

Okpebholo signs Edo Assembly funds management, judiciary autonomy bills into law

RICHARD EWEKA
BENIN CITY
Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has signed the Edo House of Assembly Funds Management Bill 2023 and the State

Judiciary Financial Autonomy 2023 Amendment Bill into law. The governor signed the bills on Monday at Government House, Benin City, while receiving the Speaker of the Edo House of Assembly, Prince Yekini Idiaje.

He commended the lawmakers for the swift passage of the legislation, saying he was pleased that the issue had been resolved. "I am indeed delighted because this has become like a controversial law, I must confess to you," Okpebholo said.

He said the three arms of government — the executive, legislature and judiciary — had distinct responsibilities and should operate within their constitutional mandates. According to him, the executive is responsible for administration and implementation, while the legislature makes laws and performs oversight functions and the judiciary interprets laws and punishes offenders.

"For me, deviating from these is totally out of the field of play, changing the goal post. I saw danger in it and the way things were going," the governor said. Okpebholo said he was confident

Okpebholo said he was confident

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That The People May Know

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#200

FG commits ₦6.47trn to strategic infrastructure

● *Highways absorb 59% of the expenditure in 30 months*

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH AND OSAYAMEN JESSICA
ABUJA
The Federal Government deployed ₦6.47 trillion to strategic infrastructure projects between June 2023 and December 2025, with highway development accounting for more than half of the total expenditure. This was disclosed in the

newly released Nigeria Reform Scorecard titled "The Benefits, Costs and Harm Prevented," which tracked the utilisation of savings from fuel subsidy removal and other economic reforms. An analysis of the document, released on Sunday, showed that the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway received the highest allocation, with ₦2.23 trillion disbursed for its construction.

According to the scorecard, the Sokoto-Badagry Superhighway received ₦1.11 trillion, while ₦489.3 billion was committed to the Trans-Sahara Superhighway. The three projects alone accounted for ₦3.83 trillion, representing about 59 per cent of the ₦6.47 trillion spent on strategic infrastructure within the review period. Other significant allocations

include ₦366 billion for road emergency intervention projects, ₦304.2 billion for Section II of the Abuja-Kaduna-Kano Road, ₦291.3 billion for the Lekki Deep Sea Port Access Road, and ₦228.4 billion for the Ilesha-Akure-Benin road corridor. The government also earmarked ₦250 billion for the Renewed Hope Smallholder Support Programme, ₦124.7

billion for the construction of 1,550 housing units for personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces, and ₦109.9 billion for Operation Lake Sanity, a multinational security initiative. The scorecard covered the 30-month period between June 2023 and December 2025 and detailed how additional fiscal resources generated from reforms were deployed. The Minister of Finance and

Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Taiwo Oyejede, said the removal of petrol subsidy and the unification of the foreign exchange market mobilised ₦15.8 trillion in additional resources for the Federation. "Between June 2023 and December 2025, subsidy savings mobilised a sum of ₦15.8tn in resources for the Federation,"

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Okpebholo assures sustainable funding for road projects

RICHARD EWEKA
BENIN CITY
Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has assured that his administration will continue to fund and support contractors handling road projects across the state to ensure significant progress before Christmas. Governor Okpebholo gave the assurance yesterday after inspecting ongoing work on the Arue-Uromi-Agbor road projects in Esan North East Local Government Area. He said the projects were progressing despite the challenges posed by the rainy season. "We are here to look at what they are doing. We have gone around several project sites since morning to see how far

they are going, and the work is progressing," he said. The governor explained that the rainy season had limited the construction activities that could be carried out at the moment, making drainage works a major focus. "By the grace of God, we are looking at what we can achieve between now and Christmas, because of the rainy season, nothing much can actually be done. "The only thing they can do now is the drainage, which they are working on, and we are seeing the progress they are making across the various sites," he said. Okpebholo said the state government would continue to release funds to contractors as resources became available.

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SWIFT ASSENT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (right), the Speaker of EDHA, Prince Yekini Idiaje (left) and the Clerk of the Assembly, Yahaya Omogbai (middle) at the signing of the Edo House of Assembly Funds Management Bill 2023 and the State Judiciary Financial Autonomy 2023 Amendment Bill into law in Government House on Monday.

Dangote Refinery extends free fuel delivery to four more states—Pg 2

Edo Assembly reverses Agbebaku's resignation, impeaches former Speaker—Pg 3

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NEWS

Dangote Refinery extends free fuel delivery to four more states

SULE OSAGIE MARVELLOUS
ABUJA

The Dangote Petroleum Refinery has extended its free petroleum products delivery programme to four additional states as part of efforts to reduce distribution costs and potentially lower petrol prices for consumers.

The newly added states are Kano, Imo, Anambra and Nasarawa, bringing the number of locations covered by the initiative to 10.

The programme initially

covered Lagos, Ogun, Rivers, Kaduna, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Delta states.

The refinery said the initiative was designed to reduce the transportation burden on independent petroleum marketers by taking products closer to their markets.

The arrangement is expected to eliminate some of the costs associated with transporting petroleum products over long distances and create room for savings to be passed through the distribution chain.

Speaking on the development, Group Executive Director, Commercial Operations, Oil & Gas, WAEP and Fertiliser, Dangote Industries Limited, Fatima Aliko Dangote, said the initiative was intended to ensure that the benefits of domestic refining extended beyond the refinery.

According to her, the value of local refining should ultimately be felt by consumers and other participants in the petroleum products value chain.

She said absorbing the cost of delivering petroleum products to

customers would remove a significant component of the distribution burden and create room for savings to flow through the value chain to consumers.

She added that the refinery's objective was to make fuel distribution more efficient, eliminate unnecessary expenses and create conditions that could support more competitive pump prices across the country.

The development has also received the support of the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN), which said the ar-

range could ease some of the financial and logistical challenges confronting its members.

IPMAN National Publicity Secretary and Public Relations Officer, Chinedu Ukadike, said the initiative could help address delays that often occur after marketers had paid for petroleum products.

According to him, marketers sometimes have their funds tied up for days or weeks while waiting for products to be loaded and transported to their destinations.

He said the new delivery arrangement could shorten the period marketers' capital remained tied down, improve their cash flow and enable them to manage their businesses more efficiently.

The refinery noted that transportation costs become particularly significant when petroleum products are moved to markets far from the refinery.

Such costs include haulage, vehicle operations, drivers' expenses, insurance and risks associated with road transportation.



ROAD PROJECTS:

Governor Monday Okpebholo (right) and the Area Manager of Setraco Nigeria Limited, Mr. Michel Aoy, flanked by some top officials of Edo State Government and the construction firm during an inspection of on-going work on Arue-Uromi-Agbor Road Projects in Esan North East LGA on Monday.

5 firms drive Nigeria's \$120m non-oil export earnings

RICHARD EWEKA AND
OSARUGUE OSADOLOR

ABUJA

Five companies generated a combined \$120m from Nigeria's non-oil exports in April 2026, highlighting the growing contribution of fertiliser and agricultural commodities to the country's foreign-exchange earnings.

The companies—Dangote Fertiliser, Robust International Commodities, Tulip Cocoa Processing, Valency Agro Nigeria and Outspan Nigeria—accounted for 29.51 per cent of the earnings recorded by Nige-

ria's top 100 non-oil exporters during the month, according to the Central Bank of Nigeria's April 2026 Economic Report.

The CBN said Nigeria's non-oil export earnings rose from \$0.77bn in March to \$0.96bn in April, supported mainly by higher global commodity prices and increased receipts from cashew nuts and fertiliser.

Cashew nuts remained the country's leading non-oil export, accounting for 21.25 per cent of earnings, while urea contributed 14.15 per cent and cocoa beans 10.46 per cent.

Dangote Fertiliser recorded the

largest share among the five companies, contributing 14.15 per cent of the earnings of the top 100 exporters. Robust International Commodities followed with 5.16 per cent, while Tulip Cocoa Processing, Valency Agro Nigeria and Outspan Nigeria contributed 4.03 per cent, 3.17 per cent and 3.01 per cent respectively.

The strong performance of the companies reflects Nigeria's increasing reliance on agricultural commodities and processed products to diversify its export earnings beyond crude oil.

Dangote Fertiliser's performance was driven by fertil-

iser exports, particularly urea, which ranked as Nigeria's second-largest non-oil export product during the period.

Robust International Commodities, which deals in agricultural commodity processing and trading, contributed through products including cashew nuts and sesame seeds.

Tulip Cocoa Processing also featured prominently, with cocoa cake and cocoa butter accounting for its contribution. The company processes cocoa beans into semi-finished products used in international cocoa and chocolate markets.

FG commits ₦6.47trn to strategic...

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Oyedele stated.

"There wasn't any line in the Federation Account with the description, 'subsidy savings'. The savings showed up in the form of higher collection by Customs... The NRS, Petroleum Profit Tax that it collected before, same dollar, higher amount in naira."

According to the report, the Federal Government recorded an incremental expenditure of N30.64 trillion during the period. Strategic infrastructure accounted for N6.47 trillion, or 21.1 per cent of the total in-

crease.

The Ministry of Finance said the infrastructure interventions were designed to address long-standing constraints to investment, productivity and economic growth.

"The objective is to use improved fiscal capacity to address infrastructure constraints that limit investment, productivity and economic growth," the scorecard stated.

The Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, listed as one of the administration's four legacy road projects, accounted for about 34 per cent of total infrastructure spending.

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cerned that funds meant for capital projects were no longer reaching the people, adding that such projects were the most visible way government could improve the lives of residents.

He commended the lawmakers for what he described as standing by the people, saying their action demonstrated their commitment to the development of Edo State.

Earlier, Idiaje said the legislation did not remove the financial autonomy of the House of Assembly or the judiciary.

He explained that recurrent expenditure would continue to go to the Assembly and judiciary, while the amendment addressed the management of capital funds.

"It is the capital part of the

funds that has issues. It was badly abused," the speaker said.

Idiaje said the governor's position was aimed at preventing further abuse of capital funds by ensuring that the executive handles the capital component through the appropriation process.

He said the Assembly and judiciary would submit proposals to the executive for approval before accessing funds for capital projects.

"The autonomy is still in place, there is no fear on any side, and the unions should not have any fear," Idiaje said, adding that workers' salaries were not affected by the amendment.

"I believe they have not been properly briefed, but the autonomy is still in order and the workers' salaries are not touched," he said.

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"Our aim is to make sure that we do our best to fund them. As the money comes to us, we also use the money to fund them. So, we will continue to strive to ensure that progress is made on these roads," he said.

He reiterated his administration's commitment to providing contractors with the resources required to sustain work on the projects.

The governor expressed optimism that the projects would improve road infrastructure and ease movement for residents and motorists, particu-

larly during the Christmas period.

The Area Manager of Setraco Nigeria Ltd., Mr. Michel Aoy, said the Irrua-Uromi bypass road would be nine metres wide on each side, with a concrete barrier at the centre and street lighting along the route.

Aoy said securing the right of way for the 18.6-metre road, in addition to a drainage corridor of about 20 metres, had posed a major challenge.

"Now we can see the drain executed, which is the hardest step of the project and which will normally take time with contractors," he said.

Banks dominate Nigeria's suspicious transaction reports as NFIU records 42,082 filings

ODINI AMAKA VIVIAN

ABUJA

The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) has disclosed that banks, fintech companies and other reporting entities submitted 42,082 Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) to the agency in 2025, with Deposit Money Banks accounting for the overwhelming majority

of the filings.

The figure was contained in the NFIU's 2025 Annual Report, which highlighted continued financial risks in the country and increased regulatory monitoring of transactions.

The agency also received 41,716,214 Currency Transaction Reports (CTRs) and 10,513 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) during the year, reflecting the scale of financial

transactions and compliance activities monitored by the intelligence unit.

According to the report, Deposit Money Banks submitted 38,715 STRs, representing about 92 per cent of the total reports received from the various sectors.

Other Financial Institutions accounted for 2,185 reports, while Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions submitted 1,029. Capital market operators and insurance

companies filed 104 reports, while Virtual Asset Service Providers, including cryptocurrency-related businesses, submitted 49.

The NFIU said its reporting framework covers threshold-based transactions, suspicious transactions and activities, as well as regulatory submissions relating to anti-money laundering, counter-terrorism financing and counter-proliferation financing.

Edo Assembly reverses Agbeba's resignation, impeaches former Speaker

RAYMOND OSOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has disclaimed the purported resignation of the former

Speaker, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbeba, and instead impeached him during plenary in Benin City yesterday.

Moving a motion to replace the reported resignation with impeachment, the House Majority Leader, Hon. Ojezele

Osezua Sunday, said the alleged resignation letter had not been officially received or considered by the House.

Ojezele said the purported resignation process was unknown to parliamentary practice and did not conform to

established procedures, urging members to support a motion for Agbeba's impeachment.

The motion was seconded by Hon. Oshomah Ahmed, representing Etsako Central Constituency.

When the motion was put to a vote, the majority of the lawmakers voted in favour of the impeachment.

Following the decision, the Majority Leader presented the impeachment letter of the former Speaker to the Clerk of the House for onward transmission to the new Speaker.

Reacting to the development, the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Idiaye, expressed concern over what he described as the unwarranted actions of Agbeba.

He reiterated his directive that the former Speaker return all property belonging to the House in his possession on or before Friday this week.

The Speaker warned that law enforcement agencies could be invited to assist in recovering the property if it was not returned within the stipulated period.

Meanwhile, the Assembly also passed two amendment bills during yesterday's sitting: the House of Assembly State Fund Management Law (2023)

and the Judiciary Financial Autonomy Law (2023).

The House reverted to a Committee of the Whole following a motion moved by the Majority Leader, Hon. Ojezele Osezua Sunday, with the proposed amendments receiving overwhelming support from members.

After reverting to plenary, Speaker Idiaye directed the Clerk of the House, Alhaji Yahaya Omogbai, to forward clean copies of the amended bills to the State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for assent.

The House also confirmed the nomination of Mr. Ambrose Oyakhilome Ayewoh as Executive Chairman of the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

The Edo State House of Assembly is expected to resume plenary on Tuesday.



NDC COURSE 34 GRADUATION LECTURE:

From left: Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa; former President Goodluck Jonathan; Commandant of National Defence College (NDC), Rear Admiral Abdullahi Ahmed; Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Defence, Rep. Babajimi Benson and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Sola Enikanolaiye, during the NDC Course 34 graduation Lecture in Abuja.

Banks file 92% of 42,082 suspicious reports as NFIU flags decline in 2025 filings

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH AND ODINI AMAKA VIVIAN

ABUJA

Deposit Money Banks accounted for 92 per cent of all Suspicious Transaction Reports submitted to the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit in 2025, as total filings dropped sharply by 48.8 per cent compared to 2024.

This is contained in the NFIU's 2025 Annual Report released on Sunday, which showed continued regulatory monitoring of Nigeria's financial system amid evolving risks.

According to the report, reporting entities submitted a total of 42,082 STRs, 10,513 Suspicious Activity Reports, and 41,716,214 Currency Transaction Reports during the year.

"During the review period, the NFIU received a total of 41,716,214 CTRs, 42,082 STRs, and 10,513 SARs," the report stated.

The data showed that Deposit Money Banks filed 38,715 of the 42,082 STRs received. Other Financial Institutions submitted 2,185, while Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions accounted for 1,029.

Capital market operators

and insurance companies filed 104 STRs, while Virtual Asset Service Providers, including cryptocurrency businesses, submitted 49.

Banks also dominated SAR filings with 8,313 of the 10,513 reports. OFIs contributed 1,816, capital market and insurance firms filed 295, and VASPs submitted 89. The DNFBP sector recorded zero SARs.

On CTRs, banks filed 37,214,139 of the 41.7 million reports, representing 89.2 per cent. OFIs submitted 4,212,466, while capital market and insurance operators filed 289,296. VASPs filed 313.

Quarterly data showed a steady rise in bank STR filings from 9,134 in Q1 to 10,032 in Q4. CTR filings by banks also increased from 7,040,493 in Q1 to 11,091,107 in Q4.

Despite increased monitoring, the number of suspicious filings fell significantly year-on-year.

STRs declined by 40,061 from 82,143 in 2024 to 42,082 in 2025. SARs dropped by 12,851 from 23,364 to 10,513, a 55 per cent decrease.

The NFIU attributed the reporting framework to compliance with the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act. Section 11 mandates reporting of transac-

tions above N5 million for individuals and N10 million for corporates within seven days, while Section 3(1) requires reporting of transfers above \$10,000 within 24 hours.

The agency received 28,133,909 reports involving Politically Exposed Persons in 2025. Banks accounted for the bulk with 27,382,793 filings across the four quarters. OFI PEP reports jumped from 12 in Q1 to 617,286 in Q4.

The NFIU's DNFBP Divi-

sion also conducted joint on-site examinations of 29 entities in the FCT across real estate, casinos, precious metals and consultancy sectors. The exercise led to 20 new registrations on the RapidAML portal and the submission of 1,029 STRs.

The NFIU said it collaborates with the CBN, NAICOM, SEC and SCUML to ensure compliance with anti-money laundering, counter-terrorism financing and counter-proliferation financing regulations.

NUPRC issues 90-day deadline as 31 firms secure 37 oil blocks in 2025 licensing round

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH AND FAVOUR OBADIGIE

ABUJA

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission has commenced the post-award process for Nigeria's 2025 oil and gas licensing round, giving 31 successful bidders 90 days to meet statutory obligations, including payment of signature bonuses ranging from \$3 million to \$7 million per block.

The Commission released the official list of winners on Thursday following the conclusion of the commercial bid conference in Abuja. A total of 37 prospective licences were awarded out of the 50 assets

put up for bidding.

Under the Petroleum Industry Act 2021, the provisional awards precede the formal grant of Petroleum Prospecting Licences, and are contingent on bidders fulfilling all post-award conditions within the stipulated timeframe.

The NUPRC warned that failure to meet the 90-day deadline would result in automatic forfeiture of bid guarantees, with affected blocks reallocated to pre-qualified reserve bidders. "Winners who fail to pay signature bonuses within the stipulated time frame in line with the Petroleum Industry Act will forfeit their bid guarantee and lose their provisional awards to the reserve bidders,"

the Commission stated.

The awards cover a mix of onshore, shallow water, deep offshore and frontier basin acreage across the Niger Delta, Benin Basin, Benue Trough, Anambra Basin and Chad Basin.

The list reflects a blend of indigenous operators and established exploration companies.

In the Niger Delta onshore and shallow water segment, SSonic Petroleum Limited secured PPL 2A29, while CFP Pipelines and Flowlines Company Limited won PPL 2A30. Other awardees include Dutchford Exploration and Production, PPL 2A32; Rosem Energy, PPL 2A38; Network Exploration and Production, PPL 2A40; and Lexoil Nigeria, PPL 2A42.

Volonte Oil and Gas won PPL 2A46; Clinton Oil Field

secured PPL 2A48 and PPL 2A62; Nuway Oaklane won PPL 2A49; and Ramec Integrated Services secured PPL 2A50.

Italia Company Limited got PPL 2A53, Blueridge Exploration won PPL 2A54, UP Energies secured PPL 2A56, and AYM Shafa won PPL 2A57. Blackrock Energy Holdings, Funtay Integrated Business and Riparian Development and Production also secured blocks in the region.

In deep offshore, Star Deep Water Petroleum Limited won PPL 2010.

Multiple-asset winners include Gupsco Energy Limited with PPL 2A44 and PPL 2A51, and Concept-Reel Petroleum Services with PPL 2A47 and PPL 2A55.

Rising power costs drive Nigerians to renewable energy loans

OGWU VANESSA CHIAMAKA

ABUJA

The rising cost of electricity and the unreliable power supply across Nigeria are pushing more individuals and small businesses to seek loans from banks to invest in renewable energy.

Solar panels, inverters, batteries and other clean-energy systems are becoming popular among Nigerians who want a more dependable alternative to the national grid and costly fuel-powered generators.

For many households and business owners, the high cost of setting up a solar system remains a major challenge. This has increased interest in bank loans and financing plans that allow customers to pay for renewable energy systems gradually instead of paying the full cost at once.

Small business owners, in particular, are looking for fi-

nancing to install solar systems that can keep their shops and businesses running during power outages. Some households are also depending on loan facilities to power essential appliances such as refrigerators, fans and televisions.

Energy experts say access to affordable financing could encourage more Nigerians to adopt renewable energy. They believe easier loan terms, longer repayment periods and lower interest rates would make solar power more accessible to low- and middle-income families.

However, borrowers still face concerns over high interest rates and strict loan requirements. Some Nigerians also worry about taking on debt when their income is not stable.

Despite these challenges, the growing demand for renewable energy financing shows that Nigerians are increasingly looking for alternatives to traditional sources of electricity.

The Nigerian **OBSERVER**

That The People May Know

INVITATION TO PLACE GOODWILL MESSAGES

FOR HIS EXCELLENCY

SEN. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO @56

The Nigerian Observer will publish a
Special Birthday Edition on **Saturday
August 29, 2026** to celebrate the
56th Birthday of His Excellency,
Senator Monday Okpebholo,
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2027: Women mobilisation secretary pledges grassroots support for Tinubu

ABUJA

Dr Mary Idele, the newly appointed Secretary of the Women Mobilisation Directorate of the Presidential Campaign Council, has pledged to lead a nationwide grassroots mo-

bilisation of Nigerian women ahead of the 2027 general election.

Idele, who is also the National Women Leader of the All Progressives Congress (APC), made the commitment in Abuja while expressing appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for the confidence re-

posed in her through the appointment.

She described the appointment as a "call to duty" and an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the success of the progressive agenda and the consolidation of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

She said she would deploy her experience in grassroots engagement, women empow-

erment, organisational coordination and political mobilisation to strengthen the participation of women across the country.

Idele pledged to work closely with women leaders, stakeholders and party members to deepen engagement and establish an effective grassroots mobilisation structure ahead of the 2027 polls.

She said the primary responsibility of the Women Mobilisation Directorate was to galvanise Nigerian women and coordinate their efforts toward achieving the objectives of the campaign council.

She said the assignment required unity, dedication and strategic engagement, stressing that women constitute a critical force in Nigeria's electoral process.

Idele said the directorate would strengthen coordination and participation among women while ensuring that their contributions remained

central to the campaign's activities across the country.

She expressed optimism that collective and sustained mobilisation would support President Tinubu's progressive and Renewed Hope agenda, pledging to work tirelessly toward a decisive victory in the 2027 presidential election.

She thanked President Tinubu for the confidence placed in her and promised to justify the appointment through loyalty, hard work, strategic mobilisation and effective delivery of the mandate entrusted to her.

**PLENARY SESSION:**

L-R: Mr. Lawrence Okah, Secretary of APC, Edo state, Mr Jarett Tenebe, chairman of the party Edo state, Sam Oboh and Fedelis Ogbejie at Edo State House of Assembly to observe the house sitting during the plenary session yesterday.

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN.

UNICEF, journalists mull strengthening child protection policies

PORT-HARCOURT

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and journalists have urged Nigerian media houses to institutionalise stronger child protection and safety policies in the newsrooms.

Forty journalists from the North Central, South East and South South zones, made the call in a resolution after a two-day workshop in Port Harcourt to adopt stricter ethical guidelines for reporting children's issues.

The workshop, organised by UNICEF in partnership with the Child Rights Information Bureau, (CRIB), brought together editors and

correspondents from print, broadcast and online media to deliberate on legal, ethical and professional responsibilities in covering children.

At the end of the workshop, participants in a communique on Saturday, issued a 10-point resolution aimed at safeguarding children in news coverage.

They resolved that journalists must report children's cases accurately and use terms such as "alleged" or "accused" until guilt is established by a competent court.

The communique also urged media practitioners to avoid graphic, sensational or unnecessary details that could expose children to harm, stig-

ma or exploitation.

The communique stressed the need to give priority to a child's protection, medical care, psychological well-being and access to justice.

Participants further resolved to avoid interviews that could re-traumatise children and to seek information from appropriate authorities, including the police and recognised child-protection agencies.

They also agreed to disclose any personal relationship or conflict of interest to editors and to focus coverage on child protection, institutional response and accountability rather than details of alleged abuse.

The workshop recommend-

ed that media organisations establish dedicated Child Rights Desks to ensure sustained attention to children's issues, while responsible blogging and online platforms should uphold the same ethical and legal standards as mainstream media.

In further recommendations, participants urged UNICEF to strengthen its strategic partnership with the Nigerian Guild of Editors to sustain responsible coverage.

They also called for the engagement of media owners, publishers and senior management through NPAN and NBC to institutionalise child-sensitive reporting policies across newsrooms.

Stop campaign of calumny against Oborevwo, Delta APC tackles Omo-Agege

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Delta State has dismissed allegations by former Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Ovie Omo-Agege, that threats to his life and those of his family members were emanating from the Delta State Government, describing the claims as "reckless, unfounded and politically motivated."

The party, in a statement signed by its State Publicity Secretary, Valentine Onojeghuo, accused Omo-Agege of resort-

ing to a campaign of calumny against Governor Sheriff Oborevwo rather than engaging in issue-based politics ahead of the forthcoming elections.

Delta APC rejected any insinuation linking Oborevwo or the party to the alleged threats, stressing that the governor, as the Chief Security Officer of the state, was committed to protecting the lives and property of all Deltans.

The party said it was "unthinkable" for the governor or the APC to be associated with threats against Omo-Agege or his family, describing such allegations as an attempt to

attract public sympathy and gain political relevance.

According to the statement, "It is unfortunate that Sen. Omo-Agege has chosen unfounded allegations and personal attacks over issues, policies and ideas. As a former senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Sen. Omo-Agege knows the gravity of such allegations."

The APC further challenged Omo-Agege to provide any credible evidence of the alleged threats to the appropriate security agencies for investigation, rather than making public

statements capable of damaging the reputation of the governor.

The party alleged that Omo-Agege and his political party, the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), lacked credible campaign issues with which to challenge the Oborevwo administration, claiming that their recent attacks were a response to the government's achievements in infrastructure and other sectors.

It said the governor's administration had recorded "unprecedented infrastructural development" in a little over three years, arguing that the achievements had left the opposition

301 students bag Monday Onyeme foundation scholarship

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

About three hundred and one (301) undergraduates from different institutions of higher learning emerged winners of the Monday Onyeme Scholarship scheme for Aniocha/Oshimili Federal Constituency.

The undergraduates, who will get a minimum of N200,000 each, passed the aptitude test organised for those who applied for the scholarship for the Federal Constituency.

The aptitude test took place at Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba.

The scholarship scheme is an annual programme sponsored by Sir Monday Onyeme, Ph.D., the Deputy Governor of Delta State.

Addressing the students, Sir Onyeme, who supervised the aptitude test, said the scholarship scheme was to encourage and support undergraduates from Delta North Senatorial District.

According to him, "for this

year's scholarship scheme, six hundred and fifty (650) undergraduates from Aniocha/Oshimili Federal Constituency were shortlisted for the aptitude test, four hundred and seventy-four (474) candidates appeared and sat for the test, while a total of three hundred and one (301) candidates passed."

Sir Onyeme, who congratulated those who passed the test, stated, "what we witnessed today is an improvement on what we witnessed last year, and for this year, eight persons will be taken from successful students from each ward in Aniocha/Oshimili Federal Constituency."

"Also, all successful students will get N200,000 each; the top scorer from Aniocha/Oshimili Federal Constituency will get an additional N200,000, while the candidates in second and third place will get an additional N150,000 each."

The Deputy Governor added that candidates from Ika Federal Constituency would sit for their aptitude test on Sunday, 23rd August, 2026.

Declining headline inflation yet to ease food prices – Economist

ABUJA

An economist, Ephraim Audu, says rising food inflation is deepening pressure on Nigerian households, in spite of the decline in headline inflation to 15.43 per cent in July.

Audu, who is also the President of Agricultural Agenda Nigeria Initiative (AANI), said this in an interview with newsmen in Abuja.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) had recently reported that headline inflation declined by 0.48 percentage points from 15.91 per cent in June to 15.43 per cent in July.

It said that core inflation, which excludes volatile agricultural produce and energy, declined to 14.97 per cent, down from 15.91 per cent.

However, food inflation rose sharply on a month-on-month basis to 5.56 per cent in July,

from 3.75 per cent in June.

This is in spite of the year-on-year food inflation rate falling from 26.20 per cent in July 2025 to 20.31 per cent.

Audu said the development was particularly worrisome as prices of essential food items continued to increase.

He listed food items experiencing price increase to include rice, tomatoes, onions, pepper, garri, plantain, beef, eggs, crayfish, guinea corn, ginger and plantain flour.

He said that Adamawa recorded the highest food inflation rate at 51.36 per cent, followed by Katsina at 30.84 per cent and Zamfara at 30.65 per cent.

Audu said although headline inflation declined from 15.91 per cent to 15.43 per cent, the development had yet to translate into meaningful relief for consumers.

NEWS



SCREENING:

Amb Terry Igbebor (L) being led by the Sergeant At-Arm into the harrowed chamber of the Edo State House of Assembly during his screening as the Executive Chairman, Edo State Ecological Funding and Management Commission at plenary yesterday.

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN.

Defence minister urges NDC graduates to champion industrialisation for African security

ABUJA

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa, has charged graduates of the National Defence College Course-34 to translate their training into policies that drive industrialisation, inclusive growth and regional stability across Africa.

Musa gave the charge on Monday in Abuja, at the Graduation Lecture of NDC Course-34.

He congratulated the commandant, faculty, staff and the graduating participants for completing what he described as a rigorous programme that prepared leaders for higher responsibilities in national security, governance and strategic leadership.

He also commended the

Guest Lecturer, former President Goodluck Jonathan, for his lecture titled; "Harnessing Industrial Capacity for Inclusive Growth and Regional Stability in Africa".

According to him, industrial capacity is no longer just an economic goal but a strategic imperative for national security.

"A resilient industrial base strengthens economic competitiveness, creates productive employment, enhances national resilience and contributes significantly to regional peace and security."

He noted that Jonathan's emphasis on transforming Africa's abundant natural and human resources into value-added production, technological innovation and sustainable prosperity was timely and critical for the continent's

future.

"Lasting peace cannot be sustained without inclusive economic growth, just as sustainable development cannot flourish in an environment of insecurity," he said.

The minister added that building resilient institutions, investing in infrastructure, technology and human capital, and strengthening regional cooperation remained indispensable to securing Africa's future.

He urged African nations to deepen collaboration through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area to promote industrialisation and shared prosperity.

Speaking directly to the course-34 participants, Musa said they were returning to their services, MDAs at a time when strategic leadership was

more critical than ever.

"The knowledge and networks you have acquired here must now translate into sound policy, innovative thinking and effective leadership."

"I encourage you to champion integrated approaches that strengthen national resilience, promote economic development and enhance peace and security, not only within your respective countries but across the African continent," he said.

Musa further commended the college for its continued contribution to national capacity building and strategic leadership development.

The event had in attendance top military officers, government officials, diplomats and members of the course-34.

Muoboghare calls for intensive grassroots mobilization for Tinubu, Oborevwo ahead 2027 polls

UGHELLI (DELTA)

AJUWA VICTOR

Chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Delta State, Prof. Patrick Muoboghare, has called on party leaders, elders, stakeholders and members to intensify grassroots sensitization and mobilization in support of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Governor Sheriff Oborevwo and other APC candidates ahead of the forthcoming 2027 general elections.

Muoboghare made the call while addressing party leaders and stakeholders during a meeting of the APC stakeholders in Ughelli North Constituency 2 held at the Ughelli North Council Hall, where executives of the Constituency Leadership Council were

inaugurated. He urged the newly inaugurated leaders to see their positions as a call to greater responsibility, emphasizing the need for unity, effective grassroots engagement and continuous interaction with the electorates.

He noted that with the electoral process for the 2027 general elections already underway, party members must take the message of the APC's programmes, policies and achievements directly to the people.

According to him, the ongoing reforms and development initiatives of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led Federal Government should be properly communicated to the electorate. He cited the administration's economic reforms, including the tax reforms, efforts to strengthen domestic revenue generation, the Renewed Hope infrastructure initiatives, student-loan

intervention and programmes aimed at expanding access to affordable energy and transportation.

Muoboghare urged party members to explain the objectives and long-term benefits of these policies rather than allowing misinformation and political propaganda to shape public perception.

He also highlighted the developmental strides of the Governor, Rt Hon Sheriff Oborevwo administration under the M.O.R.E Agenda, particularly in road infrastructure, urban renewal, education, healthcare and other areas of public service delivery.

Among the projects associated with the administration are major road construction and rehabilitation works across the state, including the Ughelli-Asaba Road dualisation project, Otovwo-Ughelli fly-over as well as major infrastructure projects

in Warri, Asaba, Effurun other cities in the state.

He thereafter stated that the Delta State Government has also identified rural and riverine road development as part of its broader infrastructure-renewal programme.

Muoboghare stressed that the achievements of both the Federal and Delta State Governments should form an important part of the party's grassroots engagement, urging leaders to present verifiable facts to the people and demonstrate how government policies and projects are impacting communities.

He further called on APC members to utilize their time, resources, networks and political structures to reach voters across wards and communities, saying that electoral victory would not be achieved through activities at the leadership level alone but through sustained engagement with the grassroots.

Eshor vows to rescue Delta's economy through accountability, job creation

ASABA

AJUWA VICTOR

The African Action Congress (AAC) governorship candidate in Delta State, Engr. Isaac Eshor, has stormed Asaba as part of his ongoing consultations ahead of the 2027 governorship election, where he declared his determination to take over the state and redirect its vast resources towards economic development and job creation.

Eshor, who was accosted by a team of community newspaper publishers and journalists at the Asaba Airport, later engaged the media in an interactive session during which he expressed concern over what he described as the underdevelopment of Delta State despite

its enormous financial and natural resources.

The AAC candidate said his visit was primarily to continue with his consultations with stakeholders across the state, stressing that his decision to contest the governorship was driven by his desire to provide purposeful and accountable leadership.

According to him, Delta State is blessed with abundant natural resources and enormous economic potentials which, if properly managed, could transform the state into one of Nigeria's leading economies.

Eshor said the state had received about N4.119 trillion in federal allocations, but questioned whether the resources had translated into sufficient development and improved living conditions for the people.

Osun governorship election: Tinubu's democratic disposition contributed to Adeleke's success – Imumolen

ABUJA

Factional National Chairman of Accord, Prof. Chris Imumolen says President Bola Tinubu's conduct, restraint and democratic disposition contributed to Gov. Ademola Adeleke's success in the recent Osun governorship election.

Imumolen stated this in a statement issued on Sunday in Abuja, while reacting to comments attributed to the Spokesperson for Adeleke campaign organisation, Pelumi Olajengbesi.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Ola-

jengbesi was quoted as attributing Adeleke's victory in the election solely to Osun voters and the governor's record in office.

Imumolen, however, faulted Olajengbesi's assertion, saying that it deliberately reduced Tinubu's role to whether he openly campaigned or deployed federal power for Adeleke.

He noted that support in politics was not limited to standing on a campaign platform or openly mobilising votes for a candidate.

According to him, sometimes, leadership is demonstrated by what a leader deliberately refuses to do.

Oborevwo inaugurates 12 duplexes, presents cars to Permanent Secretaries

ASABA

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwo has inaugurated 12 units of four-bedroom duplexes and some newly constructed internal roads with drainage facilities at the Permanent Secretaries' Quarters in Asaba, as part of measures to improve the welfare, efficiency and productivity of the state's public servants.

The governor also presented 12 brand-new official vehicles to Permanent Secretaries, describing the twin projects as another milestone in his administration's deliberate efforts to providing enabling environment for senior civil servants to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Speaking during the ceremony, Oborevwo said the development was in keeping

with his administration's commitment to ensuring that deserving public servants were adequately supported in line with the demands and responsibilities of their offices.

The governor recalled that his administration had also constructed eight additional duplexes at the Commissioners' Quarters, stressing that the additional accommodation would enable more Permanent Secretaries to live in official residences befitting their status and responsibilities.

According to him, Permanent Secretaries, as administrative heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, are critical to the smooth running of government, as they oversee daily operations, ensure compliance with civil service rules and regulations, and provide professional advice to commissioners on the implementation of government policies.

Learn to accept defeat, Weah urges politicians, as NBA conference opens in Rivers

PORT HARCOURT

Former Liberian President George Weah has urged African politicians to accept electoral defeat and refrain from challenging every election result.

He warned that democracy cannot survive when political actors undermine institutions for personal gain.

Weah, who was keynote speaker at the ongoing Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Annual General Conference

in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, said democracy was more than winning elections.

He stressed the importance of the rule of law, independent institutions and peaceful transfer of power.

The conference has the theme: "Beyond Limits."

The former football star said losing an election was part of democracy and should not automatically lead to endless disputes over election figures.

He said: "I did not wait for the counts to be completed

or for the final results to be formally announced before I picked up the phone to congratulate my successor."

Urging losers not to "contest every figure until the very last vote is satisfied," he added: "I chose to concede while the counting was ongoing because I have always believed, and still believe, that the will of the people must stand above the ambitions of any one man in the democratic sense."

"NBA's citation spoke directly of that decision of a leader who

chose to put his country before his own ambition. And I want to thank the Nigerian Bar Association for that recognition."

"Elections are now the doorway into democracy, not the house itself."

"What holds us up, what keeps the roof from collapsing on the people who live inside, are our institutions and, among the most important of these, in every serious nation, is an independent judiciary protected by a fearless, principled bar."

Weah said democratic gov-

ernance was tested more after elections than on election day.

"Democracy properly understood does not end on election night."

"It is tested every single day after, in how power treats the courts and the parliament that exists to restrain it," he said.

He warned that the threat to democracy did not come only from military coups or defeated candidates who refused to leave office, but also from elected leaders who gradually became authoritarian.

"It is also a leader who arrives in office through free and fair elections and, over time, often gradually, begins to govern like the very dictator that democracy was meant to guard against."

"A tyrant with a certificate of return is still a tyrant," Weah said.

He urged lawyers to remain vigilant in protecting democratic institutions, saying the judiciary must be independent and capable of checking executive power without political interference.



34 GRADUATION LECTURE:

From left: Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa; former President Goodluck Jonathan; Commandant of National Defence College (NDC), Rear Admiral Abdullahi Ahmed; Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Defence, Rep. Babajimi Benson and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Amb. Sola Enikanolaiye, during the NDC Course 34 graduation Lecture in Abuja.

Air Force bombings disrupt terrorists' operation in North West

SOKOTO

Terrorists operating in Sokoto State and other parts of the Northwest are facing intensified aerial bombardment.

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) sustains airstrikes that disrupted their activities, denying them freedom of movement.

NAF spokesperson Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, who dropped the hint in a statement, said the intensified air operations reflected the troops' determination to sustain pressure on hostile elements, enhance aerial surveillance and main-

tain the capacity for rapid response to emerging threats.

He said the NAF would continue to provide effective air support to ground forces operating within the Joint Operations Area.

Air Commodore Ejodame said the strengthened air presence was particularly significant in tackling asymmetric threats, as terrorists and bandits often exploit difficult terrain, mobility and concealment to evade ground forces.

According to him, the NAF's ability to leverage the reach, speed, flexibility and precision of airpower would enhance efforts to locate, disrupt and degrade hostile ele-

ments, deny them freedom of movement and create greater operational opportunities for surface forces to consolidate their gains.

He added that the operations underscored the importance of sustained coordination between air and ground forces in addressing evolving security challenges across the region.

The NAF spokesperson quoted the Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, as saying that the Service would continue to optimise the employment of airpower to deliver decisive effects in support of ongoing joint operations.

The CAS stressed that the evolving security environment required timely intelligence, responsive airpower and seamless integration with surface forces.

He said: "Our objective is clear: to sustain the pressure on criminal elements, deny them freedom of action and create the conditions for our surface forces to dominate the operational environment."

"We will continue to employ airpower intelligently, professionally and decisively, in synergy with our sister Services and other security agencies, while maintaining the highest regard for the safety of civilians."

NUPRC gives 31 oil block winners payment deadline

ABUJA

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission has warned 31 companies that emerged winners of 37 oil and gas blocks in the 2025 Licensing Round to pay their signature bonuses within the stipulated period or risk losing their provisional awards.

The commission issued the warning exactly one month after it hosted the commercial bid conference in Abuja, where the successful companies emerged

as winners of the available blocks.

In a notice on Sunday, the NUPRC said the process of compliance with the payment of signature bonuses had commenced following the issuance of provisional awards to the successful bidders.

"Exactly a month ago, the NUPRC hosted the 2025 commercial bid conference in Abuja where 31 companies emerged winners of 37 oil and gas blocks. Having issued the winners with the provisional awards, compliance with the payment of signature bonuses has already begun.

"Winners who fail to pay signature bonuses within the stipulated time frame in line with the Petroleum Industry Act will forfeit their bid guarantee and lose their provisional awards to the reserve bidders," the NUPRC stated.

The 37 blocks offered in the licensing round comprise Petroleum Prospecting Licences covering the Niger Delta onshore, shallow water and deep offshore areas, as well as frontier basins.

Among the blocks are PPL 2A29 to PPL 2A62 in the Niger Delta, PPL 2010 in the deep off-

shore, PPL 308 in the Benin Basin, PPL 900 to PPL 903 in the Anambra Basin, PPL 700 in the Chad Basin and PPL 800 and PPL 801 in the Benue Trough.

The commission also published the names of the 31 successful companies and the ranked reserve bidders for each of the 37 blocks.

A total of 143 companies participated in the licensing round, submitting about 200 bids for the 37 blocks. However, 13 of the 50 blocks initially put up for bidding attracted no bids.

HOSTCOM commits to peaceful oil bearing communities, lauds Edo Chief Judge Over special Criminal Court

EDO

The chairman of the Edo State chapter

Host Communities Producing Oil and Gas (HOSTCOM), Hon. Kenneth Aduwaye has lauded the Chief Judge of Edo State, Justice Daniel Okungbowa for the establishment of the special court to handle cases relating to cultism kidnappings in the State.

Hon. Aduwaye, who spoke recently in Benin City during a courtesy visit to the chief judge expressed the commitment of HOSTCOM to the peace and security initiatives of the Governor Okpebholo's administration including the setting up of the special court considering the activities of dare devil kidnappers and cultists in the state.

The court which took off on July 1st, 2026 was set up by Justice Okungbowa at the request of Governor Monday Okpebholo following an upsurge in

cases of violent kidnappings for ransom.

He said the announcement of the establishment of a new special criminal court has further brought peace to the various host communities, noting that Edo people can now sleep with their two eyes close as a result of the initiative.

The HOSTCOM chairman further commended the governor for fulfilling one of his electioneering campaign promises of eradicating insecurity in Edo State.

Hon. Aduwaye added: "HOSTCOM commends Governor Monday Okpebholo for establishing the new special criminal court which started operations on the 1st of July, 2026. We acknowledge that it is part of his campaign promises of providing security for Edo people. The move has further brought peace to Edo people, including the various oil and gas host communities,"

CBN tightens scrutiny of banks' asset quality

ABUJA

Major banks are experiencing delay in the release of their first half financial results as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) tightens examination and approval processes in a more intensive scrutiny of banks' assets and quality of earnings.

Five major banks- Guaranty Trust Holdings Company (GTCO) Plc, Access Holdings Plc, Zenith Bank International Plc, United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc and Stanbic IBTC Holdings Plc, which control more than two-thirds of the banking industry, are facing greater scrutiny of their financial results.

The banks, in separate statements, stated that they could not meet weekend's deadline for the release of their audited results for the first half 2026, citing ongoing review of their financial statements by the CBN.

Banks that had approved their audited results and submitted same for onward examination and approval by

the apex bank said they were still awaiting final approval of the apex bank.

Banks cannot make public their audited reports and accounts without prior and final approval of the apex bank.

GTCO, which had concluded its half-year report by July 28, and was ordinarily required to submit the audited report this weekend, has sought for extended timeline till September 30, 2026.

Also, Zenith Bank, which received board approval for its half-year report on July 29, stated that its report would now be released on or before October 9. Access Holdings has secured extension till September 30, while UBA said the release of its report is conditional upon receipt of apex bank's approval.

An industry source said the delay might not be unconnected with the post-recapitalisation compliance enhancement programme of the apex bank, especially in testing the assets and earnings of the banks.

NEWS

Seven die, two injured in multiple crash on Lagos-Ibadan expressway

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun State Sector Command of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has confirmed the death of seven passengers in a multiple road crash on the Ibafo section of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, while two others sustained injuries on Monday.

The Chief Superintendent

Route Commander of the state sector, Afolabi Odunsin, confirmed the incident in a statement issued in Abeokuta, the state capital.

According to him, three vehicles were involved in the crash: a white HOWO CNG/CIMC ENRIC, a white MACK trailer and a Mitsubishi Canter.

The FRSC said fatal crash occurred at about 0003hrs

on Monday, 24 August 2026, along the Ibafo-Lagos corridor at Kara, Ibafo.

Preliminary information indicated that nine persons, all male, were involved in the crash, resulting in the death of seven persons, while two persons sustained injuries.

Odunsin said the FRSC Ibafo Outpost Command received the report at about 4:04am and arrived at the

scene at 4:09am, representing a response time of approximately five minutes.

"The crash was classified as a fatal multiple road traffic crash, with speed violation (SPV) identified as the probable cause, subject to further investigation."

He added that the deceased victims were evacuated from the scene by the Ogun State Ambulance Service, while

the injured victims were taken away for medical attention.

The crashed vehicles were handed over to the Motor Traffic Division of the Nigeria Police Force, Ibafo, for further necessary action.

The Sector Commander, Oludare Ogunjobi, urged motorists, particularly drivers of articulated vehicles, to avoid excessive speed, main-

tain safe following distances and remain vigilant at all times.

He also advised motorists to exercise extra caution when driving at night, noting that reduced visibility and fatigue could increase the risk of road traffic crashes.

While commiserating with the families of the deceased, Ogunjobi wished the injured victims, speedy recovery.

Troops kill suspected kidnapper, arrest two in Benue

MAKURDI

Troops of the Joint Task Force, Operation Whirl Stroke, have killed a suspected kidnapper and arrested two others in separate operations across Benue State.

The acting Media Information Officer for OPWS, Lt Ahmad Zubairu, stated this in a statement issued and made available to journalists in Makurdi.

According to the OPWS spokesperson, troops, acting on credible intelligence on August 19, 2026, intercepted a suspected bandit kingpin and his associates operating an illegal checkpoint along the Jortar-Atume axis.

The statement read, "On arrival, the troops made contact with the criminals, resulting in a firefight during which one suspected bandit, identified by the nickname 'Cool Nigga', was neutralised.

"The other members of the group fled in disarray, abandoning a motorcycle, which

was recovered by the troops."

The OPWS spokesperson added that two suspected kidnappers were also arrested in a separate operation at Gou in Logo Local Government Area of the state.

He said the two suspects, identified as Terhile Iyo, 44, and Vershima Emmanuel, 32, had confessed to an attempt to kidnap one Mrs Balame Nyikwagh of Gou village.

Lt Zubairu listed the items recovered from the suspects as one locally made pistol, one cartridge, five TECNO torchlight phones, a Monie-Point ATM card, an identity card, multiple SIM cards and charms, adding that the suspects remained in military custody for further investigation.

While reassuring citizens in its areas of operation in Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba states of its commitment to protecting lives and property, the force urged residents to continue providing timely and credible information to security agencies.

Residents lament as bad road isolates Imo communities

OWERRI

Residents of Umuokanne and Ohoba communities in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State have appealed to the state government and relevant authorities to rehabilitate a major road linking the communities, saying its deplorable condition has cut them off from healthcare, markets and neighbouring communities.

The residents who spoke with our correspondent said the road, which connects Ohoba, Umuokanne and several other communities in Imo State and neighbouring Rivers State, had been abandoned for more than 15 years after it was last graded.

A resident, Cyril Nokaa, said the road condition had deteriorated to the point where it was no longer motorable, forcing residents and motorists to seek longer alternative routes.

Nokaa said, "The road has been abandoned for many

years. There was a time they graded it, but it is over 15 years now. It is a major road connecting Ohoba and Umuokanne, and you can use it to get to Owerri."

According to him, the poor condition of the road has affected farmers who could no longer easily transport their produce to markets, while residents have also been disconnected from neighbouring communities.

"We are farmers, and we have farm produce, so we cannot go to the market again because of the bad nature of the road. It is not something to write home about," he said.

He also raised concerns over insecurity, saying the abandonment of the road had created an environment where criminals could operate freely.

He said motorists, including commercial buses and private vehicle owners, had stopped using the road because of fears of kidnapping and robbery.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE WOMAN FARMER:

The Permanent Secretary, Edo State Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mrs Osedebame Bamaye delivering her speech at the 2026 edition of the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF) held in Benin City.

LIFE-ND Decries Women Farmers' Lack of Access to Funds, Land, Inputs

BENIN CITY

The Special Project Coordinator (SPC), Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise-Niger Delta (LIFE-ND), Mr John Omoruyi, has decried the inability of women farmers to access funds, land, improved inputs and other resources needed to enhance agricultural production.

Omoruyi, while applauding the efforts of women in agribusiness, regretted the barriers confronting women farmers, saying the challenges limit their ability to maximise their productive potential.

He spoke in Benin City, Edo State, on Thursday at the 2026 edition of the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF), with the theme, "Empowered Women, Transforming Agribusiness Systems," organised by LIFE-ND and supported by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other partners.

According to him, "In many cases, women are responsible for making sure that food moves from the farm to the household table. Yet, despite this enormous contribution, women farmers continue to face significant barriers. These include limited access to land, affordable finance, improved inputs, extension services,

technology, markets, storage facilities and decision-making opportunities.

"Many women also carry a disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work, which reduces the time and resources available for farming and enterprise development.

"The International Year for Women Farmers therefore calls for more than celebration. It calls for action. It requires governments, development partners, financial institutions, private-sector actors and communities to create an enabling environment in which women can own assets, access productive resources, participate in leadership and benefit fairly from the value they create."

Commending the efforts of LIFE-ND, Omoruyi said the project was designed to improve livelihoods, promote family enterprises and strengthen value chains in the Niger Delta.

He said, "This is the spirit that guides the LIFE-ND project. The project is designed to improve livelihoods, promote family enterprises and strengthen value chains in the Niger Delta.

"Its focus on rural households, youth and women reflects an important understanding: sustainable agricultural development must be inclusive, locally driven and commercially oriented.

"In Edo State, LIFE-ND is working across 10 Local Government Areas and 100 communities. This wide coverage demonstrates the project's commitment to reaching people where they live and work. It also reflects the understanding that lasting development is built within communities, through the participation and ownership of the people who will sustain the results."

On her part, the Permanent Secretary, Edo State Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mrs

Osedebame Bamaye said women were not merely participants in agrifood business but producers, processors, marketers, entrepreneurs and employers who were also custodians of food and nutrition.

She said the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo recognised the important role women play in transforming agriculture from subsistence activity into a profitable and sustainable business.

"Today is more than a celebration. It is a recognition of the indispensable contribution of women to agriculture, food security, household nutrition, rural livelihoods and economic development.

"Women are not merely participants in our agrifood systems. They are producers, processors, marketers, entrepreneurs, employers, innovators and custodians of food and nutrition security," she said.

She maintained that, "From

the farm to the market, from food processing to household consumption, women remain central to the functioning of our agricultural economy.

"In Edo State, the administration of His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo, the Executive Governor of Edo State, recognizes the important role women play in transforming agriculture from subsistence activity into a profitable and sustainable business.

"The State Government's commitment is reflected in its support for initiatives that improve women's access to productive resources, agricultural knowledge, inputs, markets, infrastructure, enterprise development and opportunities for economic empowerments.

"Through interventions across the agricultural value chains, women farmers and agripreneurs are being supported to move beyond traditional farming practices and embrace commercial agriculture, value addition, agribusiness and climate-smart production."

Bamayi said the approach was important because empowering a woman farmer benefited not only the individual but also her household and community.

She added, "We are particularly encouraged by the growing participation of women in various value chains across Edo State, including crop production, livestock, fisheries, processing and marketing.

NCC @37: Commission honours 5 former DGs, 12 retired directors

ABUJA

The Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) on Saturday organised a distinguished send-off and appreciation ceremony for its former directors-general and retired directors who served the commission meritoriously in various capacities.

The ceremony was organised in honour of five former directors-general and 12 retired directors who contributed immensely to the growth and development of the commission.

The former directors-general honoured included the pioneer Director-General, Mr Moses Ekpo, who served from 1989 to 2000.

Others were Dr Sylvester Williams, who served from 2000 to 2002; Prof. Enyinna Nwauche, who served from 2002 to 2004; and Prof. Adembo Adewopo, who served from 2004 to 2010.

The fifth former director-general was Mr Adam Ezekude, who served from 2010 to 2018.

The retired directors honoured included Mr Williams Aniche, Alhaji Mohammed Bashir, Mrs Loretta Ezichi, Mr Samuel Udowo and Mr Stephen Aiyegbusi.

Others were Mr Charles Obi, Mrs Doris Osahon, Mr Christopher Nkwocha, Mr Jacob Fagbemi, Mr Okon Odokwo, Mr Olatunji Adetule and Mrs Susan Bashorun.

The current Director-General of the commission, Dr John Asein, was also recognised for his previous contributions to the commission before becoming its chief executive.

Asein had previously served as Director and Head of the Nigerian Copyright Institute and also as Head of the Legal

Department of the commission.

Speaking at the event, Asein said the honourees had never truly left the commission because their ideas, decisions and contributions remained part of its institutional memory.

He said the commission would continue to benefit from the paths opened by the former leaders and retired directors during their years of service.

According to him, the ceremony was not merely a farewell but a gathering of the commission family to acknowledge, honour and thank those who helped to build the institution.

Asein acknowledged that the ceremony was long overdue because the five former directors-general honoured at the event had left office at different times after Ekpo completed his tenure in 2000.

He noted that none of them received a formal send-off of the kind organised by the commission, including when his immediate predecessor, Ezekude, left office in 2018.

Speaking at the event, Asein said the honourees had never truly left the commission because their ideas, decisions and contributions remained part of its institutional memory.

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FORTHCOMING 35TH ANNIVERSARY:

From left, Secretary General, Enugu State Development Association (ESDA), Chief Emmanuel Nnawike-Nwodo; President General of ESDA, Igwe Ezeudo Nwobodo; Chairman Planning Committee, Chief Osita Ogene and Assistant Secretary General ESDA, Chief Louis Okolo jnr. during a news conference on preparation for the forthcoming 35th Anniversary of the Creation of Enugu State in Enugu on Monday.

Edo trains teachers on digital innovation, AI, modern teaching methods

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has commenced a Train-the-Trainer Programme to equip vocational and technical teachers with modern skills, digital technologies, and innovative teaching methods.

The programme, organised by the state Ministry of Education under the leadership of the Commissioner for Education, Dr. Washington

Osifo, is aimed at strengthening teachers' capacity and preparing them for the changing demands of education in the digital age.

Representing Gov. Monday Okpebholo at the programme, the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Musa Yakubu, stressed the importance of continuous learning and professional development among teachers.

The training focuses on industry-relevant technical skills, digital technologies, competency-based teaching

methods, and emerging innovations, including artificial intelligence, to improve teaching and learning across the state.

Participants are being introduced to digital tools and practical techniques designed to make classroom teaching more engaging and effective while helping students develop skills relevant to the modern economy.

The government said the initiative reflects its commitment to strengthening the education system by investing in teach-

ers' knowledge and professional capacity, alongside school infrastructure.

It said vocational and technical teachers were being prioritised because of their role in equipping students with practical, digital, and technical skills needed to compete in today's economy.

The government said the programme is part of the administration's broader effort to build an innovative, technology-driven and skills-focused education system responsive to the needs of 21st-century learners.

Banks Dominate Nigeria's Suspicious Transaction Reports as NFIU Records 42,082 Filings

ODINI AMAKA VIVIAN

The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) has disclosed

that banks, fintech companies and other reporting entities submitted 42,082 Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) to the agency in 2025, with Deposit Money Banks accounting for the overwhelming majority of the filings. The figure was contained in the NFIU's 2025 Annual Report, which highlighted continued financial risks in the country and increased regulatory monitoring of transactions.

The agency also received 41,716,214 Currency Transaction Reports (CTRs) and 10,513 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) during the year, reflecting the scale of financial transactions and compliance activities monitored by the intelligence unit.

According to the report, Deposit Money Banks submitted 38,715 STRs, representing about 92 per cent of the total reports received from the various sectors.

Other Financial Institutions accounted for 2,185 reports, while Designated Non-Financial Businesses and Professions submitted 1,029. Capital market operators and insurance companies filed 104 reports, while Virtual Asset Service Providers, including cryptocurrency-related businesses, submitted 49.

The NFIU said its reporting framework covers threshold-based transactions, suspicious transactions and activities, as well as regulatory submissions relating to anti-money laundering, counter-terrorism financing and counter-proliferation financing.

Banks also dominated Suspicious Activity Reports, submitting 8,313 of the 10,513 filings recorded in 2025. Other Financial Institutions contributed 1,816

reports, while the capital market and insurance companies filed 295. Virtual Asset Service Providers submitted 89 SARs, while the DNFBP sector recorded no SAR during the period. The agency explained that it works with regulators including the Central Bank of Nigeria, the National Insurance Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering to ensure that reporting entities comply with applicable financial regulations.

The report further revealed that financial institutions filed more than 41.7 million Currency Transaction Reports during the year, with Deposit Money Banks accounting for 37,214,139 filings, or about 89.2 per cent of the total. Other Financial Institutions submitted 4,212,466 CTRs, while capital market operators and insurance companies contributed 289,296. Virtual Asset Service Providers recorded 313 filings.

The NFIU noted that Section 11 of the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act requires financial institutions to report transactions exceeding N5m for individuals and N10m for legal entities within seven days, while Section 3(1) requires incoming and outgoing transfers above \$10,000 to be reported within 24 hours.

CHANGE OF NAME/CORRECTION/DATE OF BIRTH

I formerly known as **BOYI EMMANUEL** now wish to be known and addressed as **AKITO EMMANUEL** and my correct date of birth is 11th November 1994, and not 11th November 1990. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly know as miss **ALUYA IOYRE LOVETH**, now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. EHIZE IOYRE LOVETH**. All former documents remain valid concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I Formerly known as **AGHIMIEN EMMANUEL OSAHON**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **ERHUNMWUNSEE EMMANUEL OSAHON**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly know as **ADAGO ROSEMARY ETSEMHERO** now wish to be called and addressed as **Mrs. IBHAFIDON ROSEMARY ETSEMHERO**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **AFIGO FESTUS SMITH OGHENEGAGA** and **FESTUS SMITH AFIGO** is one and the same person. That **AFIGO** is my surname, **FESTUS** is my first name while **SMITH** and **OGHENEGAGA** are my middle names. Henceforth, I want to be known and addressed as **AFIGO FESTUS SMITH OGHENEGAGA**. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **ISERE ROSELINE ROSELINE** now wish to be known and addressed as **ISERE ROSELINE UFUOMA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss ABU ZULIAT**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs MUKHTAR ZULIAT**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss AFIALOFOR PEACE ALERO**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. IREGBEYAOGENE PEACE ALERO**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss BISI MUSA**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. BISI EBHODAGHE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS IGBINOBA FUMILAYO** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS OSAGIE FUMILAYO**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **OJETOHAMHEN GODWIN RICHARD** and not **OJETOHANHEA GODWIN RECHARD** as wrongly written on my BVN. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss OSARENKHAE FLORENCE**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. ODIA FLORENCE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct arranged name is **OBOZOKHAE SAMUEL UYI** as it appears on my Nigerian passport, and not **SAMUEL UYI OBOZOKHAE** as was erroneously arranged. All former documents remain valid and concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss MERCY UWAWANI** now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. MERCY OZIEGBE**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

RE-ARRANGEMENTS OF NAME

I formerly known as **JOSEPH OSAMWONYI** now wish to be known and addressed as **OSAMWONYI JOSEPH**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Crime Diary

with Mike Osarogiagbon



The Commissioner of Police Edo State, CP Partrick Daaor (middle) briefing Journalists in Benin City

When crime wears many faces, from kidnap forests to Police extortion

MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

"Where criminals find a vacuum, they will create their own order."

This saying, I presume, is among the reasons security forces in Edo State are taking the ongoing fight against crime to the nooks and crannies of the state.

From the forests of Edo to the streets of Benin City, the state capital, and the wider national security landscape, recent developments have once again exposed the many faces of criminality in Nigeria, kidnapping, arms trafficking, illicit drugs, sexual violence, domestic violence and, more worryingly, allegations of misconduct by those entrusted with protecting citizens.

The development in Edo is particularly instructive. While the police are intensifying forest operations against kidnapers and armed robbery gangs, the Command is simultaneously investigating allegations that some officers attached to Okpella Police Division arrested some young men, accused them of cultism and allegedly extorted 1 million for their release.

The allegation came to public attention in a video circulating on social media, prompting the Edo State Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daaor, to order an immediate and full-scale investigation.

The officers allegedly involved have been identified and summoned to the Command Headquarters, Benin City, while the victims have also been invited to give their accounts.

The allegation must be thoroughly investigated, but the response is also a reminder that public confidence is itself a weapon in the fight against crime.

Where citizens lose faith in law enforcement, criminals gain an advantage. This is especially

significant coming barely weeks after the Edo Command dismissed five officers and demoted another over an alleged kidnapping and extortion syndicate.

On the other hand, the Command's fight against violent criminals is yielding notable results.

It would be recalled that on June 29, 2026, at about 5:30pm, operatives of the Violent Crime Response Unit, Edo State Command, acting on credible intelligence, arrested two suspected members of a notorious kidnapping and armed robbery syndicate, Mohammed Hamisu, 22, and Saidu Bebe, 23, at Okada, Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

During profiling, the suspects led operatives to a forest bordering Abudu in Edo State and Obiaruku in Delta State, where three AK-pattern rifles and two magazines were recovered at different locations.

On August 12, 2026, the suspects again led operatives to the same forest, resulting in the recovery of 58 rounds of AK-47 live ammunition and an additional magazine.

Speaking during the parade of suspects, Hamisu claimed that the arms and ammunition belonged to his boss and were being used to protect their cattle, "Na my Oga get the guns, we dey use them guard cows", he said.

His claim presents another dimension to the investigation. The police now face the crucial task of tracing the ownership, movement and intended use of the weapons.

The forest, which has somehow become a sanctuary for criminal gangs, is therefore emerging as a major battleground. Edo police have intensified forest-combing operations, deploying heavily armed personnel and surveillance drones to penetrate areas believed to be hideouts for kidnapers.

The recent rescue of a kidnapping victim in Esan South-East Local Government Area, where security operatives reportedly neutralised one suspected kidnapper and recovered 1.5 million ransom during a forest operation on August 6, 2026, further demonstrates the importance of intelligence-led operations and inter-agency collaboration.

This is why CP Daaor's engagement with the Kogi State Police Command over the Okene-Auchi corridor deserves attention and commendation.

On August 13, 2026, CP Daaor, accompanied by the Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Operations and Area Commanders in Auchi and Agenebode, visited the Edo-Kogi border in Okene, where he met with the Kogi State Commissioner of Police, CP Naziru Bello Kanjarof, and other stakeholders.

The two Commissioners reviewed the security situation around the border communities and discussed strategies for improved intelligence sharing, coordinated operations and sustained security presence along identified vulnerable routes.

They also proceeded into the Okene forest, which shares a boundary with the Okpella axis of Edo State, to assess the terrain and identify routes considered vulnerable to criminal activities.

Criminals do not recognise state boundaries. A kidnapper hiding in a forest on one side of a border can strike communities on the other.

The inspection of the Okene forest and discussions on intelligence sharing, coordinated operations and border security are therefore steps in the right direction. Security gaps at borders must never become safe havens for criminals.

But the crime picture goes

beyond guns and kidnapers.

The Edo State Command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has also intensified its crackdown on illicit drug activities across the state.

In an operation at Ugboku in the Igbanke forest of Orhionmwon Local Government Area, NDLEA operatives destroyed two cannabis plantations with a combined estimated yield of 4,628.9kg.

The operation also led to the arrest of 40-year-old Agholor El-ebojie, who was allegedly linked to one of the farms. Two bags of processed cannabis weighing 12.4kg were also recovered from the second plantation.

In separate operations at Oluku and Abuja Quarters, GRA, Benin City, NDLEA operatives arrested 10 suspected drug traffickers on August 13 and 14, 2026.

Among them was 28-year-old Kingsley Anigala, from Aniocha South Local Government Area of Delta State, who was arrested at Oluku on August 14 with 25.857kg of cannabis and 93 grammes of methamphetamine.

At Abuja Quarters, nine suspects were arrested on August 13, with various quantities of cannabis sativa, Loud, Tramadol, Diazepam, Swinol, Danabol and methamphetamine recovered.

Drugs do not merely constitute a crime on their own. Their proceeds can finance other criminal activities, while addiction can fuel violence, theft and social instability.

Perhaps the most disturbing revelation, however, is the report that Edo recorded more than 70 defilement cases between January and July 2026, with the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Eugenia Abdallah, saying more than half of such cases were allegedly perpetrated by fathers of the victims.

Four suspected cultists arrested, six guns recovered in Edo

Four suspected cult members have been arrested and six firearms recovered during a police operation at Egbaen Community, off Ekenhuan Road, Benin City.

The suspects, Nuka Joseph, 27, Osatohamwen Ogor, 30, John Osewengie, 30, and Osezee Osayi, 29, were arrested by operatives of the Anti-Cultism and Anti-Kidnapping Unit, in collaboration with the Government House Task Force.

Commissioner of police, Edo State CP Patrick Daaor during a press briefing in Be-

nin City said the operation led to the recovery of four locally fabricated pistols, one locally made Beretta pistol and a cut-to-size double-barrel gun.

He said the suspects confessed to membership of the Aiye Confraternity Cult, while investigation continues to track down other members of the suspected syndicate.

CP Daaor urged residents to remain vigilant and pay attention to the activities of people around them, assuring that complaints against police officers would be properly and impartially investigated.



Recovered Guns And Cutlasses

Beretta Pistols hidden in plantain sack recovered at Benin Motor Park

Three Beretta pistols concealed in a sack of unripe plantains have been recovered by operatives of the Edo State Police Command at a motor park in Benin City.

CP Patrick Daaor of Edo State said the sack was abandoned at Flight Transport Services, Akpakpava, on August 5, 2026, after an unidentified man presented it for waybill to Benue State.

According to him, a search of the abandoned sack revealed the three Beretta pistols hidden beneath the plantains, prompting the police to launch an investigation.

Through technical intelligence and sustained investi-

gation, operatives of the Anti-Kidnapping Unit arrested 27-year-old Andrew Friday at Akpakpava on August 7.

CP Daaor also stated that the confessed to sending the sack and admitted membership of Aiye Secret Cult Confraternity.

The reportedly told investigators that one Bance, surname unknown, from Iyanomo Community, gave him the firearms for repairs in Benue State and subsequent use in an ongoing cult rivalry.

The police Chief said investigation was ongoing to apprehend Bance and other suspects connected with the movement of the firearms.



Police Arrest Suspect

REPORTER'S DIARY

Journalists are not welcome to Uwanno Kingdom?

MATTHEW OKAGHA

History was made on Saturday, August 22, 2026, in Uwanno Kingdom, as a new king, His Royal Highness, Distinguished Senator Francis Asekhamena Alimikhimi, was crowned the sixth Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom amidst pomp and ceremony.

It was a day when nature, culture, people and politics blended in remarkable harmony.

The atmosphere at the palace ground on Mission Road, Agenebode, venue of the coronation, was simply electrifying. The people of Uwanno Kingdom, elegantly dressed in their traditional white attire and red caps, were a beauty to behold as they radiated smiles and excitement.

Nature was equally kind to the occasion. The sun shone brightly, seemingly adding its own splendour to the historic event.

The crowd comprised people from all walks of life — politicians, businessmen and women, traditional rulers from Edo and Kogi states, the elderly, youths and children. Together, they made the coronation a memorable spectacle.

The roll call of dignitaries included the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo; former Edo State Governor and distinguished Senator, Adams Oshiomhole; the Honourable Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Alhaji Abubakar Momoh; the Ohinoyi of Igbiraland; the Attah of Igala and several other prominent personalities.

Celebration was everywhere. Music rented the air. Cultural dances provided entertainment. Food and drinks were in abundant supply. The people savoured every moment of the historic occasion.

But there was one conspicuous absence.

The mass media was largely missing. Apart from the crew of African Independent Television (AIT), which was noticeable at the event, the presence of journalists was hardly felt.

I and my colleague had travelled all the way from Benin City, not merely to witness the coronation, but to record history as it unfolded.

One would have expected that for an event as significant as the coronation of the Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom, the organising committee would have accorded journalists a place of importance. After all, journalists are the chroniclers of history. They document

the events that societies eventually rely upon to reconstruct their past.

But apparently, the chairman of the Media Committee, High Chief Tony Akiotu, thought otherwise.

To him, at least on this occasion, journalists from Benin City were not welcome.

For someone who had himself worked in the media, the attitude was difficult to understand. I consider it not only an irony but, in some respects, a subtle disservice to the people whose historic occasion deserved the widest possible publicity.

As the events unfolded, I approached High Chief Akiotu to inform him that journalists from The NIGERIAN OBSERVER had travelled from Benin City to cover the coronation.

His response was curt.

"I told Alex that I was not inviting any journalist from Benin."

He said this and walked away.

At that moment, I considered his reaction excusable, perhaps because of the enormous pressure and demands associated with organising such a major event.

Besides, I had already written two separate articles on the Okumagbe and the historic coronation. I had also arranged an interview with the new monarch, which was supposed to take place before the coronation.

The interview did not happen before the ceremony. I was, however, assured that the Okumagbe would speak with me after his coronation.

That assurance influenced our decision to remain in Agenebode overnight.

My colleague, Lucky Agie, and I had also decided to stay because the celebration was expected to continue later in the day at the private residence of the new monarch at Agenebode-Igiode.

Following the official ceremony, we proceeded to Igiode to join the people in the celebration.

As the festivities continued into the evening, we approached High Chief Akiotu again to seek his assistance with accommodation for the night.

His response was the same: journalists from Benin City had not been invited.

I explained the circumstances of our presence. I pleaded with him to assist us, explaining that we were not financially buoyant enough to secure accommodation at short notice and were unfamiliar with the environment.

He asked to see our identification



The Okumagbe of Uwanno Kingdom, HRH, Senator Francis Asekhamena Alimikhimi

cards.

Mine was not immediately available, but Lucky reached into his pocket, brought out his identification card and handed it to him.

He examined it for a while before returning it.

There was silence.

Not knowing what was going through his mind, I repeated my plea.

His response was brief:

"I have heard you."

We returned to our seats.

After two further reminders, however, nothing changed. Eventually, High Chief Akiotu left for the night.

We were, to put it mildly, stranded.

As the night progressed, we began looking for alternatives. One option was to approach the security personnel and request permission to share the space allocated to them for the night.

We approached some policemen, introduced ourselves and explained our predicament.

We were asked to wait for the Chief Security Officer.

When we eventually met the CSO, he told us that he could not allow us to sleep in the security area because their ammunition was kept there.

That option was closed.

We were left in the open compound of the palace.

There, the night became our unwilling host.

The cold was intense. Mosquitoes provided their own unwelcome accompaniment. We had nowhere to sleep and no immediate assistance.

Yet, despite the ordeal, we remained hopeful that the following morning would bring an opportunity to speak with the new monarch.

It did not.

When we sought an audience with the Okumagbe the following morning, his Personal Assistant informed us that the monarch was not ready to speak with journalists.

That was it.

We left Uwanno Kingdom.

And as we departed, one thought continued to trouble me:

Are journalists really not welcome in Uwanno Kingdom?

This is not merely a personal complaint about accommodation or an interview that did not take place.

It is about the place of the media in society.

No society is complete without its storytellers. No historic ceremony is truly complete without those who document it for posterity. Coronations, anniversaries, state ceremonies and other significant public events acquire their historical value partly because journalists record them.

The journalist is not an intruder at a public ceremony.

He is a witness.

He is a recorder.

He is a chronicler.

He preserves moments that would otherwise disappear with time.

Uwanno Kingdom has a rich history and cultural heritage. The coronation of a new Okumagbe was an important chapter in that history. It deserved to be properly documented and communicated to the wider world.

That is why the near absence of journalists at such a historic event was disappointing.

More troubling was the apparent attitude towards those who nevertheless made the journey to Agenebode to perform their professional duty.

High Chief Tony Akiotu may have his reasons. The organising committee may also have had its reasons for limiting media participation. But whatever those reasons were, they should not diminish the dignity of journalists or their important role in society.

The media should not be treated as an unwanted guest at an event whose organisers themselves seek publicity.

If the coronation was worthy of the presence of governors, senators, ministers, traditional rulers, businessmen, women, youths and thousands of celebrants, then it was equally worthy of journalists.

Indeed, the photographs, reports, interviews and stories generated by journalists are what will eventually help generations yet unborn understand what happened in Uwanno Kingdom on August 22, 2026.

That is the paradox.

A ceremony meant to celebrate history appeared, at least from our experience, to have little room for those whose profession is to preserve history.

We came to Uwanno Kingdom to witness and document history.

We left with another story to tell.

The story of journalists who came to record history — and were made to feel unwelcome.



A cross section of Traditional Rulers at the event

FEATURE

Protecting tomorrow today: 5 reasons why immunization is good for children

OGBUNKWU NKEM EVELYN

The waiting room at Oko Primary Health Care Centre in Benin City is already full by 8 a.m.

Mothers sit on wooden benches with babies tied to their backs. Some fan their children with exercise books. Others scroll through their phones while waiting for their turn.

They have come for one reason: to have their children vaccinated.

A nurse calls out: "Six weeks! Ten weeks! Nine months!"

One by one, mothers stand up. The child cries as the injection is administered. The nurse smiles and reassures the mother.

"That cry means protection has started."

It is a simple moment, repeated thousands of times every day in health centres across Nigeria.

But behind the routine injection is one of the most powerful tools available for protecting children from serious and potentially fatal diseases.

Across primary health centres in Benin City, Lagos, Kano, Maiduguri, Enugu and other parts of the country, health workers continue to see children brought in with high fever, convulsions, severe diarrhoea, breathing difficulties and other complications associated with vaccine-preventable diseases.

Nigeria still faces a heavy burden of childhood illnesses. Pneumonia, diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and measles remain major threats to children under five, while vaccine-preventable diseases such as polio, measles, diphtheria and whooping cough can cause severe illness and death.

The National Primary Health Care Development Agency, NPHCDA, says childhood immunization is designed to provide protection early in life, before children are exposed to serious infections.

Yet fear, rumours and misinformation continue to discourage some parents from taking their children for vaccination.

Health workers, community leaders, religious leaders and parents are therefore stepping up their message:

Immunization works.

Here are five reasons every Nigerian parent should take childhood vaccination seriously.

1. IT PREVENTS SERIOUS AND LIFE-THREATENING DISEASES

Some childhood diseases do not give a second chance.

Polio can cause permanent paralysis. Measles can lead to pneumonia, blindness, brain complications and death. Diphtheria can cause severe breathing problems and other life-threatening complications.

Vaccines prepare the body's immune system to recognize and fight specific infections.

The idea is simple: rather than waiting for a child to encounter a dangerous disease and then treating the consequences, vaccination gives the child's immune system an opportunity to develop protection beforehand.



Health workers deliver Lifesaving Measles-rubella vaccine to children at the Market Square

Nigeria's routine immunization programme provides vaccines at different stages of childhood. The exact schedule depends on the vaccine and current national guidelines, which is why parents should keep the child's immunization card and follow the schedule given by health workers.

The NPHCDA explains that children are immunized early because they are particularly vulnerable to serious infections during the first years of life.

According to Mrs. Ogieva Queen Eronmwon, Head Matron at Oko Primary Health Care Centre, Benin City, one of the biggest challenges is failure to complete the recommended doses.

"The biggest problem is incomplete doses. Parents come for birth and six weeks, then they disappear. Later, when the child becomes sick, they say vaccines don't work."

"But you cannot build a house with only the foundation. You must complete it"

She urged parents to ask questions whenever they are confused.

"Ask the nurse to explain. You can ask in Edo, Pidgin or any language you understand. If you don't understand something, don't be afraid to ask again."

That message is important because immunization is not a single event. Protection depends on receiving the vaccines recommended for the child's age.

2. IT SAVES LIVES — AND CAN SAVE FAMILIES FROM HEAVY MEDICAL COSTS

Vaccination is one of the most effective public-health interventions ever developed.

The eradication of smallpox demonstrated what sustained vaccination can achieve. Nigeria was also certified free of wild poliovirus in 2020, although circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus remains a challenge and continues to require vaccination and surveillance efforts.

The benefits extend beyond preventing death.

When a child develops a serious vaccine-preventable disease, the family may face hospital bills, transportation costs, laboratory investigations, medicines, food expenses and income lost while caring for the sick child.

For a low-income family, such an illness can push household finances into crisis.

At primary health centres, routine immunization is provided as part of public primary healthcare services. The NPHCDA's mandate includes controlling preventable diseases and improving access to basic healthcare.

Mrs. Queen says parents should not wait until a preventable disease has become a medical emergency.

"People sometimes think vaccination is not important because the child looks healthy. But that is precisely when you should protect the child."

"Treating a serious illness can be very expensive. Prevention is better than waiting until the child is on a hospital bed."

PARENT VOICE 1

Mrs. Faith Osayande, 32, a pepper seller in New Benin Market, says her experience changed her attitude towards childhood vaccination.

"My first son, I did not complete his vaccines. At about 10 months, he got measles. We spent two weeks at UBTH. I had to borrow money to pay the bills."

"With my daughter, I made sure I completed the recommended doses. She is three now, and we have not had that kind of experience."

"I tell every woman in the market: take your child for vaccination."

Her story illustrates a simple truth: prevention can be much less costly than treatment.

3. IT HELPS CHILDREN STAY IN SCHOOL AND PARENTS STAY AT WORK

The effect of childhood illness goes beyond the hospital.

When a child becomes seriously ill,

school attendance is disrupted. Parents may have to leave work, close their businesses or spend days in hospital wards.

For families in communities such as Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha, one prolonged illness can affect school fees, food purchases and other basic household needs.

Healthy children are better positioned to attend school consistently, while parents are able to concentrate on their jobs and businesses.

Vaccination therefore contributes not only to health, but also to family stability and productivity.

Mr. Monday Igbinosa, 40, a commercial driver, says he has seen how infectious childhood diseases can affect families.

"Once one child gets an infectious disease, other children can become sick too. The parents may have to stay home and miss work."

"That is why I take vaccination seriously. Anything that can help protect my children is important."

Teachers also benefit when fewer children are absent because of preventable diseases.

A classroom where children are healthy and regularly present provides a better environment for learning.

4. IT PROTECTS THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

Immunization does not protect only the child receiving the vaccine.

When a large proportion of a population is protected against an infectious disease, the disease has fewer opportunities to spread. This community protection is especially important for people who are too young to receive certain vaccines or those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

This is why vaccination is a community responsibility.

A child who contracts measles, for example, can transmit the infection to other children before parents even realize what is happening.

In densely populated communities,

markets, schools, churches, mosques and other gathering places can provide opportunities for infectious diseases to spread rapidly.

Nigeria's experience with polio demonstrates the importance of maintaining high vaccination coverage. Although wild poliovirus has been eliminated from Nigeria, the country continues to respond to circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus through vaccination campaigns and strengthened routine immunization.

Blessing Aifuwa, 26, a nursing mother at Oko Primary Health Care Centre, puts it simply:

"Your child and my child breathe the same air in the market."

"If your child is not protected and brings an infection into the community, my baby can also be affected."

"We are one community."

The message is clear: protecting one's own child can also help protect other children.

5. VACCINES ARE CAREFULLY MONITORED AND ARE PART OF A TRUSTED HEALTH SYSTEM

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing immunization is not the science but confidence.

Rumours circulate rapidly on social media, particularly WhatsApp, Facebook and TikTok. Some claim vaccines cause infertility. Others suggest that immunization is part of a secret population-control programme.

Such claims can create fear among parents.

But parents should not make healthcare decisions based on forwarded messages or unverified social-media videos.

Nigeria has systems for vaccine regulation, monitoring and cold-chain management. NAFDAC, for example, provides guidance on vaccine cold-chain management, including the use of vaccine vial monitors to help assess vaccine storage conditions.

The NPHCDA also emphasizes that vaccines must be properly stored and handled. Its immunization guidance notes that vaccines need to be maintained within recommended temperature conditions to retain their potency.

Vaccination, like any medical intervention, can sometimes produce mild reactions. A child may develop pain or swelling at the injection site or a short-lived fever.

Parents should report unusual or severe reactions to health workers rather than relying on rumours.

Mrs. Queen acknowledges that parents sometimes have legitimate complaints about healthcare services.

"Sometimes mothers complain about waiting too long or about the way they were treated. Those things must be corrected."

"Health workers must be patient and respectful. But a bad experience at a health centre should not make a mother abandon vaccination."

"Ask questions. Come back if you need clarification. But don't deprive your child of protection because of a rumour."

FEATURE

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES: Men who dispense cash like father Christmas

BAGUDU MOHAMMED

In the life of every woman there are whispers that travel like folklore, stories of men so generous they arrive like Father Christmas in August. You hear them in dormitories after lights out, in hostel kitchens while noodles boil, in hushed class chats, in market gossips, in Nollywood plots and Kannywood dramas, in the paperback African novels passed hand to hand until the pages soften.

These stories are not always about wild ambition. They are about possibility. The fantasy that one ordinary meeting, one chance ride, one strange number on a phone screen, could flip everything. Status, family name, the weight in the room when you walk in. It is hard to hear those stories and not, for a second, hope the wind blows your way too.

Courtship between men and women has always carried theater, and some men understand the script better than others. It is thrilling because it feels like a movie unfolding in real time, with suspense, music, and a payoff.

A friend told me one many years ago. He liked a girl from school. She

brushed him off on the road one afternoon. Instead of chasing her himself, he hired a bike man to follow her home. The rider, reading the sun and her tired feet, offered her a lift with the easy kindness strangers use. She hesitated, then climbed on. The next morning the bike was back.

Growing up, I was raised on these tales. A chance encounter in a commercial bus, a conversation by the roadside, and suddenly money flows like water to make an impression that may never even turn into a relationship, but the girl walks away with a memory that changes how she sees herself. Sociologists call this "symbolic capital." Pierre Bourdieu argued that money is not just money, it is a signal. It tells a story about power, about who can provide, about who can protect.

In many African societies, courtship has historically been a public performance of capacity. The man who brings the most visible sacrifice wins the narrative. Anthropologist Ifi Amadiume wrote about how gender roles and value are negotiated in daily life, not only in marriage rites but in the small economies of attention and gifts. So what looks like extravagance is also

communication. I am able. I am serious. I can carry you.

Biology and culture braid together here. Evolutionary psychologists like David Buss have shown across cultures that men often signal resources to attract mates, while women, not because they are greedy but because the stakes of reproduction and security are different, read those signals closely. It does not mean every woman is for sale. It means the human brain is wired to notice investment. That is why, when we were boys and a girl was coming to visit, we would scrape together money for drinks we had not tasted in months, and then guard the unfinished bottle after she left, as if her sip had made it sweeter. The gesture was not about the drink.

That is also why the most visible girls, the ones who glow on campus, on TikTok, at events, often believe visibility is a magnet. If I am seen, I will be found. If I am found, I will be chosen. It is not vanity. It is a theory of how the world works, learned from stories and reinforced by what people see every day.

I just stumbled on a clip that brought all of this back. Popular No-

llywood actress Biola Fowosere, in an interview on Agbaletu Radiovision TV, said something that cut straight to the tension. "Men who say they love my natural beauty don't give me money," she said. "They only spend on BBL girls. I am a Muslim, I take my religion seriously, I pray a lot, but I have never seen any man sponsor me to Saudi for pilgrimage. I have noticed some men sponsoring girls who don't even do their five daily prayers."

Yes, it happens. And what a girl needs, people say, is luck. To meet one of those men who dispense cash like Father Christmas. Not everyone gets that luck in one lifetime.

So where does BBL fit into this? It is not that character does not matter. It is that in a noisy marketplace of attention, bodies are read as billboards. Sociologist Erving Goffman taught us about "impression management," the way people stage themselves to be read a certain way. In an economy where men are competing to signal seriousness, and women are competing to be seen, enhanced bodies, luxury cars, and pilgrimage tickets become the props. The man who spends is saying, I can. The woman who is chosen is say-

ing, I am chosen. Both are performing, and both are, in their own way, trying to be loved.

I do not know if BBL causes generosity, or if generosity chases a certain kind of visibility that BBL represents. What I know is that the story persists because it promises a shortcut through uncertainty. It promises that someone will see you, and when they do, everything will change overnight.

And maybe that is the real thrill. Not the money. The moment someone looks at an ordinary girl and decides she is worth the boxes, the phone, the driver, the pilgrimage. In a world that often asks women to wait, that moment feels like grace. Even when it doesn't last, even when it is only for a season, it leaves a story behind. And stories are what we live on until the next knock on the door, the next strange number, the next man who arrives like Father Christmas.

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The Role of Literature in Nation Building

OMIJIE RACHEAL ESEOSE

Literature — many have different definitions of literature. Some see it as a record of human experience, some define it as the preservation of culture and identity. Some see it as a pathway for voices to be heard. But what truly is literature?

Literature is the body of written or spoken words used to express human thoughts, emotions, experiences, and imaginations. In essence, it is an expression of human nature. Many scholars have offered different definitions of literature, but from the explanations above, it can be said that literature is, in fact, "the expression of human nature."

Literature comes in four forms depending on how it is expressed. It can take the form of: prose, poetry, drama, and oral literature.

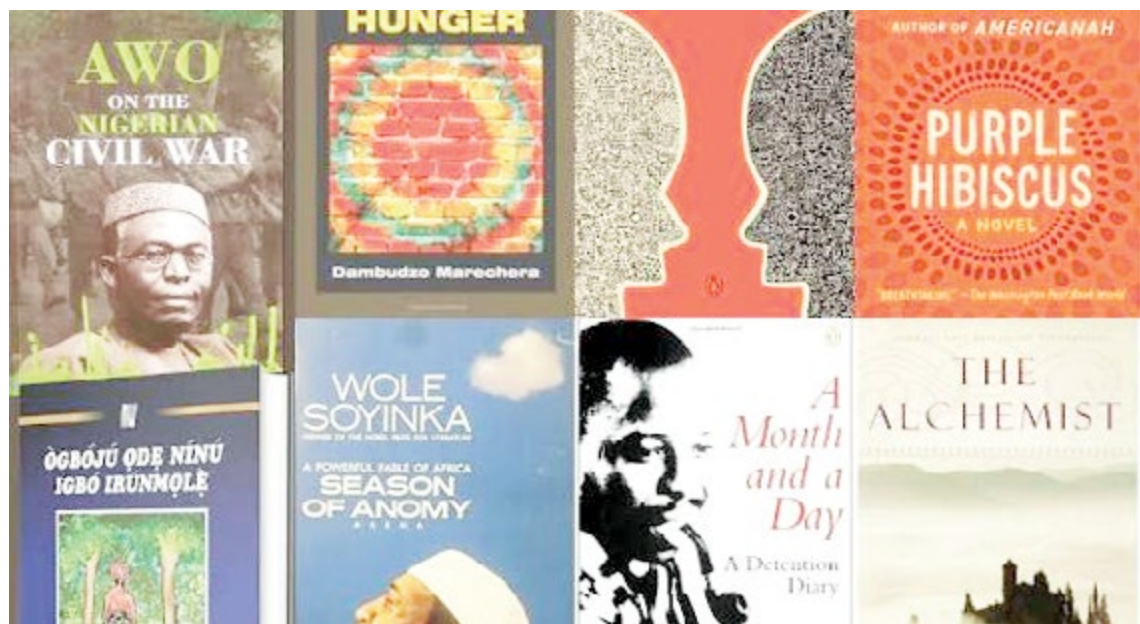
Literature in itself has shaped Nigeria in various ways. One can say that it has played a major role in shaping Nigeria by:

PRESERVING HISTORY

Through oral literature, our culture, traditions, and lifestyle have been preserved. Stories of traditions, wars, migrations, and beliefs have helped in the growth of our cultural and national identity. For example, the Igbo moonlight tales and Yoruba oral chants have preserved our history and ancient knowledge.

FIGHTING COLONIAL NARRATIVES

Literature has helped us to challenge the stories and ideas created by European colonizers about us, about our country Africa, about our continent. Before, we were written about as primitive, uncivilized, dark, without history, without religion, and organised government. But now due to lit-



erature, we have proved them wrong. We showed them a different side to us, who we were before they came, our identities before they arrived, and who we still are.

PROMOTING NATIONAL IDENTITY

Yes, we are different in religion, in culture, in tradition, in tribes. Many differences are noticed, but despite these differences we understand who we are, what we are, and we are one. A country of over 250 ethnic groups. Such a big difference, literature helps us understand our culture, history, values, and shared struggles. It creates unity among diverse people. For example — a Yoruba reader learning about Igbo customs through a book. It tells our history. For example, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores the Nigerian civil war. It gives us a voice, nationally and globally.

Literature has influenced a country in many unimaginable ways:

Politically in which it exposes bad leadership and corruption

Socially in which it addresses social problems like poverty, tribalism, and gender inequality

Educationally by which it improves language, critical thinking, and creativity

Morally by which it teaches values like honesty, courage, and discipline

There are several examples of popular Nigerian literature some of which include:

THINGS FALL APART BY CHINUA ACHEBE

Arrow of God by Chinua Achebe
The Lion and the Jewel by Wole Soyinka
Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Half of a Yellow Sun by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

THE CONCUBINE BY ELECHI AMADI

Literature has helped in preserving and developing our culture by keeping our indigenous languages alive, preserving folklore and traditions, teaching our customs and values, promoting our cultural pride.

Literature is a very powerful tool which can shape and has shaped what people think about government and society.

CREATING AWARENESS

Literature helps citizens understand how society is structured and how government affects daily life. Writers expose what is going on in the system. Examples: corruption, bad governance, inequality, poverty, abuse of power. This helps readers recognize political corruption in real life.

CHALLENGE INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION

Through literature, voices are heard. Literature gives voice to the oppressed and sidelined and also questions unfair systems.

ENCOURAGING ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Literature is not just mere words, they are words that provoke thoughts which lead to actions. It inspires protest, reforms, advocacy, and rights.

Literature is a mirror of society — literature reflects society back to itself. It helps people ask what is wrong with our society, how we can fix it, what kind of leaders we have. It shapes how people think about government, politics, and leaders, how they build support for reforms, create criticism of government, and change public attitudes. All these can be achieved through storytelling. Writers help citizens understand the world around them.

Literature has helped in shaping young minds, building imagination, teaching morals, improving communication, encouraging ambition, and helping the younger generation understand society.

Literature in nation building promotes unity, encourages social change, serves as a voice for the oppressed, and builds international image. For example Nigeria gained global recognition through many writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and many more Nigerian writers.

In Nigeria literature should not just be seen as a means of entertainment for literature has done more than provide laughter during leisure times.

Literature has corrected history, it has preserved culture, shaped public opinion, educated younger generations, thereby strengthening our national identity, our unity, and the future of the coming generation.

NEWS

FOREIGN

Nearly 90,000 people told to evacuate as wildfire approaches Reno, Nevada

Tens of thousands of people have been told to evacuate from an area close to Reno, Nevada, as a large wildfire reached the outskirts of the city.

Around 42,000 people have been ordered to leave their homes immediately, with a further 45,000 people urged to get ready to leave.

The fire, which was first reported on Saturday morning, had so far injured six people, officials said. Windy and unpredictable weather conditions have contributed to its spread.

Nevada's Governor Joe Lombardo has declared a state of emergency in Washoe County and ordered the National Guard to join firefighting and law enforcement efforts.

"This is an active and rapidly evolving situation and I urge everyone in the affected areas to remain vigilant and follow the direction of local officials," he said.

The fire was caused by humans and first reported at 11:15 local time (18:15 GMT) on Saturday, according to local officials.

The Washoe emergency information centre said around 15,000 acres (23 sq miles) had been burned.

It said that, as of Sunday lunchtime, no part of the fire's perimeter had yet been contained.

Around 13,700 homes were inside the evacuation area, local emergency services said, with two shelters set up to take in displaced residents.

Of the six injured, three were emergency responders fighting the fire.

Over the weekend, local officials described the fire as fast-moving, with windy weather and dry conditions contributing to its spread.

"The fire has definitely exploded in size," Lucia Starbuck, a local reporter for KUNR Public Radio, told the BBC.

"It's burning these dry desert hills with neighbourhoods at the bottom. We know some homes have been burned, we don't know the exact number yet."

The Nevada National Guard said 72 personnel, one Chinook and one Black Hawk helicopter had joined the response.

All Washoe County schools will be closed on Monday, except one, and mass road closures are in place.

The immediate "go now" evacuation zone and wider "get set" area - where people are being warned to prepare to evacuate - do not extend to the centre of Reno, but do affect large urban areas and part of a highway.

The University of Nevada in Reno - which has its main campus in the city, outside of but close to the "get set" warning area - said regular campus operations would continue but that it was monitoring the situation.

Nearly three million Teslas recalled in China over hidden door handles

Minimalistic door handles became a signature feature of electric vehicles (EVs), but the controversial designs are now at the centre of China's biggest car recall, affecting more than 4 million vehicles.

The recall, which includes 2.98 million Chinese-made Teslas, follows safety concerns that the hidden door handles are difficult to locate and open in emergency situations.

Other brands affected by the recall include Chinese carmakers XPeng, Xiaomi and Geely.

The recalled vehicles will have a warning label stuck on the interior door and receive a software update to automatically lower the windows in a crash.

The designs have come under scrutiny after two fatal

crashes in China involving Xiaomi EVs, in which power failures were suspected to have prevented doors from being opened.

Tesla said in a statement on Friday that it was recalling some of its Model 3, Y, S and X vehicles due to door handles that are "difficult to identify and operate because their colour is similar to the interior trim".

"In extreme situations such as a severe collision causing the vehicle's low-voltage system to fail, this could hinder occupants from quickly opening the doors to escape and impede rescue efforts by those outside the vehicle, posing a safety hazard," it said.

Tesla said it would place warning labels on the recalled vehicles and issue a software update to automatically lower a ve-

hicle's windows after a collision.

It is not clear if the affected firms plan to make a similar recall for the rest of the world.

The use of hidden handle designs has "snowballed" after Chinese brands were quick to copy the "sleek" look of Tesla's Model S sedan since 2014, said Tu Le, the founder of consultancy Sino Auto Insights.

The use of warning labels and a software update is more of a "band-aid" than a lasting solution for the issue, he added.

In February, Chinese authorities announced a ban on hidden door handles.

Under new rules due to take effect on 1 January 2027, cars will only be allowed to be sold in China if they have a mechanical release on both the inside and outside of their doors.

Russia's second-biggest online retailer targeted in Ukrainian strikes

Warehouses belonging to Russia's second-largest online retailer have been hit by a wave of Ukrainian drone strikes.

Ozon said its logistics facilities in the southern regions of Krasnodar, Dagestan, Stavropol and Adygea were on fire and several people had been injured following overnight strikes.

Ukraine has for weeks struck sites belonging to Wildberries, the country's biggest online retailer, describing the

firm as a legitimate target because it supplied components to the military, which Moscow denies.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that Ukraine had opened "Pandora's box" by striking economic targets and that Russia would hit back at Kyiv's "most sensitive economic sectors".

Russia has targeted Ukraine's civilian infrastructure since launching its full-scale invasion in 2022, and recent Russian attacks have hit Ukrainian warehouses and

cargo terminals.

Both Russia and Ukraine deny deliberately targeting civilians.

Ozon said "a fire broke out" at a logistics centre in Makhachkala, in the southern region of Dagestan, following a drone attack at around 05:00 local time (02:00 GMT) on Monday.

The company said earlier that a "major fire" was burning at one of its logistics centres in the city of Krasnodar, 700km (435 miles) to the east of the Dagestan site.



WILDFIRE:

The Nevada National Guard said 72 personnel, one Chinook and one Black Hawk helicopter had joined the response to the wild fire

Iran faces 'greatest financial offensive ever', says US treasury secretary

The US treasury secretary has threatened Iran with "the single greatest financial offensive ever", claiming the US-Israel war with Iran was "entering its endgame".

Scott Bessent said the US would sever all economic ties with the country in "an economic D-Day" and that any nation partnering with Iran financially would also be isolated.

Bessent's threat to the Iranian regime follows several U-turns and extended deadlines from US President Donald Trump's administration on previous threats.

Iran dismissed Bessent's comments and said it would shut down all oil exports from the region "if the war continues", according to news agency Reuters.

The Iranian regime has also issued a new warning to shipping not to pass through the Strait of Hormuz without its permission, the agency reported.

One fifth of the world's oil and gas usually passes through strait, a waterway south of Iran, but the flow has been effectively blocked by the country since the conflict began at the end of February.

Bessent made the comments in an opinion piece for the Financial Times. He did not detail what the economic pressure on Iran would involve, but he is expected to do so in a press conference in the US at 13:00 local time (18:00 BST) on Monday.

"The world should understand that our objective is to sever every economic lifeline that sustains the tyrannical regime until Tehran stands alone," he wrote in the piece.

The US has made several threats to Iran over the course of its war with the country, including Trump saying in April that "a whole civilisation will die tonight" unless Iran agreed a deal to end the war and unblock the Strait of Hormuz.

The US eventually climbed

down from that position after mediator Pakistan intervened and called for more diplomacy.

The Iranian regime already faces tough economic sanctions from the US.

Former US president Barack Obama and several US allies had agreed a deal with the country in 2015 which lifted many sanctions in return for Iran agreeing to limit its nuclear programme.

However, Trump pulled out of that deal in 2018, calling it "defective at its core, and re-imposed all US sanctions on Iran.

During Joe Biden's term as US president, he made some attempts to reinstate the Obama-era deal, but this did not happen.

In April this year, the Trump administration launched a wave of sanctions on foreign banks and firms doing business with Tehran after it became clear its military operations had not caused Iran's regime to surrender.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Zambia courts sealed off as election petition deadline looms

Court premises in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, and elsewhere have been shut as the deadline for filing a petition against the outcome of the recent presidential election approaches.

An unusual police presence has been reported at some courts, which have been taped off to prevent access.

Opposition candidate Brian Mundubile said he would challenge the election result, citing irregularities, after coming second with a 38% share of the vote. Incumbent Hakainde Hichilema won a

second term with 60%.

Mundubile is in hiding over alleged threats made against him, amid a post-election period marked by controversy, including the shooting dead of an opposition figure and the arrest of others.

Monday is the last day on which petition against the presidential election result can be filed. Such a petition could potentially affect the inauguration of Hichilema, which is scheduled for 1 September.

On Monday, lawyers who arrived at the courts were being asked to depart.

One lawyer told the BBC that three armed men approached his vehicle, identified themselves, and instructed him to leave the area.

The courts that have been sealed off include the High Court in Lusaka, the Supreme Court, which also houses the Constitutional Court, and several local courts.

It is unclear when the premises will reopen. The BBC has contacted the Zambian police and the judiciary for comment.

Local media cite a directive by a judiciary administrative

official telling all staff not to report to work following the closure of courts for "security reasons".

The memo, which has also been shared online by some opposition figures, does not give details of the security situation.

Some commentators have raised concerns over the closure while questioning the independence of the judiciary.

A prominent voice for the opposition, Emmanuel Mwamba, alleged the action was aimed at preventing Mundubile from filing his presidential election petition.

Despite the court closure, preparations for Hichilema's inauguration appear to be continuing.

The youth and sport ministry has issued a media invitation for journalists to accompany a cabinet official on an inspection of arrangements at National Heroes Stadium, where the ceremony is expected to take place.

Mundubile last week rejected the presidential election results and said he planned to challenge the outcome through the courts.

He remains in a secure lo-

cation under the protection of what his campaign describes as an "international human rights body".

He went into hiding after the arrests of opposition figures and the death of former minister Mutotwe Kafwaya during a raid by security officers, in what officials described as an exchange of fire in a security operation in the capital.

The arrests as well as the death of Kafwaya prompted calls from rights groups and the Law Association of Zambia for an independent investigations.



RESCUE:

Rescue workers search through a heap of refuse after it collapsed at Conakry's largest landfill, Guinea, Sunday, Aug. 23, 2026.

Guinea rubbish landfill collapse kills 31

Residents near the dumpsite were evacuated after the collapse.

At least 31 people have been killed after a mound of rubbish at a major waste site collapsed onto nearby homes in Guinea's capital Conakry, the government has said.

Another 22 people were injured, including six seriously, in the city's Dar-es-Salam area.

"Significant" resources and personnel - including the military - were deployed to search for survivors after the collapse at about 02:00 local time following heavy rain overnight, the government added in a statement.

One woman told local media her five children had died in the disaster. There are fears that the death toll will rise further.

Rescuers were later seen using excavators to comb through a mountain of scattered rubbish at the site as local residents gathered nearby.

One eyewitness said many people were buried when a second part of the site gave way.

"People tried to come to the rescue [after the first section collapsed]... They came running and climbed onto the refuse to see if anyone was there," Robert Kamano Saa told the Associated Press.

"That was when the second section collapsed in three successive stages, cascading down. And that is what poured onto the people."

Guinea's Prime Minister Mamadou Oury Bah has visited the scene to assess the situation and oversee the search efforts.

Mamadouba Bangoura, who lost his house in the collapse,

said he and his family were woken up by the "loud noise" of the first wave of rubbish, which did not reach them.

"[Then] the second wave came. That is what knocked over - pushed the house - and it fell," he told Reuters news agency.

"There were a lot of people [buried]... It is very, very difficult to talk about it because seeing a human being lose his life like that is pathetic, it is so painful."

Rescuers have been searching for survivors.

Neighbourhood leader Lincine Sylla had earlier told the AFP news agency that he feared there would be a heavy death toll.

"We have pulled out 18 bodies that were taken to the morgue," he said.

Visiting the injured in hospital, Health Minister Khaïté Sall said they would get free medical care, while assuring families of government support.

Guinea has experienced similar landslide tragedies before, with 10 people being killed at the same site in 2017.

The government had recently ordered people living close to the site to move, but many residents chose to stay.

Guinea's opposition figure and former Prime Minister Cellou Dalo, who is in exile abroad, called the accident "a tragedy that plunges us into dismay".

"This tragedy is all the more worrying because the closure of the landfill had been announced for this Sunday, 23 August," he said.

Rescue teams are continuing to search through the waste for others trapped underneath.

Burnham to hand long-range missile blueprints to Zelensky as he visits Kyiv

Andy Burnham has met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on his first foreign visit as prime minister in Kyiv, where he will hand over long-range missile blueprints.

The prime minister will later chair his first meeting of the "coalition of the willing", set up by the UK and France under his predecessor, Sir Keir Starmer.

Crucially for Ukraine, he will announce his government has agreed to allow defence company MBDA to declassify information on UK components for the long-range Scalp missile - the French equivalent of the UK's Storm Shadow.

Speaking alongside Zelensky, Burnham said "despite Russia's outrageous threats to my country" the UK will continue to support Ukraine.

"This is the moment to keep up the pressure on Russia, the moment to squeeze their ability to fund this illegal war," he said, praising the "strength" of the Ukrainian people.

"Ukraine has been Europe's protector, not a drain on our security but the front line in

keeping Europe safe."

It comes after Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov criticised the UK's decision to share the missile blueprints. Peskov said it prevented "even the slightest progress" towards achieving peace.

He told reporters on Monday that the Russian military was already gathering data to locate any missile production sites to destroy them.

"Britain is involved in this war on the side of the Kyiv regime. Britain methodically and regularly adds fuel to the fire," he added.

In response, Burnham said: "Who started the fire? That's the question, isn't it."

He added the issue of missile interceptors would be the main topic at the coalition of the willing meeting.

Burnham has been reaffirming the UK's backing for Kyiv in the wake of escalating Russian strikes on Ukraine in recent weeks - including one on a shopping centre on Friday that killed at least 16 people.

On Monday morning the prime minister laid flowers at the graves of Ukrainian sol-

diers during a service at the National Military Memorial Cemetery.

He also accepted an award from Zelensky on behalf of the British people recognising the UK's support for Ukraine during an independence day event outside the St Sofia cathedral in Kyiv.

Ahead of his visit, Burnham said: "On Ukraine's 35th anniversary of independence, the Ukrainian people should be in no doubt: the UK is behind you today and for as long as it takes."

"I am proud of the contribution our country has made to Ukraine and I want the

DRC, M23 agree for peace roadmap as Doha talks seek to regain momentum

The Democratic Republic of Congo and the Rwanda-backed M23 have agreed on a roadmap for peace talks, setting out the next steps and timetable under the Doha framework. The deal comes after months of stalled diplomacy and renewed fighting in the east.

The Democratic Republic of Congo and the AFC/M23 have agreed on a roadmap for continuing peace negotiations

following talks held in Switzerland from August 17 to 21.

The roadmap is intended to define the successive stages and timetable for negotiations under the Doha framework, according to a joint statement issued by the Swiss government.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing negotiations aimed at securing a comprehensive peace agreement and resolving the con-

flict through implementation of the Doha framework.

Ceasefire monitoring gets priority

The parties also agreed on a standardised method for reporting alleged violations of the ceasefire, a step seen as important to rebuilding confidence between the two sides.

A first ceasefire verification mission under the MCVE+ mechanism is scheduled to take place Monday in Minem-

bwe, in South Kivu province.

The participants also agreed to establish a mechanism to assess progress and identify challenges in implementing the commitments made under the Doha framework.

The discussions included efforts to strengthen the MCVE+ mechanism, including the creation of its secretariat and preparations for its first field verification mission.

The Democratic Republic of

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FEATURE

THE RISING COST OF LIVING IN NIGERIA: How inflation is reshaping the lives and dreams of young Nigerians

ODINI VIVIAN AMAKA

For many young Nigerians, the dream of adulthood once seemed straightforward: finish school, secure a good job, become financially independent, build a home, support the family and eventually create a comfortable life.

Today, that dream has become much more complicated.

A university student who once planned to graduate, get a job and begin saving is now thinking about how to afford accommodation and food. A young graduate who has finally secured employment may discover that the salary disappears within days after paying rent, transportation and other essential bills. A young entrepreneur who started a small business with the hope of expanding may now be using much of the profit simply to replace stock at higher prices.

Across Nigeria, the rising cost of living is changing the way people work, eat, study, save, socialise and plan their futures. And among young Nigerians, the impact goes beyond empty pockets. It is gradually reshaping expectations about success, independence, marriage, home ownership, education and the kind of future they believe they can afford.

Inflation may be presented in economic reports as a percentage, but for the ordinary Nigerian, it is experienced in much simpler terms: the money in the wallet finishes faster.

The National Bureau of Statistics reported that Nigeria's headline inflation rate eased marginally from 15.93 per cent in May 2026 to 15.91 per cent in June. However, food inflation moved in the opposite direction, rising from 16.96 per cent in May to 17.52 per cent in June. (Punch Newspapers)

On paper, a decline in the headline inflation rate may appear encouraging. But for households that have already experienced years of rising prices, a slower increase does not necessarily mean that life has become cheaper.

The price of food does not automatically return to what it was several years ago simply because inflation has slowed. Instead, consumers are left to adjust to a new and often much higher price level.

This is where the economic statistics meet everyday life.

WHEN THE SALARY DOES NOT LAST

For young workers, receiving a salary should ideally represent financial independence. Yet for many, earning an income no longer guarantees that they can comfortably meet their basic needs.

A recent Reuters report captured this reality through the experience of a health NGO worker in Abuja earning N135,000 a month. Despite earning almost twice the country's minimum wage, she said her salary lasted only about a week because of the rising cost of food, housing, electricity and other necessities. (Reuters)

Her experience is a reminder that the real question is not simply how much a person earns, but what that income can actually buy.



A young employee may receive a salary and immediately divide it between rent, transportation, food, electricity, internet subscriptions, family responsibilities and other expenses. By the time these obligations are settled, very little may remain for savings or emergencies.

This creates a frustrating cycle.

People work to earn money. Their earnings increase slightly, but the cost of necessities rises as well. They work harder, take additional jobs or start side businesses, yet still struggle to build savings.

For a generation that has been repeatedly encouraged to "work hard and succeed", this reality can be discouraging.

THE STUDENT'S STRUGGLE

The situation is particularly difficult for young people in tertiary institutions.

University students already face expenses such as tuition, accommodation, textbooks, transportation, feeding, internet data and other academic requirements. When the prices of these necessities increase, students and their families are forced to make difficult choices.

For some students, the financial pressure means reducing the number of meals they eat.

For others, it means finding cheaper accommodation, walking longer distances to school, taking public transportation instead of more convenient options or looking for part-time jobs and businesses that can provide additional income.

A student may have to decide whether money should go towards food or academic materials. Another may postpone purchasing something needed for school because transportation expenses have consumed most of the available allowance.

These choices may appear small, but when they become part of everyday life, they can affect the student's academic experience and general wellbeing.

The Nigerian student is increasingly becoming more than just a learner. Many are also becoming entrepreneurs, freelancers, vendors, content creators and service providers in an attempt to support themselves.

The classroom and the marketplace are becoming interconnected parts of student life.

THE GENERATION OF SIDE HUSTLES

Perhaps one of the clearest signs of how the economy is changing young Nigerians is the popularity of the "side hustle."

A young Nigerian can be a student during the day and a business owner at night. Another can work in an office and run an online fashion business after work. Someone else may combine employment with photography, makeup, baking, graphic design, writing, social media management, hair-dressing, digital marketing or other income-generating activities.

For some, entrepreneurship is a deliberate choice.

For others, it is economic survival. The side hustle has become a way

for young people to create a second source of income because depending on one salary can feel increasingly risky.

But there is a hidden cost.

The more jobs a person takes on, the less time remains for rest, family, relationships and personal development. A generation that should be building its careers is also becoming a generation constantly trying to make ends meet.

Resilience is admirable, but constantly surviving is exhausting.

WHEN FOOD BECOMES A LUXURY

Food is perhaps where the cost-of-living crisis becomes most visible.

For many Nigerian families, meals are deeply connected to culture and family life. Yet rising food prices are forcing households to rethink what they eat and how often they buy certain items.

A family may reduce the quantity of meat or fish in its meals. A young person living alone may replace preferred meals with cheaper alternatives. Students may choose food based not on what they want to eat but on what they can afford that day.

The situation is even more concerning when viewed against broader poverty figures.

The World Bank's Nigeria Development Update continues to highlight poverty as a major challenge and argues that bringing inflation down faster and strengthening economic growth are essential if Nigerians are to feel the benefits of economic reforms. (World Bank)

This distinction is important.

Economic recovery cannot be considered complete simply because certain national indicators improve. The real test is whether ordinary people can actually afford better lives.

THE RENT PROBLEM

For young Nigerians trying to become independent, accommodation is another major financial challenge.

Rent is often one of the biggest expenses faced by a young worker or student. When accommodation costs rise,

young people are forced to make difficult decisions about where and how they live.

Some choose cheaper accommodation farther from their workplaces or schools.

But cheaper rent can come with higher transportation expenses.

Others share apartments with friends or relatives to reduce costs. Some postpone moving out of their parents' homes because living independently has become too expensive.

For students, the situation can be equally difficult. The desire to live close to school must often be balanced against the reality of what their families can afford.

The housing crisis therefore cannot be separated from the transportation crisis. One financial burden often creates another.

TRANSPORTATION: THE COST OF MOVING

Transportation is another expense that young Nigerians cannot simply eliminate.

Workers have to get to work. Students have to attend lectures. Traders have to move goods. Entrepreneurs have to deliver products. Job seekers have to attend interviews.

When fuel and operating costs increase, transportation fares are affected. Once transportation becomes more expensive, the cost of moving goods also rises, and businesses eventually pass some of those expenses to consumers.

This creates a chain reaction.

Higher operating costs affect transport.

Higher transport costs affect businesses.

Higher business costs affect the prices consumers pay.

The result is that inflation becomes part of nearly every economic decision an individual makes.

SMALL BUSINESSES UNDER PRESSURE

Nigeria's young entrepreneurs are not immune to the crisis.

In fact, many are among those experiencing it most directly.

Consider a young person who starts a clothing business. The entrepreneur purchases products from suppliers and sells them to customers. If the supplier increases the price, the entrepreneur must either increase the selling price or accept a lower profit.

But customers are also struggling. If the business owner increases prices too much, customers may choose cheaper alternatives. If prices are kept low, the entrepreneur may no longer make enough profit to sustain the business.

The same problem affects food vendors, fashion businesses, beauty entrepreneurs, traders and countless other small enterprises.

For many young entrepreneurs, business growth has therefore become more difficult.

Instead of reinvesting profits to expand their businesses, some are forced to use part of the money to meet personal needs.

The business survives, but growth is delayed.

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Their earnings increase slightly, but the cost of necessities rises as well. They work harder, take additional jobs or start side businesses, yet still struggle to build savings.

FEATURE

Tony Elumelu and the Coconut Syndrome

MAJEKODUNMI EBHOHON

What happens when a lizard leaps from the high branches of an iroko tree, lands squarely in a corporate boardroom in Lagos, demands to be addressed as an American eagle, and then bites anyone who forgets he is still a lizard? This is the theatre of absurdity currently playing out on the stage of Nigerian public discourse. The drama began when a young trainee under the United Bank for Africa (UBA) Graduate Management Accelerated Programme greeted the bank's chairman, Tony Elumelu, with a Westernised, "Good morning, Tony." The chairman, famed for his meticulously curated image as a Western tycoon, brushed the familiarity aside. He instructed her not to call him by his first name, but "Mr Elumelu" or "TOE."

With that single clarification, the trainee was dragged into the public square. Like unleashed pitbulls, an online mob charged at her, barking at the ghosts of her ancestors and growling about the "collapse of African values." Yet, the outrage becomes deeply awkward for those invoking traditional respect, as several banking professionals, seemingly in defence of the trainee, have since clarified on social media that first-name address is an established feature of corporate culture, particularly within UBA. If this is the professional standard the trainee was taught to imbibe, the troubling question that follows is why the Chairman is being spared cultural condemnation while she is being condemned for simply following the rules of the environment he created and trained her to operate within.

To view this incident as a mere breach of etiquette is to miss the forest for a misplanted shrub. The real issue is the contradiction underneath it. Here is a man who has built his public identity as a thoroughly western minded African tycoon. He operates within a corporate empire heavily influenced by Western ideas of flat hierarchy and professional familiarity, yet he has also publicly declared that he does not subscribe to the "Oyinbo lifestyle." There is nothing inherently wrong with either posture. The crisis begins when both are demanded simultaneously, and the youth caught in the crossfire are punished for the collision. What we are witnessing is not a simple quarrel over corporate honorifics. It is an existential identity crisis: the struggle of an African elite class trying to inhabit Western capitalism without surrendering the feudal expectations of home. Tony Elumelu is not an isolated actor in this drama. He is merely the most visible character in a much larger crisis of the "coconut syndrome" that bedevils Nigeria's ruling class.

These elites exist in a state of perpetual limbo, unable to answer a foundational question: Who, in heaven's name, are they? Are they colonised, post-colonised, or decolonised Africans? In trying to be all three at once, these "Coconuts", brown on the outside, white on the inside, have institutionalised a culture of confusion. Ironically, it is the Tonys themselves who, in their desperate bid to mimic "global best practices," imported the Western gospel of first-name address. They told their subordinates: "We are



United Bank for Africa (UBA) Chairman Mr. Tony Elumelu



a team. Look at Silicon Valley. Call us by our first names." In doing so, they deliberately engineered environments where Western corporate familiarity overrode traditional African forms of deference. Yet, the moment the Chairman's ego is pricked by the very familiarity his system cultivated, the globalist suddenly remembers the ancestral shrine. The feudal chieftain emerges from the cultural cave, wrapping himself in the protective cloth of "African respect."

This is a classic case of wanting the validation of Wall Street and the adulation of the red cap simultaneously. You cannot spend Monday to Friday wearing a bespoke suit, calling yourself Tony, and then demand the unquestioning deference due to an African elder the moment a junior colleague takes you at your word. This double standard leaves the younger generation shipwrecked, socially lynched for playing strictly by the rules of the game they were given.

This friction (where imported models collide with local realities) is the defining hallmark of the African coconut class. The "Tony and the Trainee" saga mirrors the exact conflicts embedded across our wider institutional landscape. Step into any tropical Nigerian courtroom, and you will find lawyers and judges sweating under heavy, 18th-century British horsehair wigs and woollen black gowns. When the air conditioning inevitably fails, the scene turns farcical. The coconuts argue that this agonizing attire maintains the "solemnity of the law," yet they are fiercely enforcing a colonial dress code that Britain itself has largely discarded. Just as the bank

trainee is trapped between corporate policy and traditional elder-worship, our legal professionals are trapped between the blistering reality of the equatorial sun and the ghost of a dead British empire. The masquerade that copies foreign dance steps invariably steps off the rhythm of its own drums.

We see this same identity crisis operating at various homes, long before the youth ever step into a corporate training program. The Coconut routinely hire "diction coaches" to systematically strip their children of local inflections, strictly enforcing English-only households and punishing them for speaking their mother tongue. Yet, these exact same parents will throw a lavish, culturally heavy traditional wedding decades later. They suddenly expect these linguistically castrated children to instinctively master the deep, tonal, and ancestral nuances of traditional oration. They build an environment that erases African culture, only to throw a tantrum when their children fail to manifest that culture on demand.

Even the country's spiritual and domestic realities are caught in this crossfire. Look at a Yoruba Imam, or Pastor E.A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Redeem Christian Church of God (RCCG), thoroughly convinced they have washed themselves clean of "pagan" ancestry. Yet, in the next breath, each refers to his spouse as "Iyawo," oblivious to the fact that the word is deeply rooted in Ifá divination, originating from the sacred tale of Orunmila's suffering to marry the princess of Iwo. The coconuts perform this daily tightrope walk across a chasm of contradictions,

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shouting foreign prayers while relying on traditional structures of tribal solidarity to secure jobs. They are, as V.S. Naipaul famously captured, "Mimic Men", expertly copying the outer garments of foreign lifestyle while remaining deeply haunted by the unresolved spirits of our own.

Even the physical infrastructure where these corporate dramas unfold reflects this architectural schizophrenia. The coconut insists on building massive, sealed glass skyscrapers in Lekki or Ikoyi, modeled after Chicago or London. These structures require

an unsustainable, round-the-clock consumption of diesel generators just to keep cool because the elite reject ventilated, sustainable African architectural principles as "primitive." When the reality of local infrastructure collides with their imported Western blueprint, an economic and environmental crisis ensues. It is a closed loop: importing a system that doesn't fit our reality, and then acting surprised when the machine overheats.

The tragedy of the "Tony" brouhaha is that it exposes how the African Coconut class uses culture not as a moral compass, but as a weapon of convenience. Culture in their hands is a shield to protect privilege and class. When it is time to secure a foreign loan, pitch a tech startup, or court international investors, the elite are ultra-modern, cosmopolitan, and post-racial. But when a junior employee steps into that same social space, culture is instantly weaponised to push them back down the ladder.

The man who changes his voice to mimic a ghost should not complain when real spirits invite him to the graveyard. If the coconuts wish to get rid of their shells, they must accept the consequences of their interior. If they wish to embrace their shell, they must discard the contradictions of their interior. To oscillate wildly between the two based on whose ego is bruised is a form of psychological fraud. Until the coconuts stop treating identity like a revolving wardrobe, the continent will remain a confusing place where a young woman can be publicly crucified for doing exactly what she was trained to do.

WHEN CORRUPTION BECOMES NORMAL: Were they really saints, or have we simply lost our shame?

COMRADE ADAMS EREPO

Former military President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, has reportedly said that the level of corruption in Nigeria today makes the military administrations of his era look like saints.

His argument is striking. He reportedly recalled that he once removed a military governor over N300,000, contrasting that with the scale of corruption allegations involving hundreds of billions of naira today.

BUT NIGERIANS MUST ASK A MORE UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTION:

Are we really looking at a more corrupt generation or have we simply moved from corruption that was punished to corruption that is increasingly tolerated, defended and politically weaponised?

There is a danger in comparing the corruption of yesterday with the corruption of today as though the lesser evil becomes virtue.

No, General.

The fact that today's corruption may be larger, more sophisticated and more institutionalised does not transform yesterday's corruption into sainthood.

Saints do not seize power through coups. Saints do not suspend democratic institutions. Saints do not rule without the consent of the people. And saints certainly do not leave behind unresolved questions about accountability, transparency and the management of public resources.

History must therefore be honest.

The military era had its own corruption, authoritarianism, abuse of power and lack of democratic accountability. The difference today is that the scale, sophistication and political protection surrounding the alleged misuse of public resources appear to have reached a frightening level.

And that is where Babangida's statement becomes more than a nostalgic reflection.

It becomes an indictment of Nigeria's present political culture.

Today, allegations involving billions can dominate the headlines without producing the same urgency that a N300,000 offence once generated. Public officials can be accused of monumental financial wrongdoing and the national conversation sometimes shifts from What happened to Whose political interest is behind the allegation?

That is the tragedy.

We have turned accountability into politics.

If the accused belongs to our political camp, we search for excuses.

If the accused belongs to the opposition, we demand prosecution.

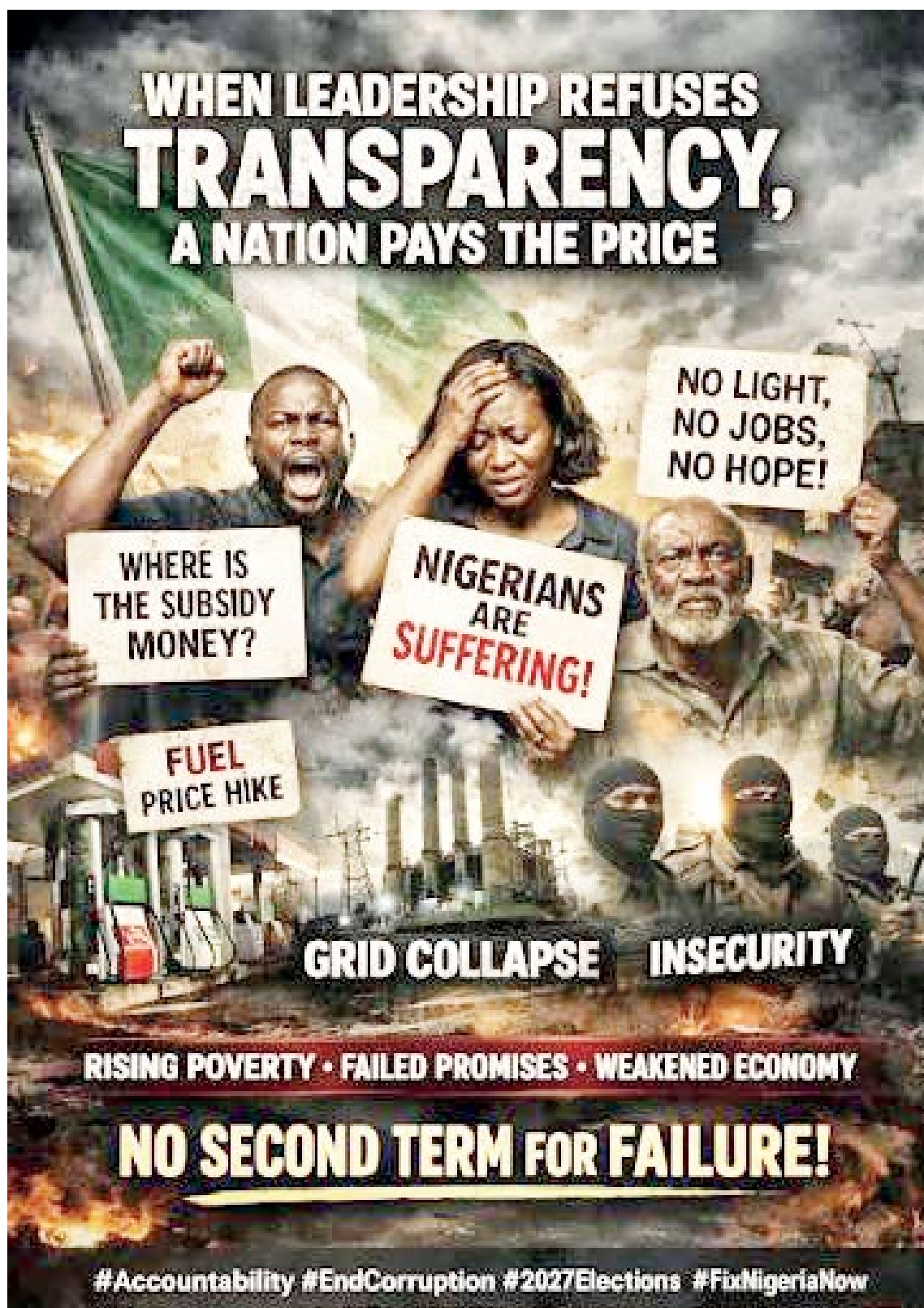
If the scandal threatens our political interests, we call it propaganda.

If it helps our political interests, we call it evidence.

That is not democracy.

That is selective morality.

Nigeria's greatest corruption problem is therefore no longer only the money allegedly stolen. It is the culture that has developed around it the culture



of silence, political protection, selective prosecution and public resignation.

We have reached a point where Nigerians can hear allegations involving billions and simply shrug.

That is perhaps more dangerous than the corruption itself.

Because when society becomes shocked by N300,000 but indifferent to N300 billion, the problem is no longer merely the politician who allegedly stole.

The problem has become the collapse of our moral threshold.

And this is where the present administration, like every government before it, must answer the fundamental question: Where is the accountability?

The Nigerian people are not asking for political speeches. They are asking

for institutions that can investigate without fear, prosecute without favour and recover public funds without political interference.

They are asking why accountability appears so selective.

They are asking why some corruption allegations generate immediate political outrage while others disappear into committees, investigations and endless promises.

They are asking why political loyalty sometimes appears to be a stronger shield than the law.

AND ABOVE ALL, THEY ARE ASKING:

Who really owns Nigeria?

Because the trillions being dis-

cussed in government contracts, borrowing, procurement, subsidies, infrastructure and public expenditure do not belong to politicians.

They belong to Nigerians.

They belong to the market woman struggling to feed her children.

They belong to the civil servant whose salary disappears under inflation.

They belong to the young Nigerian searching for a job.

They belong to the pensioner waiting for what he has already earned.

They belong to communities without roads, hospitals, electricity, water and schools.

Every naira lost to corruption is therefore not merely an accounting figure.

It is a classroom that was not built.

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The Nigerian people are not asking for political speeches. They are asking for institutions that can investigate without fear, prosecute without favour and recover public funds without political interference.

A hospital that was not equipped.

A road that was not constructed.

A job that was not created.

A child that was denied an opportunity.

So, when Babangida says today's corruption makes his generation look like saints, Nigerians should not simply applaud or dismiss him.

WE SHOULD DEMAND SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT:

Let every generation account for its own record.

The military must answer for its years.

The politicians must answer for theirs.

The present government must answer for today.

And tomorrow's leaders must not inherit a culture where stealing public money is considered normal as long as the thief has political protection.

Nigeria does not need saints in government.

Nigeria needs accountable leaders.

We do not need politicians who tell us that the past was worse or the present is better.

We need leaders who can look Nigerians in the eyes and say:

This money belongs to you, and I will account for every kobo.

That is the standard.

Not military nostalgia.

Not political propaganda.

Not selective justice.

Not party loyalty.

Accountability.

Because the greatest danger to Nigeria is not merely that corruption has become bigger.

It is that corruption may be becoming normal.

And once a nation loses its capacity to be outraged by the theft of its commonwealth, it has already begun to lose something far more valuable than money:

its conscience.

PHOTO NEWS**FACES, AND MOMENTS AT CHRIST CHOSEN CHURCH 2026 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

Newly appointed Reverend



The Spiritual Leader Chairman Church Council with His Deputy Snr Apostle Dr. Samuel Echigbue, Head prayer Ministry.



Acting Divisional Heads in charge of various divisions of the Church



Youth and Members of the church celebration mood



The Spiritual Leader Chairman Church Council Christ Chosen Church of God International, Snr. Apostle (Dr) David Unuefe Ikhuwu The Elect of God, Flank by Snr. Apostle Dr. Samuel Echigbue, Head Prayer Ministry with Snr. Apostle Joseph Akhuere. As he Unveil the Theme of this Year 2026, Annual International Convention "NO STORM CAN SWALLOW THE BOAT" at the Cathedral of Christ Chosen Church of God International Benin-Agbor Road Benin city.



Set B 1991, 35 years Marriage Anniversary



Papa praying Snr Apostle Akhuere and other Apostle during Anointing Service



Those who celebrate 30 years Marriage Anniversary

BREAKING THE SILENCE: Confronting gender-based violence in society

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a phenomenon and concept we watch on television in the form of plays or news, listen to on the radio, contribute our little quota to the discourse about, or hear addressed in seminars. People have become so used to hearing about GBV that they lose the ability to understand the gravity of its presence in society.

Could it be that the aggressive bus driver is suffering from a toxic wife who assaults him emotionally? Could it be that GBV has resulted in that career woman raising her shoulders and stamping her foot on the ground to ensure no man lords over her at work, because behind her actions and reactions is the taunting shadow of her husband who believes that women are not supposed to rise higher in their careers unless they are on the same level as, or preferably higher than, their husbands? Could it also be that the headstrong child who bullies his classmates in school must have witnessed several merciless battering that his mother quietly received from his father? Or that the customer service attendant everyone avoids because she is seen as “rude, impatient, and manner less” might have suffered assault, beatings, or threats from someone she called her husband, thereby passing down her silent anger onto customers and colleagues?

Most shocking of all is seeing couples with matching outfits, lovey-dovey videos, and captivating family photoshoots, yet behind closed doors there are threats, insults, and intimidation that do not tally with the life they portray to the outside world.

The above scenarios tell us that many people do not simply act the way they do without such actions being driven by an underlying factor.

Although GBV is often witnessed in a more muted manner, it has silently led to a major social problem in societies despite growing awareness. Hence, this article is designed to explore its causes, effects, and possible solutions.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is violence committed against a person because of his or her sex or gender. It means forcing another person to do something against his or her will through violence, assaults, threats, deception, cultural expectations, or economic means. Although the victims or survivors are mostly girls and women, boys and men can also be targeted.

GBV SURFACES OR EXPRESSES ITSELF IN DIFFERENT FORMS. SOME OF THESE INCLUDE:

Physical violence: This comes in the form of beating, punching, killing, and other physical harm to victims, with or without the use of weapons. For example, a man who constantly uses a belt to beat his wife is said to have indulged in GBV because his wife is not an animal on whom such a tool should be used.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE: This involves any sexual activity carried out without the consent of the victim. It includes



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

rape, sexual abuse, harassment, and related acts. This form is not restricted only to those who are not yet married; it can also be found in marriages, especially when one partner is not interested in engaging in sexual activity, which can lead to a forceful attempt by one of the spouses.

EMOTIONAL VIOLENCE: Although not physical and non-sexual, it involves using certain words or statements that are insulting, degrading, and unpalatable to the victim or survivor.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: This involves any physical, verbal, sexual, or economic violence between one person and another within the family.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC VIOLENCE: This means excluding a person from participating in certain activities that would benefit them in society—for example, denying someone access to education, work, or the opportunity to partake in civil, social, economic, cultural, and political rights.

One might wonder why, despite the growing cruelty of GBV, victims prefer to die in silence rather than speak out or cry out for help.

First and foremost, the fear of being harmed again is among the reasons victims choose the difficult path of remaining silent. This is because opening up to people, especially when they encounter the wrong persons for help, might further cause more harm than good.

For instance, a young girl who has been sexually assaulted by her school teacher might ignorantly open up to a close relative she feels might protect her, only for her hope to be shattered when that same uncle also uses the

opportunity to take advantage of her. Such a child will find it difficult to trust people and open up because, to her, everyone is a suspect.

Also, the thought of facing shame and embarrassment has prevented most victims from speaking up due to the fear of being judged, misunderstood, and stigmatized. As a result, they lock themselves up and wallow in their world of suffering from gender-based violence, especially in societies where people are quick to point accusing fingers instead of verifying information.

Another cause of silence among GBV victims is the fear of not being believed. There are people who have gone through one form of GBV or another—physical, sexual, or emotional violence—yet their claims were denied as fabricated or as attempts to tarnish the accused. Consequently, the justice and action that ought to be taken on the issue are discarded. For example, if a younger boy accuses his aunt of touching the sensitive parts of his body in an uncalled-for manner, but due to the close relationship between that aunt and his parents, the child may be shunned and even beaten as well.

Furthermore, when a victim is financially dependent on the abuser, there is a high possibility that such a person will find it difficult to break the silence because the abuser is like their lifeline—the one who holds the key to something that makes the victim stick with them. This is commonly experienced in marriages where a woman, for instance, is married to someone who physically and emotionally abuses her but is very wealthy. The victim may think it wise to leave such a toxic marriage, but the fear of leaving luxury and entering into poverty will make

her develop a thick skin and stay in the marriage.

Other reasons include concern about their reputation, cultural or religious beliefs that do not encourage speaking out, and a lack of confidence that justice will be served.

It is, however, worthy to note that when victims remain silent, it often gives impetus to perpetrators to continue abusing others.

In light of this, gender-based violence does not take place without certain factors that give rise to it. It stems from a combination of personal, cultural, social, and economic factors. Some of its major causes include:

GENDER INEQUALITY: This evolves when one gender is given preferential treatment over the other, thereby elevating the importance of that gender. For example, in times past, many females were relegated to “school in the kitchen” while males were encouraged to acquire formal education. Also, some cultures allocate a greater amount of respect to boys than to girls, irrespective of the disparity in their ages.

PATRIARCHAL BELIEFS: This explains male dominance and exalted power over a territory or people; hence, their opinions stand irrespective of opposing views. For example, in some societies, cultural norms give men more authority and say over women, which makes them justify and normalize their dictatorship, controlling, egocentric, violent, or rash behaviours.

POOR UPBRINGING: This evolves when a child constantly witnesses scenes of violence at home and may become so accustomed to it that it feels normal. A good example is when

a lady believes that until a man beats her, he has not proved his love for her. As funny as it may sound, it clearly shows the kind of environment in which she was raised and what has shaped her perspective of what love truly means.

Weak law enforcement: When those who are caught involving themselves in gender-based violence are not held accountable or given the punishment they deserve, the toll will continue.

Lack of education: In situations where people are not aware of human rights, the need for healthy relationships, what such relationships should look like, and the legal bodies that can serve as protection, it can contribute to GBV in the long run.

GBV is a salient issue that calls for attention from individuals, families, religious bodies, and society. If it is ignored or seen as less important, victims may suffer emotional trauma, physical injuries or scars, and low self-esteem. The risk of violence can span generations in families; society will then have to grapple with violations of fundamental human rights, the loss of bright minds that would have contributed to the growth of society, and reduced productivity.

Despite the gamut of gender-based violence, the antidote that has the capacity to weaken its persistent toll on people is to “speak out.” It is only when victims rise to the occasion by reporting abuse that they can help protect themselves and others, hold perpetrators responsible, and further prevent harm from reoccurring. But as much as victims are encouraged to speak out, they should do so safely by gaining the support of families, communities, legal practitioners, and institutions.

FEATURE

Will Nigeria overcome the HIV pandemic? the battle is far from over

TALBORT HOPE

There is something frightening about HIV that statistics alone cannot explain.

It is not simply the number of people living with the virus. It is the fear attached to a positive result, the silence that sometimes surrounds the disease and the possibility that a person may avoid testing because of what society might say if the result comes back positive.

In Nigeria, HIV has been part of the public-health conversation for decades. But in 2026, a different question deserves to be asked: Will Nigeria actually overcome the HIV epidemic, or will the country simply continue managing it from one year to another?

Nigeria has made important progress, but the country still carries one of the largest HIV burdens in the world. NACA's latest programme review reported that an estimated 2,002,624 people were living with HIV in Nigeria, while national prevalence remained at approximately 1.3 per cent.

Those numbers may not sound alarming when compared with countries where HIV prevalence is much higher. But Nigeria's enormous population means that even a relatively low national prevalence represents a very large number of people. And behind every number is a story.

THE HIV NIGERIA KNOWS TODAY IS DIFFERENT

There was a time when hearing that someone had HIV could immediately create an atmosphere of fear.

People associated the virus with death. Families sometimes hid diagnoses. Some patients were treated as though their condition made them dangerous to others. Medicine has changed that reality.

Today, antiretroviral therapy can suppress HIV and allow people living with the virus to live long and healthy lives. When treatment successfully suppresses the virus to an undetectable level and that level is maintained, HIV is not sexually transmitted.

That scientific breakthrough has changed the meaning of an HIV diagnosis. But science alone cannot defeat an epidemic.

A person must first know they have HIV. They must be willing and able to seek treatment. The treatment must be available. The person must continue taking it. And society must allow them to live without discrimination.

THE NUMBER BEHIND THE NUMBER

Nigeria's 1.3 per cent national prevalence can easily create the impression that HIV is no longer a major problem. IT IS.

NACA's current data show that the number of people living with HIV remains above two million. That means millions of Nigerians are either living with the virus themselves or are directly connected to someone who is. The epidemic is also not evenly distributed across the country.

Different states and population groups experience different levels of HIV risk. Earlier national survey data

showed particularly high prevalence in parts of southern Nigeria, with the South-South recording the highest regional prevalence in the 2018 NAHS results. This means Nigeria cannot rely on one national figure to tell the entire story.

What happens in a community in Rivers State may be different from what happens in Kano, Edo, Lagos or Enugu. The response must therefore be local as well as national.

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST ENEMY IS STIGMA

If there is one thing Nigeria must defeat alongside HIV, it is stigma.

Imagine discovering that you are HIV-positive and immediately wondering who you can tell.

Will your partner stay? Will your friends still associate with you? Will your family treat you differently? Will people at work find out? Will someone turn your private medical information into gossip?

These fears are not imaginary. Stigma can push people away from testing and treatment. Someone who is afraid of

being recognised at an HIV clinic may decide not to go. Someone who receives a positive result may struggle to disclose their status or remain connected to care.

This is why Nigeria's decision to join the Global Partnership for Action to Eliminate All Forms of HIV Related Stigma and Discrimination in 2025 was important.

The country cannot claim victory over HIV while people living with the virus are still being judged for their status.

HIV is a medical condition. It is not a punishment. And it certainly does not make a person less deserving of dignity.

YOUNG NIGERIANS AND THE DANGER OF MISINFORMATION

The next generation will play a major role in determining whether Nigeria wins or loses this battle. Young Nigerians are surrounded by information, but not all information is correct.

Social media has made it possible for health information to travel across the country within minutes. Unfortunately, false information can travel just as quickly.

The boat sailed through despite the troubled waters

RICHARD EWEKA

Life itself is a great challenge, and staying alive can be even more challenging. But overcoming the difficulties and storms of life is a task every individual must undertake in order to survive and fulfil destiny.

In a country like Nigeria, where citizens are confronted with economic hardship, political uncertainties, social challenges and security concerns, navigating life requires strategic planning, faith, perseverance and prayer.

Victory does not come by chance or luck. It comes through preparation, planning, perseverance and prayer, which ultimately produce testimonies and tangible evidence that one has survived and overcome the storms of life.

It is against this backdrop that Christ's Chosen Church of God International (CCCCGI) has continued to use its annual international convention as a platform to equip Christians with spiritual knowledge and practical guidance on how to overcome the storms that confront them.

The 2026 International Convention of the church, held from Wednesday, August 19 to Monday, August 24, at the church's international headquarters along the Benin-Agbor Road, Ohovbe Quarters, Benin City, brought together members from different parts of Nigeria and across the world.

The convention, organised under the leadership of the Spiritual Leader and Chairman, Church Council, Snr. Apst. (Dr.) David Unuefe Ikhuwu, had as its theme: "No Storm Can Swallow the Boat," drawn from Luke 8:22-24.

The theme was carefully chosen to remind believers that, regardless of the intensity of the storms they encounter, their faith in God can sustain them until the storm is over.

Throughout the convention, the church's leadership delivered a series of teachings aimed at strengthening the faith of members and equipping



The Spiritual Leader Chairman Church Council Christ Chosen Church of God International, Snr. Apostle (Dr) David Unuefe Ikhuwu The Elect of God, Flank by Snr. Apostle Dr. Samuel Echigbue, Head Prayer Ministry with Snr. Apostle Joseph Akhuere. As he Unveil the Theme of this Year 2026, Annual International Convention "NO STORM CAN SWALLOW THE BOAT" at the Cathedral of Christ Chosen Church of God International Benin-Agbor Road Benin City.

them to confront the challenges of life.

Among the topics were "Peace, Be Still," "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled," "Contend for the Faith" and "Looking Unto Jesus."

Other topics included "The Power of the Tongue," "Be Not Deceived," "Standing on the Rock," "The Kingdom of God Suffereth Violence," "When Tough Times Persist, the Tough Keep Going" and "Who Is on the Lord's Side?"

The teachings centred on faith, perseverance, spiritual discipline, courage and total dependence on God, with emphasis on the need for Christians to remain steadfast even when confronted by circumstances that appear overwhelming.

In his welcome address, Snr. Apst. Ikhuwu called on Christians to remain absolutely obedient to God, stressing that obedience was essential to achieving all-round success and blessings in their endeavours.

He acknowledged the economic

and security challenges confronting Nigeria but expressed confidence in God's continued providence over His children and the church.

"God's providence upon His children and the church has continued to strengthen our faith and confidence that, with God on our side, we shall continue to achieve success as we earnestly pursue our individual aspirations and God's vision for the church," he said.

The spiritual leader also drew attention to the security challenges confronting the nation, noting that religious organisations and worshippers had a responsibility to complement the efforts of government in protecting lives and property.

In response to the security situation, the church established the Chosen Special Duty Marshals (CSDM) to strengthen security across its stations and branches.

He directed other leaders whose branches had yet to establish the

CSDM units to do so, stressing the importance of proactive measures to protect worship centres and their members.

He also urged Nigerians, irrespective of religious affiliation, to remain security-conscious and collaborate with government and relevant security agencies in the fight against insecurity.

According to him, the prevailing situation requires collective responsibility, vigilance and cooperation among citizens and government at all levels.

The convention also provided an opportunity for the CSDM to conduct the investiture of the Spiritual Leader of the church, Snr. Apst. (Dr.) David Unuefe Ikhuwu.

Another major highlight of the convention was the promotion of deserving and long-serving members of the ministry.

Eleven officers who had served the church for between 21 and 44 years were promoted from the rank

of pastors to apostles. Twelve others were promoted from Senior Teachers to appointed pastors, while five members were elevated to Acting Divisional Heads in charge of various divisions of the church.

Other members were also promoted to the rank of councillors in recognition of their service and commitment to the ministry.

While announcing the promotions, Snr. Apst. Ikhuwu urged the newly elevated officers to remain diligent, focused and committed to their responsibilities in the vineyard of God.

He particularly warned them against pride, stressing that humility was essential for effective service and that the spirit of pride could ultimately lead to destruction.

As the convention drew to a close on Monday, August 24, the atmosphere at the international headquarters remained charged with worship and thanksgiving.

Despite the heavy downpour, members remained committed to the programme, with the new auditorium filled to capacity and an overflow of worshippers.

The determination of the members to remain until the end of the convention was perhaps the clearest illustration of its central message: storms may come, but they do not have the final say.

The story of the disciples in Luke 8:22-24 remains a powerful reminder that the presence of a storm does not mean the absence of God. The boat may be tossed by the waves, the wind may rage and fear may set in, but faith provides the strength to keep sailing.

For the members of Christ's Chosen Church of God International, the 2026 convention was therefore more than an annual gathering. It was a reaffirmation of faith, a call to vigilance, a celebration of service and a declaration that, with God at the centre, no storm can swallow the boat.

The boat sailed through despite the troubled waters.

Sports

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

WAFU-B: Enabulele salutes Gov. Okpebholo for support to Edo Queens

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As the Nigeria Women Football League champions Edo Queens prepare to confront their first opponents AS Garde Nationale in the WAFU-B tournament in Burkina Faso today, the Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has commended the Edo State government under the leadership of Senator Monday Okpebholo for its tremendous support for the team and the enabling environment the administration has created for sports to thrive in the state.

Enabulele gave the commendation while chatting with journalists in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, ahead of Edo Queens' opening match in the WAFU-B fixture against AS Garde Nationale of Niger Republic.

According to him, "the state government has prioritised the welfare of the players and technical crew throughout the team's preparation, creating the right environment for Edo Queens to compete at the highest level."

He particularly commend-

...Tasks team to reciprocate with Trophies

ed Governor Okpebholo for his commitment to rewarding athletes and supporting sports development, noting that the governor's approach has provided additional motivation for the team.

"Let me first appreciate His Excellency, the Governor of Edo State, for the tremendous support and commitment to sports development in our state. The government has created an enabling environment for our athletes to train, prepare and compete at the highest level," Enabulele said.

Enabulele expressed confidence in Edo Queens' ability to compete favourably with the other West African participants for the WAFU-B Women's Champions League qualification tickets in Burkina Faso.

The Sports Commission Chairman said the team was fully prepared for the competition, following an extensive preparation programme that included a 30-day training exercise and a series of high-quality friendly matches against teams invited from Lagos and other parts of Nigeria.

He recalled Edo Queens' successful run in the previous WAFU-B competition, where the team emerged champions, stressing that the feat had raised expectations ahead of this year's campaign.

Enabulele, however, acknowledged that the team faces a major task, insisting that Edo Queens would approach the competition one game at a time with the ultimate objective of winning the championship.

"Our target is the championship. We are here to win it, but we also understand that it is one game at a time," he said.

On the absence of the team's head coach, Moses Adoku, who is currently on national assignment with Nigeria's U-20 team in Poland, Enabulele explained that Bendel Insurance Technical Manager, Coach Kennedy Boboye, had stepped in to oversee the team, alongside Edo Queens' assistant coaches who are already on ground. He expressed confidence in the technical arrangement, stressing that Boboye's role was primarily to provide oversight while the team's

established coaching structure remains intact.

Enabulele revealed that Governor Okpebholo had given the team a clear mandate to return from Burkina Faso with the trophy.

"The target is clear and direct — five over five. We are here to win the five matches. Anything short of winning the five matches will be disappointing for us in Edo State. The Governor has made it clear: go to Burkina Faso and bring the trophy," he stated.

Ahead of the opening fixture, Enabulele also disclosed that efforts were underway to mobilise Nigerians resident in Burkina Faso to support Edo Queens at the stadium.

He said he had already engaged members of the Nigerian community in Ouagadougou and visited Nigerian and African restaurants as part of the mobilisation drive. Edo Queens jerseys were also distributed to some members of the community to encourage their support for the team.

He further disclosed that another meeting with the Nigerian community was scheduled as part of efforts to ensure strong support for the team when they take on AS Garde Nationale.

Today's match is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. Burkina Faso time, 7:00 p.m. Nigerian time.

Speaking on the transformation agenda of the Edo State Sports Commission, Enabulele said the commission had adopted a deliberate approach to sports development, with emphasis on grassroots talent identification, athletes' welfare, coaching and regular competitions.

He explained that the commission was moving away from a reactive approach to sports development towards a system where talents are deliberately identified, nurtured and provided with opportunities to compete.



AMAS OBASOGIE

NPFL2026/27: Amas Obasogie Returns to Bendel Insurance FC on One-Year Deal

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Former Bendel Insurance FC captain and Super Eagles goalkeeper, Amas Obasogie, has made a return to the Benin Arsenal after signing a one-year contract with the club.

The Benin Arsenal goalkeeper, known for league record performance of 18 clean sheets in 35 matches in 2023 football season with Federation cup title Insurance FC, joined Tanzania club Singida Black Stars in 2024/25 season.

Obasogie, who established himself as a key figure between the posts for the Benin Arsenals, is expected to bring his experience and leadership qualities to bear in the team as they prepare for the new season.

The goalkeeper's return has been welcomed by supporters of the club, who will be hoping that his experience abroad will further strengthen the team's goalkeeping department and contribute to the ambitions of the club in the 2026/27 campaign.

His return marks another chapter in his career with the Benin-based club, with fans already expressing excitement at seeing the former captain back in the Bendel Insurance colours.

Speaking with the Nigerian ObserverSports, Obasogie said he was happy to be back to contribute to his childhood club.

"I am back to where part of my journey began."

Sometimes, your profession takes you away so you can grow, learn, and become stronger. Today, I'm grateful for the opportunity to return to my former team—not just as a player, but with more experience, hunger, and determination."

"I'm ready to give my all for the badge, the team, and the supporters. Back home, back to work. Let the journey continue! Adaa Bendel," Obasogie added.

Bendel Insurance FC have been paired against Warri Wolves in their first match of the 2026/27 season on Sunday, August 30th at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin.



EDO QUEENS

Olumide Oyedeji Basketball Camp marks 25th edition, targets 500 talents

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Olumide Oyedeji Basketball Camp will mark its 25th year anniversary from 31 August to 5 September 2026 at the Indoor Sports Hall, with more than 500 young basketball players expected to take part.

Founded by former Nigeria international and NBA player Olumide Oyedeji, the camp has, over the years, provided young players with the opportunity to learn from experienced coaches and improve their skills on and off the court.

According to the organisers, the 25th edition will feature intensive basketball training and mentorship sessions aimed at helping participants to improve their technical skills, teamwork and understanding of the game.

The camp is the longest-running basketball developmental programmes in Nigeria and has remained a key part of Oyedeji's efforts to promote grassroots basketball and provide opportunities for young talents.

Oyedeji, who is the 3rd Vice President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), said ahead

of the camp that he remains committed to using basketball to empower young people and contribute to the development of the sport in Nigeria.

The programme will also include coaching clinics and mentorship sessions, giving participants the opportunity to learn from experienced figures within the basketball community.

The President of the Nigeria Olympians Association assured participants and members of the basketball community of an exciting experience as the camp celebrates its 25th edition.

The 2026 edition is expected to bring together more than 500 young players for six days of basketball training, as the camp celebrates 25 years of impact.



OLUMIDE OYEDEJI

La Liga: Simeone apologises to lookman

Atletico Madrid manager Diego Simeone has apologised to Super Eagles forward Ademola Lookman for playing him out of position during their La Liga clash against Villarreal.

Simeone admitted that Lookman was deployed in an unfamiliar role due to the absence of Alexander Sorloth through injury and Julián Alvarez still working his way back to full form.

"I have to apologise to [Ademola] Lookman; I know that's not his position," Simeone said. "We needed him to help

us there because Sorloth is injured and Julián is working his way back to his best form."

"He's a great kid and he's working hard, but he was missing the things he enjoys most: dribbling, scoring goals, taking players on one-on-one."

"We'll get him back to doing those things once we have our attacking players available again." The Atletico boss praised Lookman's attitude and indicated that the Nigerian will be restored to a more natural attacking role once the club's attacking options are fully available.

SPORTS

Gusau and his board: Nigeria football needs a fresh start

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

Four years. That is all it took to take Nigerian football from "sleeping giant" to "patient in ICU." Under the leadership of Ibrahim Gusau and his NFF board, the promise of 2022 has turned into excuses, early exits, calculator qualifications, and embarrassment in 2026. The time for press statements is over. The time for resignation is now.

Let's be honest about the results. In the past four years, the Super Eagles failed to qualify for a World Cup. Same for the Olympics football event. The Super Falcons also failed to qualify. The U20s and U17s, once our pride, became afterthoughts. The CHAN Eagles could not even get out of the group. Every benchmark we set for ourselves was diminished.

It is not just about losing matches. It is about how we lost them. No plan. No identity. Coaches hired today, sacked tomorrow. Players had to be begged to play for Nigeria. Camps opened 48 hours before games. Bonuses went unpaid. It looked like an association running on vibes, not structure.

A football federation is not supposed to be surviving from one crisis to another. It is supposed to build. Under Gusau's board, we built nothing. No league reform. No youth development. No data. No medical department that works. Just firefighting.

The NFF board had one job: to restore pride. Instead, they inherited goodwill from Rohr, Pinnick, and Osimhen's rise, and spent it all. They took the most talented generation of Nigerian players in 20 years and gave them chaos. We missed a second World Cup in a row, even when we had a relatively easy group to navigate.

The news from the Presidency is cheering.

It is good that calls for the board to resign are getting louder. A voluntary resignation is the cleanest way out. It



IBRAHIM GUSAU

saves us from the long, shameful road with FIFA — the bans, the normalization committees, and the headlines that say "Nigeria suspended again."

We have been down that road before. In 2014. In 2018. Every time gov-

ernment or factions interfere, FIFA knocks. And every time, football suffers while administrators play politics. Gusau and his board should not take us there again. Walk away with dignity. We have watched Nigerian football go down, and the fans have not decided to chase you out of office. Don't force them to.

The benchmarks were clear in 2022 when they came in: Qualify for the World Cup in 2026. Win AFCON. Make the league professional. Pay coaches. Clear debts. Develop women's football. Grow the grassroots. Four years later, which one can they point to and say "we delivered"?

The NPFL is still broke and changes sponsors like Diapers. Referees are still owed. State Governments and club owners still run teams like family businesses. The NFF could not even guarantee a home stadium that meets CAF standards for six months. If that is not failure, what is? If Uyo was not ready, we might have been playing our home games in Togo or Ghana.

Meanwhile, our players are our biggest export. Osimhen, Lookman, Iwobi, Boniface, Ajibade, Oshoala, Nnadozie — they are carrying the Nigerian brand on their backs in Europe. But at home, the house that should support them is collapsing.

Women's football was diminished. The Falcons, 10-time African champions, were treated like an after-

thought. Then we expected to stroll into WAFCON and pick up an 11th title. We received the shock of our lives. There was no proper preparation for the World Cup qualifiers, and the girls were beaten and failed to qualify. No league support. The board talked about "equal treatment" but showed the opposite.

Youth football was abandoned. No U17 World Cup qualification. No U20 structure. Countries like Morocco, Senegal, and Ivory Coast are passing us because they invested in 12-year-olds while we were busy fighting over NFF elections.

This is not just about Gusau as a person. It is about a system that has failed. When results don't come, when structures don't improve, and when stakeholders lose confidence, the honorable thing is to step aside and let fresh ideas come in.

Nigeria deserves a football federation that thinks like a business and acts like a national institution. We need term limits, independent audits, technical directors with real power, and a league that can pay players £500,000 a month without begging.

We need a board that understands media, branding, and data. Not one that hides when we lose and appears only to take pictures when we win. Football in 2026 is run on analytics, sports science, and partnerships. We are still running on "oga, help us."

A fresh start means new faces, yes. But more importantly, a new culture. No more emergency coach appointments. No more 3am flight bookings a few days to a serious match. No more using the national team to settle personal scores. Professionalism from top to bottom.

The players deserve better. The fans deserve better. The kid in Katsina kicking a ball barefoot deserves to believe that if he is good enough, the NFF will find him — not that he needs an "uncle on the board" to get a call-up.

To Gusau and the board: you tried. But the numbers and the results are clear. Four years, and every index has gone down. Do not wait for FIFA to push you. Do not wait for government to dissolve you. Resign honorably.

Nigeria is still the Brazil of Africa in talent. That has not changed. What has changed is management. And management can be changed today.

A resignation is not failure. Staying and destroying what's left is failure.

Nigerian football needs a fresh start. Not in 2027. Not after the next embarrassment. Now. A new board, new vision, new benchmarks, and real accountability. Let Gusau's exit be the beginning of rebuilding, not the end of another era.

Because if we don't reset now, in four years we will be writing this same article again.



MALLAM SHEHU DIKKO AND AMAJU PINNICK

SPORTS



Falconets set up World Cup camp in South-west Poland

Nigeria's Falconets will today open their training camp for the U20 World Cup in the South-western town of Trzebnica.

The Nigeria U20 ladies are booked into Hotel Trzebnica and

will be there until September 3.

The team led by coach Moses Aduku are expected later today in Poland.

Already Benfica Ladies striker Janet 'Semenya' Akekoromwei has landed in Poland di-

rectly from her base in Portugal to join up with the rest of the squad.

It is a major boost for the Falconets as they will do well to have her goals after her Portuguese club previously tried to stop her from the World Cup.

The U20 Women's World Cup kicks off September 5 and Nigeria open their campaign two days later with a tough tie against Spain in Sosnowiec, Poland.

[8/23, 5:58 PM] Kenny: Enugu City Marathon: Sponsors Jostle For Place As Race Day Draws Near

The buzz in Enugu is mounting as the 2nd Enugu City International Marathon edges

closer, with just 6 days to go. The race has sparked a wave of sponsor interest, as major corporations, growing brands, and local enterprises rush to secure a spot at what has quickly become one of the region's most talked-about sporting events.

Set for Saturday, August 29, 2026, the marathon has grown beyond athletics to become a key platform for business, culture, and community.

The momentum will build further when the 5-day Marathon Expo opens on Monday, August 24 at the landmark Michael Okpara Square, offering brands and the public a first taste of the race-week experience.



FALCONETS IN TRAINING



Port Harcourt to host NBBL final 8 for fourth straight year

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, will host the Final 8 of the 2026 Nigeria Premier Basketball League for the fourth consecutive year following a slight adjustment to the competition schedule by the League Management Committee of the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF).

The Phase 3 playoffs will now take place from August 29 to September 6, 2026, at the Indoor Basketball Stadium, 59 Niger Street, Port Harcourt Township.

The eight-team tournament will be played on a round-ro-

in basis, with four teams qualifying from the Atlantic Conference and four from the Savannah Conference.

Representing the Atlantic Conference are Rivers Hoopers, Maktown Flyers, Hoops & Read and Lagos Raptors, while Aso Sky Hawks, 313 Warriors, Gboko City Chiefs and Kano Pillars will represent the Savannah Conference.

Port Harcourt has established itself as a regular host of the league's decisive phase, with the Rivers State capital once again set to welcome the country's top basketball teams.

2026 African Beach Volleyball Nations Championship: Nigeria beat Egypt, hit quarter-final

Nigeria have qualified for the quarterfinals of the 2026 African Beach Volleyball Nations Championship in Alexandria, Egypt.

The 2024 African Games bronze medallists defeated hosts Egypt 2-0 (21-17, 21-16) in the Round of 16 on Friday, August 21.

Nigeria started the first set on a strong note, with the duo of Esther Mbah and Pamela Bawa putting the host nation under pressure. The Nigerian pair eventually secured the set 21-17.

The Nigerian side continued their impressive performance in the second set, maintaining their momentum to defeat the former champions 21-16 and seal their place in the quarterfinals.

Reacting to the victory, board member of the Nigeria Volleyball Federation, Chinedu Onikeku (OLY) said the players had put a smile on the faces of Nigerians back home.

Onikeku praised Mbah and Bawa for their impressive display against the host nation, Egypt.

She said the duo had shown that they are a force to reckon with in African beach volleyball.

Onikeku added that the players bounced back strongly from

their loss to Morocco in their third and final group-stage match, making a huge statement with their victory over the hosts.

Onikeku said: "Nigerians are excited with the performance of the girls against the host nation, Egypt, in the Round of 16.

"The girls have put a smile on the faces of Nigerians back home. Esther and Pamela gave a good account of themselves and proved that they are a force to reckon with in beach volleyball.

"They bounced back from their loss against Morocco in their third group-stage match, and this victory is a huge statement from the team."



Ameh slams Monimichelle, says contractor has no moral Justification to criticise NFF Leadership

The North-Central Coordinator of the Gusau 4+4 Solidarity Forum, Ochoga Ameh, has advised the Chief Executive Officer of Monimichelle Construction Company, Ebi Egbe, to refrain from commenting on issues concerning Nigerian football, accusing him of being part of the problems affecting sports

development in the country.

Ameh made the remarks while reacting to recent statements attributed to Egbe on developments in Nigerian football.

According to him, Egbe, popularly known as Monimichelle, lacks the moral justification to criticise factors responsible for the challenges confronting football develop-

ment, alleging that several projects handled by his company have remained uncompleted.

"Monimichelle is part of our problem in sports development in the country. It is a known fact that one of the major causes of the present downward trend facing the country is the lack of infrastructure," Ameh said.

Nigeria must return to the Grassroots to rebuild Women's Football — Omidiran

The Executive Chairman of the Federal Character Commission (FCC),

Honorable Hulyat Motunrayo Omidiran, has called for a wholesale rebuilding of wom-

en's football in Nigeria, beginning with renewed investment in grassroots development, following the Super Falcons' failure to qualify for Brazil 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.

Hon. Omidiran made the call on Friday while attending the opening ceremony of the 2026 FCT FA Women's Inter-Area Council Football Tournament at the Area 3 Sports Complex, Abuja, where defending champions AMAC defeated Gwagwalada 7-0 in the opening fixture.

The FCC Chairman said Nigeria's shocking failure to secure a place at the next Women's World Cup should serve as a wake-up call for stakeholders to reassess the country's women's football development structure and return to the fundamentals of grassroots development.

"This is the time for us to rebuild women's football in Nigeria. We need to go back to the grassroots and invest properly in the development of our girls," Omidiran said.



Hon. Hulyat Motunrayo Omidiran addressing Edo Queens



BEACH VOLLEYBALL