



How We'll Tame Post-Primary Rancour in ADC, Defeat APC – Salihu Lukman, Ex-APC Chief

PG 7

Nigeria's Public Debt Stock Climbs to N159.28trn in Q4 2025 – NBS

PG 8

2027: Count Us Out of Ibadan Opposition Summit's Resolutions- NNPP Faction

PG 9

Police Reject N100m Bribe, Launch Investigation into Syndicate Behind Train Derailments

PG 14

"I Will Show Him Pepper" – Verydarkman Fires At Sowore

PG 2

As With Atiku, Jonathan Quiet as Obi, Igbo Leaders Visit for "Consultations"

● Former President Welcomes Obi, But Reticent Over Politics of 2027



From left: Former Minister of Health, Prof. Isaac Adewole, former INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, former Minister of Interior, Gen. Abdulrahman Danbazau, former Senior Special Assistant to the President on National Assembly Matters (Senate), Ita Enang, and former Governor of Enugu State, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi, during the opening session of the induction ceremony for ambassador-designates in Abuja yesterday.

Orji Kalu, Reps Deputy Speaker, Kalu, Fight Dirty Over Control of Abia APC

PG 7

■ Rival Thank-You Messages to Tinubu Expose Power Struggle Ahead of 2027 Governorship Race



Soft Sell

...with Uche Agholor



● VeryDarkMan



● Sowore

“I Will Show Him Pepper” – Verydarkman Fires At Sowore

Known for his audacity and outspoken persona, Martins Otse was in court on 27 April 2027 alongside Linus Williams Ifejirika, and his remarks afterwards have once again stirred conversations.

Speaking to the press, VeryDarkMan maintained that he holds no personal grudge against BLord, but insisted the matter has

moved beyond a private dispute.

According to him, he might have ordinarily considered dropping the impersonation case, but the intervention of Omoyele Sowore changed the dynamics.

In a statement laced with defiance, he suggested the case would continue, not just as a legal battle, but as a matter of principle, to prove a point.

Sowore, however, offered a markedly different tone. Responding to the threat, he said he remains prepared to stand in the line of fire if it means others do not suffer. He also dismissed the idea of exchanging words with VeryDarkMan, noting that with reconciliation reportedly reached and the matter no longer actively pursued by the court, his interest has always been peace.

Too Close for Comfort? Viral Video of Charles Born and Lydia Nze Gets Nigerians Talking



A viral video involving Nollywood actor Charles Born and actress-producer Lydia Lawrence Nze has set social media buzzing, with Nigerians sharply divided over what many have described as “too much chemistry” in public.

As expected, every major Lagos event comes with its own viral subplot, and the recent Big Brother Naija wedding celebration proved no exception.

In clips making the rounds online, the duo was seen sharing moments some viewers considered unusually intimate, especially after many pointed out that Lydia is married with children.

Just like that...The internet became relationship police.

Reactions poured in, with critics calling the interaction inappropriate, while others dismissed the outrage as overreach and projection. What has made the story even more interesting, however, is that both actors appear entirely unbothered.

If anything, they seem amused. The pair have reportedly dropped playful comments under posts about the controversy, seemingly mocking the intensity of public reactions.

Which, of course, has only fueled the conversation, because in celebrity culture, nothing keeps a story alive like stars refusing to explain themselves.





“I Will Marry You Is Not Marriage” – Eucharika Anunobi Warns Single Ladies

In a world where many things once frowned upon have become normalised, veteran Nollywood actress and preacher Eucharika Anunobi has sparked fresh debate with a stern warning to single women.

The actress advised young ladies to be cautious of men who seek sexual pleasure while disguising their intentions as marriage.

According to her, promises are not proof.

“Engagement is not marriage. ‘I will marry you’ is not marriage,” she stressed, insisting that any man serious about commitment should follow the proper path and approach a woman’s family.

For Eucharika, words without action are simply romance in disguise.

Expectedly, her comments have split opinions.

While some hailed her message as timeless counsel for young women, others argued that modern relationships cannot always be boxed into traditional expectations, but as usual with Eucharika Anunobi, a simple warning has become a full blown debate.



Do Good Work or Go Home” — Apostle Johnson Suleman Sparks Debate With 2027 Remarks

A video of the General Overseer, Apostle Johnson Suleman made the rounds on April 27, though this time it was not for a fiery sermon or revival message, but for pointed political commentary.

In the viral clip, the cleric questioned why the current administration should begin talking about 2027 reelection campaigns when many Nigerians, according to him, are worse off than they were before 2023.

He cited rising insecurity, growing incidents of banditry, kidnapping and terrorism, alongside the surge in fuel prices and the value of the dollar against

the naira, as signs of deepening hardship.

Driving home his point, Suleman argued that the strongest campaign for any government is performance, not promises.

His warning was blunt: if leaders have done well, the people will reward them with another term. If they have failed, they should go home, not return asking for fresh mandates.

The remarks have since stirred conversations among Nigerians, with many debating his criticism and broader concerns about governance ahead of the 2027 political season.

Intimate Affairs: Assisted Fatherhood

By Funke Egbemode

If there is a marital sin any wife is adjudged guilty even before she makes her case, it is the one where she passes off another man's child as her husband's. Nobody really cares why any woman should or would do it. She's just guilty, should be sentenced and there should be no room for appeal. As much as I plead the case of women, even I won't take that brief. I think it is taking biological advantage of a man, a husband who trusts you. I think it is also foolish to think wishing a problem away will actually make it go away. And who really gets away with tempting fate that way, anyway? Singing while sitting on a keg of gunpowder is extreme foolishness.

I think swapping babies, paternity swap, whatever tag we choose for it is a sin of extreme infidelity and I hear it is becoming rampant. Indeed, a marriage counsellor told me that with the kind of stories she hears, there are more guilty women than there are innocent ones these days. Damning, damnable.

A friend even stretched it further by saying he thinks many first-borns have swapped paternity. Of course, I told him to cover his mouth or I'd cover it for him. But then would covering his mouth stem this epidemic that is spreading for all kinds of reasons? Yes, one gets to hear really weird stories that makes it unreasonable to ignore this mean trend.

A couple discovers in the course of their search for a child that the 'culprit' is the man. He is long and strong but he fires only blank bullets.

According to my friend, when a young woman is dating two men and sleeping with both without protection, chances of her handing over Oba goddess' child to Osun goddess is high. Here is how;

Double-dealing girl, let's call her Tito, has two boyfriends, one of whom she hopes to promote to husband in no distance future. Of course, she loves one more than the other and really wishes he's the one who'll pop the question. He's sexy, fair, fine and fun to be with. The second guy is solid, well-built in every way but he's not really the one Tito would prefer as husband. She continues to sleep with both. The solid guy gets more serious, the fun, sexy one just wants more fun. No commitment. Then she misses her period. She knows the fun guy is responsible but he'd told her several times that he had no intention of settling down in marriage anytime soon and no girl, nothing, would change his plans. So Tito counted her teeth with her tongue and did the needful paternity swap. She 'gifted' one man's seed to another and with a smile, she walked down the aisle in a frothy white dress and took her vows before men and God.

How do such women feel, every morning, everyday especially the first time they see the swapped baby's birth certificate? Do their hearts thud in their chests when the deceived daddy carries the baby for the first time and says welcome son or welcome my daughter. What kind of tensed life is that, living in fear of the truth coming out one day? And those truths often come out, though many women have not been found out. Yet.

There are also those women who think in their infinite wisdom that paternity swap is doing their husbands a favour. They do it to rescue their husbands' manhood. You are lost, right? Here is how that one works.

A couple discovers in the course of their search for a child that the 'culprit' is the man. He is long and strong but he fires only blank bullets. His fine and fertile wife, however, does not want to leave him to his fate. Women are mushy-mushy like that, many times thinking with their hearts instead of their heads. So, she embarks on a rescue mission but instead of going to a sperm bank and doing the legit thing, she goes to the sperm black market. She sleeps with a stranger, gets pregnant (of course, it is called timed sex) and the couple has a son or daughter nine months later. The only snag is sperm procured from black market almost always ensures the couple do not live happily long after procurement. The man may become resentful. The woman may become arrogant. She may start to threaten to take her son away;

'You should be grateful to me.'



Funke Egbemode

'Keep behaving like that and you'd never see this boy again.' And he, all resentful will retort: 'You can take your bastard out of my house. I don't even know where you brought him from.' 'I will not die just because I don't have a child' The sperm black market option is the most dangerous one for a waiting couple. It is extreme foolishness for a woman to opt for black market sperm just to save her husband's face. Even if they swear to an oath in the deadliest shrine in the land, their flesh will creep in regularly to remind them of what they did. Oaths do not stop people from being unhappy, do they? And whose child then will the procured sperm child be if things fall apart? Now, let's look at a case of accidental paternity swap. Sodiq and Tokunbo got married at a quiet but classy wedding. They were the ideal couple, successful and decent. Until the devil introduced the

no-child clause into their marriage. The tension and pressure was gradual but it soon came from everywhere. Everybody was asking questions at the same time and as usual, furtive accusing fingers were being pointed at Tokunbo. You know how it is; if a marriage is childless, lynch the woman. But in this case Sodiq was not just the prime suspect, he was the only suspect. Unproductive firing. When Sodiq finally accepted, he would not be able to ever fertilize Tokunbo's eggs no matter how many hours he put on the job, he went all macho about it.

'No, I won't go to sperm bank and bring another man's child into my home'

'And no, I won't adopt. What will everybody say, think of me? How will I face my mother, your mother, my friends?'

What followed, for Tokunbo, was beyond trauma. Her husband was uncooperative. Both parents were running up and down her house proffering solutions that were everything from outlandish to outright bizarre but she stood solid with her husband. She resolved that whatever she was going to do, exposing Sodiq's status would not be an option. However, the tension and pressure turned to heat, unbearable heat which became scorching heat when her best friend, a doctor, the only one she'd always confided in warned her about biological clock and ageing eggs. She cried herself to sleep almost every night. She worked late so she could sleep. And then her mother-in-law (why does it always have to be a mother-in-law and not father-in-law?) told her to 'shift' so her son could get her grandchildren from another woman. Sodiq's sister urged her on too.

What? Tokunbo felt like shaking the old woman until she stroked out. To avoid committing murder, she decided to attend a professional conference she had earlier decided against.

Of course, half the time, Tokunbo's head was somewhere else. Mama's words kept reverberating in her head. She was staring into her coffee cup when someone tapped her and asked if the coffee cup had turned into a crystal ball. Zak, shortened from Razak, still as handsome as ever, the man who made her a woman many years ago, stood there, his disarming smile as potent as ever. Tokunbo broke down and spilled the beans. She was vulnerable and exhausted from holding it all in. She just wept and wept. Zak consoled her, innocently at first, and then things got out of hand. Old flame sparked into a ball of fiery passion. Tokunbo did her best to resist. It was just not her day of strength. It was not planned and so nobody used protection. Both Tokunbo and Zak regretted it as soon as it was over. But what was done was done.

Tokunbo found out she was pregnant four weeks later. Bittersweet news. News she could not share with Sodiq or even Zak. This was her business she moved out while Sodiq was away on business, asked for transfer to another branch.

Everybody thought Tokunbo had bowed to pressure and taken mama's advice to 'shift'. Let's not go into details of the search for Tokunbo and move straight to three years later when Sodiq's sister saw Tokunbo entering a crèche with a set of twins in Calabar. Yes, Calabar and yes, Tokunbo had a set of twins from that chance encounter with Zak. One quickie and two babies. Sodiq's sister quickly called her brother. They calculated the age of the twins and concluded that Tokunbo ran away with Sodiq's babies.

Noise, accusations, tears, curses followed. Sodiq who had remarried without a child still, jumped at the chance to be called 'Baba Ibeji' (father of twins) and joined the furor. Until Tokunbo said, 'Fine, let's do a DNA.'

Yes, Sodiq's family chorused.

'No', Sodiq said.

He knew the scores.

Nothing is cut-and-dried when it comes to matters of the heart. It is easier to judge why women do what they do. The shoes of childlessness are better understood by those who have worn them. Still, I think handing over the fruits of the labour of one man to another unsuspecting man is sad and bad.

• Egbemode (egbemode3@gmail.com)



Published by Cicero Communications Ltd., 1142 Cadastral Zone, Off Ajose Adeogun Street, Utako, Abuja.
All correspondence to: keepingthemhonestng@gmail.com, Website: www.keepingthemhonest.ng

OUR TEAM

PUBLISHER:
IMA NIBORO
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER:
OLUDARE AKINTUNDE
CHAIRMAN, EDITORIAL BOARD
DR. OBIORA CHUKWUMBA
EDITOR:
ORKULA SHAAGEE
NEWS EDITOR:
JEREMY FREGENE
SOFT SELL EDITOR:
UCHE AGHULOR
COPY EDITOR:
EMMANUEL OLUGUA

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER:
FRANCA OMAGBO ADOLE
ADMIN MANAGER:
DAVID JOHNSON DAGOGO
HEAD COMPUTER/GRAPHICS:
DARE FAITH ADEBIYI
HEAD, ICT & ONLINE:
ALHASSAN KPAKI
DIRECTORS:
ABAYOMI AKINTUNDE,
SIMI ALADA & LAZARUS PETERS

As With Atiku, Jonathan Quiet as Obi, Igbo Leaders Visit for “Consultations”

By Franklin Adole

Former President Welcomes Obi, But Reticent Over Politics of 2027

Former President Goodluck Jonathan on Monday held a closed-door meeting with frontline 2027 presidential aspirant and former Labour Party candidate, Peter Obi, alongside a delegation of prominent Igbo leaders at his Maitama residence in Abuja, maintaining a characteristically quiet stance after the engagement.

The meeting, which lasted about two hours, was attended by key South-East figures, including former Enugu State governor, Okwesilieze Nwodo; former Imo State governor, Achike Udenwa; former Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development

Commission (NDDC), Onyema Ugochukwu; and Senators Ben Obi and Victor Umeh, among others.

A statement issued by Ibrahim Umar, spokesman for the Obi Media Team, said the visit formed part of Obi's ongoing consultations with former national leaders as he explores his 2027 presidential ambition.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Obi said the delegation was at Jonathan's residence for consultations and exchange of views, stressing that no request for endorsement was made.

“We're not talking about endorsement yet. When I become a candidate, I will come back for endorsement. We are here to consult with him,” Obi said.

He disclosed that Jonathan emphasised the need for free, fair, and credible elections.

“There can't be a one-party system. He cannot support such a thing,” Obi said, adding that Jonathan wished the country well.

Beyond these remarks relayed by Obi, Jonathan did not publicly comment on the meeting, a posture similar to his earlier engagement with former Vice President Atiku Abubakar

months ago, where he also refrained from making detailed public statements.

In a personal statement following the visit, Obi described the discussions as “frank and thoughtful,” centred on the 2027 general elections and the broader future of Nigeria.

He highlighted the need to reposition the country towards unity, security, stability, productivity, and inclusive governance, amid what he described as economic hardship, rising insecurity, and deepening social divisions.

Obi stressed that the 2027 elections should be seen as a

critical opportunity to reset Nigeria's trajectory, calling for leadership defined by competence, character, capacity, and compassion.

He also advocated a shift from a consumption-driven economy to a production-driven model, noting that Nigeria's resources must be effectively harnessed for national development.

“The elections must be about the Nigerian child who deserves quality education, the struggling entrepreneur who needs a conducive environment, and citizens who desire a secure and functional nation,” Obi said.

He expressed confidence that

Orji Kalu, Reps Deputy Speaker, Kalu, Fight Dirty Over Control of Abia APC

Rival Thank-You Messages to Tinubu Expose Power Struggle Ahead of 2027 Governorship Race

By Our Reporter

A simmering power tussle has erupted within the Abia State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC), as Senator Orji Uzor Kalu and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu, issued conflicting public messages, each claiming presidential backing to lead the party's structure in the state.

In a Facebook post, former Abia State governor and serving senator, Orji Uzor Kalu, expressed gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for what he described

as a directive assigning him oversight of party affairs in the state.

“I sincerely thank His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for the confidence reposed in me and the marching order to coordinate activities in Abia State in respect of our great party, the APC,” he wrote.

Kalu added that, as the most senior former governor in the state, he would work with stakeholders to ensure the emergence of broadly acceptable candidates capable of securing victory for the party and supporting the President's re-election.

However, in a swift and pointed response, Deputy Speaker Benjamin Kalu—widely seen as a governorship hopeful in Abia—offered a sharply different account of the President's directive, suggesting that control of party affairs in the state rests with him.

“Thank you... President Bola Ahmed Tinubu... for insisting that Governors should handle party issues in their states with APC Governors, while the highest-ranking political office holders like the Deputy Speaker take care of the affairs in Abia State,” he wrote.

Benjamin Kalu further claimed that the President had reaffirmed this arrangement during a recent engagement, adding that the model had been consistently applied from ward to state congresses and had strengthened party unity.

“We are ready to win elections in Abia State... We will deliver Abia votes overwhelmingly,” he stated.

The conflicting claims by both men—long seen as political allies—have laid bare an intensifying struggle for control of the APC structure in Abia, with both camps projecting authority derived

from the presidency.

The development is seen as a prelude to a broader contest ahead of the 2027 elections, particularly as Benjamin Kalu positions himself for a possible governorship bid, while Orji Uzor Kalu seeks to retain strategic influence over the party's machinery in the state.

Despite both figures framing their positions as aligned with the President's vision, their divergent interpretations underscore growing internal tensions within the Abia APC over leadership, structure, and the control of its political future.

How We'll Tame Post-Primary Rancour in ADC, Defeat APC — Salihu Lukman, Ex-APC Chief

By John Paul

Achieftain of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) and former North West stalwart of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Lukman Salihu, has outlined how the opposition party plans to manage post-primary rancour and present a united front against the ruling party ahead of the 2027 presidential election.

Speaking on ARISE TV, Salihu said the ADC is developing a “collegiate system” designed to ensure that all aspirants remain part of a collective leadership structure, regardless of who emerges as the party's presidential candidate.

“The new framework we are

trying to put together is a collegiate framework. It is not a framework where one person will be the winner of everything,” he said.

According to him, the model is aimed at replacing winner-takes-all politics with a team-based approach to governance, where decisions are taken jointly and no single individual dominates power.

“Our leaders are committed to ensure that if we produce the next government, it is not going to be like an emperor presiding over an empire. It will be a collegiate team spirit,” Salihu added.

The move comes amid heightened contestation within opposition ranks, with supporters of Peter Obi, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, Atiku Abubakar and

Rotimi Amaechi pushing different ambitions. However, Salihu dismissed concerns that such rivalry could fracture the party.

“What you are seeing is contestation. When you have politics without contestation, then it is no longer politics,” he said.

He stressed that the ADC's strategy is to keep all aspirants invested in the process, even after the primaries.

“One person will emerge, but will emerge as part of a team, not someone who defeats others and pushes them out of the race,” he said.

Salihu expressed confidence that key figures would remain within the party fold after the primaries, noting that the collegiate structure would discourage

defections and foster unity.

“I do not see him (Amaechi) walking away if someone else emerges victorious. He will remain part of the same collegiate system,” he stated.

Beyond internal cohesion, Salihu said the ADC is also positioning itself to challenge and defeat the APC, which he criticised for drifting from its founding ideals.

“To see where the APC is today is quite disappointing. Instead of parties regulating elected officials, elected officials now regulate parties,” he said.

He added that restoring internal party discipline and strengthening institutional structures are central to the ADC's alternative.

On policy direction, Salihu

disclosed that the party has already adopted a manifesto developed by a 50-member committee, focused on citizen-centred governance and addressing key national challenges.

He acknowledged that legal and internal issues have delayed its public presentation but expressed confidence that the process would soon be concluded.

Salihu maintained that participation in the coalition remains voluntary, respecting the decisions of those yet to join, while expressing optimism that the opposition would ultimately rally behind a single candidate.

“We are ready to confront the situation as it is, and we believe the Nigerian people will make the right choice at the end,” he said.



From left: Technical Assistant to the Ministry of Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment (MCCTI), Dr Olamide Okulaja, Permanent Secretary, MCCTI, Mr Babatunde Onigbanjo, Lagos State Commissioner for MCCTI, Mrs Folashade Ambrose-Medebem, General Manager, Lagos State Consumer Protection Agency (LASCOPA), Mr Afolabi Solebo, and Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on MCCTI, Mrs Hauwa Adeeyo-Orekoya, during a news conference to announce the launch of the Lagos State Industrial Policy (LSIP) 2025-2030 in Lagos yesterday.

Edun's Tenure Under Review, Reserves Signal Stability at \$48.65bn

Economic experts have offered mixed assessments of the tenure of former Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, even as Nigeria's external reserves stood at \$48.65 billion, a level analysts say strengthens short-term economic resilience.

The experts, speaking in Abuja and Lagos, also outlined priority areas for the new Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Taiwo Oyedele, who assumed office on April 24 following a cabinet reshuffle.

They generally agreed that Edun's tenure was marked by macroeconomic stabilisation and tighter fiscal discipline, but noted that improvements in stability did not significantly ease pressure on households.

Dr Gloria Phillips, a development economist, said stabilisation measures were visible, particularly in fiscal coordination, but inflation remained a major constraint.

"Stabilisation policies were evident, but transmission to household welfare was weak," she said, adding that exchange rate stability and investor confidence should be immediate priorities for the new minister.

Mr Simon Audu, an economist, said reforms under Edun provided a foundation for long-term growth but stressed that policy consistency remains critical.

He added that the business environment improved modestly, while calling for stronger support for small and medium enterprises to drive job creation.

Miss Lydia Emerson, a public finance expert, said debt management frameworks improved during the period but urged further action to reduce debt servicing costs and expand non-oil revenue.

She also called for comprehensive tax reforms to widen the revenue base, simplify administration,

and improve compliance.

Across the board, the experts said the incoming minister must prioritise inflation control, economic diversification, and stronger social protection measures to sustain recent gains.

In a related development, analysts commended the Federal Government for maintaining external reserves at \$48.65 billion, describing it as a buffer against global economic shocks.

Dr Ayo Teriba, Chief Executive Officer of Economic Associates, said the reserve position reflects resilience despite global uncertainty and domestic pressures.

He noted that exchange rate stability and a relatively firm stock market indicate cautious investor confidence, but warned that vulnerable households still require targeted support amid high energy costs.

Dr Muda Yusuf, Chief Executive Officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise,

said the reserves provide about ten months of import cover, strengthening Nigeria's external position despite global headwinds.

He cautioned that geopolitical tensions and shifting investor sentiment could trigger capital outflows, placing pressure on reserves.

Yusuf also noted that external reserves are often deployed to meet debt obligations and statutory payments, underscoring the need for prudent fiscal management.

Data from the Central Bank of Nigeria shows reserves declined from \$50.03 billion on March 11, 2026, to \$48.65 billion by April 16, reflecting a \$1.38 billion drop over five weeks.

Analysts say the combination of a policy transition at the finance ministry and relatively strong reserves places the economy in a stable but sensitive position, where inflation control, investor confidence, and policy continuity will shape the next phase of economic management.

Nigeria's Public Debt Stock Hits N159.28trn in Q4 2025 – NBS

Nigeria's public debt stock increased from N153.29 trillion (103.94 billion dollars) in the third quarter of 2025 to N159.28 trillion (110.97 billion dollars) in Q4 2025.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said this in its Nigerian Domestic and Foreign Debt Report for Q4 2025, released in Abuja on Monday.

The report said that Nigeria's public

debt stock, which included external and domestic debts, grew by 3.90 per cent on a quarter-on-quarter basis.

It said that total external debt stood at N74.43 trillion, while domestic debt was N84.85 trillion within the period.

The report said that the share of external debt to total public debt (in Naira value) stood at 46.73 per cent in Q4 2025, while the share of domestic debt to

total public debt was 53.37 per cent."

In a breakdown by states, the bureau said that Lagos state recorded the highest domestic debt of N1.22 trillion in Q4 2025, followed by Rivers with N378.81 billion.

The report showed that Jigawa recorded the lowest domestic debt with N1.60 billion, followed by Ondo with N8.42 billion.

The NBS said that Lagos state also recorded the highest external debt in Q4 2025, with 1.17 billion dollars, followed by Kaduna state with 684.29 million dollars.

"The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) recorded the lowest external debt in Q4 2025 with 26.80 million dollars, followed by Zamfara with 41.93 million dollars," the report said.

2027: Count Us Out of Ibadan Opposition Summit's Resolutions - NNPP Faction

The New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), under the leadership of Dr Agbo Major, has distanced itself from the resolutions reached at the opposition political parties' summit held in Ibadan, Oyo State, last Saturday.

Major, who spoke at a news conference on Monday in Abuja, said the party was neither represented nor officially involved in the coalition gathering.

He stressed that the presence of some expelled members of the party at the meeting should not be misconstrued as participation by the NNPP.

"The NNPP, as a registered political party, wishes to categorically distance itself from the just-concluded opposition parties' summit held in Ibadan.

"None of the recognised leaders of our great party attended that gathering, nor was the party represented in any official capacity," he said.

He cautioned the coalition leadership

against allowing individuals he described as impostors to use the party's name for relevance or political advantage.

Major also disclosed that the party's ongoing electronic membership registration exercise, launched two weeks ago, had recorded significant progress nationwide.

According to him, the party has commenced a comprehensive review of the exercise involving key stakeholders, including aspirants, zonal and state chairmen, to improve efficiency and transparency.

"Our goal remains to build a credible, technology-driven political institution that reflects the aspirations of Nigerians," he said.

Major said the party recently met with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and requested the upload of the duly recognised National

Working Committee (NWC) on its official portal in line with subsisting court judgments.

He warned that failure by INEC to comply with court orders could compel the party to join calls for the removal of its chairman in the interest of democracy.

The NNPP faction also condemned what it described as impersonation and misrepresentation involving an alleged letter to INEC by Dr Ahmed Ajuji, whom it claimed is no longer a member of the party.

Major said that court judgments, including those delivered by courts in Abia, the FCT and the Court of Appeal in Owerri, had affirmed the dismissal of some former members, including Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso and others associated with the Kwankwasiya group.

He maintained that the judgments remained valid and binding, adding that the party would not hesitate to

initiate legal action against individuals parading themselves as members or representatives of the NNPP.

The faction further said it had submitted its schedule of activities for the 2027 general elections to INEC and urged the commission to enforce all relevant court rulings without delay.

Major reiterated the party's commitment to internal democracy, rule of law and credible leadership ahead of the next elections.

A coalition of opposition parties, at the end of its Ibadan summit weekend, resolved to work towards presenting a single presidential candidate to challenge the ruling All Progressives Congress in 2027.

In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the coalition said the proposed consensus candidate would be jointly agreed upon and supported by participating opposition parties.



L-R: Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, Dr. Binyerem C. Ukaire, Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, and Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Nigeria, Amb. Yousef Bin Mohammed Al-Balawi, during a courtesy visit to the Minister, yesterday in Abuja.

Sanwo-Olu Endorses Deputy Hamzat for Lagos Governorship Election

The Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has endorsed his deputy, Kadri Hamzat, as the

All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for the 2027 governorship election in the state.

Sanwo-Olu endorsed him at Lagos House, Marina, alongside members of the state executive council and APC leaders.

Also present were all the 57 local government chairmen, as well as local council development area chairmen.

He said Hamzat has the capacity to run for the state because of his vast knowledge and experience.



Lookman Recovers from Abductor Strain, Boosts Atletico Madrid Champions League Hopes

Atletico Madrid have received a massive boost leading up to Wednesday's home leg of the UEFA Champions semifinal against Arsenal after Ademola Lookman returned to full team training yesterday.

Lookman has missed his team's

last two La Liga games, no thanks to an abductor complaint from the recent Copa del Rey final against Real Sociedad.

The player said he felt some pains around his abductor and so was replaced during the cup final.

Atleti have since made him train

apart from the rest of the squad as a precaution.

He is now expected to play a part against his hometown club Arsenal on Wednesday night.

'Mola' has scored seven goals and made four assists since his arrival from Italian club Atalanta in January.

Cowrie, Barewa Headline Strong Field for 2026 Atlantic Rugby Sevens

Top clubs and state-backed teams in the Nigerian rugby circuit have commenced intense preparation as they gear up for the 2026 edition of the Atlantic Rugby Sevens, one of Nigeria's premier rugby competitions.

Set for May 2 at Rugby School Nigeria, Eko Atlantic, Lagos, the tournament will once again bring together some of the country's finest talents. In the men's category, Cowrie RFC of Lagos, Barewa RFC of Kano, Racing RFC of Lagos, and Nigeria Police RFC headline a strong and competitive lineup.

The women's category will

feature Nigeria Police RFC, Delta State Women's team, and Edo Women's RFC, highlighting the steady growth and increasing competitiveness of women's rugby in the country.

Beyond the race for silverware, the Atlantic Rugby Sevens continues to serve as a vital platform for talent development and elite competition. It offers players the chance to test themselves against quality opposition, refine their skills, and gain exposure in the fast-paced sevens format.

Adding further prestige to this year's event is the expected presence

of 2024 Olympic gold medallist Aaron Grandidier-Nkanang, who plays as a wing or fullback for Top 14 side Pau and the French national team. His participation is set to bring global attention and valuable experience to the tournament.

More broadly, the competition reflects a growing ambition to position Nigeria as an emerging force in global rugby and a hub for sports innovation in Africa. With increasing participation, improved organisation, and rising standards, the Atlantic Rugby Sevens is steadily establishing itself as a flagship event on the nation's sporting calendar.



Agbaje Claims WBA Africa Title, Misses Knockout Bet

Taiwo 'Esepo' Agbaje claimed the WBA Africa lightweight title with a unanimous decision over Tosin 'Sojar Boy' Osaigbovo at a packed Indoor Sports Hall, Surulere, Lagos.

The bout delivered drama, as Agbaje fought relentlessly in spite of boldly predicting a seventh-round knockout before the contest.

Agbaje forfeited his N2 million wager after failing to stop Osaigbovo in the seventh round, a prediction he had publicly declared before the fight.

In a show reminiscent of Muhammad Ali, Agbaje named the decisive round in advance and staked part of his purse on the outcome.

The contest, however, went the full 10-round distance.

Agbaje dominated much of the fight, trading punches evenly with Osaigbovo, as judges returned a unanimous verdict in his favour.

The electrifying encounter thrilled a capacity crowd, with fans filling every seat and standing in aisles throughout the contest.

At the final bell, judges confirmed Agbaje as the new champion, extending his unbeaten record to 19-0.

In spite of the victory, the anticipated

knockout never materialised, costing him the N2 million wager.

The charged atmosphere reflected both fighters' popularity, with sustained cheers echoing across the arena from start to finish.

Osaigbovo added flair, repeatedly sticking out his tongue during exchanges, drawing loud reactions from the crowd.

The bout was promoted by De Lad's Boxing Promotion and sanctioned by the Nigeria Boxing Board of Control (NBBofC).

Promoter, Wahid Alabi, described the event as a landmark moment for Nigerian professional boxing.

He said, "The turnout validates the long wait to match these two fighters."

Tunji Aderibigbe, Ariya Networks Director of Production, said, "The event exceeded expectations and strengthens our commitment to investing in Nigerian boxing."

NBBofC Secretary-General, Remi Aboderin, said the contest showcased the board's developmental strides.

"This was a fine advertisement for professional boxing in Nigeria.

"Two unbeaten fighters, a full house and a clean contest — that is what we aim to deliver," he said.



NPFL Shifts Ikorodu City vs Wikki Tourists Clash to May 5

The Nigeria Premier Football League, NPFL, has postponed the matchday 36 encounter between Ikorodu City and Wikki Tourists.

The encounter, which was initially scheduled for Sunday, 3rd May, will now be played on Tuesday, 5th May 2026.

The match was postponed owing to the Lagos State Federation Cup final, which is scheduled to hold on the former date.

The match will be staged at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan.

"Matchday 36 fixture, Ikorodu City v Wikki Tourists has been rescheduled from May 3 to May 5 owing to the Lagos State Federation Cup final to hold at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena in Lagos on May 3," NPFL wrote in a statement on Monday.

Ikorodu City are chasing a first NPFL title while Wikki Tourists are battling relegation.



Sabalenka Fights Back to Beat Osaka at Madrid Open

World number one Aryna Sabalenka came from a set and a break down to beat Japan's Naomi Osaka in the fourth round of the Miami Open and progress to the quarter-finals.

Four-time Grand Slam champion Sabalenka secured her 15th consecutive victory of the year - and ninth in a row in Madrid - by winning 6-7 (1-7) 6-3 6-2 in two hours and 20 minutes on Monday.

The 27-year-old had not lost a match in the Spanish capital since 2023 but she was tested early on by fellow four-time major winner Osaka, who was playing some of her strongest tennis of the season.

Defending champion Sabalenka will face American Hailey Baptiste, who defeated Belinda Bencic 6-1, 6-7 (14-16), 6-3, in her fourth-round match to book a place in the last eight on Tuesday.

Sabalenka defeated Baptiste, 24, in the quarter-finals of the Miami Open on her way to winning the title last

month. Speaking after the match, Sabalenka said Osaka, who did not play for 14 months around the birth of her daughter Shai in July 2023, "played incredible tennis", adding that the third set went by so fast because she felt she had "got lucky" with some of her shots.

"I'm happy [Osaka] brought that fight, I had to fight through to level up my game," said Sabalenka, who beat Osaka in the fourth round at Indian Wells in March.

Osaka, 28, dominated the first-set tie-break and then broke Sabalenka's serve at the start of the second set to take a 2-1 lead. But the Belarusian stepped up a gear immediately with a 40-0 break to level the set 2-2.

After breaking Osaka again to go 5-3 up, Sabalenka, who has also won titles at Indian Wells and in Brisbane this year, served out to secure the second set and take the contest to a decider.

She conceded just three points in total in the final set and then wrapped up the match with her sixth ace of the afternoon.



● Enrique

Enrique Names PSG, Bayern as Best Teams in 2026 Champions League

Paris Saint-Germain manager, Luis Enrique, has named the two best teams in the Champions League.

PSG will host Bayern Munich in the first leg of the semi-final on Tuesday night.

Ahead of the game, Enrique

has told reporters that they are the top clubs left in the competition.

Enrique even rated PSG and Bayern above Arsenal, who are yet to suffer defeat in the competition.

He said, "There is no team that is better than us. I already

said this after losing the top 8.

"These are the two best teams in Europe, even if Arsenal also had a great season.

"In terms of consistency, Bayern is a bit ahead of us because they have only lost two matches."



● Sabalenka

Turkish Super Lig: Fenerbache Lost to Best Team in the League – Osimhen

Victor Osimhen has reacted to the 3-0 spanking by Galatasaray of bitter rivals Fenerbache.

Osimhen opened the scoring just before the break as Galatasaray shot past their closest rivals in the Turkish Super Lig to now open a seven-point gap at the top of the standings with only three rounds of matches to the end of the season.

Osimhen said he was far from impressed by the mind games Fenerbache embarked on leading up to 'The Intercontinental Derby'.

"I can't understand Fenerbache. They complained

about the protector on my arm before the match against the best team in the league," the Super Eagles striker said.

"It didn't seem logical to me.

"But I came, I did my job and delivered my message in the best way possible."

He added, "I'm proud of my team's performance and happy about the victory.

"We have taken another step closer to our championship target.

"Samsunspor are a quality opponent, they are tough opponents, but we want to win every match from now on to finish the season well."



● Joshua

Anthony Joshua has signed a deal to fight fellow former world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury, Eddie Hearn has announced.

Joshua, who has not fought since he was a passenger in a fatal car crash in December, will first have a comeback fight against Kristian Prenga in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 25 July.

Fury and Joshua - both two-time world champions - have carried British boxing on the global stage for more than a decade, yet despite years of negotiations and false starts, the fight has never materialised.

But promoter Hearn posted on social media on Monday that the

long-awaited fight was "signed, sealed and delivered".

"As I said, the landlord will collect his rent. That is certain," Joshua said about the fight.

Joshua, 36, must first get past the unknown 35-year-old Albanian Prenga, who boasts a record of 20 wins, all by stoppage, and one loss.

The British fighter's most recent appearance in the ring was against Jake Paul in December.

Later that month, Joshua's driver crashed in Nigeria, with two members of the boxer's team being killed.

"It's no secret I've taken some time to consolidate and rebuild to be ready for stepping back into the ring and today is the next step on

that journey," Joshua said.

A date or venue for Joshua v Fury has not been announced. Hearn has previously suggested it could land in November on streaming giant Netflix.

Joshua attended Fury's recent comeback fight against Arslanbek Makhmudov and was called out by his British rival immediately after he secured a comfortable decision win. Fury, 37, attempted to goad Joshua into the ring, but he declined.

Afterwards, Team Fury said they had signed their part of the contract and were waiting on Joshua to do the same.

"I'm looking forward to competing and picking up where I left off," Joshua added.



● Osimhen



Representative of the Chief of the Air Staff, Stephen Nnannaibe-Nwachi (R), presenting grinding engine to beneficiary, during the Empowerment Programme for Widows of Fallen Heroes organised by the National Council of the Nigeria Legion (NCNL) in Abuja on Monday (27/4/26). With them: is the National Chairman of the Council, Grace Morenike-Henry (r).

Military Unveils Plans to Engage Veterans in Tackling Rising Insecurity

The Nigerian military has unveiled plans to formally engage retired personnel in efforts to address rising violent conflicts across the country through mediation, conflict resolution and community-based peacebuilding.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, disclosed this at the flag-off of a mediation and conflict resolution skills training for veterans in Abuja.

The training was organised by the Retired Members of Nigeria Armed Forces (REMENAF), in collaboration with the Mediation Training Institute and the Defence Headquarters.

The training is aimed at equipping retired military personnel with modern skills in mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution.

Oluyede said the initiative reflects a strategic shift towards strengthening non-kinetic approaches in addressing Nigeria's evolving security challenges, where violent conflicts are increasingly driven by local disputes and community tensions.

He stressed that military operations alone cannot guarantee lasting peace, noting that early intervention, dialogue and structured mediation remain critical to preventing escalation of violence.

"This initiative reflects the understanding that sustainable security requires both kinetic and non-kinetic responses.

"Veterans possess the experience, discipline and credibility needed to intervene in community disputes and help prevent violence before it escalates.

"They understand the cost of conflict and are uniquely positioned to promote dialogue, restraint and reconciliation at the grassroots level," he said.

The CDS explained that the initiative would also strengthen early warning systems and improve information flow from communities to security agencies, while remaining non-operational and complementary to existing security structures.

The President, Coalition of Concerned Veterans Association, Isaac Oguntuyi, described the programme as a continuation of national service, urging beneficiaries to cascade the training to other veterans across the country.

He said retired personnel remain committed to national stability and must continue contributing to peacebuilding efforts.

Similarly, National Coordinator of Retired Members of the Nigerian Armed Forces (REMENAF), Abiodun Durowaiye-Herberts, said veterans were well placed to support intelligence gathering, community engagement and conflict prevention due to their operational experience.

Tinubu Tasks News Envoys on Investment Drive, Foreign Policy Priorities

President Bola Tinubu has charged Nigeria's newly appointed ambassadors and high commissioners to aggressively pursue foreign investments.

He also charged them to strengthen strategic partnerships and reposition the country's global image in line with evolving diplomatic realities.

This was contained in a statement on Monday in Abuja, by Mr Yomi Odunuga, Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), George Akume.

According to Odunuga, Tinubu, represented by the SGF, gave the charge at the opening of an induction course for the envoys in Abuja.

The president said that the appointments of the envoys reflected the administration's confidence in their capacity to advance Nigeria's interests on the international stage.

He noted that the global

system was undergoing rapid transformation driven by shifting geopolitical dynamics, economic uncertainties, technological disruptions, climate challenges and emerging security threats.

He added that the developments had made the role of diplomats more critical than ever.

"The international system is evolving rapidly. We must be prepared to meet these challenges by focusing on how best to protect and promote Nigeria's national interest," he said.

Tinubu urged the envoys to adopt a modern, results-oriented approach to diplomacy by combining traditional methods with digital engagement, public diplomacy and strategic communication.

He underscored the importance of telling Nigeria's story in a compelling and credible manner while projecting the achievements of his administration's Renewed Hope Agenda.

The president also called on the envoys to be proactive and innovative in fostering partnerships, promoting trade and attracting foreign direct investment and technology to Nigeria.

According to him, safeguarding the welfare of Nigerians in the diaspora must remain a top priority.

He also announced a reordering of Nigeria's foreign policy framework, known as the "4D Doctrine".

He said that the doctrine, originally anchored on Democracy, Development, Demography and Diaspora, had now been rearranged to Demography, Development, Diaspora and Democracy.

According to him, the adjustment places Nigerians at the centre of foreign policy and is aimed at ensuring that international engagements deliver tangible benefits to citizens.

The president further stressed the need for professionalism, integrity and patriotism in the conduct of

diplomatic duties, reminding the envoys that they serve not only as government representatives, but also as custodians of the country's image abroad.

He also emphasised accountability, urging missions to be result-driven, prudent in resource management and guided by clear, measurable goals that would contribute to economic growth and national development.

He encouraged the participants to fully engage in the induction programme, noting that it was designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills required for effective diplomatic service in a rapidly changing world.

He commended the National Assembly for the swift confirmation of the nominees and urged the envoys to justify the confidence reposed in them.

"You have a special responsibility in helping to reposition Nigeria in global affairs. The world is watching," he said.

Court Bars Journalists from Covering Trial of Alleged Coup Plotters

Journalists have been barred from covering the trial of six alleged coup plotters accused of making moves to oust President Bola Tinubu.

In a case that was not declared a secret trial, concerns have been raised as to its transparency in handling the matter.

Reporters covering the judiciary beat were left uncertain on Monday about developments in the case, particularly as the suspects' bail application is pending before the court.

Earlier, the six accused suspects were brought into the courtroom under heightened security presence.

The Federal Government had last Wednesday arraigned the suspects

before Justice Joyce Abdulmalik of the Federal High Court, Abuja.

The Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, led the prosecution.

All but a former Minister of Petroleum, Timiprye Sylva, who is said to be at large, were present in court.

The defendants, including Major General Ibrahim Gana (ret), who was in a wheelchair; retired naval captain Erasmus Victor, Inspector Ahmed Ibrahim, Zekeri Umoru, Bukar Goni, and Abdulkadir Sani, pleaded not guilty to the 13-count charge when it was read in their hearing.

Following their plea of not guilty, Fagbemi asked that they be remanded

in the custody of the Department of State Services (DSS) and for an expeditious trial.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, therefore, ordered an accelerated trial and that the defendants be placed in the custody of the DSS.

The case was adjourned to April 27 for trial and an accelerated hearing.

The government filed a 13-count charge against the suspects last Tuesday before the court against the suspects.

Also listed in the charge, but said to be at large, is Sylva.

The charge, filed by the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation and signed by the Director of Public

Prosecutions, Rotimi Oyedepo (SAN), accused the defendants of offences ranging from alleged treason and terrorism to failure to disclose security intelligence and money laundering linked to terrorism financing.

The prosecution alleged that the defendants conspired in 2025 "to levy war against the state to overpower the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria," an offence punishable under Section 37(2) of the Criminal Code.

The Federal Government further alleged that the defendants had prior knowledge of a planned treasonable act involving one Colonel Mohammed Alhassan Ma'aji and others, but failed to alert authorities.



Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Kudirat Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun (middle, sitting), Administrator of the National Judicial Institute (NJI), Justice Babatunde A. Adejumo, with the Judges and participants, during the opening ceremony of the national workshop on judicial ethics for judges of the lower courts, held at the NJI headquarters, yesterday in Abuja.

FG Launches Community Food Bank Programme in North-East to Tackle Malnutrition

The Federal Government has launched the North-East zonal phase of the National Community Food Bank Programme (NCFBP) as part of efforts to curb child malnutrition in the country.

The First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu, said on Monday in Maiduguri that child malnutrition remained a pressing national concern requiring urgent and coordinated intervention.

Tinubu said millions of Nigerian children still lacked access to adequate nutrition, adding that the expansion of the programme was aimed at addressing the challenge nationwide.

She acknowledged the support of the federal government, state

governors, private sector partners and well-meaning Nigerians toward ending malnutrition among Nigerian children.

"Their generosity affirms that we are indeed our brothers' keepers and gives confidence that this programme will endure and thrive for many years beyond this administration.

"Globally, community food banks have proven to be effective mechanisms for delivering nutritious food to those who need it most.

"By building strong partnerships among farmers, food producers, corporate organisations and communities, food banks bridge the gap between abundance and need.

"The success of this programme

will depend on sustained collaboration. We must work together to build a transparent, accountable and well-structured food bank system that reaches vulnerable households across Nigeria," she said.

The First Lady noted that the programme aligned with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, especially in advancing food security, improved healthcare and national development.

She said the initiative was being implemented in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady, the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency and the Bank of Agriculture.

She added that the programme would be extended to other geopolitical zones while calling for stronger partnerships and increased stakeholder support.

"I therefore call on individuals, organisations and institutions across the North-East to support and actively participate in this initiative as we commence zonal rollouts nationwide.

"The choice of Borno State for the North-East launch is strategic. The region has faced security challenges, which have contributed to food insecurity and child malnutrition.

"This programme will complement ongoing efforts by state governments to improve access to nutritious food, especially for women

and children," she said.

Tinubu also commended Gov. Babagana Zulum of Borno for empowering 2,000 women, many of whom she said were potential beneficiaries of the programme.

The North-East is one of the major beneficiaries of the initiative, which aims to support about 500,000 households nationwide with nutritious food.

Those to benefit from the initiative include pregnant women, children under six and other vulnerable groups.

Recall that on April 2, the National Community Food Bank Trust Fund was inaugurated in Abuja alongside its Board of Trustees.

JAMB Gives Reasons for “No Result Yet” Notification to Some Candidates

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB, has clarified the growing confusion surrounding candidates receiving “No Result Yet” notifications, revealing that the results of underage candidates are being deliberately withheld in line with existing regulations.

JAMB’s spokesman, Fabian Benjamin, disclosed that the development follows a surge of

enquiries from concerned parents, explaining that candidates below the approved age threshold will not have their results released for now, hence the system-generated response.

He reiterated that only candidates who will be at least 16 years old by September 30, 2026, are eligible to sit for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations, UTME, stressing that any deviation falls strictly under the

board’s exceptional candidate policy.

Under this provision, underage candidates must demonstrate extraordinary academic ability by scoring a minimum of 320 in the UTME and securing at least 80 per cent in subsequent screening processes to be considered for admission.

Benjamin further revealed that, based on prior agreements with parents, only candidates who meet

the 320 benchmark will be shortlisted and invited for further assessments, effectively narrowing the pathway for exceptional consideration.

He maintained that until this process is completed, results of underage candidates will remain unreleased, urging stakeholders to remain patient as the board enforces standards aimed at preserving the integrity of the nation’s admission system.



From left: Head, Commercial Banking, Polaris Bank Ltd, Ladi Ene-Garba, Acting Divisional Head, Ilupeju Business Division, Abiola Adebisi, Executive Director, Polaris Bank Ltd, Mr Chris Ofikulu, National President, Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Dr Jani Ibrahim, Chairman, NACCIMA Export Group, Kola Awe, and 2nd Deputy President, NACCIMA, Dr Michael Olawale-Cole, during donation of equipment to NACCIMA Export Express Support Centre by Polaris Bank during the inauguration of the centre in Lagos yesterday.

Police Reject N100m Bribe, Launch Investigation into Syndicate Behind Train Derailments

By Our Reporter

The Nigeria Police Force has rejected a N100 million bribe and opened a wider investigation into a suspected syndicate involved in the vandalism of railway infrastructure, following the arrest of two suspects and the recovery of materials valued at over N400 million.

The breakthrough was recorded by operatives of the Force Intelligence Department Special Tactical Squad (FIDSTS), who apprehended the suspects—Chisom Goodnews, 32, and Ahmed Adamu,

22—on April 9, 2026, in Akwanga, Nasarawa State.

According to a statement issued by the Force Public Relations Officer, DCP Olumuyiwa Adejobi, the operation was based on credible intelligence and led to the interception of a trailer truck conveying about 60 tonnes of vandalised railway tracks and sleepers.

The materials were reportedly concealed under sacks of groundnut shells in an attempt to evade detection, while being transported from Bauchi State to Ilorin, Kwara State.

Preliminary findings indicate that the truck driver was contracted for N2.5 million to move the stolen items, while investigations have uncovered what police described as an organised supply chain linked to receivers of vandalised railway infrastructure.

In a significant development, police operatives involved in the operation reportedly rejected an offer of N00 million allegedly made to compromise the process and secure the release of both the suspects and the recovered exhibits.

The trailer used in transporting the

materials has also been recovered, while authorities say efforts are ongoing to track down other members of the syndicate, including those expected to receive the stolen items.

Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, commended the operatives for their conduct, describing their actions as a demonstration of professionalism and integrity.

The police said the operation underscores its commitment to protecting critical national infrastructure and curbing acts of economic sabotage across the country.



King Will Be ‘Very Safe’ During US Visit, Says Trump

President Donald Trump has said King Charles III will “be very safe” during his state visit to the US, which started on Monday.

Further security talks took place between the White House and Buckingham Palace after a gunman gained access to an event attended by Trump in Washington DC on Saturday.

Asked about the security implications

for the royal visit, the US president told CBS’s 60 Minutes on Sunday that the grounds of the White House, where King Charles will visit, are “really safe”.

The King and Queen’s programme will go ahead largely as planned, Buckingham Palace said, with the UK government hoping it could ease diplomatic tensions.

The UK’s ambassador to the US, Sir Christian Turner, said the visit would be

about “renewing and revitalising a unique friendship” between the two countries.

He said Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer had spoken to Trump on Sunday, and the trip would proceed largely as expected.

The King and Queen privately reached out to the Trumps to give their sympathies after the attack, during which a Secret Service agent was slightly injured, and the president and his wife were rushed to

safety.

The four-day state visit will begin in Washington DC, with the King and Queen being greeted at the White House by Trump and the First Lady, Melania Trump.

The president said on Sunday: “I think it’s great, he’ll be very safe... the White House grounds are really safe. This area of not very many acres is really safe.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Slams U.S. for Failed Pakistan Talks

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Monday said Washington’s “excessive demands” led to the collapse of recent peace negotiations in Pakistan, Iranian media reported.

Araghchi made the remarks after arriving in Russia for a scheduled meeting with President Vladimir Putin.

According to Iranian reports, he said that although the previous round of negotiations had made progress, it

ultimately failed to reach its goals because of the U.S. approach.

He also stressed that ensuring safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz is “an important global issue,” as tensions between Tehran and Washington persist

in the strategic waterway.

Araghchi’s visit to Moscow is expected to focus on bilateral ties and regional security matters, including developments in the Middle East and the situation in the Gulf, Iranian officials said.

School abroad
fund from home

#NoLimitWithFirstDiaspora

Sign up now

You First

FirstBank

www.keepingthemhonest.ng

KT Daily

KEEPING THEM HONEST

#300 TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026 VOL.03 NO. 079

Arik
arikair.com

On Being A Freelance Politician

Bauchi State Governor Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, Kauran Bauchi, best known for combative politics and acerbic rhetoric, suddenly made a rich addition to Nigeria's political vocabulary on Thursday last week. Receiving a visiting South East ADC Stakeholders' delegation led by Mr Peter Obi, he declared himself to be a "freelance politician." Obi's team was apparently in Bauchi to convince Governor Bala to end his US-Iran Islamabad-style talks with the ruling APC, abandon PDP [of which he is Chairman of its Governors' Forum, already reduced to two members] and firmly pitch his tent with the opposition ADC. ADC saw an opening because earlier last week, Bauchi State PDP leaders declared that talks with APC had broken down.

It was the mass media sector that first popularised the phrase "freelance reporter." This was the equivalent of "daily paid worker" once prevalent in Nigeria's public and organised private sectors. "Freelance politician" is a new, very rich addition to Nigeria's political vocabulary. Since 1978, when we began to experiment with presidential style politics, Nigerian politicians have enriched the vocabulary of liberal democracy with words and phrases such as zoning, rotation, Accord Concordiale, landslide victory, power shift, a little to the left and a little to the right, open ballot, Option A4, annulment, actualise mandate, stepping aside, Ghana Must Go, godfather, godson, post-dated resignation letter, Okija Shrine, Third Term, Party Leader, Garrison Politics, party re-registration, party merger, automatic return ticket, consensus, vote buying, On Your Mandate We Stand, Lt. Yerimarisation, Bwalarisation, Nafi'u Balarisation, and more recently, "stay there and scatter them."

A freelance politician, such as defined by Bala Mohammed, does not belong to any political party, something that must puzzle both the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act. Neither of them envisages contesting an election without a party platform. Yet, since 2000AD at least, a huge swath of Nigeria's political space has been occupied by actors outside political parties such as Afenifere, Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo, Arewa Consultative Forum, Northern Elders Forum, Middle Belt Forum, Pan Niger Delta Forum and Ijaw National Congress. While these groups have been careful to remain within the narrow strip of party-less political legality, others such as Oodua People's Congress, Yoruba Nation, Indigenous People of Biafra, Eastern Security Network, Boko Haram and ISWAP crossed the dividing

OPINION

BY

MAHMUD JEGA

line, into the wider path of violent pursuit of political goals.

The coming onboard of the term freelance politician reminds me of an exchange that took place in the Philippines in late 1979. Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos was facing severe criticism from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila, Jaime Cardinal Sin. With the unfolding revolution in Iran then dominating newspaper headlines all over the world, Marcos told reporters in the Malacanang Palace that Sin was "trying to be a Khomeini," the leader of Iran's Islamic revolution. The mischievous reporters rushed across the street to the cathedral and relayed the news to Cardinal Sin. The outspoken cardinal, who once described himself as "the Original Sin," cheerfully said, "If there is a Khomeini in the Philippines, then there must be a Shah!"

Look here, Governor Bala Mohammed. If there is a freelance politician in Nigeria, then there must be freelance political parties. You mean, there are parties in Nigeria that have neither ideology nor any unified policy platform, that attract members merely based on appeals to ethnicity, regional sentiment and the mobilisational power of individual politicians, and which garner votes with the help of what INEC and security agencies delicately call "vote buying"?

At one time in this Republic, there were nearly one hundred registered political parties, and the ballot paper was almost as long as an unrolled tissue paper. Did I say tissue paper? Many of the parties on that ballot paper were no better than that. At first, they existed because INEC used to give monetary subvention to registered parties. When that practice was stopped, they still existed because a briefcase political party's ticket could be bought by a desperate aspirant who loses the primaries in a major political party, but is desperate to appear on the ballot paper. The few votes that they get, is often due to illiterate voters who

confuse party symbols.

Malam Bala Mohammed, if there is a freelance politician, then there must be freelance supporters. I recently retold the story of a man in Jos during the Third Republic who led dancing troupes to welcome seven different presidential aspirants from the airport into town. He was the cheerleader at all their campaign rallies. Four of those aspirants were NRC while three belonged to SDP. That is the dream freelance supporter that Governor Bala must be thinking of. Right now, a clash of red pants is unfolding in one Northern state, of women activists at a political rally displaying the photos of a governor emblazoned on red pants. They are the freelance political supporters that Kauran Bauchi has in mind.

There cannot be freelance politicians without freelance marabouts, babalawos and shrine priests in Nigeria. They are a very important factor in Nigerian elections. They convince an aspirant that he is going to win, provided he pays them handsomely. They claim supernatural power to do everything from incapacitating election rivals, to blindfolding voters, to spiritually stamping ballot papers, to twisting the thumps of returning officers.

If there is a freelance politician, then there must be a freelance election official. In every election cycle, INEC's ranks are filled with ad hoc election officials. Despite their undergoing crash training on election laws, manuals and procedures, these ad hoc officials are a big headache to INEC since many of them are already committed to parties and politicians, while many others are there to make a kill.

If there are freelance politicians, then there must be freelance collation and returning officers. Even though most of these are university professors, plus card reader, IRev and electronic result transmission [which some people connived to exclude from the Electoral Act], stuff still happens. The

most freelance of all freelance returning officers in Nigerian elections was the Returning Officer, Gubernatorial Election Ondo State in 1983. As declared by the Supreme Court in its ruling on the election petition, he added "1" behind the NPN candidate's score of half million, instantly transformed it into 1.5 million votes, and it swiftly overtook the UPN candidate's 1.2 million votes. He was the dream freelance returning officer.

If there is a freelance politician, then there must be a freelance security agent. Such as the Police Commissioner in Borno State in 1983 who fired teargas to prevent Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and Governor Muhammadu Goni from entering the town from the airport. Or more recently, the Police Commissioner in Port Harcourt who locked Government House gates and prevented the state governor from finding his way back into his own abode.

If there are freelance politicians, there must be freelance lawyers in Nigeria who are professionally free of conflict of political interest. A Nigerian lawyer handles several election cases simultaneously, with clients belonging to different parties. He sues INEC on behalf of some clients and defends it in other cases. His aim is not to see that justice is done but to see that his client wins the office, as US President Richard Nixon of Watergate infamy once said, "by hook or by crook, mostly the latter." If there are freelance lawyers in Nigeria, then there might be some freelance judges. In the 1990s, some guerrilla newspapers alleged that a particular judge wrote two conflicting judgements, for one to be delivered in favour of the highest bidder.

I can already hear somebody saying, if there are freelance politicians in Nigeria, to borrow from Cardinal Sin's logic, then there must be freelance columnists who go about picking holes in the actions of politicians but who cannot win even a councillorship election in their own hometowns. Nobody elected a freelance columnist, but there he will sit, on one lame laptop, and claim to know better than the people on the field as well as the government officials who sit in offices with all the files, figures and reports in front of them.

You know what it reminds me of? A passage in Arthur Hailey's 1960 novel In High Places, where the Prime Minister of Canada, who had been grappling with an immigration problem for weeks, saw a newspaper columnist stating firmly how to easily solve the problem. The Prime Minister muttered to himself, "I think we should hand over this country to columnists since they know the solution to every problem."