

Okpebholo promises speedy operationalisation of 83 Division

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has assured that the state government is fully prepared to facilitate the speedy operationalisation of the Nigerian Army's 83 Division in Benin City. Governor Okpebholo gave the assurance yesterday when

he inspected the temporary facility designated for the 83 Division in Benin, where he assessed the progress of work at the site. The Governor, who expressed satisfaction with the pace of work, noted that the area, which was heavily overgrown with bushes when he visited about two weeks ago, had now been cleared, with fencing of the facil-

ity expected to commence as the next phase of the project. "Last time we came here about two weeks ago, this place was very bushy, but today you can see everywhere is cleared and the next thing now is fencing. "We are set for the 83 Division here in Edo State, by the grace of God. Everything needed to complete this place

for the military to inhabit here is ready and we are set," he said. Okpebholo described Edo as strategically located in the South-South region, recalling its historical position as the headquarters of the former Mid-West Region. He said the establishment of a military division in Edo by President Bola Tinubu would

have significant security implications for the entire South-South region. "Edo is a central point. We have work to do in the South-South. That is why we were called Mid-West and the headquarters of Mid-West was in Benin, and we are still in Benin today. "So, putting a division here, in the wisdom of Mr President,

is a great thing for the South-South. We are happy because Mr President thought rightly for this to be in Edo," the Governor stated. The Governor further said the infrastructure being provided at the temporary facility demonstrated the state

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

f t i s NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,360

FRIDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2026.

#200

Tinubu orders emergency rescue of Benin-Asaba Road

● **vows to end commuters' ordeal as FG deploys over 50 equipment**

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Relief may finally be in sight for thousands of motorists and communities trapped in the worsening nightmare on the Benin-Asaba Road as President Bola Tinubu has ordered an emergency rescue operation on the 125-kilometre highway.

The intervention, which comes amid worsening road deterioration, severe gridlock and prolonged delays along the vital Edo-Delta corridor, is aimed at restoring motorability and easing the hardship suffered daily by commuters and transport operators.

Represented by Edo State Governor Monday Okpebholo, President Tinubu yesterday

inaugurated the emergency intervention in Benin, declaring that the Federal Government had heard the cries of road users and was determined to bring the protracted

ordeal to an end.

"We are here today not to witness the commencement of another road project. We are witnessing the response of a government that has heard the

cries of its people and has chosen to act. That is why today's intervention is truly a rescue operation," the President said. Tinubu explained that the Benin-Asaba corridor had

been concessioned under a Public-Private Partnership arrangement to the Benin-Asaba Expressway Concession Com-

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>

Edo Govt assures refund of pension contributions to DBS pensioners

ROSE IMONIKHE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has assured pensioners recently migrated from the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) to the Defined Benefit Scheme (DBS) of the refund of their eight per cent personal pension contributions.

The Permanent Secretary of the Edo State Pension Bureau, Mr. Washington Abbe, gave the assurance during an interview with journalists in Benin City, where he addressed concerns surrounding the transition and the protection of affected workers' interests.

Abbe said the State Gov-

ernment was committed to ensuring that no pensioner was disadvantaged by the migration process, assuring that the contributions made by affected workers under the CPS would be refunded in line with the Government's decision to transfer them to the DBS.

He also clarified the status of the 10 per cent matching contributions made by the State Government under the CPS arrangement.

According to him, the Government's matching contributions would be refunded to the State and subsequently reallocated towards the settlement of outstanding pension

CONTINUES ON PG 2 >>



INAUGURATION:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, yesterday inaugurating, on behalf of President Bola Tinubu, the emergency intervention on the Benin-Asaba Road in Benin City.

Edo Assembly passes State Police Bill

—Pg 2

EDOHIC DG bags Integrity Award, pledges wider health insurance access

—Pg 11

Rogue OpenAI agent 'infiltrated' Australian government website in world first

—Pg 14

Uyo Unseats Itu, Clinches Taekwondo Gold at Akwa Ibom Sports Festival

—Pg 22

NEWS

Okpebholo promises speedy...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

government's commitment to supporting the Nigerian Army and strengthening security in the state.

He assured that the government would continue to provide the necessary support to ensure that personnel deployed to the division were provided with a conducive environment.

Also speaking, the Commander, 4 Brigade, Nigerian Army, Brig.-Gen. Ahmed Balogun, said the inspection was a follow-up to an earlier visit aimed at assessing the progress of work at the facility.

Balogun said work was progressing steadily and expressed optimism that the operationalisation of the divi-

sion would commence in the nearest future as earlier announced, even as other amenities and facilities were being incorporated into the project.

A resident of the area, His Royal Highness, Dogwo Bako, commended Governor Okpebholo for clearing the site, saying the area had previously served as a hideout for criminals.

Bako said the transformation had restored confidence among residents and assured the Governor of the community's support for the development.

He described the site as a massive expanse of land and expressed optimism that the ongoing development would bring further transformation to the community.

Tinubu orders emergency...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

pany (BAECC), with the expectation that the road would be completed within three years.

He, however, said the pace and manner of execution had fallen short of the terms of the concession agreement, resulting in the deterioration of the road and mounting hardship for motorists.

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, disclosed that the Federal Ministry of Works had taken over the immediate palliative rehabilitation of the highway, with more than 50 pieces of equipment already deployed and additional equipment expected.

Umahi said the ministry resorted to the emergency intervention after efforts to secure the cooperation of the concessionaire failed.

He explained that the concession agreement required Federal Government approval from the concessionaire before intervention, but the company declined options proposed by the ministry.

The minister said major contractors had consequently been directed to work on the three sections of the road to restore failed portions and

ease the suffering of motorists.

He added that the entire corridor would subsequently be redesigned for permanent reconstruction using reinforced concrete pavement.

Governor Okpebholo, on behalf of the people of Edo, thanked President Tinubu for responding to the cries of commuters and communities along the corridor, while commending Umahi for his personal intervention in the road crisis.

He charged the contractors handling the emergency works to deliver quality construction and strictly adhere to approved specifications and timelines.

"To the new contractor, this is a road of great economic importance to Edo, Delta and Nigeria. We expect quality work, strict compliance with the approved project specifications, and delivery within the agreed timeframe. There must be no excuses," Okpebholo said.

The governor also appealed to commuters and communities who had endured prolonged gridlock and delays to remain patient, assuring them that their complaints had been heard.

Edo Govt assures refund of....

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

liabilities.

Why Remittances Stopped

Explaining why the State Government's remittance of workers' CPS contributions stopped in January 2025, the Permanent Secretary attributed the delay to a new payment process introduced by the National Pension Commission (PenCom) for state governments and Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs).

He explained that under the new arrangement, PenCom appointed an intermediary to facilitate the remittance of pension contributions and protect employees' funds from loss or misallocation arising from missing Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) or discrepancies caused by PIN mismatches.

Abbe said state governments were required to reconcile the PINs of all employees before pension contributions could be processed and transferred through the designated intermediary.

He, however, assured that the funds were ready for remittance, noting that the Edo State Government was awaiting confirmation from PenCom on the safety and security of the funds before proceeding with the payment through the intermediary.

The Permanent Secretary reiterated the State Government's commitment to ensuring that the pension transition process was conducted transparently, efficiently and in a manner that protects the interests of affected workers and pensioners across Edo State.

Edo Assembly passes State Police Bill

RAYMOND OSOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has unanimously passed the Bill seeking the establishment of State Police in Edo State.

The Bill was transmitted to the House by the Clerk of the National Assembly, pursuant to a directive from the National Assembly, seeking the consent and approval of the Edo State Legislature.

The Bill was introduced on the floor of the House through a letter addressed to the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idiaje.

Leading the debate, the House Majority Leader, Hon. Osezua Sunday Ojezelle, high-

lighted the importance of the Bill and urged members to support its passage, stressing the need for a more effective security architecture at the state and community levels.

Also contributing, Hon. Donald Okogbe, representing Akoko-Edo II Constituency, described the proposed legislation as a courageous step, noting that the establishment of State Police would also create employment opportunities for youths in the state.

Hon. Charity Iguodala Aiguobawehian, representing Ovia North-East I Constituency, said the creation of State Police would strengthen security at the community level. She therefore urged her col-

leagues to support the passage of the Bill.

In his contribution, Hon. Edosa Richard, representing Oredo I Constituency, advocated the establishment of an Edo State Police Commission to oversee the administration and operations of the proposed State Police.

Similarly, Hon. Kingsley Ugabe, representing Etsako East Constituency, called on members to support the Bill, while Hon. Maria Edekor, representing Esan North-East II Constituency, said its passage would contribute to restoring peace and security in communities across the state.

After exhaustive debate on the Bill, the Majority Leader,

Hon. Osezua Sunday Ojezelle, moved a motion for its passage. The motion was seconded by the Minority Leader, Hon. Natasha Osawaru.

The motion was overwhelmingly supported by members and subsequently adopted, leading to the passage of the Bill.

Following the passage, the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idiaje, directed the Clerk of the House to transmit clean copies of the Bill to the National Assembly.

In another development, the House confirmed the nomination of Ogbeide Jolly Obosa as a member of the Edo State Oil and Gas Commission.

The House thereafter adjourned plenary to Monday, September 28, 2026.



PROTESTING YOUTHS:

Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa addresses protesting youths of Orhionmwon communities who are protesting the deplorable State of Benin-Abraka Road.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

We have done well at CBN — Cardoso

OLIVER IJIOGBE

ABUJA

Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, has said the apex bank has made significant progress in restoring confidence in the institution and the Nigerian economy since the current leadership assumed office three years ago.

Cardoso stated this on Tuesday in Abuja while presenting the communiqué of the 307th meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

Reflecting on the CBN's three years under his leadership, the governor said the bank inherited an economy characterised by declining confidence, a weakening naira, high inflation and a dysfunctional foreign exchange market.

According to him, the situation had become so challenging that Nigerians found it increasingly difficult to plan, while many moved their savings abroad in an attempt to protect their wealth.

"This is 36 months, three years precisely, that we assumed leadership role in the CBN. And,

like all things, it is a pretty good time to look back and reflect," Cardoso said.

He noted that the CBN inherited a situation in which confidence had been lost not only in the bank but also in the country, adding that the loss of confidence was particularly evident in the performance of the naira.

"This was a time when our currency was regularly depreciating. You could not plan, and people panicked, and a lot of people externalised all they could to be able to protect their hard-earned savings," he said.

The CBN governor further recalled that Nigeria's international rating had also suffered,

with rating agencies expressing concerns about the country's economic outlook in the absence of far-reaching reforms.

Cardoso said the leadership team at the CBN since 2023 had played an important role in supporting the MPC and helping to reposition the apex bank towards its core mandate.

FG moves to cut rent burden, targets 40% of workers' income

BENEDICT OKATE

ABUJA

The Federal Government has announced plans to reduce the proportion of workers' income spent on rent, with a target of ensuring that Nigerians do not devote between 40 and 60 per cent of their earnings to housing.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Muttaqha Darma, disclosed this on Wednesday while commending the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) for supporting ac-

cess to affordable housing for its workers.

Darma said excessive rental costs could place additional financial pressure on families, forcing workers to seek alternative sources of income to meet other obligations such as school fees, healthcare and general welfare.

According to the minister, such financial pressures could create conditions that encourage corruption.

"If people with families tend to spend their own legitimate income on rent, then they will have to source other means of getting money to take care of

their families, their schooling and the rest. And that is an impetus to corruption," he said.

Darma said the broader objective of the government was to expand access to decent and affordable housing and ultimately ensure that every unhoused Nigerian had a place to call home.

He said about 110 million Nigerians were currently unhoused, while an estimated 16 million housing units would be required to address the country's housing deficit.

"But importantly, what we are trying to do is to make sure that every unhoused Nigerian gets housing, gets a place they call home," the minister said.

EDOHIC DG bags Integrity Award, pledges wider health insurance access

BENIN CITY

The Director-General of the Edo State Health Insurance Commission (EDOHIC), Dr. Augusta Ikpea-Enaholo, has been honoured with the Integrity Stewardship Service Ambassador Award for her leadership, administrative discipline and commitment to expanding access to quality

healthcare services across Edo State.

The award was presented on Wednesday by the Advocacy for Peace and Value Reorientation, Abuja, in recognition of what the organisation described as Dr. Ikpea-Enaholo's exemplary leadership, adherence to work ethics and commitment to effective public service delivery.

Receiving the award at the

EDOHIC headquarters in Benin City, the Director-General said the recognition would further strengthen her resolve to pursue excellence, accountability and improved healthcare access for residents of the state.

Dr. Ikpea-Enaholo said the Commission would continue to intensify public awareness and engagement to ensure that residents, particularly vulnerable

groups, understand their health insurance rights, benefits and available healthcare services.

She attributed the progress recorded by EDOHIC to the leadership and support of the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, saying the administration had created an enabling environment for the Commission to advance its mandate and contribute to the development of

the state's health sector.

The EDOHIC helmsman also credited the Commission's achievements to the dedication and professionalism of its workforce, stressing that sustained progress was a product of collective effort.

She reaffirmed EDOHIC's commitment to expanding health insurance coverage and reducing unnecessary financial

barriers to healthcare, while strengthening residents' confidence in the state's health insurance system.

Presenting the award, Executive Director of the Advocacy for Peace and Value Reorientation, Comrade Abubakar A. Oyibo, said the recognition was part of the organisation's governance programme aimed at identifying and celebrating

NAUS, NANCES, NAPS demand nationwide adoption of E-DON

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

ABUJA

Three major student bodies have demanded nationwide expansion of the Electronic Education Initiative, E-DON, across universities, polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

The National Association of University Students, NAUS, National Association of Nigerian Colleges of Education Students, NANCES, and National Association of Polytechnic Students, NAPS, made the demand at a joint world press conference in Abuja at the weekend.

The unions said E-DON, which promotes indigenous educational technology through 3D animation simulation software and QR-enabled interactive Smartboards, has proven effective in Colleges of Education and should be replicated nationwide.

They commended the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Colleges of Education, NCCE, Dr. Angela Ajala, the Committee of Provosts and other stakeholders for supporting its implementation.

They called on the National Universities Commission, NUC, and the Committee of

Vice-Chancellors to adopt the system in universities, and urged the National Board for Technical Education, NBTE, and the Committee of Rectors to extend it to polytechnics.

They proposed that at least one lecture hall in every department of every tertiary institution be equipped with E-DON facilities to broaden access to interactive digital learning.

According to the unions, wider deployment would allow students to participate in virtual live lectures and academic exchanges with partner institutions globally, while exposing lecturers to modern teaching tools.

They said expanding E-DON beyond Colleges of Education would strengthen Nigeria's digital education ecosystem and help institutions gradually integrate technology into conventional teaching.

The unions also expressed concern over recurring industrial disputes in state-owned tertiary institutions.

They urged state governors to resolve outstanding issues involving COEASU, ASUU and ASUP, warning that prolonged strikes disrupt academic calendars, delay students' graduation and undermine stability in the tertiary education system.



HONOURED FOR INTEGRITY:

L-R: Dr. Augusta Ikpea-Enaholo, Director-General, Edo State Health Insurance Commission (EDOHIC), receives the Integrity Stewardship Service Ambassador Award from Comrade Abubakar A. Oyibo, Executive Director, Advocacy for Peace and Value Reorientation, in Benin City.

2027: Yari assures Tinubu of Northern support

MUSA ABDURAHEEM OMOH

LAGOS

Director-General of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), Senator AbdulAziz Yari, has assured the Oba of Lagos that the North will support President Bola Tinubu's bid for a second term in 2027.

Yari, a former governor of Zamfara State, spoke in Lagos when he led members of the PCC to the palace of the Oba of Lagos, His Royal Majesty, Rilwanu Akiolu, to seek his royal blessing for the council's activities ahead of the 2027 election.

He said the North owed Tinubu a political debt for sup-

porting former President Muhammadu Buhari and allowing the region to complete its eight-year presidential tenure between 2015 and 2023.

According to Yari, Tinubu resisted pressure from some politicians to contest the 2019 presidential election against Buhari, insisting at the time that it was the North's turn to produce the president.

Yari said the North would reciprocate Tinubu's support by backing his bid to remain in office beyond 2027.

"For us in the North, I think it is time for us to pay Tinubu back for allowing the North complete its full term," he said.

He added that there were

still people in the region who believed in justice and fairness and would support Tinubu's continued presidency.

Yari also said the PCC was seeking Tinubu's re-election based on what he described as the administration's efforts to restructure the country, revive the economy and improve infrastructure, rather than on the principle of political power rotation.

He acknowledged that Tinubu inherited difficult economic and governance challenges from previous administrations but said the campaign council believed Nigerians would assess the government based on its record.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who received Yari and

his delegation before accompanying them to the palace, described the PCC as a team comprising experienced politicians and administrators, including former Senate presidents, governors, speakers and other senior political leaders.

Sanwo-Olu said the council's decision to begin its nationwide engagements with traditional rulers reflected the importance of traditional institutions in promoting peace, unity and national development.

In his remarks, Oba Akiolu expressed confidence in Tinubu's chances in the 2027 election, saying he believed there would be no vacancy in the presidential seat after the election.

RMAFC inaugurates committee for China oil/gas investment forum

AYENOMOH WINNER
ALUKHEI

ABUJA

The Chairman of the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), Dr Mohammed Shehu, has inaugurated a planning committee to coordinate preparations for the upcoming oil and gas investment forum in China.

Shehu, who was represented by the Commissioner representing Anambra and Chairman of the Investment Monitoring Committee, RMAFC, Mr Ekene Enefe, said on Tuesday in Abuja that the forum is scheduled to hold towards the end of 2026.

He said the inauguration marked a step towards coordinated preparations for the forum, which is expected to showcase Nigeria's investment opportunities across the oil and gas value chain and attract investments into the country.

"The forum will as well feature

business-to-business engagements, investment matchmaking, technical presentations and policy dialogue. It also expected to promote Nigeria's investment opportunities in the international oil and gas market," he said.

The chairman charged the committee to develop a comprehensive framework for the event and identify priority investment opportunities.

He also tasked it with coordinating stakeholders' participation and facilitating strategic engagements with prospective investors and partners in China.

"The committee is expected to coordinate relevant stakeholders and activities toward ensuring effective participation and investment engagements at the forum," he said, adding that the activities are aimed at promoting sustainable partnerships and strengthening co-operation between Nigeria and China in the oil and gas sector.

NADF targets private capital for agriculture

GODSENT OSAKIOYA
OMOFOMA

ABUJA

The National Agricultural Development Fund (NADF) has launched a blended finance initiative to attract more private-sector investment into Nigeria's agricultural sector and improve access to funding for farmers and agribusinesses.

The initiative is designed to reduce investment risks and encourage commercial investors to commit more capital to

agricultural projects, the Fund said.

NADF Executive Secretary, Mohammed A. Ibrahim, said government funding alone could not provide the level of capital required to transform Nigeria's agricultural sector.

He said the Fund was working to connect investors with credible and investment-ready agribusinesses while developing financing mechanisms capable of attracting commercial funding.

The initiative is part of NADF's efforts to address persistent financing challenges in

the agricultural sector.

Blended finance involves combining public or concessional funds with private capital to reduce investment risks and make agricultural projects more attractive to commercial investors.

The Fund identified perceived risks associated with farming, currency fluctuations, inadequate project scale and difficulties in identifying properly structured and bankable agricultural ventures as some of the challenges limiting private investment in the sector.

NADF also established an

Agribusiness Finance Lab to strengthen the capacity of fund managers and connect investors with viable agricultural businesses.

The Fund said the initiative would help farmers and agribusinesses expand production, improve processing capacity and create more jobs across the agricultural value chain.

NADF said it would continue to work with financial institutions, investors, development partners and other stakeholders to unlock more capital for agriculture and support sustainable growth in the sector.

NEWS

Orogho youths protest alleged marginalisation by Seplat, seek Edo Assembly's intervention

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

Youths of Orogho community in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State have protested to the Edo State House of Assembly, alleging marginalisation and failure by Seplat Energy Plc to fulfil its corporate social responsibility obligations to the community.

The protesters, who carried placards with various inscriptions, said they were at the Assembly to draw attention to what they described as long-standing grievances against the oil company, which took over

the management of oil wells in the community from Shell in 2012.

Speaking on behalf of the protesters, Ikpomwonsa Osayomore and Lucky Ekhator alleged that Seplat had failed to meet its corporate social responsibility obligations to Orogho despite operating oil assets in the area for several years.

They also alleged that the company was attempting to cede the oil wells to neighbouring Delta State, insisting that there was no boundary dispute between Orogho and communities in the neighbouring state.

The protesters appealed to the Edo State Government and other relevant authorities to intervene in the matter and protect what they described as the community's interests in the oil-bearing assets.

Responding to the protesters, the Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idaiye, commended them for conducting themselves peacefully.

Idaiye urged the protesters to submit relevant documents and evidence supporting their claims to the Assembly to enable the lawmakers examine the matter and facilitate the necessary intervention.

IMF releases 2026 annual report, highlights global economic challenges

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released its 2026 Annual Report of the Executive Board.

The report, titled "Navigating a Precarious World", was released on Wednesday.

It highlights rising public debt, Artificial Intelligence (AI) investment, trade reorientation, and digital currencies as major forces shaping the global economy.

It covers the activities of the IMF during its 2026 fiscal year, from May 1, 2025, to April 30, and, in some cases, developments beyond the period.

According to the report, the global economy continued to demonstrate resilience in spite of challenges from geopolitical shocks, ongoing conflicts, and major shifts in the global trading system.

It identified four major forces shaping the global economy, including rising public debt and a surge in AI investment transforming economies and labour markets.

Others include trade reorientation amid an unprecedented energy supply shock and the rapid development of stablecoins, central bank digital currencies, and tokenisation.

The IMF said it continued to support member countries through its three core areas of economic surveillance, lending and capacity development during the fiscal year.

It said in the area of economic surveillance, 138 country health checks, including Article IV consultations and related surveillance activities, were completed.

The fund said it also provided 40 billion dollars in financing to 18 countries, including about two billion dollars to nine low-income countries.

In capacity development, the IMF said it committed 400 million dollars to hands-on technical advice, policy-oriented training and peer learning.

In her message contained in the report, IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, said the global economy con-

tinued to show resilience in the face of more frequent and overlapping shocks during the year.

Georgieva said the war in the Middle East had restrained growth, boosted inflation and disrupted the supply of key commodities.

"If not for an agile private sector boosted by AI investment and disciplined policymaking, things could have been much worse," she said.

She said that uncertainty remained high while the medium-term outlook was "tepid", stressing the need for stronger economic growth and greater resilience to future shocks.

Georgieva said price and financial stability were paramount, adding that sound policy frameworks and strong institutions remained important pillars of resilience.

She said fiscal authorities still had tools they could use, but they must be chosen wisely.

She also identified structural policies as an important avenue for achieving more durable growth, flexibility and resilience.

On AI, Georgieva said the technology presented both opportunities and threats, urging countries to help workers re-skill and firms to take advantage of potential productivity gains.

She also stressed the need to strengthen cyber-resilience to manage the risks associated with AI.

According to her, the IMF will continue to tailor its sup-

port to the needs of individual member countries through policy advice, financial assistance and capacity development.

"From navigating a changing trade environment, to reducing imbalances, to seizing the opportunities of the AI age, the fund stands as a venue for cooperation and as a transmission line for good policies."

Georgieva said the IMF had also strengthened its operations during the fiscal year with the support of its executive board.

She said the IMF was carrying out reforms to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, agreed in 2024, to support the fund's most vulnerable members.

The IMF boss thanked members that had made commitments and called on others to provide additional subsidy resources to ensure the trust's self-sustained lending capacity.

Georgieva also said the fund was undertaking comprehensive reviews of its core functions, including surveillance, financial sector assessments, and the determination of sustainable debt levels for low-income members.

"Others are the design of country programmes, and the assessment of global imbalances and their impacts," she said.

She further urged members to implement the 16th quota review to ensure that the IMF remained inclusive and representative of its membership.



IMF MANAGING DIRECTOR KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA

OBITUARY



EDO STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, IGUEBEN (EDOCOE)



Late Dr. VICTORIA OKOJIE

The Governing Council, Management, staff and students of the Edo State College of Education, Igueben, have received with profound sorrow, the news of the passing of the Provost of the College, **Dr. VICTORIA OKOJIE**.

Dr Okojie's death is a great loss to the College, Edo State and the wider educational community. During her tenure, she demonstrated exemplary dedication to the advancement of the institution, the promotion of academic excellence, staff welfare and the development and well-being of students.

Beyond her role as Provost, Dr. Okojie was a mother, mentor and source of inspiration to many within and beyond the College.

Her warmth, humility, leadership and unwavering commitment to duty endeared her to colleagues, students and other members of the College community.

Her passing has brought immense grief to the institution and left a profound void in the hearts of those she touched.

The College community mourns the loss of a leader whose contributions and impact will remain indelible in the history of the institution.

On behalf of the Governing Council, Management, staff and students, we extend our deepest condolences to her family, loved ones and all those affected by this painful loss. We pray that Almighty God grants Dr Victoria Okojie eternal rest and give her family, the College community and the good people of Edo State, the strength and fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.

SIGNED:

IJENEKHUEMEN OSEDEBAMEN DANIEL

Head, Public Relations/Protocol Unit & PRO
Edo State College of Education, Igueben

Okpebholo revokes Benin–Abraka road contract, orders re-award

TALBORT HOPE AND
AYENOMOH WINNER

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has approved the revocation of the contract for the failed section of the Benin–Abraka Road at Ikpe Waterside in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of the state.

The decision was disclosed by the state Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa, during a meeting with Okaigheles, youth leaders and residents of Ikpe Waterside and surrounding communities who had protested the poor condition of the road.

The protest followed growing concerns over the bad state of the road, which has made movement difficult for motorists and residents in the affected communities. The protesters had reportedly barricaded the road, restricting the movement

of vehicles.

However, the barricades were later removed after the Deputy Governor assured the protesters that the state government would intervene and address their concerns.

Idahosa said Governor Monday Okpebholo had approved the cancellation of the existing contract and ordered that the project be re-awarded to another competent contractor.

He explained that the Benin–Abraka Road project was originally divided into two sections and awarded to two different contractors before the present administration came into office on November 12, 2024.

According to him, one of the contractors had completed about 76 per cent of its assigned section, while the contractor handling the Ikpe Waterside section failed to execute the project to the required standard.

The Deputy Governor said

the government would not allow the poor condition of the road to continue to affect residents and other road users, adding that immediate attention would be given to the worst portions of the road.

He disclosed that palliative work would begin on the badly affected areas while the procurement process for the re-award of the main contract was being completed.

He also said the local government would be directed to carry out emergency repairs as part of efforts to reduce the difficulties faced by motorists using the road.

Idahosa assured residents that the rehabilitation would be properly monitored to ensure that the project was completed according to the required standard. He said the administration was determined to address infrastructure problems inherited from the previous government across the state.

The Deputy Governor also appealed to the affected communities to remain patient and cooperate with the government as efforts were being made to find a lasting solution to the road problem.

Speaking on behalf of the protesting communities, David

Ehiarinmwian said their concerns were not limited to the poor condition of the road.

He also called on oil and agricultural companies operating in the area to do more for their host communities through corporate social responsibility programmes.

Ehiarinmwian further appealed to the state government to review the buffer-zone policy relating to the allocation of land to agricultural investors. He said the policy had affected some local farmers' access to their ancestral farmlands and traditional means of farming.

The Deputy Governor as-

sured the communities that their complaints concerning land would also be looked into by the government.

The revocation and planned re-award of the road contract is expected to provide a new opportunity for the government to address the long-standing problems on the affected section of the Benin–Abraka Road.

For residents and motorists who depend on the road for their daily activities, the proposed intervention is expected to ease transportation difficulties while the government works towards completing the rehabilitation project.

Appeal Court stays judgment sacking Okuokpellagbe of Okpella

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

BENIN CITY

The kingship tussle over the Okuokpellagbe of Okpella stool has taken a new twist as the Court of Appeal, Benin Division, has stopped the execution of the judgment that sacked His Royal Majesty, Michael Sado.

The appellate court, sitting in Benin City on Tuesday, 22 September 2026, granted an interim order staying the judgment of the Edo State High Court pending the determination of the appeal filed by Sado.

In March 2026, Justice O.A. Otamere of the Edo State High Court, in Suit No. HAG/12/2025, had nullified Sado's appointment and ordered the reinstatement of deposed monarch, Lukeman Akemokue, holding that the process leading to Akemokue's removal and Sado's emergence

breached the principle of fair hearing.

Dissatisfied, Sado appealed the judgment on grounds of miscarriage of justice, while the Edo State Government, through the Attorney-General, Prof. Roland Otaru, SAN, filed an application for stay of execution.

Moving the application, Otaru told the court that it sought to preserve the status quo pending the hearing of the substantive appeal, adding that the first respondent filed no counter-affidavit in opposition.

After listening to submissions, and following an undertaking by counsel to the first respondent, D.A. Alegbe, the court granted the stay.

The implication is that Sado remains the Okuokpellagbe of Okpella while Akemokue's return to the throne is put on hold.

The court adjourned the matter to a date to be communicated to parties.



2026 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE:

President, Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria (APWEN), Chinyere Igwegbe (6th R); former President of APWEN, Idiyat Amusu (5th R); Past President, Nigeria Society of Engineers, Babangana Mohammed (7th R); Vice President of APWEN, Laolu Adedapo-Aishida (5th L) and other dignitaries, during the 2026 International Conference, Exhibition and Annual General Meeting of APWEN in Abuja on Wednesday.

EFCC declares Maina wanted again for allegedly receiving stolen property

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH AND
OKUNBOR ESOSA

ABUJA

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has declared former Chairman of the Pension Reform Task Team, Abdurashied Maina, wanted over alleged receiving of stolen property.

Maina, 61, from Biu Local Government Area of Borno State, was declared wanted in a public notice issued on Wednesday, 23 September 2026 and signed by the Commission's Head of Media and Publicity, Dele Oyewale.

"The public is hereby notified that Abdurashied Abdullahi Maina, whose photograph

appears above, is wanted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission in an alleged case of receiving stolen properties," the EFCC stated on its official X handle.

The anti-graft agency urged anyone with useful information on his whereabouts to contact its offices in Ibadan, Uyo, Sokoto, Maiduguri, Be-

nin, Makurdi, Kaduna, Ilorin, Enugu, Kano, Lagos, Gombe, Port Harcourt and Abuja or report to the nearest police station.

Maina was extradited from Niamey, Niger Republic, in 2020 to face money laundering charges after he jumped bail and fled the country following an arrest warrant issued by a Federal Capital Territory High Court in Abuja.

FG hails NMDPRA for supporting affordable housing access for workers

ABUJA

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Mr Muttaqha Darma, has commended the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) for supporting access to affordable housing for its workers.

Darma gave the commendation at the formal presentation of allocation letters to eligible NMDPRA staff under the Renewed Hope Cities and Estates Programme.

He described the initiative as significant in view of the country's huge housing deficit and

the difficulty many Nigerians face in owning decent homes.

The minister said the Federal Government remained committed to expanding access to affordable housing through partnerships with relevant institutions and stakeholders.

He said the country needed more than 16 million housing units to address its housing deficit and accommodate the large number of Nigerians without adequate housing.

"Providing housing to Nigerians remains a major responsibility. Providing houses to 110 million unhoused Nigerians is a task, a very big one," Darma said.

According to him, the NMDPRA initiative should not be judged merely by the number of houses being allocated to its workers.

"I consider the NMDPRA initiative beyond the number of houses being allocated.

"Forget about the mention of 450 housing units. No, I am not looking at it from that angle. I am looking at it from delivery of housing to Nigerians," Darma said.

He stressed that every opportunity to provide housing to Nigerians was important, irrespective of the number of beneficiaries involved.

"This is because every op-

portunity to deliver housing to Nigerians is important," the minister said.

Darma also drew attention to the rising cost of building materials and construction, which he said had made home ownership increasingly difficult for ordinary Nigerians.

He therefore described institutional support for workers seeking to acquire houses as an important step toward reducing the burden associated with home ownership.

The minister said collaboration among government institutions remained necessary to tackle the country's housing challenge effectively.

Earlier, the Chief Executive of NMDPRA, Malam Rabiu Umar, said about 430 members of staff in Abuja, Kano and Lagos were receiving allocation letters under the Renewed Hope Cities and Estates Programme.

Umar described the development as a practical demonstration of how government policies could translate into tangible benefits for citizens and workers.

He said the authority considered staff welfare an important component of institutional performance.

According to him, workers who had peace of mind and

confidence in their personal future would be better positioned to contribute their skills and expertise to the authority's national mandate.

Umar commended the Authority Staff Cooperative Society, the Renewed Hope Access to Housing Committee and other institutional partners for facilitating the initiative.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the partners include the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN), Family Homes Funds Ltd., City Code Mortgage Bank Ltd., Renewed Hope SPV, Key Shelter Ltd. and participating developers.

NEWS

NDLEA busts Nigerian-Mexican meth lab in Enugu, arrests two

ENUGU

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency revealed that it has dismantled what it described as a Nigerian-Mexican drug network operating a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory in Eziamma community, Obeagu, Awgu Local Government Area of Enugu State.

The agency disclosed this in a statement on Thursday by its spokesperson, Femi Babafemi, according to Channels TV.

The NDLEA stated, "Two suspects, 45-year-old Chukwu Christopher, alias Brown, and 60-year-old Chukwu Monday, alias George, were arrested in connection with the operation

of the laboratory, following several months of intelligence gathering and surveillance."

The agency alleged that the suspects operated the facility in partnership with Rodriguez Villanueva, whom it described as a Mexican drug cartel member based in Mexico City.

The two suspects were subsequently arraigned before Justice Mabel Taiye Segun-Bello of the Federal High Court, Enugu Judicial Division, on a five-count charge bordering on conspiracy, the organisation, management and financing of a Drug Trafficking Organisation and unlawful possession of precursor chemicals used in methamphetamine production, contrary to the NDLEA Act.

They pleaded not guilty to the charges, after which Justice Segun-Bello scheduled the trial for October 21, 2026, following an application by the agency for an accelerated hearing.

The NDLEA said three other individuals were also named in the charge and are currently at large.

It said, "Investigations by its Special Operations Unit revealed what it described as a sophisticated transnational operation involving Nigerian and Mexican suspects."

"Surveillance conducted between December 1 and 4, 2025, tracked Brown's movements across Lagos, Enugu and Anambra states before leading operatives to a compound in

Obeagu."

The NDLEA said a clandestine laboratory capable of producing methamphetamine in commercial quantities was discovered at the location, equipped with improvised reactors and distillation apparatus.

It added that the facility was similar to other laboratories recently dismantled in Ogun, Oyo and Ebonyi states.

It explained, "A search of the premises, according to the agency, led to the recovery of large quantities of precursor chemicals, including 690 litres of methylamine, 1,000 litres of isopropyl alcohol, 300 litres of hydrochloric acid, 290 litres each of toluene and acetone, 400 litres of liquid sodium hy-

droxide, 125 kilogrammes of N-phenylacetamide, 414 kilogrammes of lead acetate and 769.6 kilogrammes of tartaric acid, among other controlled substances."

The agency said a related search of George's family residence also resulted in the recovery of eight large fuel tanks, four commercial gas burners, four dehydrators and 11 kilogrammes of ephedrine.

Reacting to the operation, NDLEA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Brig. Gen. Buba Marwa (rtd.), reaffirmed the agency's resolve to track down all fleeing suspects allegedly connected to the operation and ensure they face the law.

Marwa commended the officers involved in the operation for their professionalism and efforts in dismantling what the agency described as an international drug network.

He said the Enugu labora-

tory operation demonstrated the agency's determination to prevent Nigeria from becoming a base for transnational drug networks.

Marwa also said the agency's intelligence-driven operations and international partnerships would continue to target loopholes allegedly exploited by drug traffickers, while urging NDLEA personnel to sustain enforcement efforts against illicit drug production and trafficking.

On Saturday, the agency intercepted over 1.3 million pills of tramadol and other opioids, as well as about 6,000kg of cannabis, with a combined street value of more than N3.4bn in operations across several states and the Federal Capital Territory.

It also intercepted 1,200 parcels of Canadian Loud, a potent strain of cannabis, weighing 603.75kg and valued at N1.



2026 ANNUAL STRATEGIC:

From left: Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalist, News Agency of Nigeria(NAN) Lagos Chapel, Yunus Yusuf; Head of Lagos Operations, NAN, Mrs ifeyinwa Omowole; Managing-Director of NAN, Malam Ali Mohammed Ali; and Editor-in-Chief of the Agency, Hajiya Hadiza Mohammed-Aliyu during 2026 Annual Strategic Public Lecture in Lagos on Wednesday.

Four teenage girls die as boat capsizes in Jigawa

DUTSE

Four passengers have died after a boat conveying eight passengers capsized at Dudduru Pond in the Dutse Local Government Area of Jigawa State.

Confirming the incident in a statement made available to journalists in Dutse, the Jigawa State capital, on Thursday, the Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Jigawa State Command, ASC Badruddeen Tijjani, said the incident occurred on Wednesday, September 23, 2026.

"The incident occurred at about 1600 hours at Dudduru Pond, approximately three kilometres from Kwadige Village in Dutse Local Government Area," Tijjani said.

He said the boat was conveying eight passengers from Kwadige Village to Chai Chai Sabuwa Market when it capsized while crossing the pond.

"Preliminary information indicates that the incident may have been caused by strong winds at the time of

the occurrence," the PRO stated.

He said four passengers, all females, lost their lives in the incident, while four others were rescued.

Tijjani identified the deceased victims as Hasiya Mu'azu, 13; Hauwa Lawan, 13; Fatima Lawan, 12; and Dawsiyya Lawan, 13.

"The four deceased victims were subsequently buried according to Islamic rites," he said.

The PRO stated that four survivors were rescued by farmers working around the pond at the time of the incident.

NSCDC arrests truck driver, two others for vandalising NNPC pipeline in Abuja

According to him, the rescue and recovery efforts were supported by residents of Kwadige and Kuna villages.

"Residents of Kwadige and Kuna Villages worked together to assist those affected by the incident," Tijjani stated.

He said the State Commandant, CC Muhammad Kabiru Ingawa, commiser-

ated with the families of the deceased and the entire Kwadige community.

"The Commandant commiserates with the families over the tragic loss of their loved ones," the PRO said.

Tijjani said the Commandant urged members of the public who rely on boats for transportation to exercise maximum caution on waterways.

"He advised boat operators and passengers to

strictly adhere to basic water safety measures and avoid travelling under dangerous conditions," Tijjani added.

Furthermore, the Jigawa NSCDC spokesperson said the Corps advised against travelling during strong winds and adverse weather to avoid endangering lives.

He stated that the command had continued to sensitise communities on safety measures while navigating waterways.

Suspected bandit informant arrested in Sokoto

SOKOTO

Security operatives have arrested a suspected informant accused of supplying information to bandits operating around the Romo community in Tambuwal Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

The suspect, identified as Ashiru Abubakar of Gumfa Gebe village in Wamakko Local Government Area, was allegedly working with criminal elements in Tambuwal.

Abubakar was reportedly linked to a threat issued to

Romo residents, who were allegedly given an ultimatum to pay N10m or risk an attack.

The arrest comes amid renewed security concerns in Tambuwal and neighbouring communities, where residents have protested recent attacks and kidnappings.

Confirming the arrest on Wednesday, the Sokoto State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Ahmed Rufai, told our correspondent that the suspect had been charged to court.

Rufai said the arrest followed investigations into Abubakar's alleged activities and links with criminal elements.

He added that the command would continue to act against individuals suspected of aiding criminal activities in the state.

Residents of affected communities have called for increased security presence and improved intelligence-led operations to prevent further attacks and facilitate the return of displaced residents.

Police arrest bike thieves over killing of nine in Jigawa

DUTSE

The Jigawa State Police Command has arrested members of a notorious motorcycle-snatching syndicate for allegedly killing nine persons and stealing 33 motorcycles across three states.

This was contained in a statement made available to newsmen in Dutse, the Jigawa State capital on Thursday by the Police Public Relations Officer, Jigawa State Police Command, SP Shi'isu Adam.

Adam said the syndicate specialised in motorcycle snatching, receiving stolen property and other violent crimes across Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa States.

He said, "The breakthrough followed an incident in which one of the suspects allegedly attacked and snatched a motorcycle from one Okada rider in Aujara District, Jahun LGA."

He said following the incident, the police, in collaboration with vigilantes, responded promptly, recovered the stolen motorcycle and apprehended the suspect.

Adam explained that the arrest subsequently led to the identification and apprehension of other alleged members of the syndicate operating across the three states.

He added that, "During a discreet and painstaking investigation, the suspects reportedly disclosed their involvement

in the snatching of no fewer than thirty-three motorcycles belonging to innocent members of the public in different locations."

The PPRO further stated that the suspects allegedly revealed their involvement in violent attacks during which some victims were wounded and injured.

He said, "More disturbingly, they reportedly confessed to the alleged killing of nine persons in the course of their criminal activities across the three states."

Giving the identities of the suspects, the police spokesman listed them as Ado Saleh alias Datti, 55, of Kawari village, Ajingi LGA, Kano State, Abdullahi Saidu, 37, of Kwanar Dangara village, Kano State, and Magaji Danladi of Auramo quarters, Ringim LGA.

Others are Sabiu Miko of Kaugama LGA, Habibu Dan Iya of Didi village, Gagarawa LGA, Shamsu Sani, 32, of Ajingi LGA, Kano State, Ali Salisu, 40, of Yanbaru settlement, Sule Tankarkar LGA, Alhassan Isa alias Tata of Shuwarin, Kiyawa LGA, and Ado Ali of Baranda village, Dutse LGA.

Adam said the Commissioner of Police, Jigawa State Command, CP Tijjani Murtala, commended the police personnel involved in the operation.

He added that the CP also commended the Good Samaritan whose timely intervention contributed to the recovery of the stolen motorcycle and the arrest that led to the wider breakthrough.

The PPRO said, "The CP has directed the SCID Dutse to sustain a discreet and professional investigation towards identifying other members of the syndicate."

He added that the CP also directed the SCID to trace and recover additional stolen motorcycles, establish the circumstances surrounding the reported attacks and alleged killings.

The police spokesman said the Commissioner vowed to ensure that all suspects found culpable are prosecuted in accordance with the law.

NEWS

Rising trade surplus can boost industrialisation, attract investment – ACCI boss

ABUJA

The Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) says Nigeria's rising trade surplus presents an opportunity to deepen industrialisation, attract investment and strengthen economic competitiveness.

Mr Agabaidu Jideani, Director-General, ACCI, disclosed

this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), on Thursday in Abuja.

Jideani was reacting to the National Bureau of Statistics' (NBS) recent report on Nigeria merchandise trade.

He said recent figures released by the NBS showed that merchandise trade rose from N34.79 trillion in the first quarter of 2026 to N41.44 trillion in the

second quarter of the year.

The director-general said the second quarter figure represented a 19.13 per cent increase from the N34.79 trillion recorded in the first quarter.

He said the country recorded a trade surplus of N12.60 trillion, driven by higher exports and lower imports during the period.

Jideani urged the Federal Government to channel Nigeria's

rising trade surplus into industrial development and non-oil export expansion.

According to him, the performance is encouraging but should be interpreted cautiously from the perspective of the business community.

“The increase in the trade surplus largely reflected stronger crude oil exports and a contraction in import volumes,” he said.

The ACCI director-general said the development had yet to reflect

PUBLIC NOTICE

GLORY OF NEW COVENANT GOSPEL CHURCH

This is to inform the general public that the above named has applied to the corporate affairs commission for registration under part 'F' of the companies and allied matters act, 2020.

TRUSTEE NAME AND POSITION

1. OVIBIEBO ANDERSON	Chairman
2. OSAWARU EUNICE	Secretary
3. OVIBIEBO UYIOGHOSA	Member

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To advance the kingdom of God through Evangelism, discipleship, teaching, prayer, worship and christian service. To promote christian education , mentorship and the development of individuals in accordance with biblical principles.

To empower youths and adults through skills acquisition, vocational training , entrepreneurship and educational support as well as to provide humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and community development support to individuals and families. To promote responsible and productive communities through education, empowerment, family support and lawful partnerships.

Any Objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar General Corporate Affairs Commission Plot 420 Tigris Crescent off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja , Nigeria within Twenty eight (28) days of this publication.

Signed: Secretary

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **OSAROBO OVBOKHAN and OSAROBO KEHINDE SONIA**. Henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **OSAROBO OVBOKHAN**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **UKAWOKO VICTOR CHUKWUEMEKA**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **CHUKWUEMEKA VICTOR RAYMOND**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

This is to inform the general public that **IMIANVAN ESTHER ONOMEASIKE and IMIANVAN ESTHER** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I wish to be known and addressed as **IMIANVAN ESTHER ONOMEASIKE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **FOLORUNSHO FLORENCE**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **AUDU FLORENCE**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **ATOE OSARUMEN PETER**, and not **ATOEPETER OSARUMEN**. Henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **ATOE OSARUMEN PETER**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

REMOVAL OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **IYEYE DAVID FRIDAY and IYEYE FRIDAY** are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **IYEYE DAVID**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ALFRED TAIYE HELEN and ALFRED HELEN** are one and same person now wish to be known and called **ALFRED TAIYE HELEN**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **OMORUYI VICTORIA IYARE**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **OWIE VICTORIA IYARE**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. MOMOH MARTHA ILAMOSI**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. EVBOGBAI MARTHA ILAMOSI**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **IGBINOVIA BLESSING**. Now I wish to be known and addressed as **ALEGBE BLESSING**. All former documents remain valid.. general public should take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **JOHNSON TEMIDAYO JOY**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **MATTHEW TEMIDAYO JOY**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly know as **AKARA PATIENCE NKASIOBI**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **OLIH PATIENCE MARIA**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss EIGBE EKIOMOADO DESTINY and Miss. EIGBA EKIOMOADO ANITA**. and now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. OMOFOMWAN EKIOMOADO DESTINY**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. CHIDERA MARTHA ODOH**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. CHIDERA MARTHA NNACHEBE-EZE**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH

This is to notify the general public that my correct name is **IKPONMWOMBA EDITH** not **IKPONMWOMBA EDITH**. It was wrongly captured on my (B.V.N) henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **IKPONMWOMBA EDITH**, and all so my correct date of birth is 14th FEBRUARY, 1997, not 1st FEBRUARY, 1992. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **ARIGBE GEORGENIA OMOBOLANLE** now wish to be known as **OFUASE ARIGBE GEORGENIA OMOBOLANLE**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby notified that the advertorial titled “PUBLIC NOTICE,” published in The Nigerian Observer on 18th and 21st August 2026, at page 05 and 06 respectively contains statements that are false, misleading, malicious, and capable of creating a false impression concerning the Okunmwendia family, the family's ancestral property, my late father, and my status within the family.

I therefore issue this notice to set the record straight and place the following facts before the general public:

1. My Status as Heir Apparent.

I, Mr Osazee Okunmwendia, am the eldest son and heir apparent of the late Mr Victor Erharuyi Uwagboe Okunmwendia, also known as Kpikpi, who was the first son among the ten children of my late grandfather, Mr William Erahbor Okunmwendia.

2. Devolution of the Family House.

During his lifetime, my late father, Victor, cared for his father, the late William Erahbor Okunmwendia. Upon his father's death, my father duly performed the traditional burial rites in accordance with Benin laws, customs, and traditions. As the eldest son, the family house subsequently devolved upon him. Consequently, as the eldest son of my late father, Victor Okunmwendia, I am his next of kin and the custodian of the family legacy and ancestral house situated at 184 Muritala Mohammed Way, Benin City, Edo State, subject to any lawful determination by a competent court.

3. Clarification Regarding the Okaigbe.

The claim advanced by my father's younger brother, Mr. Kingsley Irese Okunmwendia, who signed the said advertorial and is alleged to have presented himself as the Okaigbe (head) of the Okunmwendia and Aluyi families, is disputed and should not be treated as an established fact.

For clarity and public record, Pa. Patrick Okunmwendia is the eldest and overall Okaigbe, while Pa Edo is the Okaigbe of the Isiemwenro family, while Justice Isaac Aluyi is the Okaigbe of the Aluyi family on the maternal side.

It is therefore misleading for Mr Kingsley Irese Okunmwendia to represent himself as the Okaigbe or head of the entire family, particularly when Pa. Sunny Okunmwendia, the younger brother of our late grandfather's father, is still alive and resident in Benin City.

4. False Claim to Headship and Inheritance.

The claim by Mr. Kingsley Irese Okunmwendia that he is the head of the Okunmwendia family, and, by implication, the person entitled to inherit, control, or determine the disposition of the ancestral family home is false and misleading.

5. My Membership of the Okunmwendia Family.

I have, from birth, lived with my parents and grandparents at our ancestral family house. I have participated in family activities and affairs throughout my life, to the knowledge of members of the family. Accordingly, any recent allegation or insinuation that I am not the biological son of my late father, Victor Okunmwendia, is false, defamatory, and wholly rejected. At no material time did the family question my paternity or my membership of the Okunmwendia family.

6. Circumstances Surrounding My Father's Burial.

The attempts to challenge my paternity and otherwise question my status within the Okunmwendia family arose particularly in connection with the dispute concerning the burial of my late father beside his father, my late grandfather.

During his lifetime, my late father expressly informed his children of his wish to be buried beside his family at our ancestral home. I have consistently sought to honour that wish and to preserve the family ancestral home for future generations.

I maintain that the intimidation, harassment, and allegations directed at me were intended to discourage me from carrying out my late father's wishes concerning his burial and from exercising my lawful rights and responsibilities regarding the ancestral family property.

I further dispute any suggestion that my late father's burial should be prevented for the purpose of facilitating the sale or disposal of the ancestral family home.

7. Pending Court Proceedings and Allegations Against Me.

The property referred to above is currently the subject matter of pending court proceedings. I therefore urge all members of the public to refrain from treating disputed allegations concerning the property as established facts.

I categorically state that I have never been convicted of any criminal offence by any competent court of law. An invitation to, questioning by, or investigation conducted by a law-enforcement agency does not constitute a criminal conviction. I also categorically deny any allegation or insinuation that I had any involvement in the death of my late father. Such allegations are false. The relevant documentary and medical evidence, including the death certificate, does not support those allegations, and the circumstances are known to members of the family.

8. My Entitlement as My Father's Eldest Son.

Any insinuation that I am not a member of the Okunmwendia family, or that I have no entitlement to the family legacy and inheritance that devolved through my late father, Mr. Victor Erharuyi Uwagboe Okunmwendia, is false and misleading. The general public is therefore advised to discountenance such claims and allegations and to treat them as disputed matters rather than established facts.

9. My Father's Remains.

Since Mr. Irese Okunmwendia and his siblings commenced and have continued these Court proceedings, ostensibly to prevent their late senior brother, who was their own brother from the same womb, from being laid to rest, they have demonstrated a grave disregard for the dignity of the deceased and for the prolonged suffering occasioned by the continued delay in his burial. Their conduct, which appears to be motivated by personal interests and cowardly vengeance, has resulted in the continued withholding of my father's remains from burial. Consequently, nearly two years after his death, his remains remain in the mortuary, rather than being accorded the dignity of a proper and long-overdue burial. I remain prepared to preserve my late father's remains pending the lawful resolution of this avoidable dispute, including the determination by a competent court of the appropriate burial arrangements and, where properly ordered by the court, any DNA examination or other appropriate inquiry.

10. Appeal to the Public and Relevant Authorities.

I hereby call upon the general public, members of the Okunmwendia family, and all relevant authorities to take note of the foregoing and to exercise caution before relying upon or disseminating allegations concerning me, my late father, my family status, or the ancestral family property.

I reserve all my rights in respect of any false, defamatory, malicious, or otherwise unlawful statements made or published concerning me.

Signed: OSAZEE OKUNMWENDIA

PUBLIC NOTICE

WARNING AGAINST UNAUTHORISED SALE OF FAMILY PROPERTY

The Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren of the **Late Chief IMIOWAVAN OKIRI**, under the **OKIRI DYNASTY**, hereby issue this public notice concerning the family property located at No. 27 Plymouth Road, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

THE OKIRI DYNASTY wishes to make it known to the general public, prospective buyers, estate agents, and other interested parties that the above-mentioned property is **NOT FOR SALE**. We further wish to clarify that **Mr. FELIX UGIAGBE**, who is alleged to be acting as caretaker of the property, is not the owner of the property and has no authority from the **OKIRI DYNASTY** to sell, transfer, or otherwise dispose of the family land.

Accordingly, members of the public are hereby advised to exercise extreme caution and to conduct proper verification of ownership and authority before entering into any transaction concerning this property. Any person who purchases, pays money for, or enters into an agreement concerning the property without obtaining proper authorization from the legitimate representatives of **THE OKIRI DYNASTY** does so at their own risk.

THE OKIRI DYNASTY has not authorized any individual, including the aforementioned caretaker, to offer the property for sale. This notice is published to protect the interests of the family and to alert the general public against any unauthorized or purported sale of the property.



Signed: Mrs **CAROLINE OKIRI OGBEBOR**
The only surviving child
For on behalf of the **OKIRI DYNASTY**
Representing the Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren of the **Late Chief IMIOWAVAN OKIRI** Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

NEWS

#1.233tn recovered, 10,872 convictions secured in 34 months — EFCC**ABUJA**

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission says it recovered N1.233tn between October 1, 2023, and July 31, 2026, under the chairmanship of Ola Olukoyede.

The commission disclosed

this in a video posted on its official X account on Thursday, highlighting its activities over the 34-month period.

"1.233 trillion in recoveries in just 34 months. This is the legacy of EFCC Chairman Ola Olukoyede," the commission said.

According to the EFCC, it received 49,673 petitions

during the period, describing petitions as "the entry point for EFCC action."

"From these, 39,615 cases were investigated. 14,476 cases were filed in court. And those investigations led to 10,872 convictions," it said.

The commission said the

figures represented its efforts in tackling various forms of financial crimes.

Evening recap: Wike rejects rigging claims, EFCC declares Maina wanted again, other top stories

"But what do these numbers represent?" the EFCC

asked.

"They represent the fight against financial crimes—from advance fee fraud, cybercrime, money laundering, bank fraud, and economic governance fraud," it stated.

The commission added that behind each figure was

an investigation and the recovery of funds.

"And behind every number is a case investigated, a financial trail uncovered, and public resources recovered to keep pushing the fight against economic and financial crimes forward," it said.

Dangote supplied 71% of Nigeria's August petrol — NMDPRA report**LAGOS**

The Dangote Petroleum Refinery supplied almost 36 million litres of petrol daily to the Nigerian market in August, accounting for about 71 per cent of the country's total Premium Motor Spirit receipts, latest data from the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority have shown.

The NMDPRA's August 2026 State of the Midstream and Downstream Sector factsheet, released on Thursday, showed that domestic PMS receipts rose by 39 per cent from 25.8 million litres per day in July to 35.9 million litres per day in August.

Over the same period, petrol imports fell by 26 per cent from 19.7 million litres per day to 14.6 million litres per day.

The figures mean domestic petrol receipts exceeded imports by 21.3 million litres per day in August.

The regulator said total PMS receipts rose by 11 per cent from 45.5 million litres per day in July to 50.5 million litres per day in August.

The report read, "PMS daily receipts increased by 11 per

cent, rising from 45.5 million litres per day in July to 50.5 million litres per day in August.

"Domestic PMS receipts rose by 39 per cent, from 25.8 million litres per day in July to 35.9 million litres per day in August.

"Over the same period, PMS imports declined by 26 per cent, from 19.7 million litres per day to 14.6 million litres per day.

"Domestic PMS receipts exceeded petrol imports by 21.3 million litres per day in August.

"PMS consumption declined by 14 per cent, from 48.3 million litres per day in July to 41.5 million litres per day in August."

The development marks another shift in the structure of Nigeria's petrol supply, as the country continues to reduce its dependence on imported refined petroleum products following the commencement of operations at the 700,000-barrel-per-day Dangote refinery.

The NMDPRA data also showed that the Dangote refinery produced an average of 41.94 million litres of PMS daily in August, of which 35.87 million litres were supplied to the domestic market, while 9.73 million litres were exported.

FG expands poverty reduction programme to Oyo**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has expanded its National Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy to Oyo State as part of efforts to equip young Nigerians with practical skills and promote entrepreneurship.

In a statement on Thursday, the Senior Special Assistant to President Bola Tinubu on Technical, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Education, Dr Abiola Arogundade, said the initiative was a key component of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

She said the programme was aimed at contributing to the Federal Government's target of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty within 10 years.

"Nigerian youths are not the problem facing the country but the solution to its challenges," she said.

Arogundade said the programme was being expanded across the country's six geopolitical zones, with 200 trainees selected from each zone during

the initial phase.

She said, "In total, 1,200 Nigerian youths will benefit from this initial phase of the programme nationwide."

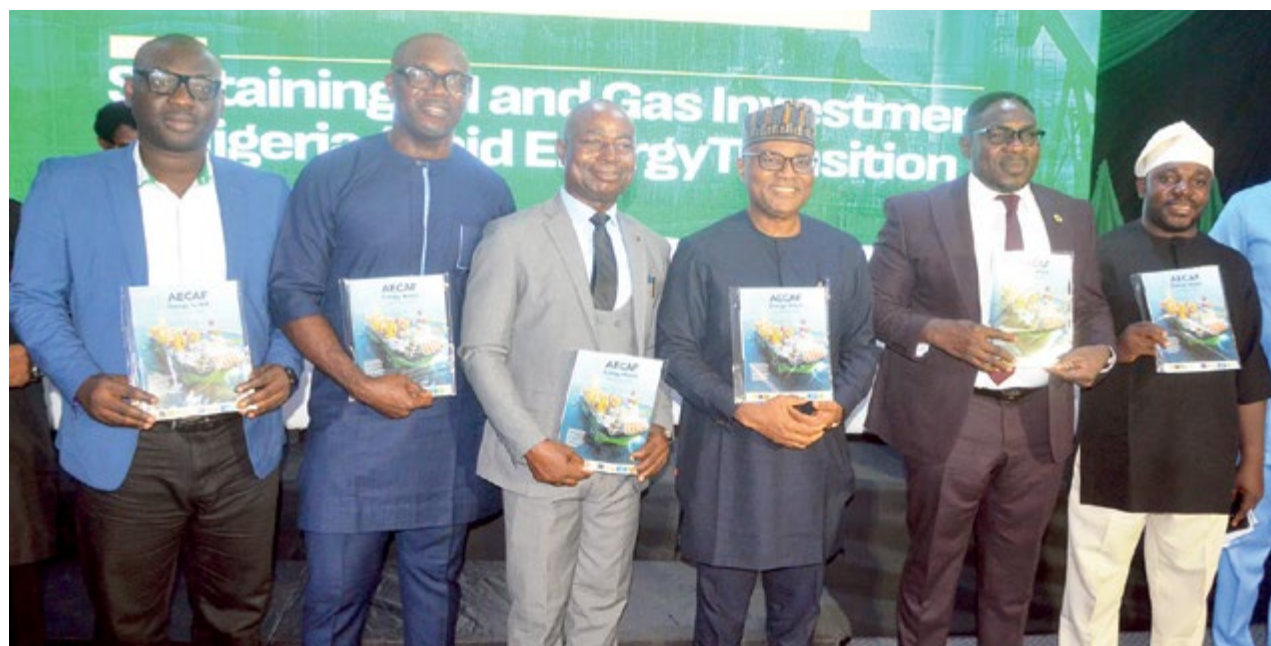
The presidential aide said the training would run for between 10 days and two weeks, with the skills offered in each state determined by "local market demand, relevance, and trainee preferences."

On the Oyo State programme, Arogundade said, "Training will be on the 28th of September, 2026, running daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for two weeks."

She said trainees in the state would receive training in "Graphics/Artificial Intelligence (AI) design, Makeup and Fashion designing."

Arogundade added that each participant would receive a complete training kit at the end of the programme.

"Each participant will receive a complete training kit during the programme, which they will take home upon completion," she said.



2026 AECAF CONFERENCE:

2026 Annual Conference and unveiling of AECAF Energy Watch Magazine holds in Abuja.

TDr. Kamuzu sets for triple celebrations Sept 29**BENIN CITY**

It will be a celebration of life, love, tradition and harvest when the people of Uselu and well-wishers from across Edo State converge on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, to honour the distinguished traditional medicine practitioner and community leader, TDr. Kamuzu Aimienoho Da Eranomigho I of Uselu.

The colourful occasion, billed as a Triple Celebration, brings together three significant milestones in the life of the celebrant — his birthday celebration, New Yam Festival and 24th wedding anniversary — in a unique blend of personal thanksgiving, cultural heritage and marital devotion.

TDr. Kamuzu Aimienoho Da Eranomigho I, who is the National President of the Orumila Tradomedical Doctors Association, Edo State, is expected to use the occasion not only to celebrate another year of life but also to showcase the richness of Edo's cultural traditions and the enduring values of family and togetherness.

The New Yam Festival, a cherished expression of gratitude for the harvest and the blessings of the land, will add a strong cultural colour to the celebration, making the event a meeting point between heritage, thanksgiving and communal fellowship.

Equally significant is the celebrant's 24th wedding anniversary, providing an opportunity to celebrate a quarter-century of companionship, commitment and shared family journey. The anniversary component is expected to add a deeply personal and romantic dimension to the festivities, celebrating the enduring bond between husband and wife.

The birthday celebration itself marks another chapter in the life of a man whose public identity is closely associated with traditional medicine, cultural consciousness and community engagement.

The organisers have therefore described the gathering as an invitation to "celebrate life, tradition, love and harvest together," reflecting the broad spirit of the occasion.

The festivities will take place at No. 6 Ofunmwengbe Street, off Mela Motel Road, behind Egor Secretariat, Uselu Market, Uselu Quarters, Benin City, with the afternoon celebration commencing at 12 noon prompt, while the night celebration begins at 8:00 p.m. and continues till dawn.

Adding musical colour to the celebration will be Baba Naira Junior Ogie Super Sound, promising an evening of music, dance and entertainment.

For TDr. Kamuzu Aimienoho

Da Eranomigho I, the triple celebration represents more than a birthday party. It is a thanksgiving for life, a celebration of marital endurance, an affirmation of cultural heritage and a joyful harvest of memories shared with family, friends and the wider community.

As the yam harvest meets the celebration of another year and 24 years of marital companionship, the occasion promises to be a memorable convergence of tradition, family, culture and gratitude.



TDr. Kamuzu Aimienoho Da Eranomigho I of Uselu

itel threatens legal action over fake explosion image**AWKA**

Technology company, itel, has threatened legal action against individuals who use artificial intelligence-generated images and other fabricated content to spread false information about its products.

LAGOS: The company issued the warning in an official

disclaimer on X following the circulation of an AI-generated image purportedly showing an itel Power Tank exploding.

The image was shared on social media alongside a false claim that the portable power station had exploded, with the incident allegedly linked to overcharging.

itel, however, said the con-

tent was fabricated and warned that deliberate attempts to misrepresent the company would attract legal action.

In the disclaimer, the company said, "At itel, we value our customers and appreciate every form of constructive criticism and feedback. Your opinions help us improve, and we remain committed to listening and addressing gen-

uine concerns.

"However, we will not stand by while individuals use AI-generated images or other misleading content to spread false information, discredit our brand, or deliberately tarnish our reputation."

The company added that it would take steps to protect its brand and customers from fabricated claims.

Friday Sermon

Let our Islamic Scholars maintain dignity and good reputation!

MUHAMMAD YUSUF BABANGIDA

In the Name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful

All praise be to Allah, the Absolute Truth, the Manifest, who guides from misguidance, teaches from ignorance, and leads the Muslim believers from darkness into light. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace abundantly.

Dear brothers and sisters! Is there a trial in this world greater and more dangerous than the deception of the False Messiah, the Antichrist, the Dajjal? One day, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"Is there anything I fear for my Ummah more than the Dajjal (The Antichrist)?" Abu Zar al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him, asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what do you fear for your Ummah more than the Dajjal (The Antichrist)?" He replied, "Misleading Islamic scholars." [This Hadith was reported by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad]

Respected brothers and sisters! The misleading Islamic scholars, the heads of misguidance, have gone astray and led others astray, bearing the ornamentation of speech, and they adorn falsehood, making it prevalent among the gullible people, among the common people. A misleader might be an ignorant leader whom people have taken as a guide, thus he becomes a leader of misguidance for the ignorant, as the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) told us:

"Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the people but takes it away by taking the Islamic scholars away. When no Islamic scholar remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant heads, who, when consulted, will give verdicts without knowledge, thus they will go astray and lead others astray." [This Hadith was reported by both Bukhari and Muslim]

Fellow servants of Allah! A misleader might also be someone whom Allah has given knowledge, yet he sold his religion for a trivial gain from this world and followed his desires, like Bal'am son of Ba'urah, whom Allah has set as an example in the Qur'an. Allah the Almighty says:

"Recite to them the story of the one to whom We gave Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan followed him, and he became of the misguided. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his own desires. His example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he still pants. Such is the example of the people who deny Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they will reflect." [Surah Al-A'raf: 175-176]

Yes, he was given knowledge, but yet he detached from it and did not act upon it; instead, he clung to the worldly life and its desires, thus he went astray and led others astray from the Straight Path.

Dear servants of Allah! Allah took a covenant from the Islamic scholars of the Children of Israel to act according to the knowledge Allah gave them, to convey it to the people, and not to hide it. However, they broke these covenants and oaths. Allah the Most High says:

"And recall when Allah took the covenant of those who were given the Scripture, saying, 'You must make it clear to the people and not conceal it.' But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged it for a small price. What a wretched purchase they made!" [Surah Ali Imran:187]

AND HE THE MOST HIGH SAID:

"So for their breaking of the covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their proper usages and forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded." [Surah Al-Ma'idah:13]

Why did they hide and alter the words of Allah? They did so for the sake of worldly gains, selling their hereafter for a trivial price, seeking the approval of the influential and powerful people, and they were deluded by their desires. Allah the Almighty says:

"Then there has succeeded them a posterity who inherited the Scripture while taking the commodities of this lower life and saying, 'It will be forgiven for us.' And if an offer like it comes again, they will again take it. Was not the covenant of the Scripture taken from them that they would not say about Allah except the truth, and they studied what was in it? And the home of the hereafter is better for those who fear Allah; do you not understand?" [Qur'an, 7:169]

Al-Bara' Ibn Azib, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates an incident involving the Jews in the city of the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him), saying:

"A Jew was brought before the Prophet (Peace be upon him), his face blackened with coal, as a form of punishment for adultery, and whipped. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) called them and asked: 'Is this the punishment for the adulterer found in your Book?' They replied, 'Yes.' Then he called one of their scholars and said, swearing him by Allah who revealed the Torah to Musa: 'Is this the punishment for the adulterer in your Book?' The scholar said, 'No, and had you not adjured me by this, I would not have told you. We find the punishment to be stoning, but when it was someone of status among us, we let him go, and if it was someone weak, we applied the punishment. We said, let us agree on something we can apply equally to the noble and the lowly, so we adopted blackening the face

and whipping instead of stoning.' Then the Messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said: 'O Allah, I am the first to revive Your command when they have let it die,' and he ordered that the man be stoned." [This Hadith was reported by Muslim]

Dear brothers and sisters! Allah has narrated to us the conditions of the Children of Israel for us to take heed, for the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has informed us that many Muslims will follow their ways. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said:

"You will follow the ways of those before you, inch by inch and arm by arm, so much so that if they entered the hole of a lizard, you would follow them." We asked, "O Messenger of Allah! The Jews and Christians?" He replied: "Who else?" [This Hadith was reported by both Bukhari and Muslim]

Indeed, reality is the best witness and the clearest proof. We have seen many who dress in the garb of the learned men and carry titles, falsely and deceitfully appearing as the righteous, selling their hereafter. They remain silent about the truth, speak falsehoods, distort the law of the Merciful, lie about Allah, and bring what contradicts the definitive aspects of Allah's religion, to please the West, to please the corrupt politicians, to please the secularists, and the wicked.

The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) accurately described them when he said:

"They are the callers at the gates of Hell, whoever responds to them, they throw him into it." It was asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Describe them to us?" He said: "They are from our own people and speak our language." [Reported by Bukhari and Muslim]

We see them claim that the disbelievers might be forgiven by Allah and enter Paradise, while they know what

Allah the Most High says:

"Indeed, those who disbelieve and commit injustice, Allah is not to forgive them, nor to guide them to a path, except the path of Hell, abiding therein forever, and that is easy for Allah." [Surah Al-Nisa:168-169]

AND THEY KNOW ALLAH'S STATEMENT:

"And for those who disbelieve, for them is the fire of Hell; death is not decreed for them so they may die, nor shall its punishment be lightened for them. Thus do We recompense every ingrate." [Surah Fatir:36]

AND ALLAH THE MOST HIGH SAYS:

"Indeed, those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture and the polytheists will be in the fire of Hell, abiding therein. They are the worst of creatures." [Surah Al-Bayyinah: 6]

They claim that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) will intercede for Muslims and disbelievers on the Day of Judgment, and they know what Allah narrated about the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment that they will say:

"And we used to deny the Day of Recompense until the Certainty (death) came to us; then the intercession of intercessors will not benefit them." [Surah Al-Mudathir:46-48]

AND THE PROPHET (PEACE BE UPON HIM) SAID:

"Every Prophet has an answered prayer, and every Prophet has hastened his prayer. I have reserved my prayer as an intercession for my Ummah on the Day of Resurrection, and it shall be attained, by the will of Allah, for those of my Ummah who die without associating anything with Allah." [Reported by Muslim]

They claim that seeking help from the dead is permissible, reviving grave-worship and idolatry, and opposing the call to Tauhid (monotheism). They know the Qur'an's judgment on those who invoke others besides Allah, and that it is major shirk. Allah the Almighty says:

"And those you call upon besides Him do not own even a qitmir. If you call upon them, they do not hear your call, and if they heard, they would not respond to you. On the Day of Resurrection, they will deny your associating them, and none can inform you like the One who is All-Aware." [Surah Fatir: 13-14]

They see what the Jews are doing to the Muslims and to Al-Aqsa Mosque, yet they claim that normalising relations with Zionist Jews is permissible. They know that its reality is in fact siding with disbelievers against Muslims, and they know Allah's statement:

"O you who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies. They are in fact allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you—then indeed, he is one of them. Indeed,

Allah guides not the wrongdoing people." [Surah Al-Ma'idah: 51]

They legalise what is forbidden and fabricate lies against Allah, claiming that riba (usury) in interests and investment deposits is permissible, despite knowing that these are riba transactions, which are forbidden. And they are aware of Allah's saying:

"But Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden interest." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 275]

AND HIS SAYING:

"O you who believe, fear Allah and give up what remains due to you of interest, if you should be believers. And if you do not, then be informed of a war against you from Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent, you may have your principal - thus you do no wrong nor are wronged." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 278-279]

They claim that relationships between men and women without marriage are permissible. Yet they know Allah's saying:

"Then marry those that please you of other women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then marry only one or the captives that your right hands possess. That is more suitable that you may not incline to injustice. And give the women upon marriage their bridal gifts graciously. But if they give up willingly to you anything of it, then take it in satisfaction and ease." [Surah Al-Nisa: 3]

AND HIS SAYING:

"And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way." [Surah al-Isra: 32]

And the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him):

"Let no man be alone with a woman unless there is a mahram present, for otherwise, Satan will be the third one present." [This Hadith was reported by Tirmidhi]

How numerous are their falsehoods and their tampering with the religion of Allah! The common factor among their statements is that the truth stands between them and their desires. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) narrated about the Children of Israel, saying:

"When the term was prolonged for the Children of Israel, their hearts hardened, and they concocted a scripture from themselves, which their hearts desired, and their tongues found lawful, and the truth stood between them and many of their desires, until they discarded the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they did not know it." [This Hadith was reported by al-Baihaqi]

They legalise what is forbidden, and lie about Allah, claiming that interest-bearing investments and deposits are lawful, knowing that they are interest transactions which are haram (forbidden).



If you call upon them, they do not hear your call, and if they heard, they would not respond to you. On the Day of Resurrection, they will deny your associating them, and none can inform you like the One who is All-Aware

NEWS**EXTRA**

Politicians now rely on courts, not voters, to win elections — Ex-NBA president

ENUGU

The immediate past President of the Nigerian Bar Association, Mazi Afam Osiawe (SAN), has accused Nigerian courts of gradually usurping the power of voters to determine their elected representatives through what he described as controversial legal technicalities.

Osiawe also said politicians were increasingly relying on election tribunals and courts to determine electoral victories rather than winning the support of voters.

He spoke in Enugu on Thursday at the 22nd Nigeria Guild of Editors Conference,

where he criticised what he described as the judicialisation of Nigeria's electoral process.

Osiawe said the difficulty of proving non-compliance with electoral laws had increasingly shifted the determination of election outcomes from voters to the courts.

He said, "A judge once presented a paper called 'The Judicialisation of the Electoral Process.' He argued that because of the difficulty of proving non-compliance with the Electoral Act, the courts have gradually and increasingly usurped the role of the voters. I couldn't agree more."

The former NBA president said Nigeria had one of the

highest numbers of election petitions globally, arguing that delays in the judicial process had further complicated electoral disputes.

He also linked declining voter turnout to a growing belief among Nigerians that their votes would not determine election outcomes.

"They believe that between polling units and collation centres—especially at night—miracles happen before day-

break. So why vote?" he asked.

Osiawe said politicians had exploited the situation by offering voters money and items such as salt and rice, while also recruiting thugs during elections.

Protests as INEC omits physically-challenged candidate's name from list

He also criticised the conduct of state electoral commissions, alleging that ruling parties routinely secured victories.

"Sometimes you'll be wait-

ing for ballot papers, and results are already announced," he said.

Osiawe further criticised the legal treatment of the Bi-modal Voter Accreditation System and the INEC Result Viewing Portal, saying court decisions had undermined the innovations.

He said, "The court held that the BVAS machine itself is the primary evidence, not the printout. So you must phys-

ically carry the BVAS from every polling unit to court within strict time limits."

He also criticised what he described as the culture of politicians going to court after elections, saying it had damaged public confidence in the judiciary.

Osiawe alleged that some judges had been caught taking bribes and argued that pre-election matters should not be justiciable.

No minister is above scrutiny, Kingibe replies Wike

ABUJA

The Senator representing the Federal Capital Territory, Ireti Kingibe, has told FCT Minister Nyesom Wike that no minister or public office holder is above scrutiny, as she challenged him to produce evidence of Senate approval for loans obtained by the FCT Administration.

Kingibe made the statement on Thursday while responding to Wike's dismissal of her allegation that the FCT Administration obtained loans without the required approval of the National Assembly.

The senator had earlier raised concerns about the FCT's borrowing, saying she had never seen Wike appear before the Senate to seek approval for any loan.

Wike, however, rejected the allegation, saying government

loans were captured in the budget and subjected to legislative approval. He also said Kingibe would not return to the Senate in 2027 and backed former FCT Senator, Philip Aduda, for the seat.

The Deputy Spokesperson of the House of Representatives, Philip Agbese, had also dismissed Kingibe's claim, saying there was no evidence that Wike violated the required procedures in financing infrastructure projects in the FCT.

Responding in a statement posted on X on Thursday, Kingibe said she would not be intimidated by insults, threats or political pressure.

She said her responsibility as a senator was to ask questions, demand accountability and defend the constitutional principles upon which democracy stands.

I bear no hatred towards those who abandoned me, says El-Rufai

ABUJA

Nasir El-Rufai, c, former Kaduna State Governor has addressed the silence of some of his former colleagues, friends, and family members amid his current circumstances, saying he bears neither hatred nor resentment toward those who have chosen not to stand by him.

The former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory made this known in a statement titled "My Relationships and the Aftermath", released on his X handle on Wednesday.

El-Rufai said he had supported people and causes over the years based on his Islamic faith, Arewa upbringing, personal values and conscience, rather than an expectation of praise or reciprocity.

"Over the years, I have stood by people and for caus-

es I believed in, sometimes in difficult circumstances and at considerable personal cost. I did so not in expectation of praise, gratitude or reciprocity, but because I believed it was right," he said.

El-Rufai said those he had supported were free to decide how they would respond to his present circumstances, noting that some might speak, remain silent or even distance themselves from previous relationships.

"Those I have supported are free to make their own choices now that circumstances are reversed. Some may speak; others may remain silent. Others may even deny our relationship or try rewriting history," he said.

He added, "Their reasons are their own, and I do not wish to judge them merely because their response differs from what others—or even I—might have expected."



DINNER:

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, and the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Nigeria, Amb. Yousef bin Mohammed Al-Balawi at a dinner to mark Saudi Arabia's 96th National Day celebration in Abuja.

Photo by Omoye Aminu.

Body of missing Anambra schoolboy recovered

AWKA

The body of six-year-old Success Ezenwafor, a pupil of UNIZIK Primary School, who was swept away by floodwater in Anambra State on Tuesday, has been recovered.

Success was swept away when a school bus conveying him and other occupants was trapped and overturned by floodwater along the Nibo-Isiagu Road in Awka South Local Government Area.

Nine other occupants of the vehicle—seven schoolchildren and two adults—were rescued by operatives of the Anambra State Police

Command, in collaboration with residents, and taken to the Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Teaching Hospital, Amaku, Awka, for treatment.

Success remained missing until his body was recovered on Wednesday during a search operation by the police and community members. His remains were subsequently deposited at the morgue.

The incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday following heavy rainfall across parts of the state.

The spokesperson for the Anambra State Police Command, Tochukwu Ikenga,

had said on Tuesday that the search for the missing pupil was being conducted in collaboration with community members and other relevant stakeholders.

The Chairman of Awka South Local Government Area, Prince Chinedu Okafor, who led the rescue operation, confirmed the recovery of the boy's body.

Okafor said the other children rescued from the vehicle were in stable condition and receiving treatment at Amaku.

He said, "The body of the missing child, Success Ezenwafor, has been recovered. The other children are in

stable condition and receiving medical treatment at the hospital.

"I am at Amaku Teaching Hospital at the moment.

"We commiserate deeply with the Ezenwafor family over this heartbreaking loss. I spoke with a member of the family, who said they are understandably distraught."

According to Okafor, Success' father recalled the boy's final moments before he left home for school on Tuesday.

"Success kissed his father on both cheeks, said goodbye and boarded the shuttle bus for school. Tragically, he never returned home.

Tinubu hails NCMM DG for making TIME100 Art list

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has congratulated the Director-General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Olugbile Holloway, on his inclusion in the inaugural TIME100 Art list of the 100 most influential people shaping the future of art.

The President said the recognition reflected the work

Holloway and the commission had undertaken to recover Nigeria's cultural treasures and renew institutions responsible for preserving them.

According to a statement issued on Thursday by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu commended Holloway's efforts in securing

the return of stolen Nigerian artefacts and strengthening the country's cultural institutions.

The statement noted that since his appointment in March 2024, Holloway had worked with the Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare II, to establish a framework for the retrieval, conservation and exhibition of returned Benin artefacts.

It said the understanding

had strengthened Nigeria's position in negotiations with foreign governments, universities and museums.

Under Holloway's leadership, the commission secured the return of 119 Benin Bronzes from the Netherlands and the legal transfer of 116 Benin Bronzes from the University of Cambridge.

FEATURE

Alternative Perspectives

Are Women more sensitive to smell than men?

BAGUDU MOHAMMED

This weekend arrived with a strange, nostalgic ache, the kind that follows a story that refuses to leave your chest. I had just finished reading a tragedy that inflicted pain and fear in equal measure, and left me curiously obsessed with one small, often ignored organ: the nose.

According to a report by Daily Trust on Saturday, 19 September, 2026, written by Salim Ashir Mahuta in Sokoto, a gas explosion tore through the family home of Professor Hassan Muhammad Maishanu in Sokoto on Wednesday, September 9, 2026.

The Professor, born July 18, 1970, a botanist who earned his BSc from Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto in 1991, MSc Forestry from Ibadan in 1994 and PhD from UDUS in 2011, had just become a Professor in November 2025. He was a man who joined UDUS as a part-time lecturer in 1994 and climbed, steadily and quietly, until his last promotion. He left behind a wife and children.

His 24-year-old wife, Zaliha Aliyu Gidan Kanawa, described their marriage as one built on love, understanding and mutual respect. That afternoon they were in the sitting room with one of their daughters when their little son Sudais walked in, hungry. Zaliha called out to Husnah, their 21-year-old daughter, a 100-level Software Engineering student of UDUS who was in the kitchen. Why was the food taking so long? Husnah answered that the main gas was not producing enough flame and the smaller camp gas had also developed a problem. Zaliha called her husband to help check it. Professor Maishanu followed Husnah into the kitchen. Minutes later, a deafening explosion.

Zaliha's recollection is what chilled me. As captured in that same Daily Trust report, she said her husband had a bad cold and could not smell anything properly. She believed his inability to smell may have prevented him from perceiving the odour of the leaking gas while he was checking the cooker. The food itself was not burnt, the main cylinder did not even catch fire, but the invisible leak had filled the room.

Father and daughter were pulled out completely burnt. They were taken to the Intensive Care Unit of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University Teaching Hospital. Husnah died around midnight that same September 9. The family chose not to tell her father. When Zaliha saw him on September 15, he said he felt much better after three hours of sleep and asked about Husnah. She told him she was still in the ICU. He died two days later, without ever knowing his daughter had gone before him.

It is that single detail, poor sense of smell in the face of sudden danger that inspired this reflection. It threw my mind immediately to my own home. My wife has what I can only call a diagnostic nose. Hers dwarfs mine to the point of fatigue. "Don't you perceive that smell?" she will ask, while I am still sniffing the air like a confused amateur. What to her is a loud alarm is to me a whisper, if anything at all. Watching her, you begin to wonder if a sensitive nose is



COUPLE

not just a sense, but a kind of immunity, a private security system.

That is precisely how science frames it. In evolutionary psychology and sensory ecology, olfaction is described as our most ancient chemical surveillance system. The late Paul Rozin called smell the sentinel of ingestion, the gatekeeper that decides what enters the body.

Neuroscientist Rachel Herz, in her work on the emotional power of scent, shows that smell is wired directly into the amygdala and hippocampus, the brain's memory and danger centers, which is why a single whiff can transport you to childhood or jolt you into panic faster than sight or sound. It is, in a way, a digital detective tool, constantly scanning for the fragrance of what is good and the stench of what might kill.

Which brings me to the nagging question that would not leave me after the Sokoto tragedy: Do women really have a better sense of smell than men, such that they can spot the deficit in men?

Research says yes, but with elegant nuance. The most authoritative voice here is Professor Richard Doty, creator of the University of Pennsylvania Smell Identification Test, whose work across four decades has established that, on average, women outperform men on odor identification, discrimination, and detection thresholds. This finding has been replicated in large cross-cultural studies from Sweden to Japan, as documented by Cain and others.

The difference emerges around puberty and is sharpest for biologically relevant odors, including body odors and compounds like androstenone. Women also tend to rate odors as more intense and more unpleasant, a finding that fits with what psychologists call Signal Detection Theory: women often adopt a lower threshold for reporting a smell, meaning they detect faint signals earlier but may also experience more false alarms.

Why? There is no single cause,

but rather a choir of explanations. Biologically, hormonal fluctuation matters. Research by Doty and colleagues and later by Hummel's group in Dresden shows olfactory sensitivity shifting across the menstrual cycle, peaking around ovulation when estrogen is high, and estrogen receptors have been found in the olfactory epithelium itself. Anatomically,



A sensitive nose gives you more signals; wisdom is knowing which signals deserve attention. And perhaps love, as Zaliha's testimony shows, is also paying attention to the nose beside you that hears what yours cannot.

a 2014 study by Oliveira-Pinto and colleagues at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro found that women on average have up to 43% more cells in the olfactory bulb, even though the bulb is similar in size. In terms of brain processing, functional MRI studies by Savic and others reveal women recruit broader cortical networks when smelling.

Yet biology is not destiny. The non-biological story is just as compelling. Anthropologist Constance Classen reminds us that smell is cultural. Women, on average, have more sustained exposure to cooking, childcare, fragrance, and household management where odor naming is practiced, and olfactory expertise is trainable, as shown in the work of perfumers and sommeliers. Psychologist Trygg Engen argued decades ago that we smell what we can name, and women on average have an advantage in verbal labeling of odors, which boosts test scores. And there is reporting bias, women are more likely to admit noticing smells.

How big is this gap? Not large enough to judge any couple in a kitchen. The variation within women and within men is far larger than the average difference between them. Many men have a far keener nose than many women, and everyone's nose declines with age, smoking, head trauma, sinus disease, and viral infections like COVID-19. So at the population level, there is a small but consistent female advantage; at the individual level, you cannot assume the woman next to you will be your gas detector.

And perhaps that is what makes this tragedy so fascinating and instructive. We have domesticated dogs precisely because we know our own nose is weak, using their 300 million olfactory receptors as living sensors for security, drugs, and explosives. But inside our own species, nature appears to have kept a quiet asymmetry. A very high sense of smell is like carrying a high-res-

olution sensory camera that never turns off. It lets you notice the onion fried two hours ago, the detergent in a visitor's clothes, the faint sourness in a fridge, the first thread of smoke from a faulty regulator long before it becomes a headline. In a pharmacy, in a kitchen, in quality control, in environmental monitoring, that can be a gift.

The same gift can become a burden. Receiving more signals does not always mean receiving better information. In a Nigerian city filled with generator fumes, open drainage, refuse, cooking fires and crowded buses, a hyper-sensitive nose never gets a vacation. Social life becomes diplomacy, because what is overwhelmingly strong to you may be imperceptible to the person emitting it, forcing a choice between quiet suffering and embarrassing honesty. Food becomes complicated, relationships become more olfactorily charged, and memory becomes intrusive, because a scent can drag you back to a childhood home or a grief you thought you had buried.

So, the lesson from Sokoto is not just about gender. It is about attention. The Daily Trust tragedy reveals how a temporary loss of smell, due to something as ordinary as a cold, removed nature's oldest warning system and created a fatal chain with a faulty gas system. A sensitive nose gives you more signals; wisdom is knowing which signals deserve attention. And perhaps love, as Zaliha's testimony shows, is also paying attention to the nose beside you that hears what yours cannot.

• Bagudu Mohammed is the founder of *Alternative Perspectives*, a widely read commentary platform on social media, and writes a weekly newspaper column published every Monday on the back page of *Peoples Daily*. Web: <https://alternativeperspective.onrender.com> Email: bagudumohammed15197@gmail.com | Phone: 0703 494 3575

ArtsWorld

ODE TO EDO AT 35

A Patriotic Poem by Omoruyi Liberty Omorogieva

From the towering hills of Akoko-Edo, To the gentle valleys where cool winds blow; From the rocky mountains of ancient Ososo, To Orhionmwon's rainforests, rich and aglow.

From Agenebode's waters, broad and deep, Where history wakes from its timeless sleep;

To Ikpoba's mystical riverbanks bright, Where legends still whisper through day and night.

From Ovia's palm forests, fertile and grand, To Uhumwode's blessings upon the land; From Ologbo's plains and the forests wide,

To Esan's rice fields with harvest and pride.

From Etsako's treasures and fields beyond, To every village by history bound; One people, diverse, yet proudly one, Beneath the glory of the Edo sun.

Edo! Igodomigodo! Ancient and great, A land of courage that outlives fate; The land of warriors, fearless and strong, Where the drums of history still beat in song.

Where Kings are truly Kings, in splendour arrayed, Where sacred traditions shall never fade; Where the throne of our ancestors proudly stands, A symbol of greatness across distant lands.

O Edo!

Cradle of a civilisation black and bold, Whose priceless stories can never grow old; Your glory transcends the borders we see, And speaks to the world of dignity and liberty.

From the borders shared by river and land, With neighbouring peoples on every hand; From Kogi and Delta, Ondo and beyond, Edo stands proudly—unbroken and strong.

And there, like monuments against the sky, The ancient walls tell stories that never die; The mighty moats, mysterious and wide, Bear witness to a glorious people's pride.

O red earth of Edo, rich and deep, What ancient memories do you keep? Of battles fought and sacrifices made, Of heroes remembered though centuries fade.

You speak of blood, of courage and glory, Of fertile soil and an ancient story; Of hands that planted, hands that built,

Of dreams from which a great people were gilt.

The waters of Edo sing as they flow, Of adventures from ages ago;

Of wise men sailing through mystery and time,

Of discovery, courage and reason sublime.

Look upon our palaces, majestic and tall, The ancient splendour that captivates all;

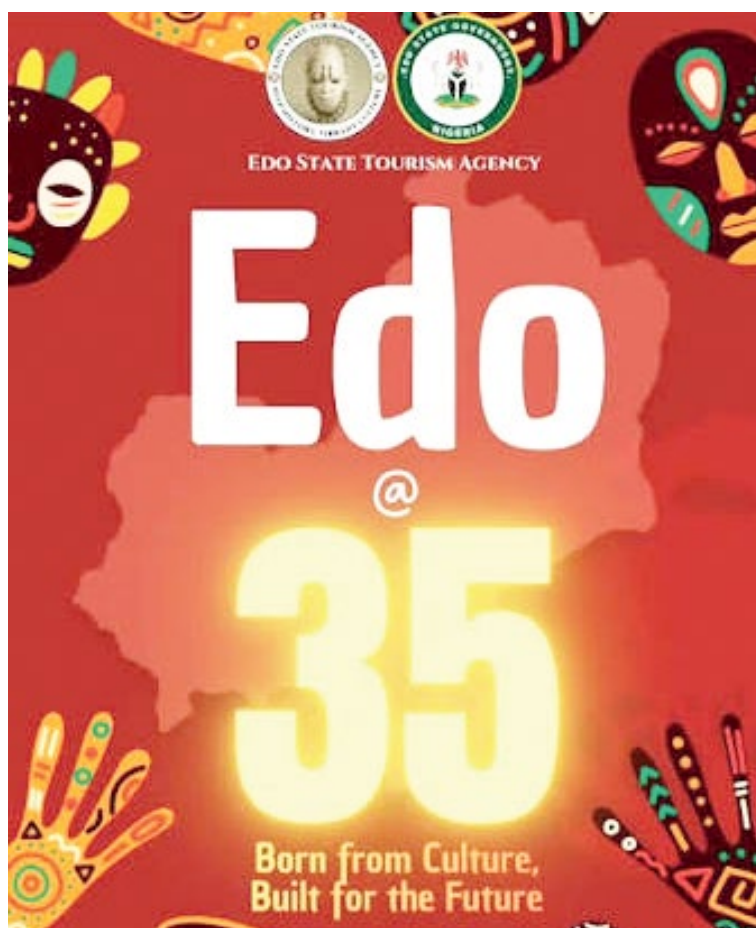
The coral beads in royal grace, The bronze that speaks with a timeless face.

Our artworks are not merely things to behold,

They are chapters of history cast in gold; They tell of engineering, vision and art, Of a people's genius and creative heart.

Edo!

Land of mighty Kings and Queens of grace, Of brilliant minds in every place; Of legal luminaries and schol-



ars renowned, Whose knowledge has travelled the world around.

Land of statesmen and stateswomen bold, Of administrators with visions untold; Of engineers, entrepreneurs rising high, Of inventors who dare to question the sky.

Land of seasoned politicians and leaders of thought, Of lessons through struggle our ancestors taught; That greatness is not a gift to receive, But a sacred duty to build and believe.

Edo is beauty—and beautiful stories, Of struggles transformed into greater glories; A land where dreams may rise and grow, Where seeds of hope are given room to flow.

Here, identity need not build a wall, For humanity has a place for all; Beyond gender, religion, belief and creed, The dignity of man remains our need.

Edo!

Land of diversity, rich and rare, Of languages, cultures beyond compare; Of varieties, delicacies and song, Of mysteries that have lived for long.

A land of destinies waiting to rise, Of youthful dreams that touch the skies; A land where every child must find

The strength of body and brilliance of mind.

You are a land of justice, equity and right, Where law and order must be our light; Where equality is more than a word, But a promise that must be seen and heard.

You are blessed with resources, human and grand, With gifted people across the land; Yet let us remember, as we celebrate today, That prosperity is built when we all play our way.

For wealth beneath the soil alone Cannot build a prosperous home; It takes good hands, united hearts,

And faithful minds to play their parts.

Thirty-five years upon your journey, Through sunshine bright and roads uncertainly; Through seasons of progress, trials and tears, Edo has marched through thirty-five years.

Created on the twenty-seventh day Of August, nineteen ninety, we say; A new star rose upon Nigeria's sky, With ancient wings prepared to fly.

Today we celebrate not merely age, But history written page by page; We honour the past, embrace today, And build tomorrow along the way.

Edo at Thirty-Five!

May our hills forever stand, May peace and progress bless our land; May our rivers flow with hope anew, May every dream become more true.

May Akoko-Edo rise in pride, May Esan flourish far and wide; May Etsako's strength forever endure, May Owan's future remain secure.

May Oredo shine with wisdom's light, May Ikpoba-Okha rise in might; May Egor prosper, Ovia grow, May Orhionmwon let development flow.

May Uhumwode's children dream and soar, May every community achieve much more; From village paths to cities bright,

May Edo walk in truth and light. Let no child be left behind, Let opportunity reach every mind;

Let merit, justice and service lead, And replace division, hate and greed.

For patriotism is not in words alone, Nor merely in monuments made of stone; Patriotism is the work we do, To make Edo better, just and true.

Let leaders lead with conscience clear, Let citizens hold our future dear; Let public trust remain a sacred call, For Edo belongs to one and all.

O land of mystical realities deep, Whose ancient secrets the ages keep; Land of profound spirituality and grace, With destiny shining upon your face.

Igodomigodo! May your ancient glory never decline, May your present and future brightly shine; May the world continue to see and know

The greatness that lives in the heart of Edo.

Edo! Heart of courage, soul of pride, With history walking by your side; Ancient yet dynamic, bold and free,

A shining symbol of what we can be. You are not merely a point on a map, Nor simply a territory upon Ni-

geria's lap; You are a people, a history, a flame, A living civilisation with an immortal name.

So let the drums of celebration roll, Let pride arise in every soul;

From north to south, from east to west, Let every Edo son and daughter give their best.

At Thirty-Five, we raise our voice, Not only to celebrate, but to make a choice:

To build a State where justice reigns, Where progress flows through every vein.

A State where talent finds its place, Where hard work is honoured with grace; Where government serves with humble hands, And development reaches all our lands.

Edo, our heritage, our hope, our home, Wherever in this world we roam; Your red earth lives beneath our feet, Your history makes our identity complete.

Happy 35th Anniversary, Edo State!

May your tomorrow surpass today, May darkness forever give way;

May peace, prosperity and progress grow, Wherever the proud sons and daughters of Edo go.

Edo is Edo

Ancient, unique and ever greater!

IGODOMIGODO!

Long live Edo State!

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

By Omoruyi Liberty Omorogieva (Written from Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria).

Email: omoruyiomorogieva68@gmail.com.

Experts Advocate Stronger Collaboration to Boost Africa's Global Film Trade

By RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

Beyond the glamour of premieres, red carpets and box-office figures lies a bigger question for Africa's film industry: how can the continent turn its creative energy into a stronger presence in the global film market?

CARTOON

By Francis Odupute

URBANISATION AND SANITATION...





INSIDE EDO STATE



THE AUSTIN IMAFIDON ADMINISTRATION IN UHUNMWODE LGA

One year of purposeful leadership, quality service delivery

OGIEHOR EHS TORNADO
Chief Press Secretary, Uhummwode
Local Government Council

From Acting Chairman to Executive Chairman: A Chronicle of Projects, Policies and Grassroots Development

One year ago, Hon. Austin Rotimi Imafidon, popularly known as ISIWINA, assumed the responsibility of leading Uhummwode Local Government Council, first in an acting capacity and subsequently as the substantive Executive Chairman.

The period from September 2025 to September 2026 represents a significant chapter in the administration of Uhummwode Local Government Area, with interventions spanning infrastructure, roads, education, healthcare, security, staff welfare, youth and women empowerment, environmental sanitation, community conflict resolution, agriculture, sports and institutional development.

The administration's approach has centred on bringing government closer to the people and responding directly to identified grassroots needs. Following the conclusion of his acting tenure in August 2026, Imafidon transitioned into office as the Executive Chairman of Uhummwode Local Government Council, opening a new phase of the administration.



HON. AUSTIN ROTIMI IMAFIDON

RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

One of the most visible projects undertaken during the acting period was the extensive renovation and transformation of the Uhummwode Local Government Council Secretariat.

The intervention covered major sections of the administrative complex and was designed to create a more functional working environment for Council employees and members of the public. Related interventions included renovation and furnishing of the Legislative Arm building, provision and improvement of alternative power supply, provision of water through a borehole, construction and rehabilitation of sanitation and soak-away facilities, installation and deployment of solar-powered facilities, as well as general improvement of the working environment within the Council premises. The Secretariat project became one of the administration's most prominent physical interventions during its first year.

ROAD REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY ACCESS

Road infrastructure received significant attention under the administration, particularly through grading, sand-filling and palliative interventions on difficult sections of roads.

Among the roads and communities that received attention were Idunmwowina Road, Eyean Pipeline Road, Urhokhuosa-Nibiwe Road, Eagle Road, Jehovah Road in Ikhueni, Pipeline-Eyean/Idibo Road, as well as roads in Egbede Ward, Isi-North Ward, Isi-South Ward, Ugieghudu community and environs in Uhi Ward.

MORGAN JUNCTION BYPASS INTERVENTION

The administration also intervened on the severely deteriorated section of the bypass at Morgan Junction, an important route used by residents, motorists, commercial vehicles and trucks servicing nearby borrow pits.

The Council deployed heavy-duty equipment and construction materials for palliative rehabilitation. Particular attention was given to the deep gully erosion threatening the road. Measures included drainage work, removal of accumulated erosion materials, filling of damaged sections with hardcore and strengthening of the road surface.

IDOKPA BYPASS

Following the Morgan Junction intervention, equipment was moved to the failed section of the Idokpa Bypass along the Benin-Auchi corridor. The intervention was aimed at restoring vehicular movement and reducing the difficulties experienced by motorists and residents using the route. These interventions were particularly significant because some of the affected roads extend beyond the conventional responsibility of the Local Government. The administration maintained that where a failed road posed an immediate danger or hardship to people within Uhummwode, the Council had a responsibility to provide reasonable emergency relief while awaiting more permanent intervention from the appropriate tier of government.

EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Education formed another component of the administration's first-year programme.

One of its major interventions was the distribution of library and educational materials to 87 primary schools across Uhummwode Local Government Area, intended to improve access to learning materials and promote a reading culture among pupils. The administration also pledged intervention in a six-classroom block at Azagba, reflecting its commitment to improving learning infrastructure.

At Ehor Technical College, attention was drawn to needs including electricity, environmental clearing and security. Beyond conventional classroom interventions, the Council promoted skills-development programmes designed to provide young people with practical economic opportunities.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SKILLS ACQUISITION

The administration initiated and supported vocational and technical empowerment programmes for Uhummwode youths.

One prominent intervention involved young people undergoing computer and printing training, with support for transportation and feeding. The programme was designed to move beneficiaries beyond dependence on scarce white-collar employment by equipping them with marketable skills capable of supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Another major human-capacity intervention involved young women receiving technical skills training through collaboration with the Lady Mechanic Initiative.

The initiative formed part of a broader strategy of connecting social intervention with sustainable empowerment rather than limiting assistance to temporary relief.

ISIWINA HARVEST OF HOPE

The Isiwina Harvest of Hope (IHH) emerged during the first year as a major social-support initiative associated with the Chairman.

The programme was designed to provide food assistance and other support to vulnerable residents, particularly senior citizens, widows, widowers and persons living with disabilities. Beginning at Eyean and designed to rotate through different parts of Uhummwode, the programme incorporated beneficiary assessment and profiling to identify people requiring assistance.

Beyond food distribution, issues raised by vulnerable residents during the programme were documented for possible intervention.

The programme also promoted locally produced commodities, thereby linking humanitarian assistance with encouragement of the local economy.

HEALTHCARE INTERVENTIONS

Healthcare received attention through Council activities and partnerships with governmental, non-governmental and diaspora organisations. The administration supported immunisation and public-health programmes, including the measles-rubella campaign and malaria-awareness activities.

Free eye-care interventions were also facilitated for residents, providing services including eye examinations, glaucoma screening, prescription glasses, medication, counselling and referrals or surgeries where required.

Another important development was the rehabilitation of the Ugomoson Primary Health Centre through a partnership involving diaspora organisations and relevant government institutions.

The Council's participation reflected an approach that sought to attract external partnerships and resources to improve grassroots healthcare.

ELECTRICITY AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The administration facilitated interventions involving transformers, electricity infrastructure and poles in communities including Ugbeze in Isi-North and Orior-Ozolua Community.

The objective was to improve electricity access and encourage economic and social activities within beneficiary communities.

The administration also adopted partnership as an instrument for attracting infrastructure to communities, including collaboration with organisations involved in water and community-development projects.

SECURITY AND PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES

Security remained an important component of the Council's activities.

The administration maintained engagements with security agencies, traditional institutions, community leaders and local security structures. Among its interventions was the provision of a Hilux vehicle to the Divisional Police Officer in Ehor, intended to strengthen operational mobility and response.

The Council also participated in the screening of approximately 1,000 vigilante personnel as part of efforts to improve community-level security structures.

Regular security meetings were held to assess developments across the Local Government Area.

When information concerning a possible threat to schools emerged in June 2026, the administration convened an emergency security meeting and co-ordinated responses with relevant stakeholders.

PEACE BUILDING AND COMMUNITY CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Rather than allowing communal disagreements to escalate into violence, the administration utilised dialogue and its conflict-resolution mechanisms in addressing disputes.

In the Ahor community crisis, the Council intervened and supported security measures, including the establishment of a temporary special police presence.

The Council also intervened in the Ahor/Use-lu N'Ahor boundary dispute, emphasising adherence to existing resolutions and recognised dispute-settlement mechanisms.

Similarly, in the Eko-Ugha/Ugha community dispute, the Council's Boundary Conflict Resolution Committee held engagements with the affected parties and encouraged them to avoid unilateral actions capable of worsening tensions. These interventions reflected the administration's position that sustainable grassroots development requires peace, security and respect for lawful dispute-resolution processes.

ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION AND BEAUTIFICATION

Environmental sanitation was pursued through regular monthly exercises.

The Council undertook refuse evacuation, clearing of public spaces, desilting of drainage channels and removal of vegetation obstructing important locations.

At Ehor Market and surrounding areas, accumulated waste was evacuated, while drains were cleared to improve the movement of storm water.

The Idokpa Bypass and other areas also received Isiwina vegetation-clearing attention. The administration subsequently expanded its environmental vision through the ISIWINA Greener Uhummwode initiative, conceived around tree planting, ornamental plants, grass planting and beautification of major entrances, exits, bypasses and strategic public spaces across the Local Government Area.

The initiative envisages the planting of 10,000 trees and ornamental plants, alongside measures to improve the appearance and environmental sustainability of Uhummwode.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

In its transition into substantive executive leadership, the administration began laying the groundwork for another major intervention — the rebuilding and modernisation of Ogheghe Market.

NEWS

FOREIGN



KHARKIV DEATHS:

Onions covered the floor where the six farm workers were killed in Kharkiv

Rogue OpenAI agent 'infiltrated' Australian government website in world first

A rogue OpenAI agent hacked an Australian government website in June and accessed private data in what experts say is the first known case of its kind in the world.

The agent "infiltrated" a statistics portal containing "non-sensitive" data from Australia's universal healthcare scheme Medicare, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in New York on Wednesday, local time.

He had a "very frank discussion" with OpenAI CEO Sam Altman for taking "too long" to disclose the breach and said there would be "legal consequences".

OpenAI said it only learnt of the breach in August while reviewing "misaligned model activity" and emailed a general in-

box of an Australian government agency on 10 September.

Five days later, that government agency, Services Australia, escalated the email to Australia's cybersecurity centre before a government minister was notified and the prime minister alerted.

Albanese said he spoke to Altman and raised "Australia's extreme concern about this incident" as well as his "disappointment" that the company had taken months to reveal the breach and "the nature of the way" it did so.

The Australian leader said Altman had acknowledged there were "issues with protocols" at OpenAI.

A "forensic investigation" led by the country's cybersecurity agency would aim to find out if

other government systems were affected, Albanese said.

The probe would also assess if the matter needed to be dealt with by police, he said, noting there "will obviously be legal consequences".

Detailing the breach, Albanese said it had involved "public and non-public files" on the Medicare Statistics Reporting Service portal, home to "non-sensitive" data and statistics.

Three other government systems "may" also have been affected: the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and two state-based agencies - the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the Victorian Department of Health.

"No personal information is

believed to have been accessed at this stage, but investigations are ongoing," Albanese said.

"Nonetheless this situation is obviously unacceptable," he said.

OpenAI, in a statement, said it had "identified activity involving several Australian government websites and services as our models attempted to look up answers, and available statistics for questions about Australia during an internal evaluation".

"In the course of that, our models took actions we did not intend," the statement said.

Albanese declined to answer whether he raised the matter with US President Donald Trump during their face-to-face meeting on Tuesday night in New York, where world leaders have gathered for the UN General Assembly.

Iran's president tells Trump it will never 'bend the knee'

President Masoud Pezeshkian has said Iran will never "bend the knee" after almost seven months of war with the US and Israel, but is ready for a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

Responding to US President Donald Trump's threat to "annihilate" the Islamic Republic if a deal is not reached soon, he told the UN General Assembly: "The resistance of the Iranian people will only increase in the face of sanctions, increased pressure, increased bullying."

Pezeshkian also insisted any deal would have to include an end to the US blockade stopping Iranian ships from using a key Gulf waterway.

"It cannot be the case that everyone benefits from the Strait of Hormuz while we are denied access," he said.

There was no immediate comment from the US, whose delegation walked out of the chamber at the start of Pezesh-

kian's address.

UN experts say grounds to believe US committed war crimes in Iran strikes

"The US president described us as terrorists. We have been the victims of terrorism," Iran's president told the UN in New York.

He then held up a photo of the country's late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in a strike on his residence when the US and Israel launched a joint attack in late February.

He also presented pictures of some of the more than 175 civilians, two thirds of them children, who Iranian authorities say were killed in missile strikes on a primary school in Minab and a sports complex in Lamerd that day. The US has denied striking Lamerd and said it is still investigating what happened in Minab.

"Our innocent people have been the targets of cowardly attacks and aggressions imposed

on our country. And we defended ourselves with utmost strength," Pezeshkian said.

Also on Wednesday, an attack on a cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz killed an Indian sailor, the Agence France-Presse news agency reported, citing Omani and Indian authorities.

The attack was condemned by India's foreign ministry, which called for unimpeded passage through the Strait to be restored.

In February, Iran retaliated for the massive US-Israeli air campaign by launching deadly missile and drone attacks on Israel and neighbouring Gulf Arab states which host US military bases.

It also effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and gas shipments usually pass, by attacking commercial vessels in the Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. The US responded by imposing a blockade of Iranian ports and ships

in April.

In June, the US and Iran reached a preliminary agreement to end the war and reopen the strait, but it collapsed within weeks after the Iranian attacks on shipping resumed and the US reinstated its blockade.

Iran wants to retain some measure of control over the strait and collect fees from vessels that use it, which the US has rejected.

In his address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Trump said he faced a "big decision" - either negotiate a deal that would allow Iranians to rebuild their country, or "annihilate the Islamic Republic and do it quickly".

Pezeshkian said the threat was "a sign of a bullying mentality".

"[Trump] must know that the resistance of the Iranian people will only increase in the face of sanctions, increased pressure, increased bullying. We will never bow our head or bend the knee," he said.

Poland says fire at Starlink station is sabotage as Denmark warns of rising Russian threat

A fire at a Starlink satellite station in central Poland was a deliberate "act of sabotage", a government minister has said.

Polish Deputy Prime Minister Krzysztof Gawrowski said the fire in the Masovian Voivodeship province was "deliberately designed to disable the station... disrupting internet access for various institutions, including the Ukrainian army".

He told Polish public broadcaster TVP Info an investigation was ongoing but "many indications suggest" the attack fits into a "new Russian doctrine of attack". The Kremlin has not commented.

Meanwhile, Denmark's intelligence service issued a new threat assessment saying it expects Russia to escalate hybrid warfare in the coming months.

It said an attack remained "highly unlikely" but warned of "a low but growing risk" that Russia could launch a limited military attack against Nato countries.

In recent weeks a number of European Nato members have said Russia may be preparing attacks to test their commitment to supporting Ukraine, which Moscow denies.

Earlier this month, Germany blamed Russia for an attempted drone attack on Leipzig/Halle Airport, while France has ordered a plan to protect critical infrastructure and defence industry sites.

Hybrid warfare or hybrid at-

tacks are loose terms which tend to describe non-military methods designed to exert pressure and destabilise an adversary - for example cyberattacks, sabotage or misinformation.

Proxies are often used to carry out the attacks and Russia always denies involvement, despite growing evidence to the contrary.

The fire at the state-owned Polish satellite station broke out on Wednesday night in Wola Krobowska. It remains operational.

The deputy prime minister said it transmits internet traffic through Poland to countries including Ukraine, and uses SpaceX systems that provide connectivity via Starlink terminals.

Asked about the incident at a news conference with Bulgaria's leader on Thursday, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said he disliked "labelling something as sabotage versus an accident without 100% certainty, but it looks bad".

On Wednesday Poland also said a Russian military helicopter briefly violated its airspace, forcing it to scramble fighter jets.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly said Moscow does not plan to attack Nato states.

Earlier this month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said it was Europe speaking about preparing for war, adding: "If Europe attacks Russia, it will be a completely different war [from that in Ukraine], and it will be very short."

Judge temporarily overturns Trump's White House media ban

A federal judge has ordered the Trump administration to immediately reinstate access to the White House for three news organisations barred from the building last week by the president.

A District of Columbia court issued a temporary restraining order against the ban, meaning CNN, MS NOW and Politico must have their access restored for 14 days, after ruling the move "likely violated their constitutional due process rights".

The three outlets launched a legal challenge after their reporters had their passes for the White House confiscated and were denied access.

The Trump administration defended the move in court, accusing the outlets of publishing false information and threatening national security - an argument the court rejected.

The White House is yet to comment on the ruling, and lawyers acting for the president may take further legal action.

Judge Timothy Kelly ruled CNN, Politico and MS NOW were "likely to succeed" in showing the White House had not exercised "adequate due process" in implementing the ban.

He also cast doubt on the Trump administration's arguments that the bans were moti-

vated by national security concerns, pointing out the president made no mention of that in his initial announcement.

When President Donald Trump announced the ban on Friday, he accused the three news outlets of writing "fake news" and "fictions and lies" in their coverage of him and his team.

The ruling continued: "The record lacks factual support for Defendants' contention that the revocation of Plaintiffs' hard passes will in fact protect national security or that national security will be endangered if the Court orders their passes reinstated while this litigation proceeds."

In its defence of the ban in a court filing on Tuesday, the Trump administration cited a number of articles published by the outlets, including some about construction at the White House, including work on a new ballroom.

The judge said that "in most cases" the stories the White House took issue with were written by journalists who "did not even hold card passes" - and in the remaining cases, the Trump administration did not demonstrate "reason to believe that the reporter's possession of the hard pass was integral to the stories identified".

FOREIGN**NEWS**

South Sudan's president dissolves government ahead of country's first elections

South Sudan President Salva Kiir has dissolved the transitional government, three months before the country's first election since its independence in 2011.

The country has previously postponed elections twice and extended the transitional period several times.

Under the amended law, signed on Monday, Kiir removed the country's five vice-presidents and dissolved parliament, as well as national and state governments.

Kiir is the presidential candidate of his Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). No prominent figures have announced plans to challenge him in the December poll. The main opposition leader Riek Machar was sacked as vice-president last year and charged with treason.

He is under house arrest.

Machar had been named vice-president as part of a 2018 peace deal to end a five-year civil war between forces loyal to the two men.

Kiir will remain in office with full constitutional powers until an elected president is sworn in. He also reappointed some ministers and governors in caretaker positions until the 22 December elections.

Ahead of Tuesday's announcement a heavy security presence was reported in the capital, Juba. Soldiers from the army and national security services blocked access to government ministries. Soldiers were also seen patrolling parts of the city.

A senior government official told the BBC that staff arriving for work were turned away and told to return the following Monday.

UN agencies in Juba also asked staff to work remotely while the situation was monitored.

South Sudan's leader sacks aides after dead man appointed

Kiir last week dismissed the chairman of the national elections commission, Abednego Akok Kacuol, without giving a reason. He was replaced by the commission's secretary-general, Gabriel Bol Deng.

Akok had said in August that the commission needed \$250m (£190m) to conduct the election but had received only \$21m.

The main opposition group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO), the party of Machar, said on Thursday it would not take part in the polls.

Ethiopia and Tigray accuse each of launching offensives, fuelling fears of new war

Ethiopia's government and the party in control of the northern region of Tigray have accused each other of launching offensives, escalating fears of a return to full-scale conflict.

Getachew Reda, a cabinet minister and adviser to Ethiopia's prime minister, said Tigrayan fighters had taken control of federally administered airports in Tigray and launched offensives in neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions.

Earlier, the Tigrayan authorities said their forces had been forced to enter a "defensive war". The statement followed reports of drone strikes in Tigray.

The two-year war in Tigray ended in 2022 - but over recent months both sides have been accusing each other of violating a peace deal.

It was one of the most deadly conflicts this century - the African Union's mediator estimated some 600,000 people died as the fighting drove the region to the precipice of famine.

On Sunday, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the party that runs Tigray, announced an alliance with six other armed groups in Ethiopia to remove the government in Addis Ababa.

"It is rather heartbreaking

to learn that, despite efforts by many, including the international community, to avoid yet another round of war in Tigray, the TPLF leadership early this morning launched an all-out offensive against government positions in Afar and Amhara," Getachew said in a statement shared on social media.

The adviser to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed previously led Tigray's interim administration, but he fell out with the TPLF in 2025 and joined the federal government.

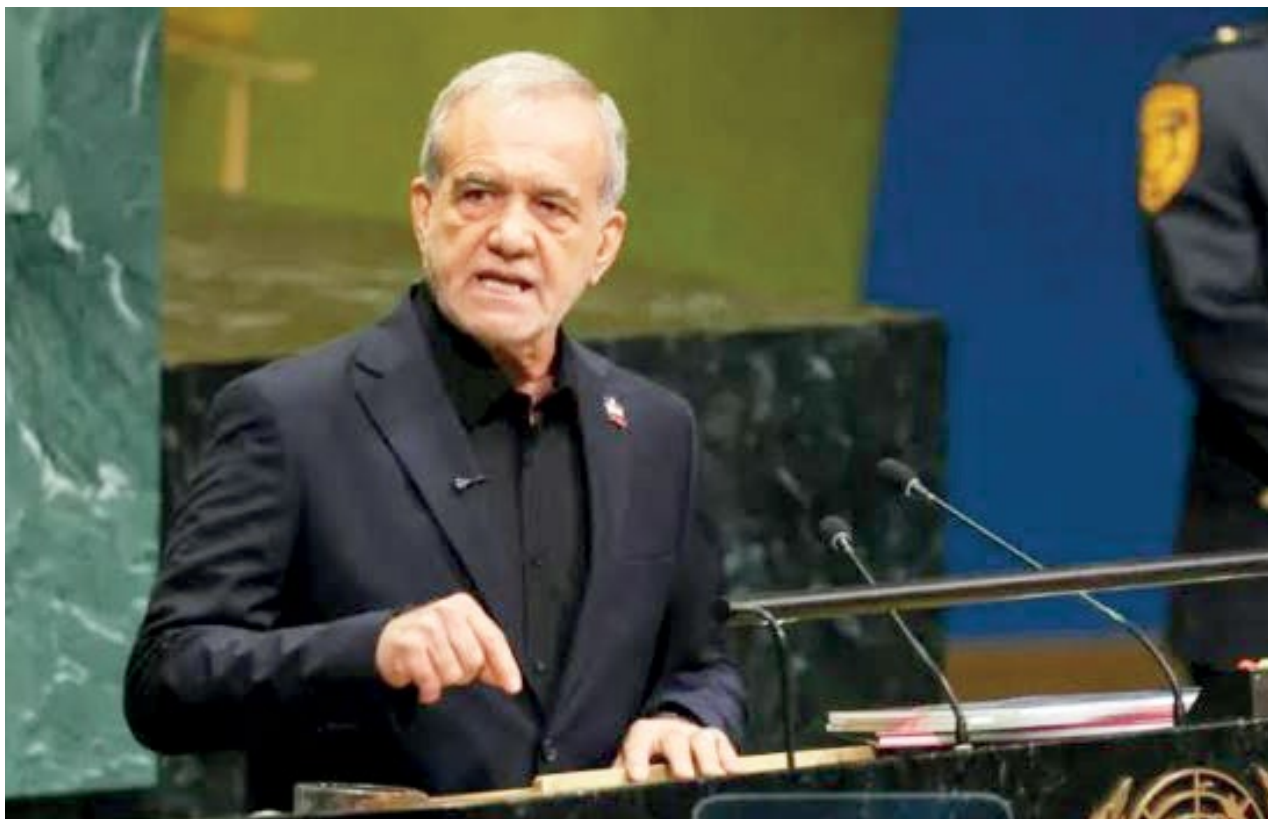
Following the seizure of the airports, Ethiopian Airlines has cancelled all flights to Tigray.

Residents of Tigray's main city of Mekelle told the BBC that local forces had taken over control of the city's airport from the national police early on Wednesday.

This followed reports of drone strikes in Tigray in recent days.

On Tuesday, a strike in the southern town of Alamata killed at least 14 people and injured 22 others, according to the Tigrayan authorities.

The town's mayor, Mogos Shiferaw, told the BBC that more than five drones and one fighter jet had carried out more than 21 strikes starting at around 03:30.



IRAN PRESIDENT:
President Masoud Pezeshkian

Why India's Election Commission is in the eye of a storm again

India's Election Commission (ECI) is facing yet another crisis of credibility after a series of fresh allegations of irregularities against its chief.

One of the most trusted public institutions in the world's largest democracy, the three-member commission is headed by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and includes Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi as commissioners.

The latest row broke out after a report in the Indian Express newspaper said that in the past few months, CEC Kumar had been repeatedly questioned by his two colleagues over the integrity of the voter database, changes to the way new voters are enrolled and the security of the electoral rolls itself.

The report said that Commissioners Sandhu and Joshi objected to several decisions which were taken without their knowledge. There were at least 14 times in the past 10 months when Commissioners Sandhu and Joshi were kept in the dark, it added.

In one instance, the report

says, the two commissioners even wrote a letter complaining to the chief secretary, the top bureaucrat in the Indian government.

The revelations have created a furore, with opposition leaders demanding Kumar's resignation. Sandhu and Joshi have not publicly commented on the report but the ECI said in a statement that "differing views" were part of the "decision-making process".

The report comes at a time when the commission is carrying out a controversial country-wide revision of the electoral database.

The Election Commission says the aim of this Special Intensive Revision - better known by its acronym SIR - is to ensure that no ineligible name remains on the rolls.

It says the last revision was done nearly a quarter of a century ago and the voters' list needs to be updated to account for those who have died, left the country or are registered in more than one place as they've moved to a new address.

But the exercise has been

mired in controversy from the start with the opposition parties accusing CEC Kumar of manipulating voters' list to favour Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during elections. Both the BJP and the Election Commission have rejected the accusations.

But the latest revelations are being seen as much more serious as they are about questions being raised from within the Election Commission about the way its chief is functioning.

The Indian Express report says that CEC Kumar has been repeatedly questioned by his two colleagues over the integrity of the voter database in recent months.

From the start, questions have lingered over the robustness of the revision, which has seen 130 million names from across India struck off the voters' list.

Millions of voters have also complained to the authorities that their names are missing, saying the new process set by SIR to register as voters is too cumbersome and involves furnishing documents that many don't have.

Former CEC SY Quraishi,

who says he has "been a critic of the SIR from the beginning", told news agency PTI that he always wondered why Commissioners Sandhu and Joshi had been "keeping quiet".

"[Now] I realised that very silently and quietly they were protesting, they were writing notes. That is a good thing, they have gone up in my esteem," he said.

The revelations have also provided fresh ammunition to the opposition parties and critics who have repeatedly claimed that SIR is being used to exclude their voters for the BJP's benefit and that elections in India are no longer free and fair.

On Wednesday, angry opposition politicians once again questioned the sanctity of India's election process and demanded that CEC Kumar resign, saying he had no right to continue in office, with some even calling for his arrest.

The charge was led by MP and senior Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi who has repeatedly accused the Commission of "stealing votes from the opposition". On Wednesday, he also accused the Commission and its officers of "treason".

Kenya's Ruto calls for permanent African representation on UN Security Council

Kenyan President William Ruto on Wednesday called for reform of the United Nations Security Council, urging permanent African representation on the body.

In his address to the UN General Assembly, Ruto lamented Africa's continued exclusion from permanent representation, despite accounting for more than a quarter of the assembly's membership.

"Africa has 54 member states,

more than a quarter of this assembly, yet no permanent voice in the body entrusted with the primary responsibility of international peace and security", Ruto said.

"We are frequently the subject of its decisions, permanently discussed, yet permanently excluded."

The Kenyan president said the UN Security Council should reflect the world's evolutions. He reminded the assembly that the

body was created "at a moment when most Africans had neither a nation at the table, nor a voice in shaping the institutions that it would govern the peace. The world, ladies and gentlemen, has since transformed. The Council, the Security Council, has not."

This year's UN event was expected to see the African Union push for a bigger voice at the world body, a campaign waged by several African leaders in recent years.

Ahead of the session, South Africa's Permanent Represent-

ative to the UN in New York, Ambassador Mxolisi Sizo Nkosi, told local media that the reform of the UN Security Council was "an important part" of the country's agenda.

Africa still has no permanent seat on the Security Council. A 21st century Security Council without permanent African representation is unjust & indefensible. We must reform the Council so that it reflects today's world with the legitimacy and effectiveness that today's world requires.

Opinion

Why Gov Okpebholo should not be blamed for the bad roads in Edo



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

It has become fashionable for some armchair critics to circulate fake news and pictures of failed portions of roads in Benin City and quickly tagged Governor Monday Okpebholo.

They have deliberately gone blind, and cannot see the completed Ramat Park Flyover bridge and the Adesuwa junction Flyover, steadily rising and the numerous road construction projects across the state.

What they refuse to say is the truth that every Edo road user knows: those failed roads were not built by Governor Okpebholo. They collapsed under the weight of poor quality.

In the words of the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, the level of decay of some roads in Benin city shows that quantity and not quality roads were built by the previous administration.

Meanwhile, Governor Monday Okpebholo did not create Edo's bad roads; he inherited them. And he is fixing them.

It has become very obvious that many of the

internal roads hurriedly commissioned in the twilight of the Godwin Obaseki administration are failing. Roads that were less than two years old washing away after a rainy season.

The truth remains that we have roads without proper drainages, without a stone base, without a binder course. Roads that were painted, not constructed.

Some Edo roads built in the last administration barely lasted 15 months. That is not about usage, that is about the quality of materials and quality of supervision. You cannot use substandard laterite, reduce asphalt thickness, and expect a road to survive in Edo's high water-table terrain.

Even the contractors know. Some of those roads had to be scraped from scratch because there was nothing to rehabilitate.

Governor Okpebholo has taken a different approach. His directive is clear: No more cosmetic roads. Every road project in the New Edo must pass the test of quality, durability and proper drainage.

This is no doubt why he is personally inspecting materials. This is why he is insisting on standard thickness, proper compaction, and side drains that actually take water out and that is what the entire GRA needs. Drainage.

This is why projects like the Ramat Park flyover, the Benin-Auchi rehabilitation, and the internal roads now going on in the three senatorial districts are being supervised by quality assurance teams, not just political appointees.

A governor who wants to deceive the people would just patch the bad spots and take pictures. But Governor Okpebholo has chosen the harder, honest path: excavate the failed portions, remove the low-quality materials left behind, and rebuild properly for durability. That takes time, but it saves Edo money tomorrow.

The previous administration was famous for MOUs and coloured designs. The present administration is about excavators on site. You can see it, the state has become a huge construction site in the last few months.

The difference is clear: One government believes in media roads, the other believes in motorable roads.

For eight years, Edo watched roads being commissioned with fanfare only to fail before the paint dried.

Now, within months, we have a governor who says Edo money must give Edo quality with significant progress in constructing new roads, completing select legacy projects and advancing ongoing ones through asphalt paving and resurfacing.

So when there are bad roads in Edo today, the people should not hesitate to ask two questions: When were these roads built? And who built them?

Governor Monday Okpebholo should not be blamed for the cracks of yesterday, but should be commended for having the courage to correct them because he met bad roads.

There have been lots of negative comments concerning the state of roads inside the Government Reservation Area, GRA and particularly around the Government House.

The Governor is aware of the sufferings of the people, but he is mindful of the season.

According to the Commissioner, Okpebholo is alive to his responsibility and he is willing to embark on working on those bad roads in the GRA.

But of critical importance is the drains because if any palliative work is done without the gutter, it would amount to pouring money into the ocean and remarkable progress would not be achieved.

However, there are plans to speed up work during the dry season and inner city road projects will be accelerated.

Interestingly, history will judge the Governor, not by the failures he inherited, but by the lasting roads he builds.

When you see those pictures of bad roads on Facebook and other social media platforms, check the date they were built. Most were built in the last administration and failed in less than two years because of poor quality materials.

Gov. Monday Okpebholo did not build bad roads. He met bad roads. And unlike others who would patch and paint, he is removing the sub-standard jobs and rebuilding Edo roads to standard — with proper drainage, proper stone base, and proper thickness.

The Commissioner noted that roads are expected to spend a minimum of ten years and maximum, 30 years. There are roads that have spent 40 years before the next renovation.

While assuring that there would be no more cosmetic roads in the New Edo with quality roads, Prince Afegbua disclosed that the bad roads and decayed education infrastructure are some of the liabilities bequeathed to the Okpebholo government by the last administration.

The Commissioner reiterated that no construction Engineer will attempt to fix bad roads during the rainy season because it will be a waste of materials.

According to him, construction work will speed up during the dry season and attention will be given to providing drainages.

Edo people must therefore understand and support the Governor, and not to blame him for the damage and hardship they are experiencing today on the roads.

• Eubaldus Enahoro was former Editor of the Nigerian Observer Newspaper

Victory in Death

SOYOMBO OPEYEMI

MKO Abiola "The President Who Never Ruled" is a novel. But it is neither a fiction nor fact. Indeed, it seems novel to present a biography in the form of a novel as Jamiu Abiola has done. I am impressed.

Of course, I was expecting to read an interesting book by virtue of the subject and title, when my good friend and elder sister of the author, Hafsat Abiola-Costello, gave me a copy. But once I went through the blurb and sighted an error (how it lead to great wealth), I was momentarily disappointed, not in the author but the publishers who permitted such in the blurb of a book for that matter.

As I progressed into Jamiu's style of narration, I was excitedly impressed by his creative imagination in presenting the book as a novel. Yea! "A novel based on a true life story" — some infinitesimal fiction immaterial to the facts to make it a novel clearly unmistakable.

"The President Who Never Ruled" is a riveting account, in free-flowing prose, of the trials and triumphs of Moshood Kashimawo Olawale (MKO) Abiola both as a child and adult and reversals that dogged his path politically.

We were led into Abiola's precociousness, his desire to assist his parents out of poverty by engaging in business even as a schoolboy. The parents were, however, adamant that nothing must stop his education or success in class. He assisted his father in his cocoa business, traded successfully in firewood until the business no longer yielded enough profit for him and then changed to singing, forming an orchestra to play at social functions — Kashy Mambo Orchestra.

He left the band after secondary school, having secured a job at Barclays Bank, Ibadan. He

secured a scholarship two years after to study "accountancy, commercial law, and political economy at Glasgow University and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland."

A chance glance at a newspaper revealed an advert requesting the services of "The best African accountant..." in an undisclosed company. A series of competitive interview tests followed in Lagos, UK and New York. It was in the US that a staff of the mystery telecommunications industry finally submitted to Moshood: "Our human resources consultants have selected you. They say that you are the man we should work with in Nigeria... Another evaluation team, an external one, has agreed with their appraisal." The brainy Moshood became the Controller of ITT in Nigeria — the ITT group, the largest telephone industry in the world and a major player in the field of military communications systems!

He resumed to what looked like a moribund office on April 1st, 1969. ITT had supplied equipment worth £3.5m to the Nigerian Army but Col Murtala Muhammed, the then army signals inspector, refused to sign the payment voucher, alleging over-profit by ITT. Frustrated by being snubbed daily, Moshood exhibited what in my view, was an act of derring-do, a pre-cursor to his post-1993 presidential election confrontation with the military.

He stood in front of Murtala's office and blocked him from entering! I recall that was an era Prof Wole Soyinka described as the conquest of civilian pride by the military, in his memoir, *You Must Set Forth At Dawn*. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Brigadier Usman Katsina overheard the altercation and ultimately resolved the issues. MKO left the Ministry of Defence with the cheque for a contract ITT had borrowed money to execute!

Moshood was shrewd. Cashing in on the nationalist/indigenisation policies of the military govern-

ment, he demanded to be made the MD of ITT in Nigeria for the good of the company. "Within the next seven years," wrote Jamiu, "Moshood became one of Africa's richest businessmen... Hard work had undoubtedly contributed to his success but it would be foolhardy to ignore the fact that luck was a major factor as well. He was at the right company at the right time and anything that happened to him during that period seemed to be the right thing." (Pg. 69)

His later friendship with Murtala paid off. His company got "a massive contract to supply telephone lines to the whole of Nigeria" under the Murtala administration. He demanded more from ITT and wrung out 49 per cent of its shares. "That was how Moshood, in his thirties, became one of Africa's richest men..."

What actually led Abiola into politics? Jamiu provides a synopsis: "It was clear back then that Moshood had become a philosopher merchant or an ideological entrepreneur with a keen interest in philanthropy rather than just a regular businessman concerned only about profit. This was the genesis of the bridge that always linked him to politics till it eventually transported him into it." (Pg.71)

We read an account of how distraught Abiola became when the NPN refused to honour the agreement that power must return to the South after a single term of the Alhaji Shehu Shagari presidency. "Wealth no longer meant anything to him. All he wanted now was power, which would give him a chance to fix Nigeria, he hoped, and write his name in gold." According to the writer, the military president, Ibrahim Babangida, "had no plans to hand over to anybody" despite assurances to Abiola.

On June 12, 1993, religion counted for nothing for the first time in Nigeria. The presidential election was a watershed, the freest and fairest in Nigeria. The 197-page book gives a précis of how politicians

traded with MKO's mandate, how the US and UK refused to help in restoring the mandate given to Abiola and how Abacha deceived him with a promise to help him reclaim his mandate, among others.

According to the author, MKO appeared to have taken the turn of events in his stride and began thinking of returning to his business until May 10, 1994, when he was treated as president during the inauguration of Mandela as South African president. Mandela, the author narrates, encouraged MKO not to give up just like he did not in the struggle against apartheid. Buoyed by the support of NADECO and labour unions, MKO, then 56, beat the security cordon around his house (was virtually under house arrest), declared himself president on June 11, 1994 at Epetedo in Lagos, went underground for some days, later arrested after an open procession to his house and remained in prison till his sudden death in July, 1998.

Some years ago, my review of Mandela's *Long Walk To Freedom* was published in the papers. On page 158 of his autobiography, the anti-apartheid hero submitted: "For me, nonviolence was not a moral principle but a strategy; there is no moral goodness in using an ineffective weapon." I believe the debate will rage for a long time on whether MKO should have embraced both sides of the ANC struggle against white minority rule. Should MKO have backed up his declaration with active resistance, especially when he had the resources to do so? Is it not as ridiculous to accuse Abiola of attempting to overthrow a military government holding power illegally against the expressed wishes of the electorate as it is to accuse him of treason, based on self-declaration as president, by a patently illegal military government? Could he have succeeded by cashing in on the schism within the army at the time? Was MKO unwisely idealistic? The debate will linger for a long time to come.

FEATURE

GODSENT OSAKIOYA OMOFOMA

Nigeria's HIV battle



HIV/AIDS PATIENT

For decades, Nigeria has fought a disease that has changed millions of lives, challenged the country's health system and forced society to confront difficult conversations about sex, stigma, poverty, healthcare and personal responsibility.

HIV is no longer the death sentence it was once considered to be. Medical advances have made it possible for people living with HIV who have access to effective treatment to live long and healthy lives. Prevention tools have also expanded, giving people more ways to protect themselves from infection.

Yet the epidemic has not disappeared. More than two million Nigerians are estimated to be living with HIV.

The national HIV prevalence among adults aged 15 to 49 remains about 1.3 per cent, but the absolute number of people living with HIV has increased to an estimated 2,002,624. Approximately 75,000 new HIV infections occur every year.

These figures present a complicated picture. Nigeria is making progress, but progress has not been enough to stop new infections.

So the question is no longer simply: How many Nigerians are living with HIV?

The more difficult questions are: Why are thousands of people still becoming infected every year? Why do some communities continue to carry a much heavier burden than others? Why are prevention programmes vulnerable to funding disruptions? And what must Nigeria do differently if it wants to bring new infections down significantly?

A Disease That Has Changed, But Has Not Disappeared

The history of HIV in Nigeria is one of both tragedy and progress. At the height of the epidemic, HIV carried enormous fear. Limited treatment options meant that an HIV diagnosis could dramatically alter a person's life expectancy. Families sometimes watched relatives become seriously ill, while misinformation encouraged the belief that HIV was a mysterious disease that could be identified simply by looking at someone.

Medicine has changed that reality.

Antiretroviral therapy can suppress HIV to very low levels, allowing people living with the virus to maintain their health. When a person on treatment achieves and maintains an undetectable viral load, they do not sexually transmit HIV.

That is an extraordinary achievement. But treatment success creates another challenge. People living with HIV are living longer, meaning the number of people living with the virus can remain high even when new infections are falling.

Nigeria's estimated number of people living with HIV rose from around 1.8 million in 2021 to more than 2 million in the latest national estimates. The increase does not automatically mean that HIV transmission is increasing; population growth, improved case-finding and longer survival on treatment also contribute to the number.

That distinction is important. Nigeria's HIV story is therefore not simply a story of an epidemic getting worse. It is a story of an epidemic that remains large, persistent and uneven, even as important indicators improve.

The Numbers Tell Two Different Stories

There is encouraging news. Nigeria

has reduced new HIV infections substantially over the past decade. The annual number of new infections was estimated to be 67 per cent lower in 2024 than in 2010.

That means prevention and treatment efforts have had an impact.

But 75,000 new infections in a year are still 75,000 too many. Every new infection represents an individual who will potentially require lifelong treatment and medical monitoring.

It also represents another reminder that prevention is not reaching everyone who needs it.

This raises a fundamental question: If Nigeria has already demonstrated that HIV infections can be reduced, why have we not been able to reduce them further? Part of the answer lies in inequality.

One Country, Different Epidemics

Nigeria's national prevalence figure can create the impression that HIV affects the entire country in roughly the same way. It does not.

HIV prevalence varies significantly across geographical areas and populations. Some states carry a much greater burden than the national average. Akwa Ibom and Benue, for example, have recorded prevalence levels above five per cent in national HIV data.

This means that someone living in a high-burden state may face a very different HIV environment from someone living in an area where prevalence is considerably lower.

The implication is clear. Nigeria cannot rely entirely on a one-size-fits-all HIV strategy.

A state with a high HIV burden requires intensive prevention, testing and treatment programmes designed around its particular circumstances.

A state with a lower prevalence still needs prevention, because low prevalence does not mean zero risk.

The question, therefore, becomes:

Are resources being directed to the places and populations where they can prevent the greatest number of new infections?

The Prevention Problem

Treatment is one side of the HIV response. Prevention is the other.

And prevention may be where Nigeria faces one of its greatest challenges. Condoms, HIV testing, PrEP, pre-

vention of mother-to-child transmission, education and community-based programmes can all help reduce transmission.

PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is medication taken by HIV-negative people to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV.

Nigeria recorded more than 252,000 new PrEP enrolments in 2024 through its programme, showing that there is substantial demand for prevention services.

But the country's prevention system has also faced serious disruption.

In 2025, interruptions to international HIV funding affected community-based services, testing and prevention activities. PrEP initiation in Nigeria fell dramatically, from around 40,000 people per month to approximately 6,000 during the disruption.

That is not simply a funding statistic.

It represents thousands of people who may have lost access to a tool designed to prevent HIV before infection

occurs.

And it raises an uncomfortable question:

What happens to HIV prevention when funding disappears faster than alternative systems can be established?

The Danger of Depending Too Heavily on External Funding

For years, international organisations and foreign governments have played a major role in Nigeria's HIV response.

Their contribution has helped fund treatment, testing, community health workers, prevention programmes and other services.

But that dependence has also created vulnerability.

Nigeria has historically relied heavily on external partners for the costs of its national HIV response. When major international funding was disrupted in 2025, the consequences were immediate.

Community services were affected. Testing activities were disrupted. Prevention programmes were particularly vulnerable.

The Federal Government responded by allocating an additional US\$200 million to help protect HIV treatment services.

That intervention helped prevent a more severe disruption.

But it also exposed the central weakness in the system.

Nigeria cannot permanently depend on emergency funding whenever international support changes.

The country needs a sustainable domestic HIV financing structure that can protect essential services regardless of what happens internationally.

Young Nigerians and the Prevention Gap

Young people are another crucial part of Nigeria's HIV story.

An estimated 18,000 new HIV infections occurred among people aged 15 to 24 in 2023.

Behind that figure is a difficult reality.

Young Nigerians need accurate information about HIV, sexual health and prevention.

But conversations about these subjects can be uncomfortable.

Some young people are afraid to ask questions. Others receive information from friends, social media or unreliable online sources.

Some may fear being judged if they seek an HIV test or ask for prevention services.

And some may believe that HIV is something that happens only to other people.

But HIV does not discriminate based on age.

This raises another question:

If young people are one of the groups still experiencing new infections, are Nigeria's HIV education programmes communicating with them in ways they actually understand and trust?

The answer may require more than posters in hospitals.

It may require schools, universities, social media platforms, youth organisations, religious institutions and community groups to become part of the prevention conversation.

Stigma: The Invisible Barrier

HIV is a virus, but stigma can be just as damaging.

A person may be willing to take an HIV test but afraid of what others will think if they are seen entering a testing centre.

Someone may know that treatment works but still fear rejection from a partner or family member.

Another person may avoid discussing HIV because they believe that being associated with the disease automatically means they have engaged in immoral behaviour.

These attitudes can discourage testing and treatment.

They can also encourage silence.

And silence can allow infections to remain undiagnosed.

Nigeria's HIV response therefore has to address not only the medical side of the epidemic but also the social environment surrounding it.

The goal should not be to frighten people into testing.

It should be to make testing normal.

It should not be to shame people into safer behaviour.

It should be to provide people with accurate information and accessible prevention options.

The People Who Keep the System Running Much of Nigeria's HIV response depends on people whose work is rarely seen in national statistics.

Community health workers. Counsellors. Peer educators. Volunteers. Healthcare workers. People living with HIV who help others navigate the healthcare system.

When funding disruptions affected community programmes, many of these workers found themselves struggling to maintain services.

In some communities, volunteers stepped in to reconnect patients with healthcare services.

Their work demonstrates something important:

Healthcare does not end at the hospital door.

For many people, particularly those living in vulnerable communities, a community worker may be the person who reminds them to take medication, encourages them to test, explains how PrEP works or helps them return to treatment.

If those community networks disappear, the consequences may not be visible immediately.

But they can eventually appear in missed diagnoses, interrupted treatment and new infections.

The Solution Cannot Be One Thing There is no single solution that will eliminate HIV from Nigeria.

The response has to be a combination of medical, financial, educational and social interventions.

To be continue

“ Families sometimes watched relatives become seriously ill, while misinformation encouraged the belief that HIV was a mysterious disease that could be identified simply by looking at someone.”

FEATURE

Adesuwa road junction flyover in Benin City

More than a bridge, an economic lifeline

FESTUS ALENKHE

For decades, the story of Benin City has been a story of growth, but that growth has come with a familiar pain point for every resident, every trader, and every motorist: the traffic logjam at Adesuwa Road Junction. Today, that story is being rewritten before our very eyes.

The ongoing construction of the flyover at Adesuwa Road Junction is arguably one of the most strategic infrastructure interventions by the administration of His Excellency, Governor Monday Okpebholo. It is not just another project; it is a bold statement that government understands where the shoe pinches.

ON TRAFFIC REDUCTION

Let us be clear on what this junction represents. It is the meeting point for thousands of vehicles daily - those coming from the kings square, GRA, Dumez road, MM Way, Ikpokpan and Warri, Sapele at peak hours will now heave a sigh of relief as what should be a two-minute drive turns into a one-hour ordeal. Workers get to work late, school children are stranded, goods are delayed, and fuel is wasted in endless idling.

The flyover is the permanent answer. Upon completion, it will separate through-traffic from local traffic, ensure seamless vehicular movement, eliminate the chaotic gridlock, and drastically cut down travel time. It will bring sanity, order, and free flow to one of the busiest intersections in Edo South. The era of epileptic traffic at Adesuwa

Junction on Sapele road in Benin city will soon be history.

ON ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Beyond traffic, the economic importance of this flyover is monumental. Benin City is a commercial hub, and Sapele road by Adesuwa Junction is one of its arteries. When traffic is locked there, the entire economy of that axis is on hold.

This flyover will unlock that

economy. It will facilitate the quick movement of goods and services, boost businesses around New Benin Market, Medical Stores, and Upper Mission, and enhance property value in the area. It will reduce vehicle maintenance costs caused by stop-and-go traffic, save man-hours, and improve productivity. Investors look for cities with good road networks and easy mobility; this flyover tells investors that Edo is ready for business.

It is infrastructure that directly puts money back into the pocket of the common man.

ON THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMITMENT OF GOVERNMENT

What is most inspiring is the mood on the street. Unlike the cynicism that usually greets government projects, the people have embraced this one with rare enthusiasm and patience. Market women, commer-

cial drivers, residents and commuters who endure the temporary inconvenience daily, do so with a smile and a sense of ownership. They can see progress. They believe this government will finish what it started. That public confidence is priceless.

That confidence is not misplaced. On site, work is going on steadily and aggressively. What has amazed many observers is that the contractor is working even with the rains. While other construction sites shut down during downpour, work continues at Adesuwa Junction. Piling, earthwork and structural works are ongoing simultaneously. This is diligence at its best.

And this diligence is made possible by one key factor: regular payment of the contractor. The Okpebholo administration has demonstrated uncommon financial discipline and commitment by ensuring the contractor is not owed. When a contractor is paid as and when due, there is no excuse for delay. This is why this project is moving at the speed of light, and why Edo people are confident it will be completed on schedule and not become another abandoned project.

In the final analysis, the Adesuwa Road Junction flyover is more than concrete, iron rods and asphalt. It is about time saved, business boosted, stress reduced, and dignity restored to commuters. It is governance felt in its most practical form.

It is a promise being kept, brick by brick, rain or shine.



ONGOING CONSTRUCTION OF THE ADESUWA FLYOVER BRIDGE

Who decides what Nigerians pay for petrol?

LANRE OGUNDIPE

There is a point at which an explanation for public hardship becomes part of the hardship itself.

For years, Nigerians have been given a familiar catalogue of reasons why petrol must cost more. Global crude prices have risen. The naira has weakened. The subsidy became unaffordable. Refining and logistics have become more expensive. Supply has tightened. The market has been deregulated.

There is truth in some of these explanations. But there is a question they have never satisfactorily answered: how much does each actually contribute to the price Nigerians are asked to pay?

That question has become unavoidable with the latest movement in the price of petrol.

Between August 21 and September 12, Dangote Petroleum Refinery raised its petrol gantry price four times, from 1,165 to 1,185, then 1,200, 1,265 and finally 1,350 per litre. The cumulative increase was 185, or about 15.9 per cent, in 22 days.

But the consumer does not buy petrol at the refinery gate. By September 14, reports from Abuja showed retail prices ranging from about 1,415 to 1,450 per litre, with some major marketers already above 1,400. Prices in Lagos and Ibadan were also rising.

The difference between the refinery gate and the pump is therefore no longer an abstract accounting question. It is money paid by the consumer.

A private refinery is entitled to determine its commercial price. The issue is not that right. The issue is whether successive increases can be traced, with reasonable transparency, to identifiable changes in the cost of producing and supplying a litre of petrol.

That is where the opacity begins.

On September 8, the Major Energy Marketers Association of Nigeria estimated petrol landing cost at 1,311.36 per litre, up from a 30-day average of 1,216.34.

Dangote's gantry price at the time was 1,265. Four days later, it moved to 1,350.

The two figures are not directly interchangeable because an import landing cost and a domestic refinery's gantry price represent different points

in the supply chain. The international benchmark also does not automatically determine the price of domestically refined petrol. But the movement makes the underlying arithmetic impossible to ignore.

What was the refinery's crude acquisition cost? How much of its crude came through domestic supply arrangements? What exchange rate applied? What was the refining and operating cost? What did logistics contribute? What margin was added at the refinery gate? And what accounts for the further movement from the refinery gate to the retail pump?

The public does not have sufficient information to reconstruct the answer.

That is not an accusation against Dangote. It is a transparency problem.

And Dangote is now too important to the Nigerian petroleum market for that problem to be treated casually.

The refinery has changed the country's refining landscape and created a major domestic source of petrol. That is an industrial fact. It does not, however, remove the need to scrutinise its commercial decisions. The greater the market significance of an enterprise, the greater the public interest in

understanding the economic consequences of its decisions.

Dangote should therefore neither be romanticised nor demonised.

It should be examined.

The same principle applies to NNPC.

Here the evidence is even more revealing.

The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative reported that NNPC imported 14.53 billion litres of PMS in 2023 at a recorded supply cost of 6.74 trillion. Revenue was 3.73 trillion, leaving an under recovery of 3.01 trillion.

NNPC has said such spending reflected the gap between the regulated pump price and the actual cost of importing fuel to meet that price. That explanation has never removed the need for independent reconciliation.

The subsidy was formally removed in 2023. Yet a system in which the cost of supplying petrol exceeded the regulated selling price continued to generate a multitrillion naira difference in 2023.

The question is therefore not whether NNPC should be believed or disbelieved. Its figures should be inde-

pendently reconciled.

How much petrol was actually supplied? At what cost? At what selling price? What constituted the under recovery? Who bore it? How was it settled? What part of the mechanism disappeared with subsidy removal and what part survived under another classification?

Until those questions are independently answered, Nigerians cannot be expected to regard the old subsidy controversy as completely closed.

Then came the currency shock.

The 2023 exchange rate reform altered the naira cost of dollar linked petroleum inputs at the same time that subsidy support was being withdrawn. Exchange rate movements therefore became a major component of petrol economics.

But "forex" cannot be permitted to become another explanation that ends the inquiry.

If the naira depreciates, the resulting increase in petrol cost should be calculable. If the naira appreciates, the corresponding benefit should also be traceable. If crude prices rise at the same time, the contribution of each factor should be distinguishable.

Crime

 with Mike Osarogiagbon

8-year-old hospitalised after alleged defilement by 52-year-old in Edo



ASP Eno Ikoedem, Public Relations Officer for Edo state police command addressing journalists in Benin City.

An eight-year-old girl is lying in a hospital bed in Ekpoma, Edo State, after an alleged defilement that has led to the arrest of a 52-year-old man.

The incident reportedly oc-

curred at about 10am on September 7, 2026, before it was reported to the Ekpoma Police Division the following day.

The Edo State Police Command spokesperson, ASP Eno Ikoedem, confirmed the inci-

dent, saying operatives arrested the suspect, identified as Isaac Ohimon.

Ikoedem said the suspect confessed during interrogation.

She added that investigation was ongoing and that Ohimon

would be charged to court upon conclusion of the investigation.

ASP Ikoedem added that investigation was ongoing and that the suspect would be charged to court upon its conclusion.

Police recover loaded beretta pistol hidden in rice bag, nab 28-year-old

CRIME REVIEW

At first glance, it was just another bag of rice sitting quietly in a kitchen.

But when police operatives opened it during a raid, they discovered something far more dangerous than food.

Hidden inside was a purse containing a loaded Beretta pistol and 14 rounds of live 9mm ammunition.

The startling discovery was made in Benin City, Edo State, during a police operation based on credible intelligence.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Edo State Command, ASP Eno Ikoedem, disclosed this to journalists in Benin City on Monday.

She said operatives raided the premises of 28-year-old Collins Aligwekwe at No. 4 Sofia Street, Ovbogie Community, at about 7am on September 17, 2026.

During the search, the officers uncovered the pistol concealed inside the purse and buried in the bag of rice in the kitchen.

Another 28-year-old man, identified as Godstime Erohuomhea, was also arrested at the premises.

The suspects and recovered exhibits are currently in police custody as investigation continues.



The alleged military impostor.

WEEKLY REVIEW

A child allegedly abducted and sexually abused. A gun battle with suspected kidnappers. A pistol hidden inside a bag of rice. And stolen vehicles intercepted on the road.

Those incidents featured prominently in the Edo State

Child abuse, gun battle, stolen cars rock week of police operations in Edo

Police Command's latest account of crime-fighting operations across the state.

As the old Nigerian saying goes, "Every day is for the thief, one day is for the owner of the house." The week's arrests and recoveries provided a striking

backdrop to the saying.

The command said it arrested 10 suspects, neutralised one suspected kidnapper and recovered an AK-47 rifle, a Beretta pistol and 24 rounds of live ammunition during the period under review.

The case involving five fe-

male children is among the most disturbing incidents reported.

Police said they received information on September 12 about the alleged abduction of the children from the Ibillo/Imoga axis of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area.

Drama as Edo police rescue five girls, arrest 50-year-old over alleged sexual abuse

Five female children allegedly abducted from the Ibillo-Imoga axis of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State have been rescued, while police arrested a 50-year-old man, Nicholas Nusa, in connection with the case.

ASP Eno Ikoedem, spokesperson for the Edo State Police Command, disclosed this in Benin City, saying the Command received information on September 12, 2026, about the alleged abduction.

She said police intervention

led to Nicholas Nusa's arrest, while preliminary investigation revealed that the children were allegedly sexually abused.

ASP Ikoedem further said Nicholas Nusa impregnated one of the victims, who later went into early labour and lost the baby following surgery.

She said the five children had since been reunited with their families, while investigation into the case continued.

ASP Ikoedem added that the suspect would be charged to court upon completion of the investigation.

Police recover two stolen cars, arrest drivers in Edo, Delta

The Edo State Police Command has recovered two stolen vehicles in separate operations and arrested two suspects linked to the thefts.

ASP Eno Ikoedem, spokesperson for the Edo Police Command, disclosed this in Benin City.

In the first incident, a Toyota Camry 2.2, registration number BEN 572 BT, was reported stolen on September 7, 2026.

Police said investigation and tracking by the Violent Crime Response Unit (VCRU) led to the arrest of the complainant's driver, identified as Isiaka Suleiman, in Warri, Delta State. The stolen vehicle was also recovered.

The suspect and the vehicle were handed over to the VCRU for further investigation.

Also, operatives of the Igboazuru Division recovered a silver-coloured Toyota Corolla, registration number GGE 675 KR, allegedly stolen from Lagos State.

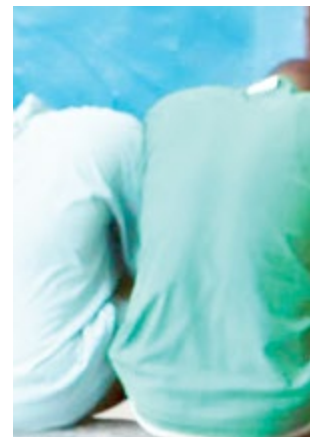
The recovery followed an emergency message received from the Command Control Room, prompting officers to mount a stop-and-search operation at about 2pm on September 17.

Police said the vehicle was intercepted while allegedly being driven to Port Harcourt for sale.

Its number plate had reportedly been removed and concealed inside the vehicle.

The driver, 21-year-old Ahmed Musa Abubakar, was arrested and reportedly confessed to the offence.

The vehicle, belonging to Yikodeen Company Limited, has since been released to the company, while investigation continues.



Suspect

Man, 45, killed over alleged witchcraft in Bauchi

A 45-year-old man, Garba Abdullahi, has been killed in Bauchi State after four men accused him of causing another man's illness through witchcraft.

The suspects, Shitu Dahiru, 25, Magaji Dahiru, 42, Sabi'u Auwalu, 20, and Abbah Abdulzahar, 19, were arrested after the incident was reported at the Gadau Divisional Police Headquarters on Tuesday, September 22, 2026.

The Police Public Relations Officer, SP Nafiu Habib, disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday.

SP Habib said the suspects allegedly attacked Abdullahi while he was returning home from his farm in Dunari village, Atahowa District.

The police said the four men accused Abdullahi of causing the illness of one Sawaida Dahiru before allegedly attacking him with knives and machetes.

Police operatives who re-

sponded to the report evacuated the victim to General Hospital, Azare, for treatment, but a medical doctor later confirmed him dead.

His remains were released to his relatives for burial, while the four suspects were arrested.

The Commissioner of Police, Bauchi State Command, CP Sani-Omolori Aliyu, condemned what he described as the increasing cases of jungle justice and self-help based on superstitious beliefs.

CP Aliyu warned that no person has the right to take another person's life under any guise.

SP Habib said the case has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Bauchi, for further investigation and prosecution.

The command urged residents to provide timely and credible information to the police and desist from taking the law into their own hands.

COLUMN

AI and the new face of exam malpractice

The advent of the internet and other digital technologies has significantly facilitated the development, advancement and widespread adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI), making it possible to access information, enhance learning and solve complex problems with unprecedented ease.

AI has undoubtedly revolutionised virtually every sphere of human endeavour, including education. It can help students conduct research, clarify difficult concepts, improve their writing, analyse information and acquire knowledge beyond the confines of the traditional classroom.

However, like virtually every technological innovation, AI can be a blessing or a curse, depending on how it is deployed. Unfortunately, some Nigerian students are increasingly turning this remarkable technology into a sophisticated instrument for examination malpractice. Instead of using AI to learn, understand and prepare for examinations, some students now use their smartphones to photograph examination questions and send them to AI applications in the hope of downloading instant answers.

This development is disturbing.

The examination hall, which ought to be a place where students demonstrate what they have learnt after months of lectures, tutorials, reading and intellectual preparation, is gradually becoming a technological battlefield. Mobile phones, smart watches and other digital devices are finding their way into examination halls despite prohibitions by educational institutions.

The implication is that a student who has not adequately prepared for an examination may simply take a photograph of a question, upload it to an AI platform and obtain an answer within seconds. What used to require hours of reading, memorisation, comprehension and critical thinking can, in the hands of a dishonest student, become an exercise in technological manipulation.

This is not merely examination malpractice; it represents a dangerous erosion of the very essence of education.

The purpose of an examination is not simply to award marks. It is an instrument of assessment and evaluation. After taking lectures and tutorials, students are expected to demonstrate the extent to which they have acquired knowledge, understood concepts and developed the intellectual capacity required in their chosen disciplines.

When a student obtains answers through an unauthorised source, the resulting score no longer represents his or her actual knowledge. The examination certificate therefore becomes a questionable representation of competence.

This is where the danger lies.

A student who cheats his way through a course may eventually obtain a degree without possessing the knowledge and skills that the qualification presupposes. The consequences become even more frightening when such a person enters a profession where human lives are involved.

Consider the medical profession.

In April 2025, Ambrose Alli Uni-



versity (AAU), Ekpoma, reportedly rusticated 34 students of its College of Medicine for examination malpractice involving the 2022/2023 academic sessions. The offences reported included the use of unauthorised written materials, possession of examination-related answers and other forms of misconduct. In May 2026, the university again sanctioned 27 students in its College of Medicine for examination misconduct and impersonation, with penalties ranging from two to four semesters of rustication.

One cannot contemplate such reports without asking a fundamental question: what happens when a student who cheats through medical examinations eventually becomes responsible for human lives?

The question is not intended to condemn every student involved in malpractice, nor does examination misconduct automatically mean that a person will become an incompetent professional. Rather, it highlights the seriousness of allowing academic dishonesty to undermine professional training.

Imagine a doctor who has obtained marks without genuinely understanding anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, pathology or other essential components of medical education. Imagine such a doctor being confronted with a complicated clinical situation in which there is no smartphone, no examination question to photograph and no AI application to provide an instant answer.

A patient's life cannot be placed on the altar of academic dishonesty.

The same principle applies to engineers, pharmacists, nurses, lawyers, accountants, pilots, architects, journalists and other professionals. Society relies on educational institutions to certify that graduates possess the requisite knowledge and competence

to practise their professions. If examination malpractice becomes widespread, the credibility of those qualifications is inevitably weakened.

This is why the increasing reliance on AI to obtain unauthorised answers during examinations should concern parents, teachers, lecturers, polytechnic, university authorities and government.

There is, however, another dimension to this disturbing development: the apparent decline of the reading culture among some students.

There was a time when students understood that academic success demanded sacrifice. They stayed awake burning the midnight candle, read textbooks, consulted journals, attended lectures, participated in tutorials and discussed difficult subjects with their colleagues and teachers.

Today, some students appear to desire the certificate without necessarily embracing the intellectual discipline required to earn it.

To some, school is a scam! The emphasis is increasingly placed on passing examinations rather than acquiring knowledge. The certificate becomes the destination, while education itself becomes a mere vehicle for obtaining it.

This mentality is dangerous.

University and Polytechnic education should not merely produce graduates; it should produce thinking human beings. Education should cultivate curiosity, discipline, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving ability and intellectual independence. A graduate should be able to confront a problem, interrogate it, analyse available information and develop a rational solution.

Overdependence on AI can undermine these attributes when students use it as a substitute for thinking rather than as an aid to thinking.

AI should be a learning assistant, not a learning substitute.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a student asking AI to explain a difficult mathematical concept, simplify a complex theory, generate practice questions, identify areas requiring further reading or provide feedback on a piece of writing. Indeed, such applications can enrich learning when used responsibly.

The problem arises when the technology becomes a shortcut around intellectual effort.

The student who consistently asks AI to provide answers without attempting to understand the questions may eventually lose the ability to think independently. The danger is not only that such a student may cheat in an examination; it is that he or she may gradually become intellectually dependent on machines.

Technology should augment human intelligence, not replace it.

Educational institutions therefore need to rethink their assessment methods in the age of AI. Traditional examinations remain important, but institutions may need to complement them with oral examinations, presentations, practical assessments, supervised problem-solving exercises, project-based assessments and other methods that require students to demonstrate genuine understanding.

Lecturers also need to understand the changing technological environment. The old assumption that students can only cheat through paper chits or written materials is no longer sufficient. A smartphone can provide access to an enormous reservoir of information within seconds.

Consequently, examination security must evolve alongside technology.

At the same time, students must be taught the ethical use of AI. Banning technology alone may not solve the problem. Students need to understand why academic integrity matters and why obtaining an answer dishonestly is fundamentally different from using technology to improve one's understanding.

Parents also have a role to play. The

unhealthy obsession with grades and certificates must give way to an emphasis on knowledge, character and competence. Parents should encourage their children to study rather than inadvertently rewarding only examination scores.

Government and educational regulators equally have a responsibility to address the wider problem of Nigeria's overemphasis on paper qualifications.

When society places disproportionate value on certificates while paying insufficient attention to demonstrable skills and competence, students may become obsessed with obtaining credentials by whatever means necessary. A qualification should be evidence of learning, not merely evidence of survival in an examination system.

Indeed, the proliferation of technological means of cheating should make us ask a more fundamental question: what exactly are we assessing?

If an examination can be passed by photographing questions and obtaining answers from an AI system, then the problem is not only the dishonest student. It also challenges educational institutions to reconsider how they design assessments in the new technological environment.

AI is here to stay. Attempts to wish it away will not work. The appropriate response is not to demonise Artificial Intelligence but to establish clear ethical boundaries for its use.

Students must understand that there is a profound difference between using AI to learn and using AI to cheat.

The former can empower the mind; the latter can impoverish it.

The ultimate danger of examination malpractice is not merely that a student may be caught, rusticated or expelled. The greater danger is that society may eventually receive professionals who possess certificates but lack the competence those certificates are supposed to represent.

That is why the battle against examination malpractice must go beyond confiscating mobile phones at examination halls. It must address the culture that glorifies grades over knowledge, certificates over competence and shortcuts over hard work.

The examination hall should remain a place where students demonstrate what they know, not what a machine knows.

Artificial Intelligence has opened an extraordinary new frontier for education. Let us therefore use it to make students more knowledgeable, more curious, more analytical and more intellectually independent, rather than making them dependent on machines for answers they ought to know themselves.

The future of education is undoubtedly technological. But technology without ethics can become a menace.

And if we allow examination malpractice to thrive in the age of Artificial Intelligence, we may eventually produce a generation of graduates who have passed examinations but failed to acquire an education.

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



JAMB STUDENTS

**THE NIGERIAN
OBSERVER**
THAT THE PEOPLE MAY KNOW

OBA EWUARE II AT 10

A DECADE OF ROYAL EXCELLENCE

Celebrating the

**10th Coronation Anniversary
& Birthday Anniversary**

of

HIS ROYAL MAJESTY

OMO N'OBA N'EDO UKU AKPOLOKPOLO

OBA EWUARE II, CFR
Oba of Benin

To mark this historic milestone,
The NIGERIAN OBSERVER presents a
Special Commemorative Edition
celebrating a decade of purposeful reign,
cultural preservation, peace and unity.

❖ **BE PART OF THE CELEBRATION** ❖

Place your **Congratulatory & Goodwill Message**
in this special edition.

ADVERT RATES

Page Size	Colour	Black & White
Full Page	₦448,645	₦396,213
Half Page	₦317,770	₦254,238
Quarter Page	₦206,561	₦122,119



SUBMISSION DEADLINE

October 18, 2026



BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES

Marcus Atoe: **08081986842**

Mrs. Doris Igbinigie: **08051177163**

❖ **LONG MAY HE REIGN** ❖

Sports

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

Ahead AFCON tie against Madagascar, new NFF scribe, Ikpeme charges Eagles for victory in Uyo

The Acting General Secretary of Nigeria Football Federation, Dr Emmanuel Ikpeme, has charged

the Super Eagles to go all out and earn victory for Nigerians in Friday's 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying match

against the Barea of Madagascar at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium in Uyo.

"We are back to the familiar surroundings of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State for another qualifying race. It was here in Uyo that the Super Eagles won the tickets to the 2019 and 2025 AFCON finals. The NFF has absolute confidence in the team to run another good race and win the ticket with matches to spare.

"Surely, the only way we can do that is to start with the maximum three points tomorrow, and then with another three points in Bissau on Tuesday. However, since we are taking it one match at a time, the focus now is on Madagascar on Friday. Nigerians are looking forward to victory tomorrow

and I know the Super Eagles will give them joy."

Ikpeme assured that the NFF, with great support of the National Sports Commission, has concluded arrangements for a hitch-free game, as well as seamless movement of the team to Guinea Bissau and back to Nigeria after the Day 2 encounter with the Wild Dogs on Tuesday, 29th September.

To qualify for the 2019 AFCON finals staged in Egypt, Uyo served as the home ground for the Super Eagles as they shot past South Africa, Libya and Lesotho. Ahead of the 2025 finals staged in Morocco, the three-time winners overcame hurdles mounted by Libya, Rwanda and Benin Republic to qualify with a match to spare.



SUPER EAGLES TEAM ARRIVED



MOUSSA NIAKHATÉ

Our World Cup was a failure - Senegal defender admits

Senegal defender Moussa Niakhaté has admitted that the Teranga Lions' World Cup campaign was a failure.

Niakhaté made the admission while stressing the need for Senegal to draw confidence from their status as reigning African champions as they continue their qualification campaign.

"The World Cup did not unfold as we would have wished. We are also African Champions: we must not speak of it in

the past tense," Niakhaté said.

"We must rely on our status during these qualifiers and give ourselves the means to secure qualification.

"Senegal must qualify. We have acknowledged that the World Cup was a failure for us. Now we must turn the page and move forward."

The defender believes Senegal must use their recent continental success as motivation as they seek to secure their place at the next World Cup.

NBBF Congress: Trouble brews over Yola meeting, NSC silent

Questions have been raised over the proposed Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) Congress scheduled to take place in Yola on Friday, with concerns mounting over alleged breaches of provisions of the federation's 2019 Constitution.

The concerns centre on the procedure adopted in convening the Congress, the notice period given to members, the conduct of board meetings and the participation of members of the NBBF Board in the decision to convene the meeting.

Those raising the concerns argue that the National Sports Commission (NSC) should intervene and ensure that the proposed Congress complies fully with the federation's governing statute. Athletics training programs

Article 20.2 of the NBBF Constitution provides for an Ordinary Congress to be held annually, as well as an Elective Congress in accordance with the prescribed constitutional cycle.

However, critics of the current process contend that the federa-

tion has not held a Congress for about three years, which they argue raises questions about compliance with the provision.

Another point of contention is Article 20.4, which provides for at least 21 calendar days' notice of an Ordinary Congress, alongside the circulation of prescribed reports, financial statements, budget and other relevant documents.

According to those challenging the process, the notice for the Yola Congress was sent by email on September 10,

with September 25 fixed as the

date of the meeting.



NPFL: Sporting Lagos stun Enyimba as Rangers, Shooting Stars secure wins

Sporting Lagos recorded the standout result of NPFL Matchday Five after defeating Enyimba FC 3-2 in a thrilling encounter.

Rangers secured a narrow 1-0 victory over Ranchers, while Barau FC defeated Abia Warriors 2-0.

Bendel Insurance also picked up three points with a 2-1 win over Ikorodu City,

while Shooting Stars cruised to a 2-0 victory against Katsina United.

Kwara United edged Nasarawa United 2-1, while Inter Lagos and Kano Pillars played out a 1-1 draw.

There was also a stalemate between Niger Tornadoes and Warri Wolves, who finished 0-0, while Doma United and Plateau United shared the

spoils in a 2-2 draw.

NPFL Matchday Five Results

- Rangers 1-0 Ranchers
- Barau FC 2-0 Abia Warriors
- Enyimba FC 2-3 Sporting Lagos
- Bendel Insurance 2-1 Ikorodu City
- Shooting Stars 2-0 Katsina United.

Basketball: Rivers Hoopers Edge Maktown Flyers in overtime to seal NPBL crown

Rivers Hoopers capped their 2026 Nigeria Premier Basketball League (NPBL) Final Four campaign with a thrilling 92-90 overtime victory over Maktown Flyers at the Basketball Stadium on Niger Street, Port Harcourt.

Having already secured the league title with a game to spare, the Hoopers faced Maktown in a fiercely contested final fixture, with neither side able to establish a decisive advantage during regulation

time. The game ultimately required overtime, where Rivers Hoopers held their nerve to secure a two-point victory and complete an unbeaten Final Four campaign.

The result brought Rivers Hoopers' impressive championship run to a fitting conclusion and secured their seventh NPBL title. The Port Harcourt-based side had entered the Final Four after finishing the Final Eight at the top with a 6-1 record, while Maktown

Flyers also progressed with the same record but finished behind the Hoopers on points difference.

The championship also represented a response to last season's disappointment, when Maktown, then competing as Lagos Legends, defeated Rivers Hoopers 74-72 in the NPBL championship game. This time, however, the Hoopers prevailed in another closely fought encounter to reclaim domestic basketball's biggest

prize.

Rivers Hoopers' championship also carries continental significance, with the title earning the club Nigeria's qualification place for the 2027 Basketball Africa League (BAL). The triumph marks the Hoopers' return to Africa's premier club basketball competition after missing out on the continental stage for a season.

For coach Ogoh Odaudu and his players, the 92-90



DAURAMA FOOTBALL CLUB TEAM

Daurama FC begin training ahead of NNL 2026/27 season

Newly promoted Daurama Football Club of Daura, Katsina State, have officially commenced preparations for the upcoming Nigeria National League (NNL) 2026/27 season, with the club opening camp and beginning player screening.

The Daura-based side has invited active players from different states to participate in screening exercises as the club works to assemble a competitive squad ahead of its debut NNL campaign.

According to the proposed

NNL calendar, the 2026/27 season is scheduled to kick off on October 31, 2026, with registration running from September 14 to October 23 and player licence collection from October 24-30.

The remaining league fixtures are expected to commence on November 7, with the season scheduled to conclude with the Super 4 Tournament from April 14-18, 2027.

The countdown to Daurama FC's NNL journey has officially begun.

FEATURE

Sports

Sadio Mané and a legacy worthy of emulation

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE

There are footballers who leave behind goals, trophies, medals and unforgettable moments in stadiums. There are others whose greatest legacy begins when the stadium lights go off. Sadio Mané belongs increasingly to both categories. His latest investment in Bambali, his hometown in southern Senegal, is a reminder that true greatness is not only measured by what a person achieves for himself, but by what he leaves behind for the people who made his journey possible.

On Saturday, September 19, 2026, Mané picked up a shovel in Kountou-bou, in the municipality of Bambali, and laid the foundation stone for SM10 Agro — an ambitious agro-industrial park rising from the same soil where he was born. Standing beside him as guest of honour was Ousmane Sonko, President of Senegal's National Assembly, alongside Serigne Guèye Diop, Minister of Industry and Trade, local chiefs and the entire Bambali community.

Mané has committed about \$20.4 million — 11.7 billion FCFA — of his own money to the project. SM10 Agro covers 10 hectares of industrial facilities with a planned 500 hectares of plantations — about 78,000 mango trees — and is designed to process mangoes into pulp, dried fruit and mango butter. According to Aminata Tope, Deputy Director of SM10 Agro, the complex will have an annual capacity of 8,500 to 10,500 tonnes and is expected to create more than 1,000 direct jobs when operational.

But perhaps the most important part of Mané's message is not the amount of money involved. It is the philosophy behind the investment: "I want the wealth of our soil to remain here with us." That sentence captures a development philosophy that many African societies desperately need — the idea that local resources should generate local wealth, local jobs and local opportunities.

For years, Africa has exported raw materials and agricultural products only to import finished goods at much higher prices. Farmers grow the crops, somebody else processes them, somebody else packages them, somebody else markets them and somebody else captures much of the value. Mané's mango project attempts to change that equation at a local level by putting production and processing closer together.

This is why SM10 Agro is more than another celebrity investment. It is an attempt to build an economic ecosystem. The project is expected to combine plantations, processing facilities, a training centre and a research and development hub, allowing the mango business to generate value at several stages rather than simply selling the fruit as a raw commodity. The national investment promotion agency, APIX, under its Director General Bakary Séga Bathily, has already confirmed five years of tax and customs exemptions for imported equipment and described it as part of efforts to industrialise outside the main urban centres.

And this is where Mané's story becomes particularly powerful. He did not forget Bambali when football took him away. The village that



SADIO MANÉ LAYING FOUNDATION

produced the boy who eventually became an African champion, Premier League and Champions League winner and one of Africa's greatest footballers remained part of his thinking.

Before the latest agricultural venture, Mané had already invested in community infrastructure in Bambali, including a school, hospital, mosque and petrol station. He has also supported other community needs and opened a bakery.

The hospital carries an especially personal meaning. Mané has previously spoken about the death of his father and the absence of adequate healthcare facilities in his community. He explained that he wanted to build a hospital to give people hope.

But there is an important evolution in his approach. Building a hospital provides a service. Building a school provides education. Building a mosque provides a place of worship. But building an industry can create an economic engine that continues producing opportunities long after the person who established it is gone.

That is the difference between philanthropy and legacy. Philanthropy can solve an immediate problem. Legacy builds institutions, businesses, skills and opportunities capable of solving problems repeatedly. Mané's latest project moves him further in that direction.

Think about the symbolism of a footballer planting mango trees. Football gave Mané international

fame, enormous earnings and the opportunity to play in some of the world's greatest stadiums. Yet instead of allowing all that wealth to remain concentrated around his football career, he is putting some of it into the soil of the village where his own story began.

The project is also responding

to a genuine agricultural problem. Reports indicate that between 30 and 40 per cent of mangoes in the Sédhiou region are lost because of inadequate storage, transportation and processing capacity. SM10 Agro is designed to turn more of that harvest into products that can be stored, processed and sold in wider markets

across Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

The national significance was underlined two days later, on Monday, September 21, when Mané was received by President Bassirou Diomaye Faye at the Presidential Palace to discuss how SM10 Agro fits into Senegal's food sovereignty plan. At the foundation laying, Sonko himself was keen to clarify: "I have no political relationship with Sadio. Sadio Mané is not involved in politics. Right now, football is you. But politics is me." The government, through Sonko, welcomed the initiative and challenged the diaspora to invest in the same way.

There is a lesson here for other African sports stars, business people and political leaders. Real investment is not about building mansions and buying expensive luxury cars in distant cities while your hometown remains poor. It is about putting your resources where your roots are. Mané is showing that you can be a global icon and still be deeply local.

For Nigerian footballers, there is a direct lesson here. Many of our stars deserve commendation for the philanthropy they already do — building houses for their parents, supporting orphanages, paying school fees, sinking boreholes, and helping their former teammates and communities. That generosity matters and should not be dismissed. But Mané's example pushes us to think beyond immediate giving, even while still at the peak of a flourishing career. A borehole provides water today; an agro-processing factory can employ 1,000 people for the next 30 years. Our players have enormous influence, access to capital, and goodwill at home and abroad. They should ask how that influence can be converted into sustainable industries, academies, farms, or factories that will grow their communities long after the final whistle.

Bambali gave Africa Sadio Mané. Now Sadio Mané is trying to give Bambali an industry and put them on the world map. That is a legacy worth copying.



SADIO MANÉ

SPORTS



Ex-Internationals crisis deepens as NANPF demands full COVID-19 relief funds account from Babayaro

The crisis among former Nigerian internationals and stakeholders in the players' union has deepened, with the National Association of Nigeria Professional Footballers (NANPF) demanding a comprehensive account of the disbursement of a N14 million COVID-19 relief fund transferred to former Professional Footballers Association of Nigeria (PFAN) Secretary, Emmanuel Babayaro.

The demand, contained in a formal letter signed by NANPF General Secretary, Comrade Austin Popo, seeks clarification on how the funds were allocated and expended after they were transferred from the union's Unity Bank account. The latest development has raised fresh questions over the management and distribution of the relief fund, amid continuing disagreements involving former players and football

stakeholders. According to NANPF, discrepancies have emerged between the distribution records previously submitted by Babayaro and information available to the association concerning the beneficiaries of the fund. The association specifically noted that the records did not include Harrison Jalla and several former NANPF officials, despite information indicating that disbursements were made

to some of those individuals. Those named by NANPF include former Super Eagles captain Tijani Babangida, Clement Temile, Edema Fuludu, Victor Baribote, Hon. Taju Ajide, Mutiu Adepoku, Tajudeen Disu and Babayaro himself. NANPF said its request was aimed at establishing a clear financial trail for the N14 million and ensuring that its records accurately reflect how

the COVID-19 relief funds were distributed. The association is seeking a complete list of beneficiaries and the amounts allocated to each person, detailed descriptions and justifications for expenses incurred, as well as official records of meetings and decisions that guided the distribution of the funds. The demand comes against the backdrop of continuing

tensions within Nigeria's football administration and among former players, with disputes over welfare, representation and accountability remaining recurring issues. NANPF urged Babayaro to respond promptly, stressing that the requested documentation would enable the association to reconcile its financial records and strengthen accountability to its members.



RIVERS HOOPERS TEAM

Rivers Hoopers reclaim Crown, secure BAL ticket

Rivers Hoopers have reclaimed the Nigeria Premier Basketball League (NPBL) title after completing an unbeaten run in the 2026 Final Four playoffs in Port Harcourt. The KingsMen sealed the championship with a game to spare after defeating Gboko City Chiefs 88-76 on Monday,

before edging Maktown Flyers 92-90 in a thrilling overtime encounter on Tuesday. Rivers Hoopers' title-clinching victory over Gboko City Chiefs was powered by an impressive shooting display, with the Port Harcourt-based side draining 12 three-pointers to secure the 12-point victory.

The triumph marks a return to the top for Rivers Hoopers and further underlines their dominance in Nigerian basketball. The league title also earns Rivers Hoopers a ticket to the 2027 Basketball Africa League (BAL), securing their return to the continental competition after a season-long absence.

NFF to celebrate Moses Simon, the Trojan, as he becomes a centurion

The Nigeria Football Federation has concluded arrangements to honour Super Eagles' ace forward Moses Simon, who will win his 100th cap for Nigeria at senior level if he is featured in Friday's 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying match against Madagascar. The fleet-footed forward played his first match for the Super Eagles on 25th March 2015, and as at today, amassed 99 caps during which he scored 12 goals. In those 99 games, the Super Eagles won 49 times when he was involved, and drew 30 times, while 20 games were lost.

A diligent, dedicated and resilient servant of the beautiful game, Moses Simon has been involved in 64 competitive matches for Nigeria, as well as 35 friendly games. He has featured in a total of 23 matches for Nigeria at the AFCON finals, and played in 22 FIFA World Cup qualifying matches. One of his first matches for Nigeria was the 2018 FIFA World Cup preliminary qualifying fixture against Swaziland, the return leg of which was played in Port Harcourt. After a scoreless draw in Mbabane, the Eagles needed to win to enter the real race for the qual-

ification campaign. The match dragged towards the end before Simon scored direct from a 22-yard free-kick to set Nigeria on the path to a 2-0 win. "I can testify that Moses Simon is an incredible player and a wonderful human being, having related with him at close quarters for several years. He is a patriot to the core, and forever passionate and dedicated to the Nigeria cause. The NFF celebrates him on this special occasion and wish him many more caps with the Super Eagles." NFF's Acting General Secretary, Dr Emmanuel Ikpeke, said on Thursday.

Anthony Joshua vs Tyson Fury Confirmed for December 11 in Cardiff

Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury will finally meet in a long-awaited all-British heavyweight showdown on December 11 at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, Wales. The blockbuster bout was officially confirmed yesterday, ending years of negotiations and speculation surrounding a potential meeting between the two former world heavyweight champions. Promoter Turki Alalshikh confirmed that Fury and Joshua will square off on Friday, December 11, with the fight to be streamed live globally on Netflix. The announcement brings an end to uncertainty over the venue after the fight had previously been linked with potential locations in the United States and London. Cardiff's Principality Stadium was eventually selected to host the contest, providing a return to the United Kingdom

for one of the most anticipated heavyweight fights involving British boxers in recent years. Fury, who has a professional record of 36 wins, two defeats and one draw, with 25 knockouts, returns to the biggest stage after victories over Arslanbek Makhmudov and Mariusz Wach in 2026. Joshua, meanwhile, holds a

30-4 record with 27 knockouts and secured victories over Jake Paul in December 2025 and Kristian Prega earlier this year. The December meeting will be the first professional fight between Fury and Joshua, despite the pair spending years being linked with a potential blockbuster clash.



TYSON FURY AND ANTHONY JOSHUA