

JULY 2024

# With Love, from Edo

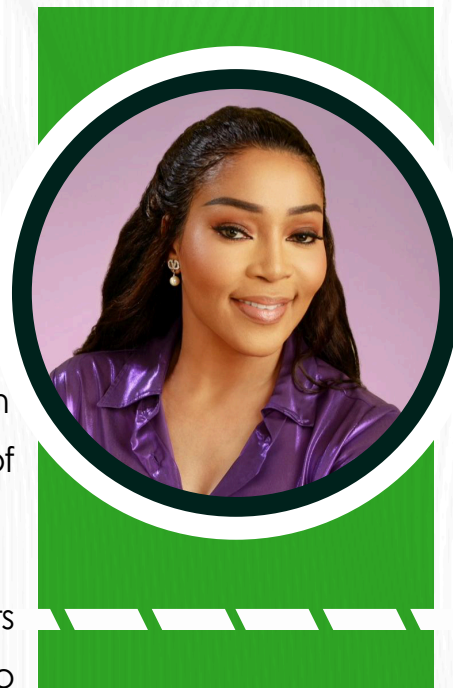
Koyo!! [Benin] Obokhian!! [Esan] Abee!! [Afemai] Hello [English]

## THE RAINS ARE HERE AGAIN



10TH EDITION

# PUBLISHER'S SCRIPT



I want to welcome you to the July edition of the “With Love from Edo” digest. The month of July is typically the peak of the rainy season in the equatorial belt of Africa and especially the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It is a month in which it is empirically believed that there will be seven days of uninterrupted rain.

But 2024 appears to be a unique and different year in its weather patterns. To some, it's as if the August break of two weeks of no rain has come one month earlier. According to the meteorological service, two of the hottest days in human history have been July 21 (17.09°C) and July 22, 2024 (17.15°C). This is courtesy of the global warming phenomenon.

Inclement weather patterns notwithstanding, July has been a fascinating month. The Olympics in Paris and the Wimbledon Tennis tournament in London. Heathrow Airport has also reported its highest passenger traffic in decades (39.8 million passengers in the first half of this year).

In this edition, we showcase the Edo connection at the world's most expensive wedding in Mumbai, India. You will also have a chance to read about the qualifier competitions at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium for the Nigerian contingents to the Paris Olympics.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Edo State's rainy secrets
- One man, one vote
- Rema performs in India for \$3 million

Stay thrilled as you flip through the pages of this edition, hopefully, with the relish of the rain.

With love,

*Obehi*

# EDO STATE'S RAIN SECRETS

The nation's heartbeat is well into the rainy season, an intriguing time in Edo state with many rainy secrets to uncover. Rainfall in Edo state represents not only a time to showcase its historical and cultural heritage but also for social initiatives. A prominent cultural festival is the new yam festival which is celebrated during the rainy season to thank the gods and ancestors of the land for the bountiful harvest of yams. Before the British Invasion in 1884, part of the ritual role played by yams was that they were planted symbolically around the Oba's Ugbeku village farm.

In Edo state, the new yam festival is called Emoro (Em'orho) and is done to give thanks to the gods of the land and ancestors for a bountiful and peaceful planting season. However, the Omo N'Oba (King) would have to undergo the Ague rite, during which they fasted for seven days in seclusion before the festival. This is one of the rainy secrets many tourists or visitors are unaware of.

The new yam festival is celebrated with a

yellow yam, used to prepare pounded yam and meat soup. The Omo N' Oba (King) has an ancestral temple that kicks off celebrations. A piece of the pounded yam is cut and placed on the altar, while another is dipped in oil and thrown through the door for those who do not come home to eat.

In addition to this showcase of cultural heritage, social initiatives have come with this rainy season. The Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) has undergone developments in Benin City, Edo's capital, not only to transform the "Iya" (Benin City's moat, earthen walls surrounding Benin) but also to bring about social development. According to Godwin Obaseki, Edo's current governor, the objective of MOWAA to preserve Benin's moat will reposition the state as an art and tourism hub. The moat is viewed as the most outward evidence of Benin's rich history, and the Museum of West African Art is dedicated to preserving this evidence of history in Benin and Edo state at large.

# One Man, One Vote – The bright side of democracy



Yale Law professor Amy Chua, in "World on Fire," revealed the dark side of democracy, where free-market policies and elections can heighten ethnic tensions and income inequality. The rise of wealthy minorities often sparks resentment from poorer majorities, highlighting plural democracy's flaws in divided societies. However, in Nigeria, we are headed towards the bright side of democracy.

The right to vote during an election in Nigeria is entrenched in chapter four of the amended 1999 Constitution. Any person who has satisfied the requirements laid down by the regulatory laws is eligible to vote. These primarily include being a Nigerian citizen at least 18 years old and recorded on the voters' register.

Growing electoral interest in developing countries is not confined to Nigeria. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a number of African countries, including Botswana, Ghana, and Tunisia, will hold presidential and legislative elections in the remainder of 2024. Incumbent regimes are expected to prevail in most elections, but there is a likelihood of reduced parliamentary majorities and much more challenging governing conditions.

Political campaigns are intense and strategic in arousing positive feelings within their target voters. How people vote and what factors influence their decisions go a long way in explaining how social, economic, and religious factors impact electoral behavior.

## ***What drives voting decisions?***

Voters can sigh with relief or disappointment, depending on whether their candidate wins or loses an election. However, the most objective questions about an election should not be concerned with who won. The questions should address why people voted the way they did and the implications of the results.

A number of attitudinal and social factors seem to play a major role in determining individual voting behavior. Over the past decades, region, social class, professional or business affiliations, traditional allegiances, and religion have become some social factors influencing voting.

For example, members of a state's Market Women Association may agree to show solidarity with a candidate from a particular political party that has demonstrated some support for their interests. On the other hand, people indigenous to a local government may inadvertently split their votes between two candidates from that same constituency.

Attitudinal factors include evaluating government performance, such as the extent of infrastructural development during its tenure, the impact of its economic policies on the community, the assessments of the candidates' personal and reputational characteristics, electability, party leadership, and ideology. These factors help us understand electoral dynamics as they primarily influence the candidate's choice.

### ***Vote buying & voter apathy***

Beyond sociological factors is the unpleasant but harsh reality of vote buying. This undermines the integrity of any election and defeats the essence of democracy. It is pervasive in corrupt politics where the wealthy and less privileged swing their votes to the highest bidder.

The destructive nature of vote buying cannot be ignored. It tends to propel the placement of less qualified candidates into office and, more significantly, contributes to the poor economic performance of many developing countries, including Nigeria.

It has also led to the erosion of confidence in election outcomes, contributing significantly to Nigeria's high level of voter apathy. There is a strong correlation between voter apathy and poor governance.

Meanwhile, countries where elections are free and fair such as Canada, Sweden and Australia often witness high tourist activity and revenues. However, the advent of digital tools and early results reporting are leading to a fall in voter apathy.

Ultimately, voters will put their choices in the ballot boxes from the available options. The candidate who has the highest votes will be chosen as the leader. Therefore, with deep reflection, we must approach the act of voting as more than just a civic duty; it is a powerful tool that shapes the future of our country.



## GLOBAL TOURISM

-  Mandarin Oriental opens London Mayfair property: The 50-room hotel is located on Hanover Square and features the first UK restaurant by Michelin-starred Chef Akira Back.
-  Virgin Atlantic to resume Canada flights with Heathrow-Toronto route: In over a decade Virgin Atlantic plans to return to Canada for the first time. It features direct flights from London Heathrow to Toronto Pearson International airport.
-  Air France Unveils new La Premiere check-in lobby at Paris CDG: A new check-in lobby is scheduled to be unveiled by Air France for its La Premiere customers at Paris CDG. The new check-in lobby is scheduled to open in time for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
-  My Lounge opens at London Luton Airport: At the London Luton Airport, Airport Dimensions and Swiss port have opened their second Lounge. The 135-seat lounge overlooks the airport's main concourse and features design "inspired by loft style living".



# The 10th Edition of the Okpekpe Road Race Was a Huge Success

On May 25th, 2024, the tenth edition of the International 10km road race was held in Okpekpe, in Etsako East Local Government of Edo State community. The Okpekpe road race started in 2013 and is now the first World Athletics label Road race in West Africa. Participants typically include world-class runners from about 9 countries, including Nigeria, the United States of America, South Africa, China, Kenya, and Ghana.

The prize for first place in the just concluded edition was \$15,000, which was won by Pingua Zakayo Edwards, a Kenyan, who came into the race as the favorite. However, his 29-minute 31-second run time was inadequate to beat the course record of 28 minutes 28 seconds set in 2023 by another Kenyan, Daniel Ebenyo. Second place and third place, who were also Kenyans, went home with \$8,000 and \$5,000 respectively. The women's category saw Gladys Kwanbuka, a Kenyan, finish first at 33:05 minutes. Kenyan runners again dominated the top three spots, receiving the same prize as the male winners.

17-year-old Francis James Musa was the fastest Nigerian, claiming N500,000, with a time of 30:46 (7th best overall), a big improvement from his time of 32:24 last year. It was the first time a Nigerian would run the Okpekpe road race in less than 31 minutes. Musa also ran 30:47 to win the 10km race of the Lagos International Marathon earlier this year, in February. The top Nigerian woman, Patience Daylop Mwavwang, who successfully defended her title in 37.07 minutes, also got half a million naira and snagged an extra \$2,000 for her position as the best 5th overall.

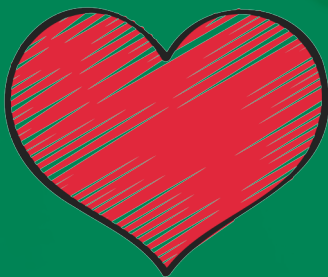
The major delight in the 10th edition of the race was partly the improvement of the Nigerian athletes and the exposure the race gave to the Okpekpe community. Senator Adams Oshiomhole, former governor of Edo state who has competed in all the VIP races from inception in 2013 to date, disclosed that the road race had put Okpekpe and the entire Edo State on the map of the world as a destination of sorts for sports.



# A Visit to Mercy Orphanage

On 15th June 2024, the Managing Director of the Edo State Tourism Agency, Mrs. Obehi Aire and her team, visited Mercy Orphanage in Benin to extend the agency's charity to the children. During her visit, Mrs. Aire brought a variety of essential supplies, including food items and other materials, aimed at improving the daily lives and well-being of the children. She engaged them by taking the time to listen to their stories and dreams. The MD shared words of encouragement with them in line with the vision of the government for the children of Edo State.

Her presence brought smiles and a sense of hope to the staff and children of the orphanage. The visit also included a tour of the facility, during which she took note of the orphanage's needs and discussed the potential of a partnership with long-term support initiatives. The MD's visit exemplifies the agency's commitment to social responsibility, community support, and spreading love across and beyond Edo State.







## Highlights from The Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) National Trials

- ✔ The trials were held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Edo State from June 16-18, 2024
- ✔ Over 1,000 athletes showed up for the national trials, the largest turnout in history, including 60 foreign-based stars
- ✔ World record holder in the Women's 100m hurdles, Tobi Amusan, claimed her fourth Nigerian title finishing at a time of 12.78s
- ✔ Olympian, Commonwealth Gold Medalist, and Nigerian Discus Thrower, Chioma Onyekwere reclaimed her National title after three years.
- ✔ She threw 59.43m to win the title, beating African Games champion, Obiageri Amaechi, who threw 59.25m for 2nd place.
- ✔ The trials were used to select athletes for the Africa Championships in Cameroon, the Paris Olympics, and the World U-20 Championship in Lima, Peru, from August 27 to 31.

## EDO-BORN AFROBEAT ARTISTE PERFORMS AT THE WORLD'S MOST EXPENSIVE WEDDING



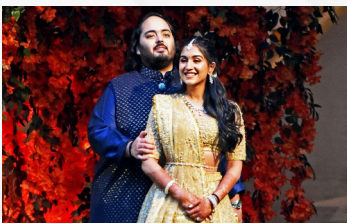
Rema, an Edo-born Nigerian artist, recently made headlines for performing at what is said to be the most expensive wedding in the world, the union of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant.

The wedding, hosted by Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man, took place from July 12 to 14, 2024, at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai, with an estimated cost exceeding \$600 million. Rema was reportedly paid a staggering N4.8 billion (approximately \$3 million) to perform his hit song "Calm Down" at the event. This performance is significant not only for its financial aspect but also

for showcasing the rising global influence of Afrobeats, with Rema being one of its leading figures.

The event underscores the growing cultural and economic ties between Nigeria and India, two nations that have increasingly engaged in bilateral trade and investment. The presence of Nigerian artists in high-profile events like this wedding reflects the rising global appeal of Afrobeats, which has found a significant audience in India. This cultural exchange fosters greater collaboration in the entertainment sector, paving the way for Nigeria to diversify its exports through entertainment exports.

As demand for entertainment and luxury services grows, Nigerian businesses can leverage such high-profile events to showcase their offerings, from catering to event planning and production services. The successful integration of Nigerian artists into Indian celebrations can lead to increased collaboration in various sectors, including fashion, hospitality, and tourism.





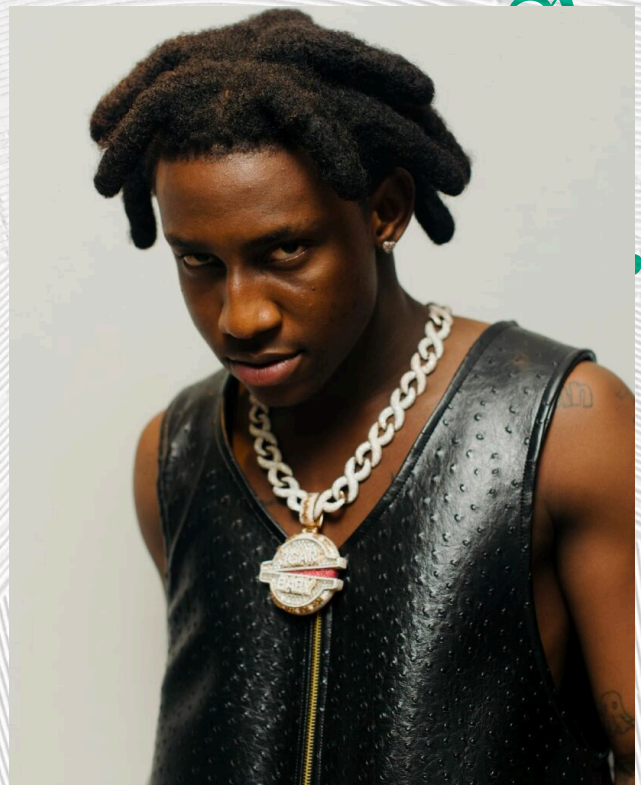
In June 2024, Nigerian musicians Rema and Shallipopi, both Edo natives, released their first collaboration, "Benin Boys."

The song is a celebration of Benin City culture, showcasing their pride in their roots and their desire to share their cultural heritage with a broader audience.

## *Benin Boys to the World*

BET music critic Oumou Fofana described the song as "a dynamic exchange of verses over heavy drums and electrifying background strings," highlighting Rema and Shallipopi's lyrical prowess and musical chemistry.

The music video incorporates elements of Benin culture, featuring the prominent display of the Benin Ancestral Bronzes, which hold significant cultural and historical importance.



## DID YOU KNOW?

1

Edo State is Nigeria's number one oil palm-producing state, contributing about 12% to the country's aggregate palm oil production.

2

Edo state's traditional calendar has about 14 months. AMA IKHURHE is the name of the first month in the Edo year.

3

The son of an Oba is born a king and cannot bow to his father, the Oba.

## WORD PUZZLE

FROM THIS EDITION



OKPEKPE  
RECORD  
PATRIOT  
ELECTION  
ARTISANS

PARTY  
STOOL  
GOLD  
OGBEMUDIA  
OLYMPICS

CHAMPION  
AGUE  
TRADITION  
YAM  
RAIN

## EVENTS

### Ubgomi

June

Wrestling

### Ikpede

June

To ensure good harvest

### Jseko

June

Circumcision ceremony



## LINGO

