

FG seeks termination of Benin-Asaba Road concession over gridlock

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, has appealed to the concessionaire handling the Benin-Asaba Expressway to formally write to the Federal Government to enable it terminate the concession agreement over the deteriorat-

ing condition of the road. Umahi also directed the concessionaire to immediately remove all blockages on the Benin-Asaba road to restore the free flow of traffic and ease the hardship being experienced by commuters. The minister gave the directive yesterday in Benin City during a stakeholders' engage-

ment meeting held at the Edo State Government House. He appealed to the concessionaire to give written approval for the Federal Government to take steps towards terminating the concession, saying the move was necessary in the public interest. "We are therefore pleading with you to give us written ap-

proval to proceed in this manner. We believe this is the way forward," Umahi said. He further directed that the concessionaire should be removed from the project site within the limits of the government's rights, accusing the company of adding no value to the project. "Therefore, our directive go-

ing forward is that you should be removed from the site of this project, within the limits of our rights. You have added no value to the project," he said. Umahi also directed the Federal Ministry of Works to write to the Independent Engineer handling the project to assess and measure all works executed so far, excluding what he de-

scribed as "negative work." He explained that the removal of asphalt contrary to the contract and specifications would not be recognised as work done, adding that the cost of repairing the damage must also be established. "When you remove asphalt

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#200

Edo at 35: From creation, promise, challenges and transformation

MATTHEW OKAGHA

BENIN CITY

Edo State marks its 35th anniversary today, August 27, 2026, providing an opportunity for the people and government of the state to reflect on its journey since its creation in 1991, celebrate its achievements and confront the challenges that have continued to shape its development.

Created on August 27, 1991, during the administration of the then military Head of State, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, Edo was carved out of the former Bendel State, with Benin City as its capital. Thirty-five years later, the state has evolved from a newly created administrative entity into one of Nigeria's important cultural, economic and political centres, with a population

spread across its 18 local government areas. The anniversary is therefore more than a celebration of the state's creation. It is also a moment to assess how far Edo has travelled, the sacrifices made by its people and the responsibilities that confront the present generation. At the heart of Edo's identity is its rich history and cultural heritage. The ancient Benin

Kingdom, with its internationally recognised artistic traditions, monarchy and historical institutions, has continued to give the state a distinctive place in Nigeria and the global cultural community. The state is also endowed with considerable agricultural, mineral and human resources. From the oil-producing

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Edo First Lady advocates first aid awareness, commends Red Cross

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has emphasised the importance of first aid awareness, saying it transcends ethnicity, religion, social status and geographical location. Anani stated this yesterday at the opening ceremony of the Nigeria Red Cross Society's Annual First Aid, Disaster Management and Leadership Training and Investiture ceremony held at the Edo Tech

Park, Okhoromi Community, Benin City. Speaking on the theme, "First Aid Without Borders: Every Journey, Every Life Matters," she said every individual deserves care, compassion and the opportunity to survive an emergency. According to her, the initiative aligns with the vision of the Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, whose administration is committed to ensuring that the life of every

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FG introduces ₦365m annual laureate prize for tertiary institutions —Pg 2

Edo First Lady Commends UNIBEN Debate Champions, Backs Student —Pg 6

NEWS

Edo at 35: From Creation...

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communities in the southern part of the state to the farming communities across Edo North and Edo Central, agriculture remains an important component of the state's economy and the livelihood of thousands of residents.

Over the years, successive administrations have introduced programmes and projects aimed at improving infrastructure, education, healthcare, security, agriculture, roads, employment and the overall living conditions of the people.

Benin City, the state's commercial and administrative centre, has equally expanded significantly, becoming a major urban hub in the South-South region.

However, Edo's 35-year journey has not been without challenges.

Unemployment, inadequate infrastructure in some communities, poor road networks, insecurity, pressure on urban facilities, poverty and the need to strengthen healthcare and ed-

ucation remain major concerns.

The state has also had to grapple with the challenge of transforming its abundant human and natural resources into sustainable economic opportunities for its rapidly growing population.

For many Edo residents, the anniversary is therefore an opportunity to ask difficult but necessary questions: What has the state achieved in 35 years? What opportunities have been missed? And what must be done differently to make the next 35 years better than the first?

Under the present administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the government has placed emphasis on infrastructure development, road construction and rehabilitation, agricultural production, healthcare, education, youth empowerment and institutional reforms.

The administration's activities have added a new chapter to the state's continuing development story, even as residents expect more visible improvements in their communities.

FG seeks termination of Benin-Asaba...

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contrary to the contract and contrary to the specifications, that is negative work.

"It will not be recognised as part of the value of work done. In fact, the cost of rectifying the damage must also be established," he said.

The minister said the government was not convinced that the concessionaire currently possessed the capacity to restore the affected sections of the road.

He warned that allowing the situation to continue could worsen the hardship faced by motorists and create the potential for public disorder.

"We have not stopped you from working, but if you continue doing what you are currently doing, we are not convinced that you will be able to avert the potential for public disorder in that area," he added.

As part of measures to address the situation, Umahi directed that the affected portions of the road be reconstructed under the supervision of the Independent Engineer.

He also directed the concessionaire to provide a technical design for proper stormwater canalisation, stressing the importance of preventing water from being channelled onto the carriageway.

The minister further ordered the restoration of all damaged asphalt, the redirection of water flowing onto the road and the restoration of free traffic movement along the carriageway.

Responding, the Head of Legal and Compliance of the Benin-Asaba Expressway Concession Company (BAECC), Mr Peterson Fabian, appealed to all stakeholders to allow the company more time to engage with the government and other parties involved.

Edo First Lady advocates first...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

resident matters.

She reaffirmed her commitment to supporting initiatives that promote healthcare, humanitarian services, emergency response, protection of vulnerable persons and the general well-being of Edo residents.

Anani also commended the Nigeria Red Cross Society for its selfless humanitarian services, particularly the dedication of its volunteers, trainers and first responders who continue to demonstrate courage and compassion by reaching people in times of crisis and providing hope when it is needed most.

The National President of

the Nigeria Red Cross Society, Prince Olujemisi Adetayo Adeaga, represented by the National Youth Resource Volunteers Adviser, Mr. Sydney Osawaru, stressed the need for more Nigerians to acquire basic first aid and emergency response skills.

He described first aid as a shared responsibility and urged members of the public to equip themselves with the knowledge required to respond effectively to emergencies and disasters.

Also speaking, the Edo State Branch Chairman of the Nigeria Red Cross Society, Mr. Monday Edogiawerie, reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to protecting and preserving human life,

Omo calls for establishment of tertiary institution in Uwanno Kingdom

AGENEBODE

MATTHEW OKAGHA

As the people of Uwanno Kingdom continue to savour the enthronement of a new Okumagbe, one of the kingdom's prominent sons, Senior High Chief Ogiانو Moyaki Matthew Omo, has called on the Federal and Edo State Governments to establish a tertiary institution in the area.

Chief Omo made the call in an interview with our reporter in Agenebode at the weekend, stressing that the growing population of young people in the kingdom had created an urgent need for greater access to higher education.

According to him, the establishment of a university, polytechnic, college of education or other suitable tertiary institution in Uwanno Kingdom would not only bring higher education closer to the people but also serve as a catalyst for socio-economic development across the area.

"There is no tertiary institution in Uwanno Kingdom

for now, and that is what the people urgently need. I am optimistic that the new Okumagbe will facilitate development, including the establishment of a fitting tertiary institution in Uwanno Kingdom," he said.

Chief Omo noted that many young people from the kingdom are compelled to travel outside the area in search of higher education, a situation he said placed additional financial and logistical burdens on families.

He argued that establishing a tertiary institution locally would provide young people with better opportunities to acquire relevant academic, technical and professional skills while also positioning the kingdom as an emerging centre of learning and development.

Beyond education, the Senior High Chief said such an institution would have significant economic benefits for the kingdom, including the creation of direct and indirect employment opportunities.

He explained that the presence of a tertiary institution would stimulate economic activ-

ities in the area, with increased demand for accommodation, transportation, food, retail businesses, artisans, professional services and other support services.

Chief Omo further expressed concern over the migration of young people from the kingdom to major urban centres in search of education, employment and better opportunities.

He said sustained investment in education, infrastructure and other critical sectors would help reverse the trend by creating an environment where young people could study, work and build their future within their ancestral community.

He therefore urged the new Okumagbe to make education and human capital development a major priority of his reign, while calling on political leaders, traditional institutions, indigenes and other stakeholders to work together to attract meaningful development projects to Uwanno Kingdom.

Chief Omo expressed optimism that the emergence of the new traditional leadership would



Snr. High Chief Ogiانو Moyaki Matthew Omo

usher in a new era of unity, purposeful development and greater opportunities for the people.

He stressed that the establishment of a tertiary institution should be seen not merely as an educational project but as a long-term investment in the future of Uwanno Kingdom and its younger generation.

"The development of any community depends largely on the quality of its people. If we want to build a stronger and more prosperous Uwanno Kingdom, we must invest in the education and skills of our young people," he added.



ROAD REHABILITATION:

Sen. David Umahi, Works Minister (left) and Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (2nd left) during a stakeholders engagement held in Government House Benin City on Wednesday.

FG introduces ₦365million annual laureate prize for tertiary institutions

OVIE GIFT KESSIENA

ABUJA

The Federal Government has introduced a N365 million annual National Laureate Prize aimed at recognising outstanding academic research, innovation and intellectual excellence across universities, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria.

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, announced the initiative on Wednesday in Abuja, saying it was part of efforts to transform tertiary institutions from mainly certificate-awarding centres into hubs for research, innovation, enterprise

and national development.

Speaking at a press conference on the initiative, Alausa said the Tertiary Institutions National Laureate Prize was established to provide national recognition and tangible rewards to scholars and students whose academic research could help address Nigeria's developmental challenges or be translated into commercial ventures.

He explained that the prize would recognise outstanding undergraduate dissertations with commercial potential, as well as exceptional master's theses and doctoral research with clear industrial and developmental applications.

The minister added that special awards would be presented in key areas, including Engineering and Technology, Medicine and Health Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Agriculture, Law and Teaching Innovation.

The initiative is being jointly implemented by the Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigeria Education Repository and Databank, NERD, under President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

According to Alausa, the government's aim extends beyond celebrating academic excellence, as the prize is intended to reshape the perception of scholarship and motivate Nigerian students to view research and innovation as avenues for national

recognition, entrepreneurship and economic prosperity.

"Scholarship matters; research matters; innovation matters; and intellectual excellence deserves a prominent place in our national consciousness," he said.

Alausa said the award would create a structured national platform for identifying research works that have the potential to be commercialised or used to address pressing national challenges.

He also announced the Dr Stella Adadevoh Prize for Medicine and Medical Innovation, established in honour of the late physician whose courage and professionalism were instrumental in Nigeria's successful containment of the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

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INVITATION TO PLACE GOODWILL MESSAGES

FOR HIS EXCELLENCY

SEN. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO @56

The Nigerian Observer will publish a
Special Birthday Edition on **Saturday
August 29, 2026** to celebrate the
56th Birthday of His Excellency,
Senator Monday Okpebholo,
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We invite MDAs, Corporate Organizations,
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NEWS

CAPRIGHTS-VP promotes economic empowerment to prevent child domestic work

LAGOS

The Centre for the Advancement and Protection of the Rights of Vulnerable People (CAPRIGHTS-VP) has reaffirmed its commitment to preventing child domestic work through the economic empowerment of vulnerable families and communities.

The organisation, in a state-

ment on Monday in Lagos, said economic hardship could influence decisions about children's future, including sending them away to work as domestic workers.

It said no fewer than 70 women, men and young girls participated in a free five-day skills acquisition programme held in March at Ikotun-Igando LCDA.

According to the organisation, participants were trained

in bag making, makeup artistry, gele tying, pedicure and manicure.

It said the intervention was designed not only to provide practical skills but also to help beneficiaries explore sustainable income-generating opportunities.

"Preventing child domestic work requires more than awareness. Families also need practical opportunities to

strengthen their livelihoods and provide for their children.

"Strengthening a family's ability to earn can help reduce the economic pressures that place children at risk of child domestic work," it said.

CAPRIGHTS-VP said beneficiaries received online mentoring and follow-up support after the training to guide them in applying the skills acquired.

It said the intervention continued on June 25 with a one-day Skills Fair and Mentoring Programme at Ikotun-Igando LCDA.

The programme brought together beneficiaries of the March training and 35 new young participants from the Education Department's Skills Acquisition Programme, with more than 106 participants in total.

According to the organisation, participants received practical mentoring on record keeping, bookkeeping, digital marketing, content creation, marketing and customer engagement.

"A skill creates an opportunity, but business knowledge can help turn that opportu-

nity into sustainable income," CAPRIGHTS-VP said.

Mrs Judith Samuel, shared how she had started making purses with needle and thread despite not having a sewing machine, choosing to begin with the resources available to her.

CAPRIGHTS-VP said the initiative had also been extended to other community members, with 50 members of the Catholic Women Organisation (CWO), St. Rita Catholic Church, Akesan, participating in a mentoring session on Aug. 9.

2027 Elections: Stakeholders seek health-focused manifestos, better access to care

Stakeholders in the health sector have urged political leaders to make health-care investment a political and economic priority ahead of the 2027 general elections.

They made the call at a high-level breakfast meeting convened by Nigeria Health Watch on Tuesday in Abuja to promote accountability and citizen engagement ahead of the elections.

The meeting, themed "Health as a Political Issue: Driving Accountability and Citizen Engagement Ahead of Nigeria's 2027 Elections," brought together political leaders, policymakers, civil society organisations, private sector stakeholders and the media.

The stakeholders urged political leaders to move beyond broad promises of free health-care and instead outline specific interventions to improve access to essential health services, protect Nigerians from catastrophic health expenditure and strengthen the quality of care.

Dr Gafar Alawode, Chief Executive Officer, DGI Consult, said access to basic healthcare remained a major challenge, particularly for women and children requiring antenatal care, safe delivery and immunisation services.

"We want the Nigerian government to put it on the political front burner, but it is not only about getting access to care.

"We do not want people to be thrown into poverty because they are accessing healthcare.

"Financial protection is very important, having access to health insurance and improving the quality of care," he said.

Alawode said health reforms should be treated as a political process, particularly during election periods when citizens and stakeholders had an opportunity to influence the priorities political parties presented to the electorate.

He said previous efforts to engage political parties on health priorities had yielded some gains, with aspects of citizen-led health agendas reflected in some political manifestos.

According to him, however,

lessons from previous election cycles show the need for sustained engagement beyond elections to ensure that health commitments become government priorities and are translated into implementation.

Alawode also called for greater financial accountability in the health sector.

He said evidence showed that while revenues had increased in some states, health expenditure had not risen proportionately and had even declined in others.

Also speaking, Dr Murtaga Bagana, Commissioner for Health in Niger, said politicians needed to understand health as a political dividend rather than merely another sector requiring public expenditure.

Bagana said political leaders often focused on highly visible infrastructure projects without adequately considering the returns that could accrue from investments in preventive and essential health services.

"For every one dollar you invest in the healthcare workforce, you have 10 dollars in full returns.

"If you take it down to the community health workforce, you are almost getting closer to 20 dollars," he said.

He said investment decisions must be evidence-based, supported by better data on the returns from health interventions such as immunisation and maternal healthcare.

Bagana also said the focus should shift from merely constructing new health facilities to ensuring that existing facilities were adequately equipped and capable of delivering a full range of services.

"Not all primary health centres are as we know them.

"We have over 1,500 in Niger, but are they Level Two, with the full complement of services, perimeter fencing, accommodation and solar power?"

"Those are the commitments," he said.

The commissioner said the state was working with the Federal Government, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Bank to upgrade 100 existing primary healthcare centres.



COURTESY VISIT:

Rt. Hon. Yekini Idaiyi, Speaker Edo State House of Assembly (8th left) Flanked on his right and left Hon Sunday Ojieleze, Majority Leader of the House and Rt Hon Atu Egbaghehita, Deputy Speaker Flanked by HRH Oba Idogu 111, the Olokpe of Okpe Kingdom, who led the members of Akoko Edo Traditional Council on a courtesy visit to Mr. Speaker on his elevation as the Speaker of the 8th Assembly, yesterday.

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN.

2027 Elections: PFN urges christians to turn prayers into civic action

DAVID MIRACLE

ABUJA

The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) has called on Christians across the country to prepare actively for the 2027 general elections, stressing that prayers for the nation must be matched with responsible civic participation.

The fellowship made the call while urging Christians to take a greater interest in the political affairs of the country and play their part in determining the quality of leadership that emerges in 2027.

According to the PFN,

Christians should not limit their involvement in national affairs to prayers alone, but should also take practical steps to contribute to the development and progress of Nigeria.

The fellowship encouraged eligible citizens to ensure that they are properly registered to vote and obtain their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), describing voting as an important civic responsibility through which citizens can influence the direction of government.

It also urged Christians to carefully examine the records, character, competence and policies of political aspirants before deciding

who to support at the polls.

The PFN cautioned against voting solely on the basis of political parties, ethnic considerations, religious sentiments, financial inducements or personal relationships. Instead, it called on voters to make decisions based on issues that directly affect the welfare and future of Nigerians.

The fellowship further appealed to political leaders and aspiring candidates to place the interests of the country above personal and political ambitions. It stressed the need for leaders who would demonstrate integrity, accountability, justice

and genuine commitment to improving the lives of citizens.

The PFN also warned against electoral violence and other practices capable of undermining the credibility of the 2027 elections. It urged Christians and other Nigerians to reject vote buying, intimidation, manipulation and the spread of false information before and during the electoral process.

The fellowship noted that political differences should not become a reason for Nigerians to turn against one another. It therefore encouraged citizens to engage in political discussions peacefully and respect the rights and opinions of people with different political views.

COAS inaugurates critical care centre, helipad, other projects

KADUNA

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has inaugurated a remodeled critical care centre and a newly constructed helipad at the 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Kaduna.

The critical care centre was named after Shaibu in recognition of his contributions to improving healthcare delivery and the welfare of Nigerian Army personnel.

The COAS also on Tuesday inaugurated a newly constructed 30-patient transit accommodation facility at the hospital as part of efforts to enhance medical services and welfare for troops and their families.

Speaking during the commissioning, Shaibu said the helipad would significantly reduce the time required to evacuate wounded soldiers from operational areas to the 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital for critical medical care.

He said the shorter evacuation time would improve the chances of survival of soldiers wounded in action during various military operations across the country.

"Some of these operations have wounded-in-action soldiers who need critical care.

"The helipad, constructed by the Chief of Defence Staff, shortens the time it takes to bring the soldier here to this reference hospital, and once you do that, you enhance his chance of survival," he said.

Shaibu said the critical care centre was equipped with modern medical equipment capable of providing specialised treatment to critically ill

and injured personnel.

He added that the facility would enable the hospital to provide the best available care to soldiers requiring critical medical attention.

The COAS said the other projects commissioned were largely welfare-related, particularly accommodation facilities designed to improve the living conditions of personnel.

At Ribadu Cantonment, the COAS inaugurated 12 two-bedroom flats and six three-bedroom flats for married officers.

NEWS**Edo APC chairman commends Okpebholo over financial autonomy laws****BENIN CITY**

Mr. Jarrett Tenebe, Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo, has commended Gov. Monday Okpebholo for signing the Edo State House of Assembly Funds Management Bill 2023 and the State Judiciary Financial Autonomy Amendment Bill 2023 into law.

Tenebe gave the commendation while addressing newsmen in Benin, following the amend-

ment and passage of the bills by the Edo State House of Assembly and their subsequent assent by the governor.

The APC chairman described the development as a significant step towards addressing what he described as anomalies in the management of public funds in the state.

He said the lawmakers amended key aspects of the 2023 financial autonomy law, particularly provisions relating to the management of capital projects funds.

Tenebe said he supported the action of the House of Assembly and the governor, stressing that the laws required amendments rather than outright cancellation.

According to him, the amendments had been duly passed by the legislature and assented to by the governor.

He said the Constitution had already guaranteed the autonomy of the three arms of government, stressing the need for each

arm to operate strictly within its constitutional responsibilities.

"Every law draws its strength from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"Any law that conflicts with the Constitution is null and void, as the Constitution takes precedence over such laws.

"The House of Assembly can make appropriation but not execute. If you approve and execute, who then checks you? The rea-

son for independence is to have checks and balances," he said.

Tenebe said the development demonstrated the readiness of the state government and the legislature to operate in accordance with constitutional provisions.

He cautioned that any institution that assumed responsibilities outside those assigned to it by the Constitution could create conflicts with established laws

and undermine the principle of separation of powers.

According to him, the lawmakers, in their wisdom, removed clauses they considered inconsistent with the principle of financial autonomy.

Tenebe expressed optimism that the amended laws would strengthen accountability, transparency and effective checks and balances among the three arms of government in Edo State.

Electricity distributors' association decries outstanding debts by MDAs**LAGOS**

The Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors (ANED) has raised concerns over out-standing electricity debts owed by government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

Mr Sunday Oduntan, the Managing Director, Chief Executive Officer of ANED, said this in an inter-view with newsmen on Wednesday in Abuja.

Oduntan said delayed or non-payment by government institutions continued to worsen the financial strain on DisCos.

He urged the Federal Government to treat electricity obligations owed by MDAs as a direct first-line charge on approved budgets to ensure timely payment.

"DisCos need to be empowered to disconnect government agencies that fail to settle their electricity bills and pursue lawful recovery of outstanding debts.

"Access to affordable and

long-term financing is critical to the survival, expansion and modernisation of Nigeria's electricity distribution network," he said.

Oduntan also called for improved customer service and greater transparency in electricity billing, as well as the expansion of mini-grid and off-grid electricity solutions, particularly in rural and under-served communities.

He recommended stronger accountability mechanisms that would enable electricity consumers and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to hold DisCos accountable for service delivery.

He said that a combination of improved metering, stronger revenue collection, affordable financing and greater accountability would be essential to strengthening the financial sustainability of the distribution sector.

He said it would also improve electricity supply across the country.

**INAUGURATION:**

From right: Deputy Director General, APC Support Group Council (APC-SGC), SouthWest, Dr Adewale Adeogun; inaugurating South West Coordinators of APC-SGC, Ekiti State, Chief Anike Adebayo; representative of the council in Oyo State, Bello Idris; Ogun State, Olalekan Sobowale; Osun State, Wasiu Odubiyi, during the inauguration of Coordinators of APC-SGC and news conference by Deputy Director General in Ibadan on Wednesday.

Edo Govt. identifies 10 herbal home residents for reintegration**BENIN CITY**

Edo Government has identified about 10 persons with mental-health conditions un-dergoing rehabilitation in approved herbal healing homes as ready for discharge and reunification with their families following rehabilitation and assessment officials.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs Eugenia Abdallah said in Benin that the ministry's latest quarterly monitoring exercise identified residents ready for discharge and reunification.

Abdallah said, government-approved herbal healing

homes provided rehabilitation and related support to persons with mental-health conditions and other vulnerable persons while quarterly monitoring assessed operations and compliance with required standards statewide.

"The current exercise is being conducted in phases, with the first phase covering facilities in Esan South-East, Esan Central, Esan North-East and Etsako West Local Government Areas of Edo State respectively.

"The areas visited included Ewohimi, Ewu, Uromi, Afokpella, Iyamho and Imiegba, among others, during the initial inspection phase across the affected local government are-

as of the state's rehabilitation programme for residents."

According to her, 10 active homes were inspected during the first phase, with 97 persons recorded across the facilities visited by the monitoring team in the four local government areas combined.

She said the evaluation covered operational standards, cleanliness, living conditions, security, staff-ing, caregivers' capacity, treatment progress, admission records, recovery monitoring and family tracing during the inspections to determine compliance and readiness.

"We have approximately 10 of them who are perfectly well and ready for discharge," she

said, noting that family reunification efforts were already underway following assessment of the residents.

The commissioner said that monitoring officials also interacted with residents who had made significant progress, including those considered ready for discharge, to understand their circumstances and determine appropriate next steps forward.

She added that the ministry was already contacting the families of residents considered ready for discharge, with reunification plans tailored to each person's circumstances, needs and available support within their communities.

IFAD-VCDP trains Niger rice farmers on modern practices to boost yield**MINNA**

The Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP), has trained rice farmers on good agronomic practices to enhance production during the 2026 wet season in Egbanti, Katcha Local Government Area of Niger.

VCDP is an IFAD-assisted programme.

The training, organised under the VCDP 2026 wet-season rice production programme, focused on improved seedlings, nursery establishment, transplanting, mechanised farming, proper application of farm inputs, record keeping and value addition.

Speaking at the training, Hajiya Hadiza Isah, the State Programme Coordinator of VCDP, said the training was designed to improve farmers' productivity and ensure better returns on their efforts.

"The essence of this programme is to improve production. Farmers have been cultivating rice but are not getting

the expected yields at the end of the season," Isah said.

She said the programme had so far covered several local government areas, where farmers were being exposed to modern technologies and innovations aimed at improving their farming practices.

According to her, the intervention was necessary because some farmers still relied on traditional methods, adding that the adoption of improved practices would enable them to achieve better yields at the end of the planting season.

Isah said VCDP trained farmers during every planting season on improved crop production techniques, including the selection of quality seedlings, transplanting and proper crop management from planting to harvesting.

She added that the programme was also collaborating with researchers to provide farmers with practical knowledge and innovations capable of improving their farming activities.

Afreximbank records 30% rise net income for first half 2026**LAGOS**

The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) and its subsidiaries (the Group) recorded a 30 per cent increase in net income to 534.7 million dollars in the first half of 2026.

The bank disclosed this in a statement issued by Vincent Musumba, Communications and Events Manager, Afrximbank, on Wednesday, on its financial results for the six months ended June 30, 2026.

Musumba said the performance reflected the resilience of its business model and its con-

tinued support for trade and economic development across Africa and the Caribbean.

According to the statement, total assets and contingencies rose by 7.8 per cent to 52.3 billion dollars from 48.5 billion dollars as of Dec.31, 2025.

It said the growth was driven largely by increased lending, with net loans and advances rising by 5.7 per cent to 35.4 billion dollars, compared with 33.5 billion dollars at the end of 2025.

The statement said the bank's asset quality remained sound, with its non-performing loan (NPL) ratio improving to 2.20

per cent at the first half of 2026, from 2.43 per cent at year-end 2025.

It said the bank also maintained a sound liquidity position, with liquid assets accounting for 13 per cent of total assets, within its strategic target range of between 10 per cent and 15 per cent.

The statement said shareholders' funds increased to 8.5 billion dollars from 8.4 billion dollars at the end of 2025.

"The increase was supported by 534.7 million dollars in internally generated profits and 13.9 million dollars in new equity raised during the period."

It said the Net interest income increased by 22 per cent to 1.0 billion dollars, compared with the 0.84 billion dollars in the corresponding period of 2025.

The statement said fee and commission income also increased by 15 per cent to 71.1 million dollars, from 61.9 million dollars in the first half of 2025.

It said the bank attributed the increase to higher fees earned from guarantees, letters of credit and advisory services.

"As a result net income reached 534.7 million dollars, representing a 30 per cent increase from 412.7 million recorded in the first half of 2025."

Etsako East begins crackdown on illicit drug dealers

LAMAI CASSIUS

AGENEBODE

The Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Council, Hon. Sunny Ekpeta Ekpeson, has declared an uncompromising war against the sale and abuse of illicit drugs in the council area.

Ekpeson warned that no drug dealer or user would be allowed to destroy the future of young people in Etsako East.

Speaking during a stakeholders' meeting, the council chairman said the crackdown would begin in his own community. He called on Mr. Cornelius Abu Osomigbekha, popularly known as Gbogous Chief, to desist from his alleged sale of illicit substances, including hard drugs.

The chairman said his administration would not shield anyone involved in criminal activities, stressing that family ties, friendship, or political affiliation

would not shield any offenders.

"I don't care if the person is my blood brother or sister. Once you are a defaulter or you are caught, you will be dealt with according to the law," he said.

Ekpeson said the campaign was not targeted at destroying youths but at rescuing them from activities capable of ruining their lives, families, and communities.

He stressed that Etsako East youths must be productive, respon-

sible, and useful to themselves and society, rather than become victims or agents of the illicit drug trade.

The chairman expressed concern over the behavioural consequences of hard-drug abuse, noting that some young people under the influence become disrespectful and aggressive towards parents, elders, and community leaders.

He described reports of drug-induced misconducts within families as disturbing, citing

an alleged case involving a young man whose behaviour reportedly became so abnormal that he attempted to make inappropriate advances towards his own mother.

Ekpeson said such developments must not be normalized in Etsako East, and vowed that the council would confront the drug menace before it destroys an entire generation.

He disclosed that a committee to carry out constant patrols and

ensure that credible intelligence on suspected drug dealers and other criminal elements is promptly forwarded to the appropriate security agencies, has constituted

The chairman warned residents against harbouring or shielding drug dealers, saying communities must become the first line of defence in protecting their children against drug abuse.

He further called on parents, traditional rulers, youth leaders,



CHAMPIONS:

Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, the Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State (middle) flanked by the victorious UNIBEN team at the just concluded South-South UNICEF Debate Competition held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, recently.

Edo First Lady commends UNIBEN debate champions, backs student

The Coordinator Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has commended students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) for emerging winners of the just concluded South-South UNICEF Debate Competition held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Mrs. Anani gave the commendation when the victorious UNIBEN team paid her a courtesy visit at Government House, Benin City.

She assured the students of the Edo State Government's willingness to partner with youth-led initiatives aimed at improving student welfare and strengthening mental health

support across the state.

Speaking on the state government's efforts to address emerging forms of abuse, Mrs. Anani disclosed that Edo State recently launched the Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) Policy.

According to her, the policy addresses cyber-related offences such as stalking, bullying, online harassment and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. She added that advocacy and statewide sensitisation on the policy would commence soon.

On sexual harassment in tertiary institutions, the Coordinator said the Edo State Government treats such cases with

utmost seriousness and has recorded several arrests. She, however, stressed the importance of credible evidence to support allegations and ensure that justice is served.

"You cannot simply say that a lecturer harassed you without proof. The law is not biased; there must be evidence," she said.

Mrs. Anani noted that male students could also be victims of harassment by female lecturers and students and urged all students to document available evidence and report incidents rather than suffer in silence.

On academic excellence, she charged the students to remain focused and prioritise their studies.

"An idle mind is the devil's workshop. Every girl is beautiful;

however, beyond looks, you must read your books. That is your greatest protection," she said.

She, however, warned against false accusations, noting that malicious allegations could amount to slander and were also punishable under the law.

Mrs. Anani also disclosed plans to engage the management of tertiary institutions in Edo State on the establishment of Gender Desks across campuses.

She noted that a significant number of reported cases of sexual harassment and assault involve students in tertiary institutions, stressing that dedicated Gender Desks would provide safe, accessible and confidential channels for reporting and addressing such cases.

CHANGE OF NAME/CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **IYOBOSA DOUGLAS** and not **IYOBOSA DIAMOND** as was wrongly captured in my BVN. and my correct date of birth is 15th September, 1995 and not 15th September 1994. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss OLUWAFEMI OLUOTOLA DUNNI** now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs MORKA OLUOTOLA OLUWADUNNI**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note

New Okumagbe urges government to build bridge across River Niger

LAMAI CASSIUS

AGENEBODE

The newly crowned Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom Etsako East Local Government Area, HRM Francis Asekham Alimikhena, Ogie-Osa, Agiode I, has appealed to the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, to collaborate with his Kogi State counterpart and the Federal Government to construct a bridge across the River Niger.

HRM Sen. Alimikhena made the appeal during his coronation as the 6th Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom.

He said the bridge, if constructed, would not only open up the economic space for development for the people of Edo and Kogi states, but also promote the rich cultural affinity shared by both states, while creating a shorter and faster route to other Eastern states of Nigeria.

The monarch also urged the state government to fast-track the development of the Edo State College of Agriculture and Marine Sciences in Agenebode. He described the institution as a critical resource center for training in aquaculture and the blue economy.

HRM Alimikhena thanked Governor Okpebholo for appointing him as the Okumagbe on the recommendation of the Agiode Ruling House. He also expressed gratitude to Senator Adams Oshiomhole and other dignitaries who attended the ceremony for their support.

The new monarch further drew the governor's attention to the General Hospital in Agenebode and called for the construction of a befitting Judges' Quarters in the town to enable assigned judges to reside and conveniently dispense justice and meet their obligation to the state and litigants.

Eagle online publisher, Dotun Oladipo dies at 56

LAGOS

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Premium Eagle Media Limited, Dotun Oladipo, has been reported dead at the age of 56.

Premium Eagle Media Limited is the parent company of Eagle Online.

Oladipo's death was announced on the Eagle Online website early Wednesday.

The publication noted that Oladipo was in his "usual state of health earlier in the day before suddenly taking ill at his office."

It described his death as a "shock" to colleagues, friends and associates.

His death was also confirmed by the President, Guild of Corporate Online Publishers, Danlami Nmodu, who announced the veteran journalist's death on the guild's WhatsApp platform on Tuesday.

He was president of the guild at a point.

"It has just been confirmed

that Emeritus President, Mr Dotun Oladipo, died today.

"May his soul rest in peace. Amen," the message read.

Also, the General Secretary, Innovative Media Partners Cooperative Multipurpose Society, Nkanu Egbe, announced on Wednesday.

Egbe wrote, "It is with profound sorrow that I announce the sudden death of our President, Mr Dotun Oladipo, who passed away on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, in Lagos, at the age of 56.

"Mr Oladipo led our cooperative with dedication, alongside a distinguished journalism career spanning nearly three decades. His passing is a devastating loss not only to IMPCMS but to Nigerian journalism as a whole."

He said funeral arrangements and other important matters would be communicated at a later time.

"The Executive Committee will communicate further details regarding funeral arrangements, condolence visits and interim leadership matters as they become available.

Kano seeks additional diphtheria vaccines from FG

KANO

The Kano State Government has appealed to the Federal Government to supply additional diphtheria vaccines to enable the state to conduct mass vaccination against the disease across the state.

The Director-General, Kano State Centre for Disease Control, Prof. Muhammad Abbas, made the request while addressing a news conference in Kano.

The press conference followed the reported outbreak of diphtheria in Kano and some local government areas, as raised by the State House of Assembly, which reportedly led to the

deaths of more than 50 children.

"Kano State has even written to the Federal Government to get more and more vaccines so that we vaccinate our people," the KNCDC DG said.

He, however, appealed to people of the state, especially parents, to ensure early reporting of diphtheria and other cases to health facilities for prompt treatment.

"We are appealing to parents to please report early. Early presentation to healthcare facilities is what saves. And even if not medical conditions, all conditions, including social, if they are long and complicated, taking care of them is always difficult. So, Please go to the healthcare

facility near you. If the cases are epidemic-prone cases, they will alert us," he said.

Prof. Abbas, who expressed concern over the failure of people to report cases to healthcare facilities, said there were a total of 126 disease surveillance and notification officers deployed across the 44 local government areas of the state.

"So, it is really disheartening that we will have cases that are up to 50 that have not been reported to the hospital. We want to appeal to people: come to the clinics, come to the hospital. If the hospitals feel these cases are greater than what they can handle, they will refer them to us and we will do the needful," he said.

He said the centre had been on top of diphtheria since the coming of the present administration under the leadership of Governor Abba Yusuf.

"I want to tell you that we had over 38,000 cases from 2022 till date, out of which over 31,000 cases were confirmed. But the disheartening thing is that more than 55% of those are what we call zero-dose children who have not received any form of vaccination. More than 16% of the cases and another 10 to 15% of them were partially immunised. Only a few of them were fully immunised, which means we have a very big deal in our hands.

NEWS

Soludo's wife urges stronger empowerment, equality for women

AWKA

The wife of the Anambra State governor, Dr Nonye Soludo, has called for stronger empowerment and equality for women across the country, pointing out that when women are empowered, families are stronger, communities are healthier, and societies move forward.

Soludo stressed that equality

is not about giving women an advantage; it is about ensuring that every woman and girl has the opportunity to learn, lead, work, dream and thrive without limitations imposed by gender, culture, religion, or social impediment.

The Anambra first lady, who is also the founder of the Non-Governmental Organisation, 'Healthy Living with Nonye Soludo Initiative', high-

lighted the strength, brilliance, and resilience, adding that their invaluable contributions towards societal development cannot be ignored.

She stated this in a press statement she released in commemoration of the 'Women's Equality Day', celebrated globally on August 26, as part of efforts to prohibit gender barriers.

She said, "As the world marks 'Women's Equality Day' today, we celebrate the strength, brilliance, resilience and invaluable

contributions of women everywhere.

"Equality is not about giving women an advantage; it is about ensuring that every woman and girl has the opportunity to learn, lead, work, dream and thrive without limitations imposed by gender, culture, religion, or social impediment.

"When women are empowered, families are stronger, communities are healthier, and societies move forward.

"In all that we do, let's continue to build a world where every

girl can see possibility in her future, and every woman can take her rightful place at the table.

"Cheers to the women who inspire, nurture, lead and transform our world. May we keep creating spaces where their voices are heard, their contributions valued and their potential fully realised."

Women's Equality Day is celebrated globally on August 26 to commemorate the 1920 adoption of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which prohibits the states and the federal government from denying the right to vote to citizens of the United States on the basis of sex.

Police arrest man over ₦3.5m romance scam, sextortion

ABUJA

The Nigeria Police Force National Cybercrime Centre has arrested a suspected online romance scammer, Abdulwajeed Abdullahi, for allegedly defrauding victims of ₦3.5m and \$1,500 and attempting to extort a woman by threatening to release her nude photographs and videos.

The suspect, who allegedly operated online under the pseudonym "Captain Junaid," was arrested at his residence in Kano State on August 4, 2026, following an investigation into a petition by a female victim.

The Director, Nigeria Police Force National Cybercrime Center, AIG Akaninyene Ezima, disclosed this in Abuja.

Ezima said the investigation began after a petition dated July 28, 2026, from a female complainant, who alleged that the suspect had engaged her in an online romantic relationship before allegedly demanding \$3,000 and threatening to publish her intimate materials.

According to him, the suspect initially contacted the woman on TikTok on June 18 before moving the conversation to WhatsApp.

"The suspect developed a romantic relationship with the complainant and allegedly induced her to send intimate photographs and videos.

He added, "On 18th July, 2026, the suspect demanded US\$3,000.00 and threatened to release the intimate materials if payment was not made," Ezima said.

The police chief said further investigation uncovered other alleged victims linked to the same online identity.

"Further investigation identified another victim, also reported losing ₦3,500,000.00 to the same 'Captain Junaid' identity," he said.

Ezima said another female

victim from Bauchi State allegedly paid the suspect \$1,500 under a purported foreign exchange trading arrangement.

"Through Open-Source Intelligence and other investigative techniques, the person behind the 'Captain Junaid' account was identified as Abdulwajeed Abdullahi and traced to Kano State," the AIG stated.

He said operatives subsequently arrested the suspect at his residence on August 4.

According to Ezima, forensic examination of devices recovered from Abdullahi revealed intimate photographs and videos belonging to multiple women.

"Forensic examination of devices recovered from the suspect revealed intimate photographs and videos belonging to multiple females, as well as forged academic certificates and identity cards bearing the suspect's photograph but different names," he said.

The AIG said the suspect confessed during interrogation, admitting that he commenced romance scam activities in January 2026 and had been operating the "Captain Junaid" identity to obtain money under false pretences.

"He admitted receiving ₦3,500,000.00 from a victim and US\$1,500.00 from another and threatening the complainant with the release of her intimate photographs," Ezima said.

The suspect also allegedly admitted using the identity, photographs and publicly available materials of a Saudi pilot identified as "Captain Abdullahi Rajhi" to create the fake "Captain Junaid" persona.

He further disclosed that some of the photographs and videos used in his impersonation activities were obtained from Telegram groups.

In another case, the police arrested David Temitope in Lagos over an alleged sophisticated Business Email Compromise operation.



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL:

From left: Representative of the Chief of Staff to the President, Dr Yusuf Sununu; Minister of State for Health, Dr Izaq Salako and President, Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Prof. Afekhide Omoti, during the National Executive Council of NMA in Abuja on Wednesday.

Malami inaugurates ADC campaign council in Kebbi

BIRNI - KEBBI

Former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, has inaugurated a 600-member campaign council of the African Democratic Congress in Kebbi State, with a call for unity, reconciliation and issue-based politics ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Malami, who inaugurated the council in Kebbi, charged its members to work collectively to build a strong grassroots campaign structure capable of mobilising support across the state's 21 local government areas.

He said the inauguration was

not merely about appointing campaign officials but represented the beginning of a coordinated effort to take the ADC's message to communities, wards and polling units across the state.

According to him, the campaign council was deliberately constituted to reflect the diversity of Kebbi State, with members drawn from different communities, local government areas and senatorial districts.

"This Campaign Council represents our collective ADC campaign. It is not about one candidate or one elective position. From the governorship to the Senate, House of Representatives and State House of Assembly, we must work as one political family," Malami said.

He specifically acknowl-

edged the party's senatorial candidates, including Gen. Aminu Bande for Kebbi Central, Garba Maidoki for Kebbi South and Chiroman Kabi, Alhaji Mera, for Kebbi North, alongside other candidates seeking election into the National and State Assemblies.

Malami urged the council members to avoid tribalism, sectionalism and personal rivalry, warning that internal divisions could weaken the party's chances of achieving its political objectives.

He called for reconciliation among members, particularly in resolving grievances and disagreements that might arise during the course of the campaign.

"Where there are disagreements, let us reconcile. Where there are grievances, let us listen.

Where there is suspicion, let us rebuild trust. Our diversity must become our strength," he said.

The former minister also introduced the theme of "One ADC, One Campaign," urging all candidates and supporters to subordinate personal ambitions to the collective interest of the party.

"Different candidates, one ADC. Different communities, one Kebbi State. Different responsibilities, one common purpose," Malami declared.

He further cautioned members against inflammatory rhetoric, hate speech, ethnic insults and attacks on political opponents, stressing that political competition should not be allowed to destroy the existing relationships among communities.

Police arrest suspected drug dealer with bottles of Methylene Chloride in Bauchi

BAUCHI

The Bauchi State Police Command has arrested a suspected drug dealer, Aliyu Suleman, and recovered 64 bottles of Methylene Chloride and 17 pieces of rubber solution in the state.

Suleman, 23, is a resident of the Tudun Salmanu area of the state.

The command disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday by its spokesperson, Nafiu Habib.

He said the arrest was part of the command's efforts to combat drug abuse and safeguard public health.

He said operatives of the Vehicle Crime Response Unit arrested the suspect during an intelligence-led operation at

Bayan Gari in the Bauchi metropolis on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at about 5 pm.

"The suspect was intercepted during a routine intelligence-led operation. Upon search, the following exhibits were promptly recovered from the suspect: 64 bottles containing Methylene Chloride, locally referred to as 'Suck and Die', and 17 pieces of Rubber

Solutions," the statement partly read.

The command said the recovered substances had been seized and registered as exhibits, adding that the suspect was currently in custody and cooperating with investigators.

"He will be charged to court upon the conclusion of the investigation."

Reacting to the develop-

ment, the state's Commissioner of Police, Sani-Omolori Aliyu, reiterated the command's commitment to tackling the distribution and abuse of harmful substances in the state.

The CP directed all Area Commanders and Divisional Police Officers to intensify surveillance and operations aimed at dismantling networks involved in the sale and abuse of

illicit drugs and other harmful substances.

The command also called on parents, guardians and community stakeholders to remain vigilant and provide timely information to security agencies.

"The fight against drugs and substance abuse requires a collective approach," the statement noted.

NEWS

FOREIGN

Eighteen dead and hundreds unaccounted for as flash flood hits Nepal-Tibet

At least 18 people have been killed and nearly 400 others are unaccounted for after a flash flood and mudslide along the Nepal-Tibet border washed away villages and damaged roads and infrastructure.

The flood hit early on Wednesday in Rasuwa, just north of Nepal's capital Kathmandu, with preliminary information suggesting it was caused by an earthquake triggering an avalanche with melted snow pouring into the Bhote Koshi river.

Search operations are under way on both sides of the border and 88 people have been rescued so far, according to the Nepalese army.

State media in China, which controls Tibet, say there are significant casualties and Nepalese officials said they anticipate "huge scale loss".

The Nepal tourism board said work was under way to establish the whereabouts of 291 tourists and 93 Nepalese nationals, including guides, who were known to be in the area where the flood hit.

They include 12 travellers from the UK as well as Americans, Malaysians, South Africans and Indians.

Several areas downstream of the Bhote Koshi river, which flows from Tibet to Nepal, are on high alert and roads, communications and power in the region have been disrupted. The authorities say the main road to Kathmandu is closed.

Verified videos from Nepal show a bridge being swept away and multi-storey buildings collapsed by the force of floodwaters, as well as a town with many buildings destroyed.

BBC Verify has located the clips to the town of Trishuli Bazaar area of Nuwakot District in Bagmati Province, about 25km (16 miles) to the north-west of Kathmandu.

The video shows the river Trishuli suddenly becoming swollen by enormous amounts of water, which appears to have significantly increased in volume and speed and filled with sediment.

About 40 seconds into the clip, the weight of the flash flood rips the bridge off of its supports and carries it swiftly downriver. A few seconds later, several buildings also collapse.

The second verified video, filmed from the same location, shows the devastating aftermath. The river's level has risen significantly, trees and many buildings visible in the earlier video have been ripped away.

It is not clear exactly how many have been destroyed, but many buildings near the riverbank have disappeared, partially collapsed or are caked in sediment from the flood's force.

Yee Liang, a Chinese businessman based in Kathmandu, told the BBC his logistics company had seven container trucks based in the area, staffed by Nepalese employees.

"We have lost contact with all of them. There is no signal, so we cannot reach anyone," he said.

"As far as I know, there was no warning. There were occasional mudslides and landslides, especially in the rainy season, but this one seems much more serious."

Nepal Army Spokesman Rajarm Basnet told the BBC efforts were under way to rescue 115 people from the village of Mailung.

The Nepalese Ministry of Home Affairs warned there was likely to be huge loss of life in Timure, Syabrubesi and Betrawati. Flooding had also caused damage to the Trishuli hydropower project.



NEPAL-TIBET BORDER:

18 people have been killed and nearly 400 others, unaccounted for after a flash flood and mudslide along the Nepal-Tibet border washed away villages.

Ex-head of Rwanda's presidential guard dies in jail 12 years after his arrest

Former head of Rwanda's presidential guard Tom Byabagamba, 59, who once served as President Paul Kagame's personal bodyguard, has died in jail.

He was arrested in 2014 along with his brother-in-law Frank Rusagara, a retired brigadier-general, for "spreading rumours" and "tarnishing the image of the country and government".

Right groups expressed concern over their cases, framing them as a part of a pattern

of government repression. Throughout his trial, Col Byabagamba denied the allegations against him, saying they were fabricated.

Byabagamba's brother David Himbara told the BBC Great Lakes service his family did not know the cause of death as "no-one was allowed to see him in all these years".

Rights groups have repeatedly accused Kagame's government of restricting political opposition and silencing critics within Rwanda and abroad.

In 2016, a military court convicted Byagamba and imprisoned him for 21 years, although this was later reduced to 15 years on appeal. Rusagara, who had also been secretary-general of the defence ministry, was given a 20-year sentence.

Rusagara died in prison in March last year. At the time Human Rights Watch (HRW) described it as the "lonely death of a general", noting that his family had not heard his voice since 2014, days before

his arrest.

His family was informed by the authorities that Rusagara had been ill with cancer, the rights group said.

The conviction of the two men had followed a "flawed trial" marked by "serious allegations of torture and witness tampering", according to HRW.

Campaign group Freedom Now had also previously criticised their detention as "arbitrary" and as having "violated international law".

Door was locked at Pakistan hospital where fire killed 14 babies, witnesses say

It was just after dawn on Wednesday morning at a maternity ward in the Pakistani capital when a horrific blaze erupted.

It would go on to kill 14 infants as parents say they waited hours for help to arrive.

Hivsa Walid was near the room at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) hospital with her sister-in-law, who had given birth days earlier. She initially heard a shout and thought a patient had died - but then she saw smoke.

The pair fled with the baby, who is so small she does not yet have a name.

"We didn't even think about our belongings. We just grabbed the baby and rushed downstairs."

"Some patients had delivered their babies just that night. I don't even know how we managed to get down - it was all a blur."

The fire broke out in an air-conditioning unit on the third floor of the mother and

child unit at PIMS, one of the main state-run hospitals in Islamabad. Only one of the 15 babies present was saved.

Khurram Mehmood, 40, told AFP news agency there was a long wait for rescue workers. "I lost my daughter. She was only three days old," he said.

Jaweria, the mother of another victim, told AFP news agency the door to the maternity ward was locked.

"For two hours I kept crying and wailing," she said. "Police arrived after four hours and said they are here to investigate."

"Why did the doctors leave the children there?" she asks.

"To hell with you, rescue team and police. Babies burnt to death there, but nobody could save them."

Scenes outside Pakistan hospital where newborn babies were killed in fire

Walid suggested PIMS's safety protocols were inadequate, despite it being a major hospital. "There should have

been fire extinguishers and protocols, but no one was doing anything - everyone was just running."

The father of a baby who died told Reuters he had been visiting the ward for eight days and the building had "no fire security, no proper exits".

And several eyewitnesses have claimed duty staff were not around.

People had to "break the door down" and rescue teams were forced to smash the windows to control the flames, a witness who did not give her name told AFP.

Abdul Ghafoor, another witness, told AFP he tried to get into the building to rescue patients but couldn't reach the maternity ward.

"There was thick black smoke inside and patients were trapped," he said. "Rescue teams arrived after almost two hours."

And Islamabad's Chief Commissioner Sohail Ashraf has said rescue teams reached

the scene "immediately" after the emergency call was first made, according to AFP.

PIMS is one of the biggest hospitals in Pakistan's capital, with 156 beds in its maternal and child health unit.

Pakistan has dealt with a number of major fires in recent years, with poor safety laws, building codes and lax enforcement often blamed for steep death tolls.

Survivors of a fire which killed dozens at a Karachi shopping mall in January this year said locked exits likely contributed to the high number of fatalities.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed his "deep sorrow and heartfelt regret" over the latest blaze, and instructed authorities to "conduct an immediate investigation", according to a statement from his office.

He has also suspended Federal Health Secretary Aslam Ghauri, a top official in the health department.

German airport worker dies of malaria after 'mosquito arrives on plane'

A Frankfurt Airport worker has died of malaria after a rare outbreak led to six employees contracting the serious infection spread by mosquitoes.

It is believed the mosquitoes arrived at Germany's busiest airport on a plane, according to German public health officials.

The remaining five infected individuals are receiving medical treatment, a spokesperson for airport operator Fraport said. Traps have been installed at the airport and mosquitoes captured will be analysed in a laboratory to determine their species and origin.

"Sadly, we must confirm that one employee has died as a result of the infection," the Fraport spokesperson told the BBC.

"We have provided comprehensive information to all employees and encourage them to consult a doctor if they experi-

ence any symptoms."

It was reported in July that the outbreak involved four infected workers.

The Robert Koch Institute - a German federal government agency and research institute for disease control and public health - previously said the four employees fell ill between 4 and 6 July and the mosquitoes were brought in by plane.

The institute said malaria in Germany almost exclusively affects long-haul travellers who were infected in malaria-endemic areas, and that malaria transmitted within a German airport is rare.

"The lack of a travel history can lead to a delayed diagnosis. A delayed diagnosis increases the risk of a severe course of the diseases," the institute said in its epidemiological bulletin.

The last case of airport malaria was in 2023 also at Frankfurt Airport, it added.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Libyan who was cleared after Lockerbie bombing trial dies

A Libyan who was cleared after standing trial over the Lockerbie bombing has died aged 70.

Al Amin Khalifah Fhimah was accused of murdering 270 people in the attack on Pan Am Flight 103 in December 1988.

He was found not guilty but a second Libyan, Abdalbasset Al Megrahi, was convicted of playing a key role in the bombing of the American airliner.

A Facebook post by Libyan Airlines announced Fhimah's death and expressed the company's condolences to his family.

Fhimah worked for the carrier in Malta before the bombing of Pan Am 103.

His funeral is set to take place on Wednesday in Tripoli, the capital of Libya.

The charges against Fhimah and Megrahi were first announced by Scotland and the United States in 1991.

Years of sanctions imposed on Libya by the United Nations led to the two men being handed over to stand trial at a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands.

In 2001, three judges convicted Megrahi of mass murder and jailed him for life, but found Fhimah not guilty.

Megrahi died from cancer in 2012, after being freed on compassionate grounds by the Scottish government.

Fhimah always denied any involvement and was welcomed home to Libya by the country's late dictator Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

In 2022, the FBI revealed

that he had been implicated in the case again, through an alleged confession made by another Libyan who is facing trial in the United States.

Abu Agila Mohammad Masud Kheir Al-Marimi is said to have told a Libyan police officer that he took part in a plot to bomb the plane along with Fhimah and Megrahi, when all three were members of the Libyan intelligence service.

Al-Marimi has denied making the bomb that brought down the jumbo jet and claims the confession is false and was made under duress.

The contents of Al-Marimi's alleged confession and other new evidence which has emerged from Libya has led to speculation that Fhimah could have faced a second trial over the attack on the airliner.

The indictment against Fhimah announced by the US

Government in 1991 is still outstanding.

Al Amin Khalifah Fhimah (right) and Abdalbasset Al Megrahi stood trial at a Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands

Under the Double Jeopardy (Scotland) Act 2011, a suspect can be tried over the same crime a second time, if there is new evidence - which was not available during the original trial - that substantially strengthens the case against them.

The BBC understands Scottish and US prosecutors would have looked at taking fresh action against Fhimah, if Al-Marimi was convicted by the court in Washington next year.

But pursuing a prosecution in Scotland or the US would have been legally challenging and politically sensitive, given his acquittal by the Scottish court in 2001.

Germany's Merz warns attackers will 'pay price' after drone incident

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has warned that those responsible for drone attacks and other hostile acts against Germany, including a recent case at Leipzig Airport, would "pay a price".

Merz said the incident showed Germany was "facing a very real threat" and was increasingly becoming a target.

On 4 August, a drone carrying an explosive device was discovered at Leipzig/Halle Airport in eastern Germany, close to Ukrainian cargo planes. However, it failed to explode as the detonator was apparently faulty.

Police defused the explosives and believe a second drone may have collided with a cargo aircraft nearby. Security experts have speculated that Russia may have been responsible.

The German government has made no direct accusations. Moscow has denied involvement.

Leipzig/Halle Airport is used by the Germany military and Nato allies for the transport of military goods and also serves as a base for Ukraine's Antonov Airlines - which carry most of

the country's aerial cargo. It is also a major hub for logistics group DHL.

"We have problems, some of which stem from outside the country, and which we must not ignore," Merz said.

"Attackers are increasingly ruthless, accepting even severe property damage, and even injuries and fatalities."

According to German reports, investigators have since found a third drone near Leipzig airport.

Public broadcasters NDR, WDR and the Süddeutsche Zeitung newspaper also reported that traces of the military explosive hexogen were found nearby.

Speaking on the margins of a government coalition retreat at Neuhausen, Merz said the government was working closely with the security authorities on the case and would release more details soon.

Merz reaffirmed German backing for Ukraine in its conflict with Russia

Merz also vowed to "stay the course" supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion.



LOCKERBIE BOMBING TRIAL:

Al Amin Khalifah Fhimah being escorted to a court hearing in 1992

CIA chief travels to Moscow for unannounced talks, US media reports

The head of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has travelled to Moscow for unannounced talks, the BBC's US news partner CBS has reported.

John Ratcliffe reportedly arrived in the Russian capital earlier on Tuesday. Neither Washington or Moscow have confirmed the nature of the visit or who he was due to meet.

In-person talks between high-level American and Russian officials are rare.

Flight tracking data confirmed a large US military aircraft travelled to Russia from the US via Latvia on Tuesday. It departed later on Tuesday.

BBC News has contacted the CIA, the White House and Pentagon for comment.

Footage posted on social media showed the C-17 transport plane approaching Moscow's

Vnukovo international airport.

It departed Riga airport at 05:50 GMT and appeared to have landed in the Russian capital at around 07:04 GMT, according to data from FlightRadar24. It returned to Riga shortly before 17:00 GMT.

Footage on social media also purported to show a diplomatic motorcade travelling through Moscow.

Ahead of the trip, the US told Ukraine that a senior delegation would be travelling to Moscow and asked Kyiv to suspend strikes until they had left, a senior Ukrainian official told CBS.

The trip is thought to be Ratcliffe's first trip to Russia as CIA director, although he has maintained contact with his intelligence counterparts in Moscow.

John Foreman, who served

as a British military attaché to Moscow between 2019 and 2022, told Radio 4's PM programme that the visit could be focused on "escalation management" given speculation recent drone activity in Germany could be linked to Russia.

He said: "The Americans don't normally send such a high ranking official to Moscow unannounced at short notice unless something is up."

Foreman said the trip could also concern the release of US detainees currently being held in Russia.

Ratcliffe played a role in negotiations for the release of Russian-American citizen Ksenia Karelina, who was jailed in Russia for over a year after being accused of providing support to Ukraine.

The CIA was also involved in a 2024 prisoner swap deal

with Russia that saw the release of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, as well as former US marine Paul Whelan and Russian-American journalist Alsu Kurmasheva.

The US has had strained relations with Russia since it launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Since then, Russia has been isolated on the world stage and faced international economic sanctions.

Ratcliffe appears to be one of the highest-ranking US officials to visit the country during President Donald Trump's second term.

Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin at a summit in Alaska last year but the meeting did not lead to a breakthrough. Subsequent US-led peace talks between Russia and Ukraine appear to have stalled.

Bodies found on S Korean holiday island as missing persons scandal deepens

The body of Jang Mi-ran was found at a palm tree farm 500m from her home

Four missing people have been found dead on South Korean holiday island Jeju, as local police face mounting public criticism for allegedly mishandling missing persons cases.

Reports emerged last week that authorities were launching a belated search for a woman reported missing months ago. This sparked criticism of the police for failing to search for her earlier.

The scandal has since deepened with the arrest of a police sergeant, surnamed Bu, who is accused of lying to victims' families and prematurely closing missing persons cases.

Four officers in the sergeant's chain of command have been put on administrative leave and on Tuesday President Lee Jae Myung ordered a sweeping reform of the police force.

Since Saturday, police have found four bodies on the island, including that of 37-year-old Jang Mi-ran who had gone missing in May.

On Monday, her body was located at a palm tree farm about 500 metres (547 yards) from where she was staying. She was believed to have killed herself.

Bu is suspected to have closed Jang's case prematurely without confirming her whereabouts.

According to local reports, Bu had allegedly told Jang's boyfriend that he had spoken to Jang over the phone and she had told Bu she did not wish to speak to her boyfriend.

Police also found the body of a man in his 60s from Jeju City on Saturday.

The man had gone missing on 28 June. Bu had closed his case and reportedly told the family that the man was found "safe" but "does not wish to disclose his location to the family".

"We believed the police when they said my father was safe and waited, but after 51 days, what returned was his body," the man's son told reporters.

It is not yet clear whether Bu was involved in the missing persons cases for two other bodies that were found in coastal villages in recent days.

Police are now examining all the missing persons reports that Bu had handled, which number nearly 300.

Jeju is one of South Korea's most popular tourist destinations.

The island, known for its rows of palm trees and sparkling waters, received more than 13 million foreign and domestic visitors last year.

While violent crime is rare in South Korea, suicide rates are among the highest in the world.

Some experts have said the low crime rate is part of the reason why missing persons cases are not taken seriously.

FEATURES

When feeding becomes a Struggle: How rising food Prices are affecting Nigerian Students

OVIE GIFT KESSIENA

For many Nigerian students, deciding what to eat is no longer simply a matter of preference. It has become a question of affordability. As food prices continue to rise, students across tertiary institutions are increasingly being forced to adjust their eating habits, skip meals and rely on cheaper alternatives to survive on limited allowances.

On many campuses, the familiar smell of freshly prepared meals from food vendors now comes with a price that some students can hardly afford. Meals that were once considered inexpensive have become increasingly difficult to purchase regularly, forcing students to find cheaper ways to satisfy their hunger.

The Changing Meal Pattern

One of the most visible effects of rising food prices is the growing number of students skipping meals. Breakfast, in particular, is often sacrificed as students try to stretch their limited funds until the end of the day.

For others, the solution is to reduce both the quantity and quality of food they consume. Nutrient-rich meals are increasingly replaced with cheaper alternatives such as garri, noodles and bread, while some students settle for



FEEDING CHILDREN

smaller portions of rice and beans.

This change in diet can have consequences beyond hunger. Students who regularly go without adequate and nutritious food may experience fatigue and weakness, making it difficult to concentrate during lectures and participate fully in academic activities.

When Hunger Meets Academics

The effects of food insecurity do not end at the dining table. For students who attend lectures on empty stomachs, maintaining concentration for several hours can become a major challenge.

Financial pressure can also affect academic performance. Students who are constantly worried about what

they will eat next may struggle to focus on lectures, assignments and examinations.

For some, the financial burden extends beyond food. Rising transport fares, accommodation costs, school fees, textbooks and other educational expenses add to the pressure, leaving students with even less money for daily meals.

The Mental Health Burden

Behind the struggle to afford food is also an emotional burden. Students who constantly worry about money and basic needs may experience anxiety, frustration and feelings of helplessness.

For students from low-income families, the situation can be even more difficult. When available resources are insufficient to cover basic needs, sus-

taining education itself can become a challenge.

Some students may be forced to defer their studies or consider abandoning their education while they search for ways to support themselves financially.

Students Find Ways to Survive

Despite the challenges, students continue to develop different strategies to cope with the rising cost of living.

Some reduce their portions and ration their food throughout the day. Others depend on friends and family members for assistance, sharing meals or borrowing foodstuffs when their money runs out.

Side hustles have also become an important survival strategy for many students. From selling snacks, clothing and other items to taking up temporary jobs around campus, students are finding different ways to supplement their allowances.

However, these activities come with their own challenges. The more time students spend working to support themselves, the less time they may have for studying, assignments, research and other academic activities.

More Than Just a Meal

The rising cost of food is therefore more than an economic issue for Nigerian students. It affects what they eat, how they study, how they spend their time and, in some cases, whether they can continue their education.

For many students, the struggle is no longer simply about choosing between rice and noodles. It is about making limited money stretch across food, transportation, school materials, accommodation and other basic needs.

Food Inflation: How rising prices are reshaping Nigerian homes

DAVID MIRACLE

The Nigerian dining table is changing. Across cities, towns and villages, families are buying less food, skipping meals and replacing nutritious foods with cheaper alternatives. What was once considered a normal family meal has gradually become a luxury for many households. From rice and beans to tomatoes, pepper, yam and garri, the prices of basic food items continue to rise, forcing millions of Nigerians to rethink how they feed their families.

For many mothers, a visit to the market now comes with anxiety rather than excitement. The amount that could buy a week's worth of groceries a few years ago can barely last a few days today. Families that once enjoyed three balanced meals now settle for one or two. Meat, fish and eggs are becoming occasional treats rather than regular sources of protein. Children are among the hardest hit, as poor nutrition can affect their health, learning and overall development.

Food inflation refers to the sustained increase in the prices of food items over time. Although inflation affects many sectors of the economy, food inflation is particularly painful because food is a basic human necessity. Recent reports indicate that food prices in Nigeria remain under pressure even when overall inflation appears to moderate. Staple foods such as tomatoes, garri, yam, crayfish and peppers continue to become more expensive, leaving many households struggling to cope.

Several factors are responsible for the rising cost of food in Nigeria. One major factor is insecurity in farming communities. In many parts of the country, farmers are unable to access

their farmlands because of attacks, kidnapping and communal conflicts. As agricultural production declines, food becomes scarcer and prices rise.

Another significant factor is the high cost of transportation. Rising fuel prices have increased the cost of moving food from farms to markets. Transporters pass these additional expenses on to traders, who, in turn, increase prices for consumers. Poor road networks also make food distribution slower, more difficult and more expensive.

Exchange-rate fluctuations have further contributed to food inflation. Nigeria relies on imported agricultural inputs, including fertilisers, agrochemicals and machinery. When the naira loses value, these inputs become more expensive, increasing production costs. Poor storage facilities and post-harvest losses also mean that significant quantities of food spoil before reaching consumers, reducing supply and putting further pressure on prices.

The effects of food inflation extend beyond empty pockets. It is changing the lifestyle of Nigerian families. Parents now plan meals more carefully, reduce food portions and buy food in smaller quantities. Some households have replaced nutritious foods with cheaper alternatives that may not provide adequate nutrition. Businesses that depend on food, including restaurants, bakeries and catering services, are also facing rising operating costs, forcing many to increase prices or reduce the quantity they serve.

Despite these challenges, practical measures can help reduce the impact of food inflation. The government must improve security in farming communities so that farmers can return safely to their farms. Greater investment in agriculture, including

improved irrigation, access to quality seedlings and fertilisers, and affordable agricultural loans, will help increase food production.

Improving rural roads, storage facilities and transportation networks will reduce post-harvest losses and lower the cost of moving food across the country. Policies that support local food processing and encourage domestic production should also be strengthened to reduce dependence on imported agricultural inputs.

At the household level, families can embrace home gardening where possible, minimise food waste and explore affordable but nutritious local food options. Community-based initiatives can also help vulnerable households access food at more affordable prices.

Partnerships among government, private investors and agricultural organisations can further strengthen Nigeria's food system. Government efforts to invest in agriculture and improve food security could provide long-term relief if properly implemented, monitored and sustained.

Food inflation is more than an economic statistic; it is a daily reality affecting the health, finances and well-being of millions of Nigerians. Behind every increase in food prices is a family making difficult choices about what to eat and what to sacrifice.

Addressing the challenge requires sustained commitment from government, businesses, farmers and citizens. By improving agricultural productivity, strengthening food distribution, reducing post-harvest losses and supporting vulnerable households, Nigeria can begin to restore hope to families whose dining tables have become symbols of economic hardship.

Until then, the struggle to put affordable and nutritious food on the table will remain one of the greatest.

When love turns into violence: The silent wounds of domestic abuse

FUNMILAYO MUYIDEEN

A woman lies injured on a tiled floor, with visible wounds and blood on her face. Her eyes are closed, and her exhausted appearance paints a disturbing picture of the kind of violence that can occur behind closed doors.

There is, however, no way to determine from the photograph alone what happened to the woman or how she sustained her injuries. Yet the disturbing image serves as a painful reminder of the dangers of domestic violence and the importance of recognising warning signs before a relationship becomes destructive.

Domestic violence does not always begin with a physical attack. Sometimes, it starts quietly.

It may begin with a partner constantly checking a phone, controlling who the other person speaks to, deciding what they should wear, displaying excessive jealousy, insulting them during disagreements or making them feel guilty for expressing their opinions.

Over time, these behaviours can escalate. For some victims, the first slap is followed by an apology.

The apology may come with promises: "It will never happen again." The victim may choose to believe it because of the love, memories and plans shared with the partner. But when violence becomes a pattern, another apology cannot erase the physical and emotional damage already caused.

This is why the message associated with the photograph is particularly important: people should take time to understand the character of a prospective boyfriend, girlfriend or life partner before making a lifelong commitment.

Love should not require fear.

A healthy relationship should provide safety, respect and room for both people to express themselves. Disagreements are normal in any relationship, but violence, threats, intimidation and humiliation should never be accepted as ordinary expressions of love.

One of the most dangerous misconceptions about domestic violence is that it happens only in certain kinds of homes or relationships. Abuse can affect people across different backgrounds, ages and social circumstances.

Many victims suffer in silence because they fear being judged, abandoned or blamed. Others remain because they hope their partners will change.



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10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
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FEATURE

The Japa generation: why young Nigerians are leaving home in search of a better future

ODINI VIVIAN AMAKA

For some young Nigerians, the biggest dream is no longer simply to succeed in Nigeria.

It is to leave.

The suitcase may be small. The destination may be uncertain. The person leaving may have spent years saying they would never abandon home. But somewhere between graduation, unemployment, rising living costs and the search for a better future, the idea of starting life somewhere else begins to look less like an escape and more like an opportunity.

In Nigeria's increasingly popular vocabulary, there is a word for it: *japa*.

It is a word that has moved beyond slang. It has become a reflection of a generation's frustrations, ambitions and hopes. To some young Nigerians, *japa* means travelling abroad for education. To others, it means securing a foreign job, pursuing permanent residency or simply finding a place where their income can provide a better quality of life.

For some, it is a carefully planned journey.

For others, it is a desperate decision. And for many, it is both.

The growing desire among young Nigerians to seek opportunities outside the country has become one of the most important social conversations of this generation. Behind every passport application, visa interview and flight ticket is a personal story: a graduate who cannot find a job, a professional searching for better pay, a student seeking quality education, a parent trying to give a child better opportunities or a young person who simply wants to live somewhere they believe the future is more predictable.

But what happens when a country begins to lose some of its most ambitious young people because they believe their dreams have a better chance of succeeding elsewhere?

That is the question behind Nigeria's *japa* generation.

WHEN LEAVING BECOMES THE DREAM

For decades, travelling abroad was often associated with adventure, education or tourism.

Today, the conversation is different.

A young Nigerian can be sitting in a university lecture hall and already be researching master's programmes abroad. A graduate can spend the day submitting job applications locally while spending the evening searching for international opportunities. A professional who has worked for several years can suddenly begin planning a move after realising that their salary is not enough to provide the lifestyle they desire.

The destination may differ—Britain, Canada, the United States, Germany, Australia, Ireland or elsewhere—but the motivation is often remarkably similar.

People want opportunity.

They want better-paying jobs.

They want functional infrastructure.

They want reliable electricity.

They want better healthcare.

They want security.

They want educational opportunities.



Nigeria *japa* youth at the airport

They want a future they can plan.

For some, the decision is not necessarily because Nigeria has nothing to offer. It is because they believe another country offers more.

That distinction matters.

The *japa* phenomenon is not simply about young Nigerians hating their country.

Many of those leaving Nigeria love home deeply.

They miss their families.

They miss Nigerian food.

They miss friends.

They miss familiar surroundings.

They miss celebrations, weddings, parties and the sense of community that comes with being surrounded by people who understand their culture.

But love for home does not always eliminate the desire for a better life.

A GENERATION CAUGHT BETWEEN LOVE AND OPPORTUNITY

There is a complicated emotional battle behind migration.

A young Nigerian may want to stay close to their parents but also want financial independence.

They may want to build Nigeria but feel that they cannot build the life they desire within the country.

They may want to contribute to society but become frustrated when opportunities appear limited.

They may want to remain with their partner, friends and family but fear that staying could mean sacrificing their ambitions.

This creates a difficult question:

Can you love your country and still decide that your future may be better somewhere else?

For many young Nigerians, the answer is yes.

Migration does not necessarily mean rejection.

Sometimes it means searching.

Searching for work.

Searching for education.

Searching for stability.

Searching for a chance.

Searching for a version of adulthood that feels financially possible.

THE ECONOMIC PUSH

Money is one of the strongest forces behind the *japa* conversation.

The rising cost of living has made

financial independence more difficult for young Nigerians. Rent, food, transportation, healthcare, education and other necessities consume a significant portion of many people's income.

For a young graduate trying to build a career, the pressure can be overwhelming.

A job may pay a salary that looks reasonable on paper, but after transportation, rent, food, electricity, data and other expenses are deducted, very little remains.

The young worker begins to wonder whether working harder will actually lead to a better life.

For some, the answer becomes migration.

If they can earn a higher income abroad, they reason, they may be able to save, support their families and achieve goals that appear difficult at home.

This is one reason migration cannot be separated from Nigeria's broader economic story.

When young people leave because they cannot see a sustainable path towards financial independence, migration becomes an economic symptom as much as a personal choice.

THE GRADUATE WHO WANTS MORE THAN A CERTIFICATE

The *japa* generation is also closely connected to Nigeria's graduate employment problem.

Every year, Nigerian universities produce graduates with degrees in different fields.

But graduation does not automatically guarantee employment.

Some graduates spend months applying for jobs.

Others accept poorly paid positions. Some work outside their fields.

Others start small businesses while continuing to search.

For a graduate who has spent years studying and still cannot see a clear professional future, migration can begin to look attractive.

A foreign university becomes more than a place to study.

It becomes a possible pathway to employment.

A foreign job becomes more than a salary.

It becomes a possible pathway to permanent residence and a different quality of life.

The decision to leave can therefore begin long before the plane ticket is purchased.

Sometimes, *japa* begins in the mind.

EDUCATION AS A TICKET OUT
Education has become one of the major pathways through which young Nigerians migrate.

For many, studying abroad is seen as a way to gain an internationally recognised qualification while simultaneously accessing a foreign labour market.

A student may leave Nigeria for a master's degree but eventually decide to remain abroad after graduation.

Another may pursue undergraduate education overseas and build their career there.

The motivation is not always simply the quality of education.

It can also be the opportunities surrounding that education.

Students consider whether they can work while studying.

They consider whether they can remain after graduation.

They consider employment opportunities.

They consider healthcare.

They consider living conditions.

They consider whether the society provides a clearer path from education to employment.

Education therefore becomes part of a larger migration strategy.

THE IOM PERSPECTIVE

The International Organization for Migration has recognised the connection between young people's aspirations, opportunities and migration.

IOM Nigeria's Youth Strategy 2023–2027 is built around six broad areas, including education and skills development, employment and entrepreneurship, health and wellbeing, civic participation, gender equality and social inclusion, and migration and mobility. The strategy aims to empower Nigerian youth and youth migrants while creating conditions in which young people can thrive and contribute to socio-economic development. (IOM Nigeria)

That approach is significant because it places migration within a much bigger picture.

Young people do not make migration decisions in isolation.

Their choices are influenced by education.

Employment.

Income.

Security.

Healthcare.

Social inclusion.

And their perception of the future.

In an IOM discussion on expanded regular migration pathways involving Nigerians, participants were asked whether they would "*japa*." The responses showed that while some were willing to migrate, others said they would rather remain in Nigeria if the economic environment provided good jobs and opportunities. IOM noted that this reflected a wider migration dilemma: when the underlying factors driving migration are not addressed, migration pressures remain. (IOM Nigeria)

That observation captures an important truth about Nigeria's *japa* generation.

Not everyone wants to leave. Many simply want a reason to stay.

THE QUESTION OF SECURITY
Economic opportunity is not the only factor influencing migration.

Security also plays a role in how people imagine their futures.

A young person deciding where to build a career does not think only about salary.

They think about where they will live.

How safe they will be.

Whether they can travel without fear.

Whether their children will be safe. Whether their families will have access to reliable healthcare.

Nigeria's security challenges have therefore become part of the larger conversation about migration.

When people believe that another country offers greater personal security and stability, that becomes another reason to consider leaving.

This is particularly important because migration decisions are rarely caused by one factor.

Sports

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

WAFU- B: We are facing ASEC Mimosas with same winning mentality – Coach Boboye



COACH KENNEDY BOBOYE

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As ruthless Edo Queens FC of Benin City step up preparation ahead of their second fixture tie against ASEC Mimosas FC of Ivory coast in the CAF Women's Champions League Qualifying tournament in Burkina Faso, the stand-in technical manager Kennedy Boboye has expressed

confidence in the team, assuring Nigerians that the Nigerian champions will come out victorious.

Coach Kennedy Boboye stated that the Benin girls will approach the game with the kind of mentality they displayed in the first game against AS Garde Nationale of Niger Republic on Monday.

He said that he has no seri-

● Edo Queens ready for battle

ous concerns in the team going into the the encounter that promises to be explosive.

"Let me commend the girls for a job well done. I was not surprised about the goals. We did something similar during the Super 6, and in some of the friendly matches we played before coming to Burkina Faso.

I hope we will carry the same winning mentality to the remaining games. Our focus is now on tomorrow's cracker," he said.

"We are ready for the game against Code D'voire champions tomorrow. We have no injury concerns. We are mentally ready and the girls are in good shape."

"I have told them not to expect anything cheap or easy to grind. Our opponents are no pushovers. We must be con-

scious and courteous going up against Ivorians tomorrow." He said.

The game against the former champions will take place at the Stade 4 AOUT Stadium. Kickoff time is 4pm local time.

The Nigerian Champions started the CAF Women's Champions League Qualifiers with a commanding 7-0 win over AS Garde Nationale of Niger Republic on Monday evening and victory over Code D'voire champions tomorrow will guarantee their qualification for the last lap.

Chioma Moses, Atume Doosuur, Aminat Folorunsho and Oluwakemi Adebuyi were all on the score sheet in the 7-0 demolishing of AS Grade Nationale Niger and they are being banked on to replicate that feat.



SAVINHO

Tottenham complete £75m move for Savinho as Spurs strengthen attack

Tottenham Hotspur have reportedly completed a £75 million deal to sign Brazilian winger Savinho from Manchester City, in a major transfer aimed at strengthening the club's attacking options.

Savinho, regarded as one of the exciting young talents in European football, is known for his pace, dribbling ability and creativity in the final third. His versatility allows him to operate from either wing, giving Tottenham another attacking option.

The transfer represents a significant financial commitment from Tottenham as the club seeks to build a competitive squad capable of challenging for major honours. Savinho's

arrival is expected to increase competition for places in the team's forward line.

For Manchester City, the reported £75 million transfer brings an end to Savinho's spell at the club, while Tottenham will hope the Brazilian can quickly adapt to his new surroundings and make an immediate impact.

The move has generated considerable attention among football supporters, with Tottenham fans looking forward to seeing Savinho in the club's colours. His combination of speed, skill and attacking creativity could make him an important player for Spurs in the new campaign.

Database of discoveries at Youth competitions will help us tackle age falsification – Sule Oluyemi

Chairman of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) youth development commission, Sule Oluyemi has stressed the importance of a database about talents discovered during age-grade competitions as a route towards discouraging falsifications any time in the future.

Sports247 reports that Oluyemi made this assertion in the wake of this year's Dynamic Athletics Championship in Lagos, which he used as a reference point in the search for better standards to regulate talent hunt competitions in the country.

While citing the Dynamic Athletics Meet as a major platform for identifying future track and field stars, Oluyemi restated the AFN's commitment to the objective of discovering, developing and monitoring young talents across Nigeria, hence his applause to the organisers for aiding that task.

He thanked the organisers for creating an independent platform where athletes can showcase their potential at a gathering that extends beyond the series of events alone, as the age-grade focus provides an opportunity to identify promising youngsters at an early stage of their careers.

While promising that the AFN will continue to monitor talents discovered at such competitions, Oluyemi also disclosed that the federation has put in place a structured system that will begin at 13 years old

up to 20, thereby ensuring that talents are captured in a database from an early age.

He also pointed out that combining athletics with academics opens opportunities of international exposure to young Nigerians through scholarships with higher institutions abroad, then added: "This is what we've been asking for and what we've been looking for.



Poland 2026: Falconets Captain Joy Igbokwe replaced after visa setback

Nigeria's Falconets have replaced captain Joy Igbokwe and defender Faridat Abdulwahab after the duo were unable to secure visas ahead of the 2026 FIFA U20 Women's World Cup in Poland. Igbokwe and Abdulwahab were ultimately denied visas, prompting the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and the Falconets' technical crew to make changes to the squad.

Vivian Kachi and Alaba Olabiyi have been called up as replacements as Nigeria intensifies preparations for the global tournament.

The Falconets arrived in Poland on Tuesday and settled at their training base in Trzebnica. They began preparations for the tournament on Wednesday at the Stadion Miejski, Fair Play Arena.

Head Coach Moses Aduku

and his technical crew are focusing on tactical organisation, technical execution, physical conditioning and team cohesion as the team prepares for the challenges ahead.

Nigeria will also play two international friendly matches as part of its preparations, facing hosts Poland on Friday, August 28, before taking on South Korea on September 1.

The match against Poland will be played at the Municipal Stadium in Brzeg from 12 noon local time, while the encounter with South Korea is scheduled for 4 p.m. at the Remes Resort & Spa Football Stadium.

The friendly matches will provide the coaching crew with an opportunity to assess the players and make final adjustments before the World Cup.

The Falconets have been drawn in Group F alongside Spain, China PR and New Caledonia.

Nigeria will open its cam-



JOY IGBOKWE

Olympic Games Qualifier: Nigeria secure first-round bye

Nigeria have been handed a first-round bye in the upcoming Olympic Games football qualifiers after being ranked among the top 14 teams based on their points tally.

The Super Falcons will consequently begin their qualification campaign in the second round, alongside 13 other nations that have also been exempted from the opening stage.

The 14 teams granted first-round byes are: Morocco,

Mali, Ghana, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Guinea, Niger, Algeria, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Zambia and Senegal.

The exemption was determined by the teams' points ranking ahead of the Olympic Games qualifying competition.

Nigeria will now wait for the conclusion of the first-round fixtures before discovering their opponents in the second round of the qualification process.



NIGERIA OLYMPIC TEAM IN TRAINING

SPORTS



FIFA U20 Women's World Cup: Falconets settle down, step up preparations in Trzebnica



FALCONETS FIFA U20 WOMEN

Nigeria's U20 Women's National Team, the Falconets, have settled into their training camp in Trzebnica, Poland and wasted no time in stepping up preparations for the 2026 FIFA U20 Women's World Cup. The two-time FIFA U20 Women's World Cup silver-medallists commenced

training on Wednesday at the Stadion Miejski, Fair Play Arena, with the technical crew and players displaying zeal, intensity and dedication from the outset. Following their arrival in Poland on Tuesday, the Falconets immediately resumed their training programme, focusing on tactical organisation,

technical execution, physical conditioning and team cohesion as they continue to build towards the championship. As part of their final preparations, the Falconets will play two international friendly matches against Poland on 28th August and South Korea on 1st September. The matches will provide valuable oppor-

tunities for the players to acclimatise further to the conditions in Poland, test themselves against different styles of play, sharpen their tactical understanding and gain experience against quality opposition on the world stage. The friendly game against the host nation on Friday will take place at the Municipal Stadium in Brzeg, and commence at 12noon local time. The clash with the Koreans is scheduled for the Remes Resort & Spa Football Stadium, and will kick off at 4pm local time. The friendly fixtures will also enable the technical crew to assess the team's progress and make necessary adjustments ahead of the World Cup, while helping the players adapt to the pace, intensity and demands of international competition.

Commonwealth Games Gold Medalist Onome Didih reveals, my late mum introduced me to weightlifting

This year's Commonwealth Games gold medalist in the women's 53kg weightlifting class, Onome Omolola Didih, has revealed how her mother introduced her to the sport of powerful arms, which has now earned her global recognition. Didih, who broke three world records en route her historic achievement in Glasgow, Scotland, expressed sadness that her mother is now late, but took consolation in how she has been able to reward her late mum's efforts with success.

Didih disclosed this and more while speaking during the Athlete's Corner segment of Sports247's television programme, 'Inside Naija Sports,' which streams via YouTube. The 22-year-old lifter, whose first international outing for Nigeria was in 2024 and who also won gold at the African Weightlifting Championship earlier this year in Egypt, recalled that her mum encouraged her to enter the sport because she was quite energetic as a child. Didih recounted, "I started weightlifting in 2013 through the help of my mum, who is now late. At that time, I was very active in the community, and people used to tell her that she should let me go into sports. "She actually loved the idea, but she did not want me to go into combat sports or anything that would give me injuries. She just wanted something that

wasn't dangerous for me. "As God had it, there was a sister nearby who was a weightlifter, and my mum asked her how she was doing it. The lady described the location to her, and my mum took me there herself. "The first day we got there, we met Coach Ene, and he welcomed us very happily. He was excited to see a young girl like me show interest in weightlifting, and he began to put me through."



ONOME DIDIH (MIDDLE)

Nigeria survives Ghana scares, to face Cameroon in final group stage match

Nigeria beat Ghana 3-2 (25-21, 21-25, 25-11, 11-25, 18-16) in the second Group C match at the 2026 African Senior Women's Nations Volleyball Championship in Kenya. Nigeria started strongly,

taking the opening set 25-21 before Ghana responded with a 25-21 win in the second set to level the contest. The ANOCA Zone 3 champions regained control in the third set, producing a dominant display to win 25-11 and

move within one set of victory. However, Ghana refused to surrender and forced the match into a deciding fifth set after claiming the fourth set 25-11. With both sides battling for supremacy, the final set turned into a tense contest. Nigeria eventually held their nerve to edge Ghana 18-16 and secure the crucial 3-2 victory. Speaking after the win, head coach of Nigeria women's team, Elishama Elam praised the fighting spirit of the team. Elam explained that the Ghanaians gave a good fight but Nigeria were the better side. He said: "This win means a lot to the entire team because we need to win and stand a chance of progressing to the next stage.



NIGERIA VOLLEYBALL TEAM

NANPF flags 10 owing clubs, writes PSAC shead of 2026/27 Season

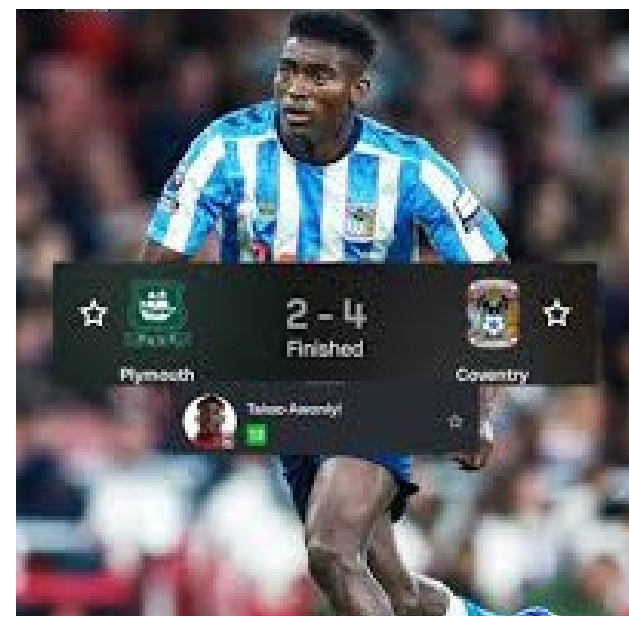
The National Association of Nigeria Professional Footballers (NANPF) has written to the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Players' Status and Arbitration Committee (PSAC), urging strict enforcement of outstanding decisions involving 10 domestic clubs ahead of the 2026/27 football season. In a letter dated August 22, 2026, and signed by NANPF General Secretary, Comrade Austin Popo, the players' union called on PSAC and the various league organisers to prevent clubs that have failed to comply with relevant directives from fielding affected newly contracted players in competitive matches.

Kano Pillars, Shooting Stars (3SC) and Niger Tornadoes are among the clubs highlighted by the union, alongside Lobi Stars, Heartland FC, Bayelsa United, Sokoto United, Gombe United and Sunshine Stars. The clubs listed by NANPF cut across the NPFL, NNL and NLO, underlining the union's call for broader enforcement of player-related decisions across Nigeria's domestic football structure. NANPF maintained that clubs yet to fulfil their obligations under applicable PSAC decisions should not be permitted to use newly registered players until they have complied with the relevant directives.

Taiwo Awoniyi scores, assists as Coventry City beat Plymouth 4-2 in Carabao Cup

Taiwo Awoniyi made an instant impact on his first start for Coventry City, scoring and providing an assist as the Sky Blues defeated Plymouth Argyle 4-2 in the second round of the Carabao Cup on Tuesday night. The Nigeria Super Eagles striker needed just three minutes to open his Coventry account before turning provider two minutes later, helping his side establish an early advantage. Awoniyi has now been directly involved in two goals in his first two appearances for Coventry City, an impressive start following his arrival at the club. The 29-year-old was introduced as a second-half sub-

stitute in Coventry's Premier League opener against Arsenal, which they lost 3-0 at the Emirates Stadium. He was handed his first start against Plymouth and responded with a goal and an assist within the opening five minutes. Coventry eventually secured a 4-2 victory to progress to the third round of the Carabao Cup, with Awoniyi's early contribution setting the tone for an impressive individual performance. The Nigerian forward will now be hoping his explosive start earns him a regular place in Frank Lampard's starting XI as Coventry continue their Premier League campaign.



TAIWO AWONIYI