

NNPC Ltd, Dangote forge strategic alliance to accelerate Nigeria's energy security

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) and the Dangote Group have forged a renewed strategic alliance designed to accelerate energy security, deepen domestic refining capacity and drive long-term economic prosperity.

In a significant move aimed

at reshaping Nigeria's energy landscape, the two companies renewed the alliance at the weekend.

This epochal deal was reached when Mr Bashir Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, NNPC Ltd., led the NNPC's delegation to the Dangote Refinery and Petrochemical Complex in Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos State.

The visit was for high-level

discussions that culminated in a renewed commitment to strategic collaboration between the two companies.

The visit, which included a facility tour, focused on strengthening operational and commercial relationships between NNPC Limited and the Dangote Refinery, with both organisations reaffirming their shared vision for Nigeria's energy future.

Ojulari, in a statement commended the President of the Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, for his vision and perseverance in delivering the 650,000 barrels per day refinery, a project that positions Nigeria as a major downstream hub in Africa.

Speaking on the breadth of the partnership, Ojulari described the strategic alliance as one that will "unlock synergies

across assets, infrastructure, capital and markets.

"It will also provide visibility of all NNPC-Dangote business relations," he added.

He further revealed the expansive potential of the collaboration, noting that there is huge opportunity for both companies to expand upstream, and move into trading, shipping, gas supplies, among other fronts.

Ojulari expressed profound appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for his visionary leadership in the oil and gas sector.

He said the president's policy clarity, investor-friendly reforms and commitment to sectoral transformation had signalled seriousness to both domestic and international

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Nigeria records 14m birth registrations in 2yrs —UNICEF

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Tinubu issues marching orders to FCT, Kano, Rivers poll winners

ABUJA

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has handed down clear marching orders to winners of Saturday's elections in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Kano and Rivers states, directing them to justify the confidence reposed in them through disciplined, people-centred leadership.

In a statement released on Sunday by his spokesman, Mr

Bayo Onanuga, the President congratulated the victorious candidates but reminded them that electoral success comes with weighty responsibility.

He charged them to treat the mandate of the electorate as a sacred trust and to serve with humility, patriotism and total dedication.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted area council elections in the FCT and by-elections in Ahoada East II and Khana II constituencies in Rivers State, as well as Kano Municipal and Ungogo constituencies in Kano State.

President Tinubu made it clear that the true test of leadership begins after victory at the polls, urging the newly elected officials to focus on service delivery, grassroots development and responsive governance.

He emphasised that Nigerians expect results, not rhetoric, and warned that the mandate must translate into measurable improvements in the lives of citizens.

The President also commended the Minister of the FCT, Nyesom Wike, for what he described as remarkable strides in the territory, noting that visible governance and infrastructural renewal had yielded political dividends for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

He congratulated the APC national leadership and its chapters in Kano and Rivers for their performance, describing the victories as a reflection of public confidence in the party's direction.

Tinubu further praised INEC, security agencies and voters for ensuring a peaceful and credible exercise, stating

that the successful conduct of the elections reinforces Nigeria's democratic stability.

He charged INEC to build on the gains recorded and continue refining its processes to deliver even more transparent and exemplary elections, stressing that strong democratic institutions remain the backbone of national progress.

Nigeria's devt incomplete without sports —Tinubu

As N'Delta Games begin in Benin

BENIN CITY

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has declared that Nigeria's development drive would remain incomplete without sustained investment in sports, describing it as a critical platform for youth empowerment, talent discovery, peace and national unity.

The President spoke at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City during the colourful opening ceremony of the second edition of the Niger Delta Games, which formally got underway at the weekend.

Represented by the Minister of State for Industry, John Owa Eno, Tinubu said there could be no sustainable development without peace and unity, stressing that sports remain one of the most effective instruments for both.

He described the Niger Delta Games as more than a sporting fiesta, noting that they provide a unique opportunity to celebrate the region's cultural diversity while harnessing the energy and creativity of its youths.

According to him, differences in tribe, religion and social status fade on the field of play, where discipline, teamwork and shared ambition take centre stage.

"The Niger Delta is a region of extraordinary cultural diversity united through sports.

What matters is discipline and teamwork in building a strong nation," he said, adding that the Games would help identify and groom amateur athletes into national champions capable of representing Nigeria on the global stage.

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OJULARI'S VISIT TO DANGOTE REFINERY:

Mr Bashir Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, NNPC Ltd (right) and the Chairman of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote during Ojulari's led delegation visit to the Dangote Refinery and Petrochemical Complex in Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos State.

Council polls: Group raises concerns over polling unit reassignments, vote-buying —Pg 6

How we tracked, arrested Owo church attackers, DSS' witness tells court —Pg 7

Investigation: Russian spy agency takes over Wagner operations in Africa —Pg 9

2nd NDGs: Tissa, Lucky Ayeni, Peremoboere shine as Team Edo dethrone Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers in swimming —Pg 11

Okpebholo commissions NDDC roads at Edo Poly, donates buses, orders hostel review

USEN

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has commissioned a 4.8-kilometre network of internal roads at Edo State Polytechnic, Usen, describing the project as a strategic boost to education, campus mobility and regional development.

The roads, facilitated by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), include 4.595 kilometres of internal asphalt pavement, a 205-metre dual carriageway at the main entrance, reinforced concrete drains and a 32-metre by 900mm reinforced concrete

culvert.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, Okpebholo said the intervention went beyond physical infrastructure, noting that it would enhance access, safety and opportunity for thousands of students and staff.

"This project is more than asphalt and concrete; it is access, connectivity, safety and opportunity for those who use this campus daily," the governor said, stressing that road infrastructure in schools is a necessity for academic excellence and security.

He maintained that quality infrastructure improves mobility, supports learning activities

and creates an environment where excellence can thrive, adding that investment in the polytechnic represented a di-

rect investment in the future of young people and the economic advancement of the Niger Delta.

The governor urged students to make the most of the improved learning environment, linking the development to

the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Reaffirming his administration's commitment to partnerships that deliver tangible results, Okpebholo said Edo State would continue collaborating with federal agencies

and development partners to accelerate growth across communities.

Minister of Regional Development, Abubakar Momoh, commended the synergy between the state government and the NDDC.

Edo NMA backs UBTH, dismisses viral allegations on clinical operations

IGUOBAZUWA

The Edo State chapter of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) has dismissed as unfounded recent social media posts targeting the management and clinical operations of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), urging the public to disregard what it described as unverified and disruptive allegations.

A viral post had alleged that the hospital's leadership improperly engaged a private laboratory to provide healthcare services.

In a statement issued in Benin on Sunday and signed by the Edo NMA Chairman, Dr Eustace Oseghale, the association called on the public to rely on credible and verifiable information, rather than rumours circulating online.

"We urge the public to treat those unverified allegations with caution," he said.

"The Edo State Branch of the Nigeria Medical Association is aware of recent social media posts concerning clinical and administrative operations at UBTH, but quality healthcare thrives on facts, not rumours, emotions or politics."

The NMA noted that since assuming office about six months ago, the Chief Medical Director of UBTH, Prof. Idia Ize-Iyamu, has prioritised uninterrupted quality care.

Defending the hospital's operational framework, the association explained that the dual-track laboratory model guarantees 24-hour testing, even during equipment downtime or supply delays, strengthens internal quality control through cross-checks, and mirrors arrangements already approved in several federal hospitals nationwide.

According to the NMA, the approach does not contravene directives of the Federal Ministry of Health but aligns with national policies encouraging public-private collaboration where it enhances service delivery and continuity.

Dr Oseghale said laboratory turnaround time remains a critical bottleneck in emergency care, stressing that having two accredited facilities on site reduces delays, improves diagnostic accuracy and allows clinicians to focus more on treatment.

He reaffirmed the association's confidence in the hospital's leadership, adding that the NMA would continue to monitor practices at UBTH and engage constructively with management, staff and the wider community in the overall interest of Edo residents.

"We stand firmly with UBTH's management and staff in their efforts to deliver reliable and continuous services, and we remain committed to safeguarding the health of Edo citizens," he added.

parties reaffirming their commitment to deepening cooperation in pursuit of shared objectives, ensuring energy security, driving industrial growth and delivering value to Nigerians.

NNPC Ltd. currently holds a 7.25 percent stake in the Dangote Refinery.

The shareholding is considered to be a strategic investment that aligns with NNPC Ltd's downstream growth objectives and commitment to domestic refining capacity.

NNPC Ltd, Dangote forge strategic...

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investors, creating an enabling environment for partnerships of this scale to flourish.

According to the Chairman of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Nigerians will be the beneficiaries of the synergy between Dangote Group and NNPC Ltd, because the collaboration will achieve economies of scale and unlock value across markets.

The visit concluded with both



INAUGURATION OF EXHIBITION HALL:

L-R: Former President, Enugu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (ECCIMA), Rev Ugochukwu Chime; representative of Enugu State Government, Dr Ogbu Nwobodo; President, ECCIMA, Mr Nnanyelugo Onyemelukwu and another former President of ECCIMA, Sir Odeiga Jideonwu during the inauguration of ECCIMA Multipurpose Exhibition Hall in Enugu at the weekend.

Ovia S'West APC re-elects officials unanimously

● As Idahosa predicts 2027 victory

IGUOBAZUWA

Officials of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State have been unanimously returned to office at the party's local government congress, in what leaders described as a demonstration of unity and readiness for future electoral contests.

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, who monitored the exercise at the Ig-uobazuwa Town Hall at the weekend, expressed satisfaction with the peaceful conduct of the congress and the consensus adoption of the 27-member executive.

The officials returned include 22 substantive members, four ex-officio members and one physically challenged representative, all affirmed through a unanimous voice vote.

Addressing party members shortly after the exercise, Idahosa said the seamless conduct of the congress had set the tone for electoral success in the 2027 general elections.

He noted that the atmosphere of unity and cooperation among members across the local government was encouraging.

"We have successfully conducted our Local Government Area Congress here in Iguobazuwa. It has been seamless.

There is unity, there is peace and there is progress," he said.

"What we have witnessed today shows that party members are in one accord. We will continue to build on this unity because the ultimate goal is to win elections."

The deputy governor added that the party leadership would continue to mentor members and sustain internal cohesion ahead of the next electoral cycle, expressing confidence that Ovia South West would deliver impressive votes for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2027.

Idahosa also commended the six-member Congress Working Committee for adhering strictly to party guidelines, noting that the process

ensured that only committed and grassroots-oriented members with proven records of diligence were returned to office.

Chairman of the Congress Working Committee and member representing Ovia South West in the Edo State House of Assembly, Hon. Sunday Aghedo, praised the executives for their resilience and dedication in managing party affairs at the local level.

He said their performance earned them the confidence of members and justified their return to office.

Aghedo urged the reelected officials to remain steadfast and deepen their commitment to strengthening the party's structures.

Nigeria's devt incomplete without...

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Declaring the Games open, Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, said the tournament symbolises hope and fresh possibilities for the region.

"These Games represent more than competition; they symbolise possibilities. They send a clear message that the Niger Delta is not only defined by its resources, but by its resilience, talent and boundless human potential," Okpebholo said.

He noted that sports teach discipline, build character and erase divisions of language and culture, fostering unity and excellence beyond the arena.

"In this tournament, there is no division, only teamwork, excellence and the pursuit of greatness. This is the spirit we must

carry into our communities," he added, urging athletes to compete with passion and integrity as ambassadors of the region.

Okpebholo commended the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) for deploying sports as a tool for youth empowerment and regional integration, and disclosed that Edo State embraced the opportunity to host the second edition with a commitment to deliver an outstanding experience.

Linking the event to his administration's SHINE Agenda, the governor said sustainable youth development remains central to his government's policy direction.

"No meaningful development can be achieved if the youths, who constitute the majority of our population, are ignored," he

said, assuring participants of a safe and hospitable environment throughout the Games.

Minister for Regional Development, Abubakar Momoh, described the gathering as a celebration of youth, talent and discipline, noting that sports provide a constructive outlet that discourages social vices and promotes positive lifestyles.

Also speaking, Director-General of the National Institute of Sports (NIS) and former Deputy Governor of Edo State, Comrade Philip Shaibu, said the Games align with ongoing efforts by the Tinubu administration to reposition the sports sector.

He added that the NIS plans to integrate more grassroots coaches into the national sports development frame-

work within the next year.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the NDDC, Chief Samuel Ogbuku, said 3,700 athletes and officials are participating in 16 sporting events at the Benin tournament, describing it as a pathway for amateur athletes to transition into professional ranks.

He called on governors of the nine Niger Delta states to strengthen support for the Games to ensure the production of future champions for Nigeria.

Chairman of the Main Organising Committee, Alabo Boma Iyare, paid tribute to the late Samuel Ogbemudia for laying the foundation of sports development in the region, noting that the Niger Delta continues to account for a significant percentage of Nigeria's athletes in international competitions.

NEWS

Nigeria records 14m birth registrations in 2yrs —UNICEF

ABUJA

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that 14 million Nigerian children have had their births officially registered in the past two years, marking significant progress in legal identity coverage.

UNICEF Country Representative, Wafaa Abdelatef, disclosed

this during a courtesy visit to the First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, at the State House, Abuja.

Abdelatef described birth registration as a fundamental right of every child, noting that the scale of progress recorded in Nigeria within a short period was remarkable compared to other countries where she had served.

"Birth registration is the first right of every child; to be

counted and recognised. In just two years, we have registered 14 million children, which is truly impressive," she said.

She added that the registration system was being digitalised across health facilities to improve efficiency, while supportive legislation was being considered by the National Assembly to strengthen the process.

According to her, sustained

leadership and collaboration have helped accelerate the scale-up, ensuring that more children gain access to identity, protection and essential services.

Responding, the First Lady acknowledged UNICEF's longstanding support to Nigeria, emphasising that birth registration must continue until every Nigerian child is captured.

"Every child has the right to

be counted. Legal identity enables access to health services and social protection and supports national planning," she said.

Tinubu noted that strengthening birth registration would also help government generate reliable population data, especially in the absence of a recent census, and guide provision of services for children.

She, however, expressed concern over persistent health challenges, including tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, and maternal

and child mortality, describing them as areas requiring intensified interventions.

"Nigeria has a large population, and these indicators remain high and worrisome, but we are not relenting. Efforts are ongoing to reposition the country for a healthier future," she said.

The First Lady reaffirmed her commitment to continued collaboration with UNICEF to advance child welfare and national development priorities.



EMPOWERMENT OUTREACH:

Convener of Osechioya Widows Ministry, Mrs Esther Irabor (middle) in a group photograph with beneficiaries of the second edition of its empowerment outreach programme, themed, "God is the Husband of the Widows."

Emirs task journalists on devt reporting, stronger govt-people link

BAUCHI

Two traditional rulers in Bauchi State have urged journalists to uphold responsible, development-focused reporting that bridges the gap between government and the downtrodden.

The Emir of Duguri, Alhaji Adamu Muhammad, and the Emir of Lame, Alhaji Aliyu Yakubu, made the call when the Bauchi State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), led by its chairman, Malam Umar Sa'idu, paid them a courtesy visit.

The Emir of Duguri commended journalists for drawing

attention to issues affecting citizens' welfare and for holding government accountable in ways that foster growth and development.

He urged media practitioners to sustain robust coverage of developmental matters, stressing that the press remains pivotal to societal reorientation and democratic consolidation.

In the same vein, the Emir of Lame charged journalists to remain steadfast in professionalism and integrity.

He also called on Governor Bala Mohammed to consider engaging retired veteran journalists in his administration, noting that their wealth of experience could

be invaluable in repositioning the state for greater progress.

Reflecting on his own career, Yakubu recalled his time as a journalist with Bauchi Television Authority (BATV) and later service at the state Ministry of Tourism and Culture, saying the experiences significantly shaped his leadership journey.

He described journalism as a noble and credible profession that contributed immensely to his personal and professional success.

The Emir encouraged practitioners to take advantage of opportunities for self-development and to prepare for life after active service.

He, however, lamented the poor remuneration of journalists despite the risks inherent in

the profession, urging relevant authorities to improve their welfare and working conditions.

Both Emirs condoled the NUJ over the death of a Channels Television reporter and prayed for the speedy recovery of members injured in a recent road accident while on official assignment.

They also prayed for sustained peace in Bauchi State and Nigeria, appreciating journalists for the solidarity visit.

Earlier, NUJ Chairman, Sa'idu, said the visit was to congratulate the Emirs of Duguri and Lame on their appointments and to reaffirm the union's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote peace, inclusiveness and grassroots governance across the state.

NPC unveils digital registration system in Delta

ASABA

The National Population Commission (NPC) has launched the Electronic Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System (eCRVS) in Delta, designed to strengthen data generation and vital statistics management.

The system was launched by the Delta State Federal Commissioner, Mrs Blessyn Brume-Ataguba, at a news briefing in Asaba.

Brume-Ataguba recalled that President Bola Tinubu formally launched the eCRVS in November 2023 as part of the efforts to modernise Nigeria's civil registration process.

She said the initiative followed resolutions reached at the Sixth Session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Addis Ababa in 2022.

According to her, African ministers urged member states to automate civil registration processes and implement the UN Legal Identity Agenda.

"Nigeria responded by developing an electronic, technology-driven system to enhance data generation and improve civil statistics nationwide," Brume-Ataguba said.

She said that NPC, in collaboration with UNICEF, produced an eCRVS Operational Readiness Assessment Report to guide implementation.

She explained that the partnership aims to establish a fully digital civil registration system that converts records of vital events into reliable statistics for effective planning and decision-making.

Brume-Ataguba described the initiative as a complete shift from paper-based documentation to a modern digital platform aligned with international best practices.

She said the system would transform the way births and deaths were recorded, tracked and analysed across the country.

"This process marks a complete departure from the traditional paper-based recording of vital events to a state-of-the-art digital solution that conforms to international best practices."

LASU bars part-time students from union activities

LAGOS

The Lagos State University (LASU) has barred students of its School of Part-Time Studies (SPTS) from engaging in any form of unionism, warning that violations would attract disciplinary action.

The directive was delivered by the SPTS Director, Prof. Oluwatobi Pemedede, at the 2025/2026 matriculation ceremony held at the Femi Gbajabiamila Hall on the university's main campus in Ojo.

Represented by the Assistant Director, Dr Oluwaseun Babalola, Pemedede reminded the matriculants that their admission letters clearly state that student union activities are prohibited for part-time students.

He cautioned that the institution would not condone misconduct, stressing that any student found culpable would bear the consequences alone.

While urging them to remain focused, he noted that university life offers opportunities for per-

sonal growth, networking and discovery beyond academics.

He also disclosed that the SPTS currently runs 17 programmes across five faculties, following the recent addition of Philosophy and Music, up from 15 programmes.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Ibeyemi Olayinka-Bello, represented by Prof. Adigun Lawal of the Department of Psychology, congratulated the new students and assured them of management's commitment to their welfare, security and a conducive learning environment.

She advised them to obey university rules, avoid cultism, examination malpractice, hooliganism and other vices, and report suspicious activities or cases of harassment.

The Vice-Chancellor further stressed the university's zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence, urging students to speak up against any form of abuse while remaining disciplined and committed to their academic goals.

Osechioya Widows Ministry empowers 70 in Benin

BENIN CITY

The Osechioya Widows Ministry at the weekend marked the second edition of its outreach programme themed, "God is the Husband of the Widows" with the presentation of food support and health counselling to 70 widows in Benin City.

The initiative, led by its convener, Mrs Esther Irabor, was held as part of activities to demonstrate love and restore hope among vulnerable women in Edo State.

Speaking at the event, Irabor

said that the ministry was born out of a divine calling she received about two decades ago, but could not immediately pursue due to lack of funds and structure.

She explained that what began as informal gatherings of between five and seven widows in the home of one of them in 2021 gradually evolved into a full-fledged ministry, formally inaugurated on November 29, 2025.

According to her, 60 widows were empowered at the official launch in November 2025, while 70 beneficiaries were reached during the Valentine's Day edition.

"Our vision is to give hope to

helpless widows," she said, noting that the ministry's guiding scripture is Joshua 1:5, which she described as her personal watchword during a difficult period of widowhood in her early years.

Irabor lamented the plight of many widows, particularly younger ones who struggle to provide adequate nutrition and care for their children.

She said the outreach was designed not only to provide material support, but also to restore their sense of belonging and dignity within society.

She disclosed that the ministry is sustained by contribu-

tions from donors both within Nigeria and in the diaspora.

She appealed to individuals, corporate organisations and government agencies to partner with the group in supporting indigent widows, stressing that collaboration would help improve their living conditions and long-term prospects.

The event also featured praise, worship and prayer sessions led by Evangelist Mrs Victoria Agbonta, General Overseer of Endless Life Gospel Church, also known as Settle Down Ministry, as participants expressed gratitude and renewed hope.

APC, PDP share spoils at FCT's councils election

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced results in three Area Councils of the FCT following Saturday's local government elections in the areas with APC winning in two and the PDP won in one.

According to the results declared by INEC, Christopher Maikalangu of the APC won in the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC),

The Returning Officer for AMAC, Prof. Andrew Abue, said that Maikalangu, who is the incumbent AMAC chairman, was returned elected having scored the highest number

of votes cast, 40,295 out of the total number of Valid Votes of 62,861 in the election.

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) came second with 12,109 votes, while the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) polled 3,398 votes.

The APC also won in Bwari Area Council where its chairmanship candidate Mr Joshua Ishaku declared winner of the council.

Prof. Mohammed Nurudeen, the Returning Officer for the Bwari chairmanship election disclosed that Ishaku polled a total of 18,466 votes to defeat his opponents and therefore declared him the winner.

However, the People's Dem-

ocratic Party PDP, won in Gwagwalada with INEC declaring Mr Mohammed Kasim, winner of the Area Council

Chairmanship election.

Prof. Philip Akpeni, the Returning Officer for Gwagwalada chairmanship election,

announced that Kasim of PDP polled a total of 22,165 votes to defeat other contests and therefore declared him the winner.

Meantime, the results from the remaining three council areas were being expected as at the time of filing in this report.

Congress: Ondo APC gets new executives in 18 LGAs

AKURE

Local government executives and ad-hoc delegates have emerged from the congress of the All Progressives Congress (APC) held on Saturday across the 18 council areas of the Ondo State.

The Secretary of the Congress Committee, Mr Smart Iheazor, stated this while addressing newsmen in Akure on Sunday, describing the exercise as peaceful and transparent.

Iheazor said members of the committee monitored the elections across 18 local government areas and were satisfied with the conduct.

He explained that the delegates elected during the ward congress on Wednesday participated in electing the local government executives.

The secretary noted that the congress was conducted simultaneously in all the local government areas.

According to him, five additional delegates elected at the congress will take part in the party's state executive election slated for March 3.

He added that the ad-hoc national delegates elected at the local government level would attend the party's national convention scheduled for March 27 and March 28, in Abuja, where national officers would be elected.

He disclosed that 27 positions were contested for in each of the local government areas.

"We went round the local governments to monitor and observe the election, and the election went very smoothly.

"The election was very transparent and it was also very peaceful.

"The feedback we received from various local governments shows that there was no incident of violence. It was peaceful, and we are happy for Ondo State," he said.

Iheazor expressed confidence that the newly elected local government executives would effectively manage the party's affairs at the grassroots.

He also disclosed that the appeal committee would sit to receive petitions from the congress.

He thanked stakeholders in the state for ensuring a conducive atmosphere for the exercise.

Village heads liable for vandalism of public property —Akwa Ibom Govt

UYO

Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom announced that village heads will be held responsible for any future destruction of government property within their jurisdictions.

Eno said this while speaking to newsmen at Government House in Uyo on Saturday.

"Any village that has a government presence, and there is vandalism of government property in that village, we will withdraw the certificate of the village head," Eno said.

The governor expressed displeasure that well-equipped public schools could be easily vandalised by hoodlums within communities.

He, therefore, directed the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Mr Frank Archibong, and the State Chairman of the Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Dr Uwe-medimo Udo, to immediately convene a meeting with village heads to brief them accordingly.

The governor urged residents to stay security-conscious and protect public property, which belongs to everyone.

On the government's plan to provide mini water projects in each ward of the state, Eno said it would be handled by the Inter-Ministerial Direct Labour Committee.

He directed them to involve his personal assistants in all wards across the state.



LP'S LEADERSHIP MEETING:

L-R: Members of Labour Party (LP) House of Representatives Caucus, Ibe Okwara; Alozie Munachim; Caucus Leader, Ginger Onwusibe; National Chairman, LP, Sen. Nenadi Usman, other members, Obinna Aguocha; Amaobi Ogah and Deputy National Chairman, Prof. Theophilus Ndubuaku, during LP's leadership meeting with the House of Representatives Caucus, at the party National Secretariat in Abuja recently

A'lbom: Police caution on lawless protests over pending court matters

UYO

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom has cautioned on threats of lawless protests by some members of the public over matters that are already before the courts.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Baba Azare told newsmen in Uyo over the weekend that illegal protests could undermine public peace and order.

"When matters are already in court, let's follow legal and civil means to seek redress. That is

how a civilised society works.

"Although we recognise the constitutional rights of citizens to lawful expression and peaceful assembly, illegal protests are not allowed," he said.

Azare said that the command would not tolerate threats or acts of nude protests, unlawful occupation of public or private facilities, and disruption

of government, economic or social activities.

He said that anyone found culpable of engaging in acts or threats of illegal protests would be prosecuted in line with the law.

"As a command, we are committed to the maintenance of law and order, we are also committed to protecting lives and property.

Ogun assembly seeks increased capital funding for ICT Bureau

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun State House of Assembly Committee on Public Accounts and Anti-Corruption (PAAC) has called for increased capital funding for the state Bureau of Information Technology to enable it meet growing ICT infrastructure demands in the state.

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr Damilare Bello, made the call during the continued consideration of the 2024 Auditor-General's Report on Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) at the Assembly Complex, Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta.

Bello spoke while hosting the management team of the bureau, led by the Director of Standard Regulation, Planning and Research, Mrs Olatundun Adekunle.

He stated that increased funding had become necessary to bolster ICT infrastructure across the state and enhance service delivery.

He directed the bureau to submit its updated fixed asset register, as well as supporting documents on its power generating sets and internet service charges.

He urged the agency to reconcile its bank charges in line with observations contained in

the auditor-general's report.

In the same vein, the committee considered the audit report of the state Agricultural Development Corporation, led by its Director of Finance and Accounts, Mr Solomon Olasehinde.

The chairman and other members of the committee directed the corporation to submit detailed income and expenditure reports from its plantations located in Apoje, Lomiro, Ibara, Ikenne and Balekan.

They also requested evidence of dividend income from associated companies and details of land leased out, which formed

the basis for revenue recorded as other investment income for the year under review.

Similarly, while considering the audit report of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, led by its Permanent Secretary, Dr Qudus Yusuf, the committee urged the management to intensify efforts toward establishing a legislative framework for hotel registration to boost revenue generation.

The ministry was also directed to submit its fixed asset register, provide documents on other equipment and reconcile its bank charges with the auditor-general's report.

LUTH receives FG's free drugs for indigent patients

LAGOS

The Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), Idi-Araba, on Friday disclosed that the Federal Government has provided free drugs for the indigent patients of the hospital.

The Chief Medical Director of the hospital, Prof. Wasiu Adeyemo, made this known at a news conference in Lagos.

Adeyemo said the drugs were basically for the treatment of hypertension, diabetes and infections.

He explained that the drugs, which had 2028 as the expiring

date, were specifically for Nigerians who could not readily pay for their drugs.

According to him, the objective is to enhance access to equitable healthcare.

He emphasised that the drugs were strictly for the in-patient and out-patients, including adults and children who were registered with the hospital.

"The Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, under the leadership of Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate, has given us some supply of free drugs, specifically for the registered indigent patients of the hospital.

"The drugs are for the treatment of some common diseases like hypertension, diabetes and various forms of infections.

"And based on the number of the drugs, I believe it's going to cover about 5,000 indigent patients of the hospital.

"This provision is not limited to LUTH alone; I believe that all the 84 federal tertiary hospitals in Nigeria were inclusive, though, not sure if they have all gotten.

The CMD said the hospital has set up a committee saddled with the responsibility of making the initiative work; which includes identifying the criteria for an indigent patients.

"Similarly, we have devised a means of making it work by setting up a small committee that will see to criteria for identifying an indigent patients.

"And the people who are going to be relevant there include the doctors, who prescribe these drugs; the nurses, who are ever present with patients; the department of pharmacy and as well as the department of medical social works."

Also speaking, the Director of Medical and Social Services, LUTH, Ms Titi Tade, described the initiative as a "strategic commitment to equitable healthcare."

NEWS

ACAMB counters misinformation on CBN recapitalisation

LAGOS

The Association of Corporate and Marketing Professionals in Banks (ACAMB) has moved to correct misinformation surrounding the recapitalisation policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The association engaged a content creator to promote accurate public understanding of developments within the banking sector.

In a statement at the weekend, ACAMB President, Jide Sipe, said the step aimed to foster informed discourse and safeguard confidence in the fi-

nancial system.

He explained that the intervention followed a misleading video by a content creator, 'Unofficial Osas', alleging some banks were shut over the recapitalisation exercise.

He noted the development also prompted the invitation of the content creator Unofficial

Osas, by the Nigerian Police Force.

According to him, ACAMB's engagement led to the retraction of the video and a public apology, reaffirming its commitment to public enlightenment.

In the apology video, 'Unofficial Osas' clarified that no bank had been shut due to the

recapitalisation policy.

"I would like to offer an official retraction of that video and reiterate that no bank is shutting down."

"Most banks have met the N500 billion minimum capital for international banks and N200 billion for national banks," he said.

The content creator commended ACAMB for its professional handling of the matter and for providing clarity on the recapitalisation process.

Sipe reaffirmed the association's commitment to professionalism, ethical standards and public confidence in the banking industry.

"ACAMB stands for the

restoration of professional banking ethics and public confidence through seamless information management and public enlightenment.

"We believe an informed public is an empowered public. By engaging the content creator, accurate information reached millions of Nigerians," he said.

Sipe noted that the intervention underscored ACAMB's resolve to sustain the positive image of the banking sector and encourage responsible information sharing.

He reiterated ACAMB's commitment to evolving strategies that enhance trust in the financial system and promote better banking culture among Nigerians.



2026 FCT AREA COUNCIL ELECTION:

Cross section of voters, during the 2026 FCT Area Council Election at Naharati Sabo Primary School polling unit, Abaji in Abuja at the weekend.

Sustainable development cannot happen without youth engagement —Sen. Abiru

LAGOS

The Senator representing Lagos East Senatorial District, Sen. Adetokunbo Abiru, has said that President Bola Tinubu understands that sustainable national development cannot be achieved without the full engagement of young people.

Abiru, who also serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance and Other Financial Institutions, made this known at the inaugural Eko Parliamentary Summit of the Lagos State Youth Parliament, held in Lagos at the weekend.

The event, held at the Lagos

State House of Assembly.

It had as its theme, "Youth Legislature on the Rise: Shaping Policies for the Future," reflecting the urgency of the times.

Abiru, said that on this day, they had witnessed young Nigerians taking up critical roles in the Federal Executive Council and other key institutions.

The federal lawmaker added that the President had demonstrated a clear commitment to repositioning the economy and creating sustainable opportunities for young people.

He said: "One of the most admirable hallmarks of the President's administration is the inclusion of young people

in governance.

"Examples are: Dr Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy – a tech visionary; Mr Ayodele Olawande, Minister of Youth Development an active youth voice from the grassroots.

"Mr Aminu Umar-Sadiq, MD/CEO of Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority entrepreneurship. An advocate for youth; Uzoma Nwagba, MD/CEO of Nigerian Consumer Credit Corporation champion of financial inclusion for youth empowerment.

"And several others serving as Special Assistants, Advisers, and chief executive officers of critical agencies.

"This intentional inclusion is a validation of the age-old

truth that the youths are not just leaders of tomorrow; they are leaders of today."

The senator said it was no coincidence that one of the fastest-growing sectors under this administration was the digital economy and tech space.

He said the president had strategically positioned Nigeria to become a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa.

Abiru said through support for tech startups, the expansion of digital infrastructure and favourable regulatory reforms, our young people were now leading a digital revolution.

He said: "Across the world, young people are no longer content with being passive observers of governance.

Naval Commander assures Kogi residents of improved security

LOKOJA

The Commander of Nigerian Navy Ship Lugard, Commodore Adesola Ojo, has assured residents of Kogi State of their safety, saying security agencies are recording major gains against kidnapping and banditry through "Operation Accord".

Ojo gave the assurance during a visit by the Naval Officers' Wives Association (NOWA), Kogi Chapter, to the Ministry of Mercy Orphanage Home.

He said that security agencies required actionable intelligence from residents to effectively carry out operations, noting that cooperation from the public had already produced visible results.

"All that security agencies need from citizens is actionable intelligence to enable us carry out our operations effectively. Residents have been providing useful information, and the results are evi-

dent for everyone to see," he said.

The commander explained that Operation Accord, initiated by the Ministry of Defence about two months ago, had strengthened the fight against criminal activities in the state and neighbouring areas.

"For the past two months, teams deployed under Operation Accord have been on ground assisting in the fight against kidnapers and bandits. We are winning the war, and all efforts are being made to ensure that lives and property are protected," he said.

Ojo stressed that security agencies in the state would not negotiate with criminals.

"The standard in Kogi is clear: we do not negotiate with criminals. The best option for them is to leave the state. Kogi is not a safe haven for bandits," he said.

He added that beyond securing waterways, the Navy remained committed to the welfare and livelihood of residents.

Firm plans to bridge creative sector gaps

LAGOS

Learnsar, an edutainment and e-learning platform, aims to institutionalise the creative economy by uniting corporates, policymakers, investors, educators, and creators within a single ecosystem.

Its Chief Executive Officer, Mr Kshitij Sainani, disclosed this at the Learnsar Creative Summit, held in Lagos.

Sainani said Learnsar is built as infrastructure for the creative economy—not just courses or celebrity content—but structured pathways to professional growth.

"Now, the issue and the challenges for creatives and corporates are that there is capital from the corporate side, but they do not know who to back in the creative space.

"We have musicians, painters, artisans, so many different kinds of creatives, but they do not know where to go to find capital.

"So, if we as a community can come together and build an ecosystem where the creative and corporate world can meet, learn and network, we hope that capital can flow in the right places in the creative economy," he said.

Sainani, however, urged governments to support the platform and creatives by providing the right infrastructure.

"Provide us with the right infrastructure in terms of internet; give us more co-working spaces, where we can actually activate and send these students to learn.

"Also, for our Skills4All programme, if we can have the government support by providing scholarships to children, it can be a big win, not only for us as a company but the country as a whole," he said.

Also, Learnsar's Director of Operations and Technology, Mr Temi Toba, said the creative sector accounts for a large share of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), highlighting its economic importance.

FG reaffirms resolve to prioritise palm oil in bolstering economic growth

ABUJA

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Yusuf Tuggar, has reaffirmed Nigeria's resolve to prioritise palm oil as a strategic commodity for bolstering the country's economic growth.

Tuggar disclosed this in a statement issued at the weekend by Kimiebi Ebienfa, the ministry's Spokesperson, against the backdrop of the visit by Izzana Salleh, Secretary-General of the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries (CPOPC) and her delegation to the ministry.

The ministry observed palm oil historically underpinned industrial development in Europe

and remained vital to food production, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and manufacturing.

He also described criticisms of palm oil in certain global quarters as often inconsistent with historical realities.

Tuggar underscored the need for producing countries to assert evidence-based narratives.

According to him, for Nigeria, palm oil is not merely an agricultural product but a cornerstone of food security, rural livelihoods, and economic diversification.

Tuggar said: "Nigeria currently produces approximately 1.4 million metric tonnes annually and consumes about 3 million tonnes, with ambitious

plans to scale production significantly in the coming years.

"Nigeria's potential membership of the CPOPC is a strategic step aligned with the administration's priorities of food security, economic growth, and youth employment.

"Joining the Council would strengthen Nigeria's voice in global commodity diplomacy and position the country to benefit from coordinated advocacy, sustainability frameworks, and technical cooperation.

"Nigeria must not allow shifting global consumption trends or policy narratives to undermine long-term agricultural competitiveness, but embrace forward-looking col-

laboration among producing countries to secure market access and reinforce collective bargaining power."

Earlier, Salleh stated that the visit was both a courtesy call and a substantive policy engagement aimed at deepening institutional ties between Nigeria and the Council.

She expressed appreciation for Nigeria's positive disposition and reiterated the council's readiness to support Nigeria's integration into its frameworks.

"Particularly, in a strategic engagement focused on Nigeria's potential transition from observer status to full membership of the intergovernmental body," she said.

Council polls: Group raises concerns over polling unit reassignments, vote-buying

ABUJA

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) has expressed concern over late polling unit reassignments, operational lapses, vote trading, and isolated disruptions during Saturday's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Councils elections.

CDD-West Africa Director, Dauda Garuba, made this known in a preliminary assessment issued in Abuja on Sunday.

Garuba said its Election Analysis Centre (CDD-EAC) deployed roving observers across all 62 wards of the FCT to monitor the conduct of the elections.

He described the exercise as largely peaceful but noted that administrative and logistical challenges significantly affected voters participation in several locations.

"CDD reported multiple incidents where voters discovered that their polling units had been reassigned shortly before election day without ad-

equate notice.

"At Polling Unit 055, Ougadogou Street Ward in Wuse, more than 20 voters were reportedly unable to vote after arriving at their usual polling

unit only to learn that their details had been moved elsewhere.

"The situation was worsened by movement restrictions across the FCT, which limited the ability of affected voters to locate their new polling units, potentially contributing to low turnout and weakening public

confidence in the process.

"Our observers also documented delays in the commencement of accreditation and voting due to operational shortcomings.

"At Polling Unit 004, Wuse Zone 2 Primary School in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), only 504 names were

displayed out of 751 registered voters."

"While no voter register was displayed at a polling unit in Wowo Nursery and Primary School, Kuje Area Council."

Garuba also said that the group noted that election officials reportedly arrived with incorrect Bimodal Voter Ac-

NSCDC, Police deepen collaboration in crime fighting

KANO

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Kano State Command, has reaffirmed its commitment to deeper collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force to boost security and combat crime across the state.

This was contained in a statement by the Corps Public Relations Officer, SC Ibrahim Idris-Abdullahi, at the weekend in Kano.

The statement said the Kano State Commandant of the NSCDC, Mohammed Hassan-Agalama, made the commitment during a courtesy visit to the state Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Adamu-Bakori.

Hassan-Agalama said the visit was part of ongoing efforts to reinforce inter-agency cooperation and deepen operational synergy among security agencies in the fight against crime and criminality.

He stressed the importance of

cooperation, intelligence sharing and joint operations, while appreciating the support and contributions of the police to NSCDC operations in the state.

The commandant reaffirmed the corps' commitment to close collaboration with the police and other security agencies to protect critical assets, lives and property, and sustain peace across the state.

According to him, enhanced collaboration among security agencies would help curb crimes such as vandalism, thug-gery, phone snatching and other emerging security threats.

He commended the police command under Adamu-Bakori for its efforts in tackling crime, adding that the NSCDC would continue to benefit from the wealth of experience of the police in maintaining public safety.

Responding, Adamu-Bakori welcomed the NSCDC commandant and commended the corps for its complementary role in maintaining law and order.

NAF, Maritime agency collaborate on blue economy security

ABUJA

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) have strengthened operational collaboration to enhance maritime security and safeguard Nigeria's blue economy.

This is contained in a statement at the weekend by the Director, Public Relations and Information, NAF, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, in Abuja.

The renewed commitment was reached when the NIMASA Director-General, Dr Dayo Mobereola, paid a courtesy visit to the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, at NAF Headquarters, Abuja.

Mobereola said maritime security remained critical to economic stability, international trade and investor confidence, noting that Nigeria had recorded zero piracy incidents

within its territorial waters over the past four years.

He described the feat as a testament to the professionalism and coordinated efforts of the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security agencies.

According to him, the increasing volume of maritime traffic across Nigeria's coastal and inland waterways requires sustained vigilance, enhanced surveillance and rapid response capabilities.

He stressed that deeper collaboration with the NAF would ensure continuous aerial oversight, timely intelligence sharing and proactive deterrence necessary to protect maritime assets and unlock the full potential of the nation's blue economy.

In his remarks, Aneke reaffirmed the NAF's unwavering commitment to strengthened air-maritime operations in support of the Federal Government's Deep Blue Project.



VOTE BUYING:

Officials of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) monitoring the FCT Area Council election against vote buying at the Kwali Health Care center Polling unit at Kwali, during the 2026 FCT Area Council Election in Abuja at the weekend.

Adamawa traditional rulers move to curb open defecation

GANYE (ADAMAWA)

Traditional leaders in Ganye Local Government Area of Adamawa have pledged to sanction residents engaging in open defecation to improve sanitation and health-care outcomes.

The District Head of Gurupawo, Alhaji Hammantukur Gisilanbe, gave the assurance in an interview with newsmen during a field visit on access to safe water under the Accelerated Sanitation and Water for All (ASWA III) project at the weekend in Ganye.

The project is funded by the Government of the Netherlands and implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) through Water, Sanita-

tion and Hygiene (WASH) units.

Hammantukur said the intervention had helped residents to appreciate the importance of household latrines in curbing open defecation.

"Initially, our people had the culture of defecating outside, polluting the environment which causes diseases to children and households, but with the introduction of latrines, the situation has greatly improved.

"We are making bylaws on this issue. This is important because our people have stayed long defecating outside, so we are gradually enforcing sanctions against offenders.

"There are different punishments meted to offenders based on their status, whether civil servants, business owners or residents, while stubborn violators may be reported to the police," he said.

He commended the WASH programme, noting that improved access to potable water had reduced disease burden and hospital expenses in the community.

Similarly, Kabiru Jailani, District Head of Sankom, said the project had improved child wellbeing, health outcomes and school attendance.

Jailani said most households now had latrines, adding that monitoring teams had been established to ensure compliance.

He said the community has now benefited from a solar-powered borehole, assuring that measures were in place to ensure proper maintenance.

Jailani added that residents who defecate openly or vandalise water facilities would be reported to relevant authorities and fined.

Jared Gangkuba, Executive Secretary, Primary Healthcare

Authority, Ganye, said government and partners had intensified WASH sensitisation across communities.

"WASH has been a blessing for us. In the last two years, we applied for ASWA II project which was granted and staff sensitised people in 150 communities.

"Currently, we are working in an additional 150 communities, bringing the total to 300 benefiting communities, including schools through clubs and societies," he said.

Gangkuba added that the local government was gradually becoming open-defecation-free in practice.

Dr Nuzhat Rafique, Chief of UNICEF Bauchi Field Office, said collaboration with the Adamawa Government had improved sanitation and water supply in benefiting communities.

65% of livestock consumed in Nigeria imported —Minister

ABUJA

Minister of Livestock Development, Alhaji Mukhta Maiha, has said that 65 percent of the livestock consumed in Nigeria annually is imported in spite of the potential of red meat exportation value of N3.2 billion.

Maiha made the disclosure when he appeared before the National Assembly Joint Committee on Livestock Development to defend the ministry's 2026 budget estimates.

The minister, in his presentation on the performance of 2025 budget and 2026 proposal, said out of the N70 billion approved as take off fund for the ministry in 2024, only N20 billion was released.

He said that the N10 billion appropriated for the ministry as capital vote for 2025 was not released.

Members of the committee frowned at what they described as "lip service" to development of livestock industry in Nigeria, given its creation in 2024.

The lawmakers, who expressed

disbelief on the state of the ministry, urged the leadership of the committee to communicate with President Bola Tinubu on the need for urgent intervention.

This, according to them, will be in line with the primary aim of government diversification via livestock development, as obtainable in Brazil, Argentina and Belgium, among other countries.

Sen. Tahir Monguno said poor funding experienced by the ministry was at variance with the intent for its establishment.

"Establishment of the Ministry

of Livestock Development in 2024 was driven by the gospel of diversification of the nation's economy.

"It is, therefore, to my surprise and disgust that we are paying lip service to the livestock sector now.

"We need to let the executive know that it is inherently contradictory to create the ministry and woefully fail to fund it," he said.

Sen. Abdul Ningi alleged sabotage in the poor funding of the ministry, which they said might not be known to President Bola Tinubu.

NEWS

How we tracked, arrested Owo church attackers, DSS' witness tells court

A witness of the Department State Services (DSS), has given details of how suspected terrorists, who attacked St. Francis Catholic Church, Owo in Ondo State on June 5, 2022,

were tracked and apprehended.

The operative, who testified as the 11th prosecution witness (PW-11), told Justice Eme-ka Nwite of the Federal High Court in Abuja while being led

in evidence by the DSS counsel, Ayodeji Adedipe, SAN.

The PW-11, who was the last witness to testify before the service closed its case, said his team deployed technical means to trace, locate and arrest the alleged perpetrators of the attack.

The DSS had dragged five

men – Idris Abdulmalik Omeiza (25 years), Al Qasim Idris (20 years), Jamiu Abdulmalik (26 years), Abdulhaleem Idris (25 years) and Momoh Otuho Abubakar (47 years)- to court over the attack.

They were preferred with terrorism-related offences.

The witness, identified as

“SSK” for security reasons,, said he is currently the Digital Forensic Lead at the Counter-Terrorism Investigation Department of the service.

The witness said following the terrorist attack on June 5, 2022 the Director General of the DSS directed his team to trace, locate and apprehend the perpetrators.

He said his team applied what he called, call geospatial network filtering and cell tower triangulation in its investigation.

“With these applications, we were able to filter thousands of mobile phones that had contact with the cell tower in Ow-aluwa, Elegbeka and Ifon.

“As a result of this, we nar-

rowed it down to one of the defendants' phone number. The defendant is identified as Idris Abdulmalik Omeiza (the 1st defendant)

“The system revealed a unique identification number, the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) associated with the 1st defendant's phone,

“This number is a unique digital fingerprint associated with every phone, meaning that no two phones have the same IMEI.

“This enabled us to trace, locate and arrest the 1st defendant. His arrest and confession led to the arrest of other defendants.

“We furthered the analysis by carrying out what we called frequency of communication.”



INAUGURATION OF BLOCK OF CLASSROOMS:

Representative of Chief of Air Staff, AVM Edward Gabkwet (M); representative of Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Prof. Ubong Umoh (8th R); facilitator of the project, retired AVM Ibora Etukudo, with Staff and students of Edemaya Unity College during the inauguration of newly constructed block of classrooms and staff offices at the Edemaya Unity College Ikot Local Government Area Akwa Ibom State.

C'River magistrates sustain strike, insist on '25-25-24' vehicle deal

CALABAR

Magistrates in Cross River has said that their negotiations with the State Government for official vehicles are inconclusive, insisting on the continuation of their 11-day-old strike.

Chairman of the state chapter of the Magistrates Association of Nigeria, Mr Godwin Onah, told reporters in Calabar that discussions were still ongoing, but the government maintained its earlier position, despite fresh proposals by the union.

Onah said the dispute with

the government centred principally on the provision of official vehicles for the over 74 magistrates in the state.

According to him, the government proposed to provide 15 vehicles in the budget cycle ending in March but the magistrates considered the number as grossly inadequate.

“We initially requested 37 vehicles at once, representing half of our member, with the remainder to be delivered on or before June.

“After the government refused to adjust its offer, the union reviewed its position

and proposed a three-tranche arrangement.

“Under the new proposal, 25 vehicles would be delivered in March, 25 in June and the remaining 24 in September,” Onah said.

He said that government had yet to respond to the association's revised proposal.

He said that they would suspend the strike and resume duties, “if the government agreed to the 25-25-24 arrangement.”

Onah said that although other issues, such as accommodation and security were pending, the provision of vehicles remained the association's immediate priority.

He said that vehicles would

ease transportation challenges and improve judicial service delivery across the state.

He further said that the association was mindful of the state's financial constraints and ongoing commitments, including efforts to recover oil wells.

Onah said that the group had exercised patience since 2012, when the issue of official vehicles was first raised.

“Renewed assurances were given in 2024 but had yet to yield concrete action,” he said.

He, therefore, appealed to the State Government to approve the instalment plan and resolve the lingering dispute in the interest of justice delivery.

Alleged rights violation: Companies, workers file N1bn suit against I-G, others

ABUJA

Aggrieved two Nigerian companies and their staff have filed a N1 billion suit against the Inspector-General (I-G) of Police and four others at the Abuja High Court over alleged rights violation and destruction of assets.

The applicants, in the fundamental rights enforcement suit, marked: CV/65/2026 filed by their lawyer, B. S. Ak-inwumi, accused the I-G and other respondents of unlawfully destroying their assets.

The applicants include two firms; Landseeds Integrated Services Ltd and Ten Thousand

Seeds Ltd.

The employees are Gbemileke Abiodun, Akinwale Olabode, Adenike Adesoji, Goodluck Olatunde and Tobi George.

They accused the respondents of unlawfully arresting and detaining them and have continued to threaten them with further arrest, detention and prosecution.

Other respondents joined alongside I-G are the Nigeria Police Force (NPF); Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Command; ACP Sadiq Mana, O/C X-Squad, Lagos Police Command and Abayomi Oluwadamilare Sotonade.

The applicants stated that the

five staff members were minding their businesses on their desks in the two companies on February 10 when agents of the 1st to 4th respondents (I-GP NPF, Lagos Police Commissioner and Mana) allegedly invaded their offices in gestapo style, destroying the property of the firms, disrupting their business and arresting Abiodun, Olabode and Adesoji (1st to 3rd applicants).

They added that the 4th and 5th applicants (Olatunde and George) were severely injured at the premises of the firms in the course of the invasion and that the 1st to 3rd applicants were bundled away in booth of the invading security agents' ve-

hicle “in dehumanising manner and were dumped in the cell of the Lagos State Police Command February 10, 2026.

“On the morning of the 11th February 2026, the first to third applicants were taken to the office of the fourth respondents (Mana), where they were told that the fifth respondent (Sotonade) was the petitioner on whose behalf the security agents acted.”

The applicants further stated that they later learnt that it was Sotonade's complaint that one Olabode John Fatoye collected N23 million from him and some others for some land transactions while being a staff of the 6th applicant (Ten Thousand Seeds Ltd).

Court remands 3 over alleged armed robbery, terrorism in Benue

MAKURDI

A Makurdi Magistrates' Court has ordered the remand in custody of three persons alleged to have robbed some herdsmen of their cows.

The trio -Timothy Akaave, Ugbakyar Tersuwe and Akpera Kator, who live at Agagbe in Gwer-West Local Government Area of Benue, were charged with criminal conspiracy, armed robbery and acts of terrorism.

However, when the case was called in court, the Magistrate, Mrs Nguter Kakaan, did not take their pleas for want of jurisdiction to hear the charges.

Kakaan subsequently adjourned the matter until March 18, for further mention.

Earlier, Prosecuting Police Officer, Insp Godwin Ato told the court that the case was transferred from the Divisional Police Headquarters, Naka in Gwer-West to the State CID, Makurdi, on Feb-

ruary 5 via a letter dated same day.

According to the letter, Men of the Naka Division led by Insp Benjamin Kyeende arrested the defendants while responding to a distress call from one Atime Iorhinya on February 4.

Iorhinya reported to the police that the defendants were notorious members of a dreaded cattle rustling gang, who specialised in reprisal attacks on communities in the area.

The prosecutor reported that the complainant stated that the youths of Mbachoon and Mbabija communities sighted the defendants with others at Nagi camp on February 5, armed with dangerous weapons such as AK 47 rifles, attacking herders grazing their cattle in the area.

Ato said that the defendants and their accomplices fired several gun shots at the cows, maimed and butchered many of them and carted away their meat to unknown destination.

PUBLIC NOTICE

VOLUNTEER EDO LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (VELTAN)
The general public is hereby notified that the above named Association has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission for registration under Part F of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020.

TRUSTEES
Asoro Kingsley — Chairman
Dr. Iredia Osemwegie-Ero — Secretary
Prof. Omogbe Esho — Trustee
Engr. Dr. Isibor — Trustee
Prof. Mrs. Doreen Yusuf — Trustee
Chief Osayomwanbo Osemwegie — Trustee
Mrs. Edobo-Uzamer — Trustee
Mrs. Nosakhare Joy Osasunwen — Trustee
Mr. Andrew Isuekehor Odigbhe — Trustee
Deacon Alex O. Guobadia — Trustee

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

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

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
To promote teaching and learning of the Edo language; support its standardization and research; and promote the preservation and transmission of Edo and related Edoid languages.

Signed:
Secretary, VELTAN

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **ONUWABHAGBE CHARLES NELSON**, now wish to be known and address as **ONUWABHAGBE CHARLES OMOZOPKEA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS JATTO ESTHER FUNKE** now wish to be known and address as **MRS. JOHNBULL MARTIN OKORO ESTHER FUNKE**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **HOSEA OMOBERHIE EDWIN** now wish to be known and called **MRS. HOSEA CHIDUBEM OKOYEAGU**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

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NEWS

Pakistan launches deadly strikes on Afghanistan

Pakistan has carried out multiple overnight air strikes on Afghanistan, which the Taliban has said killed at least 18 people, including women and children.

Islamabad said the attacks targeted seven alleged militant camps and hideouts near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and that they had been launched after recent suicide bombings in Pakistan.

Afghanistan condemned the attacks, saying they targeted multiple civilian homes and a religious school.

The fresh strikes come after the two countries agreed to a fragile ceasefire in October following deadly cross-border clashes, though subsequent fighting has taken place.

The Taliban's defence ministry said the strikes targeted civilian areas of Nangarhar and Paktika provinces and had killed dozens of people.

In Girdi Kas village, in the Bihsud district of Nangarhar,

a man named Shahabuddin told reporters while pointing at his destroyed house that of 23 members of his family, only five had survived the attack.

Local Taliban spokesman Sayed Taib Hamd said that 18 members of the family had been killed.

The BBC had earlier been told about 20 people were thought to have died.

No deaths have been reported so far in the other areas hit. A guesthouse and a religious school were targeted in the Bermal and Urgan districts of Paktika province, but they were empty at the time of the attacks, local officials and locals told the BBC.

Houses were also destroyed in Balish village in the Urgan district of Paktika province (pictured)

Pakistan's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said it had carried out "intelligence based selective targeting of seven terrorist camps and

hideouts".

In a statement on X, it said the targets included members of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, which the government refers to as "Fitna al Khawarij," along with their affiliates and the Islamic State-Khorasan Province.

The ministry described the strikes as "a retributive response" to recent suicide bombings in Pakistan by terror groups it said were sheltered by Kabul.

The recent attacks in Pakistan included one on a Shia mosque in the capital Islamabad earlier this month, as well as others that took place since the holy month of Ramadan began this week in the north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Pakistan accused the Afghan Taliban of failing to take action against the militants, adding that it had "conclusive evidence" that the attacks were carried out by militants on the instructions of their leadership

in Afghanistan.

The Taliban's defence ministry later posted on X condemning the attacks as a "blatant violation of Afghanistan's territorial integrity", adding that they were a "clear breach of international law".

It warned that "an appropriate and measured response will be taken at a suitable time", adding that "attacks on civilian targets and religious institutions indicate the failure of Pakistan's army in intelligence and security."

The strikes come days after Saudi Arabia mediated the release of three Pakistani soldiers earlier this week, who were captured in Kabul during border clashes last October.

Those clashes ended with a tentative ceasefire that same month after the worst fighting since the Taliban returned to power in 2021.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 1,600-mile (2,574 km) mountainous border.



US MILITARY:

The US has been building up its military presence near Iran in recent weeks.

US ambassador's Israel comments condemned by Arab and Muslim nations

Arab and Muslim governments have condemned remarks made by the US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who suggested Israel would be justified in taking over a vast stretch of the Middle East on Biblical grounds.

In an interview with conservative US commentator Tucker Carlson, Huckabee was asked whether Israel had a right to an area which the host said was, according to the Bible, "essentially the entire Middle East".

The ambassador said "it would be fine if it took it all". But he added Israel was not seeking to do so, rather it is "asking to at least take the land that they now occupy" and protect its people.

In a joint statement, more than a dozen governments including Jordan, Egypt and the

United Arab Emirates called the comments "dangerous and inflammatory", and a threat to efforts to end the war in Gaza.

In the interview, released on Friday, Carlson pressed the ambassador on his interpretation of a Bible verse which the host claimed suggested Israel had a right to the land between the River Nile in Egypt and the Euphrates in Syria and Iraq.

Huckabee said "it would be a big piece of land" but stressed that "I don't think that's what we're talking about here today".

He later added: "They're not asking to go back to take all of that, but they are asking to at least take the land that they now occupy, they now live in, they now own legitimately, and it is a safe haven for them."

He also said his earlier remark that Israel could take it "all" had

been somewhat "hyperbolic".

Following the interview's release, the UAE's foreign ministry released the statement on behalf of various governments and other actors expressing "strong condemnation and profound concern" regarding the comments.

The statement said Huckabee had "indicated that it would be acceptable for Israel to exercise control over territories belonging to Arab states, including the occupied West Bank".

It said the remarks violated international law and directly contradicted US President Donald Trump's plan to end the war in Gaza, including efforts to create "a political horizon for a comprehensive settlement that ensures the Palestinian people have their own independent state".

The statement continued:

"The ministries reaffirmed that Israel has no sovereignty whatsoever over the Occupied Palestinian Territory or any other occupied Arab lands."

"They reiterated their firm rejection of any attempts to annex the West Bank or separate it from the Gaza Strip, their strong opposition to the expansion of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and their categorical rejection of any threat to the sovereignty of Arab states."

The statement said it was signed by the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Syria and the State of Palestine, as well as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

'Affront to humanity': Sudan slams Uganda for hosting RSF paramilitary boss

Sudan's government has denounced Uganda for hosting the leader of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), calling the meeting an "affront to humanity".

Sudan's foreign ministry, aligned with the nation's armed forces, said Uganda had flouted international law by welcoming RSF Commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, whose fighters are accused of committing widespread atrocities throughout the continuing civil war.

On Friday, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said he met with Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, at his presidential home in the city of Entebbe.

Museveni, appointed by the African Union to mediate between Sudan's military and the RSF, said he emphasised "a peaceful political solution".

In a statement on Sunday, Sudan's foreign ministry said: "The Sudanese government condemns in the strongest terms the Ugandan government's reception... of rebel leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commander of the terrorist militia."

The statement denounced the meeting between Dagalo and Uganda's president and said it was "an unprecedented move that is an affront to humanity as a whole, before it is an affront to the Sudanese people".

Sudan said it understood

Uganda had the right to welcome whomever to its country, but said Uganda has flouted international law by hosting Dagalo. Uganda's government has not responded to these allegations.

President Museveni summarised his meeting with Dagalo in a previous statement, saying: "As always, I emphasised that dialogue and a peaceful political solution are the only sustainable paths to stability for Sudan and the region."

Sudan remains locked in an almost three-year power struggle between the regular army and the RSF. The civil war has killed hundreds of thousands of people, forced more than 13 million people from their homes and sparked widespread famine.

Both the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces have been accused of atrocities.

Earlier this week, the United Nations said evidence of horrors committed during the RSF's siege of the city of el-Fasher point to genocide.

Throughout the war, Sudan's government has criticised regional states for hosting RSF leaders.

Last year, Sudan suspended all imports from Kenya after the RSF held meetings in Kenya's capital city, Nairobi.

Kenya insisted it had hosted the meetings in a bid to find a way to end the war, "without any ulterior motives".

Trump curious why Iran has not 'capitulated', US envoy Witkoff says

The US has been building up its military presence near Iran in recent weeks

US President Donald Trump is questioning why Iran has not yet "capitulated" in the face of Washington's military build-up in the Middle East, the US president's special envoy Steve Witkoff has said.

Witkoff told Fox News on Saturday that Trump was "curious" about Iran's position after he had warned of a limited military strike if a deal was not reached on Tehran's nuclear programme.

The US and its European allies suspect Iran of moving towards making a nuclear weapon, which it denies.

Within Iran, anti-government protests were staged at several universities over the weekend - the first rallies on such a scale since January's deadly crackdown by the authorities, which saw thousands killed.

In his interview with Fox News, Witkoff said: "I don't want to use the word 'frustrated'... because he understands he's got plenty of alternatives, but he's curious as to why they haven't... I don't want to use the word 'capitulated', but why they haven't capitulated."

"Why, under this sort of pressure, with the amount of

seapower and naval power that we have over there, why haven't they come to us and said, 'We profess that we don't want a weapon, so here's what we're prepared to do?'"

"And yet it's hard to sort of get them to that place," Trump's envoy added.

Last Tuesday, US and Iranian officials held indirect talks in Switzerland aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear programme, saying progress had been made.

Despite this, Trump said two days later the world would find out "over the next, probably, 10 days" whether a deal with Iran would be reached or the US would take military action.

In recent weeks, the US has been building up its military presence near Iran.

The deployment includes the world's largest warship, USS Gerald R Ford, appearing to be heading towards the region.

USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier has also been deployed, along with destroyers, combat ships and fighter jets.

In Iran, the BBC has verified footage of demonstrators marching on the campus of the Sharif University of Technology in the capital Tehran on Saturday. They were later seen scuffling with government supporters.

NEWS

Foreign

Investigation: Russian spy agency takes over Wagner operations in Africa

Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency has taken over mercenary group Wagner's influence operations in Africa after the death of its founder Yevgeny Prigozhin, according to a new investigation.

Wagner, whose brutal methods have been denounced by rights organisations, was Russia's best-known mercenary group.

It had a widespread presence in Africa, deploying fighters alongside the armies of countries including Libya and Mali, and also conducted vast disinformation and destabilisation campaigns.

After Prigozhin died in a plane crash in 2023 following a short-lived mutiny against Moscow, the Russian defence ministry has sought to replace Wagner in Africa and coordinate security operations through an umbrella group known as the Africa Corps.

But it is the SVR that has taken over Wagner's influence operations, aimed at pushing Moscow's political and economic interests, conducting disinformation campaigns and eliminating competition in Africa and beyond, according to an investigation by a consortium of investigative and media outlets,

including Forbidden Stories and All Eyes On Wagner.

"The SVR has now taken over the most effective tool of the Wagner Group," said the investigation, which also involved Dossier Center, openDemocracy and iStories.

Nearly 100 consultants work for Wagner's influence branch, called Africa Politology or The Company, the investigative outlets said. Between 2024 and 2025, the outfit deployed teams across numerous countries, including Angola, Argentina, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Niger and Sudan, the investigation said. Teams have also been active in Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Cameroon, Benin and Namibia.

Influence and disinformation

"The SVR provides a layer of intelligence with information on specific topics, recruits sources, opens access and places key agents of influence in strategic roles," the consortium said.

The investigation was launched after internal documents from the network were anonymously sent to the editor-in-chief of the award-winning pan-African media outlet The Continent.



RUSSIAN FLAG WITH SUPPORTERS:

Supporters of Capt. Ibrahim Traore parade wave a Russian flag in the streets of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Oct. 2, 2022.

More than 1,500 Venezuelan political prisoners apply for amnesty

A total of 1,557 Venezuelan political prisoners have applied for amnesty under a new law introduced on Thursday, the country's National Assembly President has said.

Jorge Rodríguez, brother of Venezuelan interim President Delcy Rodríguez and an ally of former President Nicolás Maduro, also said "hundreds" of prisoners had already been released.

Among them is politician Juan Pablo Guanipa, one of several opposition voices to have criticised the law for excluding certain prisoners.

The US has urged Venezuela to speed up its release of political prisoners since US forces seized Maduro in a raid on 3 January. Venezuela's socialist

government has always denied holding political prisoners.

At a news conference on Saturday Jorge Rodríguez said 1,557 release requests were being addressed "immediately" and ultimately the legislation would extend to 11,000 prisoners.

The government first announced days after Maduro's capture, on 8 January, that "a significant number" of prisoners would be freed as a goodwill gesture.

Opposition and human rights groups have said the government under Maduro used detentions of political prisoners to stamp out dissent and silence critics for years.

These groups have also criticised the new law. One frequently cited criticism is that

it would not extend amnesty to those who called for foreign armed intervention in Venezuela, BBC Latin America specialist Luis Fajardo says.

He noted that law professor Juan Carlos Apitz, of the Central University of Venezuela, told CNN Español that that part of the amnesty law "has a name and surname". "That paragraph is the Maria Corina Machado paragraph."

It is not clear if the amnesty would actually cover Machado, who won last year's Nobel Peace Prize, Fajardo said.

He added that other controversial aspects of the law include the apparent exclusion from amnesty benefits of dozens of military officers involved in rebellions against the Maduro administration

over the years.

On Saturday, Rodríguez said it is "releases from Zona Seven of El Helicóide that they're handling first".

Those jailed at the infamous prison in Caracas would be released "over the next few hours", he added.

Activists say some family members of those imprisoned in the facility have gone on hunger strike to demand the release of their relatives.

US President Donald Trump said that El Helicóide would be closed after Maduro's capture.

Maduro is awaiting trial in custody in the US alongside his wife Cilia Flores and has pleaded not guilty to drugs and weapons charges, saying that he is a "prisoner of war".

Minnesota Vikings receiver Moore dies aged 25

The Minnesota Vikings have paid tribute to wide receiver Rondale Moore after the 25-year-old was found dead at his home on Sunday.

Police in Moore's hometown of New Albany, Indiana were called to a property on Saturday night, when Moore was found in a garage.

The American was transferred to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

A post-mortem examination will take place on Sunday.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of Rondale Moore," the Vikings said in a statement.

"While we are working to understand the facts, we have spoken with Rondale's family to offer our condolences and the full support of the Minnesota Vikings.

"We have also been in communication with our players, coaches, and staff, and will make counselling and emotional support resources available to anyone in need. Our thoughts are with Rondale's family and friends during

this devastating time."

Moore spent three years with the Arizona Cardinals after being drawn as a second-round pick in the 2021 draft.

He joined the Atlanta Falcons in 2024 but a knee injury saw him miss the entire campaign, before joining the Vikings in 2025.

"While Rondale had been a member of the Vikings for a short time, he was someone we came to know well and care about deeply," said Vikings coach Kevin O'Connell.

"He was a humble, soft-spoken and respectful young man who was proud of his Indiana roots.

"We are all heartbroken by the fact he won't continue to live out his NFL dream and we won't all have a chance to watch him flourish."

The NFL said they were "deeply saddened" by the "tragic passing" of Moore.

After making his NFL debut in 2021, Moore went on to make 135 catches for 1,201 yards for the Cardinals over three seasons in Arizona.

Armed man killed after entering secure perimeter of Trump's residence, Secret Service says

An armed man has been shot dead after entering the secure perimeter of US President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, the Secret Service has said.

The man was carrying a shotgun and fuel can when he was stopped and shot by Secret Service agents and a Sheriff's deputy, authorities said.

The incident happened around 01:30 ET (06:30 GMT) on Sunday morning, when the president was in Washington DC.

The suspect's identity has not been released yet but he was white and in his early 20s, officers said.

Secret Service agents fired at him after they saw him "unlawfully entering the secure

perimeter at Mar-a-Lago early this morning", agency spokesman Anthony Guglielmi posted on X.

The suspect "was observed by the north gate of the Mar-a-Lago property carrying what appeared to be a shotgun and a fuel can", the agency said in a statement.

The man was then shot after refusing orders, Palm Beach County sheriff Ric Bradshaw said.

"The only words that we said to him was 'drop the items' which means the gas can and the shotgun," Bradshaw told a news conference.

"At which time he put down the gas can, raised the shotgun to a shooting position," he said.

At that point, agents fired their weapons to "neutralise the threat", he said.

The officers were wearing body cameras and no law enforcement officers were in-

jured, he added.

Bradshaw said that he does not know if the suspect's gun was loaded, and that will form part of an investigation, which the FBI will be assisting in.

Security at Mar-a-Lago is extremely tight, with an outer cordon of local Palm Beach sheriffs and an inner one maintained by the Secret Service. Visitors are searched, and cars and bags are swept by dogs and metal detectors.

Trump has been the target of several assassination plots or attempts.

In July 2024, Trump was shot in the ear as he stood in front of crowds in Butler, Pennsylvania. One bystander was killed and two were injured in the shooting. The shooter, 20-year-old Matthew Crooks, was immediately shot and killed by security forces and his motive remains unknown.

Explosions kill police officer and injure 25 in western Ukraine

A 23-year-old female police officer has been killed and 25 people injured in what Ukrainian officials have called a terror attack in the western city of Lviv.

Two homemade explosive devices detonated after police crews responded to a reported break-in shortly after midnight on Sunday, the National Police of Ukraine said. The

devices were planted in waste bins, it added.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed "an individual suspected of carrying out the terrorist attack" had been detained. Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadovyi said she was a Ukrainian woman.

The police later said the 33-year-old suspect had made and planted the explosives on

the "instruction" of an agent of Russia's special services.

The victim of the attack was named as Viktoria Shpylka.

"She was only 23 years old and had begun her service at the start of the full-scale invasion of the Kherson region," the police wrote on Telegram on Sunday morning.

Police officer Viktoria Shpylka was killed in the attack

Police said the first blast occurred after a police car arrived at the scene of the reported break-in at a shop in the city centre.

"Later, when a second crew arrived, another explosion went off," it added.

Eleven people were admitted to hospital, six of whom were law enforcement officers in serious conditions.

Feature



China dazzles the world with its spring festival

OLALEKAN A. BABATUNDE

As the lunar calendar ushered in the Year of the Horse, the world witnessed a spectacular display of Chinese culture as the Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year, was celebrated with unprecedented enthusiasm across every continent. Far beyond a traditional family reunion and artistic expression, the 2026 festivities have been transformed into a global phenomenon, with the distinctive "China Red" illuminating iconic landmarks and the spirit of the festival captivating millions worldwide.

While viewing the spectacular displays of culture and traditions in drama, dance, drawings, food and drink, and others, I got captivated by the energy and enthusiasm with which the Chinese projected their heritage. Music legends like Lionel Richie, John Legend, and Westlife played in Beijing. Chinatowns and cultural centres across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas host parades and exhibitions, drawing diverse audiences into the festivities. The kung fu robots stole the show, indicating how technology is shaping everyday life in China. International landmarks are illuminated in red, and global media outlets devote extensive coverage to the celebrations, reflecting the festival's growing international resonance.

Recognition by UNESCO of related Chinese cultural practices has further elevated global awareness of the festival's heritage value. Watching international news channels such as the CNN, BBC, CGTN, and Al-Jazeera I saw I can only describe this as

a global canvas of Chinese traditions. The Festival captured the imagination of the world as a global cultural phenomenon, with celebrations spanning every continent and nearly 20 countries declaring it a public holiday. As a German man named Stefan was quoted as saying that to truly understand China, one must experience its Spring Festival.

From the bustling streets of Southeast Asia to the grand avenues of Europe and the Americas, the reach of this year's Spring Festival was truly staggering, and offering diverse audiences a profound insight into the depth and diversity of Chinese musical heritage. One attendee described the experience as a journey that sparked inspiration, while another praised it as a wonderful discovery of Chinese folk music.

It was estimated that approximately one-fifth of the global population engaged with the Year of the Horse celebrations in various forms. In a testament to the festival's growing international status, nearly 20 countries have now officially recognised the Lunar New Year as a public holiday, allowing their citizens to partake in the festivities.

In Europe, the city of London hosted what is described as the largest Lunar New Year celebration outside of Asia, with tens of thousands of revellers flocked to the West End for parades and performances. The United Kingdom's famed "London Eye" was also illuminated in a vibrant "China Red," a symbolic gesture of friendship and cultural unity that was replicated on landmarks such as the Calgary Tower in Canada and the "Dream

Wheel" in New York. Meanwhile, in the French capital, a Chinese humanoid robot made its debut at a Spring Festival parade in Paris, drawing an audience of approximately 100,000 spectators and demonstrating a fusion of tradition and technological innovation.

Across the Atlantic, the celebrations were equally vibrant. In Brazil, the "Happy Chinese New Year" Garden Party in São Paulo, one of the largest and most influential events of its kind in the country, attracted hundreds of thousands of local attendees who immersed themselves in Chinese culture. In Mexico, children participated with joy in Spring Festival activities. In Vienna, local children were captivated by workshops on traditional crafts like paper-cutting and sugar figure blowing. In the United States, cultural events featuring traditional cuisine and intangible cultural heritage were held in New York and Seattle, while in Los Angeles, the sounds of drumming accompanied the acrobatic leaps of dragon and lion dancers.

The festive spirit permeated every corner of the globe. In Australia, the friendship garden in Sydney hosted a vibrant garden party, featuring performances by Chinese artists and interactive areas for experiencing intangible cultural heritage. There were artistic performances and displays of traditional crafts in Lao, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, and across the region.

From the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, which was lit up with a spectacular Spring Festival light show for the seventh consecutive year, to the festive marketplaces in Indonesia which released an offi-

cial Year of the Horse logo, the Chinese New Year has become a season of shared joy.

In Africa, the "Encounters with China" themed activities were successfully held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo and the headquarters of the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO) in Rabat, Morocco, offering a memorable cultural experience centred on Spring Festival traditions. In Nigeria, the global celebrations that transformed Chinese New Year into an international cultural spectacle were staged spreading many days with songs and dance troupe in Abuja's Chinese Cultural Centre and in Lagos. Seminars and exchanges were held to mark the festival that coincided with the 55th anniversary of the Nigeria-China relations.

In Kenya, a young man was seen skilfully performing in a dragon dance troupe. Indeed, the Spring Festival also served as a powerful platform for cultural diplomacy and international goodwill.

In short, the essence of the New Year resonates universally as it provided another powerful opportunity for connection. The Spring Festival's core values like reunion, harmony, and hope deeply resonated with people from all cultural backgrounds. The festival is already on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and therefore, solidified its status not merely as a Chinese event, but as a cherished treasure for all of humanity.

As the world bid farewell to the old and welcomed the new, the 2026 Spring Festival stood as a brilliant tes-

tament to China's cultural confidence and its soft power on the international stage. It was a vivid demonstration of how ancient traditions can be revitalised to connect with contemporary global audiences, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation among civilisations. With its message of peace, prosperity, and unity, the Chinese New Year has truly become a festival for the world, building bridges of friendship and contributing to a shared sense of human connection.

Beyond the pageantry, the Spring Festival carries a deeper message that resonates universally - hope, renewal and shared humanity. In a world often divided by conflict and uncertainty, the festival's emphasis on harmony, generosity and fresh starts offers a powerful reminder of common values that transcend borders.

As China continues to play an influential role on the global stage, its Spring Festival stands as one of its most compelling cultural ambassadors. Year after year, it dazzles not only with spectacle, but with meaning - inviting the world to pause, celebrate and look forward together. It is no longer China introducing itself to international audience but endearing itself to the world.

Nigeria has a lot to learn from the Chinese tradition in preservation of distinctive culture. Each ethnic group should consistently showcase their culture and tradition with love and passion. The world is expectant.

Dr Babatunde is a historian, and a fellow at the Nigeria's Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja. He writes via austinebabatunde@yahoo.com

Edo's new dawn: A comprehensive look at Gov Monday Okpebholo's initiatives

DR IYOKA JOHN DARLINGTON

Edo State, a region renowned for its cultural heritage and economic potential, is undergoing a remarkable transformation under the leadership of Governor Monday Okpebholo. Since taking office, the governor has launched a series of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for Edo residents, focusing on key areas such as security, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, and education.

SECURITY: RESTORING PEACE AND CONFIDENCE

One of the governor's top priorities has been addressing the long-standing issue of cult-related violence in the state. To this end, a stronger anti-cultism law has been introduced, providing a robust framework for law enforcement agencies to tackle the problem. The deployment of

new patrol vehicles and motorcycles has enhanced the security presence, enabling faster response times and better coverage of remote areas. Officials report that these measures have contributed to a noticeable decline in violent incidents, giving families and businesses a renewed sense of safety.

HEALTHCARE: BRINGING QUALITY CARE CLOSER TO HOME

Significant strides have been made in improving healthcare infrastructure. New primary health centres are being constructed across local government areas, bringing basic medical services within easy reach of rural communities. A specialist hospital is also under construction, signalling a long-term commitment to quality care. In addition, the state government is providing free malaria testing and treatment, a move expected to significantly improve public health outcomes.

INFRASTRUCTURE: CONNECTING EDO AND BOOSTING TRADE

Ongoing road projects and flyover constructions are set to transform the state's infrastructure landscape. These developments aim to ease traffic congestion, reduce travel times, and open new trade routes for farmers and small businesses. By improving connectivity, the governor hopes to stimulate economic growth and create fresh opportunities for Edo residents.

AGRICULTURE AND JOBS: EMPOWERING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The agriculture sector has received a notable boost through increased budget allocations. Thousands of jobs have been created in teaching, security, and public works, providing a much-needed stimulus to the local economy. A micro-loan scheme has also been launched, offering market

women, artisans, and entrepreneurs access to capital to expand their businesses.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Education remains a key focus for the governor's administration. Thousands of teachers have been hired, and schools are being renovated to provide a conducive learning environment. University subvention has been increased to improve facilities and research capabilities, ensuring Edo's youth remain competitive both nationally and globally.

While these initiatives show great promise, the administration acknowledges that much work remains. Transparency and community engagement will be crucial to the success of these projects. Ensuring health centres are adequately staffed and equipment maintained will be vital to delivering quality healthcare services. Expanding electricity and road networks to

rural areas could further unlock agricultural potential and create new economic opportunities.

The people of Edo also have a vital role to play in shaping the state's future.

SOME WAYS TO GET INVOLVED INCLUDE:

- Joining community monitoring groups to track project progress and report issues.
- Attending town hall meetings to share concerns and ideas.
- Volunteering in local initiatives to support service delivery.
- Participating in skills acquisition programs to build personal capacity and contribute to economic growth.

With continued effort and collective commitment, Edo State's future looks brighter. Its people are watching, and with sustained progress, the state can become a model of inclusive growth and development.

Steadfast leadership and system strengthening at UBTH under Professor Idia Nibokun Ize-Iyamu

ABURE, PEDRO ANETOR

Progress in complex health institutions is best assessed through facts, context and measurable outcomes. At the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), recent reforms and structural decisions must be viewed against the realities the institution inherited and the urgent need to safeguard patient care, financial stability and service continuity. Under the leadership of Professor Idia Nibokun Ize-Iyamu, these reforms have been deliberate, strategic and firmly patient-focused.

It is important to clarify that Sudabelt was introduced during the tenure of former Chief Medical Director, Professor Darlington Obaseki E., at a time when UBTH's dialysis programme was close to collapse due to acute shortages of reagents and consumables. The dialysis unit, which provides life-sustaining treatment for patients with renal failure, was facing operational paralysis. The intervention was aimed at preventing a complete breakdown of services. Similarly, Ginos was contracted during the same period and allocated space within the hospital premises. These arrangements predate the current administration.

However, the present management under Professor Ize-Iyamu reviewed and permitted their continued operation, having found them innovative and consistent with the UBTH-CARES agenda of the current leadership, which emphasises Clinical Excellence, Accountability, Revenue Protection, Efficiency and Sustainability.

Adjustments in service costs reflect broader economic realities. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, global supply chains have remained unstable, while inflation and currency fluctuations



PROFESSOR IDIA NIBOKUN IZE-IYAMU

have significantly increased the cost of medical consumables and equipment. Tertiary institutions such as UBTH cannot operate outside these economic pressures. What distinguishes the current administration is not the imposition of hardship, but the introduction of structured systems to ensure sustainability and accountability despite prevailing challenges.

One of the most consequential reforms under Professor Ize-Iyamu's leadership is the establishment of the Quality Laboratory. This initiative emerged as a direct response to serious institutional challenges that previously resulted in operational, financial and clinical setbacks.

There was a period when laboratory services were disrupted, including the locking of the blood bank, which

led to preserved blood units expiring and being wasted. Such losses were not merely financial; they had implications for patient care and institutional efficiency. There were also instances where patients and even staff were unable to access timely laboratory investigations due to refusals to conduct tests. Reports indicated that some patients and samples were redirected to private laboratories outside UBTH, resulting in revenue leakage and weakening the hospital's service delivery framework.

The establishment of the Quality Laboratory directly addresses these systemic vulnerabilities. It ensures uninterrupted diagnostic services, promotes faster turnaround times and safeguards internally generated revenue critical to hospital operations. By

strengthening in-house laboratory capacity, the hospital protects both its financial integrity and its core mandate.

Importantly, the Quality Laboratory is structured to remain affordable and patient-centred. Its pricing reflects sensitivity to patients' realities while maintaining high standards of diagnostic accuracy and efficiency. The objective is not commercialisation but consolidation — ensuring that UBTH fulfils its primary mandate of delivering comprehensive, quality and accessible tertiary healthcare.

The Quality Laboratory now operates alongside other laboratories within the hospital following the return of laboratory scientists to their duties. Its continued existence is both intentional and strategic. It functions as a stabilising mechanism to prevent a recur-

rence of past disruptions, safeguard essential services and shield patients from avoidable clinical risks. It stands as a proactive safeguard, ensuring that diagnostic services are never again paralysed in a manner that could lead to financial losses, clinical compromise or preventable fatalities.

Patients are not compelled to use any particular laboratory. They retain the freedom to choose any of the laboratories within the hospital for their investigations and maintain full autonomy over where their tests are conducted. At the same time, patients are appropriately educated and encouraged to resist undue pressure to conduct investigations outside UBTH when equivalent services are readily available within the institution. This approach protects patients from unnecessary external costs, ensures quality control and preserves institutional integrity.

Early outcomes have been encouraging. Turnaround times have improved, diagnostic access has stabilised and overall service reliability has strengthened. The laboratory reforms support clinicians in making timely decisions, enhance patient safety and reinforce institutional accountability.

Healthcare institutions thrive when systems are strengthened rather than when inefficiencies are tolerated. Under Professor Idia Nibokun Ize-Iyamu's leadership, UBTH is aligning its operations with global best practices, prioritising transparency, sustainability and patient-centred excellence.

The reforms underway are more than administrative adjustments; they are structural reinforcements designed to protect lives, preserve institutional resources and secure the future of one of Nigeria's foremost tertiary hospitals. The vision guiding UBTH today is clear: strengthen systems, safeguard services and place patients at the centre of every decision.

The Nigerian Observer ...That the people may know					ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)								
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FP 6X2	89,800	96,535	105,450	113,359	6 X 2	60,640	65,188	49,140	52,826				
FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279				
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980				
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595				
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770				
SPECIAL POSITIONS					2 X 1	12,400	13,330	7,415	7,971				
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	CAC	38,000	40,850						
STRIP	118,250	127,119	147,800	158,885	LOOSE INSERTS								
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Sports

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NPFL 26: Bendel Insurance FC surrender all points at Nasarawa United



BENDEL INSURANCE FC

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club, Sunday, suffered a 1-0 defeat in the hands of Nasarawa Utd on match-day 27 of the 2025/26 Nigeria Premier Football League season.

John Joshua scored the only goal of the match in the 40th minute of the first-half of the match played at the Lafia Township Stadium to help his side move up the ladder.

Bendel Insurance FC went into the revised fixture, hoping to upturn the first round result

in Benin which also went in favour of the Solid Miners in a similar faction but the host defended the first half goal till the end.

The Benin Arsenal occupied 6th position on the league table with 38 points after picking away point in Yenagoa last week Sunday. The match day 26 between the Benin Arsenal and Bayelsa Utd ended in a barren stalemate at the Samson Siasia Stadium.

Bendel Insurance will be at home against Ikorodu city next weekend at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium in Benin.

Blind Sambo: Taiwo, Aseso target historic World Cup debut

Nigeria's Rukayat Taiwo and Elizabeth Aseso are set to become the first African women to compete in Blind Sambo at the World Cup in Yerevan, Armenia.

The tournament runs from April 11 to April 12 and features Blind Sambo as one of three disciplines.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that men in the SVI1 class will compete in 64kg, 79kg and 98kg categories, while women contest 54kg and 59kg.

Taiwo, a Lagos State champion, will fight in the 54kg division, while Aseso competes in the 59kg category.

Sherif Hammed, Vice-President of the Nigeria Sambo As-

sociation, described the outing as another milestone for the country.

"Since our debut in 2024, Nigeria has been at the forefront of Blind Sambo, which is gaining global recognition, particularly within the Olympic community.

"We are set to become the first African nation to feature in female Blind Sambo at the World Cup and hope to make history with medals," he said.

Nigeria's rise has been steady. Samuel Oladele Kekere became the first Nigerian and African blind sambist at the 2024 World Cup.

Sodiq Ajibade later secured Africa's first medal, winning bronze at the 2025 edition.

NDSF: Ondo wins 2 gold medals in para-powerlifting, swimming events

Team Ondo athletes on Sunday recorded impressive performances at the ongoing second edition of the U-20 Niger-Delta Sports Festival at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin, clinching two gold medals.

Anuoluwapo Akinola opened the medal haul for the state, winning gold in the para-powerlifting 86+kg category to become the first athlete to secure a medal for Ondo at the festival.

Also in swimmer, Patience Nigeria, added the second gold in the 200 metres freestyle event, while Samuel Abiodun contributed to the tally with a bronze medal in the 50 metres backstroke bringing the state's medal haul to three.

Meanwhile, in the game of basketball, Ondo State boys defeated Abia 32-20 in their opening match, while the female team edged Cross River 27-24.

The state's volleyball team also impressed, with Ondo defeating Cross River 2-0 in their opening game before securing another 2-0 victory over Delta in their second match.

In tennis, Zayan Rahman advanced to the semi-finals of the boys' singles event after defeating his Delta opponent 2-0.

The News Agency of Nigeria reports that the Ondo's women's handball team also recorded a commanding 28-4 victory over Rivers.

Speaking with newsmen after her victory, Patience Nigeria expressed delight at winning gold for the state.

"If you train very well, you will reap the rewards at the end of every competition. I thank the Niger Delta Development Commission for organising

this competition," she said.

She expressed happiness to have made Ondo State proud, adding that she began swimming at a very tender age after being discovered during a competition at the Ondo State Sports Complex in Akure.

RESULTS OF NPFL MATCH DAY 27

These are the results of Matchday 27 fixtures in the 2025/2026 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) played on Sunday:

Rivers United FC 1-1 Enugu Rangers International FC Plateau United FC 4-1 Shooting Stars FC Kano Pillars FC 3-0 El-Kanemi Warriors FC



ANUOLUWAPO AKINOLA

Ikorodu City FC 1-1 Bayelsa United FC Nasarawa United FC 1-0 Bendel Insurance FC Khun khalifat FC 2-0 Niger Tornadoes FC Katsina United FC 0-0 Eny-

imba International FC Abia Warriors FC 1-0 Kwara united FC

On Feb.21, Wikki Tourists FC beat Remo Stars FC, 2-1 and Warri Wolves FC draw Barau FC ,0-0

Nigerian fencer Brou ranked top 10 globally



INKOSI BROU

Nigeria's fencing sensation Inkosi Brou has achieved a groundbreaking milestone, becoming the first Nigerian to be ranked among the top 10 junior fencers in the world.

The latest rankings released by the International Fencing Federation (FIE) place the 18-year-old in 10th position in the Men's Sabre junior category.

With 68.750 points, Brou

is now the second-highest ranked African trailing Egypt's Ahmed Hesham, who sits in 7th place with 76.000 points.

In spite of a quarterfinal exit at the 2026 African Junior Fencing Championships in Dakar, Brou's ascent continues, buoyed by his recent sixth-place finish at the 2026 FIE World Cup in Dakar, Senegal.

It will be recalled that he won Nigeria's first-ever glob-

al Men's Sabre fencing medal, a silver at the World Tournoi Satellite Cup in Iceland (2024).

He added a bronze medal at the 2025 African Junior Championships in Luanda, Angola.

Brou, also became the first Nigerian selected for the prestigious All-American Fencing First Team in the United States at 16-years-old and started representing Nigeria on a global stage in October 2023.

His passion for fencing was sparked by the film Pirates of the Caribbean and later inspired by watching American Ibtihaj Muhammad at the 2016 Olympics.

His ultimate ambition is to qualify for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, where he hopes to become Nigeria's first-ever Olympic fencer.

Reacting to the achievement, Adeyinka Samuel, President of the Nigeria Fencing Federation, hailed Brou's rank-

Lagos sets pace in youth swimming with olympic-size meet

Lagos State Sports Commission (LSSC) on Saturday hosted a long-course Dolphin Swimming League meet at the Olympic pool in Mobolaji Johnson Sports Complex.

The event attracted World School Games champions, National Youth Games medallists and emerging talents, reinforcing Lagos' growing status as a hub for structured youth swimming.

Coaches, parents and supporters filled the stands, underscoring the commission's deliberate emphasis on age-grade athlete development and sustained competitive exposure.

Beyond the spectacle, the meet signalled a shift towards

performance-driven youth swimming, with Lagos increasingly setting the benchmark for other states.

Staged across three sessions, races covered freestyle, breaststroke, backstroke, butterfly and individual medley events.

Distances ranged from sharp 50-metre sprints for younger swimmers to demanding 200-metre contests for older categories.

Athletes aged eight to 16 displayed technical precision, race discipline and competitive maturity.

Mixed freestyle and medley relays heightened excitement, fostering teamwork while testing tactical awareness and individual brilliance.



DOLPHIN SWIMMING

Sports

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2nd NDGs: Tissa, Lucky Ayeni, Peremoboere shine as Team Edo dethrone Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers in swimming

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As competition begins in the aquatic center of the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium in the ongoing second Niger Delta Games in Benin, hosts Team Edo put up a remarkable performance as they displaced the famous states of Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa with a commanding six out of the nine gold medals available on Day one of the Swimming competition.

Talented Precious Tissa, Lucky Ayeni, and Joy Peremoboere's performances gave a boost to the host team claimed multiple gold medals to the delight of the Executive Chairman Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele and his management team who were on ground to cheer their athletes to victory.

Like he did at the Nation-

al Youth Games in Asaba last year, Precious Tissa went out of the water with gold in the 50m Freestyle in the Male category just as Lucky Ayeni finished first in the Female of the same event. Kolade Otunla won Gold in the 50m Backstroke (Male).

Edo also won the 4x100m Freestyle Relay (Male) with Albert Akintokun, Biloha Simeon, Precious Tissa, Kolade Otunla in action.

In the Medley Relay (Female), Nkonye Ziitaven, Peremobere Joy, Ifelouwa Fumilayo, Lucky Ayeni proved formidable. Peremobere Joy harvested another gold in 100m Breaststroke.

In the 200m Individual Medley, Kolade Silva got Silver as Nkonye Ziitaven also bagged silver in the 200m Freestyle. Imegbodofo Teminijesu went home with Bronze in the 100m Breaststroke (Male).

Team Edo however started



SECOND NIGER DELTA SWIMMERS

poorly as they failed to win any of the first three events - 200m Individual Medley (Men); 200m Freestyle (Women) and 100m Breaststroke (Men). Team Delta clinched gold in two of those events while Ondo won in the 200m Freestyle.

The Heartbeat state came

back into game, winning all the remaining six events of the day at the Pool side of the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City.

Peremoboere opened the floodgates of gold medals when she eased to victory in the women's 100m breast-

stroke, beating Success Ebigide of Delta. Bayelsa's Gloria Epekele finished third.

Tissa followed af defeating the hard fighting Idangofaka Tubotamuno of Rivers state in Men's 50m Freestyle final. Destiny Ajaka of Cross River finished third in the event.

Ayemi Lucky was extraordinary in Women's 50m Freestyle same as Kolade Otunla in Men's 50m breaststroke as well as Joy Peremoboere's led Team Edo in 4x100m Medley Relay (women).

Team Edo staged a remarkable comeback to win the Men's 4x100m Freestyle Relay in grand style.

Speaking, the Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele who was delighted with the performances of his team, attributed Team Edo's fine start to the Swimming competition to their adequate preparation preparation for the 2nd Niger Delta Games.

"Team Edo have been in camp for the past twenty-one days. We knew opponents are good. Early preparation is what gave us the results we are seeing here today.

Navy seeks Govt. partnership to sustain 4command's Golf Tournament



EASTERN NAVAL COMMAND (ENC) GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Nigerian Navy has called for the inclusion of the annual Eastern Naval Command (ENC) Golf Tournament in the tourism calendar of Cross River.

The call was made by a former Chief of Naval Staff, Dele Ezeoba, at the 2026 edition of the tournament held at the Calabar Golf Course on Sunday.

Ezeoba commended the organisers for hosting a tournament that attracted golfers from across the country, noting that such an event had the potential to boost tourism and revenue generation in the state.

He said the Cross River Government only needed to partner with the organisers to sustain and expand the event in subsequent editions.

"I have had a wonderful experience of golf and I must say that it is something that should be encouraged," he said.

He noted that participants aged 81 and above completed nine holes during the tournament, demonstrating that golf remained a viable form of exercise even in old age.

According to him, the tournament forms part of the annual activities of flag officers and their regimental engage-

ments.

"There is need for a more sustainable funding structure beyond the resources of the Navy and the flag officers.

"My take is that the state government should come in and add value to the development of this course as a source of tourism potential for the state," he said.

Also speaking, the Flag Officer Commanding, ENC,

Chiedozie Okehie, said the 2026 edition attracted 152 golfers from across Nigeria to Calabar.

Okehie said that beyond its fitness value, the annual tournament also provided opportunities for networking.

He added that the golf course spans about 10 kilometres, underscoring its capacity to host major competitions.

In his remarks, the Deputy Governor of Cross River, Peter Odey, urged participants to promote the state as an investment destination, particularly in tourism and agriculture.

"To be honest, I didn't know it was going to be this well-organised.

"I am impressed with what I have seen here; I'm impressed with the way they are taking it seriously.

"It's an encouragement for some of us who've just started

playing golf to ensure that we step up our game."

Similarly, the traditional ruler of Orlu in Imo, Patrick Acholonu, urged the state government to leverage the tournament to promote and boost its tourism sector.

NAN reports that Tuesday Achukwu, an Assistant Comptroller of Customs in Kaduna State, emerged overall winner with 80 gross, 12 under par, handicap 20, and a return of 60 net.

In his remarks, Achukwu attributed his victory to hard work and preparation.

"I arrived in Calabar early and practised at the course.

"I was surprised to discover that it is the biggest course I have ever played, and it took me some time to get acquainted with it.

"Perseverance, resilience and commitment paved the way for my victory," he said.

Event	20 FEB	21 FEB	22 FEB	23 FEB	24 FEB
1. Athletics	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Basketball	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Boxing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Chess	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Football	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Handball	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. Judo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Karate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Taekwondo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Tennis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11. Table Tennis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Volleyball	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13. Wrestling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14. Weightlifting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key Dates:
 Arrival: 19 February
 Opening Ceremony: 20 February
 Cultural Night: 21 February
 Closing Ceremony: 24 February

NSSF hosts seminar to strengthen school sports leadership



THE NIGERIA SCHOOL SPORT FEDERATION COMMITTEE

The Nigeria School Sport Federation (NSSF) on Friday held its annual administrative seminar, bringing together state coordinators for a one-day capacity-building workshop in Lagos.

Addressing participants, NSSF President, Olabisi Joseph, reaffirmed the federation's commitment to empowering coordinators with modern tools and updated management practices.

"Sports keep evolving and we must ensure our coordinators are equipped with the latest tools for organising competitions and writing reports," she said.

Joseph noted that the seminar,

held consistently for seven years, had significantly improved the competence of school sports officers and administrators nationwide.

She explained that the theme, 'Enhancing Capacity for Effective School Sports Leadership', focused on aligning programmes with global best practices and efficient event management.

Delivering a paper, Prof. Macpherson Ogunsemore stressed the pivotal role of coordinators in identifying and nurturing grassroots talents across Nigerian schools.

Ogunsemore, of the University of Lagos, urged collabora-

tion with coaches and physical education teachers to develop athletes from grassroots to elite levels.

In another lecture, Dr Oluymi Oluwasanmi highlighted the importance of effective documentation in school sports administration.

Oluwasanmi, Director of School Sports at the Lagos State Sports Commission, said structured reporting aids planning and continuous improvement.

Participants commended the initiative, praising NSSF's sustained efforts to strengthen school sports development with support from government and key stakeholders.

OPINION

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Governor Okpebholo's devt doctrine prioritises partnership over politics

DR PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

At the weekend, Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, stood before dignitaries at Edo State Polytechnic, Usen, to commission the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)-facilitated internal road network. But he did more than cut tape and exchange pleasantries.

In a sentence that captured the moment, he said Edo State would "continue to collaborate with federal agencies and development partners to deliver projects that improve lives and accelerate growth."

The venue and timing were not incidental. The statement came at a defining moment in the government's policy identity and political tone. By choosing the commissioning of a federally supported infrastructure project as the platform for this declaration, Governor Okpebholo anchored his message in a concrete example of what cooperation can deliver. The optics were deliberate: partnership in theory, partnership in practice.

Many observers appreciated the deeper meaning of the governor's position when viewed against the immediate political past of Edo State. Mr Godwin Obaseki, as governor, operated in a sharply polarised national environment. Following intense partisan realignments in the state, relations between Benin City and Abuja became strained. Beyond his frequent criticisms of federal economic policies and warnings about macroeconomic instability, his posture ensured Edo was largely outside the good books of the Federal Government.

That period coincided with broader national turbulence. Nigeria was navigating difficult reforms, including fuel subsidy removal and exchange-rate adjustments under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Inflationary pressures, naira volatility and labour unrest heightened public anxiety. Within that charged atmosphere, Edo's state-federal relations took on an adversarial tone.

It is against this backdrop that Okpebholo's Usen declaration must be situated. The governor is signalling a strategic reset. In Nigeria's fiscal and administrative architecture, sub-national governments that maintain functional cooperation with federal agencies typically enjoy faster access to intervention funds, infrastructure programmes and development partnerships. Governor Okpebholo appears to have made a calculated decision to reposition Edo within that cooperative framework.

The NDDC road project itself offered a practical case study. By pub-



EDO STATE GOVERNOR, SENATOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

licly commending collaboration while standing beside a visible federal intervention, the governor reinforced a simple but powerful message: under his watch, Edo's development path will be driven by partnership rather than confrontation.

Equally significant is the tonal shift in his remarks.

The Okpebholo administration is consciously moving away from rhetoric that emphasises systemic gloom towards language that stresses delivery and measurable impact. This shift matters. Development finance institutions, multilateral partners and private investors often monitor the policy tone of sub-national governments. Jurisdictions perceived as politically cooperative and administratively predictable tend to attract stronger institutional engagement.

The governor's message is therefore as much economic signalling as political positioning. With Edo now governed by the All Progressives Congress, the same party that controls the Federal Government, his emphasis on alignment reflects both political reality and strategic calculation. Harmonising state priorities with the Re-

newed Hope framework of the Tinubu administration could open additional

”
It is against this backdrop that Okpebholo's Usen declaration must be situated. The governor is signalling a strategic reset.

channels for federal support and policy synergy.

Governor Okpebholo understands that partnership language must translate into outcomes. The true test lies in hard metrics: the pace of infrastructure delivery, the revitalisation of educational institutions, the attraction of private capital and the expansion of employment opportunities. Cooperative federalism, when effectively managed, can become a catalyst for results.

He also appears mindful that effective state leadership in Nigeria demands two simultaneous capabilities: the ability to collaborate with Abuja and the capacity to innovate independently at the sub-national level. Historically, some of Nigeria's most successful governors have leveraged constructive federal relationships to advance state interests.

Plans to deepen federal partnerships while building distinctive, home-grown development initiatives could convert improved political temperature into measurable socio-economic gains across Edo's urban and rural communities. By lowering the heat of confrontation and foreground-

ing cooperation, the administration is seeking to reposition Edo as a willing and reliable partner within Nigeria's federal system.

There is also a psychological dimension to the governor's messaging. After years of intense partisan contestation in the state, he appears intent on projecting the image of a stabiliser — a leader more focused on pipelines of development than pipelines of political conflict. That positioning can itself become a governance asset.

What is clear is that the governor's statement at Edo State Polytechnic, Usen, was carefully crafted and strategically delivered. In a single sentence, he acknowledged the utility of federal collaboration and signalled a departure from a more combative posture associated with the recent past.

Governor Okpebholo has placed a clear wager: that partnership with Abuja, rather than political brinkmanship, offers a faster route to tangible development gains for the people of Edo State.

• Dr Patrick Akhere Ebojele is the Chief Press Secretary to the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo.