

Tinubu orders EFCC to unfreeze Osun accounts

ABUJA ● Says the timing of the action of EFCC is inauspicious

President Bola Tinubu has directed Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to vacate the court order freezing the accounts of Osun Government.

Tinubu gave the directive in a statement he personally issued on Thursday in Abuja.

The president said he became aware of the commission obtaining a court order on August 5, 2026, freezing the state government's accounts.

He said he felt deeply embarrassed by the timing of the action, though not by the commission's exercise of its statutory mandate backed by a court order.

Tinubu stated that actions taken by federal institutions were often attributed to him, whether or not he had prior knowledge of those actions.

He reiterated his commitment to the independence of anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies.

"Since assuming office, I have consistently maintained that anti-corruption and law enforcement agencies must be allowed to discharge their statutory responsibilities independently, professionally, without fear or favour, or political interference," he said.

The president said that he had deliberately refrained from interfering in the operational activities of EFCC and other investigative agencies.

According to him, strong

democratic institutions operating within the law remain essential for good governance and the rule of law.

"As president, I am committed to allowing institutions of state to function and take any action they consider necessary in the interest of proper governance without the need for any prior approval," he stated.

Tinubu, however, said he had yet to be fully briefed on the circumstances that in-

formed the EFCC's decision to seek the court order.

"I am not in the slightest doubt that the timing of the action of EFCC is inauspicious, and therefore, I feel compelled to intervene," he said.

The president noted that Osun is only days away from its governorship election, stressing that no action should create the impression that EFCC or any federal agency was being used to influence the elec-

toral process.

"Nothing ought to be done to give an impression that the EFCC or indeed any other agency of the federal government is being used to interfere with the election," he said.

The president said preserving public confidence in the integrity, credibility and fairness of the democratic process remained paramount.

"Accordingly, I have directed the EFCC to immediately proceed to the court to vacate the order and discontinue whatever action it has instituted against the Osun State Government in this regard," he said.



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#200

AHEAD OF OSUN POLL

Okpebholo campaigns for APC, urges Edo indigenes, others in Osun to vote Oyebamiji

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Wednesday urged Edo indigenes and others living in Osun State to support the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate, Asiawaju Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji (AMBO), in the

August, 15 governorship elections.

Speaking at an APC campaign rally at the party secretariat in Oshogbo, Okpebholo described Oyebamiji as the candidate capable of delivering infrastructure, improving education and driving sustainable economic development in the state.

The governor said Oyebamiji has the capacity to replicate the

developmental agenda being pursued by the APC in Edo State.

Addressing party supporters, Okpebholo said the APC candidate will prioritise road construction and improve public infrastructure if elected.

"This is the man that stands for the development of this state. This is the man that will develop your schools. This man will con-

struct your roads. He will give you roads with concrete pavement — roads that will last for 80 years and above," he said.

He said the election offers Osun residents an opportunity to choose progress and accelerate the state's development.

"The reality of today is someone that will bring prosperity to this land. The time for us to

call for progress into this state is now. We cannot wait for tomorrow. This is the best man that will do the job," Okpebholo said.

The governor also urged voters to elect a leader who would effectively utilise resources provided to states by President Bola Tinubu's administration.

"We must vote for someone who will use the resources that

Mr. President has made available for states to develop the states," he said.

Also speaking at the rally, Kogi State Governor Ahmed Usman Ododo appealed to Osun voters to back the APC and its candidate, saying victory for the party would demon-

CONTINUES ON PG 2



OSUN 2026: Governor Monday Okpebholo (left) endorsing Osun All Progressives Congress (APC) Governorship Candidate, Asiawaju Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji (AMBO) for August 15 election.



Gov. Monday Okpebholo during his campaign for AMBO ahead of August 15, 2026, Osun Governorship Election for APC Governorship Candidate, Asiawaju Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji (AMBO).

Ooni praises Okpebholo's leadership style, humility during palace visit —Pg 2

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Concern mounts in Cameroon over Biya's prolonged absence —Pg 14

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NEWS

Ooni praises Okpebholo's leadership style, humility during palace visit

ILE-IFE

The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II, on Thursday praised Edo State Governor Monday Okpebholo for what he described as his humble and people-centred approach to governance.

The monarch spoke when Okpebholo, accompanied by Kogi State Governor Ahmed Usman Ododo, paid him a courtesy visit at the Ooni's palace in Ile-Ife.

Welcoming the governors, the Ooni said their humility and simplicity distinguished them from many of their contemporaries, adding that they had remained closely connected to or-

inary Nigerians despite holding high public offices.

"We are very honoured and privileged to receive the two governors in the palace. The entire Yoruba race is happy and delighted to have governors with such rare characteristics," the monarch said.

He described humility as a key attribute of effective leadership, saying both governors had demonstrated qualities worthy of emulation.

"These two governors are the most humble governors we have ever produced in Nigeria. Everything about them is humility and simplicity. They are very humble, easy-going and amiable. I have watched them closely—their disposition,

mannerisms and simplicity. They don't carry themselves because of the high offices they occupy. They are down-to-earth and well connected to

ordinary people," he said.

The Ooni urged Okpebholo to remain committed to his leadership style, saying it reflected the Yoruba values of Omoluabi.

"We are here to celebrate you. I know you came to Osun State for politics, but beyond poli-

tics, we are talking about what the Yoruba call Omoluabi par excellence. Your simplicity and your approach to things, keep it up. That is the best way to live life and lead the people. Keep up the good work," he said.

Speaking on behalf of both governors, Ododo said Okpeb-

holo had asked him to address the monarch during the visit.

He thanked the Ooni for his role in promoting peace in Osun State and across Nigeria.

"We are here to thank Your Majesty for keeping peace, not only in Osun State but across the nation," Ododo said.

Okpebholo campaigns for APC...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

strate the state's support for President Tinubu.

"Why we must vote for APC and AMBO is because that is the only way we can show Mr. President our own appreciation," Ododo said.

The Director-General of the APC Campaign Council in Osun State welcomed the visiting governors and thanked them for their support for the party. He said the developmental achievements recorded in Edo and Kogi under APC

administrations could be replicated in Osun if Oyebamiji is elected governor.

Edo State APC Chairman Jarrett Tenebe and the party's Deputy Chairman, Sylvester Aigboboh, also addressed Edo indigenes resident in Osun in their native dialects, urging them to vote for the APC candidate.

The rally was attended by APC leaders and supporters from Edo, Kogi, Ondo, and Osun states, who reaffirmed their commitment, securing victory for the party in the governorship election.

Osun 2026: ICPC vows to crackdown on vote trading

OSOGBO

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has warned against vote buying and selling ahead of the Aug. 15 Osun governorship election.

The commission said anyone caught engaging in the act would be arrested and prosecuted in accordance with the law.

The ICPC Resident Anti-Corruption Commissioner in Osun, Mr Yusuf Olatunji, gave the warning during an awareness rally against vote buying and selling on Thursday in Osogbo.

The rally had as its theme: "My Vote, My Future: Reject Vote Buying, Protect Democracy."

Olatunji said the commission would deploy adequate personnel across the 30 local government areas of the state to monitor and curb the practice.

He urged the electorate to recognise the value of their votes and resist any attempt to trade them for temporary gains.

"To every voter in Osun, I urge you to reject any attempt to influence your choice through cash, gifts, food items, or any form of inducement.

"Let your vote reflect your conscience and your vision for a better state.

"Your votes are priceless, our democracy is sacred, and our future must never be sold.

"As we prepare for the forthcoming governorship election, every eligible voter has a responsibility that goes beyond casting a ballot.

We must protect the integrity of our electoral process by rejecting all forms of electoral corruption, especially vote buying and selling," he said.

Olatunji noted that while vote trading might offer temporary financial relief, it has long-term negative consequences for governance and development.

"When votes become commodities, leadership becomes a transaction rather than a mandate.

"The consequences are evident: poor governance, unfulfilled promises, inadequate infrastructure, insecurity, unemployment, and declining public confidence in democratic institutions," he said.

He added that the money collected for votes may be spent within days, but the impact of electing the wrong leaders could last for years.



ROYAL BLESSING:

The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II (middle) flanked by Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (left) and Gov. Ahmed Usman Ododo of Kogi State (right) during the APC chieftains' courtesy visit to the Ooni's palace in Ile-Ife on Thursday.

Gov Okpebholo celebrates SSG Umar Musa Ikhilor on birthday, hails his exceptional service

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has congratulated the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq, on the occasion of his birthday, describing him as a dependable administrator, an astute legal mind and a loyal partner in the administration's drive to deliver good governance to the people of Edo State.

In a congratulatory message, Governor Okpebholo praised the SSG's exceptional capacity, diligence and strong commit-

ment to the effective coordination of government activities, noting that his wealth of experience and sound judgment have continued to contribute significantly to the success of the administration.

The governor described Ikhilor as a disciplined and intelligent public servant whose professionalism, integrity, and calm disposition have earned him the respect of colleagues and stakeholders across the state.

He further commended the SSG's steadfast loyalty, dedica-

tion to duty and strong support for the administration's vision, saying his commitment has strengthened the machinery of government and accelerated the implementation of policies and programmes under the SHINE Agenda.

Governor Okpebholo said Ikhilor's exemplary service remains an inspiration to public servants, expressing confidence that he would continue to deploy his knowledge, experience, and leadership qualities in advancing the development

of Edo State.

"As you celebrate another year of God's grace, I join your family, friends, associates and the people of Edo State in thanking God for your life and invaluable service to our dear state.

"I pray that the Almighty grants you many more years in good health, wisdom, strength and fulfilment as you continue to serve Edo State and humanity with distinction," the Governor said.

Happy birthday to an outstanding public servant and accomplished administrator.

NCoS CGC orders immediate removal of 3 officers over inmate viral Tiktok

ABUJA

The Controller-General of Corrections (CGC) of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), Sylvester Nwakuche, has ordered the immediate removal of the Officer-in-Charge of the Ibara Medium Custodial Centre, Abeokuta.

The Service Public Relations Officer, CSC Jane Osuji, who made this known in a statement on Thursday in Abuja, said that the CGC also ordered the removal of two other principal officers.

Nwakuche ordered their removal from their positions after a viral TikTok live stream involving an inmate on death row in the facility sparked public concern over security.

He described the incident as a

serious breach of custodial security and a violation of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act, 2019, the Service Standing Orders and other extant regulations governing custodial operations.

He said that preliminary investigations confirmed that the inmate was in unlawful possession of a prohibited mobile phone, which was used to access social media while in lawful custody.

"The device has since been recovered following a search operation and secured as an exhibit for further investigation.

"As an additional security measure, the inmate has been transferred to another custodial facility, where he is being held under enhanced security pending the conclusion of investigations," he said.

The CGC added that prelim-

inary findings also identified security gaps that may have contributed to the breach.

He said that the removal of the affected officers was without prejudice to the outcome of ongoing investigations and intended to ensure a transparent, impartial and unhindered investigative process.

He emphasised that his administration had continued to implement security reforms since assuming office to eliminate vulnerabilities and prevent the smuggling of prohibited items into custodial centres. He added that the incident had further reinforced the need to fully implement the reforms and intensify compliance across all commands and custodial centres nationwide.

Nwakuche said that though investigations had established the inmate's culpability, inquiries

into the possible involvement, negligence or complicity of any officer, inmate or external collaborator were still ongoing.

"We assure Nigerians that anyone found to have facilitated, aided, condoned or failed in their responsibilities in connection with this incident will face appropriate disciplinary and administrative sanctions in accordance with extant regulations," he said.

The CGC appreciated members of the public and the media for drawing attention to the incident and appealed against speculation while investigations continue.

He reaffirmed the service's commitment to ensuring the safe, secure and humane custody of all persons legally committed into its care through continuous reforms, professionalism and accountability.

EIRS partners judiciary to enforce new tax laws, boost IGR

BENIN CITY

In furtherance of its efforts at building partnerships with critical stakeholders, the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has sought the support and collaboration of the Edo State Judiciary for the effective implementation of newly introduced tax reforms

and the enforcement of tax laws across the state.

The drive, aimed at curbing tax evasion, ending multiple taxation, and significantly boosting internally generated revenue, was highlighted during a courtesy visit by the EIRS management team to the office of the Chief Judge of Edo State, Honourable Justice Daniel Iyobosa Okungbowa.

Speaking during the visit, the Executive Chairman of EIRS, Mr. John Odior FCA, ACTI explained that the engagement was designed to familiarize the state judiciary leadership with the newly enacted tax laws that took effect earlier this year.

According to Odior, the reform encompasses four key pieces of legislation:

The Joint Revenue Board Act, The Nigeria Tax Administration Act, The Nigeria Tax Act and The Nigeria Revenue Service Establishment Act.

Mr. Odior emphasized that the reforms promote a cashless tax collection system designed to enhance transparency, accountability, and streamline

revenue collection into a single responsible body assuring residents that the reforms would ensure a seamless tax system, eliminate multiple taxation, and curb the activities of unauthorized revenue collectors.

He urged citizens to fulfill their tax obligations, noting that improved compliance directly supports the government's ability to deliver critical infrastructure and development projects across Edo State.



PIND'S POLICY ROUNDTABLE:

L-R: Mr. Ebijimi Olugbenga, Community Representative, Ugboland Host Community Development Trust; Ms. Amy Gukas, Junior Technical Advisor, Conflict Prevention and Elections, GIZ EPSG Project; Chief Amiefamonyo Braide Fredrick Ongiri, Director, Relief and Rehabilitation, Bayelsa State Emergency Management Agency; Dr. David Udofia, Peacebuilding Program Manager, PIND Foundation; Prof. Joel Efiang, Head of Department, Environmental Management, University of Calabar; Ms. Ogadinma Uchechi, Youth Representative; and Mr. Adam Umar Dutse, Co-founder and CEO, Greenberg Materials, during PIND's Policy Roundtable on Advancing Climate Resilience, Climate-Sensitive Peacebuilding and Human Security in the Niger Delta, held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

PIND Rallies Stakeholders to Confront Growing Climate-Security Threats in Niger Delta

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND) has called for climate resilience to be placed at the centre of peacebuilding, development planning and environmental governance as climate-related pressures increasingly threaten livelihoods, community stability and human security across the Niger Delta.

The call was made at PIND's

Policy Roundtable on Advancing Climate Resilience, Climate-Sensitive Peacebuilding and Human Security in the Niger Delta, held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The high-level engagement brought together policymakers, government agencies, development partners, environmental experts, researchers, civil society organisations, private sector actors, peacebuilding practitioners and representatives of climate-vulnerable communities.

At the roundtable, PIND

launched its Policy Brief on Climate Change and Human Security in the Niger Delta, which presents evidence that flooding, coastal erosion, irregular rainfall and environmental degradation are reducing agricultural and fishing productivity, disrupting livelihoods and intensifying competition over increasingly scarce natural resources.

New policy brief warns that flooding, coastal erosion and livelihood losses are deepening human insecurity and resource-based tensions across the region.

Delivering the welcome

remarks on behalf of PIND's Executive Director, Mr. Sam Ogbemi Daibo, PIND's Peacebuilding Programme Manager, Dr David Udofia, said climate change must no longer be treated solely as an environmental concern.

"Climate change is increasingly a livelihood, peace and human-security challenge in the Niger Delta. When farms are flooded, fishing waters are degraded, mangroves are destroyed and families lose their sources of income, the consequences extend far beyond the environment.

Edo Reaffirms Commitment to Universal Health Coverage at 2026 Health Sector Review

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening the state's healthcare system and achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through transparency, accountability, evidence-based planning and strategic partnerships.

Declaring open the 2026 Edo State Joint Annual Review (JAR) on behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the Commissioner for Health, Dr. Cyril Adams Oshiomhole, said the present administration remained committed to building a resilient health system capable of delivering quality, affordable and accessible health-

care services to every resident of the state.

According to him, the Joint Annual Review remains one of the state's most important health sector accountability mechanisms, providing government and stakeholders with the opportunity to assess health sector performance, review progress, identify implementation gaps and collectively develop practical strategies for improving healthcare service delivery.

"The Joint Annual Review is not merely a routine exercise but a strategic platform for evaluating our performance, strengthening accountability and ensuring that our policies and interventions are guided by credible evidence," Oshiomhole said.

The Commissioner conveyed Governor Okpebholo's

appreciation to development partners, healthcare professionals, local government officials, traditional institutions, community representatives and other stakeholders for their continued support of the state's health sector.

He noted that the broad participation of stakeholders reflected a shared commitment to strengthening the health system through effective leadership, transparency, accountability and evidence-informed decision-making.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to Universal Health Coverage, Oshiomhole urged participants to actively engage in discussions, share innovative ideas and global best practices, and make recommendations that would strengthen health system resilience and improve health outcomes across Edo State.

The recommendations from this review will play a critical role in shaping our health policies, improving service delivery and ensuring that quality healthcare becomes accessible to every citizen.

In separate goodwill messages, representatives of the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Health Supply Chain-Procurement and Supply Management (GH-SC-PSM) Project and the Corona Management System Team commended the Edo State Government for convening the review.

They described the Joint Annual Review as an important accountability and learning platform that promotes collaboration among stakeholders, strengthens evidence-based planning and supports continuous improvement in healthcare delivery.

EDOGIS processes 1000 Certificates of Occupancy for approval

BENIN CITY

The Edo Geographic Information Service, EDOGIS, has processed no fewer than 1,000 out of the 3,500 backlog of Certificates of Occupancy (CoFo) applications inherited from the previous administration.

The Managing Director of EDOGIS, Dr Innocent Bello, disclosed this on Wednesday in Benin, during an interactive session with journalists.

Bello said that the 1,000 processed applications have been forwarded to Gov. Monday Okpebholo for approval after a comprehensive verification exercise.

He explained that approvals were suspended temporarily after EDOGIS discovered widespread irregularities including forged documents, fake survey plans, and multiple claims to the same land.

He added that more than half of the inherited applications had serious deficiencies requiring further scrutiny before approval.

According to him, the exercise is aimed at restoring integrity to the state's land administration and ensuring only genuine applicants receive CoFo.

The agency has also strengthened its workforce with training, modern technology, and a digital cadastral system to detect fraud and revenue leakages.

The commissioner cautioned the public against unregistered agents and encroachment on government land, warning that illegal structures would be removed.

He urged landowners to pay their statutory charges promptly and assured that EDOGIS remained committed to transparency and an investor-friendly land system.

FUD expels 11 students, rusticates 23 for examination malpractice

DUTSE

The Senate of the Federal University Dutse (FUD) has expelled 11 students and rusticated 23 others for their involvement in examination malpractice.

The Director, Public Affairs, FUD, Mr Abdullahi Yahaya-Bello, who made this known in a statement on Wednesday in Dutse, said that the decision was taken at the university's 76th Regular Senate Meeting held on July 30, after consideration of the 18th Report of the Senate Committee on Examinations and Related Misconduct.

He noted that the senate approved the recommendations of the committee after reviewing cases involving students from various faculties and departments.

According to him, the sanctions are imposed in line with the university's regulations governing examinations and students' conduct.

He said that the 23 students rusticated would miss two academic semesters, while three students received written warning letters.

Yahaya-Bello said that one student was exonerated after the allegation against him was

not established by the committee.

"The rusticated students are to remain out of the university for the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic session and the first semester of the 2026/2027 academic session.

"They are expected to resume their studies in the second semester of the 2026/2027 academic session," he said.

Yahaya-Bello said the affected students were drawn from faculties including Computing, Science, Education, Management Sciences, Agriculture and Social Sciences.

He reaffirmed the university's commitment to maintaining academic integrity and enforcing disciplinary measures against examination malpractice.

"The university remains committed to upholding discipline, transparency and high academic standards.

"Examination malpractice will continue to attract appropriate sanctions, in accordance with the institution's rules and regulations," the director said.

According to him, students are expected to conduct themselves responsibly and comply fully with examination guidelines to protect the integrity and credibility of the university's certificates.

The Nigerian
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Happy Birthday

TO THE
SECRETARY TO THE
EDO STATE GOVERNMENT,
**BARR. MUSA
IKHILOR**

The Management and Staff of *The Nigerian Observer*, under the leadership of the General Manager, **Hon. Peter Odiboh Okpeahior**, warmly felicitate with the Secretary to the Edo State Government, **Barr. Musa Ikhilor**, on the joyous occasion of his birthday.

Your dedication, professionalism, and unwavering commitment to the growth and development of Edo State have earned you widespread admiration and respect. Your exemplary service continues to contribute significantly to the advancement of good governance in the State.

As you celebrate this special day, we pray that Almighty God grants you continued good health, divine wisdom, renewed strength, and many more years of impactful service to Edo State and Nigeria.

Happy Birthday, Barr. Musa Ikhilor!



Signed:
Hon. PETER ODIBOH Okpeahior
General Manager
For: Management and Staff,
The Nigerian Observer

NEWS



EIRS PARTNERS JUDICIARY:

L-R: EIRS Chairman Mr. John Odior with Comrade Joseph James Wasa.



L-R: Chief Judge of Edo State, Honourable Justice Daniel Iyobosa Okungbowa in handshake with EIRS Chairman, Mr. John Odior.

Edo Dep. Gov. rewards Nigeria's 4th best UTME candidate, Osagiobare, with N1million

BENIN CITY

The Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has rewarded Master Daniel Osagiobare, an outstanding Edo-born student who emerged as the highest scorer in the South-South geopolitical zone and fourth overall in Nigeria in the 2026 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), with a cash gift of N1 million.

Master Osagiobare, who scored an impressive 368 in the highly competitive examination conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), was received by the Deputy Governor at his office in Benin City, where Idahosa commended his exceptional academic feat and described him as a worthy ambassador of Edo State.

Speaking during the reception, the Deputy Governor said the remarkable achievement had brought pride and honour to Edo State, noting that the young scholar's brilliance, discipline and determination reflected the limitless potential of Edo youths when provided with the right support and encouragement.

Idahosa stated that the N1 million cash reward was in recognition of Osagiobare's hard work and as a deliberate effort to inspire other students across the state to pursue academic excellence.

He reaffirmed the commitment of the Senator Monday Okpebholo-led administration to promoting quality education and creating an enabling environment where talented young people can thrive and compete favourably at both national and international levels.

"The future of our nation lies in the hands of brilliant young minds like Daniel. His outstanding performance has not only made his family proud but has also placed Edo State in the national spotlight for excellence. We will continue to celebrate and encourage excellence in every sector," the Deputy Governor said.

Idahosa urged the student to remain focused, humble and committed to his academic aspirations, assuring him that the Edo State Government would continue to identify and support exceptional talents capable of contributing meaningfully to the state's development.

Responding, Master Daniel Osagiobare expressed profound appreciation to the Deputy Governor for the warm reception and generous financial support.



Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa receives Daniel Osagiobare (3rd left), the 4th best student from Edo State who scored 368, overall best in the South South Nigeria in last Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) Year 2026 with Cash Rewards of N1 Million Naira, with them are Friday Aghedo (left) CPS to Deputy Governor, MUBARAK SHA-RAMADAN JIMAH (2nd Left) SSA on student affairs to Governor, Dr. Israel Nmoye (2nd Right) Proprietor of GIFTEDHANDS science education center and the father Osagiobare Christopher during the official presentation in Government House Benin City.

PHOTO: MOSES OBHO

Okpebholo delivering on his promise to Edo people, NEC committee declares

BENIN CITY

HASSAN DAISY

The National Executive Committee (NEC) has lauded the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for what it described as his unwavering commitment to improving the lives of Edo people through purposeful leadership, people-oriented policies, and accelerated development across the state.

The committee made the commendation during a meeting with party leaders, stakeholders and government officials in Benin City, where it reviewed the performance of the administration and assessed the implementation of key projects and programmes. Members of the committee expressed satisfaction with the pace

of development under Governor Okpebholo, noting that the administration has remained focused on delivering the dividends of democracy to the people.

Speaking during the meeting, members of the committee said the governor's efforts in road construction and rehabilitation, healthcare delivery, education, security, agriculture and youth empowerment have continued to improve the standard of living of residents. According to the committee, the administration has demonstrated a strong resolve to fulfil its campaign promises by prioritising projects that directly impact communities across the state.

The committee observed that despite prevailing economic challenges in the country, the Edo State Government has continued to implement policies aimed at creating employment opportunities, supporting small businesses and improving access to essential public services. It added that these initiatives have strengthened public confidence in the administration and positioned the state for sustainable growth.

It further praised Governor Okpebholo for promoting inclusive governance by engaging

traditional rulers, community leaders, women, youths and other critical stakeholders in the decision-making process. According to the committee, such consultations have enhanced peace, unity and cooperation, thereby creating an enabling environment for development.

While acknowledging the progress already made, the committee urged government officials to remain committed to transparency, accountability and prudent management of public resources. It stressed that maintaining these values would ensure that ongoing projects are completed on schedule and that more communities benefit from government interventions.

The NEC Committee also appealed to Edo residents to continue supporting the administration, noting that meaningful development can only be sustained through collective responsibility and active citizens' participation. It expressed confidence that the governor would remain focused on policies capable of driving economic prosperity and improving the welfare of all Edo people.

TUC, ASCSN lauds Okpebholo on right leadership at EIRS, increased IGR, workforce, others

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Council of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN) Edo State Branch have commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for appointing Mr. John Odior as the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), describing the appointment as a well-deserved fit for the agency's leadership.

The commendation was delivered by the State Chair-

man of the TUC and ASCSN, Comrade Joseph James Wasa, who led other affiliates and executive members on a courtesy visit to the EIRS Corporate Head Office in Benin City to formally congratulate the revenue boss.

Comrade Wasa expressed strong confidence in Mr. Odior's capacity to steer the agency toward greater heights, praising the Governor's foresight in choosing a proven professional.

He highlighted the Chairman's track record of integrity, transparency, and adminis-

trative efficiency, noting that his tenure has already yielded visible improvements. Among these achievements are the prompt payment of staff salaries, the regularization of ad-hoc personnel, upgraded office facilities, the provision of modern work tools, and a sustained increase in the state's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).

According to Wasa "We are here to formally congratulate you on your new role as Chairman of the Revenue Service. When we heard of the news of your appointment, we were enthused due to the confidence

we have on your abilities to deliver on the job. Even those who watch you from afar can attest that you are a very diligent person and a square peg in a square hole. We thank Mr. Governor for appointing you."

"You have continued to exhibit strong character of integrity, transparency, honesty and encouragement through prompt payment of staff salaries, absorption of ad-hoc staff, ensuring Office facelift, provision of work tools for staff as well as consistent increase in the State internally generated revenue (IGR)".

Signed: Mr. KINGSLEY ASEMOTA

Expert warns Africa on maritime investment

LAGOS

Africa's maritime future depends on investment-ready, environmentally responsible projects rather than abundant ocean resources alone, says Dr Felicia Mogo, President, African Maritime Environment and Sustainability Initiative.

Mogo spoke during an international webinar held ahead

of the Executive Management Training on Maritime Sustainability for African Development scheduled for October in Accra.

Addressing policymakers, investors, regulators and maritime professionals, she urged governments and businesses to embed Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles in maritime development strategies.

"ESG frameworks are no longer optional; they are the language of investment," Mogo said during the webinar, the second in a pre-workshop series.

The marine governance expert warned that countries neglecting ESG considerations in maritime planning risk exclusion from emerging opportunities within the global Blue Economy.

She said investors increasingly require strong governance, environmental responsibility and measurable social impact before financing maritime and ocean-based projects.

According to Mogo, sectors affected include ports, fisheries, shipping, coastal infrastructure, marine tourism and other industries linked to sustainable ocean resources.

Mogo is also a member,

United Nations Committee on Marine Ecosystems and Socio-Economics.

She described the Blue Economy as an integrated platform connecting environmental stewardship, innovation, investment and economic prosperity across African countries.

Mogo stressed that sustainable growth would require collaboration among governments, private investors, development institutions and coastal communities.

She urged African nations to move beyond isolated infrastructure projects and adopt integrated business models capable of generating jobs and multiple revenue streams.

Drawing lessons from Seychelles and Indonesia, Mogo said credible governance and ESG-aligned financing had supported Blue Bonds and strengthened ocean resilience.

She added that Africa must improve project preparation, coordination and implementa-

tion to unlock similar financing opportunities and attract long-term investment.

"A key outcome was a proposal to dedicate an October workshop session to transforming marine resources into bankable business models," she said.

She explained that participants would work with an international consortium to identify investment opportunities and develop financing strategies for commercially viable projects.

Earlier, United Nations-accredited expert, Prof. Chidi Onuoha, described the Blue Economy as Africa's next frontier for inclusive growth, employment and industrial development.

Onuoha said sustainable management of marine resources could unlock significant economic opportunities while supporting environmental protection and social development.



FAREWELL VISIT:

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Sola Enikanolaye (3rd L); Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Nigeria, Amb. Mohammed Fouad Ahmed (3rd R), other Officials of the Foreign Affairs and Egyptian Embassy, during a farewell visit by the Egyptian Ambassador to the Minister in Abuja on Wednesday.

LAGOS

AIICO Insurance Plc has posted an 18.9 per cent increase in profit after tax to N13.4 billion for the second quarter of 2026, from N11.3 billion recorded in the corresponding period of 2025.

The company disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen in Lagos.

It said it had retained its composite operational licence after complying with the recapitalisation requirements of the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) under the Nigerian Insurance Industry Reform Act (NIIRA) 2025.

According to the compa-

AIICO grows second quarter profit by 18.9%, retains composite licence

ny, insurance revenue rose by 14.5 per cent to N74.9 billion, compared with N65.4 billion recorded in the corresponding period of 2025.

AIICO said its gross written premium stood at N104 billion, while total assets increased by 13.2 per cent to N661 billion from N584 billion at the end of the 2025 financial year.

It attributed the improved performance to stronger underwriting capacity, growth across key business lines and sustained customer confidence.

The company also said it

had received a new operational licence from NAICOM following the successful completion of the insurance industry's 12-month recapitalisation exercise. It said NAICOM, in a public notice issued on Aug. 2, listed it among insurers that met the new minimum capital requirement, enabling it to retain its composite licence for both life and general insurance businesses.

The company added that it met the recapitalisation threshold without raising additional capital, having maintained capital above the revised reg-

ulatory minimum before the exercise.

The Managing Director of AIICO Insurance Plc, Mr Babatunde Fajemirokun, said the milestone underscored the company's commitment to regulatory compliance, financial strength, sound corporate governance and long-term sustainability.

Fajemirokun said the strengthened capital position would enable the company to underwrite larger risks, settle claims promptly and continue delivering quality insurance services to customers.

Santuscom Food exports products to UK market

ABUJA

Santuscom Foods Ltd has commenced the export of its processed agricultural products to the United Kingdom, marking its entry into the international market.

The Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the company, Mr Paul Ofana, made this known in a statement on Thursday.

He said the products were first introduced in England before distribution was extended to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

According to him, the products are now available in major departmental stores across the UK.

The exported products include Ogoja Yam Pounded, Ogoja Garri, Ogoja Plantain Flour, Ogoja Palm Oil and Santuscom Honey Beans.

Ofana said the development reflected the company's

commitment to expanding the reach of Nigerian agricultural products in global markets.

He added that the products were processed and packaged to meet international standards.

"The reception in the UK has been encouraging, particularly for our unripe plantain flour, which has attracted considerable interest among health-conscious consumers.

"At Dulwich Hospital in South East London, our unripe plantain flour is already in high demand.

"It is particularly sought after by elderly people and others managing high blood pressure, diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders, indigestion and weight management," he said.

Ofana said the company would continue to maintain quality standards while expanding access to Nigerian food products in international markets.

Linkage Assurance, AVA Capital lift equities market by N71bn

LAGOS

The Nigerian stock market rebounded on Wednesday after a day decline, as investors recorded a bullish rally that added N71 billion to market value.

The surge was fueled by sustained investor interest in stocks such as Linkage Assurance, AVA Capital, FTN Cocoa Processors, Mc Nicholas, WAPIC and 15 other equities.

As a result, the market capitalisation rose from N158.015 trillion at the opening of trading to N158.086 trillion at the close, representing a 0.04 per cent gain, equivalent to

N71 billion in added investor wealth.

Similarly, the All-Share Index (ASI) advanced by 0.04 per cent, or 109.41 points, climbing from 245,802.83 in the previous session to 244,912.24 at the close of trading.

The Year-to-Date (YTD) return improved to 57.39 per cent, reflecting sustained investor confidence in the local equities.

However, the market breath closed negatively with 30 losers 20 gainers.

PZ Cussons and Honeywell Flour led the losers' chart by 9.94 per cent each, closing at N74.75 and N16.30 per share respectively.

Prioritise investment in education to tackle poverty, insecurity — Kukah urges stakeholders

SOKOTO

Bishop Hassan Kukah of the Sokoto Diocese has urged governments and other stakeholders to prioritise investment in education as a panacea for tackling poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment in the country.

Kukah made the remarks during the unveiling of an educational project and inception launch in Sokoto.

The project is being supported by the European Union (EU) and anchored by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in collaboration with the Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and

the Hikima Community Mobilisation and Development Initiative (HCOMDI).

The project is tagged "Enhancing Access to Safe, Inclusive and Integrated Quality Education Services for Crisis-Affected Children in Sokoto State, Northern Nigeria" and is being implemented in Kware, Isa and Sabon Birni Local Government Areas affected by banditry in Sokoto State.

Kukah attributed the growing number of out-of-school children in Northern Nigeria to poverty, ignorance and years of poor investment in education, insisting that religion

should not be blamed for the crisis.

"Nigeria's worsening security challenges are a consequence of neglecting education over several decades.

"The people making us afraid in Nigeria today are largely those who never had the opportunity to go to school.

"Every Nigerian now lives under the threat of insecurity because too many children have been denied access to the right education," Kukah emphasised.

He dismissed the notion that religion discourages western education, stressing that both Islam and Christianity

place high value on knowledge.

"Nobody should use religion as an excuse.

The Holy Prophet encouraged Muslims to seek knowledge even if it meant travelling to China. Ignorance, not religion, is our greatest enemy," he said.

The Bishop narrated lessons from Costa Rica, which abolished its military and invested heavily in education.

Kukah urged Nigerian leaders to place education at the centre of national development in order to overcome the security and other challenges bedeviling the nation.

"Education transformed my

NEWS

LASCAFAN trains students to boost youth participation in fish farming

LAGOS

The Lagos State Catfish and Allied Farmers Association of Nigeria (LASCAFAN) has intensified efforts to attract young people into fish farming through training and mentorship.

The association said it was targeting students studying fisheries and agriculture in Nigerian universities to strengthen the aquaculture subsector.

LASCAFAN State Chairman, Mr Olatoye Fajimi, dis-

closed this in an interview with newsmen on Thursday in Lagos.

Fajimi said the initiative would integrate younger farmers into aquaculture, noting that many existing practitioners were ageing.

"Our focus is on students studying Fisheries and Agriculture because they have acquired theoretical knowledge over four to five years," he said.

He said about 80 per cent of graduates in the disciplines did not pursue careers in fisheries

after completing their studies.

According to him, inadequate practical exposure remains a major reason many graduates do not venture into fish farming.

Fajimi said LASCAFAN had partnered universities offering fisheries and agriculture programmes to provide students with three to six months of practical training on member farms.

He said the programme complemented classroom learning and exposed students to opportunities across the

fisheries value chain.

"We also mentor them so they avoid mistakes many of us made when we started our businesses," he said.

Fajimi said some beneficiaries returned during the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to undertake primary assignments on member farms for additional practical experience.

He said the association also linked young fish farmers with opportunities offered by governments, non-governmental organisations and internation-

al development partners.

According to him, many youths were unaware of available empowerment programmes or lacked the knowledge to access and utilise them effectively.

He said some beneficiaries also struggled to sustain their businesses after receiving grants because of avoidable mistakes.

Fajimi said LASCAFAN, therefore, provided continuous mentorship to help young entrepreneurs remain stable beyond the first five years of business.

He said the association also partnered the Lagos Agripreneurship Programme in Araga, Epe, to train aspiring fish farmers.

According to him, participants receive one month of in-house training followed by a

three-month internship.

He said the programme equipped participants with practical skills to establish and manage profitable fish farming enterprises using best aquaculture practices.

Fajimi also disclosed that LASCAFAN introduced research grants for final-year students to address challenges facing the aquaculture industry.

He said research topics were selected from priority areas identified by members through regular consultations.

"The association raises funds to support approved projects either partly or fully, depending on the research cost," he said.

Fajimi said this year's research would focus on marketing strategies to increase fish consumption and improve retail marketing in Nigeria.



UNIABUJA DELEGATION:

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Sola Enikanolaye (6th R); the Vice Chancellor, University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), Prof. Hakeem Fawehinmi (7th R), other officials of the Ministry and members of the UNIABUJA delegation, during a visit by the latter to the Minister at the Ministry in Abuja on Wednesday.

Osun-Osogbo festival: NSCDC assures residents, tourists of adequate security

OSOGBO

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Osun Command, has assured adequate security for residents, tourists and visitors attending the Osun-Osogbo Festival before, during, and after the event.

NSCDC Osun Commandant, Mr Igbalawole Sotayo, gave the assurance in a statement on Thursday.

Sotayo stated that the command had put in place comprehensive security arrangements in anticipation of the influx of visitors expected at the cultural festival.

"NSCDC personnel are drawn

from the Arms Squad, Crisis Management Department, Rapid Response Squad, and the Special Weapons and Tactics Unit, to secure lives and property throughout the event," he said.

Sotayo urged members of the public to go about their lawful activities without fear.

He assured them that the command, in collaboration with other security agencies, had developed a robust security strategy to guarantee a peaceful and hitch-free festival.

He, however, emphasised that security was a collective responsibility, appealing to residents, tourists, and other participants to remain vigilant and support

security agencies by reporting suspicious movements and activities.

He also encouraged the public to embrace the principle of "If you see something, say something", noting that timely and credible information was essential to preventing crime and maintaining public safety.

The commandant also appealed to parents and guardians to caution their children and wards against engaging in acts capable of disrupting the peaceful atmosphere of the festival.

"Anyone found involved in criminal activities, violence, or any act capable of breaching public peace would be arrested

and prosecuted in accordance with the law," Sotayo said.

The Osun-Osogbo festival is an annual traditional event hosted by the Osun Government with the traditional ruler, Ata-Oja of Osogbo.

The festival, which normally attracts foreign tourists, is taking place at the Osun-Osogbo Grove, a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, recognised heritage site located in Osogbo.

The week-long festival will be climaxing on Aug. 7 with the Calabash Carrying Ritual, by the Osun Maiden called the 'Arugba', to the Osun River in Osogbo.

Lagos unveils Access to Market initiative to boost MSMEs

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government on Thursday inaugurated Access to Market initiative, aimed at connecting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) with buyers, distributors and strategic partners to accelerate business growth and job creation.

The Commissioner for Wealth Creation and Employment, Mr Akinyemi Ajibotafe, during the occasion said that the initiative would bridge the market access gap confronting many entrepreneurs, after receiving training and financial support.

According to Ajibotafe, the programme, being implemented by the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF), underscored the state's commitment to building a sustainable entrepre-

neurial ecosystem that promotes enterprise development and inclusive economic growth.

"Access to Market represents the next phase of our journey. Empowering entrepreneurs does not end with training or financing. It extends to creating opportunities that enable businesses to compete, expand and prosper," he said.

He said the ministry remained committed to creating an enabling environment that would promote employment generation, enterprise development, skills acquisition and sustainable wealth creation across the state.

According to him, LSETF had over the last 10 years disbursed more than N15 billion, through 20,000 loans, created over 320,000 jobs, trained 30,000 young people and maintained a 94.53 per cent loan repayment rate.

Court grants dissolution of petitioner's marriage over neglect

IBADAN

A Grade 'A' Customary Court in Ibadan on Thursday dissolved the 30-year-old marriage between one Abosede Fasoyin and her estranged husband, Isola Fasoyin on grounds of irresponsibility.

Delivering judgment, the court president, Mrs S.M. Akintayo, held that she arrived at the decision to grant a marriage dissolution, following unwillingness of the petitioner to continue waiting endlessly.

"Therefore, the 30-year-old union between Abosede and Fasoyin is hereby, dissolved in the interest of peaceful living.

"Since the three children produced by the union are now

grown up, they are each free to stay with whoever pleases them," she said.

Earlier, the petitioner had told the court that she filed the suit because the respondent abandoned her for the past five years, leaving her to wallow in penury and hunger.

"My lord, not only did Fasoyin desert home, he also refused to take any form of responsibility of the children and I.

"Despite the fact that I reported the incident to his parents especially his father, nothing was done to bring him back home.

"In fact, we don't know his whereabouts and that is the reason why the bailiff served him by substituted means, pasting it on his family's house door," she said

Foundation to empower 50 South-East youths with aviation skills

ENUGU

The Eastwing Youth Foundation, the non-governmental arm of the Eastwing Aviation Institute, Enugu, has unveiled plans to empower more than 50 South-East youths through a transformative aviation skills development programme.

The foundation's Executive Director, Mr Christian Agadibe, disclosed this on Thursday in Enugu while briefing journalists on the second South-East Aviation Summit and Eastwing Youth Competition organised

by the foundation.

Agadibe said that the summit which would hold on Sept. 26th at Bon Platinum Hotel, Enugu, was designed to inspire, educate, and expose young people to the diverse career opportunities available in the aviation industry.

He said that the event would be organised in partnership with a global aviation company, Sofema Aviation Academy.

According to him, the summit will place a strong emphasis on safety, innovation, leadership, skills development and equipping participants with the knowledge

and confidence they need to pursue successful careers in aviation.

He said that aviation remained one of the country's most promising yet least explored career sectors among young Nigerians.

The executive director said that the programme reflected the foundation's commitment to nurturing the next generation of aviation professionals and contribute to the sustainable development of Nigeria's aviation industry

"Through mentorship sessions, career talks, competitions, networking opportunities, and practical learning experiences, the

summit aims to ignite interest in aviation especially in South-East.

"The summit also prepares participants for opportunities within the global aviation ecosystem.

"The Eastwing Youth Competition, which made its successful debut last year under the theme: "Face of Eastwing Competition/ South-East Aviation Summit", was established to address the underrepresentation of Nigerian youths in the aviation industry.

"It is aimed at creating awareness and building the capacity of aspiring aviation professionals.

FEATURE

CHOOSING PEACE OVER PRESSURE: Why more young Nigerians are quietly walking away from hustle culture

**THE HUSTLE:**

The hustle and bustle of Lagos will make any 9-to-5er question their life choices.

AYENOMOH WINNER

As rising living costs, workplace burnout and growing mental health awareness reshape priorities, an increasing number of young Nigerians are embracing “quiet quitting” not by abandoning their jobs, but by rejecting the culture of endless overwork.

For years, the unwritten rule of survival for many young Nigerians was simple wake up early, work tirelessly, sleep late, and repeat the cycle. Hustle was celebrated as a badge of honour, while rest was often mistaken for laziness. Popular expressions such as “No gree for anybody” became more than catchy slogans they reflected the determination to keep pushing despite economic hardship and uncertainty.

Today, however, that narrative is changing. Across Nigeria, many young professionals are making a conscious decision to step away from the relentless pursuit of productivity. They are not resigning from their jobs or giving up on their dreams. Instead, they are choosing healthier boundaries, prioritising their mental well-being, and refusing to sacrifice their personal lives in the name of career success.

The trend, widely known as quiet quitting, simply means performing the duties outlined in one’s job description without taking on excessive responsibilities that often go unrewarded. For many young workers, it represents a shift from living to work towards working to live.

For 27-year-old Lagos-based content strategist, Chinelo, the decision came after years of pushing herself beyond her limits. She recalls answering work emails in the early hours of the morning, juggling multiple freelance jobs on weekends, and constantly searching for new opportunities online.

“I burnt out,” she says. “I had money in my account, but I was always angry and emotionally drained. I realised I wasn’t really living.”

Today, Chinelo closes her laptop at 6 p.m., has declined several side gigs, and has invested more time in therapy and personal growth. “I’m not lazy,” she explains. “I’m simply done performing exhaustion.”

Her experience mirrors that of many young Nigerians who are openly questioning the belief that success must come at the expense of health and happiness. Conversations across social media platforms such as X, TikTok, LinkedIn

and WhatsApp increasingly centre on work-life balance, self-care and setting boundaries. What was once considered ambition is gradually being replaced with a new aspiration—peace of mind.

Economic realities have also accelerated the shift. In many urban centres, the cost of rent has risen sharply over the past few years, while inflation continues to erode purchasing power. Fuel prices, transportation costs, food and internet subscriptions consume a significant portion of monthly salaries, leaving many workers wondering whether endless overtime is truly worth the sacrifice.

“The hustle culture sold us a dream,” says Tunde, a 31-year-old product designer in Abuja. “We believed that if we worked harder, we’d eventually get ahead. Many of us worked harder, yet we’re still struggling to make ends meet.”

The lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, stories of burnout among Nigerians who relocated abroad through the Japa wave, and increasing conversations around mental health have encouraged many young adults to rethink their priorities.

Contrary to widespread assumptions, quiet quitting is not about laziness or poor work ethic. Most

employees who identify with the movement continue to meet deadlines, deliver quality work and fulfil their responsibilities. What they have chosen to abandon is the expectation of constant availability, unpaid overtime and the pressure to say yes to every opportunity.

For some, this means declining unnecessary late-night meetings, refusing additional side hustles, or resisting the pressure to constantly launch new businesses. Others have chosen to leave toxic workplaces, accept lower-paying remote jobs that offer better work-life balance, or move back in with family to reduce financial stress while rebuilding their lives.

According to Dr. Amina Bello, a psychologist based in Benin City, more young adults are seeking professional help for stress-related conditions than ever before.

“Many of them have realised that constant striving isn’t sustainable,” she says. “Today, peace has become a career goal.”

Despite its growing popularity, the movement has attracted criticism. Some employers argue that quiet quitting reflects a lack of commitment, while many older Nigerians believe younger workers are becoming entitled. Others maintain that

only those with financial support can afford to slow down in today’s economy.

Supporters, however, insist that the cost of constant overwork is far greater than the risks of slowing down.

“I’d rather be broke and sane than rich and broken,” says 25-year-old Femi, who left his fintech job to freelance part-time while pursuing agriculture on weekends.

For many members of Generation Z and young millennials, success is no longer measured solely by promotions, multiple income streams or endless productivity. It is increasingly defined by emotional well-being, meaningful relationships, personal fulfilment and the freedom to enjoy life beyond work.

The hustle culture that once dominated conversations may not be disappearing entirely, but it is certainly losing its place as the only acceptable path to success. In its place is a quieter movement—one that values balance over burnout and fulfilment over fatigue.

As Chinelo reflects on her journey, she sums up the mindset shared by many of her generation: “I’m still ambitious. I just don’t want to die trying to prove it.”

FCID, NAFDAC strengthen partnership to tackle counterfeit products

LAGOS

The Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) Annex, Lagos, and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening collaboration to combat counterfeit and substandard regulated products.

The commitment was disclosed in a statement issued on Thursday in Lagos by the spokesperson for FCID Annex,

ASP Aminat Mayegun.

According to the statement, the Assistant Inspector-General of Police in charge of FCID Annex, Lagos, Mr Simeon Akpanudom, gave the assurance during a courtesy visit to the NAFDAC Directorate of Investigation and Enforcement in Lagos on Wednesday.

Akpanudom said the Nigeria Police Force remained committed to deepening inter-agency collaboration with NAFDAC to curb the growing threat posed by counterfeit food, drugs, bev-

erages, cosmetics and other regulated products.

He commended the existing cordial relationship between both organisations and stressed the importance of sustained cooperation, particularly in the area of capacity building and knowledge sharing, to address emerging crimes.

The AIG presented a proposed training programme to be facilitated by a five-member FCID Annex team led by the Commissioner of Police (Forensics), DCP (Dr.) Agbo, following a request by NAFDAC.

He said the team would col-

laborate with NAFDAC officials to coordinate the logistics, venue and schedule for the training, while urging that FCID personnel also be included among the participants.

According to him, the programme will focus on public health protection, forensic science, investigative techniques and strategies for tackling counterfeit and substandard regulated products.

"There is no waste in acquiring knowledge," Akpanudom said, noting that the training would strengthen the investigative capacity of both institutions

and contribute to a safer and healthier society.

He described the proliferation of counterfeit products as a major threat to public health, national security and the nation's economy, while assuring NAFDAC of the continued support of the Nigeria Police Force in enforcing relevant laws and prosecuting offenders.

Responding, the Director of Investigation and Enforcement, NAFDAC, Dr Martins Iluyomade, welcomed the proposed collaboration and described the training curriculum as comprehensive and timely.

Iluyomade said the programme, scheduled to commence in Lagos within the next few weeks, aligned with NAFDAC's strategic objective of strengthening professionalism and improving operational effectiveness.

He noted that the inclusion of FCID personnel would enrich the programme through the exchange of investigative expertise.

According to him, criminal networks involved in the manufacture and distribution of counterfeit and substandard regulated products continue

Youth participation in governance records steady progress, governor's aide says

ABUJA

Musaddiq Adam, the Senior Special Assistant on Open Government Partnership (OGP) to the Kano State Governor says that youth participation in governance has recorded steady progress under the administration of Gov. Abba Yusuf.

Adam stated this in an interview with our correspondent in Abuja.

Adam said the state government had continued to create opportunities for young people to contribute meaningfully to governance and public service.

He said the Yusuf administration had moved beyond symbolic youth inclusion by appointing young people into strategic government positions and creating platforms for them to participate meaningfully in policy formulation and public administration.

According to him, the administration's commitment to youth empowerment is reflected in the composition of its cabinet, with about 65 per cent of members being youths.

Adam added that his appointment as the Senior Special Assistant on Open Government Partnership also demonstrated the government's confidence in young leaders.

"As far as I know, I am the only Senior Special Assistant on Open Government Partnership in the country, and that demonstrates

his excellency's commitment to youth inclusion," he said.

He explained that through the Open Government Partnership framework, young people were actively participating in policy consultations, budget conversations, civic engagement programmes and accountability initiatives.

According to him, the OGP Secretariat also works closely with civil society organisations, youth groups, innovation hubs and development partners to ensure governance remains transparent, participatory and inclusive.

Adam said the administration believed sustainable development could only be achieved when young people were given a seat at the decision making table.

He further identified the Youth Development Bill, currently before the Kano State House of Assembly, as one of the administration's key achievements toward institutionalising youth inclusiveness.

According to him, when enacted, the bill will provide a stronger legal framework for youth participation, representation and development across the state.

He also said young innovators, entrepreneurs and civil society organisations had opportunities to contribute to policy formulation through innovation, policy advocacy, budget monitoring and public accountability initiatives.

PSC deploys new commandant for Police Academy, CPs for 8 states

ABUJA

The Police Service Commission (PSC) has approved the deployment of a new Commandant for the Nigeria Police Academy, Wudi and eight Commissioners of Police to various states.

Mr Torty Kalu, the Head of Protocol and Public Relations of PSC said this in a statement in Abuja that the approval for the deployment of the new Commandant, Mr Auwal Mohammed, an Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG) and the eight CPs were part of the decisions reached at a recent meeting of the commission.

Kalu said the meeting was presided over by Justice Paul Galumje, a Board Member and Commissioner 1, in the Commission,

He said the newly deployed commandant of the Nigeria Police Academy, Wudi, Kano State, was an officer with over 33 years of experience in operations, investigations, intelligence-led policing and training.

According to him, he holds a B.Sc in Political Science, M.Sc in Public Policy from Bayero University and has served as Commandant Police College Maiduguri, CP Bauchi, and AIG Zone 3 and Zone 6.

He said the new commandant is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Kalu said the newly deployed CPs are Afolabi Olutokunbo, Abia, Ayodeji Faniyan, Plateau, Saka Ajao, Bayelsa, Ajo Ordu Cross River, Nnanna Ama, Anambra, Patrick, Edo, Tijani Murtala, Jigawa and Samuel Etaifo, Delta.



COURTESY VISIT:

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Sola Enikanolaye (R); with the Ambassador of Austria to Nigeria, Amb. Peter Guschelbauer, during a farewell visit by the Austrian Ambassador to the Minister in his office in Abuja on Wednesday.

Yobe assembly seeks FG, donors' relief for Damaturu flood victims

DAMATURU

The Yobe House of Assembly has passed a resolution urging the Federal Government, development partners and well-meaning Nigerians to provide assistance to victims of recent flood disaster in Damaturu Local Government.

The resolution followed the adoption of a motion of Urgent Public Importance

sponsored by the member representing Damaturu II Constituency, Buba Kalallawa, during Wednesday's plenary.

Kalallawa, while presenting the motion said the flood affected several communities, including Dikumari, Malam Matari, Maduri, Malari and Pompomari.

He said the disaster claimed two lives, displaced many residents and destroyed property worth millions of naira.

The lawmaker expressed

concern over the plight of the victims, noting that many families had lost their homes and means of livelihood.

Kalallawa, however, commended the Yobe Government for its prompt intervention through the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).

He described the response as timely and instrumental in alleviating the hardship faced by the affected communities.

The House Leader, Nasiru Yusuf, contributing to the

debate, urged the contractor handling the ongoing drainage expansion project in Damaturu to expedite work to minimise the risk of future flooding.

The Speaker of the House, Chiroma Mashio, who presided over the session, condoled with the families of those who lost their lives in the disaster and prayed for the repose of their souls.

Mashio also prayed for God to grant the bereaved families the fortitude to bear the loss.

BUA Cement employs 52 of 60 trained youths from Sokoto host communities

SOKOTO

BUA Cement Company has employed 52 out of 60 youths it trained from host communities in the operation of heavy-duty equipment in Sokoto State.

The youths underwent the training sponsored by the company as part of efforts to reduce unemployment and ensure community involvement in the company's activities.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, the Managing Director, Mr Yusuf Binji, represented by Alhaji Sada Suleiman, Assistant Director, Administration and Corporate

Services, said the event was part of the firm's unwavering commitment to reducing the high unemployment rate in the country.

Binji said the company would not relent in executing its routine Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects as a way of appreciating the cordial relationship between it, the Sokoto State Government, and its host communities.

He enjoined the beneficiaries to abide by the company's guidelines and work procedures, and advised those who were not employed to make themselves available for future recruitment exercises.

Earlier, Gov. Ahmed Aliyu of

Sokoto State, represented by the Commissioner for Commerce, Trade and Industry, Alhaji Haruna Abbas, said the event was more than a graduation ceremony.

"It is a celebration of empowerment, opportunity, and hope. Skills acquisition remains one of the most effective tools for addressing unemployment, reducing poverty, and promoting inclusive economic growth.

"It equips individuals not only to earn a living but also to become innovators, entrepreneurs, and employers of labour. I commend BUA for complementing government's efforts through this laud-

ble initiative," he added.

Gov. Aliyu described the private sector as a critical component of human capital development programmes.

While congratulating the graduates on reaching what he described as an important milestone, the governor urged them to utilise the knowledge, discipline, and practical skills acquired for the progress of society.

"The Sokoto State Government remains committed to creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive and for our youths and women to realise their full economic potential.

FEATURE

When survival becomes a skill: How Nigerians are adapting to hard times

FAVOUR OBADIGIE

A few years ago, many Nigerians believed that getting a good education, securing a decent job and working hard would be enough to guarantee a comfortable life. Today, that belief has been challenged by the realities of a struggling economy. The rising cost of food, transportation, electricity, rent and other necessities has forced many people to rethink how they survive. For countless families, survival is no longer just about earning a salary; it has become a skill that must be learned, improved and practised every day.

Across the country, the effects of economic hardship are visible in almost every home and community. A visit to the local market tells the story. Items that once seemed affordable now come with prices that leave buyers surprised. Families who once bought food in large quantities now purchase only what they can afford for the day. Some have adjusted their diets, while others have reduced the number of meals they eat just to keep up with the increasing cost of living.

Transportation has become another challenge. Many workers and students now spend a significant part of their income on commuting. Some trek longer distances to save money, while others rely on carpooling or public transport even when it is less convenient. What used to be ordinary daily expenses have gradually become difficult financial decisions.

Yet, despite these challenges, Nigerians have continued to demonstrate one quality that has earned them admiration around the world—resilience. Rather than surrendering to hardship, many people have chosen to adapt. Across cities and towns,



individuals are discovering creative ways to earn a living and support their families.

It is now common to find students running small businesses alongside their studies. Some sell thrift clothing, perfumes, pastries, wigs or skincare products through social media. Others offer graphic design, photography, video editing, tutoring or virtual assistance services. Many young Nigerians have embraced digital skills such as web design, programming, content creation and digital marketing, recognising that learning a valuable skill can open

doors to opportunities beyond traditional employment.

For others, entrepreneurship has become more than a choice—it has become a necessity. Roadside food vendors, hairdressers, fashion designers, POS operators and countless small business owners continue to work tirelessly every day, not because business is easy, but because they understand that every opportunity to earn an income matters. These businesses, no matter how small they appear, have become important sources of livelihood for many households.

The growing interest in skill acquisition also reflects a change in mindset. Increasingly, people are realising that relying on a single source of income is no longer enough in today's economy. Learning a skill is no longer viewed as an option reserved for those without formal education; it has become an important tool for financial stability and personal growth. Whether through vocational training or digital education, Nigerians are investing in themselves in the hope of building a better future.

However, while resilience deserves to be celebrated, it should not be-

come an excuse to overlook the realities facing millions of citizens. Hard-working people should not have to struggle endlessly to afford basic necessities. Economic policies that encourage job creation, support small businesses and improve the overall standard of living remain essential. Citizens can adapt, but lasting progress also requires an environment where honest work is rewarded and opportunities are accessible.

Despite these difficulties, one thing remains remarkable about Nigerians—they rarely give up. Every morning, markets open, buses leave their parks, shops welcome customers and entrepreneurs continue chasing their dreams. Behind every small business is a story of determination. Behind every side hustle is someone refusing to allow hardship to define their future. This spirit of perseverance continues to inspire hope even during uncertain times.

The economic challenges facing Nigeria are real, but so is the determination of its people. Every challenge has also inspired innovation, creativity and courage. While many continue to hope for improved economic conditions, they have refused to remain idle. Instead, they continue to learn, create and build.

Survival should never have to become a skill, but today's realities have made adaptability one of life's greatest necessities. As Nigerians continue to navigate difficult times, one lesson stands out clearly: those who are willing to learn, grow and embrace new opportunities are often better equipped to face whatever tomorrow brings. With determination, practical skills and collective effort, today's struggles can become the foundation for a brighter and more prosperous future.

Beyond the laughter: Preserving the legacy of Nollywood's screen legends

AKURE

FAVOUR OBADIGIE

For many Nigerians, growing up meant gathering around the television to watch actors who made us laugh, cry and learn valuable lessons. Names like Sam Loco Efe and Mr. Ibu were more than just actors—they were part of many people's childhood. Their movies were funny, entertaining and, most times, carried messages about family, honesty, respect and life. Today, Nollywood has grown bigger than ever, with new actors, better cameras and movies reaching audiences around the world. But as the industry continues to change, many people believe something important is gradually disappearing: the kind of storytelling that made old Nollywood movies unforgettable.

Over the years, Nollywood has grown into one of the largest film industries in the world. Better production quality, streaming platforms and international recognition have opened new doors for Nigerian filmmakers. Today's actors and actresses

are reaching audiences far beyond Africa, proving that the industry has come a long way from its early days.

However, as Nollywood continues to evolve, many movie lovers often find themselves comparing the stories of today with those of the past.

One reason for these comparisons is the way stories are told. Many older Nigerian films were built around everyday life and often ended with clear lessons about honesty, patience, hard work and family values. While modern Nollywood has introduced fresh ideas, better visuals and a wider range of genres, some viewers believe that many films now focus more on romance and entertainment than on messages that leave a lasting impression.

Others disagree, arguing that today's filmmakers are simply reflecting the realities and tastes of a new generation.

Watching Nigerian movies has also changed over the years. Before the era of streaming platforms and smartphones, many families bought CDs and VCDs from movie shops just to watch the latest Nollywood releases. It was common to hear people asking for "Part One" and "Part Two" before settling down with family and friends

to enjoy a movie. Today, technology has changed everything. With just a phone and an internet connection, people can watch thousands of Nigerian films from anywhere in the world. This has made Nollywood more accessible and has helped the industry reach a global audience.

Despite these achievements, many viewers believe something has changed in the way stories are told. Some argue that a large number of recent movies place greater emphasis on romance, luxury and entertainment than on the life lessons that older films were known for. However, that does not mean meaningful movies no longer exist. Many modern filmmakers continue to produce powerful stories that address family, culture, crime, history and social issues. The difference is that these films now compete with a much larger volume of content, making them less noticeable to some audiences.

The impact of these screen legends goes beyond the awards they won or the number of movies they acted in. They created characters that people still remember years later.

Mention the name Sam Loco Efe,

and many people immediately remember his unique sense of humour and natural acting style. Mention Mr. Ibu, and for many Nigerians, the first reaction is a smile because of the laughter his movies brought into homes. Their performances created memories that continue to live on in the hearts of millions.

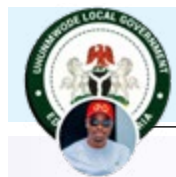
Beyond entertainment, many of these veteran actors helped shape the identity of Nollywood during its formative years. Their dedication, creativity and ability to connect with ordinary Nigerians made their movies relatable. They proved that great acting was not only about making people laugh or cry, but also about telling stories that reflected society and encouraged people to think differently about everyday life.

As someone who grew up watching many of these movies, I still remember the excitement of seeing familiar faces like Sam Loco Efe or Mr. Ibu appear on the screen. The moment they showed up, you already knew you were about to laugh, but beyond the humour, their performances often carried messages that stayed with viewers long after the movie ended. That experience is one of the reasons

many Nigerians still speak fondly of old Nollywood today.

It is also important to recognise that every generation brings something new. Today's Nollywood has produced talented actors, directors and filmmakers who continue to raise the industry's standard and earn international recognition. Many recent films have received praise for their quality, storytelling and production. Rather than comparing generations to decide which is better, perhaps the focus should be on preserving the strengths of the past while embracing the opportunities of the present.

Nollywood's greatest achievement is not only that it has become one of the world's largest film industries but that it has continued to tell Nigerian stories to audiences across the globe. As new actors, directors and producers shape the future of the industry, the memories and lessons left behind by legends like Sam Loco Efe and Mr. Ibu should remain a source of inspiration. Great actors may leave the stage, but the stories they told and the impact they made continue to live on through every generation that watches their films.



INSIDE EDO STATE



TEN MONTHS OF PURPOSEFUL LEADERSHIP: How Hon. Austin Imafidon (Isiwina) is redefining grassroots governance in Uhunmwode Local Government

Leadership is best measured not by promises but by tangible results. Within ten months of assuming office as the Acting Chairman of Uhunmwode Local Government Council, Hon. Austin Imafidon, popularly known as ISIWINA, has demonstrated that prudent management, visionary leadership, and unwavering commitment to public service can deliver remarkable development even under severe financial constraints.

Despite operating with virtually no internally generated revenue (IGR) and depending almost entirely on monthly statutory allocations, the Isiwina-led administration has embarked on an unprecedented transformation across the ten wards of Uhunmwode Local Government Area. Through fiscal discipline, transparency, accountability, and a business-oriented approach to governance, the administration has recorded impressive achievements that have positively impacted infrastructure, education, healthcare, security, youth empowerment, environmental sanitation, and rural development.

Hon. Austin Imafidon brought into public office the managerial competence, financial prudence, and result-oriented philosophy that distinguished him in private business. Rather than allowing limited financial resources to become an excuse for underperformance, he adopted efficient resource management, strategic planning, and cost-effective execution of projects. Every available naira has been carefully deployed to projects that directly improve the lives of the people.

STRENGTHENING SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Recognizing that security remains the foundation for development, the administration completely overhauled the Toyota Hilux operational vehicle of the Ehor Police Division to enhance law enforcement and improve response time to security challenges.

The council secretariat underwent comprehensive renovation and modernization, restoring the administrative headquarters to a conducive working environment. Similarly, the Legislative Quarters received extensive renovation, while a modern water system was constructed to provide uninterrupted water supply within the renovated secretariat complex.

Office furniture, executive chairs, and office fittings were provided across departments within both the executive and legislative arms, significantly improving productivity and staff morale. The council also renovated the Aso-Rock (Corpers' Lodge), creating better accommodation for National Youth Service Corps members serving within the local government.

To improve staff welfare, the administration introduced monthly fuel support for the staff bus, ensuring regular transportation for workers, while food items and New Year gifts were distributed to staff members as part of efforts to boost morale and productivity. The office of the Vice Chairman was equally strengthened with the purchase of a Toyota Camry official vehicle.

MASSIVE RURAL ROAD REHABILITATION

One of the most visible accomplishments of the administration has been the aggressive grading and sand-filling of rural roads across virtually every ward in the local government.

Within ten months, over forty major roads and numerous adjoining streets and inter-link roads have been rehabilitated, making communities that were previously inaccessible motorable throughout the year.

SOME OF THE ROADS INCLUDE:

- Pipeline Road, Eyeon
- Idumwovina Road
- Old Road, Urhokhuosa
- Primary School Road, Urhokhuosa
- Oguedion-Udeni Road
- Youth Road,
- Keke Street
- Jehovah Road Ikhueni
- Anetor Street Ikhueni
- Ewere Street and Environs Ikhueni
- Odionwere Street Ikhueni
- Hon. Ogbewe Street
- Okezee-Irighon Road
- Market Road okeze
- Aduhanmhan Inter-link Roads
- Okueken Road
- Ekhornuwaya Inter-link Roads
- Ekhoni Road
- Ekhonikhokho Road
- Ugonoba Old Road
- Ugoneki Old Road environs
- Ugbayon Old Road
- Ugomoson Old Road
- Ugomoson Health Centre Road
- Emuhun Road and surrounding lanes
- Igbogiri Market Road
- Evbuosawe Roads
- Uvbe-Egbede Roads
- Evbogho Road
- Iguesogban Road
- Iguezomon Road
- Izighiri Central Road
- Izighiri Inter-link Roads
- Iguele Streets
- Ilobi Old Road
- Ilobi-Ekae-Iguezomon Road
- Obanisi Road
- Ike-Okhuokhuo Road
- Okhuokhuo-Ike-Uvbiemi Road
- Okhuokhuo-Isievbe-Oghada Road
- Ugieghudu Old Road and adjoining roads.

These interventions have significantly improved transportation, enhanced agricultural activities, reduced travel time, and stimulated commercial activities across the local government.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The administration constructed a modern six-classroom block with toilet facilities in Azagba Community, creating a better learning environment for pupils.

Electricity supply was restored to several communities through the installation of transformers

at Ugbezee Community and Orior Ozolua Community, bringing relief to residents and encouraging economic activities.

ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

In line with the vision of creating a cleaner Uhunmwode, the administration cleared illegal structures along Idokpa Bypass to restore environmental order and improve urban aesthetics.

The council also evacuated refuse dumps that had accumulated for over six years at Ehor Market. A second phase of refuse evacuation was equally undertaken to sustain environmental cleanliness and improve public health.

HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

Healthcare has remained a priority. The administration renovated the Eyeon Health Centre to improve primary healthcare delivery and actively supported routine immunization and polio vaccination programmes, ensuring wider coverage for children across the local government.

Youth Development and Human Capital Investment

Believing that the greatest investment any government can make is in its people, Hon. Austin Imafidon launched several empowerment initiatives.

Sixty youths from Uhunmwode were sponsored for professional automobile mechanic training under the Lady Mechanic Initiative, pro-

viding them with employable vocational skills.

Another twenty-five youths received free training in computer graphics design and printing technology. Beyond tuition, beneficiaries received transportation and feeding allowances throughout the programme.

The administration also sponsored Uhunmwode Scout members to participate in the Edo State Scout Camporee, promoting leadership, discipline, and community service among young people.

EDUCATION SUPPORT

The council distributed textbooks to over eighty-seven public primary schools across Uhunmwode Local Government Area, providing learning materials that will improve teaching and academic performance.

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

The successful organization of the ISIWINA Gold Cup Football Competition brought together young football talents across communities, fostering unity, peace, youth engagement, and grassroots sports development.

SECURITY REINFORCEMENT

Understanding the growing need for community-based security, the administration recruited and employed over three hundred vigilante personnel to strengthen local security architecture





INSIDE EDO STATE



How Hon. Austin Imafidon (Isiwina) is redefining grassroots governance in Uhumwode Local Government

and complement conventional security agencies in protecting lives and property.

A Business-Oriented Approach to Public Administration

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Isiwina administration lies not merely in the number of completed projects but in the management philosophy behind them.

Coming from a successful private business background, Hon. Austin Imafidon introduced into public administration the principles of prudent financial management, accountability, strategic planning, cost control, and value-for-money spending. Every project has been carefully prioritised to ensure that available resources produce the greatest possible impact for the people.

Without relying on substantial internally generated revenue, the administration has shown that visionary leadership, transparency, and disciplined financial management can achieve what many believed impossible.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the administration continues to consolidate on its achievements, the people of Uhumwode are witnessing a new model of grassroots governance one driven by integrity, innovation, fiscal responsibility, and genuine commitment to development.

Ten months in office have clearly demonstrated that effective leadership is not determined by the size of available resources but by the ability to manage them wisely. Hon. Austin Imafidon (ISIWINA) has continued to prove that with vision, discipline, and business-minded governance, meaningful development is achievable even in a financially constrained environment.

The transformation taking place across Uhumwode today stands as evidence that purposeful leadership, prudent management of public funds, and unwavering dedication to the welfare of the people remain the true foundations of sustainable grassroots development.



NEWS

FOREIGN



UKRAINE'S BLACK SEA PORTS:

Russian missiles and drones are hammering Ukraine's Black Sea ports, like Odesa

Concern mounts in Cameroon over Biya's prolonged absence

In Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, the president's absence has dominated newspaper headlines and public conversations in recent weeks. Paul Biya has been out of public view for 58 days, but for some residents like Mr. Njoya, who is trying to remain reassured, the silence does not pose a major threat to the country.

"If he is away, there is certainly a good reason. We trusted him to manage the country, and we remain confident in that. We hope everything is fine and that his absence will bring us good news," said Abdou Salam Njoya, a Yaoundé resident.

But for many residents of Yaoundé, Paul Biya's prolonged and unprecedented absence is now becoming a source of concern.

"The children took their exams and had very poor results. He should have been there to guide us and guide this young generation, to ask why these results were so weak, but unfortunately he is not here. I feel that these are the holidays he has been waiting for. Maybe it is time, I don't know, maybe he has gone to rest as he said," said Tchoffo Jule, a Yaoundé resident.

"It has been almost two months now. We don't know

whether our president is alive or not, and this makes us even more uncomfortable," said Majesté Arouna, a Yaoundé resident.

For this political analyst, the country is heading toward difficult institutional challenges. The absence of a new government since the October 2025 presidential election, along with growing confusion within the administration, has led him to argue that discussions about the post-Biya era can no longer be avoided.

"It is normal that, as we are now talking about 58 days of his absence from the country, Cameroonians are asking what

this absence really means, especially because the government has shown signs of confusion. There is a heavy silence among Cameroonians when it comes to thinking about what comes after Biya. Today, we must acknowledge and address this," said Cyrille Tchamba, a political analyst.

As the two-month mark of Paul Biya's absence approaches, there has been no announcement of his return. Recent military appointments have raised concerns among observers about what lies ahead.

For now, the situation remains increasingly unclear.

In Odesa, no-one is safe from Russia's new Black Sea strikes

My crane operator, my partner, died five metres from me... The driver remained in the cabin. He also died."

Svitlana Halchenko winces as she remembers the Russian ballistic missile which exploded at work in Odesa, killing her colleagues.

Svitlana works as a warehouse shift manager at the city's main port.

Despite her injuries – she walks with a limp, pieces of shrapnel still embedded in her leg and back – Svitalana is determined to keep working.

But her normally bustling workplace is largely silent.

Russia is ramping up its efforts to strangle Ukraine's commercial links to the outside world, launching attacks all along the country's Black Sea coastline.

From damaged port infrastructure to listing ships with bridges blackened and containers still smouldering, the evidence is everywhere. Nowhere

more so than out towards the horizon, where the approaches to Ukraine's once bustling ports – Odesa, Chornomorsk, Pivdennyi – are almost devoid of ships.

Svitlana maintains a brave smile throughout our conversation, but her distress is painfully obvious. Her fingers constantly twist a tissue as she tries to maintain her composure and she gazes into the distance as tears well up behind her glasses.

The last few weeks have been worse than ever.

"It's been very difficult for morale," she says with a deep sigh. "A lot of sirens, a lot of shaheds [drones], a lot of hits. People are very tense."

According to Ukraine's port administration, July saw 57 Russian attacks on civilian vessels, 22 of them at sea, and a further 67 hits on port infrastructure.

While there have been Russian attacks on international vessels before, they've never been so numerous or so deadly.

On July 19, a Turkish-owned

cargo vessel, Golden Leo, was struck by three Russian missiles, killing nine Indian and Syrian crew members and a Ukrainian pilot.

The ship, carrying Ukrainian corn, sank off Odesa a week later.

According to the global shipping journal Lloyd's List, the Black Sea may now be the most dangerous place for shipping in the world – with July the deadliest month for merchant seamen since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began.

At his union's offices in the port city, Oleg Grygoriuk, Chairman of the Marine Transport Workers Union of Ukraine, says his members are suffering.

"There are a lot of veterans who already served their country," he says, "and they literally say that being in the port is more scary than being on the front line."

Odesa's proximity to Russian-occupied territory means that workers often have little time to react.

"A missile flies from Crimea within a minute," he says. "If you

are sitting in a crane, you need three and a half minutes to get down and go to the shelter. There's literally no time to do that."

On a rare visit to one of the area's main ports, we saw almost no sign of movement. Hundreds of metres of berths sat empty and towering gantry cranes stood idle as a skeleton crew conducted maintenance.

The military authorities allowed the visit on strict condition that we neither name the facility nor film anything. Ukraine doesn't want Russia to know what has and hasn't been damaged or reveal details that might aid Moscow in further targeting.

Two damaged cargo vessels were moored nearby. Both had suffered severe damage to the superstructure, where the bridge and crew quarters are located.

Just one lone freighter was seen moving towards the port.

"My heart is broken," a senior manager told us on condition we didn't name him.

"Normally there's a queue, even out at sea, waiting for a berth."

Iran says deal with Oman on Strait of Hormuz is in final stages

Iran says it has reached an agreement with Oman on a route for shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei did not give any further details on the agreement, which he said was "in the final stages".

Baqaei warned, however, that a deal with Oman would not guarantee safe navigation through the strait, arguing security remained impacted by the US blockade of Iran's ports. The US and Oman have not commented on the proposal.

Since the US and Israel attacked Iran in February, Tehran has largely blocked the Strait of Hormuz through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas usually passes.

On Tuesday, US President Donald Trump warned that Iran would be "hit very hard" if the strait did not open "very soon".

His comments came after senior US officials said talks had progressed to allow shipments to potentially resume later this week, though Iran has maintained that it is not negotiating with the US and has no plans to do so.

The ministry did not release any specific details on the proposed route.

Reopening the strait has been a key point in discussions between the two countries and mediators.

In his statement, the Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said the "geographical coordinates of the route" had been

agreed with Oman.

"The factors making the Strait of Hormuz insecure still exist on the part of the United States, particularly the naval blockade and other aggressive and threatening actions against Iran and its interests," he said, according to Iran's official Irna news agency.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi later told Irna the new route would be temporary and could stay open from two to four months. He did not give further details.

Oil prices edged lower on Thursday, with global benchmark Brent crude down by 0.3% at \$79.24 (£58.84) in morning Asian trade.

Energy prices have fluctuated wildly during the conflict as shipments through the key route for around 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) have been severely disrupted.

Since the beginning of the war, traffic through the strait has dwindled. Iran has said all passage needs to be cleared beforehand – and it has attacked vessels which have ignored the order.

One of the main points of disagreement between Tehran and Washington has been Iran's threat to impose a fee on vessels wishing to cross the strait.

Iran is seeking fees of between 5% and 7% of the price of cargoes from ships using the strait, according to a senior Iranian official cited by Reuters. Oman is discussing fees of around 3%, while Washington wants no fees at all.

Indian journalist Tarun Tejpal sentenced to 10 years in jail for rape

An Indian court has sentenced former Tehelka magazine editor Tarun Tejpal to 10 years in prison for raping a former colleague, overturning his 2021 acquittal in a decade-old case.

The Goa bench of the Bombay High Court convicted Tejpal under sections of Indian law pertaining to rape and sexual harassment.

Along with jail terms which run concurrently, the court has also ordered him to pay fines adding up to more than 1mn rupees (\$1,000; £780).

Tejpal, who has denied the accusations, said before the sentencing that he would file an appeal in the Supreme Court.

The allegations against Tejpal, one of India's best-known editors, had made national headlines in 2013. A year before that, thousands of Indians had participated in protests after a brutal gang rape and murder of a woman in Delhi, leading to a larger conversation on sexual violence.

Tejpal's accuser, who cannot be identified under Indian law, said that he sexually assaulted her in a lift during Tehelka's

high-profile international conference in Goa in November 2013, an event attended by, among others, Hollywood star Robert De Niro.

Tejpal initially blamed the assault on "a lapse of judgement" and "a misreading of the situation" which had "led to an unfortunate incident that rails against all we believe in and fight for".

But as the case escalated, he issued a statement urging authorities to examine the CCTV footage "so the accurate version of events stands clearly revealed". He also alleged that the case against him was part of a "political vendetta" by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Goa.

Tehelka, the magazine Tejpal co-founded in 2000, had published a number of scoops, many of them based on sting operations.

Some of these stories – including Operation West End in which some of its journalists posed as arms dealers, secretly filming senior army officials, bureaucrats and even the president of the then ruling BJP taking bribes to push through a fake deal – created national and international ripples.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Protests grow in Indian state over alleged exam irregularities

Hundreds of students and government job applicants are protesting in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand against alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations.

They are demanding that a preliminary civil service exam held in April be cancelled and conducted again, and that India's premier investigative agency investigate alleged malpractice in other state recruitment exams.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has said the allegations are being investigated and promised that students will get justice.

The protests have gained national attention after a much larger youth-

led demonstration in Delhi over exam paper leaks led to the resignation of a federal minister last month.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) - not a political party, but a youth-led movement - which led the Delhi protests has announced its support to the protesters.

The protests in Jharkhand began on 25 July and intensified four days later when demonstrators gathered at a stadium in state capital Ranchi for an indefinite sit-in.

They are demanding an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as well as a fast-track court to hear cases linked to the al-

leged irregularities.

A few of the protesters, including political activist Devendra Nath Mah-to who contested the last state election with the Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha party, have been on a hunger strike since Sunday in support of the demands.

The row erupted after last month's preliminary civil service exam results, with some candidates alleging that answer sheets shared online showed successful applicants had answered fewer questions than expected, fuelling suspicions of manipulation.

Hundreds of thousands sit these highly competitive exams each year

because government jobs offer prized security and stability.

The row has since widened into broader allegations over recruitment exams in the state. Chief Minister Hemant Soren said a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) probe was under way, including claims that the exam contract was awarded to an agency previously accused of irregularities. More than a dozen people have been arrested.

Jharkhand Public Service Commission chairman L Khiangte resigned on 22 July, before the protests began, and the commission later postponed the main examination.

The protests have created a political firestorm in Jharkhand, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is in the opposition.

The Congress, which governs the state with Soren's Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) but sits in opposition nationally, has made exam paper leaks and the police crackdown on student protesters in Delhi a key issue against Modi's government. The party has said it supports the protests in Jharkhand.

The BJP, meanwhile, has held protests outside the state assembly against the government and some of its lawmakers have met the protesters and announced their support.

Ebola crisis deepens in DR Congo as cases surge in hotspots

The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is accelerating, with health officials warning that cases are doubling in some of the hardest-hit areas.

On Wednesday, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus met with President Félix Tshisekedi in Kinshasa, marking his second visit to the country since the outbreak was declared in mid-May.

Tedros, accompanied by Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Director-General Jean Kaseya, said the situation remains deeply concerning as transmission continues to rise.

According to Congo's Ministry of Health, the outbreak has now recorded 3,874 confirmed cases and 1,751 deaths.

The United States announced an additional 242 million dollars in funding for emergency Ebola response, preparedness, and humanitarian support across the region.

This outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo virus, has become the second-largest Ebola outbreak ever recorded and the fastest-spreading in Congo's history. With no approved vaccine or treatment for this strain, health authorities are racing to contain the virus and prevent further loss of life.

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South Africa: Government pushes for continent-wide talks on migration

As anti-immigration demonstrations have driven many migrants to leave South Africa, the country's government is pressing for continent-wide discussions.

The south African minister of international relations insisted talks among all African nations could address the wider causes of the migration crisis throughout the continent.

Ronald Lamola said, "it's not a South African phenomenon. What we are disagreeing with is to isolate it and make it a South Africa phenomenon, particularly through the intervention of Ghana. When you look at it it's that because we are one of the highest receiving countries in the continent,

therefore, we end up being the ones that are mostly discussed."

The country has faced a criticism over the protests and reported violent attacks against migrants. Lamola insisted it is something authorities are taking seriously.

"We are also cooperating with the African People's Human Rights Commission on the matter. They will also be soon visiting South Africa and we will be responding/cooperating with them with regards to this issue that is on the table, which is the appropriate organ of the AU (African Union)," he said.

It comes after the African Union rejected a proposition last week by Ghana to add South Africa's migration tensions to the agenda of the next meeting in October.



PROTESTERS:

Anti-immigration demonstrations have driven many migrants from south Africa.

Air India's new CEO faces financial and safety turbulence

Air India has appointed a new chief executive as the airline grapples with mounting challenges, including heavy financial losses and the fallout from last year's crash that killed 260 people.

Tewolde Gebremariam succeeds Campbell Wilson, who stepped down from the role in April.

Gebremariam was earlier CEO at Ethiopian Airlines, where he worked for over a decade, growing the regional carrier into one of Africa's largest airlines.

Air India, which Tata Group bought from the Indian government in 2022, has been dealing with a period of operational turbulence.

The airline operates a fleet of 198 aircraft, flying nearly 5,000 weekly flights to 91 destinations in India and abroad, according to the Air India website.

Air India said Gebremariam was unanimously chosen by its board after an extensive search, citing his leadership and operational expertise to steer the airline's "next phase of growth".

N Chandrasekaran, Air India chairman, said: "Having completed the initial phase of stabilisation, integration, and fleet commitments under Campbell's guidance, Air India is now entering a critical execution and expansion era."

Wilson, a former Singapore Airlines

executive hired after Tata Group bought Air India nearly four years ago, had signalled in 2024 that he planned to step down in 2026 and had been preparing the airline for a smooth transition.

Now, his replacement Gebremariam has said that he is looking forward to building a "world-class global airline" that "reflects India's extraordinary economic potential".

During his tenure at Ethiopian Airlines, Gebremariam was credited with expanding the fleet nearly three-fold and growing it into Africa's most profitable airline.

At Air India, however, Gebremariam faces a daunting task. He takes over as the airline grapples with a series of safety and operational challenges, led by last June's fatal Ahmedabad-London crash, a major setback to its ambitions. The final crash report is due in October.

The airline has continued to struggle since returning to private ownership, reporting a record loss of nearly \$2.3bn (£1.7bn) last month. Chandrasekaran has warned a turnaround could take up to a decade. The airline has also cut nearly a third of its international operations.

The airline has also made headlines for a string of operational setbacks. In March, a Delhi-Vancouver flight turned back after nearly eight hours because it lacked clearance to enter

Canadian airspace.

These troubles come as India's wider aviation sector faces pressure from rising costs, disrupted international routes due to the Iran war, aircraft delivery delays and tighter regulatory scrutiny.

Air India is grappling with serious challenges, including the aftermath of last year's deadly crash that killed 260 people.

Aviation experts told the BBC that Gebremariam may be the leader Air India needs, pointing to two defining crises he steered Ethiopian Airlines through: the 2019 Boeing 737 Max crash that killed 157 people and the Covid pandemic, when the airline stayed profitable by expanding its cargo business as passenger revenues collapsed.

"Gebremariam endeared himself to his employees during both these black swan events, especially his backing of the pilots and engineers at Ethiopian," Sanjay Lazar, CEO of Avialaz Consultants, told the BBC.

At Air India, Gebremariam's priorities will include rebuilding workplace culture, lifting employee morale, accelerating delayed fleet expansion and refurbishment, and reshaping the airline's network to stem losses, experts say.

Air India has not said when he will take over, saying details will be announced later.

Opinion

Why Edo need investment opportunities to thrive



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

There is no doubt that every government has one basic obligation and that is to improve the lives of its citizens.

In Nigeria, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu has introduced economic reforms that have given state governments the financial capacity to deliver meaningful development across the country.

The Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo has repeatedly given credit to President Tinubu's economic decisions, particularly the removal of fuel subsidies and other support which have strengthened the finances of sub national governments, thereby enabling them to embark on projects that directly improve the lives of the people.

As part of his strategy to develop the state the Governor recently called on Edo professionals, entrepreneurs and investors living abroad to partner with the government by bringing home their expertise, technology, global network and investors to accelerate development.

The Governor met with the Edo residents in the United Kingdom urging them to come back home because when there are economic activities there would be progress and people would be engaged.

It is however sad to note that there are some people not happy with this move, instead they want to live large without working or investing.

It is quite something else when you play and don't want to work. According to the scriptures, If you do not work to earn a living, do not expect to eat.

Others regard this nonchalant attitude to work with hostility as they believe that there should be no food for a lazy man. It is this lifestyle that encourages crime and other get rich quick schemes in our society and that has to stop under the watch of Governor Okpebholo.

We all know that in reality, we live in a society where those who struggle hard to make a living, live moderate lifestyles and some below the poverty line, while those whose source of livelihood cannot be explained, make so much money and live ostentatious lifestyles.

To such groups of people who have constituted themselves into clandestine cliques, and cult groups, they will quickly tell you that "the end justifies the means."

They are ready to go to any length to take unnecessary risks just to make quick money and before they know it the law catches up with them.

Some of them are involved in ritual means to make money. They join cult groups because they want to belong to a class of rich folks who flaunt wealth with their lifestyles.

They do not believe they have to wait for the end of the month to earn a salary, nor do they want to make any meaningful investments that will take time to yield profits.

But today, Senator Monday Okpebholo has ensured that workers in the state get paid on or before the 26th of every month and he has continued to attract investors into the state.

Interestingly, some people want quick money to buy flashy cars, build or buy flamboyant houses with money they get without working hard for them. They spend lavishly on entertaining themselves and a series of their girlfriends.

Such people do not have value for the virtues of hard work and patience and they don't bother about spending time to acquire any skill or education. Even when some of them acquire vocational skills, they prefer to abandon it and rather belong to cult groups because that is where they can make quick money.

Some of these groups of persons have become land speculators instead of putting their talents and skills to productive use for the benefit of the society. They have refused any other form

of work, because what they get is free money through the sale of land and landed properties.

They do not want to hear that there is dignity in labor. They sell one piece of land to several buyers, and at the end cause confusion for those who buy the land or property.

That was the experience of Mrs. Eki Osa-Oni who has lived in the USA for over 21 years. She is from the Ovia North East local government area of Edo State and was eighteen years old when she traveled abroad.

Over the years, she was pressured from her siblings and immediate family at home to build a befitting building in Benin City and she saved to achieve that goal.

During the last Christmas holiday, Eki came to Nigeria with her two children and acquired a piece of land measuring 200 by 200 which she bought for five million naira in a sprawling community off the Benin-Sapele by-pass, from the community elders.

After the holidays, Eki traveled back overseas, assuring her relations that she would commence the building project in six months.

But, by the second month, she got a call from a relation that construction work was going on in the land and the caller inquired if she was the one who commissioned them to build on the land.

This news came as a rude shock to Eki, because she had contacted an architect who she mobilized to design a befitting building for the land.

With this development, she hurriedly came back home.

When she got to the land, she could not believe what she saw. A massive structure at the foundation level, fenced round with high walls.

She invited the police and made some arrests, but it was later resolved that another piece of land would be made available to her somewhere in the interior of the community by those who sold the land.

This scenario was so common in Benin City and other parts of the country and the youths who became land speculators no more indulge themselves in any other legitimate source of livelihood rather than waiting for any easy source of money.

Too many persons became victims of such

people and their antics in dispossessing people of their hard earned money in the state.

It was good news that the Oba of Benin disbanded the activities of Community Associations.

But it is appalling to note that they are still operating in some communities.

For instance if you want to develop your own land you are forced to go through stringent conditions. In some communities, people are made to pay money at different stages of the progress of the building.

If you are fencing, if you are installing a bore hole, if you are roofing, and others. You are made to pay money to them.

They have made the cost of completing a building very high by using every opportunity to extort money from the people, which invariably scares away prospective investors.

In this regard, every Edo son and daughter should encourage those coming back home, especially those in Diaspora to come home to develop and invest, rather than scaring them away with so many levies and conditions that will not encourage growth and positive development.

That is why the slogan of His Royal Majesty, the Omo N' Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, "Aimamien eson Aimiuwa," meaning, suffer before pleasure, should be imbibed by everyone in the land.

We should all know that "No pain no gain. There must be efforts before the reward."

This was aptly demonstrated during the traditional rites of the coronation of the Oba of Benin before becoming Oba.....His Royal Majesty, with all the opulence, passed through some stages of suffering before ascending the exalted throne of his ancestors.

As you step out today, examine yourself, are you really working to earn that pleasurable lifestyle you are living. If not, it is not too late to amend your ways because there is dignity in labour. Let us encourage Mr Governor to attract investors to the state to create an enabling environment for investment opportunities to thrive.

• Eubaldus Enahoro was Former Editor of the Nigerian Observer.

Electricity at what cost?

OSARUGUE SOPHIA OSADOLOR

When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." This African proverb has never felt more relevant than it does today as Nigerians react to the Federal Government's decision to phase out electricity subsidies from 2027. While government officials insist the move is necessary to rescue the country's struggling power sector from mounting debts, many Nigerians are asking a more pressing question: Who will bear the burden of these reforms?

For millions of households already struggling with the high cost of living, the answer appears painfully obvious. It will be the ordinary Nigerian.

The Federal Government, through the Minister of Power, Joseph Tegbe, announced that electricity subsidies would be gradually removed beginning in 2027. According to the minister, the government has been mandated by President Bola Tinubu to clear the legacy debts crippling the power sector and establish sustainable financing structures to prevent further debt accumulation.

The figures presented by the government paint a worrying picture. Nigeria reportedly owes electricity generation companies about N6.5 trillion. In addition, the government says it spent approximately N3 trillion in 2025 alone to subsidise electricity for consumers and had to borrow N2.3 trillion to settle debts owed to power generation companies. These numbers

reveal the enormous financial strain the sector places on public finances.

From an economic standpoint, the government's position is understandable. No nation can continue to finance massive subsidies indefinitely while debt continues to rise. Every year, funds that could be invested in healthcare, education, infrastructure, agriculture and security are diverted to sustaining electricity subsidies. If the debt continues to accumulate, the entire power sector could become financially unstable, making it even more difficult to provide reliable electricity.

However, while the government's financial concerns are valid, so too are the fears of ordinary Nigerians. Economic reforms are often measured by figures on balance sheets, but their true impact is felt in homes, markets, hospitals, schools and small businesses.

Electricity is no longer a luxury reserved for the wealthy. It has become one of the most essential services in modern society. Students depend on electricity to study at night and charge electronic devices used for learning. Small businesses rely on it to operate machinery, preserve food and reduce production costs. Hospitals need uninterrupted electricity to power life-saving equipment, while families depend on it to refrigerate food, access information and perform everyday household activities.

For many Nigerians, especially those in the lower and middle-income classes, electricity rep-

resents more than comfort; it represents survival.

This is why the planned removal of electricity subsidies has generated anxiety across the country. Even though the government has assured Nigerians that there will be no immediate increase in tariffs, many citizens remain sceptical. Experience has taught them that subsidy removal often leads to increased costs sooner or later.

The memory of the fuel subsidy removal remains fresh.

When petrol subsidies were removed, fuel prices rose dramatically. Transportation fares increased almost overnight. Food prices climbed because transporting agricultural produce became more expensive. Manufacturers faced higher operating costs, which were eventually transferred to consumers through higher prices. Inflation surged, and household incomes could no longer keep pace with rising expenses.

Although the government introduced several intervention programmes, many Nigerians believe these measures were insufficient to cushion the economic shock. Families adjusted by cutting down on meals, reducing transportation, postponing healthcare expenses and withdrawing children from expensive schools.

Many fear that electricity subsidy removal could trigger a similar chain reaction.

Electricity is directly connected to the cost of producing almost every good and service in the economy. Hairdressers, welders, printers, tailors, cyber cafés, frozen food sellers, cold room

operators, bakeries and countless small enterprises depend on affordable electricity. If electricity becomes more expensive, these businesses will likely increase the prices of their goods and services to remain operational.

The burden would ultimately fall on consumers.

The lower class may suffer the greatest consequences because they spend a larger proportion of their income on essential needs. For families already struggling to buy food, pay rent and transport themselves to work, even a modest increase in electricity costs could become another financial burden they cannot afford.

Middle-class Nigerians would also feel the impact.

Many households already spend significant amounts every month on electricity, internet subscriptions, school fees, transportation and healthcare. Additional electricity costs may force families to reduce spending on other important necessities, lower their standard of living or increase dependence on generators, which themselves require expensive petrol or diesel.

Ironically, unreliable electricity has already forced many Nigerians to develop expensive alternatives. Businesses and households routinely spend thousands of naira weekly on fuel to power generators because public electricity remains inconsistent. If electricity tariffs eventually increase without a corresponding improvement in power supply, consumers may end up paying more while still relying on generators.

FEATURE

South Africa's Xenophobic Crisis: What it means for Pan-Africanism

CHUKWUFUMNAYAN ADIGWE

For decades, Pan-Africanism has stood as a symbol of African unity, solidarity, and the collective pursuit of freedom and development. It was this spirit that saw many African nations rally behind South Africa during the struggle against apartheid. Today, however, South Africa finds itself at the centre of recurring attacks on fellow Africans, raising a critical question: What does this mean for the ideals of Pan-Africanism?

Since the late 1990s to date, South Africa has experienced different waves of anti-immigrant attacks, from isolated attacks on foreign-owned businesses and migrant communities to violence leading to the killings of several African nationals and the rise of organised anti-immigrant movements such as Operation Dudula and March and March, which relentlessly push for the evacuation of migrants from the country.

As tensions continue to rise over successive waves of xenophobic violence, the responses of several countries, including Nigeria, have continued to evolve. They have included diplomatic protests, emergency evacuations, consular assistance, the registration of affected citizens, crisis hotlines, and negotiations with South African authorities.

The largest and most coordinated evacuation effort has taken place during the 2026 crisis. The response has been much larger because the violence has persisted for months. The Nigerian government has carried out evacuations in five different phases, underscoring the growing humanitarian and diplomatic concerns arising from the crisis.

For many, the xenophobic crisis in South Africa is puzzling and greatly undermines the role played by other African nations in securing the rights of Black Africans in the country during the apartheid movement, an official system of racial segregation and white minority rule, which lasted from 1948 to 1994.

Although racial discrimination had existed long before 1948, apartheid became state policy when the National Party won the 1948 general election. Under apartheid, South Africa's white minority—about 15–20% of the population—controlled virtually all political power, most of the country's wealth, and the best land, while the Black African majority, as well as Coloured and Indian South Africans, were denied fundamental rights.

Apartheid was maintained through many discriminatory laws, such as the Population Registration Act (1950), an Act which meant every South African was classified into racial groups: White, Black (African), Coloured, and Indian. Due to this Act, the race of a person living in South Africa determined where they lived, worked, the schools they could attend, whom they could marry, what hospitals they could use, and whether or not they could vote. Communities were forcibly separated, millions of Black South Africans were removed from desirable urban areas and relocated to townships, and entire neighbourhoods were bulldozed.

In addition, Black South Africans were required to carry passbooks. Without one, they could be arrest-



XENOPHOBIC PROTESTERS

ed, imprisoned, or deported to rural homelands. Another law that enforced apartheid was the Bantu Education Act. This meant Black children received deliberately inferior education. The architect of the policy, Hendrik Verwoerd, argued that Black South Africans should only receive education suitable for manual labour. Because of the apartheid system, Black South Africans could not vote, could not hold national political office, and had almost no political representation.

However, with a fierce anti-apartheid struggle, the situation changed. South Africans led the struggle through platforms like the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan Africanist Congress, and other movements fighting to dismantle systemic racial inequality, secure basic human rights, and redistribute power and resources fairly among all people. A lot of strife preceded the calls for the end of apartheid, as thousands were imprisoned, tortured, exiled, or killed in the ordeal.

With much effort and major contributions from other African countries, including Nigeria, arguably the largest financial and diplomatic supporter of the anti-apartheid struggle, liberation came to the South African people in 1994. Among Nigeria's contributions was the continuous condemnation of apartheid at the United Nations, lobbying for sanctions, demanding South Africa's isolation, and recognising the ANC, a South African political organisation that began as a movement advocating for the rights of the country's Black majority and became the leading force against apartheid, as the legitimate representative of the South African people. Then, to crown it all, one of Nigeria's greatest contributions was the Southern Africa Relief Fund (SARF), established in 1976 by the military government of Olusegun Obasanjo following the death of Murtala Mohammed, who had strongly championed African liberation. With contributions from schoolchildren, civil servants, market women, traders, labour unions, companies, religious organisations, and other agencies, millions of naira were raised to support liberation movements in Southern Africa. Nigeria also provided financial support to the ANC, South African

refugees, educational programmes, humanitarian initiatives, and more.

In a relentless call for the liberation of the South African people, several other African countries rallied behind them. Countries like Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, and others all showed their support in different ways, both politically and diplomatically, demanding the end of the apartheid era. This was brought to fruition on 27 April 1994, when South Africa held its first democratic, non-racial general election, allowing citizens of all races to vote. The election was won by the African National Congress, and on 10 May 1994, Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as South Africa's first Black president, formally bringing the apartheid era to an end.

Unmistakably, this historical record of the anti-apartheid struggle is clear proof that Pan-Africanism is not an abstract philosophy. History shows us how, during apartheid, it inspired African governments and ordinary citizens to make tangible sacrifices for South Africa's freedom.

Today, however, recurring xenophobic attacks against Nigerians and other African migrants raise difficult questions. The killings of African migrants in South Africa, the burning and looting of businesses, and the hostile movements against foreign nationals, particularly those of African descent, have led to the repatriation of these migrants by the governments of several African countries. Nigeria alone says roughly 1,490 Nigerians have been evacuated during the latest crisis.

Here is the big question: How much longer will the xenophobic tension go on? And how much longer until the true ideals of Pan-Africanism are eradicated by issues such as this?

With the xenophobic tensions in South Africa, bilateral relations between South Africa and other African nations are eroding. The sense of community between the African peoples, if I dare say it, is dying. Brotherhood is becoming a novel idea, and I do not just say this. Dear reader, take an analysis yourself as to how even the common man from affected African communities feels about South Africans, not xenophobia, not the crisis,

not the movement, but the average South African man, and hear what he says. It may not be comments you would want to hear.

A recent occurrence that clearly asserted this was the cancellation of a planned concert involving South African Grammy-winning singer Tyla, who was scheduled to perform in Lagos, Nigeria. The announcement of the show coincided with renewed reports of xenophobic attacks against Nigerians and other African migrants in South Africa, triggering widespread backlash in Nigeria. On social media, the court of public opinion quickly opened, with a majority calling for the cancellation of the event.

One of the most vocal opponents was Nigerian social media activist Very-DarkMan (Martins Vincent Otse), who warned that the concert should not go ahead unless the xenophobic attacks were addressed. He called on Nigerians to boycott the event and urged organisers to cancel it, insisting that it would be insensitive to host the performance while Nigerians were being repatriated from South Africa.

This alone is a strong statement to the harm xenophobia has done, and is doing, to the unity among the African people.

Now, Pan-Africanism, at its core, is the belief that the peoples of Africa and those of African descent around the world should unite to defend their common interests, oppose oppression, and promote African unity and development. But what can be done when the infringement is carried out by stakeholders in the Pan-African movement?

Although the South African government has condemned the xenophobic violence in the country while maintaining that illegal immigration is a legitimate concern and that immigration laws must be enforced, many critics argue that these statements are excuses that come after violence has already erupted, that prosecutions have not always been sufficient to deter future attacks, inflammatory anti-immigrant rhetoric by some politicians has not always been challenged strongly enough, and that recurring outbreaks suggest that deeper causes have not been adequately addressed.

The fact remains, the lives of every African living in South Africa must be

respected. Reflecting on the Pan-African movement and how much South Africa itself benefited from it must spur the South African government into action. It should move them into doing more to protect the lives and rights of those who fought to uphold theirs in the past. Not mere words to quell tension or soothe, but real action, true Pan-African action.

While illegal migration is greatly condemned, what we have seen and heard about the violence in South Africa shows tension and violence against both legal and illegal African migrants and is an affront to the ideals that stood with South Africa in its fight for a more cohesive system, which it now enjoys.

Even where illegal migration is involved, a threat to life is not the way to solve the problem, and this must be nipped in the bud before the structures that shape and uphold the inter-African community are undermined. Ills like xenophobia are silent plagues that destroy and undermine the cooperation that an ideal like Pan-Africanism seeks to promote. It is good to note that a country can enforce immigration laws while still protecting the dignity and safety of migrants.

With much said, the South African government must enforce the law consistently and draw a clear line between immigration enforcement and mob action. The government should ensure that people who assault, kill, intimidate, or loot the property of migrants are promptly investigated, prosecuted, and punished. Moreover, South Africa has the right to enforce its immigration laws. However, immigration enforcement should be carried out by the police and immigration authorities, not by vigilante groups or private citizens.

The government must also condemn xenophobia consistently and address unemployment and inequality, as many analysts argue that migrants become scapegoats for deeper structural problems. It should also promote public education. Schools, universities, civil society organisations, and the media can help challenge misinformation about migrants and encourage understanding of Africa's shared history and the ideals of Pan-Africanism. Furthermore, it should strengthen regional cooperation. If South Africa works more closely with neighbouring governments, the African Union, and regional bodies, it can better manage migration, share information, and develop coordinated responses to displacement and labour mobility.

With these and more intentional actions from the South African government and other inter-African agencies, we can ensure that the goals of the Pan-African movement are not reneged on. When we collectively ensure that xenophobia is destroyed at its roots, we assert defiantly that an Africa where there is aggression against Africans is not one we stand for. We state boldly that the Pan-African ideal is one that will continue to flourish and that Africa is one community, not one detached from a whole, but one community where the freedom and prosperity of one African nation are tied to the freedom and prosperity of all African nations.

The hidden danger of unrealistic expectations in relationships

EJEMOGO REBECCA

The internet went wild when the news broke that Mallam Dantata, one of the country's most influential billionaires and CEO of Velata Motors, had filed for divorce from his wife, Rasheedat Dantata, after twenty-five years of marriage. The ever-curious and gossip-hungry bloggers immediately swung into action, digging into every nook and cranny to uncover the reason behind the split. Citizen journalists refused to be left out and also joined the frenzy, all asking the same question: "What could have led to the alleged divorce?"

Rumours spread like wildfire until Mallam Dantata finally addressed the issue in an exclusive interview. He said: "Truth be told, I love Rasheedat so dearly, but for the sake of my sanity and my desire to live long, I had to quit the marriage. I can no longer endure a relationship where I am constantly under duress to meet unrealistic expectations. I am not Almighty God. I am not a perfect man either."

Interviewer: "WOW! So Mallam Dantata, are you telling the audience that despite the fact that you are worth billions of dollars, it is still not sufficient to save your marriage?"

Mallam Dantata: "The issue in my marriage is beyond luxuries. If not, I wouldn't even be here in the first place talking about it. But can I tell you that there is no partner that would like to remain in a marriage where the other partner expects so much from you — such that when there is a flaw, it becomes a problem. Mr. Interviewer, at this point, I rest my case!"

Like Mallam Dantata, there are many relationships and marriages where the partners had to go their separate ways not because they were not in love, or financially stable, or incompatible, but because of the existence of 'unrealistic expectations'. These can be likened to the little foxes that destroy many otherwise itch-free marriages, causing disappointment and conflict, which eventually lead to separation and, for some, filing for divorce. Unrealistic Expectations are strong beliefs or assumptions about yourself, others, or situations that are not grounded in truth, practical limitations, or reality. What it connotes is a kind of high expectation that is created but remains unattainable. These expectations do not surface without being influenced by certain factors, such as social pressures, past experiences, or media representations of certain things or situations.

When unrealistic expectations reside in a relationship, one partner often suffers the brunt of it. At all times, they are expected to consistently meet certain beliefs and standards that are unnecessary or simply unreasonable. The irony of unrealistic expectations is that many people hold them so firmly and automatically feel that their partner should be able to read their minds, be flawless at all times, and prioritize them over everything else. Unrealistic expectations should not encourage nonchalance, irresponsibility, or an indifferent attitude from either partner. The lens from which this article stems is to establish the position that, irrespective of whether one is in a relationship or marriage, both partners have a huge responsibility to play. However,



there should be a level of understanding between partners. If one falls short of meeting the other's expectations, instead of creating a scene or beefing the other partner, there should be room for understanding.

One might wonder: What then are the causes of unrealistic expectations, and how do they creep into relationships?

First and foremost, when you look around in this day and age, you'll notice that we live in a society driven by technology. In extension, we are now in the age of social media, where people come across diverse content that can have a strong influence over their lives, thoughts, or ideologies. Hence, social media has not only become a tool for communicating and connecting people from different Geographical zones. It has also been used as a platform that portrays the idea of 'perfect relationships'. A lot of young people and couples have fallen prey to what it projects as the 'ideal relationship'. While some relationships are truly experiencing bliss, others are built on deception. This happens because people only amplify the rosy aspects of their relationships and silence the gory or ugly aspects. However, due to the ignorance of many, people begin to model their own relationships after the 'flawless' ones they see on social media. Hence, they subject their partners to pressure to meet up with these standards. For instance, many of us have come across glorious scenes of marriage proposals online — where the décor was top-notch, the lighting was super attractive, the flowers were perfect, etc. A young lady whose partner earns less than one hundred thousand naira monthly may be accused of having unrealistic expectations

when she wants or expects him to organize something similar, simply because of what she has seen.

Yet another major cause of unrealistic expectations in relationships: romantic movies and fairytales. Movies are one of the fastest means of promoting an ideology that tends to alter people's existing beliefs. Women are often the most affected because many are exposed to films that encourage them to fantasize about a perfect world free of problems — one filled with flawless relationships, a mind-reading partner who always knows how they feel, and a

prince charming who always saves the day. Korean movies, popularly known as K-Dramas, have produced and released many stories that downplay the reality that relationships experience hiccups and challenges. Instead, they amplify only the beautiful, almost flawless aspects. Over time, viewers who are constantly exposed to such ideologies when they enter into relationships, they begin to compare their partners with the likes of their favourite movie stars like Lee Min-ho and Lee Jong-suk.

Furthermore, past heartbreaks from failed relationships often become the driving force behind unrealistic expectations in current partnerships. Many relationships suffer not because the people involved lack the capacity to make things work or no longer find each other attractive, but because one partner may have come out of a previous failed relationship where their ex did certain things or exhibited behaviours that hurt them. Now, when they give love a second chance, there is a strong tendency to quickly try to correct or judge any inclinations or pointers of the previous partner's errors in the current partner — sometimes picking quarrels over minor issues. What people don't understand is that no two persons are the same. Little wonder even identical twins do not have the same fingerprints. Therefore, instead of addressing little issues and communicating them properly to reach a level of understanding, many people try to single-handedly become agents of change in their relationships.

Childhood experiences also contribute significantly to the hidden dangers of unrealistic expectations in relationships. Some people, while

growing up, may have experienced or witnessed certain things that shaped their resolutions about what a relationship should look like. For instance, those who grew up in homes where their mothers were battered or their fathers endured emotional abuse have a high possibility of entering new relationships with a strong "wall of defence." They tend to fight against even the slightest trigger of such situations with every fiber of their being even though the reverse is actually the case. For example, when the couple has a little disagreement, such a person might begin to feel that their partner wants to hit them or physically abuse them — even when it has never crossed the other person's mind to do so.

Additionally, wrong advice from friends is another major contributor to why many relationships fail. The absence of good friends who are willing to call their friend to order when they notice them acting out of proportion can lead a person astray. Many people are not mature enough to discern the kind of advice to accept and the ones that should be filtered as chaff. Hence, they swallow wrong advice and implement it in their relationships or marriages. For instance, most people who used to be satisfied with the amount of monthly upkeep their husband provided — until a friend steps in, begins to demean it, and even goes to the extent of revealing how much she gets from hers. Some even go to the extreme of suspecting whether their husbands are indeed transparent about their salaries or if they divert it to another source — which of course would mean they might probably have a side chick. This tells us that people who are in relationships should be mindful of the kind of things they reveal to a third party who might destroy their homes.

Unrealistic expectations if not addressed on time will often lead to constant disappointment. At this point, no matter how much the other partner tries to please them, they are never satisfied or feel it is good enough. Like Oliver Twist, they always desire more than what is being presented to them.

Also, it increases conflict in relationships. When the expectations of one partner who desires more are not met, it leads to issues such as resentment, beefing, or unnecessary arguments.

Furthermore, the other partner will.

When unrealistic expectations are not addressed on time, one partner may be subjected to excessive pressure more than they can handle. In trying to please the other partner, they often go through different discomforting routes to achieve what is expected of them. This can lead to physical, mental, or emotional breakdown. Other consequences include loss of individual identity, lack of gratitude, and relationship breakdown if the unresolved issues threaten to lead to separation.

However, building realistic expectations is very much encouraged in relationships. One of the ways to achieve this is to learn to accept or acknowledge that everyone has their shortcomings. Partners should learn to forgive when disappointed, understand and appreciate effort rather than nagging or grumbling, stop comparing their relationships with others, and focus on growth rather than perfection.

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This can lead to physical, mental, or emotional breakdown. Other consequences include loss of individual identity, lack of gratitude, and relationship breakdown if the unresolved issues threaten to lead to separation.

FEATURE

Simple daily habits that can help you stay healthy despite Rising Healthcare Costs

SALIHU MARYAM SAIDU

The rising cost of healthcare has become a major concern for many families. With the prices of medicines, consultations and hospital treatments increasing, maintaining good health through preventive measures has never been more important. While no home remedy can replace professional medical care, health experts agree that adopting simple and affordable daily habits can help reduce the risk of many preventable illnesses and improve overall wellbeing.

One of the easiest habits to adopt is drinking enough water.

Water plays a vital role in keeping the body hydrated, regulating body temperature, supporting digestion and helping the kidneys remove waste. Many people also begin their day with a glass of warm water mixed with fresh lemon juice. Although it is not a cure for diseases, lemon water provides vitamin C and antioxidants, encourages hydration and may support healthy digestion when taken as part of a balanced diet.

Good nutrition is equally important. Eating a variety of fruits and vegetables supplies the body with essential vitamins, minerals and fi-

bre needed for growth, energy and disease prevention. Nutritious foods such as oranges, lemons, guava, bananas, watermelon, tomatoes, carrots, spinach and other leafy vegetables are widely available and can be included in everyday meals without placing excessive pressure on the household budget.

Regular physical activity is another simple but effective way to maintain good health. Health professionals recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week.

Activities such as brisk walking, jogging, cycling or simple home workouts help strengthen the heart, improve blood circulation, maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Exercise also contributes to better mental health by reducing stress and improving mood.

Adequate sleep is often overlooked, yet it is essential for overall wellbeing. During sleep, the body repairs itself, strengthens the immune system and restores energy. Adults are generally encouraged to get between seven and nine hours of sleep each night to support physical and mental health.

Maintaining good personal hygiene

is another effective way to prevent illness. Regular handwashing with soap and clean water, proper food handling, drinking safe water and keeping the environment clean help reduce the spread of infections and protect both individuals and communities.

Health experts also caution against self-medication, a practice that has become common due to the rising cost of healthcare. Taking medicines without proper medical advice can delay accurate diagnosis, worsen certain health conditions and contribute to antibiotic resistance. Anyone experiencing persistent or unusual symptoms should seek professional medical attention rather than relying solely on home remedies.

Routine medical check-ups also play an important role in disease prevention. Many serious health conditions, including high blood pressure and diabetes, can develop without obvious symptoms in their early stages. Early detection through regular screening improves the chances of successful treatment and helps prevent complications.

Maintaining good health does not always require expensive products or complicated routines. Simple daily



habits such as staying hydrated, eating nutritious foods, exercising regularly, getting adequate sleep, practising good hygiene and seeking medical advice when necessary can make a significant difference. These lifestyle choices may not prevent every illness, but they can improve overall wellbeing, reduce the risk of many preventable diseases and lessen the financial

burden associated with frequent medical treatment.

In challenging economic times, prevention remains one of the most practical and affordable investments anyone can make. By making healthier choices each day, individuals can protect their wellbeing, improve their quality of life and reduce the likelihood of avoidable health problems.

Silent Crisis: Why mental health can no longer be ignored

ODINI VIVIAN AMAKA

The young undergraduate smiled through her lectures, laughed with friends, and regularly posted cheerful photographs on social media. To everyone around her, she appeared to be thriving. Yet behind the smiles were sleepless nights, overwhelming anxiety, and the constant fear of failing both herself and her family. Her story is not unique. It reflects a growing reality experienced by millions of people around the world whose emotional struggles often remain hidden behind seemingly normal lives.

Mental health has become one of the defining public health issues of the twenty-first century. While medical science has made remarkable progress in treating infectious diseases and improving life expectancy, emotional and psychological well-being continues to receive far less attention than it deserves. Across homes, schools, workplaces, and communities, countless individuals silently battle stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health conditions, often without seeking help because of fear, stigma, or limited access to care.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly one in every seven people globally was living with a mental disorder in 2021, representing approximately 1.1 billion people worldwide. Despite the availability of effective treatment for many mental health conditions, WHO reports that most people do not receive the care they need, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where access to mental health services remains limited.

The WHO further describes mental health as more than the absence of



illness. It defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals can cope with the normal stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn, work productively, and contribute to their communities. This definition reminds us that mental health is fundamental to education, employment, family life, and national development rather than being a personal issue affecting only a few individuals.

In Nigeria, conversations about mental health are gradually becoming more open, but misconceptions remain widespread. Many people still associate emotional disorders with spiritual attacks, weakness, or a lack of faith. Consequently, individuals experiencing psychological distress are sometimes encouraged to "be strong" instead of receiving professional sup-

port. Such attitudes discourage people from speaking openly about their struggles and often delay treatment.

Young people appear particularly vulnerable. University students face academic pressure, financial uncertainty, relationship challenges, unemployment fears, and the growing influence of social media. These realities create emotional burdens that are rarely visible. Behind impressive academic records or carefully edited online photographs may be students struggling with loneliness, burnout, or anxiety.

Economic hardship has also intensified the problem. Rising inflation, unemployment, insecurity, and increasing living costs have placed many families under enormous pressure. Parents worry about providing for their households, while young gradu-

ates face uncertainty about their future. These challenges can affect emotional well-being and increase the need for accessible mental health support.

Technology has transformed the conversation in both positive and negative ways. Social media has created platforms where people can share their experiences, find supportive communities, and raise awareness about mental health. However, it has also encouraged unrealistic comparisons, cyberbullying, online harassment, and constant pressure to appear successful. Mental health experts increasingly warn that excessive digital engagement without balance may contribute to emotional distress, particularly among young people.

Recognizing the urgency of the issue, WHO continues to advocate for

stronger mental health policies worldwide. The organization's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan calls on governments to strengthen leadership, expand community-based mental health services, promote prevention, and invest in research and information systems. According to WHO, improving mental health is not only a health priority but also a critical investment in education, productivity, economic growth, and sustainable development.

The media also has a responsibility. Journalists shape public understanding through the stories they tell and the language they use. Responsible reporting can challenge harmful stereotypes, educate the public, amplify expert voices, and encourage those who need support to seek help without fear of discrimination. In an era where misinformation spreads rapidly, ethical journalism can help replace myths with facts and compassion.

Mental health is no longer a silent issue affecting only a few people behind closed doors. It is a global concern that touches every family, institution, and nation. The challenge before governments, healthcare professionals, educators, religious leaders, journalists, and communities is to ensure that conversations about mental health move beyond awareness campaigns into meaningful action.

A healthier society cannot be built by treating physical illnesses alone. True national development requires healthy minds alongside healthy bodies. Until mental health is recognized as an essential component of overall well-being, millions will continue to suffer in silence. The time has come to replace stigma with understanding, neglect with investment, and silence with hope.

COLUMN

Walking the talk: Restoring hope through IVF in Edo

Governor Monday Okpebholo appears to be walking his talk. The establishment of an In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) Centre at Edo Specialist Hospital, Benin City, offers thousands of couples yearning for the joy of parenthood every reason to heave a sigh of relief.

Beyond being another addition to the state's healthcare infrastructure, the facility represents renewed hope for families who have silently endured the emotional, psychological and sometimes social burden of infertility.

It also reinforces the growing perception that Governor Monday Okpebholo is committed to translating campaign promises into tangible democratic dividends. While governments are often judged by the roads they construct or the schools they renovate, investments in healthcare arguably leave a more enduring legacy because they directly touch human lives. The acquisition of modern IVF equipment for the Edo Specialist Hospital, Benin City, is a clear example of this philosophy in action.

According to the hospital's management, the equipment was procured with the approval and support of the Governor to expand fertility services for couples experiencing infertility. It is a development that aligns closely with the SHINE agenda, particularly in strengthening healthcare delivery and infrastructure across the state.

For many people, the term IVF sounds highly technical and even intimidating. In simple language, however, IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) according to the Chief Medical Director (CMD) of Edo Specialist Hospital, Dr. Anthonian Inibokun Njoku, is a medical procedure that assists couples who are unable to conceive naturally.

It literally means fertilisation outside the body. During the process, a woman's eggs are collected after ovarian stimulation, and then combined with a man's sperm in a carefully controlled laboratory environment. Once fertilisation is successful and healthy embryos are formed, one or more embryos are transferred into the woman's womb, where pregnancy may then occur naturally. About two weeks later, a pregnancy test is carried out to confirm whether implantation has been successful.

It is important to stress that IVF is not a process of "manufacturing babies", as some misconceptions suggest, but rather a scientific method of helping nature overcome certain barriers to conception. It is one of several assisted reproductive technologies designed to support couples facing infertility challenges such as blocked fallopian tubes, ovulation disorders, endometriosis, low sperm count, zero sperm count or unexplained infertility.

Infertility remains a silent public health challenge across the world, including Nigeria. Medical experts generally define infertility as the inability to achieve pregnancy after about twelve months of regular, unprotected sexual intercourse. The causes are numerous and often complex. In some cases, the problem may arise from female factors such as blocked fallopian tubes, hormonal imbalance, ovulation disorders or age-related decline in fertility. In other cases, male factors such as low sperm



count, poor sperm motility or abnormal sperm morphology may be responsible.

In many situations, both partners may contribute to the challenge, while in some cases no clear cause is identified despite extensive medical investigations.

Unfortunately, society has often treated infertility with prejudice rather than compassion. In many communities, women are unfairly blamed whenever a couple is unable to conceive, even though medical evidence clearly shows that infertility affects both men and women almost equally.

This misconception has led to broken homes, emotional trauma, social stigma and unnecessary pressure on couples. Many have endured ridicule, family interference and psychological distress, while others have spent years moving from one prayer house or traditional healer to another in search of solutions.

It is against this background, according to Dr. Njoku, that the establishment of an IVF Centre in the Fertility and Reproductive Medicine Unit of the Edo Specialist Hospital, Benin City assumes enormous significance. For countless families, it represents not merely another hospital unit but a beacon of hope. It reassures couples that infertility is, in many cases, a medical condition that can be professionally managed rather than a curse or spiritual affliction.

The CMD stressed that it also encourages early medical consultation instead of delayed intervention driven by stigma or misinformation.

One of the most significant advantages of the new facility is accessibility. Until now, many Edo families requiring IVF treatment had little choice but to travel to Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Enugu or even outside Nigeria to access specialised fertility services.

Such journeys imposed additional financial burdens in transportation, accommodation, feeding and repeated follow-up visits. For couples already struggling with the high cost of fer-

tility treatment, these extra expenses often proved overwhelming.

Having such specialised reproductive services available within Edo State changes the equation significantly. Couples can now access consultations, investigations, treatment and follow-up care much closer to home. This translates into reduced travel costs, less physical and emotional stress, greater family support and improved continuity of care.

It also allows patients to remain within their familiar social environment while undergoing treatment, which can be psychologically beneficial during what is often an emotionally sensitive journey.

The comparative advantage is therefore clear. Rather than travelling hundreds of kilometres for each appointment, intending parents in Edo and neighbouring states can now receive care in Benin City. The convenience alone may encourage many couples who previously abandoned the idea of IVF because of distance, logistics and financial strain.

The benefits extend well beyond Edo State. With its strategic location, the IVF Centre is well positioned to serve patients from Delta, Ondo, Kogi, Anambra and other parts of the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones.

Benin City has long served as a commercial and educational hub, and with the addition of advanced fertility services, it is steadily strengthening its reputation as an emerging medical destination in Nigeria.

There are also important economic implications. Patients travelling into Edo for fertility treatment will inevitably spend money on accommodation, transportation, food and other services, thereby stimulating local businesses. The hospital will also require skilled professionals such as embryologists, fertility nurses, laboratory scientists, counsellors and support staff.

This will create employment opportunities and contribute to reducing un-

”
Modern medicine offers a range of solutions, and IVF is only one part of a broader spectrum of fertility care.

employment in the state while strengthening the healthcare workforce.

The presence of an IVF Centre also opens doors for medical education and research. Young doctors, nurses and laboratory scientists within Edo State will have greater opportunities for specialised training in reproductive medicine. Over time, this can reduce dependence on external expertise and position Edo as a centre of excellence in fertility care and reproductive health services.

However, it is important to manage expectations. IVF is not a guaranteed solution for every couple. Success depends on several factors, including the woman's age, the underlying cause of infertility, the quality of eggs and sperm, and overall health conditions. Some couples may achieve success in the first cycle, while others may require multiple attempts. This makes proper counselling before and during treatment absolutely essential.

Another critical issue is affordability. Although the establishment of the

centre in Benin City, according to the Chief Medical Director of the Hospital, reduces travel-related costs, IVF treatment itself remains expensive in Nigeria. Across other facilities in Nigeria, a single cycle can range between N2.5 million and N4.5 million depending on medications, investigations and additional procedures such as ICSI, donor gametes or embryo freezing. For many low- and middle-income families, this remains a significant financial challenge.

The cheering news is that at the Edo Specialist Hospital, the cost of IVF is relatively lower.

This is made possible through the direct intervention and support of Governor Monday Okpebholo, who is committed to making fertility care accessible.

Such gestures ensure that fertility care is not limited to the wealthy but is accessible to a broader segment of society.

No doubt, public enlightenment is essential in this regard. Misconceptions about assisted reproductive technology remain widespread. Some people wrongly believe that IVF children are different from other children, while others assume that the procedure contradicts religious beliefs. These myths need to be addressed through continuous education by healthcare professionals, religious leaders and community stakeholders.

Ultimately, the establishment of the IVF Centre should encourage couples experiencing infertility to seek early medical evaluation rather than delay treatment due to stigma or misinformation. Modern medicine offers a range of solutions, and IVF is only one part of a broader spectrum of fertility care.

Healthcare remains one of the clearest indicators of responsive governance. When governments invest in facilities that improve quality of life, reduce suffering and restore hope, citizens are right to acknowledge such efforts.

The establishment of the IVF Centre at Edo Specialist Hospital is a significant milestone in the state's healthcare journey and a reflection of a policy direction that prioritises human wellbeing.

For countless couples whose deepest desire is to hear the cry of a newborn in their homes, this new IVF Centre symbolises something priceless: hope. It reminds us that science, when supported by visionary leadership and sound public policy, can transform lives, strengthen families and restore dignity to those who have silently carried the burden of infertility.

If properly managed, adequately staffed and made progressively more affordable, this initiative will not only add another department to a hospital. It will write new stories of joy, reduce the need for expensive medical travel, strengthen families across Edo and neighbouring states, and reinforce the principle that quality healthcare should be accessible to all.

In that sense, the new IVF Centre is more than a medical facility; it is an investment in families, in humanity and the future of Edo State.

Dr. Odaro is a columnist and lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria.

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BR

ShowBiz



Music extravaganza for Edo music icons by Akaba Man, others holds August 28

BENIN CITY

The maiden music extravaganza of Edo Music Elders Forum in celebration of the legacy of Sir Victor Uwaifo and other fallen music icons, heroes and legends has been slated for August 28, 2026, in Benin City.

The Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has thrown his weight behind the epoch-making event scheduled for the state-owned iconic Sir Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, Benin City.

Receiving members of the group on

a courtesy visit in Government House in Benin, Idahosa said the state government appreciates the forum's efforts to preserve the legacy of veteran musicians and promote Edo's cultural heritage.

He promised to reach out to the management of the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub over the forum's request to use the facility for its remembrance programme on August 28, subject to the venue's availability.

Idahosa further expressed willingness to attend the event, adding that he will send a representative if official engagements prevented his attendance.

Earlier, the Chairman of the forum, Roland Igbini, popularly known as "Akaba Man", said the visit was to seek government support for the forum's initiative to annually honour departed music legends.

Akaba Man said the maiden edition will commemorate the late Sir Victor Uwaifo and other deceased Edo music icons, as he appealed for approval to use the creative hub for the event.

He said the initiative is aimed at preserving the contributions of late musicians and inspiring younger generations through the celebration of their works.

Tempoe earns Spotify billion streams plaque for love Nwantiti

ABUJA

Nigerian record producer Michael Chigozie, popularly known as Tempoe, has earned Spotify's billion streams plaque for his production of CKay's global hit, Love Nwantiti.

The producer announced the recognition on Wednesday via his verified X account, where he shared photographs of the plaque and the presentation.

He wrote: "First & Only Solo Nigerian Song to surpass 1 BILLION STREAMS on Spotify!!! ICONIC!"

The plaque recognises Love Nwantiti (Ah Ah Ah), produced by Tempoe and performed by CKay, for surpassing one billion streams on Spotify, making it the first solo Nigerian song to reach the milestone on the platform.

The commemorative plaque bears the inscription: "In recognition of 1,000,000,000 streams", with Tempoe

credited as producer and CKay listed as the performing artiste.

Released in 2019, Love Nwantiti (Ah Ah Ah) gained global prominence following its international remixes and widespread traction on social media, becoming one of Afrobeats' biggest global hit.

Tempoe, born and raised in Lagos State, has produced several commercially successful Afrobeats records with international recognition.

Some of his productions include CKay's Love Nwantiti (Ah Ah Ah), Victory's Soweto, Joeboy's Sip (Alcohol) and Omah Lay's Soso, which have collectively accumulated hundreds of millions of streams worldwide.

The recognition marks another milestone for Nigerian music, reflecting Afrobeats' growing global reach and continued success on digital streaming platforms.



TEMPOE

Peller, Jarvis union threatened by spiritual incompatibility— Ajibola, social media psychic

EJEMOGO ANWURI

Nigerian Social Media Psychic, Elizabeth Ajibola has affirmed that the Nigerian TikTok personalities, Peller and Jarvis are spiritually incompatible, stressing that their relationship is at the verge of having a negative effect on Peller if it evolves to marriage.

Ajibola made the comment in a viral video circulating on social media, where it was alleged that she had previously discouraged Jarvis against the relationship because according to her, they were not spiritually compatible for each other.

According to her, she cautioned Jarvis about a month ago maintaining that the relationship would end up creating problems for Peller despite his stable appearance at the moment.

She further noted that while the relationship appears to be currently stable, she however believes its consequences will surface with time.

"I told her like that because it is easy to join two things together, but very soon a lot of things will start mani-



PELLER AND JARVIS

festing in the life of that boy, into the reality of that boy," she said.

Additionally, the Social Media Psychic highlighted that their spiritual origins further portrays her claim to the couples incompatibility, claiming Peller is "a marine boy" while Jarvis

originates from what she described as "a snake community."

Ajibola also advised the intending couples to seek proper spiritual guidance before marriage noting that people ought to pray and seek for confirmation before deciding on choosing a life partner.

P-Square feud deepens as fresh dispute keeps fans concerned

DIVINE JOHN

Peter and Paul Okoye, popularly known as P-Square, are once again making headlines following a fresh disagreement that has sparked reactions among fans and the entertainment industry.

The twin brothers, who rose to fame as one of Africa's biggest music groups, have experienced several public disagreements over the years. Although they reunited in 2021 after years apart, recent developments suggest that tensions have resurfaced.

The latest saga has seen the brothers exchange allegations and make public statements through interviews and social media. Their elder brother and former manager, Jude Okoye, has also

been drawn into the dispute, making the situation even more complicated.

Many fans have expressed disappointment over the ongoing family conflict, saying they would rather see the brothers resolve their differences privately. Others have urged them to focus on their music career instead of public disagreements.

Entertainment analysts believe the continued conflict could affect the P-Square brand, which has remained one of the most successful music groups in Nigeria and across Africa.

Despite the controversy, neither Peter nor Paul has announced plans to reunite professionally again or confirmed that the dispute has been resolved. Fans continue to hope that the brothers will settle their differences and return to making music together.



P-SQUARE

BBNaija: Abi, Aikou, Araga, 16 Others Face Eviction

FAVOUR OBADIGIE

Tension is building in the Big Brother Naija Season 10 Show Ya Sef house after 19 housemates were nominated for possible eviction during the week two nomination process.

The nominations came shortly af-

ter Sheba emerged as the new Head of House, putting Abi, Aikou, Araga and 16 other contestants on the eviction list.

The latest twist means nearly the entire house is now at risk, leaving fans with the task of deciding who stays and who leaves the reality show.

With alliances beginning to take shape and rivalries becoming more obvious,

this week's eviction race is expected to be one of the most competitive so far as supporters campaign and vote to keep their favourites in the house.

The nominated housemates will now wait for the next live eviction show, where at least one of them will see their journey in the competition come to an end.

Sports

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

NPFL set to unveil new \$7.5m title sponsorship as Elegbeleye confirms August kick-off

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) is on the verge of announcing

a new title sponsor ahead of the 2026/27 season, with Chairman Otunba Gbenga Elegbeleye re-

affirming the league's commitment to August 28 kick-off date

Speaking during an interview with journalists at the Maldron Hotel in Glasgow, Scotland, Elegbeleye disclosed that negotiations with the prospective sponsor had reached an advanced stage, with the official unveiling expected before the league's Annual General Meeting on August 7.

"We are finalising the details. I have travelled abroad to conclude discussions and ensure everything is properly put in place. Beyond becoming our title sponsor, this partnership will also strengthen our digital presence as we work to grow the league's social media platforms through influencers and strate-

gic content creation," he said.

As part of efforts to reposition the league, Elegbeleye revealed that discussions had also been held with leading Nigerian entertainers, who have agreed in principle to support the NPFL's fan engagement campaign.

"I have spoken with a couple of top entertainers, and we are expected to sign agreements with them in the coming days. They have agreed to support this initiative for the development of Nigerian football and have even indicated they would attend more than one league match. Their involvement, alongside our new title sponsor and digital campaign, will significantly increase the league's visibility and fan engagement."



GBENGA ELEGBELEYE

WAFU-B: Deputy Governor lifts Edo Queens spirit in camp ahead CAF tourney

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As Nigeria Women Premier Football League Champions Edo Queens step up their preparations for the forthcoming West Africa Football Union WAFU-B play off, scheduled to hold later this month in Burkina Faso, Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, gingered up the players' spirit as he paid them a surprise visit in camp and joined them in their evening training session.

The sports loving Deputy Governor who visited the reigning champions in the company of Edo State Sports Commission Chairman Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele gave the girls the pleasant surprise with his esteemed presence as part of motivation in addition to unannounced financial support to boost their morale ahead of the CSF engagement.

Idahosa who scored twice during the Tuesday evening training with the former WAFU-B champions was visibly excited to be with the champions as some fans around hailed him for his uncommon humility.

Addressing the players at the end of the evening session, the

Deputy Governor commended the players for making Edo State proud during the league ending Super six tournament in Port Harcourt where they showcased their talents and determination, coming from behind to lift the league title for the second time in three seasons.

He reassured the team that the Governor will soon host and reward them for their excellent outing, making Edo State proud.



EDO STATE DEPUTY GOVERNOR RT. HON. DENNIS IDAHOSA

NNL AGM: Owerri set to welcome Nigeria's football stakeholders

The Nigeria National League (NNL) has announced Owerri, the

Imo State capital, as the host city for the 2026/2027 Annual General Meeting (AGM).



NNL Chief Operating Officer (COO), Mr. Danlami Alanana, said His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Imo State, Distinguished Senator Hope Uzodimma has given the nod for the 17th AGM to be hosted in the Eastern Heartland.

"We are delighted that the sports-loving Governor of Imo State Distinguished Senator Hope Uzodimma has magnanimously approved NNL's request to host our AGM in Owerri. This is one of the most important events in our calendar," Danlami disclosed.

The AGM, a precursor to the 2026-2027 NNL football season is scheduled to hold on Friday, 21st August, 2026 with top officials of the nation's soccer governing body led by NFF president Alhaji Ibrahim Gusau and General Secretary Dr Mohammed Sanusi in attendance.

CAF concludes inspection of Nigeria's facilities for CAF Awards, General Assembly

A five-man delegation from the Confederation of African Football (CAF) has concluded the inspection of facilities proposed by Nigeria to host the 48th CAF Ordinary General Assembly and the 2026 CAF Awards.

This is contained in a statement issued on Tuesday by Ademola Olajire, Head of Com-

munications, Nigeria Football Federation (NFF).

According to the statement, the delegation, led by Christian Emeruwa, inspected the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, the Transcorp Hilton Hotel and the Bola Tinubu International Conference Centre (ICC) in Abuja.

Other members of the dele-

gation were Hervé Dassoundo (Commercial and Branding), Inas Ahmed (Travel and Accommodation), Salah Mostafa (Transport) and Mohammed Baker (Technology).

The statement said the team had earlier arrived in Lagos on Sunday, where, alongside officials of the NFF, it inspected the Eko Hotel and Suites, the

Murtala Muhammed International Airport and the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and Creative Arts.

According to Olajire, the ICC has been proposed to host the 48th CAF Ordinary General Assembly, while the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and Creative Arts has been designated as the venue for the 2026 CAF Awards.



ANNUAL SPORTS FIESTA

WAMUFAT/NSSF Annual Sports Fiesta begins in Ogun

The second edition of the WAMUFAT/Nigeria School Sport Federation (NSSF) Annual Sports Fiesta began on Tuesday at the Agroterra Sports Complex in Jega Orile, Ogun.

The five-day camp, which will end on Aug. 8, has attracted more than 300 students aged between six and 16 from the South-West

It is organised by WAMUFAT Youth Sports Development in partnership with the NSSF, with support from the management of the Agroterra Sports Complex.

Declaring the camp open, the traditional ruler of Owu

Kingdom, His Royal Highness, Saka Matemilola, urged the participants to make the best use of the opportunity to develop their talents and improve their sporting skills.

He also called on governments at all levels to give greater attention to school sports, describing it as the foundation of every successful sporting nation.

Founder of WAMUFAT, Fatimo Mohamed, said the decision to sustain the initiative after its successful maiden edition in 2025 was driven by her passion for giving back to society and creating opportunities for young people.

Nathaniel Idowu Foundation opens maiden summer camp for children in Lagos

The Nathaniel Idowu Foundation has launched its maiden Summer Camp in Lagos, with more than 1,000 children turning up for the programme, although only 321 registered participants were admitted.

The foundation disclosed this in a statement issued on Tuesday by its Media Officer, Lekan Okusan.

According to the statement, the one-month camp, which commenced on Monday at the New Maracana Stadium, is designed for children between the ages of eight and 16.

It stated that families began arriving at the venue from about 6:30 a.m. and were received with music, banners and an organised registration process.

The statement added that each participant received an official camp jersey, while the

camp rules were explained by the Camp Coordinator, McAnthony Anaelechukwu, who is also the Director-General of Peakline Sports World Ltd.

It said the foundation, in partnership with U.S.-based organisation, Gear 'Em Up, led by Khadija and Marvelous, distributed complete training kits to selected participants.

The kits included football boots, gloves, shin guards, jerseys and footballs.

According to the statement, the camp is being managed by 20 certified coaches, supported by medical personnel and kitchen staff to ensure the safety and welfare of participants.

It noted that after registration and group photographs, basketball participants proceeded to the courts, while football campers engaged in warm-up exercises, icebreakers and training drills.



NATHANIEL IDOWU FOUNDATION

Sports

NIGERIA VS CAMEROON: Justin Madugu and his 200 million assistants

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

The Super Falcons are in the Quarter finals and are up against the Lionesses of Cameroon for a Semi Final spot and an automatic World Cup ticket in the on-going WAFCON.

We have a pattern in this country. The moment things get uncomfortable, we conclude that the local coach "doesn't know his work." Every Nigerian is tactical and can read a match. We rate foreign coaches higher by default, even when the results and context are the same. If this were a European coach with the same record, we would be calling it "rotation" and "tournament management." Justin Madugu is not being judged on tactics alone. He is being judged because he is Nigerian.

The truth is, African women's football has come of age. The gap is closing fast. Who would have thought Nigeria would be needing calculators to qualify from a WAFCON group that has debutants Malawi and Egypt? Both teams were only in the tournament because it expanded from 12 to 16 teams. Yet they made us to do extra work.

That is not because Nigeria got worse overnight. It is because other teams have improved and got better. Cameroon, Zambia, South Africa, Morocco — they are all professional now. They have structures, data, and players exposed in Europe. The days of walking through group stages are gone.

In April I wrote an article that went viral titled "SUPER FALCONS DESERVE BETTER." I expressed doubt that the NFF had set this team up to succeed. Here are two paragraphs from that article:

"Elite performance is built on elite

preparation. Friendlies are not just warm-ups. They are tactical laboratories where coaches test formations, bed in new talents, and measure their squad against varied styles of play. Right now, the Falcons' 2026 calendar shows just a double-header vs Cameroon in February and March. That is a recipe for rust, not readiness."

"The concern is sharper because the rest of Africa is not standing still. Nigeria no longer wins games by default. Women's football on the continent has undergone a quiet revolution in the last 5 years. Investment, structure, and belief have spread. The days of Nigeria walking through WAFCON are gone. The competition is now a fight."

You could see the effect of that poor preparation in the first three games.

Three games. Three different line-ups. That tells you everything. Madugu is not playing mind games. He is using the tournament to find his first eleven because he was not given the time to do it before the tournament. When preparation is rushed, the coach experiments in public.

That is why the Esther Okoronkwo case keeps coming up. Yes, she has the reputation. Yes, she is a quality. But she is also coming back from injury. Rhythm is not something you switch on. You build it with minutes, and sometimes the safest way to build it is off the bench.

Fans see 20 minutes of brilliance and ask why she didn't start. Coaches see training data, recovery markers, and tactical matchups and decide to protect the player. Remember, Esther herself benefits when she is not rushed back into 90 minutes too early.

The criticism is also loud because we are Nigeria. We expect to dominate. But this WAFCON is different. Teams sit deep. They press. They ana-

lyze. You cannot just throw your "best XI" on paper and expect chemistry. Chemistry is built, and Madugu is building it under live fire.

Let us be honest about the line-up changes too. Is it ideal? No. But is it necessary when you had poor preparation? Yes. The coach is trying combinations. He is testing who can link with Oshoala, who can cover defensively; who can break a low block. That is what tournaments are for when pre-tournament work was not done. The good thing is there are goals in this team and we have different leaders in every department.

We have been here before. Shuaibu Amodu led us to qualified for two World Cups - in 2002 and 2010. Fans and administrators screamed "tactically deficient." They sacked him both times. We went to those World Cups with new coaches and flopped. We regretted it. And Nigerian football has not fully recovered from that culture of panic.

Amodu was not perfect. But he understood the players, the terrain, and the pressure. We threw that away for the illusion that a foreign name would solve everything. We are repeating that script with Madugu.

Now we face Cameroon in the quarterfinals. A World Cup ticket is on the line. This is not the time for experiments or fan selections. This is the time to back the man in the dugout, even if we disagree with one or two decisions.

What the Super Falcons need now is not more noise about who should start. They need ruthlessness in front of goal. They need to take the half-chances. They need the midfield to control the tempo of the games. Those are coaching points, but they are also player execution.



JUSTIN MADUGU

Esther Okoronkwo will have her role. Whether she starts or comes on at 60 minutes, her impact is still needed. A player of her quality changes games either way. The goal is not to start 11 stars. The goal is to win and qualify.

Madugu deserves respect for navigating this mess. He inherited a team with no proper build-up with the fan base expecting 2010 football, and opponents who no longer fear us. Yet we

are still in it.

So, to the fans: criticize, yes. Debate, yes. But don't burn the house down because one player is on the bench. Don't confuse rotation with incompetence. Don't confuse a Nigerian coach with a bad coach.

African women's football has grown up. Our expectations must grow up too. The pitch against Cameroon will answer more questions than Twitter will.

Daniel Daga's Second Coming: A chance to reclaim stardom

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

Three years ago, Daniel Daga was Nigeria's next big thing. A defensive midfielder in the Sunday Oliseh mould — strong, intelligent, with delicate long-range passing and an eye for goal.

At 17, he was an Enyimba Football Club mainstay, playing for Nigeria's most successful club. He then played for the Flying Eagles at back-to-back U20 FIFA World Cups in 2023 and 2025. At 18 he made the move every Nigerian boy dreams of — Europe — signing for Norway's Molde FK. Where talent becomes stardom. Or dies trying.

Suddenly, a few months after arriving in Europe, news of a rape allegation hit the internet. "This can't be true," some of us screamed.

In December 2025, Molde removed him from training and matchday activities after he was formally charged over an alleged sexual offence involving an unnamed woman. The case reportedly dated back to April 2025. It echoed what happened to another young Nigerian, Akinkunmi Amoo, who was accused and later convicted of rape in Denmark while playing for FC Copenhagen. Everyone following Daga's career prayed for justice — we



DANIEL DAGA

did not want to see a bright future derailed.

In March 2026, a Norwegian district court convicted Daga and sentenced him to six months in prison for a sexual act without consent. Daga maintained his innocence, with his lawyer arguing the encounter was consensual, and an appeal was filed. Molde kept him out of the squad while the legal process continued.

The case took a decisive turn in July. Norway's Frostating Court of Appeal

unanimously acquitted Daga, overturning the earlier conviction. Molde subsequently confirmed that the midfielder was again available for selection. From suspension to a fresh start.

Daga's return has been emphatic. He marked his comeback against KFUM with an emotional goal, then scored again against Sarpsborg — a powerful reminder of his ability after an extremely challenging period. The focus is now back where he wants it: on the pitch.

When news first filtered out of Norway, the reaction back home was instant and brutal. Social media buried him. Pundits wrote him off. For a boy who was the face of Enyimba at 16, it felt like the dream was over before it truly began.

Daga was not just another export. He was the NPFL's proof that local football could still produce world-class midfielders. Composed, strong, and tactically smart beyond his years, he captained the Flying Eagles and bossed games for Enyimba as a teenager. Europe came calling because he looked ready.

Then came the case. The details were messy, the headlines were louder, and the process was slow. Whether guilty or not, the stain stuck. Contracts were paused. Confidence dipped. For months, the player who once played like he had nothing to lose looked like a boy who had everything to lose.

But here is the truth we rarely say in football: a man does not fall forever. Sometimes the fall is what teaches you how to stand properly. Daga is out of that process now and learning to pick his steps again. That is why people are talking about a "second coming." His return to the pitch is the best thing that happened to Nigerian football in the month of July.

To understand why this matters

and gives me so much joy you have to look back. Nigerian football has seen this movie before. Talent derailed not by injury, but by off-field trouble. The first name that comes to mind is Etim Esin.

Etim "Maradona" Esin was arguably the most gifted Nigerian midfielder of the late 80s and 90s. At 18 he was in the Flying Eagles, Olympic team and Super Eagles. He was the darling of the local league before he was scouted to Belgium, with technique that made defenders look foolish. Everyone said he would be our greatest ever.

Before we could blink, he was arrested and charged in connection with a rape case involving a minor. He spent time in detention before being released. Legally, the case ended. Professionally, it never did. While he was away trying to sort himself out, Friday Ekpo and then Jay Okocha emerged.

From national team regular to forgotten man in less than two years. By the time Okocha made his Super Eagles home debut against Algeria in 1993, the fans had forgotten about Etim Esin completely. Esin later spoke about depression, financial ruin, and how one incident cut a career that should have lasted 20 years down to less than 10. He remains a cautionary tale in every Nigerian dressing room.

SPORTS



NPFL2026/27: Bendel Insurance FC boss Tenebe Vows to reposition club to int'l standard



EMPEROR JARRETT TENEBE

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As part of preparations for the 2026/2027 Nigeria Professional Football League season, the Chairman of Bendel Insurance Football Club, Emperor Jarrett Tenebe has vowed to explore all necessary avenues and pull resources together to help reposition the Edo state owned football club to an international standard.

The Benin Arsenal's chairman gave the assurance when he held a strategic meeting in London with Dr Drew Uyi, a FIFA-licensed football agent and international brand strategist.

The meeting focused on in-

novative strategies to reposition the historic Benin-based club for greater success on and off the pitch.

Tenebe who doubled as chairman of All Progressive Congress and Uyi, founder and CEO of DD Eleven Group met on how to explore possible ways of strengthening Bendel Insurance's global profile through modern player branding, international marketing, talent exposure and commercialization.

The discussions also centred on initiatives aimed at improving the international marketability of the club's players while reinforcing Bendel Insurance's reputation as one of Nigeria's premier football clubs.



HON. AMADIN DESMOND ENABULELE (LEFT)

Enabulele hails Onyema over Commonwealth Games' feat

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has congratulated Edo parapowerlifter Esther Onyema on her silver medal-winning performance at the just concluded, 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

The Edo state Sports Commission boss said he was impressed by the performance of the Edo athlete at Glasgow games, describing the medal as a significant achievement for both Edo State and Nigeria, saying that it underscores the

state's growing status as a breeding ground for world-class athletes.

Enabulele commended Onyema's determination, discipline and consistency, describing her performance as an inspiration to younger athletes across the country.

"Esther Onyema has once again demonstrated that she is a world class athlete once again on the international stage. Her outstanding performance is a source of immense pride to Edo State and Nigeria. She has shown that with hard work, discipline and motivation, our athletes can compete favourably against the very best in the world," he said.

Military Barracks Sports Championship to boost youth development, discover talents — CDS

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, says the 2026 Abuja Military Barracks Youth Sports Championship will promote youth development, discipline, unity and talent discovery among young people in military barracks.

Oluyede said this on Tuesday while declaring the five-day championship open in Abuja.

Represented by the Chief of Defence Administration, Rear Adm. Saburi Lawal, the CDS said the championship would bring together youths from military barracks across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to foster friendship, healthy competition and mutual cooperation.

He said the initiative would also encourage participants to embrace the values of teamwork, sportsmanship and excellence.

"This competition is not just about winning or losing. It is about the journey, camaraderie and the spirit of healthy competition.

"It is about pushing oneself to greater heights, overcoming challenges and striving for excellence," he said.

The five-day championship, organised by the Defence Headquarters, began on Aug. 3 at the Mogadishu Cantonment Sports Complex and Aguiyi Ironsi Sports Complex, Abuja, and will end on Aug. 7.

Oluyede commended the organisers, coaches, trainers, officials and mentors for their

commitment to the success of the championship and urged participants to compete with discipline, fairness and respect.

He expressed confidence that the event would inspire more young people to embrace sports while strengthening friendship among youths in military barracks.

Speaking with newsmen after the day's football matches, Lawal said the championship was conceived to keep children in military barracks meaningfully engaged during the long



MILITARY BARRACKS SPORTS CHAMPIONSHIP

AFN Vice President Hails Team Nigeria's impressive Commonwealth Games Performance

● **Lauds President Tinubu for his unwavering support**

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The 2nd Vice President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Akuchukwu Aghazu, has praised Team Nigeria for its impressive outing at the just concluded 23rd Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, describing

the athletes' performances as reflection of their dedication, discipline and quality preparation.

Aghazu gave the commendation in a statement signed by Maxwell Kumoye, Chairman Media Committee of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN).

He said that the commit-

ment displayed by Team Nigeria from the build-up to the Games proper through to the end of the competition, was highly commendable, noting that the athletes remained focused on achieving success for the country.

"From the preparations to the end of the Games, our athletes demonstrated total commitment and dedication. Their work ethic was exceptional, and the relationship between the athletes and officials was excellent throughout the competition. That unity contributed greatly to our success."

She reserved special praise for the Director General of the National Sports Commission, Honourable Bukola Olopade, whose leadership she described as invaluable.



TEAM NIGERIA

Kida applauds Tinubu over Commonwealth Games success

The President of the Nigeria Basketball Federation, Ahmadu Musa Kida, has commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu over the success recorded by Team Nigeria at the just concluded Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

Mr. Kida, in a statement on Wednesday said the role played by the president was instrumental in the preparation and performance of Nigerian athletes.

He noted that the NSC provided technical support and capacity building that helped

boost the morale and readiness of the contingent throughout the games.

The NBBF President further applauded President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his unwavering support for athletics and team officials during the competition.

He said the president's commitment to sports development created an enabling environment that allowed athletes to compete favorably and represent the country with pride on the global stage.

According to Kida, the Commonwealth Games in



AHMADU MUSA KIDA