

Edo Govt faults Phillips Consulting Index, says report reflects inherited challenges

BENIN CITY
IDAHOSA MUSA

The Edo State Government has faulted the interpretation of the 2026 Phillips Consulting States Performance Index (pSPI), arguing that the report largely

reflects governance and fiscal conditions inherited by the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo rather than its performance. The government, in a statement issued on Monday by the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, said it welcomed independent governance as-

sessments as instruments for promoting accountability, transparency and improved public administration. It, however, cautioned against drawing conclusions about the present administration beyond what the methodology and assessment period of the pSPI could reasonably establish.

The government said the timing of the assessment was critical to understanding Edo State's ranking, noting that Governor Okpebholo assumed office on November 12, 2024, by which time, it argued, "virtually the entire assessment period had elapsed." According to the statement, most of the fiscal, administra-

tive and governance indicators assessed by Phillips Consulting had already been shaped by policies, budgets and expenditure decisions of the previous administration. It specifically cited indicators such as citizen satisfaction, internally generated revenue, revenue self-reliance, debt sustainability, fiscal management and

audited financial information, arguing that many of them were cumulative in nature and could not be fundamentally altered within weeks of a new administration assuming office. The government said the issue was not whether governance should be measured, but

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

NigerianObserver@Nigerian_Observer@NigerianObserverwww.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968 VOL. 47, NO. 1,326 TUESDAY 11TH AUGUST, 2026. #200

Okpebholo approves appointment of 4,800 Special Assistants

RICHARD EWEKA
BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the appointment of 4,800 Special Assistants as part of his administration's efforts to strengthen grassroots governance and deepen the participation of party members in government. The governor disclosed this on Monday during a meeting with members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) from across the 18 local government

● Says governance must reach Edo grassroots

areas of the state at the Government House, Benin City. Addressing the party members, Okpebholo reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the APC and ensuring that the benefits of government reach communities across the state. "I want to say good morning to everybody and tell you that I love you all. I want to let you know that the party is our party. We don't have any other

party than APC," the governor said. He stressed that his administration was committed to taking governance to the grassroots, saying development, opportunities and government programmes must extend from the state level to the wards. "So we are taking the governance to the grassroots, so that whatever is from the top, will also go down to the bot-

tom," Okpebholo said. The governor, while speaking on the appointment of the 4,800 Special Assistants, said the initiative was a recognition of the collective efforts of party members in securing the APC's victory. "Appointing 4,800 SAs is not an issue at all because we all work for this victory. The victory does not belong to Okpebholo alone," he said, while

expressing appreciation to APC members for their support. Earlier, the APC State Chairman, Jarret Tenebe, commended the governor for his efforts to reposition and strengthen the party since assuming office. Tenebe said the APC had become more active and stable under Okpebholo's administration, noting that the governor had created opportunities for party members to participate

in governance and take the dividends of democracy to the grassroots. According to the party chairman, the governor approved the appointment of 25 Special Assistants in each of the 192 wards across the state, bringing the total number of appointments to 4,800 based on the stated ward allocation.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

2027: INEC deadline for parties to submit candidates ends today

BENIN CITY
FIDELIA FREEMAN

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has extended to today, Tuesday, August 11, 2026, the deadline for political parties to submit the names and particulars of their candidates for the 2027 Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections. The extension gives political parties that are yet to complete their nomination processes a final opportunity to submit and electronically upload the required details of their candidates through the Commission's designated platform. The Commission has continued to emphasise the impor-

tance of strict compliance with its timetable and guidelines, particularly as political parties race to conclude outstanding nomination processes ahead of the 2027 elections. Under the revised arrangement, all submissions are expected to be completed by the end of today, August 11, 2026. The development has placed renewed pressure on political parties to resolve outstanding issues, finalise their candidate lists and ensure that all required information is accurately uploaded within the period allowed by the Commission. INEC's regulations require political parties to use the prescribed Candidate Nomination Portal for the submission of the

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



PRACTICAL GOVERNANCE: Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, addressing the All Progressives Congress (APC) faithful across the state in Government House, Benin City, on Monday.

Edo Govt. House Chapel begins 7-day prayer, fasting for Okpebholo, State

—Pg 2

CP Daaor Assumes Duty In Edo, Assures Highly Mobile Policing

—Pg 21

Alleged rebel leader killed in Colombia as president targets armed groups

—Pg 14

IGP Olatunji Disu receives Commonwealth Games Champion Nathaniel

—Pg 22

NEWS

Edo Govt. House Chapel begins 7-day prayer, fasting for Okpebholo, State

BENIN CITY

MATTHEW OKAGHA

The Edo State Government House Chapel has commenced a seven-day prayer and fasting exercise for divine protection, preservation, wisdom and continued prosperity of Governor Monday Okpebholo, members of his administration and the people of Edo State.

The spiritual exercise, which began on Monday, August 10, and will run until Sunday, August 16, 2026, is being organ-

ised under the theme: "There Shall Not Be Loss," drawn from Acts 27:22, Deuteronomy 33:6 and Isaiah 28:18.

The exercise is scheduled to hold daily from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

In a statement signed by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Religious Matters and Chaplain of the Edo State Government House Chapel, Apostle (Dr.) Sule Faraday Azekhumen, JP, religious groups, ministers, clergymen, members of the Government House Chapel, government functionaries and civil servants were invited to partici-

pate in the spiritual exercise.

According to the organisers, the prayer and fasting programme is intended to provide an avenue for the people to collectively seek the face of God for the protection of Governor Okpebholo, his working team and the entire state.

The exercise will also focus on prayers for divine preservation, wisdom, peace, victory, stability and the continued prosperity of Edo State.

The organisers urged participants to approach the exercise with fervent faith, unity and commitment, stressing the im-

portance of collective prayers at a time when the state is seeking greater peace, progress and development.

The spiritual exercise is anchored on the biblical assurance of divine protection, particularly the words of Psalm 121:8: "The Lord shall preserve his going out and his coming in."

The organisers said the prayer programme would bring together people from different religious groups and government institutions in a united spiritual effort to intercede for the leadership and people of Edo State.



TAKING-OVER CEREMONY:

AIG Zone 5, Monday Agbonika (left), and the new Commissioner of Police, Edo State Command, CP Patrick Daaor (right), shortly after the handing-over and taking-over ceremony at the Police Command Headquarters, Benin City, on Monday, August 10, 2026. PHOTO: MIKE OSAROGIAGBON.

Land developers in Edo seek intervention over illegal levies

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

Property developers operating in Benin City and its environs have raised fresh concerns over what they described as the resurgence of illegal activities by some community leaders and Community Development Associations (CDAs), alleging that developers are being subjected to multiple levies, intimidation and other demands before they can commence or

continue construction work.

According to one developer, who requested anonymity, the demands are made at different stages of a project, ranging from land acquisition and mobilisation to the commencement of construction.

"We are not against community development or legitimate government charges. What we are asking for is clarity. A developer should know exactly what he is required by law to pay, to whom, and for what purpose. When different indi-

viduals or groups impose levies at different stages of a project, it becomes difficult to plan and invest with confidence."

Another developer, who has projects on the outskirts of Benin City, said the situation could discourage investors and worsen the housing deficit if left unchecked.

"Developers invest huge amounts of money before a building is completed. If, after obtaining the necessary documents and approvals, people still come to the site demanding one levy or another, it increases the cost of housing and creates unnecessary tension between developers and host communities."

They also urged Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration to strengthen enforcement of the state's private-property protection framework to ensure that the resurgence of undue extortion of land developers in the state, particularly within the Benin Kingdom, is checked.

The developers therefore appealed to the Oba of Benin to use his traditional authority to discourage individuals and community groups from exploiting the name and institution of the Benin Kingdom to impose unauthorized charges on property developers.

Okpebholo approves appointment...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

He explained that the meeting with ward chairmen and other party members was convened to communicate the criteria and guidelines for selecting beneficiaries of the appointments.

"In his magnanimity, the governor has decided to appoint 25 SAs in each of the wards in 192 wards across the state. And that is the reason why we decided to invite ward chairmen and members to this meeting so we can tell you the criteria to select these people that will benefit from this appointment," Tenebe said.

The APC State Working Committee, he added, had constituted a committee to interface with the various wards and ensure compliance with the stipulated guidelines in the selection process.

The committee is also expected to compile the names of qualified nominees and communicate them to the party headquarters in Benin City.

Tenebe further commended the administration for providing opportunities for the party to operate more effectively, including plans for the APC to have a vehicle for its activities.

He also said the administration had supported APC candidates in the local government elections, including councillors and council chairmen, describing the development as part of the efforts to strengthen the party's grassroots structure.

The meeting was attended by members of the APC State Working Committee, Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, the Chief of Staff to the Governor, ward chairmen and other party representatives from the 18 local government areas.

The meeting is expected to further strengthen coordination between the state government and the APC structure at the ward and local government levels as the Okpebholo administration intensifies its grassroots governance and mobilisation agenda.

Edo Govt faults Phillips Consulting...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

whether historical outcomes should automatically be attributed to an administration that did not formulate or implement the policies that produced them.

It insisted that chronology remained fundamental to credible governance assessment.

The government said that since assuming office, Governor Okpebholo had embarked on reforms aimed at changing the state's developmental trajectory, citing strengthened revenue administration, road construction and rehabilitation across the three senatorial districts and measures to reduce financial leakages.

It also highlighted the regularisation of the appointments of more than 5,000 teachers, renovation of over 80 public schools, construction and rehabilitation of more than 70 primary healthcare centres, recruitment of additional health workers and the deployment of about 2,500 Security Corps

personnel and 500 Forest Guards.

According to the government, the administration had also pursued urban renewal, market reconstruction, public service reforms and expanded youth development programmes in partnership with Federal Government institutions and development partners.

It described the initiatives as evidence of what it called a deliberate effort to improve governance and service delivery across the state.

The government urged the public to await future editions of the pSPI for a more comprehensive assessment of the Okpebholo administration, arguing that subsequent reports would increasingly capture policies conceived, funded and implemented during its tenure.

It maintained that governance should ultimately be judged not only by inherited circumstances, but also by "the vision, leadership and measurable progress" achieved in transforming them.

INEC deadline for parties...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

names and particulars of their candidates.

The extension is expected to enable parties that encountered delays or had outstanding nomination issues to complete the process and meet the electoral requirements.

As the deadline expires today, attention is now shifting to the Commission's next steps in processing the submissions and ensuring compliance with the relevant electoral laws and guidelines.

The development comes as preparations for the 2027 gen-

eral elections gather momentum, with political parties intensifying their efforts to select candidates, conclude internal processes and position themselves for the electoral contest.

INEC has repeatedly urged political parties and other stakeholders to adhere to established electoral timelines, stressing that compliance remains essential to the smooth conduct of the electoral process.

With the submission window closing today, political parties are expected to complete all outstanding electronic submissions before the deadline lapses.

VGN patron fires warning at kidnappers, criminals in Ika Land

OUR REPORTER

Patron of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Across Express Unit, Chief Yomi Oduselu Hassan, has declared that he will not be intimidated by alleged threats from criminal elements, even as he vowed to continue supporting the fight against kidnapping and other forms of criminality in Ika land, Delta State.

Hassan spoke against the

backdrop of an alleged threatening message sent to him through WhatsApp by a person who identified himself as Alfred.

According to Hassan, the sender displayed knowledge of sensitive details about his personal life, including his residence and the school attended by his children.

He said the sender claimed that although they knew considerable information about him, they were not targeting him.

Reacting to the development,

Hassan said he remained undeterred and would not abandon his efforts to support security initiatives aimed at tackling kidnapping and other criminal activities in Ika land.

"I want them to know that I am a typical Ijebu-Ode man and a member of the Agbekoya, which means Yoruba warriors," he declared.

Hassan also made claims about his alleged spiritual abilities, stating that he had spent 27

years in India studying what he described as occult science.

He further claimed to possess "199 powers," but said he had chosen to deploy whatever abilities he possessed for positive purposes.

"I will never bend to destroy or take the life of anyone in Ika land, but for those heartless criminals, I will make them mad, go naked along the streets, and they will confess who are their sponsors in Ika land," Hassan said.

Security forces intensify rescue operation, deploy drones after Okene-Auchi kidnap

LOKOJA

The Police Command in Kogi has launched co-ordinated bush-combing operations and dismantled suspected criminal hideouts in forest areas along the Okene-Auchi Road, as the search for victims of a recent kidnapping intensifies.

The command's spokesperson, ASP Afusat Saliu, in a statement in Lokoja, said that joint teams of police and the army have deployed to the Ebiya Forest and adjoining cor-

ridors within the Okene-Ajaokuta axis to locate the abducted victims and apprehend the perpetrators.

She said that the operation, which was activated immediately after the incident, involved personnel from the Area Command Okene, 77 Police Mobile Force Squadron, Okene Division, Adavi Division, the Anti-Kidnapping Unit, and the Violent Crime Response Unit.

"Also involved is the detachments of the Nigerian Army from Forward Operating Bases in the area, with additional

tactical support from the Edo Police Command, including its Anti-Kidnapping Unit," Saliu said.

The security teams, the command spokesperson said, combed the forests identified and searched for suspected hideouts used by the kidnappers.

"Items recovered at the locations include foodstuffs, cooking ingredients, an army-pattern jungle hat and a National Identity Card believed to have been abandoned by the suspects.

"The identified hideouts

were subsequently destroyed and set ablaze to deny criminals further use of the locations.

"To enhance surveillance, the Nigerian Army and the Edo State Police Command have deployed drones to support intelligence gathering during the operation," Saliu said.

Although no victim was rescued during the initial phase, the command said operations continued into Saturday, with tactical teams advancing toward areas of interest along the Ajaokuta and Adoko axis.

To block possible escape routes, Saliu said, joint patrols

and clearance operations have been strengthened across the Kogi-Edo border.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police (CP) in Kogi, Naziru Kankarofi, has assured residents that the command was working closely with sister security agencies and stakeholders to ensure that the victims are safely rescued and those responsible brought to justice.

He urged residents, especially those in affected communities, to remain calm and vigilant and to provide timely and credible information to se-

curity agencies.

"The safety and recovery of the victims remain the Command's immediate priority," he said.

In a related development, the Command said normalcy has returned to Abugi and adjoining communities in Lokoja following recent reprisal killings.

The Police Area Command, Lokoja, in conjunction with traditional rulers and community leaders, held critical engagements focused on reconciliation and restoring peaceful coexistence, Saliu said.

eTranzact, SMEDAN partner to expand digital access for MSMEs

LAGOS

Tranzact International Plc says it is strengthening its digital payment solutions to help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) overcome financing, payment and financial management challenges.

The company disclosed this at the SMEDAN/eTranzact Town Hall Engagement in Lagos, organised in partnership with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN).

The engagement, with the theme, "Financial Literacy and Inclusion for MSMEs Leveraging Fintech Innovation", focused on using financial technology to improve access to financial services and support business growth.

Speaking at the event, Mrs Abimbola Reis, Divisional Head, Merchant Services, eTranzact, described MSMEs as critical drivers of Nigeria's economic growth and job creation.

Reis said Nigeria had about 40 million MSMEs but many continued to face challenges, including limited access to finance, inefficient payment systems, poor financial reporting and cash-flow constraints.

She said reliance on cash-based transactions exposed businesses to theft and made payment reconciliation more difficult,

while limited access to digital platforms and trust issues also constrained their growth.

According to her, eTranzact has developed customised digital infrastructure to address some of the challenges and enable businesses to operate more efficiently.

"At eTranzact, we build infrastructure to help businesses grow. A lot of our products are customised solutions because we look at the specific challenges businesses are facing," she said.

Reis said small businesses were important drivers of economic growth and needed appropriate digital tools to improve their operations and competitiveness.

She highlighted Credo by eTranzact, a digital payment gateway that enables merchants, MSMEs and informal-sector operators to accept and process payments.

She also showcased PocketMoni, eTranzact's mobile money platform licensed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Reis said PocketMoni enabled users to send and receive money, purchase airtime and data, and pay utility bills through their mobile devices.

The Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of SMEDAN, Mr Charles Odii, represented by Prof. Yinka Fisher, said the town hall was designed to generate practical ideas and solutions to help MSMEs thrive.

Expert urges parents to identify children's learning needs during holidays

BENIN CITY

The Principal of Chrisidia Education Centre, Benin City, Edo, Mrs Adesuwa Aghayere, has urged parents to use the school holidays to identify their children's learning needs and address challenges that could affect their academic progress.

Aghayere gave the advice in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Benin.

The education expert said that although holidays should allow children to rest and recreate, parents should also keep them engaged in simple learning activities to maintain their academic routine.

According to her, some children can begin to lose their learning routine from about the second week of the holiday, if they completely disengage from academic activities.

"From about the second week of the holiday, many children begin to lose their learning routine if parents do not deliberately keep them engaged," she said.

Aghayere said children in the same class did not necessarily learn at the same pace or retain information equally, noting that while some learned faster, others required more repetition and support.

She advised parents to study their children's academic results, identify subjects in which they performed poorly and determine why they struggled with them, rather than comparing them with other children.

The principal also urged parents to discuss the subjects their children disliked with them, and find out whether the difficulty was related to the subject, the way it was taught or their relationship with a particular teacher.



HIJIRAH 1448 LUNCHEON:

PDP leader, Sen. Munsurat Sunmonu; Gov. Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, Deputy Governor, Mr Bayo Lawal; Chairman Elders Council, Chief Saka Balogun; APM Governorship Candidate, Mr. Abimbola Adekanbi, during the Hijirah 1448 luncheon in Ibadan on Monday

NAPTIP secures 20 SGBV convictions, rescues 3,000

ABUJA

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) says it has secured more than 20 convictions for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) offences and rescued over 3,000 victims in 2026.

Mr Vincent Adekoye, Head of Press and Public Relations Unit, NAPTIP, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Abuja.

Adekoye said three of the convictions resulted in life imprisonment, adding that most of the cases involved rape.

"From January 2026 to now,

we have rescued over 3,000 people from critical situations. We have also arrested a whole lot and are prosecuting a whole lot of them," he said.

He said NAPTIP had expanded its response to SGBV by strengthening collaboration with the police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and relevant ministries, departments and agencies.

Adekoye said the agency was also engaging communities and training frontline responders to strengthen prevention, reporting and response to SGBV.

He urged perpetrators to desist from the crime, saying offenders could be prosecuted

under laws including the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Amendment Act.

He also cited the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Maputo Protocol as relevant instruments for protecting victims' rights.

Adekoye said NAPTIP's recent inauguration of an SGBV media corps was aimed at securing stronger media support in the fight against the crime.

He urged journalists to go beyond reporting individual cases and investigate the fac-

tors driving different forms of SGBV.

"We want the media to ask why cases are rising and examine the roles of critical institutions, customs, norms, behaviours and habits in addressing the problem," he said.

Adekoye also urged journalists to adopt victim-centred reporting that protects survivors' dignity, privacy and safety.

"We must protect the victims, ensure their dignity and privacy are protected, and help them regain trust in society," he said.

The Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Media Corps Workshop was organised by NAPTIP.

Police arrest 23 foreign nationals for alleged ponzi scheme, visa scam

SANGO-OTA

The Ogun Police Command have raided a residential building and arrested 23 foreign nationals in connection with an alleged ponzi scheme and visa scam in Ota area of the state.

This was contained in a statement issued by the Command's Spokesperson, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, on Monday in Abeokuta.

Babaseyi said the suspects were arrested on August 4 at about 11 a.m. by operatives attached to the Atan-Ota Division of the Command.

"The raid followed credible intelligence received by the police concerning suspected fraudulent activities at the location.

"The police personnel promptly mobilised, secured the premises and arrested the suspects for further investiga-

tion.

"23 foreign nationals were arrested in connection with alleged Ponzi scheme, visa scam and others immigration-related offences.

"After preliminary investigation, 21 of the suspects were formally handed over to the Nigeria Immigration Service on Aug.5, for further immigration-related investigation and appropriate action," he said.

The spokesperson said that

two suspects were retained by the Police for prosecution in connection with Obtaining by False Pretence (OBT) and other related offences, subject to the conclusion of investigation.

Babaseyi said investigation is ongoing to establish the full circumstances surrounding the alleged fraudulent activities and identify any other persons connected with the scheme.



HAPPY 46th BIRTHDAY

— YOUR EXCELLENCY —

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the Management and staff of the Edo State Health Insurance Commission (EDOHC), I warmly felicitate with **His Excellency, Hon. Dennis Idahosa**, Deputy Governor of Edo State, on the occasion of his 46th birthday.

We celebrate your purposeful leadership, commitment to the development of Edo State, and, particularly, your passion for improving healthcare and the wellbeing of our people. Your support for a stronger and more people-centred healthcare system reflects a leadership that places the welfare of citizens at the heart of governance.

As you mark this milestone, may God grant you greater wisdom, strength and grace to continue serving Edo State with distinction. May the years ahead bring you greater impact, accomplishments and fulfilment.

**Happy Birthday,
Your Excellency.**

HIS EXCELLENCY

HON. DENNIS IDAHOSA
DEPUTY GOVERNOR, EDO STATE

Signed by

**Dr. (Mrs.) Augusta
Ikpea-Enaholo**

Director-General
Edo State Health Insurance
Commission (EDOHC)



Permanent Secretary, Dr Obanor assures of quality service delivery at thanksgiving

BENIN CITY

The newly appointed Permanent Secretary of the Edo State Ministry of Works, Dr John Obanor, has

pledged to deploy his experience and the opportunity presented by his new position to improve quality of services in the ministry.

Speaking during a thanksgiving service attended by dignitar-

ies including civil commissioners, fellow permanent secretaries, directors, top professionals in the engineering field, Dr Obanor described his appointment as a call to greater service, responsibility

and accountability.

The thanksgiving service held at Eagles Ministry, Upper Sakponba Road, Benin City offered him a rare opportunity to renew his commitment to con-

tributing more meaningfully to the development of the state.

Speaking on the responsibility that comes with his new role, the Permanent Secretary acknowledged the demands of public service, stressing that his appointment offered him an opportunity to contribute his quota to the progress and wellbeing of Edo State.

He thanked Governor Monday Okpebholo for finding him worthy for the assignment and promised to do his

best to drive the policy objectives of his administration for the benefit of the people.

Obanor also commended the Governor, for what he described as his firmness, resilience and determination to remain focused on the objectives of his administration.

He said the governor's resolve to confront the challenges facing the state and leave a positive mark on its development, deserved commendation.

**THANKSGIVING CEREMONY:**

Dr. John Obanor and his wife, Dr. (Mrs) Esther Obanor, flanked by family, friends and associates at the thanksgiving ceremony on Sunday in Benin City.

Delta govt. IMPACT project begin assessment tour of PHCs

ASABA

The Delta government says it has begun the assessment of Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in the state to evaluate the quality-of-service delivery.

The exercise, which started on Monday is organised by the Delta State Primary Health Care Development Agency.

It is held in partnership with the Immunisation Plus and Malaria Progress by Accelerating Coverage and Transforming Services (IMPACT) Project in the 25 Local

Government Areas (LGAs) of the state.

The IMPACT Project is an initiative of the Federal Government, implemented through the National Primary Health Care Development Agency.

The project is aimed at strengthening services in PHCs, particularly maternal and child healthcare, immunisation, malaria control among others.

Speaking, Mrs Angele Ossai, the Officer-in-Charge and Director, Nursing Services at Umuagu, PHC, commended the government and IMPACT Project for their commitment to improving healthcare delivery across the state.

She lauded the improved infrastructure, modern medical equipment and increased free maternal healthcare services.

Ossai said the facility had recorded significant improvements since the commencement of project, including the construction of a new laboratory, provision of staff quarters, and renovation and repainting of the PHC.

Also speaking, the Officer-in-Charge of Okpanam PHC, Mrs Yemi Okaka, described the IMPACT Project as a major boost to the facility.

"The intervention has led to extensive renovation works, the provision of operational

funds, volunteer health workers, essential drugs and delivery kits," she said.

According to her, the project has improved the quality and efficiency of healthcare services at the facility.

Similarly, the Officer-in-Charge of the Model PHC, Asaba, Mrs Isioma Eboigbe, lauded the government and the IMPACT Project for strengthening the state's healthcare system.

She disclosed that the introduction of free maternal and delivery services had resulted in 70 per cent increase in facility-based deliveries, as more women now sought skilled care during child birth.

CSOs raise alarm over weaker regulation of emerging nicotine products

ABUJA

Some Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and public health advocates have opposed proposed tobacco-law amendments, warning that some provisions could weaken safeguards around vapes, heated tobacco products and nicotine pouches.

The groups, under the Nigeria Tobacco Control Community, expressed the concerns while briefing newsmen on Monday in Abuja on the National Tobacco Control Act (Amendment) Bill 2025.

Speaking on behalf of the group, the Executive Director, Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa (CAPPA), Mr Akinbode Oluwafemi, called for the immediate recall of the consolidated Bill.

Oluwafemi acknowledged the need to update the National Tobacco Control Act 2015 and its 2019 Regulations to address emerging tobacco and nicotine products.

He however said such reforms should strengthen public health protections rather than create weaker rules for newer products.

He faulted provisions that could facilitate the advertising and promotion of non-combustible products through adult publications, point-of-sale materials and online platforms.

He also raised concerns over provisions allowing tobacco and nicotine companies to sponsor cultural, social and recreational events targeted at adults.

According to him, defining publications or events as "adult" will not necessarily prevent young people from being exposed to tobacco and nicotine marketing, particularly through social media.

He said content from such events could be photographed, shared online and amplified across digital platforms, potentially reaching children.

Oluwafemi also expressed concern over a proposed definition of "adult publication" based on a readership comprising at least 50 per cent adults.

He argued that such a threshold could allow publications with a substantial proportion of underage readers to carry tobacco and nicotine advertising.

Another major concern, he said, was the proposed relaxation of restrictions on online sales and distribution of non-combustible products.

He noted that though the bill provided for age verification, such mechanisms could be circumvented, particularly where adults purchased products on behalf of minors.

He also questioned Nigeria's capacity to effectively monitor online vendors, websites, social media platforms, courier companies and delivery channels involved in such transactions.

He further criticised provisions that would allow indoor product sampling and point-of-sale promotional materials.

He argued that the combination could transform retail outlets into promotional spaces where consumers would be encouraged to see, sample and purchase emerging nicotine products.

On heated tobacco products, he opposed their proposed classification as non-combustible products.

Oluwafemi argued that the products contained tobacco and nicotine and should therefore remain subject to strong tobacco-control measures.

He also faulted the proposed packaging and health-warning requirements for novel nicotine products, saying they were weaker than existing requirements for conventional tobacco products.

He said the bill proposed text warnings for vape liquids covering no more than 30 per cent of the front of the package, while nicotine pouches would carry warnings covering no more than 10 per cent.

He further raised concerns over a provision that would exempt e-cigarette and heating devices from carrying health warnings.

According to him, relying on safety information generated and controlled by manufacturers can undermine independent public health oversight.

NIA unveils strategy to increase insurance penetration in Nigeria

ABUJA

The Nigerian Insurers Association (NIA) has outlined a comprehensive strategy aimed at increasing insurance penetration in Nigeria.

The Chairman of NIA, Mrs Ebelechukwu Nwachukwu, said this in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Abuja.

She said that the strategy would run in the next five years through an initiative known as the Awareness, Capacity Building and Enforcement (ACE) agenda.

Nwachukwu said the agenda was focused on moving the insurance industry from potential to performance by

prioritising ACE.

She said under the awareness pillar, NIA planned to roll out nationwide education campaigns to improve public understanding of insurance.

She explained that these initiatives would target people from different stages of life, including school children, while expanding distribution channels to Nigeria's diverse demographics.

According to her, the second pillar focuses on capacity building, with the industry seeking to strengthen leadership, underwriting expertise and institutional capabilities.

She said the capital being raised under the ongoing recapitalisation programme would be deployed to improve insurers' ability to underwrite larger risks

and deepen market penetration.

On enforcement, Nwachukwu said NIA intended to work closely with state governments to ensure compliance with compulsory insurance policies, including those covering buildings under construction and public liability.

She said stronger enforcement would provide greater financial protection for citizens while increasing participation in the insurance market.

Following Lagos state's recent enforcement initiative, she urged other states to establish similar platforms to improve compliance nationwide.

She also said that prompt claims settlement would remain a key priority.

Nwachukwu said that stronger, better-capitalised

insurance companies and efficient compensation for policyholders would help build public confidence and encourage wider adoption of insurance.

Addressing the role of technology, she highlighted ongoing digital transformation efforts across the industry.

The NIA boss said the association established an innovation hub to encourage technology-driven solutions.

According to her, NIA is developing platforms for electronic Know Your Customer (e-KYC) processes and a centralised claims repository to combat insurance fraud.

She said member companies were increasingly using AI for property surveys, inspections, claims verification

NEWS



DIALOGUE LECTURE SERIES:

From left: Representative of the Indonesian Ambassador to Nigeria, Mrs Tuty Dityawanty; representative of the Chairman of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Mr Clifford Oparaodu, during the second edition for International Diplomatic Dialogue Lecture Series organized by the Anti-corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN), in Abuja on Monday

Nigeria produces 1m tons of mangoes annually, ranks 11th globally – NAMPPMAN

ABUJA

Dr Garba Kangiwa, National President, National Association of Mango Producers, Processors and Marketers of Nigeria (NAMPPMAN), says Nigeria ranks 11th globally in mango production, yielding roughly one million metric tons annually.

Kangiwa said this during an interview with newsmen on Monday in Abuja.

He said that despite the country's high production volume, Nigeria trailed far behind global leaders such as India (26 million metric tons annually), China, Indonesia, Mexico, and Egypt.

He, however, said that with targeted reforms, government backing, and modernised farming practices, the country had the capacity to break into the top three global mango-producing nations.

To achieve this, the NAMPPMAN president called on federal and state governments

to actively support the mango subsector to unlock its full economic potential.

"The first thing we are looking for is cooperation from government at all levels.

"We need the government to understand that mango is a natural gold mine.

"Every part of the mango is useful, and boosting this sector will directly increase food security, nutrition, and employ millions of youth and women across the value chain," he said.

Kangiwa outlined specific areas where government intervention was urgently required, including land allocation, financial support, and the provision of high-yield seedlings.

He said that NAMPPMAN had set an initial target to plant at least 50 million high-quality, internationally acceptable mango trees, such as the Kent variety, across the country over the next few years.

He said the plan was to use

modern tissue culture techniques instead of the outdated traditional grafting method.

"The government should incorporate mango cultivation into its national tree-planting programmes, provide land, and coordinate with agricultural institutions to propagate fast-growing, high-yield varieties.

"These will transform the production capacity of Nigeria's mango industry within four years," he said.

Kangiwa also urged government agencies to help remove bureaucratic bottlenecks currently preventing smallholder farmers and processors from accessing critical agricultural loans and development funds.

Highlighting economic losses in the subsector, Kangiwa said that Nigerian mango farmers currently suffered 40 per cent to 50 per cent post-harvest losses due to poor storage, transport deficits, and lack of processing infrastructure.

He said that while a single exporter in Nigeria currently

generated over N10 billion annually from mango exports, the lack of a centralised exporter database and limited processing capacity restricted broader national gains.

To address domestic demand and discourage importation of foreign mango products, Kangiwa proposed the establishment of 12 to 14 processing plants across the six geopolitical zones and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

"We have the market, but our processing capacity is low.

"If we can establish at least two processing factories per geopolitical zone, we will saturate the domestic market with natural Nigerian mango products and then expand aggressively into international markets," he said.

He said that value addition in the subsector extended beyond fresh fruit and juice, pointing out that mango waste could be converted into organic fertiliser, while seeds could be processed into industrial oil and body cosmetics.

2027: Opposition must put policies ahead power struggles – Don

LAGOS

A university don, Prof Adepolu Tejumaiye, has urged opposition political parties to stop internal wrangling and focus on presenting credible alternative policies ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Tejumaiye, a lecturer at the Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Lagos, gave the advice in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Lagos.

He said opposition parties could reposition themselves by critically examining the policies and programmes of the current administration and presenting better alternatives to Nigerians.

Tejumaiye said the opposition should focus on issues affecting Nigerians, including the economy, infrastructure,

fuel subsidy removal, foreign exchange reforms and sports, rather than engaging in personal attacks and unnecessary controversies.

"They need to come up with alternative credible policies that will sell themselves to Nigerians.

"They should look at the weaknesses of the ruling party and tell the people what they can do better," he said.

According to him, the opposition parties have so far failed to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the actions of the present administration to present themselves as a credible alternative.

He said instead of constructive criticism, opposition politicians had been engaged in internal disagreements, social media attacks and arguments over personal issues.

Police arrest suspect over alleged armed robbery in Ogun

OGUN

The Police Command in Ogun has arrested a suspected armed robber, Babatunde Olanikanmi, and recovered a locally made pistol at itele axis of Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of the state.

The command's Spokesperson, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, disclosed this in a statement issued on Monday in Abeokuta.

Babaseyi said that on August 3, at about 12.48p.m., the Itele Division received a distress report from a commercial motorcyclist alleging that two passengers he picked up at Three Crown Bus

Stop, attempted to rob him at gun-point along Orji Block Area, Itele.

"The police personnel acting swiftly on the distress call immediately mobilised to the location, where the suspect, Olanikanmi, who allegedly pointed a locally fabricated cut-to-size double-barrel pistol was arrested.

"His accomplice, however made away with the victim's red Bajaj motorcycle," he said.

Babaseyi said that items recovered from the suspect included a Techno Android phone, one United Bank for Africa (UBA) ATM card, one locally fabricated cut-to-size double-barrel pistol and criminal charms.

Osun 2026: Adeleke's wife leads women's protest for peaceful August 15 poll

OSOGBO

The wife of the Osun Governor, Mrs Titi Adeleke, on Monday led women in a peaceful protest, demanding a credible and violence-free Aug. 15 governorship election in the state.

Mrs Adeleke was joined by the Commissioner for Women Affairs, Mrs Ayobola Awolowo, and the Special Adviser to the governor on Market Affairs, Mrs Eniola Omosho.

The protesters, carrying placards, marched from the Government House to the Police Headquarters.

Speaking during the protest, the governor's wife said the demonstration was to demand a peaceful election, noting that the killings and rising tension should be brought to an end.

She also called for an end to the alleged arrest of leaders of the Accord Party in the state.

Mrs Adeleke urged the police to invite those involved in the killings for questioning

and take appropriate action.

"We are demanding a free and fair election. All we want is peace and a non-violent process," she said.

Responding, the Commissioner of Police in charge of the election, Mr Samuel Etaifo, said he was deployed to the state to ensure a peaceful poll.

Etaifo said he was mandated by the Inspector-General of Police, Mr Tunji Disu, to stabilise the political environment and provide an enabling atmosphere for all political actors to exercise their franchise peacefully.

"I commend you for conducting a peaceful protest, but I urge you to disperse to avoid any breakdown of law and order.

"I have been here for the past two weeks. The IG was also here due to the heightened tension in the state.

"For the first time, the IG directed the deployment of a Commissioner of Police for election duties three weeks ahead of the poll.

Pediatrician says breast milk cannot become sour inside breast

LAGOS

Prof. Edamisan Temiye, a Consultant Paediatrician and Lecturer at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), has dismissed the belief that breast milk becomes sour when a baby stops breastfeeding for several days.

Temiye made the assertion in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Lagos, on the sideline of a lecture organised by the Paediatric Department of Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) to mark World Breastfeeding Week.

He described as false the belief that breast milk could become soured/contaminated inside the mother's breast if not consumed by the baby.

"Breast milk cannot be soured as may be the belief of

some people. How can it be soured inside the mother – a living body?

"That belief is wrong. If the breast is soured/contaminated, the mother will be sick," he said.

He explained that breast milk was produced through a natural demand-and-supply process, saying that the milk remained safe inside the mother's breast even when breastfeeding was temporarily discontinued.

He added that the more frequently a baby suckled, the more milk the mother's body produced, while a reduction in breastfeeding would gradually reduce milk production.

"Breast milk is produced on demand. It is simple physiology.

"If a woman continues producing breast milk when the breast is not being emptied via

suckling, the breast will become engorged, painful.

"Nature does not want anything like that to happen. So, the production of breast milk is dependent on the baby's demand.

"Unfortunately, some mothers claim that the breast milk is not coming out, to deprive babies of breast milk in replacement for artificial milk.

"If the baby is demanding regularly and sucking frequently, at least 30 to 40 minutes intervals, the mother will produce more free rushing milk," he said.

Temiye, however, said the quantity of breast milk produced immediately after childbirth was usually small but sufficient to meet the newborn's needs.

According to him, the first milk, known as colostrum, is

produced during the first few days after delivery and is rich in protein, water and antibodies that help protect newborns against infections.

He emphasised that failure of a baby to suckle regularly would eventually lead to a reduction in milk production.

On weaning, Temiye said mothers could experience breast fullness, engorgement, heat and pain when they abruptly stopped breastfeeding.

He explained that the discomfort occurred because the body initially continued producing milk based on the baby's previous feeding pattern.

"When the baby stops breastfeeding and the mother is still producing as if the baby is demanding it, the breast will become full and painful.

NCS uncovers 399 rifles in Tin Can port shipment

ABUJA

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) says it uncovered 399 fully assembled Jojef firearms and assorted rifle parts following the detailed examination of a seized shipment at the Tin Can Island Port Command.

The service made this known in a statement by its National Spokesperson, Abdullahi Maiwada in Abuja.

Maiwada said the seizure was confirmed on Sunday after Customs completed the coupling and examination of the arms shipment, which was initially discovered as crates of knocked-down components concealed in a container.

He said NCS's Comptroller-General(C-G), Bashir Adeniyi, had disclosed the interception of the container containing the concealed firearm components, which were

preliminarily identified as Jojef pump-action rifles.

Adeniyi said the additional rifle parts recovered include 89 frames, 16 heat shields, 10 trigger pins, three pistons, 25 locking lugs and 80 charging handles.

Others are 39 pistol-grip screws, 34 springs, 57 trigger groups, 66 foregrip latches, 45 foregrips or handguards, four pistol grips and five barrels.

The C-G said that criminal networks could exploit Nigeria's

borders, ports and airports to move prohibited items into the country ahead of the next general elections.

"We are about entering a major election cycle and we know that by this period, men of the underworld will want to use our borders, our ports, our airports to bring in items like this," he said.

He said that the service would intensify surveillance and enforcement operations to prevent the movement of illicit arms and

other prohibited items through the country's entry points.

He reaffirmed the NCS commitment to intelligence-led enforcement, stronger border surveillance and collaboration with sister security agencies to dismantle arms-trafficking networks.

Adeniyi specifically cited collaboration with the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW), under the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), in efforts to safeguard national security.

He said the seized firearms would be handed over to the NCCSALW following the completion of the inventory and assessment.

The C-G said that the development reflected the commitment of security agencies to

removing dangerous weapons from circulation and ensuring that those behind the trafficking network were identified and brought to justice. Earlier, Mr Ibrahim Ogiri, SDP Chairman, Keana LGA, assured Adamu-Omadefu of the cooperation and support of party executives in the area to ensure his success.

Ogiri said the party executives in the area would continue to work in unity for the victory of the party beyond 2027 and called on members to work tirelessly for the victory of retired IGP Abubakar-Adamu, Adamu-Omadefu, and other SDP candidates in 2027.

The visit had in attendance Mr Jerry Alex, State SDP Youth Leader, and Mr Yusuf Salihu, State SDP Welfare Officer, among others. on both sides of the border.

**SEIZED RIFLES:**

Rifles seized at Tin Can Island Port Command by Customs officials

Onion dispute: Nigerian traders halt exports to Ghana, seek ECOWAS intervention

SOKOTO

The National Onion Producers and Marketers Association has sought the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) over lingering trade disputes between Nigeria and Ghana.

The association's national president, Alhaji Aliyu Maitasamu, made the call in an interview with newsmen in Sokoto.

Maitasamu disclosed that Nigerian onion marketers had halted onion exports to

Ghana, explaining that the decision was reached after exhausting all resolution parameters.

He also stressed the need for urgent intervention by the governments of Nigeria and Ghana to resolve the disagreement.

Maitasamu said restoring the flow of onions between the two countries would strengthen confidence in cross-border agricultural commerce across West Africa.

He said the development had triggered fresh concerns among farmers, producers,

exporters, transporters and other players in the onion value chain.

According to him, stakeholders are afraid that a prolonged disruption could inflict serious economic losses on both sides of the border.

"Suspension will remain in force until an amicable and mutually acceptable agreement is reached between the two countries on the modalities governing onion trade.

"The action was not taken to undermine regional trade but aimed at drawing the attention of the relevant authorities to the difficulties faced by

Nigerian traders and securing a lasting solution to the dispute," Maitasamu said.

He urged ECOWAS to urgently mediate on the onion trade dispute before the disagreement degenerated into a wider crisis.

The official said the dispute was capable of undermining the principles of regional economic integration.

He urged ECOWAS to also facilitate a fair, transparent and enforceable framework that would protect legitimate agricultural traders and prevent unilateral actions from disrupting cross-border commerce.

Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway: Umahi commends Lagos's support, seeks more

LAGOS

The Minister of Works, Sen. Dave Umahi, on Sunday praised Lagos State Government for support for Federal Government's infrastructure development in the commercial city.

Umahi also urged the state government to provide more support as the Federal Government would begin construction of the service lane of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway.

He spoke at a stakeholder engagement on the coastal highway and some other projects in the state.

jects in the state.

The decision to construct service lanes and secondary drainage channels on Sections 1 and 2 of the highway project was prompted by recent heavy rainfalls and flooding experienced in Lagos.

Umahi said, "You have to bring money, Governor, to do the service lanes, and also to do the drainage channels. We must join hands to solve this problem for the sake of our people," he said.

He said that Lot 1 of the coastal highway had been completed and Lot 2, over 80

per cent done.

"We have done over 30 per cent of the job in Calabar and Akwa Ibom. We have started the largest section, 180km by two," he said.

He gave the assurance that the highway project would be completed in time.

"We want everybody on this corridor, the entire Nigerians that are benefitting and will benefit from this coastal highway construction to continue to pray for and support the President."

Umahi expressed dissatisfaction at the attitude of unpatriotic Nigerians vandalis-

ing national assets.

"It is very disheartening. The effort they are putting to destroy national assets, if they put it in labour in all construction sites of state governments and the Federal Government, they will make more money.

"It is devilish, wickedness and unacceptable; so, we have to come together to protect our national assets.

"When these roads are built under the President, it will last for a hundred years but when the roads are excavated and removed, we will be back to square one," he said.

Leadway targets digital growth after recapitalisation

LAGOS

Leadway Assurance Ltd. says its post-recapitalisation strategy will focus on digital growth, expanded underwriting capacity and stronger commitment to policyholders.

The company disclosed this in a statement in Lagos following the successful completion of its recapitalisation exercise under the Nigerian Insurance Industry Reform Act (NIIRA) 2025.

It said the recapitalisation had strengthened its capacity to underwrite larger and more complex risks, support financial inclusion and contribute to Nigeria's economic development.

According to the insurer, its post-recapitalisation growth strategy will focus on three key areas: high-net-worth individuals and premium customers; critical sectors and infrastructure; and digitally driven Nigerians and small business owners.

It said the stronger capital base would enable it to provide tailored insurance solutions to high-net-worth individuals, whose growing wealth and increasingly complex assets require specialised services.

Leadway said it was also positioned to support major public and private-sector projects, including investments in energy, manufacturing and other large-scale enterprises, through increased risk-underwriting capacity.

The company said it would also target young Nigerians, entrepreneurs and small business owners who increasingly expect convenient and digitally enabled financial services.

The insurer said its digital focus aligned with the National Insurance Commission's (NA-ICOM) drive to accelerate digitalisation and deepen financial inclusion in the insurance sector.

Taraba Govt dismisses ₦1.2trn debt claims

JALINGO

The Taraba Government has dismissed claims that the state borrowed ₦1.2 trillion within three years.

Addressing newsmen in Jalingo, Dr Sarah Adi, the Commissioner for Finance described the figure as inaccurate and misleading.

Adi said that the latest data from the Debt Management Office (DMO), Taraba's domestic debt stood at ₦85.51 billion as of Dec. 31, 2025.

"The figure represents a reduction of about ₦2.45 billion from the ₦87.96 billion domestic debt recorded in DMO data available before Gov. Agbu Kefas assumed office,

"The DMO publication released in March 2023 reflected Taraba's debt position as of Sept. 30, 2022, rather than its debt position at the time the report was published.

On external debt, the commissioner said the state's obligations increased from about 46.47 million dollars as of Dec. 31, 2022, to approximately 48 million dollars of Dec. 31, 2025.

Adi described the increase as relatively modest, while acknowledging the potential impact of foreign exchange fluctuations on external obligations.

The commissioner also addressed the ₦206.78 billion commercial bank financing facility approved by the Taraba State House of Assembly in 2023.

She said the facilities, involving Zenith Bank, United Bank for Africa, Fidelity Bank and Keystone Bank, were backed by designated revenue streams.

Adi stressed that the original approved value of a credit facility should not automatically be treated as the state's current outstanding debt, as repayments, restructuring and the actual amount drawn could have altered the liability.



HAPPY Birthday

TO OUR DISTINGUISHED
DEPUTY GOVERNOR,
RT. HON. DENNIS
IDAHOSA

On behalf of the Management and Staff of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), I, John Odior, FCA, ACTI Executive Chairman, EIRS extend our warmest congratulations to His Excellency, Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, on the auspicious occasion of your birthday.

Your dedication to the progress, stability, and economic revitalization of Edo State remains a shining light for public service.

As a proven leader and steadfast advocate for the people, your vibrant leadership continues to inspire productivity and synergy across all sectors of the state's administration.

We celebrate your steadfast dedication to good governance and pray that God Almighty grants you continued wisdom, robust health, and renewed vigor to support the vision for a prosperous Edo State.

**Happy Birthday,
Your Excellency!**

Signed,
John Odior FCA, ACTI
Executive Chairman,
Edo State Internal Revenue Service

VGN patron fires warning at kidnappers, criminals in Ika Land

OUR REPORTER

Patron of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), Across Express Unit, Chief Yomi Oduselu Hassan, has declared that he will not be intimidated by alleged threats from criminal elements, even as he vowed to continue supporting the fight against kidnapping and other forms of criminality in Ika land, Delta State.

Hassan spoke against the backdrop of an alleged threatening message sent to him through WhatsApp by a person who identified himself as Alfred.

According to Hassan, the sender displayed knowledge of sensitive details about his personal life, including his residence and the school attended by his children.

He said the sender claimed that although they knew consid-

erable information about him, they were not targeting him.

Reacting to the development, Hassan said he remained undeterred and would not abandon his efforts to support security initiatives aimed at tackling kidnapping and other criminal activities in Ika land.

"I want them to know that I am a typical Ijebu-Ode man and a member of the Agbekoya, which means Yoruba warriors," he declared.

Hassan also made claims about his alleged spiritual abilities, stating that he had spent 27 years in India studying what he described as occult science.

He further claimed to possess "199 powers," but said he had chosen to deploy whatever abilities he possessed for positive purposes.

"I will never bend to destroy or take the life of anyone in Ika land, but for those heart-

less criminals, I will make them mad, go naked along the streets, and they will confess who are their sponsors in Ika land," Hassan said.

The VGN patron said he had lived in Ika land for more than five decades and had contributed to the development and wellbeing of the people.

He appealed to the Delta State Governor, Elder Sheriff Oborevwo, to adopt more stringent measures against kidnapping and internet fraud in the state.

Hassan specifically advocated the demolition of buildings and hotels allegedly used as hideouts or operational bases by kidnappers and internet fraudsters, while also calling for severe punishment for persons convicted of kidnapping.

He urged security personnel to remain committed to their responsibilities and discharge their duties professionally, reminding them that positions of authority were temporary.

"Whatever position you hold today is not forever. So, do the right thing," he advised.

Explaining his involvement with the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Hassan said his major motivation was the desire to contribute to efforts to address the rising cases of kidnapping and insecurity in Ika land.

He said the VGN remained committed to protecting lives and property, promoting peace and supporting legitimate security agencies in the fight against criminality.

Hassan also urged residents to remain vigilant and cooperate with security agencies by providing useful information that could assist in preventing crime and making communities safer.

He maintained that the fight against kidnapping and other criminal activities required collective action from security agencies, vigilante groups, traditional institutions, government and residents.

Nigeria's tax revenue limbs to N27trn after 11.3% increase

ABUJA

SALIHU RUKAYYA SAIDU

Nigeria's tax revenue has climbed to about N27 trillion following an 11.3 per cent increase in collections, according to a recent report. The development reflects growing efforts by the government to strengthen revenue generation and improve the country's tax administration system.

The increase is significant as the Federal Government continues to seek ways of reducing its dependence on crude oil revenue. Taxation has become an increasingly important source of funding for government activities, particularly amid fluctuations in global oil prices and production challenges.

The rise in tax collections has been linked to ongoing reforms designed to improve tax compliance, widen the tax base and ensure that more taxable individuals and businesses meet their obligations. Authorities have also been working to strengthen the use of technology in tax administration and reduce leakages in revenue collection.

The additional revenue could provide the government with more funds to finance critical areas of the economy, including infrastructure, healthcare, education, security and social development programmes. Effective use of the increased revenue could also support efforts to improve public services and stimulate economic growth.

However, the development comes against the backdrop of economic challenges fac-

ing households and businesses across the country. Rising operating costs, inflation and other financial pressures have continued to affect businesses, making some taxpayers concerned about additional tax burdens.

Economic analysts have therefore stressed the need for a balanced tax system that encourages compliance while protecting vulnerable households and supporting businesses. They also emphasise that improved revenue collection should be accompanied by transparency and accountability in the management of public funds.

For many Nigerians, confidence in the tax system will depend not only on how much revenue the government collects but also on how effectively the money is used. Visible improvements in public infrastructure and essential services could encourage greater willingness among citizens and businesses to fulfil their tax obligations.

The latest growth in tax revenue represents a positive development for Nigeria's fiscal position. However, sustaining the increase will require consistent reforms, efficient collection mechanisms, broader taxpayer participation and responsible management of public resources.



OLAYEMI CARDOSO

Delta steps up measures to tackle Herders-Farmers conflicts

Govt backs profiling, early warning system, community-based peace initiatives

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Government has intensified efforts to address recurring herders-farmers conflicts, expressing its readiness to partner with relevant stakeholders to promote peaceful coexistence, strengthen security and enhance agricultural productivity across the state.

The commitment was dis-

closed during an advocacy visit by the Herders and Farmers Dispute Resolution Volunteers (HFDRV) and the Border Peace Compliance Taskforce (BPCT) to the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Asaba.

Receiving the delegation in his office, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Barr. Ada Val Arenyeka, reaffirmed the state government's commitment to collaborating with credible organisations whose programmes align with its agricultural and livestock development agenda.

Arenyeka stressed that sustainable peace could only be achieved through strict compliance with existing laws and

government policies.

He said herders operating in Delta State must respect farming communities, refrain from illegal grazing, submit to compulsory profiling and registration, carry valid means of identification and cooperate with lawful monitoring and enforcement measures.

The delegation was led by the National Chairman of HFDRV, Alhaji Mustapha Suleman, and the organisation's Secretary, Mr. Epe Paul.

Also present were the Delta State Director of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), representatives of the Agro Rangers Unit of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), as well as representatives of HFDRV and BPCT.

The Permanent Secretary and directors of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

also participated in the meeting.

Speaking during the engagement, Paul described HFDRV and BPCT as grassroots peacebuilding organisations committed to preventing violence through dialogue, mediation, early warning mechanisms, stakeholder engagement and collaboration with government institutions.

He said the organisations were working to promote peaceful coexistence between herders and farmers, protect livelihoods, encourage compliance with laws regulating grazing and land use, and improve food security by reducing conflict-related disruptions to agricultural activities.

In his presentation, Suleman identified several factors contributing to herders-farmers conflicts, including destruction of crops by grazing livestock, encroachment on farmlands, illegal grazing,

CHANGE OF NAME
I formerly know as **Miss OSAGIEDE ROSELINE ENOTALELWOMAN**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. IDUMWONYI ROSELINE ENOTALELWOMAN**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I formerly known and addressed as **Miss APULE FAVOUR**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. FREDERICK FAVOUR**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH
I formerly known as **SEDENU KERIMU** now wish to be known and addressed as **SEDENU ABDUKERIMU OBOFONI**. also my correct date of birth is 23rd, January 1968. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME
I formerly known as **OROBOR SUCCESS UWA**. now wish to be known and addressed as **OROBOR OSAIDE UWA**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAMES
The general public is here by notified that my correct name is **FREDERICK IRORO PRINCE KENNETH UYI** and not **KENNETH FREDERICK IRORO**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I formerly know as **Miss EKHATOR MARIS** now wish to be known and addressed and called as **Mrs. COLLINS - EKHATOR MARIS OSE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and general public should please take note.

REMOVAL OF NAME
The general public is here by notified that **OSAMWONYI KATE** and **KATE ABIEYUWA OSAMWONYI KATE** are one and the same person. Henceforth now wish to be called **OSAMWONYI KATE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, formerly know as **ADESUWA IYASERE** now wish to be known and addressed as **ADESUWA IDAHOSA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME
Change of name: I formerly know as miss **EDOBOR PEARL NNEKA**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. PEARL NNEKA EKWEMUKA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTEER EDO LANGUAGE TEACHERS (NAVLT)

REGISTERED OFFICE: 11, Uwasota Street, Ugbowo, Benin City, Edo State.

The general public is hereby notified that the above-named Association has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for registration under Part F of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020.

TRUSTEES
Asoro Kingsley — Chairman
Dr. Irredia Osemwegie-Ero — Secretary
Prof. Omeregbe Esohe Mercy
Dr. (Rev.) Goddie Orhue Isibor
Prof. Doreen Osazuwa Yusuf
Chief Osayomwanbo Osemwegie-Ero
Mrs. Edobo-Uzamerie Edamwen Veronica

Mrs. Nosakhare Joy Osasumwen
Mr. Andrew Isuekebor Odiagbe
Deacon Alex O. Guobadia
Princess Adesua Iseghohi-Okojie
Mrs. Efevbohkan Victory
Mr. Agbongiasede Iyalekhue
Engr. Barr. Fidelis Ulifu

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
To promote the teaching and learning of the Edo language and its sister Edo languages; encourage their standardisation, documentation, and development; support teacher capacity building and curriculum development; advocate for the preservation, revitalisation, and transmission of indigenous languages; promote the production and use of appropriate language-learning resources; and collaborate with government, traditional institutions, educational institutions, and other relevant stakeholders in advancing the linguistic and cultural heritage of Edo State and Nigeria.

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

Signed: **Dr. IRREDIA OSEMWEIGIE-ERO**
Secretary, Volunteer Edo Language Teachers Association of Nigeria (VELTAN)

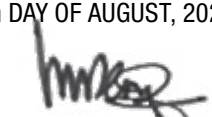
LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
EDO STATE OF NIGERIA
PROBATE REGISTRY
BENIN CITY

WHEREAS the person whose name is set out in the first column hereunder died intestate on the date and at the place stated in the column;
AND WHEREAS the persons whose names, addresses and claimed relationship to the deceased are set in the second column hereunder have applied to the Probate Registrar, High Court of Justice, Edo State of Nigeria for a grant of Letters of Administration of the real and personal property of the deceased.
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Letters of Administration will be granted to such persons unless a NOTICE to prohibit the grant is filed in this Registry within Twenty-One (21) days from the date of the publication of this notice.

1. MR. SYLVESTER AHUSIMENRE EHIDIAMEN , late of Okhe, Esan Central L.G.A., who died on the 24th day of October, 2025 in Benin City.	PED/505/2026 Precious Ehidiemen and Tracy Ejemen Ehidiemen of No 27B, Edo Street, Off Medical Store Road, Benin City, daughters of the deceased.
--	--

DATED THIS 10th DAY OF AUGUST, 2026.


B. O. OSAWARU ESQ.
Probate Registrar

FEATURE

Okpebholo's crusade against cultism — Edo finally breathes again

FESTUS ALENKHE

For years, Edo State wore the toga of shame. Our once peaceful communities became battlegrounds. Cultism, with its attendant bloodletting, extortion, and fear, became a second government. Our youths were the casualties, our mothers the mourners, and our future the ultimate victim.

Today, there is reason to hope. There is reason to clap. There is reason to say that governance has returned to the business of protecting lives.

Under Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo, the war against cultism in Edo State has moved from rhetoric to results. And the dividends are clear for all to see: peace and harmony are gradually returning to our streets.

POLITICAL WILL, DECISIVE ACTION

What changed? Political will.

This administration drew a red line and dared cultists to cross it. The Governor gave a marching order to security agencies: dismantle the networks, arrest the sponsors, and restore order. No sacred cows. No excuses.

The partnership between the Police, DSS, and local vigilante groups,



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO ADDRESSING THE PRESS

with the backing of traditional rulers, has yielded arrests, prosecutions, and the disruption of cult cells that once operated with impunity. For the first time, cult leaders are looking over their shoulders.

THE STREETS ARE SPEAKING

Go to Benin tonight. Go to Ekpo-

ma, Auchi, and Uromi. The fear that caged our people is lifting.

Students are returning to class without looking behind them. Traders are staying late in the market. Nightclubs and social events are coming back to life.

When a mother can send her child to evening lessons without prayers and panic, that is governance. When

a businessman can count his money at 9pm without fear, that is progress.

BEYOND GUNS: GIVING YOUTHS AN ALTERNATIVE

Government has also understood that you cannot fight cultism with bullets alone. The Okpebholo administration is rolling out skills acquisition,

sports, and empowerment programs to engage our youths. Idle hands, we know, are the devil's workshop. Give them work, give them hope, and you take away the cults' recruitment pool.

OUR CHARGE

We must not get carried away. The hydra-headed monster of cultism does not die easily. It thrives on silence, on politics, and on community complicity.

Therefore, our appeal to Edo people is simple: cooperate with security agencies. Name and shame cultists in your communities. Parents, monitor your children. Traditional rulers, do not shield criminals.

To the Governor: sustain the momentum. Fund the security architecture. Complete the youth programs. Let this peace be permanent, not seasonal.

CONCLUSION

Edo State is not yet Eldorado. But we are moving. Under Senator Monday Okpebholo, we have traded the culture of fear for a culture of peace.

For that, Edo people say thank you. And for the sake of our children, we say: do not relent.

Festus Alenkhe the writer of this News Editorial is based in Benin City.

2027 General Election: Nigerian Youths as Frontliners

JAMES OMONZELE

Chinedu is 22. He sells phone accessories in Benin City's Ring Road market. He did not vote in 2023. "What's the point?" he asked. "Na the same people."

Aisha is 19, a 200-level student at UNIBEN. She registered to vote last month. "2027 must be different," she says. "We cannot continue like this."

Chinedu and Aisha represent two sides of Nigeria's largest voting bloc: the youth. With INEC data showing that over 60% of registered voters are under 35, the 2027 general elections will be decided by young Nigerians.

But which way will they go? Apathy? Protest votes? Or a full-scale political takeover? The answer will shape Nigeria for the next 8 years.

THE YOUTH VOTE: NUMBERS AND POWER

Nigeria has the largest youth population in Africa. 70% of the population is under 30. In 2023, 37 million of the 93 million registered voters were aged 18-34.

Yet turnout was just 26.7% — the lowest since 1999. Social media was loud, but polling units were quiet.

Why? Three reasons keep coming up in focus groups across Lagos, Abuja, Kano, and Benin:

Distrust: "They rig anyway."
Economic pressure: "I was busy hustling."

No credible candidates: "All of them are the same."

2023 LESSONS: FROM TWITTER TO BALLOT



YOUTH PROTESTS

The 2023 elections showed the power and limits of youth mobilization. The "Obidient Movement" proved that young people can organize, fundraise, and dominate online discourse without party structures.

But it also showed a gap. Online energy did not fully translate to PVC collection and voting, especially in rural areas.

Barr. Eragbe, a youth political consultant in Edo, says: "2023 was a warning shot. 2027 will be the real test. If youths organize structures in wards and LGAs, they can swing any election."

WHAT YOUTHS WANT IN 2027

I spoke to 50 young Nigerians across Edo State for this article. 4 issues came up consistently:

Jobs and Economy: "Give us jobs, not rice." Youth unemployment is at 42% according to NBS Q1 2026.

Security: Kidnapping, cultism, and police brutality are top concerns, especially in Edo and Delta.

Education: ASUU strikes, JAMB stress, and "certificate without skills."

Governance: "We want leaders under 50. We want transparency. We want technology in government."

THE POLITICAL PARTIES: WHO IS COURTING YOUTHS?

As of August 2026, all major parties

have created "Youth Directorates."

The APC is pushing "Renewed Hope 2.0 for Youths" with N15bn in student loans and tech grants.

The PDP is rebranding with younger state chairmen and promising 40% youth appointments.

The Labour Party and new coalitions are actively recruiting under-40 candidates.

But youths are skeptical. "We've heard this before," says Osas, a youth leader in Uhumwode. "Show us the candidates. Not just the Twitter influencers."

The "Not Too Young To Run Act" of 2018 lowered age limits. In 2023, 15 members of the House of Reps were

under 35. The goal for 2027: 100.

CHALLENGES TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Money Politics: It costs N20m - N100m to run for House of Reps. How does a 28-year-old teacher compete?

Godfatherism: Party structures are still controlled by older politicians.

Voter Suppression: Violence, ballot snatching, and logistics failures target youth-heavy areas.

Apathy: "Nothing will change" is the biggest enemy.

3 SCENARIOS FOR 2027

Apathy Wins. Turnout stays at 25%. Old politicians recycle themselves. Youths complain on social media.

Protest Vote. A third force or coalition emerges and captures 20-30% of youth votes, forcing a runoff.

Youth Takeover. With PVC drives, ward organizing, and credible candidates, youths deliver 40%+ turnout and elect a new generation of leaders.

Which one happens depends on what happens between now and February 2027.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW

INEC*: Continuous Voter Registration must be aggressive in campuses and markets. Use tech to reduce rigging.

Political Parties: Field credible youth candidates, not just the children of politicians. Fund them.

Civil Society: Voter education. "Your PVC is your power" campaigns in pidgin, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba.



INSIDE EDO STATE



Isiwina's Harvest of Hope: Ehor Beneficiaries receive Food Baskets as Eyeon Commences Second Monthly Phase

The Isiwina Harvest of Hope food initiative of the Acting Chairman of Uhunmwode Local Government Area, Hon. Austin Imafidon, has continued to put smiles on the faces of vulnerable residents, as beneficiaries in Ehor and surrounding communities received food baskets while the second phase of the monthly distribution commenced at Eyeon.

The initiative, popularly known as the "Basket of Hope," was personally instituted and funded by Hon. Austin Imafidon, popularly called Isiwina, as part of his commitment to supporting vulnerable members of society and ensuring that no elderly or less-privileged person goes to bed hungry.

The beneficiaries include senior citizens, elderly men and women, widows and widowers, physically challenged persons and other vulnerable residents across Uhunmwode Local Government Area.

The food baskets contain essential food items such as rice, beans, tomatoes, spaghetti, noodles, seasoning cubes, salt and other household provisions. A significant portion of the items is sourced within Uhunmwode, thereby providing some support to local economic activities.

At Ehor, beneficiaries included members of the Ehor Community Elders Council, senior citizens, widows and elderly women, who expressed appreciation for the gesture and commended the Acting Chairman for remembering vulnerable members of the community.

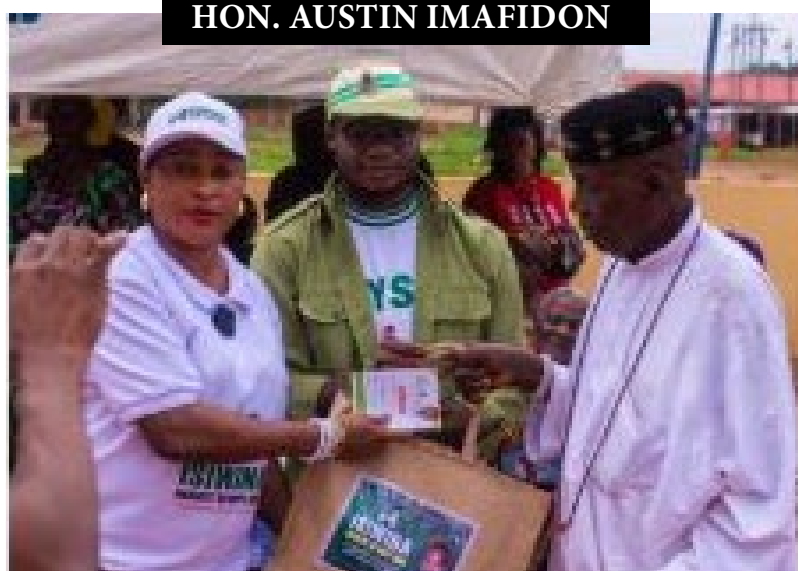
Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Pa. Peter Idemudia and Madam Suzzy Akenbor described the initiative as a demonstration of compassion and responsible leadership.

They prayed God to grant Hon. Imafidon long life, good health, wisdom, favour and strength to continue serving the people.

The beneficiaries also congratulated him on his recent success in the local govern-



HON. AUSTIN IMAFIDON



L-R: The Coordinator, Harvest of Hope Food Initiative, Mrs. Anita Iyare (L) Presenting A Food Basket to one of The Beneficiaries in Ehor, Pa. Peter Imafidon (R).



ment council elections, while wishing him a peaceful, successful and impactful tenure in office.

Meanwhile, at Eyeon, the commencement of the second phase of the monthly distribution was greeted with excitement, particularly among beneficiaries who had received their first Basket of Hope.

Some beneficiaries said they were pleasantly surprised when they received calls inviting them to collect their food baskets, noting that the continuation of the intervention had strengthened their confidence in the programme.

The distribution exercise

was conducted in an orderly and transparent manner. Beneficiaries were required to present identification cards for verification, while members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) played a significant role in the coordination and assessment process.

Despite the rainfall, the exercise proceeded smoothly without rancour or disruption, as organisers ensured that beneficiaries were attended to and that no qualified recipient was left unattended.

PERSONALLY FUNDED INITIATIVE

It is important to clarify that

the Isiwina Harvest of Hope/Basket of Hope initiative is not funded with government funds or resources of the Uhunmwode Local Government Council.

The initiative is personally funded by Hon. Austin Imafidon from his salaries and allowances as Acting Chairman, as part of his personal commitment to giving back to the people and providing direct assistance to vulnerable members of society.

The initiative reflects his belief that leadership should go beyond infrastructure and government programmes to embrace compassion, human-

itarian support and direct intervention in the lives of people who need assistance most.

The Isiwina Harvest of Hope is expected to continue across communities in Uhunmwode LGA, with the objective of reaching more vulnerable residents and sustaining the spirit of care, compassion and community solidarity.

The message behind the initiative is simple: no elderly person, widow, widower, physically challenged person or vulnerable resident should feel forgotten.

Through the Basket of Hope, hope is being delivered to one household at a time.



INSIDE EDO STATE



A TRIBUTE TO PURPOSE, LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE: HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO HON. AUSTIN IMAFIDON (ISIWINA)

On behalf of the Management and Staff of the Umunmwode Local Government Council, I, Ogiehor Ehis Tornado, Chief Press Secretary, heartily felicitate with our esteemed Chairman, Hon. Austin Imafidon, popularly known as ISIWINA, on the joyous occasion of his birthday today, Monday, August 10, 2026.

Today, we celebrate not merely the anniversary of your birth, but the remarkable journey of a man whose life continues to reflect purpose, courage, humility, service and an unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of his people.

Your birthday provides us with another opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate your contributions to the development of Umunmwode Local Government Area and your determination to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people.

Since assuming leadership, your administration has continued to demonstrate a clear vision for a more prosperous, peaceful and progressive Umunmwode. Through your commitment to infrastructural development, grassroots empowerment, security, environmental sustainability, healthcare, staff welfare and the general wellbeing of the people, you have continued to give practical expression to the ideals of responsive, responsible and people-oriented leadership.

Beyond physical development, however, your leadership has also demonstrated an understanding of the human dimension of governance. Your concern for the elderly, widows, vulnerable persons and less-privileged members of society, particularly through initiatives such as the Isiwina Harvest of Hope/Basket of Hope, speaks to a leadership philosophy that recognises that development must ultimately translate into improved lives and renewed hope for the people.

Your humility, accessibility, generosity of spirit and willingness to identify with the people have continued to endear you to many across the Local Government Area. You have demonstrated that leadership is not only about occupying an office, but about accepting the responsibility that comes with it and using that position to touch

lives, inspire confidence and create opportunities for others.

As you mark another remarkable year today, we join your family, friends, associates and the good people of Umunmwode in thanking Almighty God for the gift of your life and for bringing you this far.

It is our prayer that God will continue to bless you with sound health, divine wisdom, renewed strength, peace, favour, prosperity and uncommon grace as you continue to serve humanity.

May He guide your decisions, strengthen your hands and grant you the wisdom and courage to navigate the responsibilities of leadership. May your administration con-

tinue to record remarkable accomplishments, and may your efforts in the service of Umunmwode yield enduring benefits for generations to come.

May the new chapter you begin today bring greater fulfilment, greater accomplishments and greater opportunities to make an even more profound impact on the lives of the people.

As you celebrate this special milestone, may you continue to rise from strength to strength, from grace to grace and from one achievement to another.

Once again, on behalf of the entire Management and Staff of Umunmwode Local Government Council, I warmly celebrate a visionary leader,

a passionate administrator, a compassionate servant-leader and a proud son of Umunmwode and the Isi Clan.

Happy Birthday, Hon. Austin Imafidon (ISIWINA)!

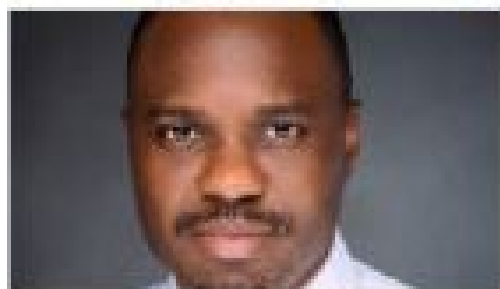
May your new age usher in greater grace, greater wisdom,

greater accomplishments and greater glory.

Congratulations and many happy returns!

Ogiehor Ehis Tornado
Chief Press Secretary
Umunmwode Local Government Council

"Since assuming leadership, your administration has continued to demonstrate a clear vision for a more prosperous, peaceful and progressive Umunmwode."



NEWS**FOREIGN****India police fire tear gas at protesters seeking exam reforms**

Police in India have fired tear gas shells on protesters demanding reforms to recruitment exams in the eastern state of Jharkhand.

Thousands of students, job seekers and volunteers have been trying to reach the state's assembly in the capital city of Ranchi to register their protest.

The BBC has seen some people who have sustained injuries, though the official number of injured is unclear.

The protesters have been demonstrating for over two weeks now, demanding an overhaul of Jharkhand's government exam system.

On Monday, many attempted to breach police barricades, causing police to use water cannons, batons and tear gas to try and disperse crowds, officials say.

Ranchi City Superintendent of Police Paras Rana told ANI news agency that most protesters had been peaceful, but accused a smaller group of breaking through barricades and throwing stones at officers. He said three policemen had been injured.

"About 90% of the students are peaceful, but there are some who are not listening even to their own representatives," he said.

Rana said police had shown restraint and used "minimal force for a very short time" because the protesters were students. He appealed to them to remain peaceful, saying their demands were reaching the government.

The protest comes weeks after thousands of young Indians attempted to march to the national parliament in Delhi, amid the massive "cockroach" protests over exam paper leaks.

India's Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) - which is not a political party - called off its five-week-long protest on 25 July after education minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned.

The CJP had attracted support from students based in different states of the country.

Meanwhile in Ranchi, visuals from the state capital show thousands of protesters, police as well as media personnel on the streets, amid tightened security arrangements.

Despite police efforts to disperse them, large crowds remain at the site.

Protesters in Jharkhand have been gathered at a stadium in Ranchi since 25 July - some have been sleeping in the open and several have gone on hunger strike.

Even after multiple rounds of talks and the government accepting several demands, protesters say the agitation will continue until all their demands are met.

The immediate cause of the anger is a preliminary civil service exam held by the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) in April.

After the results were announced in July, candidates alleged that leaked answer sheets shared on social media showed some successful applicants had answered far fewer questions than expected.

This fuelled suspicions that the results had been manipulated.

The state government has assured students that they will get justice. The allegations around the exam are being investigated by Jharkhand's Criminal Investigation Department (CID). More than a dozen people have been arrested.

Investigators are also examining the role of a private company that conducted parts of the exam process after candidates raised questions about how it was selected.

After talks with protesters on Sunday, the government agreed to cancel the exam in question, along with two others. Three JPSC members also reportedly resigned.

This came after JPSC chairman L Khiantge stepped down on 22 July.

He was questioned in the investigation and arrested on Monday.

But protesters say several demands remain unmet, chief among them an investigation into the irregularities by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's premier federal investigative agency.

Unlike the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protests, which emerged outside party politics, the Ranchi agitation has drawn strong political backing.

71 men arrested in Senegal for 'unnatural acts' as crackdown intensifies

Months after passing a law upping the penalties for homosexual relations, Senegal is intensifying its crackdown on same-sex relations.

On Friday, the public prosecutor's office said 71 men have been arrested and charged with "unnatural acts."

The men were brought before a court while 28 other defendants have had their charges dropped, the statement said.

More than 100 people have been charged since the law was

passed, including local celebrities arrested on suspicion of homosexual acts and in some case of deliberately transmitting HIV.

The charges of willful transmission of HIV/AIDS have since been dropped.

Senegal is one of several West African countries to enact laws criminalising homosexuality in recent months.

Activists say the LGBT+ community is being scapegoated by politicians falling back on a subject that draws unanimity.

Alleged rebel leader killed in Colombia as president targets armed groups

A man suspected of leading a dissident faction of a left-wing rebel group has been killed in a military operation in central Colombia, officials say.

The operation forms part of a crackdown on illegal armed groups ordered by Colombia's new president, Abelardo de la Espriella, who was sworn in on Friday.

He said the killing by the security forces of Hernando Forero Mosquera and five other alleged members of armed groups on the weekend sent "a clear and powerful message to all bandits that there is nowhere for them to hide".

During his campaign for the presidency, de la Espriella said he would target "narco-terrorism" relentlessly, including by

launching air strikes.

Military intelligence officers said that Forero led a group known as Frente 28, which is one of the many dissident factions to have sprung forth from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc).

The Farc, Colombia's largest left-wing rebel group, signed a peace deal with the government in 2016 but some of its members did not agree to the terms of the deal and refused to lay down their arms.

These dissident groups, which are now mainly involved in cocaine trafficking and illegal mining, are among the main driving forces behind the resurgence in violence in the country.

De la Espriella said he would take a radically different ap-

proach to defeating criminal groups in the country than his predecessor in office, Gustavo Petro.

Petro, the first left-wing politician to be elected president of Colombia, advocated what he called a "total peace" strategy, which prioritised negotiation over confrontation.

His attempts to negotiate with a number of armed groups, however, failed as members of the illegal organisations repeatedly broke cease-fires and walked away from the talks.

De la Espriella's combative approach has been met with defiance by dissident rebel groups.

On Saturday, just a day after he was sworn into office, two explosive devices went off.

In Cauca province, a car bomb exploded at a tollbooth, injuring two security guards, and in Cesar province, a police officer was killed by explosives dropped from a drone.

In a video uploaded to social media, de la Espriella praised the military for killing Forero, who was also known as "El ruso" (The Russian), and whom he described as an explosives expert.

He added that three more alleged members of the dissident group had been killed in the military operation in a rural area in Meta province.

The president also said that soldiers had killed two alleged members of another criminal group, the Gulf Clan, in a separate offensive in Antioquia province.



PROTESTERS:

Police used tear gas shells, water canons and batons as the protesters attempted to march towards Jharkhand's assembly building

Israel rejects Trump's 15-point plan for Gaza, Netanyahu says

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected US President Donald Trump's 15-point plan for Gaza, stating that no military pull-out will happen until Hamas is "genuinely" disarmed.

Trump's Board of Peace said last month it had reached an agreement for the "complete disarmament" of Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza.

But Hamas said handing over its heavy weapons was contingent on Israel ending "all forms of aggression" and withdrawing its forces from Gaza.

On Sunday, a senior Board of Peace official insisted the US-backed peace plan for the territory remained the only way forward.

Israel has continued to carry out strikes on Gaza since agreeing to an initial ceasefire in the

territory last October.

"Israel rejects the 15-point document," Netanyahu said at a cabinet meeting on Sunday.

The Israeli military "will not carry out any withdrawal until Hamas is genuinely disarmed and will continue to thwart threats against our forces and our citizens", he added.

A Hamas official told the BBC on Sunday the group "reaffirms its commitment" to the agreement and it was ready "to engage seriously and responsibly in implementing" the 15-point plan.

They called on mediators to ensure "that all parties comply with what has been agreed".

Israel's rejection signals another blow for Trump's Gaza peace plan which was announced in September last year.

Zambians hope for peaceful elections, economic change as vote nears

Zambians vote Thursday in a closely watched presidential election that will test whether recent economic gains can offset frustration over the high cost of living in one of Africa's most stable democracies.

Incumbent Hakainde Hichilema faces Brian Mundubile, a former ally of late president Edgar Lungu, who surged to the front of a fragmented opposition after being backed by a coalition of rival parties.

Up to 8.7 million voters -- a majority of them women -- will decide whether Hichilema's economic reforms deserve another term or whether the opposition can turn widespread discontent into a comeback.

Hichilema, leader of the United Party for National Development (UPND), won the presidency in 2021 on his sixth attempt, inheriting a country in sovereign default after years of heavy borrowing under

Lungu.

His victory marked a rare peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party through the ballot box in Africa.

The government has since secured a landmark debt restructuring agreement, restored an International Monetary Fund programme and returned the economy to growth, winning praise from international lenders and investors.

But many Zambians say the benefits have been slow to reach ordinary citizens. Rising food prices, unemployment and persistent poverty remain dominant concerns in a country where more than 70 percent of the population lives on less than three dollars a day, according to World Bank data.

"Worldwide there has been recognition that we are doing well but he needs to bring it home," medical student Semi Malama, 26, told AFP.

FOREIGN

NEWS

**TYPHOON:**

Typhoon Dolphin made landfall in eastern China on Sunday evening

China evacuates one million from homes as massive storm arrives

Chinese authorities have evacuated more than a million people from their homes in eastern China including the financial capital Shanghai, as Typhoon Dolphin made landfall.

The typhoon brought heavy rain and halted transportation across the region.

Nearly 1,000 flights were cancelled in Shanghai alone on Monday.

While authorities have downgraded Dolphin to a tropical storm, they continue to warn of torrential rains, severe flooding and the risk of landslides through to Wednesday as the storm moves north.

Chinese authorities had earlier issued their highest-level red alert for Dolphin, which is the strongest storm to hit China this year.

It packed maximum wind speeds of 150km/h (94mph) when it first slammed into Yuhuan in the Zhejiang province at 17:30 (09:30 GMT) on Sunday.

day before making a second landfall in the city of Wenzhou about an hour later, meteorological authorities said.

Heavy rain was forecast on Monday for the provinces of Shandong, Henan, Hubei, Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and the city of Shanghai.

Typhoon Dolphin made landfall in eastern China on Sunday evening.

Governments have urged people to avoid outdoor activities, while several top tourist attractions remain closed, including parts of Disneyland and Legoland, and several viewing platforms along the Bund in Shanghai.

Footage on state media show ground-floor businesses flooded in the former French Concession in Shanghai, an area popular with tourists, and people wading through ankle-deep waters.

Several state media outlets have reported that a nine-year-old boy from Wenling,

Zhejiang is missing after being swept into the sea. Chinese officials have not reported any casualties.

Parts of Zhejiang could receive 250mm to 500mm of rain over the next few days, forecasters say.

Authorities in Hangzhou, Zhejiang's capital city, have waived parking fees in all public spaces for drivers seeking shelter amid the strong winds and floodwaters.

Elsewhere in the province, Wenzhou authorities have relocated some 900,000 residents and opened more than 1,000 emergency shelters, while about 390,000 people have been evacuated from their homes in the city of Taizhou.

In the coastal province of Fujian, maritime authorities have suspended dozens of passenger ferry routes and halted more than 100 offshore construction projects.

The storm moved over a long distance of 6,000km before making landfall, suggesting a lifespan of more than three times that of an average typhoon, according to China's state broadcaster CCTV.

It also has a massive circulation size and intense rainfall capacity, CCTV reported.

Misinformation around the storm has apparently spread rapidly on the Chinese internet, with state media reporting that two people have been detained for distributing such content.

One of them, a 60-year-old man, created a fake video with AI that claimed someone in Shanghai had fallen from a building during the storm.

Another man, 32, had re-edited storm footage posted by other social media users in a way that was deemed as misleading.

Dolphin brought torrential rains to the Philippines, parts of northern Taiwan and Japan's Okinawa island before bearing down on China.

At least 13 killed in Ukrainian strike on Russia's Tatarstan region, officials say

At least 13 people have been killed in a Ukrainian drone strike on the Russian republic of Tatarstan, officials have said.

One child was among the victims with 75 more people injured, Russian authorities said, in one of the deadliest single attacks on Russia since the start of Moscow's full-scale war in Ukraine.

Kyiv has not yet commented on the strike on the city of Nizhnekamsk, which is more than 1,100 kilometres (680m) from the Ukrainian border.

Ukraine's Armed Forces confirmed Nizhnekamsk's Tanevo oil refinery had been hit, while Ukrainian defence technology manufacturer FirePoint said its FP-1 drones had been used in the attack.

The strike lasted several hours overnight and into the morning, local sources say.

Unverified images on social media show large plumes of smoke and flames rising into the sky in daytime, with air raid sirens howling in the background.

Although there is no official information yet on the target of the attack, Kyiv has recently stepped up its strikes on facilities it says contribute revenue and logistics to Russia's war on Ukraine.

Moscow confirmed industrial facilities were targeted as

well as residential areas. "Civilian individuals who were not involved in any military operations were present," Russia's Investigative Committee said. The BBC has not independently verified this information.

The head of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnikhanov, confirmed the strike and shared his condolences with the families of the deceased.

"This is a tremendous pain for all of us," said Nizhnekamsk mayor Radmir Belayev.

A period of mourning has been declared in Tatarstan.

Ukraine's defence forces previously struck oil refineries in Nizhnekamsk on 12 June.

More than 450 Ukrainian drones were also shot down by the Russian air defences overnight, Moscow said.

Kyiv has become increasingly successful at carrying out long-range strikes on Russia, often targeting warehouses or energy infrastructure, with civilian casualties mounting.

Russia, meanwhile, continues to target Ukraine with regular large-scale aerial attacks on cities and residential centres mounting.

Last week, a combined drone and missile strike on Kyiv killed 21 people.

And in Kharkiv, near the front line, five people were killed overnight in a Russian artillery attack.

Former Thai MP allegedly kills official and confesses on YouTube

A former Thai MP allegedly shot dead a local official in the southern province of Nonthaburi, then dialled into a YouTube livestream to inform the host - a political pundit - of what he had done.

Former Nonthaburi MP Chalong Reawraeng told the shocked host, Anchalee Paireerak, that he had shot Thongchai Yenprasert, a former police official, outside Thongchai's office.

Thongchai, who was hit in the neck, died in hospital.

His driver was shot in the arm and hand.

Chalong was arrested but then allowed to hold a press conference at a police station where he attempted to explain what had happened while smoking a cigarette.

He told the reporters there that Thongchai was "angry" at him, but did not explain why.

He also said he did not intend to shoot Thongchai, whom he described as a "good friend".

Chalong said he told Thongchai that he wanted to talk to him. According to local media reports, the two were involved in a personal dispute.

"He [Thongchai] then pushed me, saying 'I don't want to talk, I don't want to talk.'"

Chalong said he then followed Thongchai towards his car.

"When I pulled the gun out, I didn't intend to shoot him. But

then [Thongchai's driver] pulled his gun out and pointed it at me, so I fired."

Thongchai, a retired police colonel, was president of the Nonthaburi Provincial Administrative Organisation or PAO, a local government body.

Earlier, Chalong had called political commentator Anchalee Paireerak, who was livestreaming on YouTube at the time, to confess to the incident.

Anchalee was filmed picking up a call midway through her programme.

"I'll call you back... Oh, something big [happened]? Go ahead, what's that?" she said.

Viewers could not hear what the caller said next, but Anchalee was seen reacting in shock.

"Did he die? Did he die? You shot him in the head? You need to wait there for the cops," she said on the video, which was seen by the BBC. "Don't go anywhere."

Monday's shooting came three days after a 14-year-old boy shot dead eight people at his home and school, then killed himself, in Thailand's worst mass shooting since 2022. The two attacks are not related.

The latest shooting will further spur debate about gun control in Thailand, which has the highest rate of gun ownership in South East Asia by a wide margin.

Suspected crime boss Kinahan spends first night in custody in Ireland

Suspected crime boss Daniel Kinahan, one of the world's most wanted men, has spent his first night in custody in Ireland after being extradited from Dubai.

The 49-year-old appeared before Dublin's Special Criminal Court on Sunday for a 13-minute non-jury hearing, where he was remanded in custody until 5 October.

He has been charged with directing the activities of a criminal organisation between 18 October 2015 and 6 April 2017.

When it was explained to Kinahan that he could file an application for bail through the High Court, he replied: "I think we all know I won't be getting bail, but thank you for your time."

An Irish government jet carrying Kinahan landed in Dublin after 18:00 local time. He was arrested and charged upon his arrival.

Heavy police operation

After his arrival and arrest at Baldonnell Casement Aerodrome on Sunday evening, he was directly transported under heavy police guard to the Criminal Courts of Justice in Dublin.

All the benches were full in a packed courtroom of journalists, a number of solicitors from the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), some members of the public and court clerks.

In court, Kinahan was sitting on a wooden bench and wearing a black hooded top.

He appeared before judges Patrick McGrath, Sarah Berkeley and Fiona Lydon, and rose to his feet when the three judges

took their places.

Kinahan did not have legal representation, and told the court that he did not have time to arrange this.

When Judge McGrath suggested that he should be charged today and legal representation arranged later on, Kinahan replied: "If I have time, yes."

Det Sgt Colm Davison told the court he arrested Kinahan earlier that evening.

Judge McGrath asked Kinahan if he would like to appear at the next court sitting in person or via videolink.

Kinahan asked if he had to "decide now" and it was explained to him he could make a decision later and notify the governor in the prison.

A large-scale security operation was in place ahead of Sunday's hearing.

Ahead of the extradition, the Irish Prison Service bought a bulletproof and bombproof van which can be used to escort prisoners who are considered high-risk.

Garda Commissioner Justin Kelly said the arrest shows the force's determination to "target transnational organised crime groups" alongside international policing partners such as Dubai police.

He added it shows the value of the force's relationship with the authorities in the UAE, the Irish ministry of justice at judicial level, and "on a police-to-police basis".

Who is Daniel Kinahan? Kinahan was arrested in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in April. He appealed the extradition order over the past few months but his attempts were unsuccessful.

FEATURE

Oligarchs, not immigrants, are taking job opportunities

HASHIM YUSSUF AMAO

As a wave of Anti-Immigration Demonstrations sweeps across the United Kingdom one salient geopolitical fact I've learnt over the years is that the loudest villains in politics are often not the real ones, they are merely the easiest to point at.

Matter-of-factly, the ones with less attention are often the untold villains. Pay attention to history, whenever economies stagger, wages falter, or uncertainty settles over ordinary households, there is a familiar targets have always been summoned into the public square. Sometimes, religious minorities; other times, ethnic or colour minorities. Today, in much of Europe, parts of North America, and certain countries in Africa like South Africa, immigrants have been marched before that very court of public opinion.

Placards have been raised and borders have been demanded, innocent victims have been attacked, and politicians have taken advantage of this by building election campaigns upon promises of deportation. Because streets have echoed with chants insisting that foreigners are stealing jobs, draining welfare systems and threatening national identity. Across several European countries in recent years, anti-immigration demonstrations have drawn tens of thousands of participants, while immigration has remained among the defining political issues shaping elections and public debate. Yet, beneath the noise lies a quieter story that is less theatrical, less convenient and even considerably more uncomfortable. You see, the greatest threat to employment in advanced economies is not the nurse who crossed a border, the engineer seeking refuge from war, or the farm worker harvesting food; it is rather the relentless concentration of economic power in the hands of an increasingly small corporate and financial elite, aided by accelerating automation, artificial intelligence, weakened competition and political influence.

But, you know, immigrants are visible, while Oligarchic power is not. That distinction matters because it is easier to blame the newcomer than to challenge the boardroom. It's quite easier to protest outside a refugee centre than outside the headquarters of a multinational corporation replacing thousands of employees with algorithms. In fact, it is easier to denounce the family arriving with two suitcases than to confront monopolies whose market power quietly shapes wages, competition and opportunity. Reminds me of the word of the ancient Roman poet Juvenal that the masses could be pacified with "bread and circuses". Two millennia later, spectacle still distracts from substance, while public anger is too often directed towards those with the least power, while those wielding immense economic influence remain comfortably beyond the spotlight.

Talking of artificial intelligence, for instance, it has become one of the clearest examples. Across 2025 alone, tens of thousands of jobs in technology, finance, customer service, publishing and administrative sectors were eliminated or restructured as compa-



Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo (middle)

nies accelerated AI adoption alongside cost-cutting programmes. Many chief executives openly described AI as a productivity revolution capable of replacing significant portions of routine human work. The consequence has not been merely technological progress. It has also been profound labour displacement. And none of those redundancies were caused by immigrants. They were corporate decisions. Imperatively, the distinction deserves to be remembered whenever another political speech claims that employment insecurity begins at the border.

Funnily enough, the mechanics of modern oligarchy are rarely dramatic. They arrive quietly, wrapped in annual reports, shareholder meetings and polished corporate slogans. A factory does not always close because demand has vanished. A newsroom is not always reduced because readers disappeared.

A call centre is not always emptied because customers stopped calling. Increasingly, jobs are being erased because executives have calculated that software, algorithms or cheaper overseas labour can produce higher returns for investors. The language employed is usually "efficiency", "optimisation" or "transformation". The outcome, however, is painfully familiar: a livelihood disappears, a family budget contracts, and a community grows poorer.

Europe has witnessed this transformation in real time. Major firms across technology, manufacturing, retail and finance announced substantial workforce reductions throughout 2025 as artificial intelligence and automation were woven into business operations.

According to several industry trackers, well over 100,000 technology jobs were cut globally during the year, with Europe accounting for a significant share as companies restructured

to prioritise AI investment. Those redundancies were authorised in executive suites, not at immigration checkpoints. And this is what a country like South Africans should know and thereby put a halt to their xenophobic attacks on innocent foreigners, some of whom, like Nigerians, even contributed hugely towards their liberation from the apartheid era.

Thence, the story grows deeper

”
An economy flourishes not when fear governs policy, but when productive capacity, innovation and enterprise are allowed to expand.

because employment is not merely lost through automation. It is also diminished when markets become concentrated in too few hands. When dominant corporations swallow competitors, duplicate departments are dissolved.

Human resources teams are merged. Regional offices are closed. Engineers, accountants, designers and technicians are quietly informed that their roles have become "redundant". The celebrated merger that delights investors frequently becomes the redundancy letter that devastates workers. This phenomenon has long been recognised by economists.

As Joseph Stiglitz wrote in *Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%*, modern economies can become systems in which wealth and political influence accumulate around a narrow elite rather than being broadly shared. That observation was not written as a slogan. It was presented as a warning. When excessive economic power becomes concentrated, opportunity itself begins to narrow.

The consequences ripple beyond the workplace. Small businesses, once regarded as the beating heart of innovation and local employment, often struggle to survive against corporations capable of absorbing temporary losses, negotiating exclusive supply agreements or influencing regulation through extensive lobbying.

Every independent shop that closes, every family enterprise that collapses and every local manufacturer forced out of the market represents not merely a commercial failure but the disappearance of future jobs that might otherwise have been created. Political influence compounds the problem. Vast financial resources have increasingly been channelled into lobbying, campaign financing and policy advocacy.

The objective is seldom stated open-

ly. Yet regulations favourable to dominant firms, tax advantages unavailable to smaller competitors and barriers that discourage new entrants have all been documented across numerous advanced economies. The result is an economy where competition weakens while economic power hardens.

Meanwhile, public frustration seeks a simpler explanation. Immigrants become the convenient answer. That narrative, however, collapses beneath evidence.

Across Europe, immigrants have become indispensable to healthcare, agriculture, construction, transport, hospitality, scientific research and information technology. In the United Kingdom, the National Health Service has long depended upon internationally trained doctors, nurses and care workers.

Across Germany, Italy and several Nordic countries, labour shortages created by ageing populations have been alleviated by migrant workers filling vacancies that domestic labour markets could not fully supply. In the United States, immigrant entrepreneurs have founded or co-founded many of the country's most valuable companies, generating employment for millions rather than depriving citizens of work. An economy flourishes not when fear governs policy, but when productive capacity, innovation and enterprise are allowed to expand. Workers who produce, consume, establish businesses and pay taxes contribute to that expansion, irrespective of where they were born. For, a society cannot preserve employment by attacking visible outsiders while ignoring the deeper economic structures that steadily erode opportunity itself.

Hashim Yussuf Amao is a geopolitical analyst from Ibadan Nigeria; and an advocate for a sane and peaceful world.

hashimlegalbard@gmail.com

FEATURE

Obasanjo: The man history refuses to leave alone

LANRE OGUNDIPE

● *Power, Legacy and the Burden of the Documentary Record*

History is often kinder to the dead than to the living. It sands away rough edges, softens harsh judgments and, over time, transforms flawed leaders into national icons. Yet there are rare public figures whose lives stubbornly resist simplification. They remain objects of admiration and controversy in equal measure long after they have left office. Nigeria's former President, General Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo, belongs unmistakably to that exclusive class.

For more than six decades, Obasanjo has stood at the crossroads of Nigeria's political evolution. Soldier. Civil War commander. Military Head of State. Prisoner. Democratically elected President. International statesman. Farmer. Author. Relentless commentator on national affairs. Few Nigerians have occupied so many defining moments in the nation's history. Fewer still have continued to shape national conversations long after leaving office.

His admirers celebrate him as the statesman who voluntarily handed power to an elected civilian government in 1979, returned from prison to rescue Nigeria's battered international image in 1999, secured historic debt relief, pursued economic reforms and refused the comfort of retirement whenever he believed the nation was drifting from the path of responsible governance.

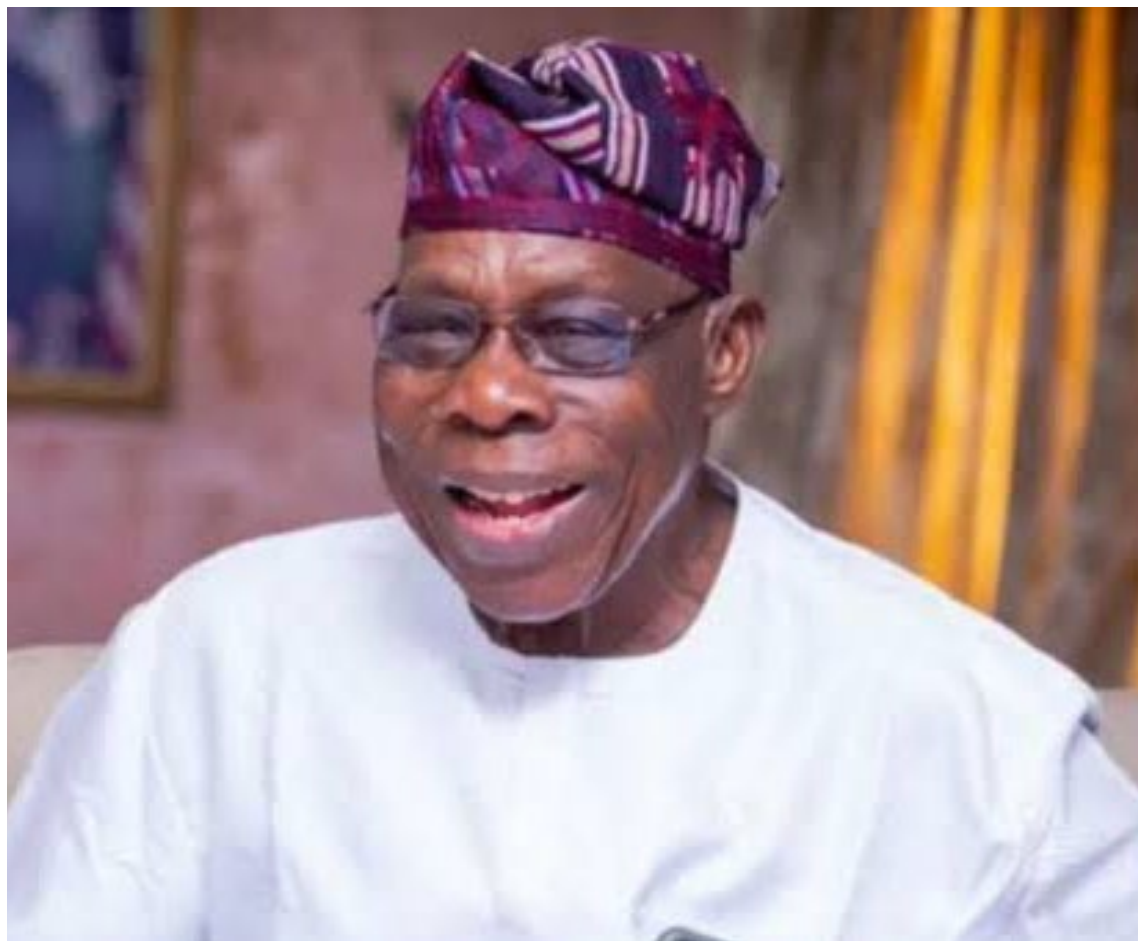
His critics tell another story. They see a leader who often presented himself as the nation's moral compass while leaving behind an extraordinary trail of disputes with military colleagues, political associates, intellectuals, party leaders, business interests and even long-standing friends. They ask whether history is dealing with a succession of isolated disagreements or confronting a recurring pattern in the exercise of power.

That question—not praise or condemnation—is the purpose of this commentary.

History is rarely interested in isolated incidents. One controversy may be dismissed as misunderstanding. Two may be explained away as coincidence. But when controversies recur across military service, civilian governance, party politics, intellectual engagement and public policy over more than half a century, history acquires a responsibility to ask whether they disclose a discernible pattern. That obligation is not an act of hostility. It is the highest compliment history pays to those who profoundly influence the destiny of a nation.

The Nigerian Civil War offers an early illustration. General Benjamin Adekunle, the legendary "Black Scorpion", remains one of Nigeria's most celebrated field commanders. Yet debates over military strategy, recognition and the ownership of wartime narratives have persisted for decades. Obasanjo's role in the closing stages of the war and his subsequent writings ensured that he became one of the principal custodians—and contestants—of that history. Competing memoirs and testimonies have kept alive legitimate questions about military leadership and historical memory. Such questions deserve careful examination, not emotional verdicts.

The June 12 crisis presents another enduring chapter. Chief M.K.O. Abiola's annulled mandate remains perhaps the deepest scar on Nigeria's democratic conscience. Obasanjo did not create that tragedy, yet his eventual emergence as the ci-



Nigeria's former President, General Olusegun Aremu Obasanjo

vilian President in 1999 inevitably placed him within its larger historical narrative. To many, his presidency symbolised national reconciliation after years of military dictatorship. To others, it represented an incomplete resolution of the June 12 struggle. Those contrasting interpretations continue to demand sober historical reflection rather than partisan certainty.

Obasanjo's encounters with Professor Wole Soyinka equally transcend personal disagreement. They were not routine exchanges between politician and critic. They reflected a larger contest over democratic accountability, public morality and the limits of executive authority. When two towering national figures repeatedly challenge each other in the public square, historians must ask what those encounters reveal about the nature of leadership in a democratic society.

Within the People's Democratic Party, the pattern became even more pronounced. Audu Ogbah's resignation as National Chairman was more than an internal party affair. His resignation letter entered Nigeria's political literature because it raised profound questions about presidential influence and the independence of party institutions. Chuba Okadigbo's turbulent removal as Senate President and Evan Enwerem's earlier experience similarly exposed the difficult relationship between executive power and legislative autonomy during the formative years of the Fourth Republic. Atiku Abubakar's transformation from trusted deputy to principal political rival completed one of the most consequential political ruptures in contemporary Nigeria.

Beyond personalities lay policy controversies that have equally become part of the national archive. The Sagem national identity card project generated years of public scrutiny. The Mambilla power project has remained entangled in litigation, official inquiries and compet-

ing claims involving former public officials, including Olu Agunloye. Whether every allegation ultimately survives legal and historical scrutiny is not the immediate issue. The issue is that decisions taken at the highest levels of government continue to invite documentary examination because they affected national institutions and public confidence.

The Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library presents another revealing example. Across the world, presidential libraries preserve historical records and celebrate public service. In Nigeria, however, the funding model adopted for the project generated sustained public debate over the relationship between political influence, private donations and public perception. Admirers regarded it as a visionary national institution. Critics questioned whether the distinction between voluntary support and official influence was always sufficiently clear. Whatever one's position, the controversy itself has become part of Nigeria's historical record.

Then came the famous declaration that the 2007 election would be a "do-or-die affair." Supporters have argued that the statement merely expressed political determination. Critics regarded it as an unfortunate metaphor capable of encouraging excesses in an already fragile democratic environment. Presidents are judged not only by their decisions but also by their words. Public language often acquires an independent life, shaping perceptions long after the moment has passed.

Nor did the controversies end with the conclusion of his presidency. His often difficult relationships with political leaders across successive administrations—including Bola Ahmed Tinubu—have demonstrated that retirement has not diminished either his influence or his willingness to intervene in national affairs. Whether through books, interviews, public lectures or his now-famous

open letters, Obasanjo has remained an active participant in Nigeria's democratic conversation. That continued engagement has ensured that he is never merely a subject of history; he remains one of its active participants.

Ironically, one of the richest sources for understanding Obasanjo is Obasanjo himself. Through *My Command*, *Not My Will*, *This Animal Called Man* and *My Watch*, he has offered an extensive account of his philosophy of leadership, public duty, faith and national service. Those works are invaluable contributions to Nigeria's political literature. Yet memoirs, however illuminating, remain personal narratives. They explain; they do not conclude. They must therefore be read alongside official documents, judicial findings, parliamentary records, the memoirs of contemporaries and independent historical scholarship. That is how mature societies distinguish memory from evidence.

None of this should obscure Obasanjo's undeniable achievements. He supervised Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1979 and honoured the transition by handing over power to an elected government. Two decades later, he assumed office under perhaps the most difficult circumstances in Nigeria's democratic history, restoring international confidence after years of military isolation. His administration secured debt relief, pursued significant economic reforms and repositioned Nigeria within regional and global diplomacy. Those accomplishments deserve their rightful place in the nation's historical ledger.

But mature democracies do not honour great leaders by placing them beyond scrutiny. They honour them by examining them honestly. Greatness should never confer immunity from historical inquiry. If anything, it imposes a greater obligation to evaluate the exercise of power with fairness,

”
They must therefore be read alongside official documents, judicial findings, parliamentary records, the memoirs of contemporaries and independent historical scholarship

rigour and documentary discipline.

This is why any assessment of Olusegun Obasanjo must resist two temptations. The first is uncritical adulation that converts every decision into unquestionable wisdom. The second is reflexive hostility that dismisses every accomplishment because of political disagreement. Neither approach serves history. Neither serves Nigeria.

The responsibility of historians, journalists and public intellectuals is both simpler and more demanding: to follow the evidence wherever it leads. Where the documentary record supports praise, let praise be offered without hesitation. Where it justifies criticism, let criticism be expressed without malice. Where the evidence remains incomplete or contested, let honest questions remain open until stronger facts emerge.

For that is ultimately why Obasanjo continues to fascinate the Nigerian imagination. He has not merely witnessed history; he has shaped it, narrated it, contested it and, increasingly, become one of its principal subjects. Few leaders have occupied so many defining moments in the life of a nation. Fewer still have inspired such enduring admiration and such persistent debate.

History has not finished writing the Obasanjo story. Perhaps it never will. But it has reached the point where celebration alone is no longer sufficient and condemnation alone is no longer adequate.

In the end, history is indifferent to reputations carefully cultivated or criticisms passionately advanced. It recognises neither political loyalties nor personal animosities.

History asks only one question: What does the evidence reveal?

• *Ogundipe, Public Affairs Analyst, former President Nigeria and Africa Union of Journalists writes from Abuja.*

Onaiyekan's Arise TV interview exposed his partisanship, says Prince Idaomi

RICHARD EWEKA

The meeting between President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Catholic Bishops at the Presidential Villa in Abuja has continued to generate reactions across the country, with political analysts and commentators offering divergent views on the encounter as Nigeria gradually moves towards the 2027 general election.

The meeting has also become a subject of discussion among politicians, civil society organisations, religious leaders, traditional rulers and other stakeholders, with many examining its possible implications for the 2027 presidential election.

Adding his voice to the debate, political commentator, activist, financial expert and specialist nurse, Prince Oluwatobi Idaomi, who holds a Master's degree in Law (LLM) and a master degree in General Nursing from the University of West London, said the public comments made by Cardinal John Onaiyekan after the meeting with the President had exposed what he described as the cleric's partisan position.

Idaomi, however, maintained that the disagreement between the Presidency and the Catholic leadership would not affect President Tinubu's chances of securing a second term in office.

How do you see the controversy between the Catholic Bishop and the President?

I have listened to different people speak about this issue, and I believe many of them are missing the point. There was no problem with the meeting itself. The issue arose when Cardinal Onaiyekan went on Arise TV to publicly discuss and criticise the President.

There is nothing wrong with advising the President. However, when you



Prince Oluwatobi Idaomi

go before a television station and openly castigate the President, you begin to give the impression of partisanship.

He suggested that the body language of the President indicated that he wanted to win the 2027 election by all means. But that was not the reason the Catholic Bishops visited President Tinubu.

Cardinal Onaiyekan's decision to publicly discuss the meeting in that manner raises questions about his neutrality. We should also not forget that Cardinal Onaiyekan openly supported Peter Obi during the 2023 presidential election. At the time, he reportedly said he would not recognise President Tinubu until the Supreme Court delivered its final judgment.

These are issues Nigerians should consider when assessing his position on the current controversy.

Will this controversy cost President Tinubu his second term?

There is no way this disagreement between the Presidency and the Bishops will cost Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu his second-term bid.

Nigerians are already aware of the arguments being made by some of these individuals and groups. The administration, in my view, has recorded achievements that Nigerians will consider when the time comes to vote.

For example, the Academic Staff

Union of Universities, ASUU, has not embarked on a nationwide strike for almost four years. The labour unions have also not experienced the kind of prolonged industrial action witnessed in previous administrations.

There is relative peace in the Niger Delta, while major infrastructure projects are ongoing across the country. The removal of fuel subsidy, which had become a major burden on the nation's finances, has also allowed more resources to be available to the states for development.

These are issues Nigerians will examine when making their decision in 2027.

Is the Presidency handling the issue appropriately?

I believe the Presidency is handling the matter appropriately. The administration is simply trying to put the issues in their proper perspective so that Nigerians will understand that President Tinubu is not against Catholics or Christians.

The President is the President of all Nigerians, regardless of religion, ethnicity or political affiliation. His administration should therefore continue to demonstrate that its policies are aimed at the development and growth of the entire country.

Do you think the action of the Bishops was in good faith?

In my opinion, the Bishops got it wrong by allowing the issue to become a subject of public confrontation on television. Going to Arise TV to discuss the matter gave the impression of partisanship.

We have not forgotten Cardinal Onaiyekan's position during the 2023 presidential election and his support for Peter Obi.

However, I would not want to generalise or suggest that every Catholic Bishop shares the same position. As far

as this particular controversy is concerned, I believe Cardinal Onaiyekan should be allowed to own his position.

What is your message to Nigerians as we approach the 2027 general election?

My message to Nigerians is that we should approach the 2027 general election with peace, maturity and a strong sense of responsibility.

Elections should not be reduced to religion, ethnicity, personality or political sentiments. Nigerians should examine the policies, programmes, achievements, character and capacity of every candidate before making their choice.

I also urge Nigerians to be cautious about information circulating on social media and other platforms. Political disagreements are normal in a democracy, but they should never become a reason for hatred, violence or division.

Nigerians should obtain their Permanent Voter Cards, participate actively in the electoral process and vote according to their conscience. We must hold every political leader accountable, whether in the ruling party or the opposition, and demand transparency, good governance and respect for the rule of law.

As we move towards 2027, politicians, religious leaders and other influential figures have a responsibility to promote peace and national unity. Nigeria belongs to all of us, and no election is worth the life of any Nigerian.

The power ultimately belongs to the people. Nigerians should therefore come out peacefully, exercise their civic responsibility and allow their votes to count. Whoever emerges through a credible and lawful process should be given the opportunity to govern, while the opposition should continue to provide constructive criticism and hold the government accountable.

The Unsung Peacekeepers: Role of Women in Peacebuilding and Development

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

In the dusty streets of Uromi, Edo State, Mama Osas does not carry a gun. She does not wear a military uniform. Yet when two rival youth groups clashed over land last year, it was her voice, not the police siren, that stopped the fight. Gathering the women of the community, she went from compound to compound, mediating, praying, and appealing to mothers to call their sons home.

Stories like Mama Osas' play out daily across Nigeria. While headlines focus on politicians and security chiefs, women are doing the quiet, unglamorous work of keeping the peace. From the Niger Delta to the North East, women have become the backbone of peacebuilding and grassroots development.

As Nigeria grapples with insecurity, economic hardship, and social division, the question is: why are we still leaving them at the margins?

THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN PEACEBUILDING

Nigerian history is filled with examples of women as peace architects.

The Aba Women's Riot of 1929 was not just a protest against taxation — it was women organizing collectively to demand accountability. In the Niger Delta, the "Women of the Niger Delta" movement in the early 2000s used non-violent protests to demand environmental justice and an end to community conflicts with oil companies.

In traditional settings, women's councils, "Iyalaja" market associations, and wives of traditional rulers have long served as conflict mediators. Their power comes not from weapons, but from moral authority, social networks, and trust.

Dr. Joy Onyesom, a gender and conflict expert at the University of Benin, explains: "In most Nigerian communities, women are seen as neutral. A man may not listen to another man from a rival clan, but he will listen to his mother, his aunt, or the women's leader. That is the soft power women wield."

See what women on the Frontlines are doing today.

Today, that role has expanded beyond the village square. Women are making tremendous impact.

There are Early Warning Systems. In Edo, Benue, and Plateau States, women's groups run community alert networks. Market women hear rum-

ors. Church women see strange movements. They pass information to security agencies before violence erupts.

Consideration is being given to Rehabilitation and Reintegration. NGOs led by women are rehabilitating former militants, Boko Haram escapees, and victims of banditry. They provide psychosocial support, skills training, and help children return to school.

Advocacy and Policy are taking frontal stage. Organizations like WANEP-Nigeria, Women Aid Collective, WARD, and Stand to End Rape are pushing for laws on gender-based violence, and for women's inclusion in security meetings.

In Benin City, the Edo Women Peace Network recently mediated a 3-month farmers-herders crisis in Ovia North East. "We sat with both sides, fed them, and reminded them that their children go to the same school," said coordinator Mrs. Eki Oshomegie.

Let us consider the development link and why GENDER EQUITY MATTERS.

Peace without development is fragile. And development without women is incomplete.

According to the World Bank, countries with higher gender equality have 27% lower risk of civil conflict. When women earn income, 90% of

it goes back into family health, education, and food — directly boosting community development.

In Edo State, women cooperatives are driving agriculture, SMEs, and vocational training. Yet they face barriers: limited access to land, credit, and political office. The 35% affirmative action policy for women in governance, adopted in Nigeria since 2006, is still far from reality. As of 2025, women make up less than 6% of the National Assembly.

"How can we talk about sustainable development when half the population is excluded from planning?" asks Barr. Osagie Obayuwana, a human rights lawyer in Benin. "Women understand the problems of water, health, and education because they live it daily."

There are challenges women face.

Despite their contributions, women peacebuilders face 3 major challenges:

Who will be funding initiatives? Most women-led initiatives run on personal savings and small donations. Donor funds often go to big INGOs.

Security Risks abound. Female mediators in conflict zones face threats, abduction, and stigma.

Cultural Barriers do exist. In some communities, women are still told "peace talks are for men and elders."

The UN Women, Peace and Securi-

ty Agenda, Resolution 1325, calls for increased women's participation. Nigeria adopted a National Action Plan in 2013 and reviewed it in 2022. But implementation remains weak at state and local government levels.

There is a way forward for Nigeria.

If Nigeria is serious about peace and development, 4 things must happen:

Time too to institutionalize Women's Role. State governments should create "Ministries or Departments of Peacebuilding" with mandatory women's desks.

It is also expedient to Fund Women Directly. 20% of peace and security budgets should go to women-led organizations.

There should be Political Inclusion. Political parties must enforce the 35% affirmative action and field more women for elective office.

In Education and Media, schools and media organizations should tell more stories of women peacebuilders to change narratives.

"Peace is not the absence of war," says Nobel Laureate Leymah Gbowee. "Peace is the presence of justice." And in Nigeria, women are demanding both.

Mama Osas in Uromi may never make the news. But her work, and the work of thousands of women like her, is what keeps many Nigerian communities from collapsing.

INTERVIEW

Squaring up with Banditry: Can Communities and Government win this war?



SUSPECTED BANDITS

CLARETH SOLOMON

On a Tuesday morning in March 2026, farmers in Mari-ga LGA, Niger State woke up to smoke. Bandits had raided 4 villages overnight, rustled 200 cattle, kidnapped 17 people, and burned 3 schools. By afternoon, the story was on social media. By evening, it was forgotten — replaced by another headline from another state.

This is Nigeria in 2026. Banditry is no longer a "North West problem." It has metastasized. From Zamfara and Katsina to Niger, Kaduna, and parts of Edo and Kogi, the pattern is the same: mass kidnapping, cattle rustling, attacks on farms, and the collapse of rural life.

The question Nigerians are asking is simple and urgent: Can we square up with banditry and win this war? Or have we accepted it as the new normal?

Understanding the **BANDITRY ECONOMY** will help us all!

Banditry in Nigeria is not random violence. It is an economy.

Security analysts describe 3 layers:

The foot soldiers*: Mostly young men, aged 15-30, lured by poverty, unemployment, and the promise of quick money. Many were once herders displaced by climate change and farmer-herder clashes.

The commanders: Warlords who control territory, arms, and kidnapping networks. Some operate across 3 states.

The enablers: Informants, arms dealers, and those who collect ransom and launder it through real estate, cars, and businesses.

The money is huge. The Centre for Democracy and Development estimated that Nigerians paid over N2.2 billion in ransom between 2019 and 2024. That money funds more weapons, more bikes, more attacks.

Prof. Kabiru Sulaiman, a security expert at ABU Zaria says: "We are fighting an insurgency that funds itself. Until we cut the money and the recruitment pipeline, kinetic operations alone will not work."

THE HUMAN COST

The statistics are staggering, but the stories are worse.

- *Food Security*: The UN FAO warns that attacks on farms in the North West and North Central have cut grain production by 40% since 2022. This is a major driver of food inflation in 2026. A bag of rice that sold for N35,000 in 2023 now sells for N95,000.

- *Education*: Over 1,400 schools have been shut in bandit-prone states. The "safe school initiative" exists on paper, but in rural areas, children learn under trees — if they learn at

all.

Displacement: IDP camps in Niger, Zamfara, and Benue are overflowing. The IOM reports over 3.2 million IDPs due to banditry and related violence as of June 2026.

In Edo State, the problem is evolving. While not as intense as Zamfara, communities in Owan East, Akoko-Edo, and parts of Esan have reported kidnappings along Benin-Auchi and Benin-Okeke roads. Farmers are abandoning land.

Chief Osagie, a farmer in Ewohimi, Esan South East, puts it plainly: "We used to plant yams and go to farm at 6am. Now we wait till 10am and return by 3pm. We farm with fear. Who will feed Nigeria like this?"

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

The Federal Government's approach has been largely military.

Operation Forest Sanity and *Operation Hadarin Daji*: Joint military task forces in the North West.

Aircraft and Drones: Increased air surveillance in 2025/2026.

State Police Debate: 17 states have passed laws for state policing. Amotekun in the South West and Vigilante groups in the North are active.

Non-Kinetic: The Peace Dialogue initiatives in Zamfara and Katsina in 2024. Some worked temporarily,

others collapsed when bandits regrouped.

Yet gaps remain. Poor intelligence sharing between federal and state agencies. Poor welfare for frontline soldiers. And the porous borders with Niger Republic that allow arms to flow in.

THE COMMUNITY ROLE: FIGHTING BACK LOCALLY

Where government presence is weak, communities are organizing.

- *Vigilantes*: In Edo, the Edo State Security Network and local hunters have partnered with police on high-way patrols.

- *Early Warning*: Women and youth groups in Kaduna use WhatsApp groups to alert each other of suspicious movement.

- *Economic Programs*: The "Gidauniyar Matasa" project in Katsina is giving skills training to 5,000 at-risk youth to prevent recruitment.

Dr. Oarhe Osumah, a political scientist in Benin, argues: "You cannot win this war from Abuja alone. Banditry is local. The solution must also be local, with traditional rulers, vigilantes, and communities owning the security architecture."

STEPS TO SQUARE UP AND WIN

If Nigeria is to defeat banditry by 2027, experts agree on this roadmap:

Cut the Money: Banks and EFCC

must track ransom payments. Telecom companies should block lines used for negotiations. No ransom policy must be enforced.

Take Back the Forests: A 6-month joint operation to clear major forest reserves used as bandit camps. Follow it with civilian administration and schools.

Justice and Prosecution: Fast-track courts for banditry and kidnapping. Prosecute sponsors, not just foot soldiers.

Development as Security: Roads, clinics, and jobs in rural areas. A jobless 20-year-old is a recruitment target. A 20-year-old with a farm and loan is not.

Banditry is testing the Nigerian state. It is testing our unity, our economy, and our will to protect the most vulnerable.

Winning will not come from press statements. It will come from coordinated action: government, communities, media, and citizens.

As we head toward 2027, candidates will campaign on security. But Nigerians in Mari-ga, in Akoko-Edo, in Birnin Gwari are not waiting for campaigns. They are waiting to farm without fear, to travel without ransom, and to sleep without gunshots.

The war on banditry can be won. But only if we decide, as a nation, to square up — and stay in the fight until it is over.

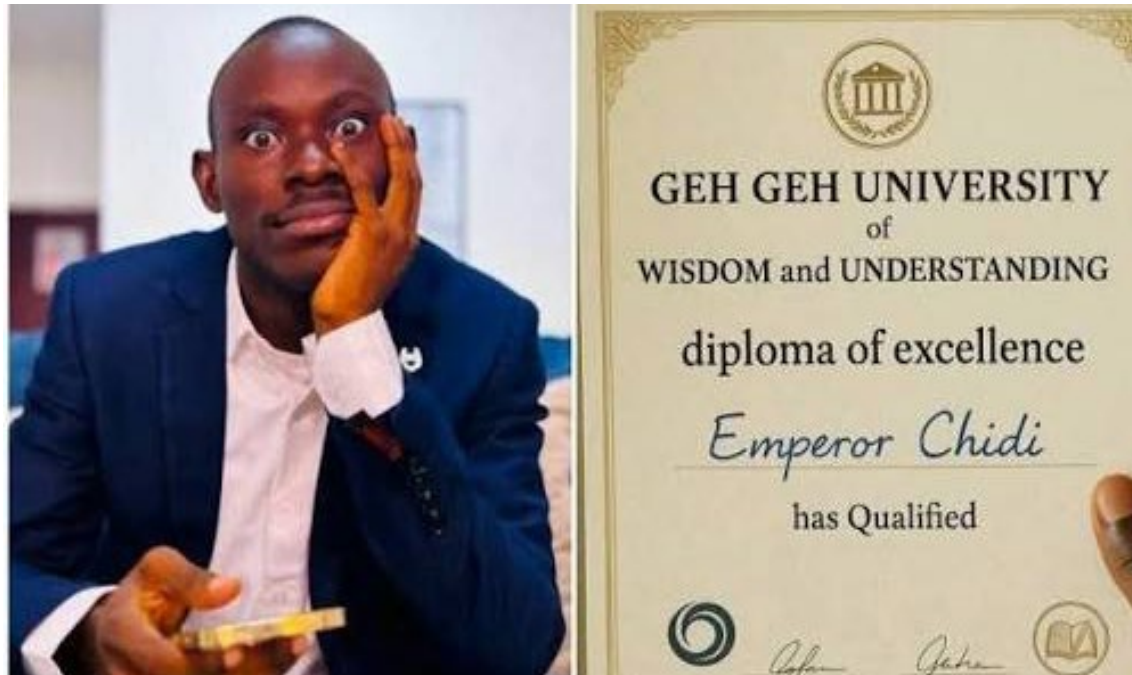
University of Gehgeh: The final examination between fiction and reality

BAGUDU MOHAMMED

I have watched, with a strange fascination, how often the people who preach the loudest are the first to buckle when life puts them on the stage they built for others. We have all seen the stories. The anti-racist advocate who marches, donates, and lectures, only to go quiet or even bristle when his own white daughter brings home a Black boyfriend. The woman who once mocked a co-wife as jealous and insecure, then turns feral when her husband talks about a third wife. The man who sponsors his son to take more wives and then calls it disgrace when another man does the same to his daughter. The critic who calls women greedy for chasing wealthy men, and later finds himself unable to say no when his own daughter meets one. In each case the script flips, not because people are evil, but because conviction that has never been tested is still theory.

Sociologists and psychologists have a name for this drift. Leon Festinger called it cognitive dissonance, the uncomfortable tension between what we say we believe and what we do when reality demands a price. Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory explains another part: we are comfortable with equality in the abstract, but when our family, name, or lineage is involved, the group we identify with suddenly feels threatened. Gordon Allport's Contact Hypothesis warned us that contact reduces prejudice, but only if it is equal, voluntary, and personal. When it becomes intimate, like marriage, the abstract "them" becomes "us," and old conditioning rises.

That is why the 1967 film, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* still stings. A liberal white couple, proud of their progressivism, are thrown into panic when their daughter returns engaged to a Black doctor. It was fiction, but it held up a mirror to the 1950s and 60s, when many white Americans who supported civil rights laws still drew a hard line at interracial dating in their own homes. Even public opinion



GEHGEH

polls of that era showed the split: support for desegregation could coexist with deep discomfort about marriage across the color line. It did not always mean hypocrisy. Often it meant the principle had never been asked to live in the same house with the believer.

This is why I was not surprised, only intrigued, when the internet broke over Gehgeh. For those who missed it, Gehgeh is the online name of Emmanuel Obruste, a Nigerian creator who built an entire brand, he called it the "University of Gehgeh". It is raw, pidgin-laced "lectures" about money, women, and survival. His thesis was simple and viral: don't marry, stack baby mamas instead. He said it with the confidence of a professor, he said he himself had four baby mamas and two more expecting, and he even mocked TikTok stars Peller and Jarvis for daring to plan a wedding. Then about a day ago, videos leaked. Gehgeh in wine-colored traditional wear, dancing with a bride named Mary,

cutting cake, doing the first-feeding rite. The date on the invitation read July 26. He posted clips himself on X, Pulse, Leadership, and Legit all ran the story, noting that as of then he had not officially confirmed the marriage.

The internet did what it always does. One camp shouted hypocrisy. How could the man who told men to run from marriage now walk down the aisle? Another camp defended him. People change, they said. Maybe the advice was for his audience, not for himself. A third camp called it content, a skit, a clout loop. Then came his rebuttal. "I never for once told y'all not to get married. Did I? If yes, show me a video," he wrote, adding that Nigerians do not understand how social media works. Days later, Intel Region reported a second video, this time him kneeling, voice breaking: "Nigerians, please forgive me. I am a hypocrite. I didn't practice what I preached." He asked those who left relationships because of his words to go back and reconcile.

Gehgeh did not invent this pattern. He just dramatized it. And that is the point. Words spoken from a safe distance are a kind of content creation. They are scripted, lit, and edited. We do not know what we will do until the camera turns on us. The actress Nafisa Abdullahi once said marriage was not worth it. Maybe she meant it, from the place she stood that day. But life has a way of rewriting scripts when loneliness, love, or circumstance changes the set. Most of our grand critiques of marriage offer no alternative institution to replace it, so they float, beautiful but weightless, until reality asks for rent.

The deeper problem is not change. A student does not think like a worker. A follower does not see like a leader. The problem is subjectivism. The habit of selling one slice of truth as the whole loaf. In politics we see it too. In 2015, President Buhari was packaged as a messiah who would fix everything alone. When the weight hit, the handlers had to pivot to "change begins with me"

and "Buhari cannot do it alone." Peter Obi now enjoys a similar aura, painted as too clean to be human, a character you would only believe in a novel. Even private truths like Buhari smoking once, a quarrel with his wife, felt like plot holes because the brand had been built too perfectly. Content creators do the same. Blessings CEO has millions hanging on her relationship advice, even as her own marriage collapsed in public. She survives not because the advice is flawless, but because she is brilliant at performance, at holding attention, at making pain look like wisdom.

This is where the Gehgeh episode becomes useful, not just entertaining. It reminds us of a simple, old truth: words are cheap. Not because people are liars, but because imagination is cheap. It costs nothing to imagine how you would act. It costs everything to act when the bill arrives. Politicians and influencers both sell us a fictional world with good oratory, emotional cues, and moral framing. We buy it because it feels good, because it entertains, because it gives us someone to boo or cheer.

I am not saying everyone is fake. I am saying we should separate the message from the messenger. Gehgeh may have been sincere when he told men to avoid marriage, and he may also be sincere now that he chose it. Reality is not a straight line. Two celebrities can preach love and still divorce. A pastor can preach the gospel in perfect English and still struggle to raise his child. That does not erase the value in what they said. It just means human beings are not brands. We are contradictions trying to hold together.

So the next time a viral "university" tells you how life works, listen, laugh, learn, but sieve it. Ask what happens when the theory meets a wedding hall, a hospital bill, a daughter's boyfriend, a co-wife. That is where principles stop being content and start being character. And that is where we all, Gehgeh included, are finally tested.

• Bagudu can be reached via bagudu-mohammed15197@gmail.com or 07034943575.

Why "Respect Your Elders" should not mean "Never Question Them"

SALIHU MARYAM SAIDU

Respect your elders."

It is one of those instructions many Nigerians grow up hearing repeatedly. From the family home to religious gatherings, schools and communities, young people are taught to greet elders properly, listen when they speak and avoid answering them rudely.

It is a valuable lesson. Respect for elders is an important part of Nigerian culture, and older people often possess experience and wisdom that younger generations can learn from.

But there is a line that deserves more attention: when does respect become silence?

There are situations where an elder makes a decision that affects younger people or the entire family, and a younger person notices that something may be wrong. The younger person may want to ask a question or suggest another approach, but stops because of the fear of being labelled disrespectful.

Sometimes, even a polite question

can be interpreted as an attempt to challenge authority.

Imagine a family discussing an important matter. An elder makes a decision, and a younger family member notices a possible problem. Instead of saying, "You are wrong," the young person respectfully says, "Please, can we consider another option? I think this approach may create a problem."

The response may be: "Are you teaching me what to do? You are disrespectful."

At that point, the issue is no longer about whether the young person's suggestion is right or wrong. The conversation has ended simply because the person who raised the concern is younger.

This is where we need to rethink what respect means.

Respect does not mean agreement, and questioning does not automatically mean disrespect.

A young person can disagree with an elder without insulting the elder. Someone can question a decision without questioning the worth or dignity of the person who made it.

There is a significant difference between saying, "You don't know what you are doing," and saying, "Please, can we consider another option?" One is insulting; the other opens the door to discussion.

Unfortunately, the two are sometimes treated as the same thing.

Age deserves respect, but age does not make anyone incapable of making mistakes. An elder may have decades of experience and still make a poor decision. Likewise, a younger person may have a useful idea that deserves to be heard.

Experience and fresh perspectives should not be enemies.

In fact, older and younger generations need each other. Elders possess knowledge of family history, traditions, relationships and life experiences that younger people may not have. Younger people, meanwhile, are growing up in a world shaped by technologies, new forms of communication, changing workplaces and social realities that previous generations did not experience in the same way.

Neither generation knows everything.

This is why the phrase "because I said so" can sometimes prevent a valuable conversation. An explanation does not weaken an elder's authority. In many cases, it strengthens it because it shows that the decision can withstand questions.

There is also a lesson for young people.

The argument for questioning elders should never become an excuse for arrogance. Young people must learn that disagreement can be expressed with courtesy. Being younger does not automatically make one's opinion more intelligent, just as being older does not automatically make an opinion correct. Sometimes, the young person needs to listen.

Sometimes, the elder needs to listen. Both can be true.

What matters is creating an environment where people can speak without being immediately dismissed because of their age.

A healthy family, for instance, should

allow a child or younger adult to ask why a particular decision is being made. Parents can explain their reasoning, correct misunderstandings and, where necessary, reject the suggestion. But the conversation should not automatically become a battle over respect.

There is something powerful about an elder being able to say, "I have considered what you said, and I still believe my decision is better."

That is authority with dialogue. It is different from saying, "You are younger, so you have no right to question me."

The same principle applies beyond the family. In schools, workplaces, religious communities and wider society, younger people should be encouraged to contribute ideas respectfully. A society that discourages questions simply because they come from younger voices may silence useful ideas before they are even considered.

This does not mean abandoning the cultural value of respecting elders. Rather, it means protecting that value from being misunderstood.

NEWSEXTRA**CP Daaor assumes duty in Edo, assures highly mobile policing****● As predecessor urges him to sustain, surpass current security record**MIKE OSAROGIAGBON/
EKHABAFE BELOVED

The newly deployed Commissioner of Police to Edo State, CP Patrick Daaor, has assumed duty in Benin City, the state capital, with a promise to adopt a highly mobile policing strategy to address security challenges across the state.

CP Daaor arrived at the Edo State Police Command headquarters at about 1:30pm on

Monday, August 10, 2026, where he immediately inspected the sentry guards mounted in his honour before being received by senior officers of the Command.

A few minutes later, his predecessor, AIG Monday Agbonika, who is now the Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG) in charge of Zone 5, arrived at the Command headquarters for the formal handover and taking-over ceremony held at the office of the Commissioner of Police.

Speaking after the ceremony, Agbonika recounted some of the challenges encountered and successes recorded during his stewardship of the Command, urging his successor, CP Daaor to sustain and surpass the achievements recorded under his leadership.

The AIG said some gallant officers and operatives of the Command had paid the ultimate price in the course of ensuring the prevailing peace and

security in the state.

He commended the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, sister security agencies and the people of the state for their unwavering support and cooperation during his tenure.

On what Edo residents should expect under his leadership, CP Daaor said, "They should expect a highly mobile command, I mean a command that is always moving, addressing every issue that has to do with the good

people of Edo State."

Patrick Daaor, the 51st Commissioner of Police in Edo State, hails from Benue State and was, until his current posting, the Commissioner of Police in charge of Administration at the Force Intelligence Department (FID), Abuja.

A career police officer with more than 30 years of service in the Nigeria Police Force, CP Daaor has served in various capacities spanning investigation,

divisional policing, Police Mobile Force operations, area command and Force Headquarters duties.

He succeeded Agbonika, who was recently elevated to the rank of Assistant Inspector-General of Police and deployed as the AIG in charge of Zone 5, Benin City.

Monday Agbonika reportedly assumed duty as AIG Zone 5 on July 29, 2026, following the retirement of his predecessor, AIG Salman Dogo-Garba, on July 22, 2026.

Delta steps up measures to tackle herders-farmers conflicts

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Government has intensified efforts to address recurring herders-farmers conflicts, expressing its readiness to partner with relevant stakeholders to promote peaceful coexistence, strengthen security and enhance agricultural productivity across the state.

The commitment was disclosed during an advocacy visit by the Herders and Farmers Dispute Resolution Volunteers (HFDRV) and the Border

Peace Compliance Taskforce (BPCT) to the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in Asaba.

Receiving the delegation in his office, the Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Barr. Ada Val Arenyeka, reaffirmed the state government's commitment to collaborating with credible organisations whose programmes align with its agricultural and livestock development agenda.

Arenyeka stressed that sustainable peace could only be

achieved through strict compliance with existing laws and government policies.

He said herders operating in Delta State must respect farming communities, refrain from illegal grazing, submit to compulsory profiling and registration, carry valid means of identification and cooperate with lawful monitoring and enforcement measures.

The delegation was led by the National Chairman of HFDRV, Alhaji Mustapha Suleman, and the organisation's Secretary, Mr. Epe Paul.

Nigeria's tax revenue climbs to N27tn after 11.3% increase

SALIHU RUKAYYA SAIDU

Nigeria's tax revenue has climbed to about 27 trillion following an 11.3 per cent increase in collections, according to a recent report. The development reflects growing efforts by the government to strengthen revenue generation and improve the country's tax administration system.

The increase is significant as the Federal Government continues to seek ways of reducing its dependence on crude oil

revenue. Taxation has become an increasingly important source of funding for government activities, particularly amid fluctuations in global oil prices and production challenges.

The rise in tax collections has been linked to ongoing reforms designed to improve tax compliance, widen the tax base and ensure that more taxable individuals and businesses meet their obligations. Authorities have also been working to strengthen the use of technology in tax adminis-

tration and reduce leakages in revenue collection.

The additional revenue could provide the government with more funds to finance critical areas of the economy, including infrastructure, healthcare, education, security and social development programmes. Effective use of the increased revenue could also support efforts to improve public services and stimulate economic growth.

However, the development comes against the backdrop of economic challenges fac-

**Happy
Birth
DAY****Nimbel
Shaw Ltd.**

"Happy Birthday, Your Excellency, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, Deputy Governor Edo State. On behalf of the NIMBEL SHAW family, we celebrate your leadership and the vision you continue to bring to Edo State's development. Wishing you good health, wisdom, and many more fruitful years ahead.

**SIGNED:
YASMIN AND
JUNAID
BELO-OSAGIE
Directors, Nimbel
Shaw Limited**



Sports

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

IGP Olatunji Disu receives Commonwealth Games Champion Nathaniel

The Inspector-General of Police, IGP Olatunji Disu, has received 400m Hurdles Commonwealth Games champion Corporal, Ezekiel Nathaniel at the Force

● vows more investment in Police Sports

Headquarters in Abuja.

Speaking during the reception, IGP Disu said the victory underscored the longstanding

relationship between the Nigeria Police Force and sports.

The Police boss explained that Nathaniel's achievement is a reminder of what police personnel can accomplish when provided with the necessary platform and support to excel both in their professional duties and sporting careers.

He said: "The Nigeria Police Force and sports have always been twins, bound together by shared values of discipline, teamwork and excellence.

"This victory is a powerful reminder of that bond, and of what our personnel can achieve when given the platform and

support to thrive both in service and in competition."

The IGP assured police athletes and personnel with sporting talents that the Force would continue to invest in and support police sports, promising to identify, nurture and celebrate talents within its ranks.

"I want Corporal Ezekiel Nathaniel, and every officer watching, to know that this Force will continue to invest in and support police sports.

"We will keep identifying, nurturing and celebrating talent within our ranks, because a Force that is strong in body and spirit is a Force that serves the nation better."



IGP OLATUNJI DISU WITH EZEKIEL NATHANIEL

NPFL 2026/27: Bendel Insurance FC set to begin Campaign against Warri Wolves In Benin

It is certain that the 2026/27 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season will kick off as planned as the league management body has officially announced Friday, August 28 as the kick off date with Shooting Stars SC of Ibadan and Inter Lagos FC paired against each other for the opening match in Ibadan.

The announcement was made during the draws ceremony held on the sidelines of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Nigeria Premier Football League in Ibadan, Oyo State on Friday, August 7, 2026.

The draws also have Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin at home against Warri Wolves in their first game of the season. The match is scheduled for Sunday, August 30. The Niger Delta derby is followed by a trip to Lafia for Match Day two with Nasarawa Utd.

Kun Khalifat(H), Ranchers Bees (A) and Ikorodu City (H) are next in the first five fixtures involving the Benin Arsenals.

Bendel Insurance FC now expect their fans to return to the stadium to cheer them up against their opponents as the club have served out the three match behind closed doors punishment.

● as Enabulele salutes NPFL Mgt

Meanwhile, the Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has commended the NPFL management under the leadership of Hon. Otunba Gbenga Elegbeleye for his visionary and pragmatic leadership which is evident in the stability and sus-

tainable progress the topflight league has recorded in the recent past.

Enabulele said that Elegbeleye has distinguished himself, having succeeded in establishing a stable calendar that has seen season kickoff and conclusion going as planned without any major hiccups.

"Our premier league has impressed tremendously in the operational standard and has been stable and consistent following the calendar for the past three seasons with a clear sense of direction. Elegbeleye's management committee deserves commendation". He said

Bendel Insurance FC fin-



BENDEL INSURANCE FC IN TRAINING

Lagos hosts 250 fencers from 20 nations

At least 250 athletes from more than 20 countries will compete at the Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Lagos from Sunday, Aug. 9, to Friday, Aug. 14.

President of the Nigerian Fencing Federation, Adeyin-

ka Samuel, disclosed this on Saturday at a press conference held at Rugby School, Eko Atlantic City.

Samuel said Nigeria was ready to host a successful championship and expressed confidence that the country's athletes would capitalise on

home advantage.

He said the Nigerian team had prepared extensively and possessed the quality needed to challenge for medals across several categories.

"I think we have a good chance. We have a number of athletes that are very strong

and have been training hard.

"They are focused, hungry to win and determined. All these qualities give them a very good chance of success," he said.

Samuel said Nigeria was targeting medals in the under-23, veterans and wheelchair fencing events, with ambitions of winning gold.



JANET 'SEMENYA' AKEKOROMOWEI

Benfica meet officials over NO World Cup for new striker Semenza

Portuguese champions Benfica have agreed to meet with Nigerian officials this week after they turned down the call-up of Janet 'Semenya' Akekoromowe for next month's U20 World Cup in Poland.

The Falcons have been training in Abuja ahead of the World Cup with coach Moses Aduku pushing for the release of Semenza for the tournament.

Aduku as well as representatives of the big striker will be part of this meeting after Benfica would have received a formal notice from the NFF.

'Semenya' who has been capped by Nigeria at U17 and Super Falcons lev-

els, has been barnished to the Benfica B team since they received her official invitation for the World Cup.

Lagos Is Building the Sporting Future — SSA Adeboye Commends Sanwo-Olu's Infrastructure Drive Ahead of National Intermediate Games

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Grassroots Sports Development, Hon. Adeyinka Anthony Adeboye, has commended the Lagos State Government for its sustained investment in sporting infrastructure as preparations gather momentum for the inaugural National Intermediate Games, scheduled to hold in Lagos in September 2026.

Nigeria league must embrace commercial model to survive – NPFL boss

The Chairman of the Nigeria Premier Football League, Chief Gbenga Elegbeleye, has said the financial sustainability of NPFL clubs remains the biggest challenge facing the league, as only seven of the 20 teams are privately owned.

Elegbeleye stated this on Friday at the 2026 NPFL Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Reviewing the 2025/2026 season, which ended on May 24, the NPFL boss said that the campaign tested the league, but also showed what could be achieved through collaboration.

"The title race went down to the wire and there was improved matchday organisation, better security, and increased fan engagement across venues," the chairman said. On broadcast, Elegbeleye described the season as a mixed experience.

He said that for the first time, the league's Over-The-Top (OTT) broadcaster, Propel Sports Africa, achieved 80 per cent matchday coverage.

Elegbeleye, however, added that the relationship was terminated midway due to the broad-

caster's failure to fulfil its rights obligations.

He also disclosed that Direct-To-Home partner, AfroSoccer, joined from mid-season but only managed to produce one game per matchday, though talks are ongoing to improve both the number of games and the spread of coverage.

The chairman listed three urgent issues the league must address going forward.

First was the over-reliance of 13 clubs on government subvention, which he said made a commercial model driven by merchandising, ticketing, branding, and private investment inevitable.

Second was infrastructure and compliance, with a call for stadiums, medical facilities, and youth development structures to meet minimum standards, while the third centred on integrity.

The NPFL chairman warned that the board would act decisively against match manipulation and the intimidation of officials. For the 2026/2027 season, Elegbeleye said the agenda would focus on commercial growth, player and officials' welfare, and stricter professional standards.

Sports



WAFU-B: Edo Queens camp bubbles as Tenebe visits team ● Redeems pledge, task team to go for glory

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Nigeria women premier league football champions Edo Queens' preparation for WAFU-B continental football tournament received a big boost today as the Chairman of All Progressives Congress APC, Edo State, Emperor Jarrett Tenebe

paid a surprise visit to their camp and redeemed the pledge he made during the Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Super Six in Port Harcourt.

Delivering the morale boosting package to the Nigeria champions, the sports loving Edo APC boss charged the team to be good ambassadors

at the forthcoming West Africa Football Union (WAFU-B) play-off in Burkina Faso.

Tenebe who did not want the cash prize for the team announced urged the players to remain focused and take their training programme seriously as they fine-tune their readiness for the CAF champions league prelim campaigns.

He commended the players for making Edo State proud during the NWFL Super six showpiece in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Tenebe, who was accompanied by the Executive Chairman of Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Enabulele, revealed that the State government has put all logistics in place for the team to excel in Burkina Faso, adding that the girls have all it takes to face any team in Africa.

According to him: "We are very proud of you girls. I can see you are doing very well in your build up to the continental engagement. You made the state proud during the regular league season. For Edo Queens to have won the league trophy in a battle involving six NWFL premierships giants goes to show that we are fully ready for the Continental challenge."

"I am very happy with your level of preparation for the WAFU-B play-off in Burkina Faso. So, I urge you all to show total commitment, go there and conquer again as you did in 2024. We are solidly behind you. Also know that the State governor, His Excellency Senator Monday Okpebholo, is waiting to receive the WAFU-B trophy. I wish us the very best of luck."



EDO QUEENS WITH COACH

NPFL 2026/27: Bendel Insurance FC set to begin Campaign against Warri Wolves in Benin

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

It is certain that the 2026/27 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season will kick off as planned as the league management body has officially announced Friday, August 28 as the kick off date with Shooting Stars SC of Ibadan and Inter Lagos FC paired against each other for the opening match in Ibadan.

The announcement was made during the draws ceremony held on the sidelines of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Nigeria Premier Football League in Ibadan, Oyo State on Friday, August 7, 2026.

The draws also have Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin at home against Warri Wolves in their first game of the season. The match is scheduled for Sunday, August 30. The Niger Delta derby is followed by a trip to Lafia for Match Day two with Nasarawa Utd.

Kun Khalifat(H), Ranchers Bees (A) and Ikorodu City (H) are next in the first five fixtures involving the Benin Arsenal.

Bendel Insurance FC now expect their fans to return to the stadium to cheer them up against their opponents as the club have served out the three match behind closed doors punishment.

Meanwhile, the Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has commended the NPFL management under the leadership of

Hon. Otunba Gbenga Elegbeleye for his visionary and pragmatic leadership which is evident in the stability and sustainable progress the topflight league has recorded in the recent past.

Enabulele said that Elegbeleye has distinguished himself, having succeeded in establishing a stable calendar that has seen season kickoff and conclusion going as planned without any major hiccups.



BENDEL INSURANCE FC

Edo set to launch Youth Tennis Championship 2026

● as Tennis Association chairman Dr Jackson hails sponsors 82.ng

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Edo State Tennis Association under the leadership of Dr Elo Jackson has announced their readiness to launch a 3-day Tennis Championship on Wednesday, August 12, 2026.

The championship, tagged, 'Edo Youth Tennis Championship' which is opened to U-12 and U-16 male and female players is scheduled to run from Wednesday 12 to Saturday

15th, August 2026 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin.

According to the chairman of Edo Tennis Association Dr Elo Jackson the maiden Tennis championship is aimed at providing a competitive platform for talent discovery, nurturing, and to celebrate the next generation of tennis talents in Edo State and Nigeria in general.

Dr Jackson expressed gratitude to the sponsors of the Tennis Championship 82.ng

Ltd for adding values to the Edo Tennis development plan.

He said that lack of funds is the major hiccup in the development of tennis, revealing that hosting a major tennis championship is quite expensive.

Speaking on the initiative, Mr. Victor Ezewoko Ugwualla, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of 82.ng Ltd, said the championship reflects the company's vision of creating opportunities that transform lives.

"At 82.ng, we believe businesses should create lasting value beyond commercial success. Through 82 Sports, we are investing in grassroots sports because we see it as a powerful platform for developing young people, promoting excellence, and strengthening social development in our host communities. This championship is the beginning of a long-term commitment to youth sports development in Edo State." He assured.



NIGERIAN FENCING

Lagos hosts 250 fencers from 20 nations

At least 250 athletes from more than 20 countries will compete at the Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Lagos from Sunday, Aug. 9, to Friday, Aug. 14.

President of the Nigerian Fencing Federation, Adeyinka Samuel, disclosed this on Saturday at a press conference held at Rugby School, Eko Atlantic City.

Samuel said Nigeria was ready to host a successful championship and expressed confidence that the country's athletes would capitalise on home advantage.

He said the Nigerian team had prepared extensively and possessed the quality needed to challenge for medals across several categories.

"I think we have a good chance. We have a number of athletes that are very strong and have been training hard."

"They are focused, hungry to win and determined. All these qualities give them a very good chance of success," he said.

Samuel said Nigeria was targeting medals in the under-23, veterans and wheelchair fencing events, with ambitions of winning gold.

Nigeria League must embrace commercial model to survive – NPFL boss

The Chairman of the Nigeria Premier Football League, Chief Gbenga Elegbeleye, has said the financial sustainability of NPFL clubs remains the biggest challenge facing the league, as only seven of the 20 teams are privately owned.

Elegbeleye stated this on Friday at the 2026 NPFL Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Reviewing the 2025/2026 season, which ended on May 24, the NPFL boss said that the campaign tested the league, but also showed what could be achieved through collaboration.

"The title race went down to the wire and there was improved matchday organisation, better security, and increased fan engagement across venues," the chairman said.

On broadcast, Elegbeleye described the season as a mixed experience.

He said that for the first time, the league's Over-The-Top (OTT) broadcaster, Propel Sports Africa, achieved 80 percent matchday coverage.

Elegbeleye, however, added that the relationship was terminated midway due to the broadcaster's failure to fulfil its rights obligations.



GBENGA ELEGBELEYE

Nigeria stripped of African, National U-20 mixed 4x100m record after spikes disqualification

Nigeria has been stripped of the African and national under-20 records in the mixed 4x100m relay after the team was disqualified at the World Athletics

U-20 Championships for using unauthorised spikes.

The quartet of Tejiri Godwin, Chigozie Rosemary Nwankwo, Perfect Faye and Miracle Ezechukwu clocked

41.77 seconds to finish fourth in the final in Eugene, Oregon.

The performance initially stood as both an African and Nigerian U-20 record. Officials later ruled that Faye's spikes

were not on the World Athletics approved list, resulting in the disqualification and the erasure of the mark.

The decision came shortly after the race, in which Eze-

chukwu produced a strong 9.89-second anchor leg to lift the team from seventh place into fourth.

Italy won gold in a world under-20 record of 41.21 seconds,

followed by Great Britain (41.38) and the United States (41.39).

The disqualification means Nigeria loses both the continental and national junior records set in the event.



Boxing in Nigeria is like hell fire, National Welterweight Champion Ikechukwu raises alarm

Nigeria's national welterweight champion, Michael Ikechukwu (Odogwu) has raised alarm over the current state of the pugilist's sport and submitted that boxing in the country is like hell fire.

Sports247 reports that the outspoken pugilist, who had his first professional fight in 2021, lamented over the low amounts that Nigerian boxers currently get as contract fees after their bouts.

Ikechukwu spilt the beans on the sordid state of professional boxing in Nigeria while speaking on Athlete's Corner segment of Sports247's television programme, Inside Naija Sports.

He added during the programme that airs weekly on YouTube and NTA News24 that Nigerian boxers are in the sport just because of passion they have for it, while relying on other jobs to stay alive.

'Odogwu' recalled that he actually ventured into boxing five years ago after he was motivated by a dramatic scene he observed at Lagos National Stadium.

"Back then, I used to go for swimming sessions at the National Stadium. One day, I saw a female boxer fighting a male boxer, and she was doing it very well.

"I was amazed to see what a woman could do against a man. So, I went to the coach and asked how I could join his club. He agreed to take me, and I quickly registered.

"It was not easy at the beginning and, even after three months, I kept on having bruises and cuts; but I didn't give up. I had a lot of passion for it.

"I even told myself that one day, I'll not only be national champion, but I will also be world champion. I thank God that I'm now a national champion in my weight category," Ikechukwu retorted.

However, while revealing his strong passion for the sport and how he has grown since his professional debut in 2021, 'Odogwu' confessed that the biggest challenge for him is the issue of paltry payments handed to boxers in Nigeria.

"I'm happy with my journey so far in boxing. It's now five years for me, but I just have to confess that, in Nigeria, boxing is hell.

"Yes, boxing is like hell fire in Nigeria, but I've enjoyed my five years in it because I love boxing with a strong passion. Many of us like the sport, but Nigeria is not helping us.

"Number one, the income we get as boxers is too low. It's interesting to be a boxer but, in Nigeria, you must have a side-job in order to stay alive.



MICHAEL IKECHUKWU

ABA urges Taraba Basketball coaches to unite, build Grassroots Talent

A member of the Taraba House of Assembly, Tanko Yusuf, has urged basketball coaches to unite and support grassroots development of the sport.

A statement by Kayode Adeniyi, Head of Media and Public Relations, Amateur Basketball Academies (ABA), said Tanko made the call during a two-day coaching clinic in Jalingo.

Tanko, who is also Chairman, Taraba Basketball Association, said Taraba had talented coaches, players and referees capable of competing favour-

ably with their counterparts within and outside Nigeria.

"We know that we have talented coaches, players and excellent referees, but we must remain focused, united and committed to continuous learning," Tanko said.

He urged coaches to embrace modern coaching methods, share knowledge and create opportunities for young players to develop their skills and achieve their potential.

According to him, unity among stakeholders was critical to rebuilding basketball

from the grassroots and positioning Taraba as a major basketball hub in Nigeria.

Tanko commended ABA for bringing the coaching clinic to Taraba, describing the initiative as timely and important to developing coaches and young basketball players.

"I encourage other stakeholders to support ABA's vision because sustainable basketball development requires collective efforts, proper training and consistent investment in coaches and players," he said.



TARABA BASKETBALL GRASSROOTS TALENT

Nigeria's Samuel becomes president of Commonwealth Fencing Federation

Nigeria has recorded a historic achievement in international sports ad-

ministration with the election of Adeyinka Samuel as President of the Commonwealth Fencing

Federation (CFF).

This is contained in a statement issued by the federation on Sunday in Lagos.

Samuel defeated the incumbent, Marie-France Dufour, at the federation's elective Annual General Meeting, held at Rugby School Nigeria, Atlantic City, Lagos, on Saturday.

He secured 14 votes against Dufour's six.

Samuel has become the first Nigerian and African to lead the CFF, breaking the long-standing tradition of leadership from

countries such as Scotland, Australia and Canada.

"This is a great honour and a responsibility that I do not take lightly," the statement quoted Samuel as saying.

"I am grateful to the Commonwealth fencing family for the confidence placed in me," Samuel added.

He said his election would provide an opportunity to further develop fencing across the Commonwealth and create greater opportunities for athletes.



ADEYINKA SAMUEL

Basketball: MFM clinch maiden Louis Edem title

Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM) Basketball Club defeated First Bank 49-41 on Saturday to win the maiden Louis Edem West Africa Women's Basketball Championship.

Both sides produced an entertaining final, battling fiercely for the trophy at the tournament's inaugural edition.

MFM captain, Ukamaka Okoh, described the victory as a major confidence booster ahead of the forthcoming Nigeria Women's Basketball League season.

She said First Bank provided the ideal test and helped her team demonstrate its readiness to challenge for domestic honours.

"It's a great competition. We thank the organisers for giving us the opportunity to showcase our skills and prove ourselves.

"We have been preparing all year for opportunities like this and

we are delighted with the result at the end of the day," she said.

Earlier, Victoria Queens of Lagos defeated GRA of Ghana 54-48 in the third-place match at the Indoor Sports Hall, National Stadium, Surulere.

Founder of the championship, Louis Edem, praised all participating teams and described the tournament as another landmark achievement for the Louis Edem Foundation.

"It is another great moment for all the teams that came for this year's championship," Edem said.

He noted that the participation of teams from other West African countries would strengthen competition and improve basketball development across the region.

"For example, the team from Ghana competing against elite Nigerian teams will return home better prepared for its domestic league.

FG backs Onyeka Ikenga football academy to nurture future talents

The Federal Government has thrown its weight behind the newly unveiled Onyeka Ikenga Football Academy, saying the initiative will provide a platform to discover and develop Nigeria's next generation of football stars.

The Minister of Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande stated this at the unveiling of the academy's Under-17 team in Abuja on Saturday.

Olawande represented by his Special Adviser on Public Engagement, Omoleye Adedoyin, said the initiative demonstrated the commitment of individuals and stakeholders to football development and youth

empowerment.

"Being here today is an opportunity for me. Being right here shows that there are people who are committed to football and sports, and we want our young children to grow and be proud of us," he said.

He said the academy would enable young footballers to showcase their abilities, develop their skills and pursue professional careers.

"This is a platform where talents can be identified. There are also many young people who are willing to do more.

"From here, it is a stepping stone for them to go higher and put into practice whatever they have learned," he said.



ONYEKA IKENGA