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE

EDO STATE OF NIGERIA

PROBATE REGISTRY

BENIN CITY

WHEREAS the person whose name is set out in the first column hereunder died testate on the date and at the place stated in the column;

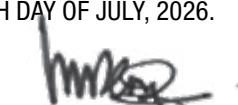
AND WHEREAS the persons whose names, addresses and claimed relationship to the deceased are set in the second column hereunder have applied to the Probate Registrar, High Court of Justice, Edo State of Nigeria for a grant of resealing of Letters of Administration of the real and personal property of the deceased.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Resealing of Letters of Administration will be granted to such persons unless a NOTICE to prohibit the grant is filed in this Registry within Twenty-One (21) days from the date of the publication of this notice.

1. **SGT. SAMUEL IGUMA**, late of Evbuoeboba, Oredo L.G.A., who died on the 25th day of January, 2010 in Benin City.

PED/842/2025
MRS. ANGELA EKARIMA IGUMA (Alias **Angela Ekarima Ogar**) of No 3, Agbo Street, off Ekewan Road, Benin City, widow of the deceased.

DATED THIS 13TH DAY OF JULY, 2026.


B. O. OSAWARU ESQ.
Probate Registrar

Nigeria meets 104% of OPEC Quota as production soars

ABUJA

Nigeria's crude oil and condensate production soared to an average of 1,735,398 barrels per day in the month of June 2026, representing positive growth for a 4th consecutive month.

According to the crude statistics, released by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) on Sunday, in the month under review, crude oil production hit 1.56 million barrels per day (mbpd).

The report showed that

0.18mbpd of condensates was produced.

This means Nigeria met 104 per cent of the 1.5mbpd crude oil production quota set by the Organisation and Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The report showed that in strict crude oil terms (exclud-

ing condensates), the 1.56 million daily average production Nigeria witnessed in June is the highest that Africa's biggest oil producer has recorded since April 2020.

This, it said, represented a 74-month high.

"In June, the peak com-

bined crude oil and condensate production was 1.89 mbpd, reflecting Nigeria's potential to reach 2 mbpd in the near term.

"However, the lowest production was 1.57 mbpd for the period in review.

"The statistics shows that Nigeria has maintained an upward trajectory, increasing from 1.483 mbpd in February to 1.546 mbpd in March, 1.663 mbpd in April, 1.700 mbpd in May, and 1.735 mbpd in June.

"This represents a 2.2 per cent growth month on month.

The report said the improved performance was primarily driven by stable production operations across most producing assets and the absence of any major pipeline outages during the period under review.

It said the enhanced opera-

tional stability supported improved production uptime and crude evacuation efficiency.

It said though a limited number of assets experienced short-duration operational shutdowns, but the overall impact on national production was minimal.

"In addition, scheduled turnaround maintenance activities were effectively managed and completed without significant disruption to production operations.

"The sustained growth recorded in June reflects the continued commitment of operators and industry stakeholders towards improving operational efficiency, maintaining asset integrity, and enhancing production reliability across the Nigerian upstream petroleum sector.



RESEARCH AND TRAINING IN CANCER:

A cross-section of the participants at the Best of ASCO Africa 2026 conference organised by African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC) in collaboration with project PINK BLUE in Abuja.

PTAD says harmonisation reforms to promote pension equity

LAGOS

The Pension Transitional Arrangement Directorate (PTAD) says the Defined Benefit Scheme pension harmonisation will promote equity, improve retirees' welfare and restore confidence in the administration of legacy pensions.

PTAD Executive Secretary, Mrs Tolulope Odunaiya, said this in a statement issued in Lagos.

She said the harmonisation exercise, a landmark reform, aims at ensuring fairness in pension payments across the Defined Benefit Scheme.

According to Odunaiya, the initiative, approved under President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, is one of the most significant policy interventions in the DBS since PTAD was established in 2013.

PTAD manages pensions under the old Federal Government pension arrangement.

She explained that, unlike periodic pension increases, which raise existing benefits by a fixed percentage, pension harmonisation involves a comprehensive recomputation of pensions using the latest approved salary structures

that were in effect before the closure of the Defined Benefit Scheme.

"The objective is to ensure that retirees who held similar positions and served for comparable years receive equitable pension benefits irrespective of when they retired," she said.

Odunaiya said the exercise was introduced to address longstanding disparities in pension computation that had generated complaints from pensioners over the years.

"The harmonisation programme seeks to correct these historical imbalances by re-

storing parity within the pension system," she added.

She said pension harmonisation entails the formal recomputation of pensions based on approved salary structures applicable before the DBS cut-off date, ensuring that benefits are determined by rank, grade level and years of service rather than retirement date.

According to her, the reform is expected to promote social justice by correcting historical inequities that have disadvantaged thousands of retirees.

Odunaiya said the exercise

applies mainly to pure Federal Government pensioners and eligible retirees under the Parastatals Pension Department (PaPD), the Defunct and Transferred Agencies Pension Department (DTAPD), and the Treasury-Funded Federal Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education Pension Department (TEHPD).

She added that eligible retirees who served under the Federal Government before their agencies were transferred to state governments are also covered by the harmonisation programme.

Lawal unveils \$200m lithium processing plant in Zamfara, targets 2,000 jobs

GUSAU

Governor Dauda Lawal has unveiled a \$200 million lithium mining and processing plant in Boko, Zurmi Local Government Area of the state.

He described the plant as a drive toward economic re-birth for Zamfara.

This was contained in a statement issued over the weekend in Gusau by the Governor's spokesperson, Sulaiman Idris.

Idris quoted his principal describing the project as the beginning of a new era in the state's drive toward responsible mining, industrial development and economic diversification.

The governor said the project marks a significant milestone in the collective effort to harness Zamfara's abundant mineral resources through responsible investment, value addition, job creation and sustainable development.

Lawal noted that his ad-

ministration was committed to transforming the solid minerals sector from informal and unregulated activities into an organised, transparent and value-driven industry that directly benefits the people.

He said global demand for lithium and other critical minerals had increased due to their importance in renewable energy, electric vehicles, modern technology and industrial transformation.

According to him, Zamfara must no longer remain "mere-

ly a supplier of raw mineral resources" but must become an active participant across the entire mining value chain through local processing, value addition, skills development and industrialisation.

The governor commended Zam Mining Company Ltd, Bima Mines Ltd, Jinlide Mining Co. Ltd, Bevo Mines Ltd, Generalized Mining Company Ltd and other development partners for investing in the state.

He said their confidence had shown that Zamfara remained open to legitimate businesses and responsible partnerships.

Lawal assured investors that the state government would continue to provide support through improved collaboration, infrastructure development and policies that encourage sustainable investment.

guing that improved funding could strengthen certificate verification, digital infrastructure and service delivery if implemented with transparency and affordability safeguards.

The approval was conveyed by the Federal Ministry of Education in a memo dated June 18, 2026, signed by the Director of Senior Secondary Education, Mr Adeniji Ibrahim.

The memo was signed on behalf of the Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, following a directive to harmonise WAEC and NECO Senior School Certificate Examination registration fees.

Under the approval, NECO's SSCE internal fee will rise from N30,000 to N50,000, while WAEC's will increase from N27,000 to N50,000 from 2027.

Speaking with our correspondent, an educationist, Beatrice Oke, described the increase as excessive despite acknowledging rising operational and logistics costs.

"The percentage increase is too high, although we expected a review after some time due to rising logistics costs.

"However, many average Nigerians may not afford the new fees, and this could force some students out of school," she said. Oke urged the government to review the increase or introduce measures to cushion its impact on low-income households.

She said affordable examination fees were vital to sustaining access to education and preventing more children from dropping out of school.

She also urged governments at all levels to expand subsidies and intervention programmes for vulnerable students to guarantee equitable access to education.

A private school owner, Mrs Funmilayo Soyoye, also described the increase as excessive.

Eight killed in suspected terrorist attack in Benue community - Police

MAKURDI

The Police in Benue has confirmed the killing of eight persons in a suspected terrorist attack on a rural community in Otukpo Local Government Area of the state.

The Commissioner of Police

Mr Cletus Nwadiogbu, confirmed the incident to newsmen on Sunday.

Nwadiogbu said the victims comprised five adults and three children.

He said he had spent most of the day in the affected community alongside other securi-

ty personnel to assess the situation and restore calm.

"We have been in the interior since morning. The network was poor because we were in the bush.

"Some people were killed and the youths became violent.

"We have been engaging

them and they have now agreed to reopen the road. They are only waiting for water tankers to extinguish the fire," he said.

The police commissioner said investigations were ongoing to determine whether the latest attack was connected to previous killings in the area.

NEWS

Calls to shut South African Firms may hurt Nigeria - Stakeholders

LAGOS

Whenever xenophobic attacks erupt in South Africa, public outrage in Nigeria often extends beyond diplomacy to calls for South African businesses operating in the coun-

try to be shut down.

The latest attacks have once again fuelled such demands, reviving a familiar debate over whether economic retaliation serves Nigeria's national interest.

However, some business professionals and media prac-

tioners warned that forcing South African firms out of Nigeria could inflict greater economic damage on Nigeria than on South Africa.

They spoke in separate interviews with our correspondent in Lagos on Monday while reacting to calls by some Nige-

rians for South African companies operating in Nigeria to be shut down.

The reactions also followed threats by the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) to shut the operations of MTN Nigeria and MultiChoice over renewed

xenophobic attacks against Nigerians and other African nationals in South Africa.

NANS National President, Comrade Babatunde Akinteye, had urged Nigerians to close their Stanbic IBTC Bank accounts and boycott other South African owned businesses if the attacks persisted.

Mrs Seyi Adeshiyan, a banker, said diplomatic disagreements should not be confused with investment decisions.

"Once a company is regis-

tered in Nigeria, employs Nigerians, pays taxes and complies with our laws, it becomes part of our economy. If we chase away investors because of political disagreements, we risk creating uncertainty that affects every foreign investor," she said.

She warned that Nigerian workers, suppliers and consumers would suffer most through job losses, cancelled contracts and reduced competition.



COURTESY VISIT:

Managing Director, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali Muhammad Ali (R), presenting a souvenir to the Executive Chairman of the Federal Character Commission (FCC), Hon. Hulayat Omidiran, during a courtesy visit by the management of NAN to the Commission's Headquarters in Abuja on Monday.

Abbas hails Shettima's APC re-nomination

ABUJA

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Abbas Tajudeen, has congratulated Vice President Kashim Shettima on his re-nomination as the APC vice-presidential candidate for 2027.

In a statement in Abuja, Tajudeen described the re-nomination as recognition of Shettima's competence, merit and unwavering loyalty to President Bola Tinubu and Nigeria.

He also commended President Tinubu for retaining confidence in Shettima, saying the decision reflected strong leadership and reinforced unity within the ruling APC.

Tajudeen said the Vice

President had remained dependable since assuming office, helping the administration maintain focus on improving Nigerians' welfare and delivering governance.

"I join leaders and countless members of our esteemed party in congratulating Vice President Kashim Shettima on his re-nomination alongside President Bola Tinubu," he said.

He added that Shettima had consistently demonstrated loyalty and dependability, enabling the administration to remain focused and determined to improve citizens' lives.

According to the Speaker, Tinubu's decision reflects extraordinary leadership, sound political judgement and en-

during confidence in the Vice President's capacity to serve effectively.

"I make bold to say this decision has further strengthened our party's chances in the 2027 election. APC will easily cruise to victory come January," Tajudeen stated.

Meanwhile, APC National Director-General of Volunteers, Dr Victor Oluwafemi, also applauded Tinubu for reaffirming Shettima as his running mate for the presidential election.

Oluwafemi described the decision as a demonstration of confidence, continuity and strategic leadership that would strengthen public trust in the administration's direction.

He said the President's decision reinforced confidence

in reforms targeting economic recovery, stronger institutions and improved national security despite inherited challenges.

Oluwafemi also congratulated security agencies for rescuing the abducted Oyo schoolchildren, describing the operation as a significant achievement for national security.

"The rescue of innocent children is not merely a security success. It restores hope and reaffirms the state's commitment to protecting citizens' lives," he said.

He praised security personnel for their sacrifices and urged greater investment in intelligence gathering, surveillance technology, border security and community engagement.

Archbishop charges lawmakers on laws to promote peace

UYO

Most Rev. John Koko-Bassey, Archbishop of Methodist Church Nigeria, has charged lawmakers to make laws that would promote peace and unity in the state.

Koko-Bassey gave the charge while delivering his homily at a thanksgiving service of the 8th House of Assembly in Uyo.

He said that leadership was associated with troubles, struggles and infighting, but assured the lawmakers that God's grace was sufficient for them.

The Archbishop, who also spoke on Matthew 13:1-9 and Genesis 25:23, prayed that God would bless the Speaker

and members of the Assembly and enable them to actualise their good policies.

"Akwa Ibom has six nations, including Ibibio, Annang, Oro, Obolo and Eket, among others, with their peculiar struggles. Hence, Mr Speaker, you must make laws to ensure mutual respect.

"There is too much discrimination among the various groups here. The House should enact anti-discrimination laws to promote peace," the Archbishop said.

Koko-Bassey also charged the National Assembly to enact laws, prescribing the death penalty for kidnappers and perpetrators of other heinous crimes to serve as a deterrent to others.

Police detain man for allegedly killing wife in Nassarawa

LAFIA

The Police Command in Nasarawa State has detained a 30-year-old man, Musbawu Amodu, for allegedly beating his 20-year-old wife to death in Agyaragu, Obi Local Government Area of the state.

SP Rahman Nansel, the command's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), disclosed this in a statement issued on Sunday in Lafia.

Nansel said that the incident occurred in Angwan Yahaya, Agyaragu, and that the couple had been married for six years with two children.

He said that a complaint was lodged at the Agyaragu Police Division at about 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, alleging that the suspect assaulted his wife, leading to her death.

According to him, the Divisional Police Officer immediately deployed patrol personnel to the scene, while the victim was evacuated to the Federal University Teaching Hospital, Lafia, for medical examination and preservation.

"The suspect was promptly arrested and, during interrogation, allegedly confessed to committing the act.

"He stated that he acted out of anger after the deceased allegedly refused to prepare food.

"According to him, an argument ensued, which escalated into a physical altercation that ultimately resulted in her death," the statement said.

The police spokesman added that the suspect had expressed remorse over the incident.

He said that the Commissioner of Police in the state, Shetima Mohammed, had directed that the case be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Lafia, for thorough and discreet investigation.

Nansel said the commissioner assured the public that justice would be served and that the suspect would be charged in court upon the conclusion of investigations.

He quoted the commissioner as condemning all forms of domestic violence, describing the incident as tragic and avoidable.

Nansel urged couples and family members to embrace dialogue, patience and lawful means of resolving disputes, stressing that no misunderstanding was worth the loss of a human life.

The PPRO added that the command had assured residents that the situation in Agyaragu and its environs remained calm and under control, while security monitoring continued.

APC hails timely candidates submission

ABUJA

The All Progressives Congress (APC) says it met the Independent National Electoral Commission's deadline for submitting candidates for the 2027 presidential and National Assembly elections.

The party's National Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka, disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja.

Morka said the APC completed the submission in spite of fielding a significantly larger number of candidates for various elective offices across the country.

He recalled that INEC extended the original July 11 deadline to July 14 after opposition parties requested additional time to complete their submissions.

According to him, the electoral commission acted within its statutory powers and administrative discretion by approving the extension.

"While INEC acted within its statutory powers and administrative discretion in extending the deadline for opposition parties, the extension reflected their failure," Morka said.

He argued the opposition's inability to meet the deadline

exposed weaknesses in managing internal nomination processes despite handling fewer candidates than the APC.

Morka described the development as another indication of what he called the opposition's chronic organisational weaknesses and questioned its operational capacity.

According to him, parties unable to conclude internal nomination processes efficiently cannot be trusted with governing Nigeria or its sub-national governments.

"They do not possess the competence, discipline or readiness required to govern our

great nation or its sub-national governments," he stated.

Morka also accused opposition parties of hypocrisy over their previous allegations that the APC controlled INEC's decisions.

"It is starkly ironical that the same opposition parties repeatedly claimed the APC dictates INEC's decisions.

"Yet, after missing the submission deadline, they shamelessly sought relief from the same INEC and received an extension," Morka said.

He noted that the APC, despite benefiting from the original deadline, neither opposed nor influenced INEC's deci-

Alleged fake agency scam: Police to arraign Adeniyi Adeyemi on Tuesday

ABUJA

The police is to arraign Adeniyi Adeyemi, the Director-General (DG) of a non-existing Presidential Foreign Intervention Promotion Council (PFIPC) in the Federal High Court on Tuesday (today). The police in a fresh court document marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/562/2025, charged presently Adeyemi and two others with eight counts of forgery, impersonation, among others. The charge was filed on November 27, 2025, by Wisdom Madaki, a police prosecutor.

June 16 when the case came up for the suspects to take their plea, Adeyemi was said to be indisposed and Justice Mohammed Umar adjourned the matter.

According to the court documents, witnesses listed in the case are the Chief of Staff to the President, Mr Femi Gbajabiamila; Paul Emmanuel, Jeremiah Imoukhede and Ituah Sylvester.

Other witnesses are civil servants working in the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation (AGoF), Akimbo Shola and Adamu Balongu, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, were in the list.

Also listed as witnesses are Ojo Victor, Omeh Amarachukwu, and Wakili Saidu, all of whom were allegedly posted to work with Adeyemi at the non-existent agency.

Others are Joy Ngwoke, the owner of Kachi Hotel in Abuja, and Ven Okoriko, the pastor of St. Matthew's Anglican Church, Maitama.

The documentary evidence expected to be tendered by the police include the police investigation report, Gbajabiamila's petition dated Oct. 17, 2025; and Adeyemi's fake presidential appointment letter dated March 8, 2024.

These also include the re-

quest for a note verbally by Adeyemi sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the approvals he got to open accounts with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), request for approval of self accounting Adeyemi sent to the AGoF and the conveyance of approval for take-off of the PFIPC.

Other documents listed by the prosecution are a letter of request for collaboration with the ministry in the area of land acquisition and offices across the 36 states of the federation; statements of all the witnesses and that of the defendants, and pictures.

Woman returns ₦50,000 dowry after husband's divorce

KADUNA

A pregnant woman, Fauziyya Abdulsalam on Monday insisted on returning the ₦50,000 dowry she received after her husband Ishaq Idris sent her a divorce letter.

The complainant had prayed court to dissolve her union to Idris on the basis of Khul'i, a form of divorce where a woman returns dowry to be free from marriage.

She told the court that she was seven months pregnant and would want her ex husband to continue taking care of the pregnancy.

The defendant had confirmed ₦50,000 as the dowry amount but prayed court to give him

time to reconcile with wife.

The reconciliation was not successful and the defendant sent a letter declaring one pronouncement of divorce to the complainant on the adjourned date.

The Judge Malam Yakubu Abdullahi said a woman can seek for Khul'i during her iddah (a three menstrual cycle waiting period for divorced women before they remarry).

"I, Yakubu Abdullahi, the Judge presiding Shari'a court II, Magajin Gari, hereby dissolve the union between Ishaq Idris and Fauziyya Abdulsalam based on Khul'i", he said.

The Judge urged the complainant to file a new suit seeking for care of the pregnancy from her husband.

Court remands blogger over defamatory story against Soludo, family

AWKA

Chief Magistrates' Court in Akwa, on Monday remanded an online publisher and blogger, Ejike Ofoegbu, over alleged defamatory publications targeting Gov. Chukwuma Soludo and members of his family.

Ofoegbu, owns Igbo Times Magazine and INews.

Chief Magistrate C.O. Ezekwere ordered that the case should be transmitted to the Anambra Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice.

Magistrate Ezekwere advised Ofoegbu to approach the High Court in Awka for bail, noting that the Magistrate Court lacked the jurisdiction to entertain the matter.

The magistrate adjourned the case until July 27, for report of compliance.

The complainant was represented by Mr A.A. Nwanri and the the Chief Security Officer to the Governor, Mr O.K. Nkuma.

The Prosecution Counsel, Insp Tochukwu Echemagu of the State Criminal Investigation Department, Awka

told the court that Ofoegbu is charged with identity theft, defamation and cyberstalking.

The prosecution told the court that Ofoegbu allegedly created and published fabricated and defamatory reports against the governor and his family to attract online traffic and generate financial gains.

The police alleged that the publications falsely claimed that Soludo had disowned his son, Ozonna, and that the son described his father as "a drunkard who beat my mum," and also alleged a drinking competition involving the governor and a minister.

The prosecution further told the court that although Ofoegbu had earlier issued a public apology and retraction over the publications, he was still facing prosecution for criminal defamation, cyberstalking and identity theft under the relevant laws.

The police said the offence contravened the provisions of Sections 24(1)(b) and 38, of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc) Act of 2015, as well as Sections 373 and 375 of the Nigerian Criminal Code Act.



MEDIA LUNCHEON:

Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Dr Aisha Garba (2nd L); Chairman of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), FCT, Comrade Grace Ike (2nd R); Chairman of Education Correspondent's Association of Nigeria (ECAN), Mr Chuku Ukwatu (L); with the Female Education Correspondents during the Media Luncheon by the Executive Secretary of UBEC in Abuja.

Ex-minister, Nnaji, pleads not guilty to forgery, fraud charges

ABUJA

A former Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Uche Nnaji, on Monday, pleaded not guilty to a six-count charge bordering on alleged money laundering, corruption, forgery and the use of false documents.

Nnaji was arraigned in the Federal High Court, Abuja before Justice Joyce Abdulmalik by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

Following his plea, the prosecuting counsel, Mr Osuobeni Akponimisingha told the court that the prosecution was ready for trial as they had three witnesses available in court to testify.

Counsel to the defendant, Mr Ogwu Onoja, SAN, however, said he was not ready to proceed as he needed time to study the charge and prepare his client for trial.

He also informed the court that he had filed an application praying the court to admit his client to bail.

The prosecutor said he was not opposing the application for bail since it was at the discretion of the court to grant or refuse bail.

Justice Abdulmalik admitted the defendant to bail in the sum of N20 million and one

surety in like sum.

The judge said the surety must reside within the jurisdiction of the court at a fixed place of abode for not less than four years and must deposit evidence of that by way of tenancy agreement.

"The proposed surety shall be a Federal Civil Servant within the court's judicial division of not less than GL15 and shall fix evidence of receipt of salary for a period not less than three months.

"The proposed surety shall also deposit his letter of offer of pensionable employment to the aforementioned grade level and also a letter from the proposed surety's immediate head of department shall be deposited with the court's registry."

Other conditions of the bail are that the surety must depose to an affidavit of means and enter into a bail bond and deposit his recent passport photographs.

The defendant is to also deposit his valid Nigerian official passport as well as his valid Nigerian international passport at the court's registry.

The judge subsequently adjourned the matter until Sept. 21 for commencement of trial.

According to the charge, Nnaji allegedly took possession of N29.58 million paid

into his Fidelity Bank account as salaries and allowances while serving as minister.

The ICPC alleged that he reasonably ought to have known the funds were proceeds of unlawful acts, namely corruption and fraud.

The commission said the alleged offence contravened Section 18(2)(d) and is punishable under Section 18(3) of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

In count two, the ICPC al-

leged that Nnaji used his office as minister to confer a corrupt advantage on himself, contrary to Section 19 of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000.

The commission further alleged that, with intent to mislead the Federal Government, he knowingly presented a false National Youth Service Corps Certificate No. A231309, during his ministerial appointment process.

Alleged defamation: Court rejects Sowore's application for long adjournment

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Monday refused to grant an application for long adjournment filed by Omoyele Sowore, publisher of Sahara Reporters.

The Department of State Services (DSS) charged Sowore with criminal defamation, cyberstalking, and incitement.

Justice Mohammed Umar refused the application by Sowore's lawyer, Reuben Adakole, seeking the permission to adjourn the trial until after the court's annual vacation.

Sowore, is also the presidential candidate of the African

Action Congress (AAC).

He was alleged to have made false claims against the person of President Tinubu by referring to him as "a criminal" in a post he made on his "X" and Facebook accounts.

However, after Adakole applied for the adjournment, the DSS lawyer, Akinlolu Kehinde, SAN, opposed the request.

Kehinde drew the attention of the court to the previous adjournments the trial had suffered at the instance of Sowore.

He argued that the latest request for long adjournment was a ploy by Sowore to further frustrate the criminal trial.

Besides, the senior lawyer

drew the attention of the court to the day-to-day accelerated trial granted by the court in line with the provisions of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015.

He said the order had not been set aside by the court.

Kehinde, therefore, submitted that granting two months adjournment would be against the earlier order of the court.

In a ruling, Justice Umar declined the application on the grounds of previous order for accelerated hearing of the matter.

The judge subsequently ordered Sowore to be in court on July 16 for continuation of his defence in the charge.

Earlier, Sowore's first defence witness (DW-1), Deji Adeyanju, in continuation of his testimony, insisted that President Bola Tinubu, during an official engagement in Benue, said citizens had the right to insult, abuse, criticise and call him names.

Adeyanju, a lawyer, said the president told the law enforcement agencies to allow citizens exercise their rights as part of democracy.

The DW-1 also testified that the president made it clear that the judiciary should be the guardian of the public and should not be used as instrument of oppression against critics.

Umahi hails Tinubu's South-East projects

ABAKALIKI

The Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi, has urged Nigerians, especially South-East residents, to appreciate President Bola Tinubu for ongoing Federal Government infrastructure projects across the region.

Umahi spoke on Sunday in Abakaliki while inspecting a section of the Ebonyi-Benue-Kogi-Nasarawa-Abuja Superhighway, one of

the Federal Government's flagship legacy road projects.

He praised the project's pace and construction quality, expressing confidence that the completed highway would transform transportation and strengthen connectivity across several geopolitical zones.

According to the minister, the highway will substantially reduce travel time between the South-South, South-East and the Federal Capital Territory

when completed.

Umahi said motorists would travel from the South-South and South-East to Abuja in approximately six hours, boosting commerce, investment and regional integration.

He described Tinubu as a leader committed to equita-

ble national development and urged Nigerians to support the administration's ongoing infrastructure renewal programme.

"I want all of us to win together with President Bola Tinubu in the forthcoming election," Umahi said.

He expressed satisfaction with

the contractors' performance, saying the quality and speed of construction reflected the administration's determination to modernise Nigeria's road network.

"I am happy with the ongoing projects and what the contractors are doing," the minister stated.

Umahi also referenced former Anambra Governor, Mr Peter Obi, while defending the administration's infrastructure achievements and inviting public scrutiny of the projects.

"That is why I asked my brother, Mr Peter Obi, to debate with me on what I am doing," he said.

He added that Obi declined, saying he was not a presidential candidate, but maintained the projects deserved objective assessment by Nigerians.

Anambra Govt. arrests woman who allegedly evolved from traditionalist to surgeon

AWKA

The Anambra Government has arrested a 47-year-old woman, Onyinyechi Charles, who allegedly transformed from an 'Eze Nwanyi' (female traditionalist) to a self-acclaimed medical surgeon.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr Afam Obidike, made the disclosure while speaking with newsmen in Awka.

The commissioner said the suspect carried out surgical procedures without required medical licenses.

According to him, she allegedly operated an illegal traditional birth attendant's facility in Umueri, Anambra East Local Government Area.

Obidike said investigations revealed that the suspect allegedly performed caesarean sections, conducted normal vaginal deliveries and carried out other surgical procedures without authorisation.

He said the facility had also been linked to reported medical complications and fatalities.

"The arrest followed investigations launched by the Ministry of Health as part of the state's campaign against quackery and illegal medical practices.

"The suspect admitted during interrogation that she had been carrying out caesarean sections, normal deliveries and other surgical procedures without the required medical

or surgical qualifications.

"She was previously known as 'Eze Nwanyi' before becoming a church minister and later presenting herself as a surgeon," he said.

Obidike said that during an inspection of the facility, conducted alongside the Chairman of Anambra East Local Government Area, Mr Ifeanyi Chinweze, and security personnel, they recovered surgical instruments and other medical equipment allegedly used for unauthorised procedures.

He added that officials also discovered what appeared to be a shrine and an altar inside the facility.

The commissioner said the facility had been sealed pending the conclusion of investigations, while the suspect would be arraigned before a competent court if found culpable.

He described the discovery as disturbing and a serious threat to public health, adding that the administration of Gov. Chukwuma Soludo would not allow unqualified persons to endanger lives under the guise of providing healthcare.

Obidike urged residents, particularly expectant mothers, to seek medical care only from government-approved hospitals and duly registered healthcare providers.

He said the ministry would sustain surveillance and enforcement operations across the state to identify and prosecute illegal medical practitioners.



COURTESY VISIT:

Senator representing Oyo South Senatorial District, Sen. Sharafadeen Alli, during his visit to the rescued Orire victims at the Military Hospital 2 Div. Ibadan on Monday.

Police launch manhunt for driver, conductor over attempted murder, rifle snatching

ENUGU

The Police Command in Enugu State has launched a manhunt for a bus driver and his conductor over assault and attempted murder of police officers as well as snatching of a police rifle.

This is contained in a statement by the Command's Spokesman, SP Daniel Ndukwe, on Sunday in Enugu.

According to Ndukwe, the command has commenced manhunt for the driver and conductor of a Mitsubishi L300 commercial bus for the offences of conspiracy, serious assault, dangerous driving, attempted murder, and snatching of police rifle.

"The incident occurred at about 1; 20p.m., on July 9, at All Saints Roundabout, along Abakaliki Road, Enugu.

"Acting on information received from the command's control room that the driver and conductor had assaulted a traffic police officer on duty, operatives of the Distress Response Squad (DRS) intercepted and flagged down the vehicle.

"However, rather than submitting to arrest, the driver deceptively slowed down before suddenly accelerating in an attempt to escape.

"In the process, he knocked down

one of the operatives and dragged away the officer's AK-47 rifle, which was entangled with the vehicle.

"During the ensuing pursuit, the suspects threw the rifle out of the vehicle at IMT Bus Stop along the same road before speeding off. The rifle was immediately recovered intact, with its ammunition."

Ndukwe said that the state's Commissioner of Police, Mr Mamman Giwa, had ordered a comprehensive investigation and intensified efforts to arrest and

prosecute the fleeing suspects.

The commissioner also advised the driver and conductor to voluntarily present themselves to the police for proper investigation, because every lawful measure is being deployed to apprehend them.

Giwa further urged the public to disregard misleading narratives surrounding the incident and cautioned against assaulting or obstructing police officers in the lawful discharge of their duties.

NDLEA intercepts illicit drugs worth N10.3b at Lagos Port

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has intercepted 8,287 nylon bags of substance suspected to be Canadian Loud weighing 4,143.5 Kilo grammes at the Apapa seaport in Lagos.

The Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Mr Femi Babafemi said this in a statement in Abuja.

Babafemi said the drugs worth over N10.3 billion in street value were discovered in a container imported from Canada during a joint examination of the shipment by NDLEA officers, Customs personnel and other security

agencies on July 10.

He said that the discovery followed weeks of targeted tracking and monitoring of the shipment since its departure from Montreal, Canada, by operatives of the Maritime Intelligence Unit of NDLEA.

According to him, this was in close collaboration with the Apapa Strategic Command of the agency.

He also said that the NDLEA operatives of the Directorate of Operation and General Investigation (DOGI) foiled an attempt by a drug trafficker to export a 2.5-Kilo Gramme of substance suspected to be skunk, a strain of cannabis.

"The drugs were concealed in a gas compressor going

to Cyprus through a courier company in Lagos," he said.

He added that commands and formations of the agency across the country have continued their War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) sensitisation activities in schools, worship centres, work places and communities.

Babafemi quoted the NDLEA chairman, retired Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa as commending the officers and men of DOGI and Apapa commands of the agency for the arrests and seizures.

Marwa noted their drug supply reduction efforts and charged them and their compatriots across the country not to relent.

Illegal Mining: FG arrests 2 suspects in Osun crackdown

OSHOGBO

The Federal Government says intensified efforts to curb illegal mining nationwide have led to the arrest of two suspected illegal miners at a mining site in Osun.

The enforcement operation, led by the Southwest Zonal Mines Officer, Mr Ajibade Ganiyu, was carried out by officials of the Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals Development in Ogun, Oyo and Osun, with security agencies.

Mrs Lara Owwoye-Wise, the Special Assistant to the Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dr Dele Alake, made this known in a statement in Abuja.

Owwoye-Wise said that the enforcement exercise targeted illegal artisanal mining camps at Ileki-Ijesa along the Ile-Ife/Ilesa Road. She said mining equipment and other tools used for the illegal operation were confiscated, while the il-

legal miners' major operational bases were dismantled.

Reacting to the incident, Alake said President Bola Tinubu's administration was determined to sanitise the mining sector through reforms that combined stronger enforcement, regulatory measures, intelligence gathering and sustained community engagement to curb illegal mining nationwide.

He said the establishment of the Mining Marshals significantly strengthened the government's enforcement capacity, leading to the arrest of more than 300 illegal miners and the prosecution of over 150 suspects.

This, he said, was including foreign nationals, while several illegal mining sites had been shut down across the country.

He said that the ongoing nationwide enforcement operations were part of a broader strategy to ensure that Nigeria's mineral wealth benefits the country through lawful, transparent and responsible mining activities.

Alake, also Chairman of the African Mineral Strategy Group (AMSG), said Nigeria's firm stance against illegal mining reflected the growing continental resolve to promote responsible mineral governance.

He said the effort also aimed to curb the illicit exploitation of Africa's mineral resources and maximise value addition for sustainable economic development.

The minister appealed to traditional rulers, community leaders, youth groups and residents of mining communities to support the Federal Government's efforts by refusing to harbour or shield illegal miners.

He also urged them to provide credible information to security agencies and the ministry to combat the menace.

"Illegal mining destroys the environment, fuels insecurity, deprives the nation of legitimate revenue and undermines the livelihoods of law-abiding miners.

FEATURE

FTSE review puts Nigeria's frontier market upgrade at risk after T+1 settlement reform



NIGERIA EXCHANGE MARKET

ESE AMADASUN

Nigeria fixed its settlement system to move closer to the world. FTSE Russell is now asking whether that same fix has made the market harder for the world to access.*

Nigeria's long-awaited return to FTSE Russell's Frontier Market category has come under fresh uncertainty after the global index provider placed the country's planned upgrade under further review, citing concerns over the implementation of the T+1 settlement cycle.

The development has introduced a new layer of caution into the Nigerian equities market, which had spent years working toward regaining stronger international classification status. Ironically, the same settlement reform promoted by Nigerian market authorities as a sign of improved market efficiency has now become the key issue delaying the country's frontier market reclassification.

FTSE Russell had in March 2026 announced Nigeria's upgrade from "Unclassified" to "Frontier Market" status, with implementation expected in September 2026. The decision was widely seen as a major breakthrough for the Nigerian capital market, with investors expecting it to attract passive inflows from index-tracking funds, improve foreign investor con-

fidence and deepen market liquidity.

However, in its June 30 update, FTSE Russell said Nigeria had not yet been formally reclassified and that the upgrade would remain under review. The index provider said it would issue a definitive update by the end of August 2026.

At the centre of the review is Nigeria's transition to T+1 settlement, which took effect on June 1, 2026. Under the new framework, trades on the Nigerian Exchange settle one business day after execution, compared with the previous T+2 arrangement.

The reform was introduced to speed up settlement, reduce counterparty risk and align the Nigerian market with global best practice. Nigeria also became one of the first African markets to move to T+1, a step regulators and market operators presented as evidence of the country's readiness for deeper international participation.

But FTSE Russell's concern is that the shortened settlement cycle could create operational difficulties for foreign institutional investors, especially those trading from different time zones and dealing with foreign exchange conversion requirements.

The key concern is whether international investors may be forced to prefund trades before execution in order to meet the one-day settlement deadline. For FTSE Russell, mandato-

ry prefunding is a serious market-access issue because it may affect the delivery-versus-payment standard, one of the quality-of-market criteria used in assessing countries for frontier and emerging market classification.

This has created an uncomfortable contradiction for Nigeria. The reform that was meant to strengthen the market's case for frontier status is now the same reform FTSE Russell wants to study further before allowing the upgrade to proceed.

The review unsettled market sentiment during the week, contributing to renewed selloffs after an already difficult month of June. The Nigerian Exchange All-Share Index closed the week at 229,240 points, down 1.21 per cent from the previous week's 232,049 points, while market capitalisation declined from N148.91 trillion to N147.10 trillion.

The market had fallen through much of the week before a strong rebound on Friday, July 3, when the index gained 2.19 per cent. The recovery was led largely by Airtel Africa, which rose by the maximum 10 per cent to close at N5,274 per share, returning significant value to the market.

Despite Friday's rebound, the FTSE review remains the major issue before the market. Nigeria's frontier market reclassification had been expected to serve as a major catalyst for the second half of the year, with possible

inflows from passive index trackers and active foreign portfolio investors positioning ahead of the September implementation.

Those expectations are now on hold until FTSE Russell concludes its review.

Market analysts say the Nigerian Exchange Group, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Central Securities Clearing System and other market stakeholders now have a narrow window to convince FTSE Russell that foreign investors can trade Nigerian equities under the T+1 settlement system without being compelled to prefund transactions.

This will likely require clearer settlement guidelines, stronger engagement with global custodians, improved foreign exchange coordination and direct consultation with international institutional investors whose feedback may influence FTSE Russell's final decision.

The broader concern is that Nigeria may have implemented a technically sound reform without sufficiently addressing how it would affect offshore investors who must manage currency conversion, custody instructions and settlement timelines across jurisdictions.

While T+1 settlement is not inherently negative, its success depends on whether the surrounding market infrastructure can support smooth par-

ticipation by both local and foreign investors. For domestic investors, faster settlement may improve liquidity and reduce risk. For foreign investors, however, the challenge is whether the system allows them to complete transactions efficiently without tying down funds in advance.

This is the question FTSE Russell now wants answered.

If Nigeria resolves the issue before the end of August, FTSE Russell could still proceed with the September reclassification. That would restore confidence, unlock the expected foreign inflow pipeline and strengthen Nigeria's position in global frontier market indices.

But if the concerns remain unresolved, the upgrade may be delayed, depriving the market of one of its most important anticipated catalysts for 2026.

For now, Nigeria's capital market finds itself in a difficult position. It has carried out a major settlement reform intended to modernise the market and improve competitiveness, but the reform has exposed fresh questions about accessibility for foreign investors.

The coming weeks will therefore be critical. Regulators and market operators must show that T+1 settlement is not a barrier to foreign participation but a sign of a more efficient, credible and globally aligned market.

ArtsWorld

with Francis Odupute
08023680030

The smile she lost and found

RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

Junior Ada, a 16-year-old girl, lively, happy, and always energetic, brought joy everywhere she went. Just her smile alone lights up the whole room, and everyone in it was instantly happy. She always loved acting in school drama and dreamed of becoming famous. Anything that had to do with the media space, she wanted to be there, whether it was acting, presenting, broadcasting, or being on the screen. She was passionate about acting.

Ada went to All Peace College, a secondary school known for its dedication to teaching students and producing world-class leaders in all sectors of life. It was the second term in school, a time when everyone would go to their respective clubs: drama, craft, tie-dye, ICT, debating, in preparation for the end-of-term co-curricular day and so much more. Ada was in the drama club with her best friend, Mira. She was chosen as the female lead of the drama and Ada was so happy, she was finally doing what she loved.

Every day by 12 p.m. when the bell rang, everyone was expected to go to their respective clubs, and so every day became Ada's favourite time.

One day, on a school day, Ada woke up and felt weird around her face. She didn't think much of it because the excitement for that day's drama practice overwhelmed her. Then it started with pain in her ear. She ignored it, took her bath, ate breakfast and got in the car taking her to school. The pain continued but "it cannot limit me," Ada told herself. After the drama practice, Ada still felt pain and thought, "maybe I overstressed myself."

And the day went on. The next morning, she woke up and felt her mouth was heavy, so she checked the mirror and realized she could not smile properly. She tried to brush her teeth, but water dropped from her lips while brushing. Ada was scared and cried out to her parents' room. When they saw her, they were worried because she looked different, so they rushed her to the hospital.

Her dad inquired from the doctor what was wrong, and Ada and her mum were too worried to even pay attention. The doctor said it was Facial Palsy.

(The facial nerve had become weak, affecting one side of her face. She needed to begin treatment immediately.)

The doctor then went on to explain.

The news came like a downpour of heavy rain on her father. What would he tell his wife and daughter? That their precious baby girl had facial palsy and there was no cure for it. Her father worried but still broke the news to the family. He encouraged Ada that he was always there for her. But Ada didn't care about that. What she kept remembering was the thought of "no cure" in her head and she broke down crying. Her parents encouraged her in every way possible, but it seemed like it wasn't having any effect. Instead, her crying increased. Ada didn't go to school for the rest of the week and she felt so insecure.

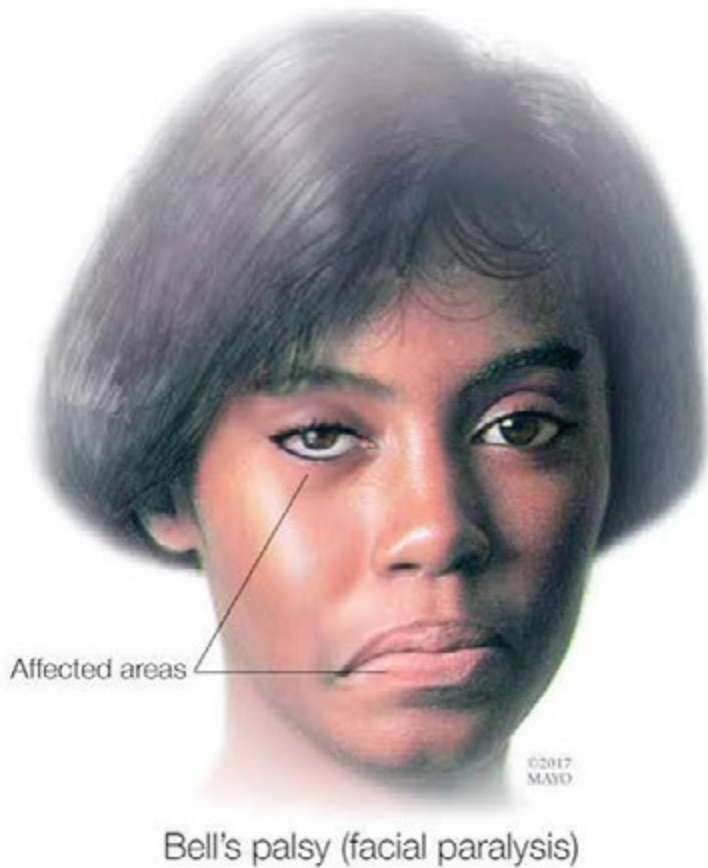
But Monday came faster than she expected, and she had to return to school. The school had previously sent an email to her parents asking why she hadn't returned, and so she had to go to school. When she entered the school,

she saw the stares, everyone gazed at her and she became insecure about her looks. Her parents explained her situation and the school gave assurances that they would take special care of her.

Ada was escorted to the classroom, and when everyone saw her, the gossip began and she felt like crying. Throughout the day, everyone stared at her, some with pity, some with mockery, and even her best friend, Mira, didn't want to speak to her, joining others to verbally bully her. "What happened to your face?" one student said, and others laughed. She began crying, but there was no one to comfort her.

From that day, she began wearing a hoodie to school and started isolating herself. Her seat changed from the front row to the back row, the last seat. And from then on, she became more withdrawn than ever. Ada changed, no longer lively and happy, and her parents noticed. They noticed when she stopped eating well, when they heard her crying from their bedroom, and they tried to comfort her but it wasn't working, nothing was working. Ada became depressed at a young age because of a disability that wasn't her fault. She always avoided mirrors, and most times, she thought of how her life would be with her disability. She felt she no longer deserved to be in the media space, and because of this, she avoided drama.

Every time the bell rang for activity time (club), she didn't go. Instead, she stayed in class crying and hiding from everyone. This went on until Ada started rejecting treatment. Her parents spoke to her but to no avail. Even when she went to school and it was time for drama practice, Ada didn't go for it, but this time the teacher came to her. Mrs Udoka Ifong, the drama instructor, came and saw her seated at the back and walked up to her asking if she was okay. Ada replied saying she was fine, but the teacher, who had five years of teaching experience, knew that Ada had lied about that.



DRAMA: The Acts of the KARIBIANS

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

This is a fictional story on the recent kidnappings, in Oriire community in Oyo State and at the Vegetable market in Benin City respectively. Happy reading.
Continued from last week.*

SCENE TWO

"Abeg reduce this music small make pesin for hear word, sey this place resemble club for your eye abi na d Igbo wey you dey take dey turn your brain?"

"Ochuko leave am jare, me dey celebrate! Abi you wan join me?" He said dancing to the rhythm of the song

Ochuko hissed "Frank kon check your friend o because e be like say something don lose comot for em head because I no understand why human being with flesh and blood go dey celebrate inside poverty. Bros you dey feel me?"

"I understand you blood. Stone, wetin dey sup na, do normal, that music too loud."

Stone laughed hysterically "See these boys sha, if the plug kon enter now shey una go tell me say make I reduce una share? Thank God say una don use una mouth talk say make I reduce am, and I go too cut am, una know me."

"Wait! Stone, shey plug dey?" Frank asked with sudden interest

"Plug dey! Na why me dey dance since. Abi una think say na Binutu administration dey give me joy for this kind shege wey we don see for Karibia?"

"Omo you no yarn us na, how we go take understand?"

"Stone you no try o, why you kon dey waste the small energy wey I dey manage talk since? See, na garri your boy dey live on currently make breeze no carry me trowey." Ochuko responded

Frank laughed "Omo... E no go funny oh!"

"Enough of these jokes, now to business! Are you guys with me?" Stone said as he puffed out the cigarette at the corner of his mouth.

"Yes Baba." They said in unison.

"Our harvest, Engineer Collins Thomas, is the CEO of Orifield Corporations, in other words, he deals with oil money. He resides in a Government Residential Area, G.R.A for short, and his net worth is about three hundred million dollars. He lives a quiet and peaceable life with one wife and two daughters, I no dey miss that family part because na them go carry the cross las las."

Frank nodded "Hmmm! what an interesting profile."

"An interesting one indeed!" Ochuko concurred

"Now, we'll be executing this mission on Sunday morning, because according to Agent Sylvanus, he is a committed member of Saint Saviours Anglican Church and the interesting fact is that na one man soldier he be; he walks alone, no convoy, no bodyguard, no protocol. Hence, it will be much easier for us to accomplish this task."

"Stone Baba, all these things wey

you dey talk na for formality sake. How do you want the job done? Shey we go take d man down abi na logistics d man be?" Ochuko said confidently

"Ochuko calm down, why your blood dey hot?"

"Omo we no get time."

"Guys listen! Get your church clothes ready because we go attend first service with them, if na borrow you wan borrow church outfits, do am between now and midnight. Then, to answer your question Ochuko, the man na logistics, na em go pay us for the job. We're going to collect it in form of a ransom."

"Ransom? Is it a kidnap operation?" Frank asked

"Yes na! Wetin you dey talk sef?" Ochuko responded

"So guys get ready, we'll be making use of pistols, but we no go silence anybody. Shey una dey hear me?"

"Yes Baba!"

SCENE THREE

"God bless you Engineer Collins for contributing immensely to the body of Christ, you don't understand how much this donation means to me. I mean, the church has been clamouring for Buses to cater for the missionaries amongst us."

"Thank God Reverend, it has always being a blessing to give to this great house." He said smiling.

"Chai! I am very happy, in fact stretch forth your hands let me pray for you."

Engr. Collins stretched forth his hands

"Father thank you for the life of your son, Collins..."

"How many hours Reverend wan use pray for pesin? E dey delay my plug abeg." Ochuko said, hitting his hand on the steering impatiently.

Frank hissed "Bad belle! Shey you fit buy that kind Bus wey e donate for church? Or shey you fit even afford the tire?"

"Abeg make I hear word!" Ochuko fired back.

"Shey una see say that man don dey enter e moto? Una dey here dey argue blindly with una poverty mentality! If that man comot for our eyes, I go silence pesin pikin dis morning and nobody go arrest me. Ochuko start moto make we hit street." Stone said

"Noted Boss!"

"Ochuko no drive speed abeg, the instruction is for you to follow the car unnoticed. Frank, hope say d mask and teargas dey ready?"

"Yes boss."

"Omo, Ochuko fire on! fire on!! The man don dey on high speed."

"Stone Baba trust me, I go meet up with am." Ochuko said, mounting pressure on the accelerator.

"Stop the car!"

"Stop this car Over-sabi man, you no see say their car no dey move again?" Frank addressed Ochuko

"Hmm... I can see someone coming out of the car heading towards the Pumpkin Market." Stone said

"That must be his daughter."

"Boss shey make we attack since d car no dey move?"

Entertainment

— with Davidson Imosime Izegaegbe —

Beyond the Screen: Film Festivals as tool driving global creative economy

IZEGAEGBE IMOSIME DAVIDSON

For decades, if we critically examine our public, we would realize that their perception of film festivals, within their locale or international communities, has been firmly rooted in glitz, paparazzi and glamour. We often picture pristine red or green carpets, flashbulbs popping in rapid succession, and film scholars or Nollywood elite celebrating the high art of visual storytelling and filmmaking. However, behind the transparent velvet ropes and champagne toasts lies a far more practical reality. In our modern global landscape, only recently though, film festivals have quietly evolved into aggressive economic engines from just mere entertainment. They are now instruments of soft power, they trigger for foreign direct investment (FDI), and foundational pillars for what economists now call the "Orange Economy." I am sure you know what that means!

As developing nations, like Nigeria, look critically to diversify their revenues far away from depleting natural resources and traditional commodities, the creative sector has suddenly emerged as a goldmine before all to see. When thoroughly planned and structured strategically, a film festival does not merely cost money to host; it also generates a compounding economic multiplier effect that can reshape a nation's financial trajectory. Many may think this is just mere talks on paper, but it is sure a real deal.

To understand this phenomenon with uneasy ease, we may need to look no further than the upcoming Africa & Caribbean International Film Festival (ACIFF), a Cross-Borders Film Festival. This is not to say all film festivals are not tailored to make money or get return on investment, not at all. It is just a move to let us know that there are many closed doors with a film festival with so many economic opportunities and benefits. By breaking geographic boundaries and uniting emerging markets, ACIFF provides a textbook masterclass in how cinema can be leveraged for macroeconomic growth.

It is a fact that, at the most fundamental level, an international film festival acts as a massive temporary stimulus package for local tourism. When a city hosts a major festival, it becomes a magnet for an affluent, highly active demographic: international filmmakers, producers, foreign journalists, distributors, and cultural tourists. The spotlight at that point in time beams not just on the festival but on the State it is held. Everybody benefits economically from directly or indirectly. The immediate economic injection, into the state or country where any festival is always felt across multiple touchpoints like the areas of Hospitality Surge. Here, Hotels, boutique lodgings, and short-term rentals experience a massive spike in occupancy rates, often allowing them to command premium seasonal pricing. That is just a tip of the iceberg when you consider other areas like the Service Ecosystem like Restaurants, catering companies,



FILM FESTIVALS GATHERING

transport logistics, aviation, and local retail vendors see a sudden influx of high-spending consumers.

Most times, I am stunned when the government or agencies ask questions like what is the relevance or benefits of a film festival. Well apart from the above listed, let coin a word like Job Creation. I know this will sound familiar and become an apartment where all benefit ends right? No. It's beyond job creation. Will deal with that later. Now to job creation, beyond the immediate screen, a festival requires an army of temporary and permanent workers such as event coordinators, sound technicians, translators, security firms, and marketing agencies, putting money directly into the pockets of citizens.

Again, consider the baseline data from legacy festivals: events like Cannes or the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) inject hundreds of millions of dollars into their regional economies annually. For developing or emerging economies like that of Nigeria, we know what festivals by Fidelis Duker, Coal City Film festival, ZUMA International film festival, Edo State International Film Festival, and many others have done to the Nigeria economy. Don't you think ACIFF, even though a fraction of many that would want to be involved in cross-border film festivals, can through its budget spending profoundly alter the quarterly revenue of most local small, medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and others?

While film screenings as part of events in a film festival ceremony entertain the public, the true engine of economic growth operates strictly behind closed doors in the Business-to-Business (B2B) markets. A film festival is, at its core, a trade fair. During these events, intellectual property (IP) is commercialized.

Distribution companies like many great online film platforms or regional broadcasting networks negotiate the licensing rights for local content. Co-production treaties are drafted, permitting filmmakers from different countries to pool financial resources, secure international tax rebates, and employ diverse crews.

When a nation successfully sells its cinematic content internationally, it is effectively exporting its culture, bringing invaluable foreign currency back into the domestic banking system. Furthermore, as global studios witness the viability of local talent, they are incentivized to establish regional offices or utilize the host country as a physical shooting location, creating sustained economic capital.

The Africa & Canadian International Film Festival (ACIFF) serves as a brilliant modern case study of how a cultural event can deliberately engineer transnational economic cooperation. Rather than limiting its scope to a single geographic territory, ACIFF's "Cross-Borders" ethos intentionally constructs an economic bridge between two continents, and broader international markets.

A striking example of this is ACIFF's decision to position its landmark editions in unexpected global hubs. By bringing African and Canadian creative leaders directly into the heart of a one stop over creative shop, massive economic and educational ecosystem, the festival has attempted to establish a unique diverse-way trade route for cultural exchange and corporate collaboration.

ACIFF targets a massive, historically fragmented consumer market: the global African and Canadians, diaspora, black emancipation alongside international allies. By facilitating direct B2B networking sessions between

cross-border creators and foreign financiers, the festival bypasses traditional Western distribution gatekeepers. This allows intellectual property from emerging markets to be bought, sold, and co-funded directly, establishing an alternative, highly lucrative supply chain for creative goods.

An economy cannot scale sustainably on raw talent alone; it requires formalized capacity building. ACIFF recognizes this economic reality by anchoring its festival schedule around intensive professional workshops. Spanning specialized disciplines, such as Acting, Directing, Set Design, Screenwriting, Acting, Cinematography, Cartooning and many others. With a goal getting mindset, these programs act as an incubator for human capital. We do know that when local creatives are trained to meet rigorous international technical standards, their labour value skyrockets. We have seen it happen. They transition from an informal domestic workforce to a highly competitive, and globalized talent pool capable of commanding top-dollar contract fees from international production houses.

Even when operating on an international canvas, ACIFF's operational blueprint directly stimulates the hyper-local economy of its host destination. Over its multi-day run, the festival program intentionally balances heavy industry panels with holistic and cultural integration. Activities such as guided city visits, regional tours, and communal traditionally based sessions which seamlessly intertwine the visiting delegates with local tourism vendors. Ultimately, the economic impact of a film festival like ACIFF outlives the closing night awards ceremony. When films showcase a nation's landscapes, architecture, and cultural nuances, they serve as a multi-million-dollar commercial

for the country. This phenomenon, known as "film tourism," routinely inspires audiences to visit the real-world locations they fell in love with on screen. As noticed in this moment of experience, the event is happening simultaneously in Africa and Canada and Benin City in Edo State.

Furthermore, a nation that demonstrates the logistical capability to pull off a prestigious, secure, and technologically advanced international festival marrying two continents signals to the world that it is open for business. It proves to foreign investors that Nigeria, Canada possess the corporate infrastructure, legal protections for intellectual property, and institutional maturity necessary for large-scale economic partnerships, even though married by the singular idea of ACIFF Chairman with collaborators.

As we advance through the second half of the decade, the line between culture and commerce has permanently been blurred. However, we may pretend like it is not happening but it is, actually. Content is a global currency, like I mentioned earlier in one of my write ups here on this page and the nations that learn how to harvest their creative capital will dominate the financial landscape of tomorrow. No hard feelings!

Film festivals can no longer be dismissed as mere entertainment or elitist vanity projects. As pioneered by the cross-border architecture of ACIFF, these festivals are sophisticated fiscal instruments, not just for nation building but for continents. By merging tourism, international B2B commerce, and intensive human capital development, film festivals now represent one of the smartest, high-yield investments any country can be involved in to make toward achieving a diversified, future-proof economy.

NEWS**FOREIGN****A HUGE FIRE IN BANGKOK:**

Footage from outside the venue shows the fire blasting out of the front door as people run through the flames to escape

At least 27 killed, 22 critically injured after fire engulfs Bangkok bar

A huge fire tore through a bar in Bangkok late on Sunday, killing at least 27 people and leaving 22 critically injured.

The blaze started near the stage of the bar in the popular Chatuchak district, then spread rapidly, cutting power and engulfing the room with smoke, eyewitnesses say.

Footage posted online show panicked customers screaming as they fled – some with their clothes on fire – through the flame-enveloped front door of Rong Beer Na Lat Phrao.

Firefighters, who arrived at the scene just after midnight, quickly extinguished the fire. They found the bodies of most of the victims in a bathroom, where they had apparently sought shelter.

Footage from outside the venue shows the fire blasting out of the front door as people run through the flames to escape.

Preliminary investigations by Bangkok's disaster mitigation department suggest the fire could have been caused by an electrical short circuit in an air conditioner, though no official cause has been given.

Authorities have promised a thorough investigation.

This is not the first time such an incident has occurred in Thailand.

Despite official promises to improve fire and electrical safety standards following previous incidents, they are still often poorly enforced.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who visited the scene early on Monday, said a musician who was performing when the fire broke out told him "there was blasting and everybody tried to flee from the smoke and flames".

Many people did not make it out of the bar because they "went to the back of the building and tried to hide them-

selves... in the toilet", the musician said, according to Anutin.

Firefighters, who were alerted to the blaze by a passing driver, were reportedly able to bring the flames under control in about half an hour.

However, despite their efforts, nine men and 18 women were killed. More than 60 are now being treated in hospital, including 22 who are in critical condition, authorities said.

People were seen scrambling outside as a massive blaze ripped through the bar.

Initial findings suggest the majority of the victims had died from smoke inhalation, said Suriyachai Raviwan, the director of Bangkok's disaster mitigation department.

Bangkok governor Chatchart Sittipunt say the flammable interior decorations on the bar's ceiling may have facilitated the blaze's rapid spread.

There are also reports of people found unconscious near

the building's emergency exit, suggesting that there may have been some obstruction, the governor added.

Authorities say these suggestions can only be confirmed through further investigation by forensic officers.

One motorcyclist, Surin Jai-harn, told AFP that he helped about five people flee the burning bar using clothing to extinguish flames on their bodies.

"I feel depressed. I saw many deaths and I do not know the fate of the people I helped," he told AFP.

The driver who alerted the fire department told Thai news outlet the Daily News that he broke windows to help two people escape.

As of Monday morning, the bar has been cordoned off, with shattered windows and furniture piled up outside its entrance. Confronting pictures have emerged of many body bags lined up outside the bar.

driving past friends' houses that had not been so lucky.

The couple were among about 600 of the nearly 1,500 people evacuated from the fire zone in Almería province who were told they could return on Sunday.

Emma and her husband Simon moved three years ago to Bédar, where they looked after 15 chickens and spent time with their three dogs.

"When I look over there and I see how close we were to disaster like some of those people, that is terrifying," she said.

The Mitchells said they had never been given clear instructions on how they should flee in the case of a fire.

"Next time it would be good to get an alert on our phones. We get an alert for earthquakes

that are 50 miles away but we don't get an alert for a fire that is a quarter of a kilometre away."

We followed them back to their house where they found all of the chickens still alive.

The power and water were still working, too – despite the inferno that took hold around the house.

The couple said the local police and firefighters had been outstanding.

But Emma was particularly angry with those local officials who said some people who were killed – including Britons – had not followed instructions.

Addressing the authorities, she said: "You need to get your act sorted and please don't try and victim-blame afterwards.

Former Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani dies aged 74

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the former leader of Qatar, has died aged 74, the country's government announced on Sunday.

"The Bureau of the Emir mourns the great loss to the nation of the late, may God have mercy on him," a statement read.

Sheikh Hamad was one of the key masterminds behind modern Qatar and had taken power from his father in June 1995 in a bloodless coup.

He is credited with transforming its economy into the wealthy global powerhouse it is today, thanks to its huge gas reserves. But his reign also had controversies – including Qatar's World Cup bid in 2010.

Qatari emir handed power to son Tamim

Funeral prayers were held on Sunday evening before several days of public mourning across the country to mark his death.

Flags will be flown at half mast, while government offices and public institutions will be shut as a mark of respect.

King Charles and Queen Camilla paid tribute, saying Sheikh Hamad had "dedicated many years of distinguished service to Qatar".

"His leadership, vision and commitment to the welfare of the Qatari people were widely admired, both within Qatar and around the world," they added.

India declared a day of na-

tional mourning and said that all entertainment events would be cancelled during the period.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi said: "A visionary leader who led Qatar to great levels of development and prosperity.

"We remember him also as a true friend whom I had the honour of meeting during my last visit to Qatar in February 2024."

When Sheikh Hamad took power 31 years ago Qatar was struggling for money with its oil reserves dwindling.

His coup – carried out while his father Sheikh Khalifa was abroad – changed the country forever.

It became a leading producer and exporter of liquefied natural gas, thanks to international partnerships and investments that had been brokered.

In 1996 Al Jazeera was launched there before becoming a big name in international broadcasting.

And Sheikh Hamad founded the Qatar Investment Authority which put money into businesses abroad, including Harrods and football team Paris Saint-Germain.

It would be football where he secured one of Qatar's biggest – and controversial – triumphs.

The country was awarded the right to host the 2022 World Cup in 2010, despite allegations of corruption it was later cleared of.

Planes sent to tackle wildfires of 'exceptional scale' near Paris

Two firefighting planes have been rushed to the Paris region to tackle a large wildfire south of the French capital.

The Fontainebleau forest blaze, described by officials as "virulent" and of "exceptional scale", partially closed the country's main north-south highway, disrupting traffic during the first major weekend getaway of the summer.

Early on Monday, officials said the fire had raced across 800 hectares and was still spreading in the forest, about 40 miles (60km) south-east of the city of Paris.

The Paris region is suffering through its third heatwave this year during a summer in which temperature records have broken in several countries across Europe.

It was the first time firefighting planes had been sent up from the normally drier and hotter south of the country to tackle fires in the Paris region, Eric Brocardi, of France's national federation of firefighters, said.

Two firefighting helicopters and an observation aircraft had also been deployed, he added, according to Agence-France-Presse.

"The aim is to save lives and property," he was quoted as saying.

A map showing France, Paris and the Fontainebleau forest just south of it

Earlier, a fire had also blocked a highway running east from Paris and disrupted a high-speed train line to the south of France.

Travellers were facing delays of up to six hours for trains arriving at or leaving from Paris's Gare de Lyon, French rail company SNCF said on Sunday evening.

The latest French heatwave has forced the temporary shutdown of three nuclear power stations to avoid the discharge of warm cooling water into overheated waterways.

Organisers of the Tour de France cycling race also shortened Sunday's stage by 30km (19 miles) as temperatures neared 40C.

The record-breaking temperatures across Europe this summer have led to major wildfires, most notably in Spain where at least 13 people were killed by Thursday's wildfire in Almería, one of the country's deadliest ever.

And in the UK, a large wildfire in north Wales was declared a major incident by emergency services on Sunday, as firefighters tackled fires across England and Wales.

British couple return to village at heart of deadly Spanish wildfire

As we climbed the winding road to Bédar, we emerged into a charred and desolate landscape.

Molten car parts littered our path and out of the window we saw the whole hillside now coated in a dusty black.

At least 13 people, including five believed by Spanish authorities to be Britons, were killed by Thursday's wildfire in Spain's Almería province, one of the country's deadliest ever.

The toll rose on Sunday after a 93-year-old woman, believed to be British, died of her injuries in hospital. The identities of those killed have not yet been officially confirmed.

The fire, which has now been contained, burned through

about 7,000 hectares (17,300 acres) of land, authorities said.

The breadth of the damage on display was a vivid sign of the ferocity of the flames, which had been powered by winds of up to 50 km/h (31mph).

"This landscape is completely charred": Inside the town at the centre of Spanish wildfires

But as we drove further into the village it dawned on us just how many of the bright white Andalusian homes had seemingly been spared.

"This is our house and it survived," Emma Mitchell told us with a huge sigh of relief.

She pointed across the valley to a property ringed by darkened trees and vegetation. But her eyes filled as she described

FOREIGN

NEWS



MOHAMED HAMDAN DAGLO

RSF chief Mohamed Hamdan Daglo sentenced to death in absentia

A court in Sudan's army-controlled city of Port Sudan on Sunday sentenced paramilitary leader Mohamed Hamdan Daglo and 15 others to death in absentia over charges of killing a regional governor and war crimes in Darfur, state media reported.

The ruling, issued by a judiciary functioning under the army, is the first against the leadership of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) since war broke out between the paramilitary group and the Sudanese army in April 2023.

The court convicted Daglo and the other defendants of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and attacks on civilians and public facilities, state news agency SUNA reported. Those sentenced include Daglo's brother and deputy, Abdelrahim Hamdan Daglo, as well as several RSF officers and tribal leaders from Arab communities in West Darfur.

The case centres on the killing of West Darfur governor Khamis Abbakar in June 2023, shortly after RSF forces seized El-Geneina, the state

capital. Abbakar was killed hours after accusing the RSF and allied militias of carrying out attacks against civilians. UN experts determined that between 10,000 and 15,000 people, mostly from the Masalit ethnic group, were killed in El-Geneina during the violence.

The RSF has repeatedly denied allegations of genocide and other war crimes. The court said it would refer the case to the Supreme Court for review and seek the arrest and extradition of those convicted through Interpol and other international channels.

Sudanese army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Daglo had jointly led the 2021 coup that derailed Sudan's transition to civilian rule, before falling out over plans to integrate the RSF into the regular army, a dispute that eventually led to war.

Now in its fourth year, the conflict between the army and the RSF has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced more than 11 million and triggered what the United Nations describes as the world's largest displacement and hunger crises.

Ramaphosa honors South Africa's WWI fallen in France

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has honored the country's World War One soldiers at the South African National Memorial in Longueval, France, marking 110 years since the Battle of Delville Wood.

He said the sacrifice of those who fought must never be forgotten.

"The men of Delville Wood endured what few human beings should ever be asked to endure. Their sacrifice deserves the eternal gratitude of our country and indeed of France as well."

Ramaphosa also called for greater recognition of Black South Africans whose contributions to the war were ignored for decades, saying the

country's history should reflect the sacrifice of all who served.

The ceremony included members of the South African National Defence Force, who said the legacy of Delville Wood continues to inspire today's soldiers.

"It is wonderful. One thing that is very special is that their commitment and their sacrifice, as it is indicated, is our ideal and is our inspiration. Their commitment, courage and dedication remains what inspires us."

The Delville Wood memorial has evolved into a place of remembrance for all South Africans who served in the First World War, reflecting the country's efforts to tell a more inclusive history.

Heavy rains and flash floods in Bangladesh leave 51 dead

At least 51 people have died and more than a million affected by heavy rainfall in Bangladesh in recent days.

Thousands have lost their homes as flash floods and landslides hit large parts of the country, including the capital Dhaka.

More than half the deaths so far have occurred in Cox's Bazar, home to a large Rohingya refugee population. Last week several students and a teacher were killed in that district when floodwaters swept

through their school.

Bangladesh is a low-lying country that has many rivers, and often sees heavy rain and floods during its annual monsoon season. But experts warn that climate change has made rainfall more intense and more frequent.

The heavy rain began more than a week ago and as it intensified in recent days, authorities issued warnings about floods and landslides, evacuated families in high risk areas, and postponed student exams.

Thousands of people are now

living in government shelters.

As of Sunday, more than 1 million people have been affected by the rain, according to authorities.

Twenty-eight out of the 51 deaths reported so far have been in Cox's Bazar. The district is home to more than a million Rohingya who make up the world's largest refugee settlement.

In Dhaka, traffic has slowed in the capital as residents report of flooded streets, with the water rising up to knee level in some areas, according to BBC

Bangla.

Some local media outlets on Monday questioned previous government efforts to fix the drainage systems in Dhaka.

Sarder Udoy Raihan of the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre told the AFP news agency that the situation in the southeast of the country was likely to improve soon.

But with the monsoon continuing to affect the north-eastern and northern parts of Bangladesh, "there is a possibility of further inundation", he warned.



VENEZUELA COLLAPSED BUILDING:

Families continue digging through the rubble for relatives in Venezuela.

Venezuela: families continue digging through the rubble for relatives

Venezuelans continue working day in and day out in the rubble to recover their relatives' bodies almost 20 days after twin earthquakes devastated the country.

Although more and more machinery has been visible across the coastal state to help with recovery efforts, there is

still insufficient government assistance for families in their desperate search for bodies. Sleeping outside collapsed buildings, families refuse to quit.

Silvana Aguilera is sleeping under an improvised tent outside a collapsed residential building where her only son and only grandson are buried.

She lived with her husband in the next building. But her building, while severely damaged and on the brink of collapsing, stayed put, while her son's building fell to the ground. It has been raining hard, making recovery effort more enduring.

But Aguilera is going nowhere until she finds her be-

loved son. "I can't get my family out," Aguilera says.

The government of Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez has estimated that the earthquakes left more than 17,000 people without a home. The displaced are now living in schools, sidewalks, parks, plazas and other public spaces.

Parents in southwestern Nigeria relieved after kidnapped children return



Parents of students abducted in Oyo State.

Parents of students abducted from a school in Nigeria's southwestern Oyo State have expressed relief and gratitude after their children were rescued following nearly two months in captivity.

Families celebrated the news as authorities began reuniting the children with their loved ones. The pupils and their teachers remain at a military hospital in Ibadan, the state capital, where they are undergoing medical assessments and receiving care.

"When I heard that they have been rescued, I was only a bit

happy because I was trying to confirm if it's the truth or not," said Jeremiah Jandeh, father to one of the abducted children.

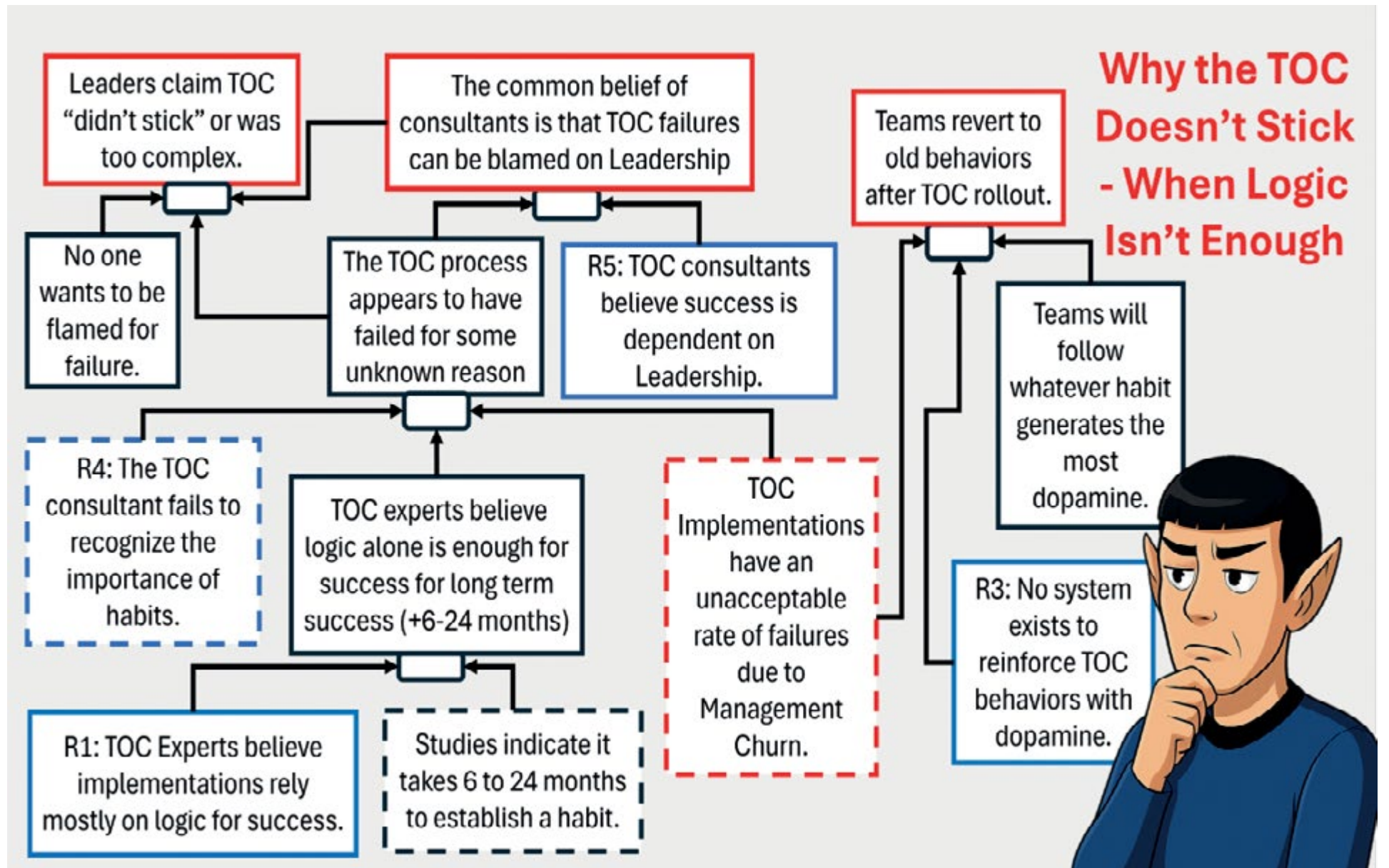
He said he now had "peace of mind" after the news of their rescue was confirmed.

The abductions in a southern state had represented an escalation of the country's security crisis because most such abductions previously had taken place in the north.

Abductions at schools are common in Nigeria, where militant groups target them to put pressure on the government and extract ransoms.

ANALYSIS

When logic isn't enough



BAGUDU MOHAMMED

My sister-in-law told my wife a story that is passionate and heartbreaking. The weight of it sat between them on the phone, too heavy to be held alone.

She was talking with her sister, who had just given birth, when the conversation drifted to the young doctor who had delivered the baby. He was someone they had grown close to because of the frequent visits to the private clinic back home. And it was in that ordinary chat that the slogan we all throw around, "may Nigeria not happen to you," suddenly found flesh and blood.

The doctor had closed late, past 10pm. He was walking home, tired but relieved the night wasn't long, holding onto his ID like a shield. A curfew had been imposed in the town recently because of hoodlums. The streets were empty. Bad boys stopped him. They took everything. His money, his phone, and then, cruelly, his ID card. They stripped off his shirt and trousers too, leaving him in just a boxer and a singlet. Yes, even the clothes.

That should have been the end of the nightmare. It was only the beginning. As he walked on, half-naked and shaking, he ran into police officers enforcing the curfew. They saw a man with no clothes, no ID, wandering in the dark, and their minds made up the story for them. "Drug addict. Bandit." He shouted, "No, I was robbed! I'm a medical doctor!"

But the more he explained, the angrier they got. "How can a doctor look like this? Where is your ID? They robbed your clothes too?" The beating started. He screamed, hoping someone would hear.

And then, as if the universe wanted to add a twist only fiction dares, a soldiers' patrol van slowed down, didn't stop, and seemed to urge the police on: "kill him, he's a criminal." His leg was broken. The healer became the patient.

At that exact moment, back in the clinic, his phone was ringing nonstop. A new patient had come in, a woman in labour. They needed him urgently. The phone rang and rang in the hands of his robbers while the man who owned it lay bleeding on the street.

My wife finished the story and looked at me. We both went quiet. There was nothing to add, only the heaviness of it.

I broke the silence. "The police used logic," I said. "But it was the kind of logic that refuses to doubt itself. A man without clothes at 10pm? Without an ID? During curfew? To them, that evidence was enough. Why would robbers take clothes and an ID? Therefore he must be lying. Therefore he must be the criminal."

This is what psychologists call the "fundamental attribution error," a term coined by Lee Ross. We overestimate personality and underestimate situation. We see an outcome and invent a character to match it. We also fall into "confirmation bias"; once we decide someone looks like a suspect,

every new detail only proves us right. The brain hates uncertainty, so it closes the case early.

The problem is, human life doesn't always fit the logic we use to judge it. Not everything makes sense from a distance. Not everything can be explained so others will believe you. Sometimes you are robbed of your story before you can even tell it.

Philosopher Karl Popper warned that no amount of reasoning can replace observation. In law, we call it "audi alteram partem". Meaning, hear the other side. But in the street, in moments of fear, we trade due process for speed. We trade humility for certainty. And that certainty can turn us hard.

That is how coincidence becomes verdict. How appearance becomes evidence. How luck decides who is called a saint and who is called a villain. The same logic that saves one man can condemn another, depending on timing, lighting, and who is watching. Even courts, with all their procedures, get it wrong sometimes. The same facts, the same evidence, can be interpreted differently by different judges because they are human, and humans are not cameras. We interpret.

I thought of Mokwa last year. In late May, heavy rain came down and the town was swallowed in hours. Nearly a thousand people died. Hundreds are still missing. Houses, roads, gone like a scene cut from a film. Till today, people try to explain it with drainage, with deforestation, with a dam. Those

are real factors. But they don't fully contain the mystery of water arriving all at once, with that kind of force. When we insist that everything must add up, we invent neat narratives just to sleep at night. Sometimes the honest answer is: we weren't there, and we don't know the whole truth.

It happens in small ways too. A friend once dragged me to the bathroom at 2am in our old apartment. "I saw something," he whispered. "Like a man. I'm sure." I couldn't explain it. I told him some things don't add up, and you have to let them be. Another friend got arrested years ago. Overnight, stories started multiplying. "We always knew he was like that." The old me remembered him as a good boy. What changed? I don't know. But I've learned that logic without curiosity becomes a weapon.

If those police officers had paused, if they had let doubt sit in the room for just a minute, that doctor would have gotten help instead of a beating. The charge to "take out any bandit at sight" is convenient. It feels like justice. But convenience is not truth.

The truth is, we cannot know everything. We should be modest enough to say that. We should be curious before we are judgmental. Logic is a tool, not a god. Without evidence, without listening, without the humility to admit we might be wrong, it will keep breaking the very people it was meant to protect.

So yes, may Nigeria not happen to you. And may we, when it does, have the restraint not to finish the story be-

fore the person gets to speak.

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How luck decides who is called a saint and who is called a villain. The same logic that saves one man can condemn another, depending on timing, lighting, and who is watching. Even courts, with all their procedures, get it wrong sometimes

FEATURE

Nigeria must adequately invest in Agriculture



PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU

SOPHIA OSARUGUE OSADOLOR

Agriculture is the backbone of food security, particularly in a country like Nigeria, where millions of people depend on farming for their livelihoods. Beyond feeding the population, agriculture creates employment, sustains rural communities, provides raw materials for industries and contributes significantly to economic growth. A nation that neglects agriculture risks food shortages, rising poverty, unemployment and economic instability. Yet, despite Nigeria's vast available land and favourable climate, agriculture remains one of the country's least funded sectors.

Between 2024 and 2025, Nigeria allocated barely one per cent of its national budget to agriculture. In the 2025 fiscal year, approximately 362 billion less than one per cent of the federal budget was earmarked for the sector. Although the allocation increased to about 1.475 trillion in the 2026 budget, it still falls far short of the 10 per cent benchmark agreed upon by African leaders under the Maputo Declaration.

Even more concerning is how these funds are utilised. A significant portion is channelled towards research institutions, educational programmes, infrastructure and constituency projects, while relatively little reaches the smallholder farmers who

produce the bulk of Nigeria's food. At the state level, budgetary information is often unavailable or lacks transparency, making it difficult to determine whether allocated funds actually benefit farmers.

The consequences of chronic underfunding are evident across the country. Food inflation continues to push prices beyond the reach of many households, while rising production costs reduce farmers' profits and discourage investment. Many young Nigerians are abandoning agriculture in search of alternative livelihoods, leaving an ageing farming population behind. At the same time, food production has become uneven across regions, leading to supply shortages in some areas and surpluses in others.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have attempted to bridge some of these gaps by supporting smallholder farmers through training, access to improved seedlings, financing and extension services. While these interventions are commendable, they cannot replace sustained government investment or a comprehensive national agricultural strategy.

One practical solution is for governments at both the federal and state levels to establish strategic partnerships with NGOs and the private sector while creating State Agricultural Empowerment Zones (SAEZs).

These would be government-designated agricultural hubs, with two to five zones in each state depending on its size and agricultural potential. Each zone would specialise in crops and livestock best suited to its ecological environment.

Within these zones, farmers would receive access to modern farm equipment, irrigation facilities, quality seedlings, veterinary services, extension officers, storage facilities and regular training programmes. Young people, regardless of their previous farming experience, could be trained

and employed as farm managers, technicians, machine operators, extension workers and supervisors. Government incentives and guaranteed minimum prices for selected commodities would further encourage production and improve farmers' incomes.

The benefits of this model would extend far beyond increased food production. Greater agricultural output would improve food availability, moderate food prices and strengthen national food security. Increased farming activities would stimulate

rural economies by creating employment, supporting local businesses and improving living standards in underserved communities.

Furthermore, expanding agricultural production would increase government revenue through taxation, value-added processing, exports and commercial agricultural activities. Nigeria would also reduce its dependence on imported food, conserve valuable foreign exchange and become less vulnerable to global food price shocks and supply chain disruptions.

Nigeria's agricultural challenges are not caused by a lack of fertile land or unwilling farmers. Rather, they stem from inadequate investment, inconsistent policies, poor coordination and insufficient support for those working the land. A well-funded partnership between government, development partners and the private sector, anchored on the proposed State Agricultural Empowerment Zones (SAEZs), has the potential to transform the sector.

Agriculture has always been the foundation of national prosperity. Investing meaningfully in it would not only guarantee food security but also create jobs, reduce poverty, diversify the economy and strengthen Nigeria's long-term development. If agriculture truly feeds the nation, then it deserves to become one of Nigeria's highest funding priorities. The time to invest in agriculture is now.



Government incentives and guaranteed minimum prices for selected commodities would further encourage production and improve farmers' incomes

Urgent need to regulate underage social media use

OBOH SYLVESTER

The debate over restricting underage access to social media is no longer a theoretical one. It has become an urgent public policy issue that governments, parents, educators, technology companies, and civil society can no longer afford to ignore. As social media continues to shape the lives of millions of young people, its devastating consequences on children and adolescents are becoming increasingly evident. The time has come for decisive action to protect the next generation.

Social media has undoubtedly revolutionized communication, education, and commerce. It has democratized access to information and given millions a platform to express themselves. However, these benefits should not blind society to the grave dangers posed by unrestricted access for children who lack the emotional maturity and critical judgment required to navigate the digital world safely.

Across Nigeria, children below the recommended minimum age for most social media platforms routinely operate accounts, often with little or no parental supervision. Many parents, either through ignorance or necessity, provide smartphones and internet access without adequate safeguards, inadvertently exposing their children to a digital ecosystem that is increasingly hostile to youthful innocence.

The consequences are alarming. Cases of cyberbullying, online sexual exploitation, identity theft, internet fraud, exposure to pornography, violent content, gambling, drug promotion, and dangerous online challenges are steadily increasing. Equally disturbing is the growing evidence linking excessive social media use to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, poor academic performance, sleep deprivation, and social isolation among adolescents.

Perhaps the greatest danger lies in the invisible algorithms that drive these platforms. Designed primarily to maximise user engagement and advertising revenue, they continuously feed young users with content based on previous interactions, regardless of whether such material is healthy or harmful. Children, whose cognitive and emotional capacities are still developing, become easy targets for manipulation, misinformation, and unhealthy behavioural patterns.

Nigeria is not immune to these realities. Reports of young people being lured into criminal activities, blackmailed through intimate images, recruited into cybercrime, or manipulated by online predators are becoming disturbingly frequent. Social media has become a fertile ground for criminal networks seeking vulnerable victims. This is a national security concern as much as it is a child protection issue.

It is against this backdrop that calls for a ban—or, more appropriately, stringent age-based restrictions—on underage social media use deserve serious consideration. Such measures are not intended to isolate children from technology or deny them access to information. Rather, they seek to ensure that digital participation occurs within an environment that pri-



Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani

oritises children's safety, emotional well-being, and healthy development.

Several countries have already begun implementing stricter age verification requirements, mandatory parental consent mechanisms, and legal obligations on technology companies to protect minors. These initiatives demonstrate that protecting children

online is both achievable and necessary. Nigeria should not lag behind in adopting robust legislative and regulatory frameworks that hold social media companies accountable for enforcing their own age restrictions.

Legislation alone, however, will not solve the problem. Parents remain the first line of defence. They must

become more digitally literate, monitor their children's online activities responsibly, establish clear rules on screen time, and foster open conversations about internet safety. Schools should equally integrate digital citizenship, cyber ethics, and online safety into their educational programmes, preparing students to become respon-

sible digital citizens.

Technology companies also have a moral and legal obligation to place children's welfare above commercial interests. Age verification systems must become more robust. Privacy settings for minors should be stronger by default. Harmful content should be removed swiftly, while algorithms that amplify addictive or dangerous material must be subjected to greater regulatory scrutiny.

Critics argue that a ban may be difficult to enforce and that determined children will simply find ways around restrictions. While enforcement presents undeniable challenges, imperfection is not an excuse for inaction. Society does not abandon laws against child labour, underage driving, or the sale of alcohol to minors simply because some individuals violate them. Laws establish standards, deter misconduct, and provide mechanisms for accountability. The same principle applies to protecting children in the digital environment.

The Nigerian government, through the National Assembly and relevant regulatory agencies, should therefore initiate comprehensive legislation that establishes enforceable minimum age requirements for social media use, compels technology companies to verify users' ages effectively, imposes meaningful penalties for non-compliance, and strengthens online child protection mechanisms. Such legislation should be complemented by sustained public awareness campaigns and investments in digital literacy for parents, teachers, and children alike.

The future of any nation rests upon the well-being of its children. In an age where digital technologies increasingly influence values, behaviour, and mental health, safeguarding young minds is not censorship; it is responsible governance. Society has a collective duty to ensure that technological advancement does not come at the expense of childhood.

A carefully crafted ban on underage social media use, backed by effective regulation, parental responsibility, and corporate accountability, is therefore not only desirable but imperative. Nigeria must act now before another generation of children pays the price for our collective hesitation.



In an age where digital technologies increasingly influence values, behaviour, and mental health, safeguarding young minds is not censorship; it is responsible governance.



FEATURE

One Health: Why human health depends on Animals and the Environment

SALIHU MARYAM SAIDU/WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) has renewed global attention to the One Health approach, emphasizing that the health of humans, animals and the environment is inseparable. Health experts warn that many infectious diseases affecting people originate in animals, making collaboration across human, veterinary and environmental sectors essential to preventing future disease outbreaks.

According to WHO, about 60 per cent of known infectious diseases in humans are transmitted from animals, while nearly 75 per cent of new and emerging infectious diseases—including Ebola, Avian influenza and Mpox—have links to wildlife or domestic animals. This growing threat has prompted governments and international health agencies to strengthen disease surveillance and improve their capacity to detect, prevent and respond to outbreaks before they spread widely.

The One Health approach recognizes that disease emergence is often influenced by environmental degradation, food production systems, animal health and human activities. By monitoring these interconnected factors together rather than in isolation, experts say countries can identify health risks earlier and reduce the likelihood of epidemics and pandemics.

Health authorities also recommend practical preventive measures

to reduce the transmission of diseases from animals to humans. These include washing hands after handling animals, cooking meat, eggs and seafood thoroughly, drinking safe water, maintaining proper food hygiene, vaccinating pets, and protecting against mosquito and tick bites.

WHO's renewed commitment to One Health was reaffirmed through a joint declaration by regional and international health organizations, calling for stronger collaboration among governments, veterinary services, environmental agencies and public health institutions. The declaration stresses that sustained investment in animal health systems, food safety, environmental protection and disease surveillance is critical to preventing future outbreaks.

Experts further note that rapid population growth, urbanization, climate change and increased interaction between humans and wildlife have heightened the global risk of emerging infectious diseases. Consequently, protecting forests, improving sanitation, strengthening surveillance systems and promoting responsible animal management have become key public health priorities.

Ultimately, WHO maintains that protecting animal health and preserving the environment are fundamental to protecting human health. A healthier ecosystem, the organization says, is the foundation for healthier people, stronger health systems and more resilient communities.



Building a culture of responsibility in the next generation

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

Responsibility is the state or fact of being accountable, answerable, or obligated for a duty, task, or decision. Hence, it connotes recognizing and understanding one's obligations, reliability in completing tasks, and accepting the consequences of actions when it is defaulted.

Every society that has been known to thrive in all facets of development often have an element of 'responsible citizens', although no one might come up to term him or herself as 'responsible' but there are certain indicators that cannot be ignored which will eventually tell that there are responsible citizens in that society. Being responsible however is not a product of Inheritance or pretence, but intentionally learnt through guidance, training and experience. The desire of a nation to bring forth the next generation of citizens that will change the trajectory of that nation in a positive light will only remain as a wish and vain words until they step-up to intentionally build a culture of responsibility in the next generation who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

In achieving building a culture of responsibility in the next generation, it should first begin from childhood because even the Bible says that

"Train up a child in the way he should go, so that when he is old he shall not depart from it." Raising a responsible generation should be an exercise that ought to start from the younger generations because that stage of their lives is a time that they do not have an absolute will of their own, their parents and other persons who have authority over them can have a say in their lives and decide what they should imbibe and what to stay away from. It is at that stage they are being molded or modelled to become what they will turn out to be in the future. That is why it is important for a child to become sane and responsible, he or she has to be raised by a parent who is intentionally responsible and disciplined. Hence, it is garbage in, garbage out.

Raising responsible children is pertinent because it prepares children for adulthood. The adults we see daily did not mature out of the blue, they were once babies, toddlers, pre-teens, teens and adults, hence, it reveals that there are stages for growth and development and these stages are important in the life of every child. It is from childhood that one begins to know the difference between good and bad, pick and imitate certain habits, portray diverse characteristics and also learn to make certain choices. Hence, it is important

that a child is properly trained and groomed in the right manner, and by the right set of persons because it is what is sown into him or her that will surface when such child attains adulthood. For instance, there are people who are known as drunkards, womanizers, thieves etc; beyond the reality of what people say about them an investigation on their childhood days will corroborate with what they became because, there will be certain similarities in that character that they exhibited in the past but because it was not properly addressed and corrected, it transcended into an addiction in the future creating problems for themselves, families and the society at large.

Aside from preparing children for adulthood, imbibing the culture of responsibility helps in the promotion of discipline and self-control. The generation of citizens or people that will make a difference in their societies will be one that has been forged in the furnace of discipline and self-control. It is during the formative years that these two aspects will definitely arise to test the two aspects aforementioned. It is rather unfortunate that societies are dominated by people who are greedy and manner less, such that when certain persons are in a position of authority they seek opportunities to exploit funds entrusted to them or abuse

the power given to them. This is a call to begin to instill discipline and teach the younger generations to exercise self-control when necessary.

Another important benefit of building a culture of responsibility in the next generation is to encourage leadership and good citizenship. When a society is filled with upright individuals, issues like bad governance, irresponsible citizens, poverty etc will not be heard of because they have come to the point of knowing what is right and also doing that which is acceptable in the society.

Additionally, it reduces antisocial behaviour. Actions that disregard or harm others, violate social norms in society such as bullying, vandalism, thuggery, littering, stealing, verbal abuse, disobedience to basic social rules etc will not take hold in an environment where the culture of responsibility is held in high esteem or upheld.

In order to raise a generation of people that will exhibit responsibility as a lifestyle there are certain measures that have to be put in place before it can be achieved.

First and foremost, parents must learn to lead by example. Children by nature are imitators, they often pick up habits and portray characters they see in their parents and guardians, they observe them very closely that

they can replicate their actions. Hence, when adults are honest, accountable, reliable, disciplined, loving, forgiving, cheerful etc, children are most likely to develop those qualities. Therefore, responsible children are a product of responsible parenting.

Teaching accountability early should also be introduced. This means that children should be taught and encouraged to admit their wrongs and mistakes and learn from them rather than being pampered to shy away from it. For instance, one will notice that in contemporary times, there is a decline in the rate of how parents discipline their children for wrongdoings, instead we find a lot of parents shielding them from the result of their actions, some even go as far as picking up quarrels with those that correct their children. Parents and teachers should assist them to understand that the kind of decision they make can either make or mar them.

Furthermore, age-appropriate duties should be assigned. Being responsible is not just to serve as head knowledge, it should be practiced, for example, children should be given tasks based on their capacities which makes them understand the value of contributing positively to the family or society.

The hidden reality of student life

OMIJIE RACHEAL ESEOSE

Behind the Walls of Boarding Schools, what really goes on?

Many ask that question, but only a few get answers. Many individuals have different perspectives about what goes on in boarding schools. Many people see it as a place for better discipline and reduced distractions, a place for increased academic focus, personal development, and independence, but what actually is a boarding school? Boarding schools are designed to build discipline and independence, but behind that many students experience emotional and psychological challenges that are rarely discussed. Some of these include:

Bullying : This is a common and major social problem in boarding schools. In some boarding schools, seniority becomes a system of control rather than leadership. Here older students intimidate younger students through physical punishment, errands, emotional humiliation, or impossible tasks. If not obeyed by younger students, it leads to harsh punishment. These actions are so normalized that victims create the ideology that, "My senior did it to me, I must do it to my junior too, that is how boarding school is," and victims are expected to endure such things quietly.

A teenager was asked if she was ever bullied in boarding school, and she said, "I was punished to look for the book 'Journey on Return,' but the book does not exist, and anyone who tells me the book does not exist will still take over and look for the book even if they know the book does not exist." An experience like this can darken a teenager's childhood. The teenager further went on saying some senior students even created what they called "Black Book," which consisted of a collection of strange and sometimes impossible punishments. A student could be asked to pick a number between one and one hundred, with each number attached to a punishment. Experiences like this may appear harmless to outsiders, but for many children they create fear, anxiety, humiliation, and emotional scars that can last for years.

Peer Pressure : Because students spend most of their time together, peer influence becomes very powerful. Students are influenced by their peers to act aggressively, conform to harmful traditions, or participate in bullying in order for them not to become victims. Through peer pressure, students are influenced in both good and bad ways, resulting in how well their behavior or attitude will be in the future.

Difficulty Expressing Emotions : Many students, in order not to be mocked or appear weak in front of their peers, tend to hide their emotions. Hiding emotional pain instead of seeking help can affect future relationships and communication skills.

Social Isolation : Not every child adapts easily to an unknown environment. Some may struggle to make friends and therefore become isolated. Students who are emotionally weak or different from others can become tar-



BOARDING SCHOOLS GIRLS

gets of ridicule or exclusion, and these students cannot easily escape from the environment.

Low Self-Esteem : Students who are constantly insulted, treated harshly, punished unfairly, or treated as weak may begin to see themselves negatively. Some students become silent because they are afraid of being mocked. Bullying can make students question their existence and identity.

Trauma and Emotional Scars : Certain boarding school experiences stay with people for a long time, even after graduation. The abuse may leave emotional scars that continue into adulthood. For example, a student forced to crawl on their knees, beaten with objects, or publicly humiliated may carry those memories for years. Some other psychological issues include depression, mental breakdown, fear, and anxiety. Boarding schools have bad effects as well as good effects. Some bad effects include harsh conditions in some schools, poor feeding, overcrowding, excessive punishment, and unhealthy environments. It also causes reduced family bonds. Children who spend long periods away from home may become emotionally distant from parents or siblings. Mental stress, strict routines, and academic pressure can also affect mental health.

There are many reasons why parents take their children or put their children in boarding schools, and it is mostly influenced by what they believe, with the thought that it will help the child succeed academically and morally. Some of which include:

Academic Concentration : Parents choose boarding schools mostly for academic focus. At home, children may become distracted by television, excessive phone use, social media, neighborhood activities, household activities, and noise. A teenager interviewed said her house was just a

few minutes away from school, yet she stayed in boarding school because she was always distracted at home by television. Boarding schools create a controlled environment where students follow strict reading schedules such as prep hours. Many parents believe that this structured system will improve concentration and academic performance.

Discipline and Character: Boarding schools are often associated with discipline. Students are expected to wake up early, follow schedules, obey rules, keep their surroundings clean, and respect authority. Parents who struggle with stubborn children at home send them to boarding schools so that the school can help shape their child's at-

titude and behavior. In African societies, boarding schools are often seen as places that train children to become responsible and disciplined adults.

Independence: Some parents intentionally send their children to boarding schools to shape them into independent individuals. Unlike some children who are totally dependent on their parents, students who attend boarding schools often learn how to wash clothes, organize belongings, manage time, solve personal problems, and do things without supervision from parents. Parents believe these experiences shape and prepare children for adulthood earlier.

Protection from Negative External Influences : Some parents fear that the home environment is unsafe or the neighborhood may expose children to bad friendships, cultism, drug abuse, crime, or irresponsible lifestyles. Boarding schools are then seen as safer places for bringing up a child in a more controlled environment where movements and interactions are monitored.

Busy Family Schedules : Some parents have demanding jobs or businesses that limit the time they spend supervising their children daily. Boarding schools provide constant supervision, helping parents feel assured that their children are under organized care. These and many more reasons are why parents put their children in boarding schools.

Boarding schools also have positive influences on a child's personality, social development, and life skills, which include:

Development of Independence: The student gradually learns how to survive without relying heavily on parents for every need. They begin to think for themselves, make decisions, solve problems, and manage personal responsibilities. This independence often helps students adapt more easily

to university life and adulthood later on.

Better Time Management: Boarding schools operate on structured timetables. Students balance academic work, classes, extracurricular activities, meals, and rest. Because of this system, many students develop time management skills early in life.

Social Development and Communication Skills: Living with many students from different backgrounds exposes children to diverse personalities, cultures, and behaviors. Students learn cooperation, tolerance, communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and friendship building.

Emotional Strength and Adaptability: Boarding school forces many students to adapt to difficult situations, endure discomfort, adjust to unfamiliar people, survive challenging routines, and handle pressure. Some former students believe these experiences made them emotionally stronger and more resilient.

Leadership Development: Boarding schools usually provide leadership opportunities through prefect positions, hostel prefect roles, club activities, and debate teams. Here students learn authority, organization, responsibility, and decision-making. These experiences may help them build leadership qualities later in life.

Lifelong Friendships and Networks: Because students live together closely for long periods, boarding schools often create strong friendships that last a long time. Many people maintain lifelong relationships with roommates, classmates, and juniors even after graduation. These networks sometimes become useful professionally and socially later in life.

These are the good effects of boarding schools, while some students leave boarding school stronger, others leave carrying wounds nobody sees.

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Children who spend long periods away from home may become emotionally distant from parents or siblings. Mental stress, strict routines, and academic pressure can also affect mental health.

FEATURE

Igbekhue breaks silence over land dispute with Idunmwonwina

ANDY EGBON

For decades, Igbekhue Community in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State has enjoyed a reputation of being a peaceful agrarian settlement where farming is not only the main occupation, but also the foundation of its social and economic life.

Situated along the Benin-Abraka Road, about 25 kilometres from Benin City, the community has maintained cordial relationships with its neighbours, bound together by commerce, kinship and a shared dependence on the land.

From its earliest history, Igbekhue has coexisted peacefully with surrounding communities, including Obozogbe-Niro, Enabulele Camp, Ugbighele, Ugboko-Numagbae, Iyare Camp, Ikponmwosa Camp and other communities along the Aideyan-Oba axis.

Its traditional boundaries are well recognised by neighbouring settlements, with Okiyaegbe marking one end, Igue-Omukhua on the Reserve Forest flank and Iya N'Uwu serving as the boundary with Idunmwonwina Community.

The communities have, over the years, maintained close social and economic ties. Beyond cultivating the fertile land that sustains their livelihoods, they have traded with one another, celebrated festivals together, entered into marriages across community lines and resolved differences through traditional institutions, making peaceful coexistence the hallmark of the area.

This long-standing harmony has fostered an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation, enabling residents to focus on agriculture and community development rather than conflict.

The peaceful disposition of the people has also contributed to the area's stability and attracted farmers and traders from neighbouring settlements.

However, the calm that has defined Igbekhue for generations appears to be under strain following a land ownership dispute with neighbouring Idunmwonwina Community.

The disagreement came into the public domain after a report aired by a television station in Edo State in which representatives of Idunmwonwina alleged that Igbekhue had unlawfully sold portions of land belonging to their community.

The report sparked concern among residents of Igbekhue whose traditional leadership and elders strongly rejected the allegation, describing it as false, misleading and a distortion of the historical ownership of the disputed land. They insist that the claims have the potential to inflame tensions and erode the peaceful relationship both communities have enjoyed over the years as Igbekhue has never sold any land.

According to the Odionwere (traditional head), elders and other stakeholders, the issue goes beyond the allegations made in the television report. They contend that there have been sustained attempts by some persons from Idunmwonwina to lay claim to portions of Igbekhue's ancestral land, a development they



THE ODIONWERE AND MEMBERS OF IGBEKHUE COMMUNITY.

fear could threaten the livelihoods of farmers and disrupt the long-standing peace in the area.

While reaffirming their commitment to peaceful coexistence and respect for constituted authority, the leaders maintain that they have no interest in conflict, but are determined to defend what they describe as their ancestral heritage through lawful means.

It was against this backdrop that The Nigerian OBSERVER visited Igbekhue Community to hear directly from the traditional leadership, elders and residents on the history of the community, the issues surrounding the seeming dispute and their appeal for timely intervention to preserve peace and ensure justice.

Speaking with newsmen, the Odionwere of Igbekhue Community, Pa Matthew Omoruyi, maintained that Igbekhue predates Idunmwonwina Community.

He expressed concern over what he described as attempts by Idunmwonwina to undermine the long-standing peaceful relationship between the neighbouring communities by laying claim to land which, according to him, belongs to Igbekhue.

This was corroborated by the Okaighele (Youth Leader) of the community, Mr Roland Idahosa, who alleged that Idunmwonwina had started selling a large expanse of Igbekhue community land without the knowledge or approval of Igbekhue.

Speaking on the development, the Legal Adviser to Igbekhue Community and an indigene of the community, Barr. Osaro Usunobun, said it had become necessary for the community to let the public know about what he described as the false allegations and propaganda being peddled by the people of Idunmwonwina Community.

Barr. Usunobun dismissed allegations that Igbekhue was selling land, insisting that the community was instead seeking a peaceful resolution of the boundary dispute with neighbouring Idunmwonwina Community.

According to him, some time ago, Idunmwonwina Community sent a delegation to Igbekhue proposing that both communities jointly demarcate their common boundary.

He said the delegation requested that youths from both communities

be excluded from the exercise to ensure a smooth and peaceful process.

Barr. Usunobun said Igbekhue requested time to consider the proposal. He explained that the move became necessary because youths from Idunmwonwina had allegedly begun selling land around the boundary area, raising fears of possible encroachment on Igbekhue ancestral land.

He further disclosed that Idunmwonwina elders later returned with the same proposal, to inspect and demarcate the boundary area. It was agreed that farmers familiar with the area would assist in identifying the authentic boundary line.

However, while the process was still ongoing, Barr. Usunobun alleged that one Sylvester Okungbowa, popularly known as Akobe, unilaterally embarked on demarcating the boundary, allegedly extending it into Igbekhue ancestral land.

According to him, the land allegedly appropriated belongs to the Ogbo family, Felix Osemwegie, Reuben Oyemina and others.

"We don't want to resort to violence or take the law into our hands," he said. "Akobe has started selling Igbekhue community land. After we learnt that land on the Igbekhue side was being sold, the community resolved to straighten the boundary Akobe created up to the end of the community to avoid future misunderstanding between the two communities."

Barr. Usunobun, however, clarified that although Akobe allegedly enjoys the support of some elders in Idunmwonwina in appropriating Igbekhue land, many other respected elders in the community do not share his position.

He said Igbekhue held a general meeting on July 3, during which it

also received another delegation from Idunmwonwina. At the meeting, both communities reportedly agreed to jointly undertake the boundary demarcation exercise on Wednesday, July 15, 2026.

According to him, while both communities were awaiting the agreed date, media reports fed the public with lies and propaganda on the land matter.

"Ordinarily, we would not have dignified Akobe with a response, but it is important to set the record straight so the public knows the true facts," Barr. Usunobun said.

He alleged that Akobe's predicament stemmed from the fact that those he sold land to were now challenging him over the ownership of the property.

"We appeal to the constituted authorities and His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, to call Akobe to order," he added.

The Secretary of Igbekhue Community, Mr Monday Izogie, corroborated Barr. Usunobun's position, alleging that Idunmwonwina was attempting to lay claim to land belonging to Igbekhue.

"They want to prove that they own everywhere. They want to sell our land, but we refused. Idunmwonwina wants to create chaos," he said.

Also speaking, Mr Clifford Igbinovia gave a detailed account of the traditional boundary between the two communities, while the Woman Leader, Madam Igbinijesu Enobakhare, daughter of the immediate past Odionwere, maintained that a natural boundary has always existed between Igbekhue and Idunmwonwina, expressing surprise over what she described as the recent actions of Idunmwonwina Community.

“Akobe has started selling Igbekhue community land. After we learnt that land on the Igbekhue side was being sold, the community resolved to straighten the boundary Akobe created up to the end of the community to avoid future misunderstanding between the two communities

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13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
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FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279	
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770	
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A New Gold Standard: How the NSC's Strategic Governance is Breaking New Boundaries

OLUCHI TOBE-CHUKWU

A new era of administrative excellence is sweeping across the Nigerian sports ecosystem. Over the past few months, the



MALLAM SHEHU DIKKO AND OLOPADE

National Sports Commission (NSC), operating under the visionary leadership of Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko and Director-General Hon. Bukola Olopade, has consistently proven that intentional plan-



ning and strategic partnerships are the bedrock of sporting success. From executing what is arguably the most seamless Commonwealth Games preparation in recent history to securing legacy-defining partnerships, the NSC is not just meeting expectations—they are actively raising the bar.

The hallmark of the NSC's recent administrative triumph lies in their athlete-centric approach to the upcoming 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland. Eradicating the last-minute logistical nightmares of the past, the Commission proactively set up a world-class training camp for over 72 Nigerian athletes in Aberdeen, Scotland. The early

provision of top-tier training facilities, elite medical support, and improved welfare packages has drawn massive praise from the athletes themselves. Paralympic Champion and Team Nigeria Captain, Fola-shade Oluwafemiayo, recently commended the NSC, noting that the unprecedented level of support has significantly boosted the squad's morale and confidence as they prepare to conquer Glasgow.

To further sweeten the pot, the NSC has announced a highly competitive cash reward structure for medal-winning athletes and their coaches, proving that the welfare of the Nigerian athlete is now paramount.



ISAAC BENJAMIN AND GOV. UBA SANI

SWAN president hails Gov. Sani for upgrading Ahmadu Bello Stadium

Isaac Benjamin, President of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), has commended Gov. Uba Sani of Kaduna State for the ongoing upgrade of the Ahmadu Bello Stadium.

Benjamin gave the commendation in Kaduna on Monday, when he paid an unscheduled visit to the stadium to assess the ongoing renovation project.

He described the project as another "demonstration of the administration's commitment to sports development and

youth empowerment".

He said the ongoing renovation and upgrade of facilities at the iconic stadium had rekindled hope among athletes, sports administrators, coaches and football enthusiasts in the state.

"This is proof that the state is steadily reclaiming its position as one of the country's leading sporting destinations.

"The quality of work being carried out at the stadium reflected the governor's determination to provide world-class sporting infrastructure," he said.

Federation cup Triumph: Gov. Sule, Deputy, Others Congratulate Nasarawa Amazons

Nasarawa Amazons, the Women's Football Club of Nasarawa State, have won this year's Women's President Federation's Cup title, formerly known as the FA Cup, after overcoming Heartland Queens of Owerri 6-5 on penalty shootout in a thrilling finale that kept supporters and fans on the edge till the final kick which stood at 1-1 apiece at the Late Stephen Keshi International Stadium, Asaba, Delta State, on Saturday afternoon.

The Amazons recovered from a shock 1-0 deficit at half-time after Chizoba Johnson gave Heartland the breakthrough, to level the score at 1-1 courtesy of substitute, Adaobi Judith, in the 65th minute after benefitting from a goal area scramble.

A nervy penalty shootout ensued where nerves of steel saw Nasarawa Amazons prevail 6-5 to lift the coveted trophy.

The win overturned the heart-break of last year's final, where they lost 2-4 on penalties after regulation time had ended 2-2 versus Rivers Angels of Port-Harcourt, separately, in Lagos.

This year's triumph marks the Club's third FA Cup title in nearly two decades, after achieving the feat in 2005 and 2019.

Jubilant erupted among the large Nasarawa State Government delegation, supporters and fans of the Amazons both at the Late

Stephen Keshi International Stadium and across Nasarawa State and beyond after the team won the spot kick session in tiebreaker.

The Executive Governor of Nasarawa State, Engr. Abdullahi Sule, alongside other prominent indigenes and stakeholders of the State, led celebrations for the team's resilience, grit and historic achievement.

Governor Sule who spoke to the players during the Half-Time via phone from Texas, United States of America where he is currently

on a short holiday, had urged the team to go all out to lift the trophy and make the State proud.

He then wrote "Masha Allah! Congratulations, the Champions of all Champions!!", on the Nasarawa United WhatsApp Platform shortly after the end of the match's live text commentary, applauding the team's players, technical crew led by Danjuma Christopher, management, Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, State Football Association, key stakeholders and supporters for bringing honour to the State.

14th Women Africa Cup of Nations: Falcons will adopt one-match-at-a-time strategy - Nnadozie

Nigeria's number one goalkeeper, Chiamaka Nnadozie, has opened a window on the approach the Cup-holders are thinking of

adopting for their defence of the title when the 14th Women Africa Cup of Nations finals begin in Morocco this month.

Nnadozie, one of the best wom-

en goalkeepers in the world, who is serving her third successive year as African Woman Goalkeeper of the Year, told thenff.com that the 10-time champions are looking at taking it one match at a time as they compete in Group C against Egypt, Zambia and newcomers Malawi at the competition scheduled for 26th July - 16th August in the North African kingdom.

"We will take it one match at a time because we cannot afford to stumble at any stage as a result of over-confidence. We will be focused squarely on the double targets of FIFA World Cup ticket and retaining the trophy.



NNADOZIE

NFF, ICPC strengthen anti-corruption drive with staff-sensitisation seminar

The Nigeria Football Federation, in collaboration with the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) on Monday held a sensitisation seminar for staff of the Federation aimed at curbing corrupt practices and promoting transparency

within the football body.

While declaring the seminar open, NFF General Secretary, Dr Mohammed Sanusi MON, issued a stern warning that the Federation would no longer condone acts of misconduct among its personnel. He noted that certain actions taken for granted by public servants have

serious implications under the law. "It is a corrupt practice for a public servant or civil servant to give out official documents or information. People take these things for granted but it is a serious misconduct. Similarly, it is a corrupt practice for you to collect salaries and allowances and refuse to do your work

the way you are supposed to do it"

Sanusi called on the ICPC to look into the rising trend of frivolous and fictitious petitions and allegations against sports administrators, which he said often damage the image of the sport and waste the time of investigative agencies.

Abuja Charity Half Marathon generates N12m to equip FCT hospitals

The sixth edition of the Run Club Abuja (RCA) Charity Half Marathon has generated N12.4 million to procure neonatal health-care equipment for two public hospitals in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

A statement signed by Jonathan Ameh, Member, Media and Publicity Committee, quoted the President of Run Club Abuja, Buchi Onyebule, as saying this after the charity race held in Abuja on Saturday.

Onyebule said the funds would be used to provide neonatal equipment, including incubators, nebulisers and re-

suscitators, for selected public hospitals in Abaji and Kuje area councils.

He said the intervention was aimed at improving access to specialised newborn care and reducing infant mortality in the communities.

"Participation in the annual charity event has continued to grow, reflecting increasing public support for the initiative," he said.

Onyebule said the marathon had grown from about 100 participants at its inception to about 250 in the second edition and attracted about 1,000 runners this year.



ABUJA CHARITY HALF MARATHON



FIFA considers expanding World Cup to 64 teams International Sports Competition



GIANNI INFANTINO

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has confirmed that football's world governing body is considering expanding the FIFA World Cup from 48 to 64 participating nations.

Infantino disclosed that the proposal has already been presented to the FIFA Council and will now undergo further study before any final decision is taken.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico, will be the first edi-

tion to feature an expanded 48-team format, up from the previous 32-team competition.

If approved, the proposed 64-team format would represent another major expansion in the tournament's history, allowing more countries from across the globe to participate in football's biggest event. Soccer

FIFA is expected to conduct a detailed assessment of the proposal before deciding whether the expanded format will be adopted for future editions of the World Cup.



MAHMUD HADEJIA

Mahmud Hadejia to Chair NFF Beach Soccer, Futsal Board

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has appointed Mahmud Hadejia as Chairman of its newly constituted Interim Beach Soccer and Futsal Board, tasking the body with organising and developing Beach Soccer and Futsal leagues across the country.

The appointment was one of the major resolutions reached at the meeting of the NFF Executive Committee held at the Best Western Plus Hotel in Asaba, Delta State, on Saturday, July 11, 2026.

According to the communiqué issued after the meeting, the Executive Committee constituted the interim board to drive the growth and administration of Beach Soc-

cer and Futsal in Nigeria.

"The Executive Committee constituted an interim Board that is now saddled with the organisation of Beach Soccer and Futsal leagues in the country," the communiqué stated.

The board comprises Mahmud Hadejia as Chairman, Dele Gbajumọ, Hon. Nkopuye Ukpe, Abdul-Nasir Adamu Senchi, Prof. Victor Madubuko, Alhaji Mohammed Bukar Alau and former Super Falcons captain Onome Ebi as members. Saraki Rasheed Oladimeji will serve as the Chief Executive Officer, while the NFF said a Chief Operating Officer will be appointed by the General Secretary.

Nwabali brushes aside criticism after Chippa United return

Super Eagles goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali appears to have delivered a subtle but unmistakable response to the criticism that followed his surprise return to South African side Chippa United.

Less than 24 hours after the club officially confirmed his comeback, the Nigeria international took to his Instagram story with a series of posts that many fans interpreted as a message to those questioning his decision.

Among them was a viral video meme by popular Nigerian comedian and content creator Emmanuel Obrutse, better known as Ghe Ghe, who's energetic, street style comedy skits have earned him a huge following on social media.

In the clip shared by Nwabali, Ghe Ghe humorously performs part of Wizkid's 2013 hit 'The Matter', featuring Maleek Berry.

The section of the song reposted by the goalkeeper carries a defiant message:

"Dem say dem bad but I swear dem do nothing..."

Dem say dey go throw me punch but I swear dem no reach...

Twenty man shall fall that day if you cross my lane..."

Nigerian comedian and content creator Emmanuel Obrutse, known as Ghe Ghe. Photo-

credit: Stanley Nwabali/Insta

Although Nwabali offered no caption or direct explanation, the timing of the post has fuelled speculation that it was aimed at the wave of online criticism that greeted his return to Chippa United.

The 30-year-old completed an unexpected reunion with the Chilli Boys five months after leaving the club in search of a bigger move, only for trans-



STANLEY NWABALI

WAFCON 2026: Ajibade, Oshoala headline early Super Falcons arrivals as Morocco camp opens

Nigeria's quest for a record-extending 11th Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) title has officially begun, with several key Super Falcons stars reporting early to the team's training camp in Casablanca, Morocco.

Captain Rasheedat Ajibade, six-time African Women's Player of the Year Asisat Oshoala, first-choice goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie, Christy Ucheibe, Oluwatosin Demehin, Glory Ogbonna, Rofiat Imuran, Fatima Oloko, and

Shukurat Oladipo were among the first batch of players to arrive as preparations gathered momentum on Sunday.

Head coach Justine Madugu has invited a 25-player squad for the continental showpiece, with the remaining players expected to join camp in the coming days before the team relocates to Rabat for the group phase of the competition.

The reigning African champions will be looking to defend the title they won in Morocco while chasing an unprecedented 11th WAFCON crown.

Drawn in Group C, Nigeria will face Malawi, Zambia, and Egypt, beginning their campaign against Malawi on July 28 at the Al Madina Stadium in Rabat.



SUPER FALCONS

Football won't last forever, I'll go back to school – Osimhen

Super Eagles striker Victor Osimhen has disclosed that he plans to return to school and obtain a university degree despite his success in professional football.

The interview, originally granted to Instablog, which resurfaced on Monday, captures the Galatasaray forward, reflecting on education, life lessons, and the importance of preparing for life after football.

Speaking during the interview, Osimhen acknowledged that while life has taught him invaluable lessons outside the classroom, formal education remains

something he hopes to complete.

"As an adult, not everything I learned in school. There are some kinds of life lessons you encounter through life's journey," he said.

The 2023 African Footballer of the Year noted that although football has transformed his life, he is aware that a playing career has a limited lifespan.

"So for me, it will be an amazing thing to also try to get a degree, which I'm still considering because football is not something you will play for so long, probably 20 or 25 years, and then you're done," he said.



VICTOR OSIMHEN

NSC announces election petitions, election appeals committees to uphold integrity in Sports Federation Elections



The Nigeria Sports Commission (NSC) has officially inaugurated two important committees — the Election Petitions Committee and the Election Appeals Committee — as part of its strategic initiative to ensure transparency, fairness, and integrity in

sports federation elections.

In alignment with international standards and its renewed commitment to excellence in sports governance, the NSC has selected respected legal professionals, administrators, and media practitioners with exceptional track records to serve on these committees.