

Tinubu increases 2025 budget to ₦54.2trn

● *Says I have prioritised Nigeria's security*

President Bola Tinubu has raised the proposed 2025 budget from ₦49.7 trillion to ₦54.2 trillion, citing additional revenues generated by key government agencies.

The President conveyed the budget adjustment in separate letters sent to both the Senate and the House of Representatives, which were read during

plenary by the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio.

According to Tinubu, the increase was driven by ₦1.4 trillion in additional revenue from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), ₦1.2 trillion from the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), and ₦1.8 trillion generated by other government-owned agencies.

Following the announcement, the Senate President has referred the President's request to the Senate Committee on Appropriations for urgent consideration.

He assured lawmakers that the budget would be finalised and passed before the end of February.

Also, President Bola Tinubu has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to strengthen-

ing Nigeria's security architecture, stressing that he has prioritised national security as a fundamental aspect of his governance.

Speaking at the Chief of Defence Staff Joint Task Force Commanders Conference in Abuja on Wednesday, Tinubu lauded the military and security agencies for their relentless efforts in combating security

threats across the country.

Represented by the Minister of Defence, Muhammed Badaaru, the president said, "While I applaud the tremendous efforts of the Armed Forces, I wish to also commend the various joint task forces and security agencies operating across the country



TINUBU

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The Nigerian Observer



...that the people may know

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PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 46, NO. 936

THURSDAY 6TH FEBRUARY, 2025.

₦200

IGR: Edo records over ₦10bn in Jan

● *to investigate mismanaged state assets, review contracts*

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has recorded over #10 billion internally generated revenue (IGR) for January 2025, marking a significant milestone in the state's financial performance.

EIRS Executive Chairman, Hon. Barr. Oladele Bankole-Balogun, disclosed this during a courtesy visit to the Edo State Commissioner of Police, CP Betty Enekpen Isokpan Otimenyin, the first female Commissioner of Police in the state.

Hon. Bankole-Balogun attributed the revenue growth to the leadership of Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo, who has mandated the EIRS Board to drive revenue generation in line with the administration's five-point agenda.

He emphasized the need for continued enforcement of tax laws and sought the support of the police in maintaining compliance.

In her remarks, CP Betty Otimeyin acknowledged the importance of tax revenue in driving state development and assured the EIRS of the Police command's support in sustaining revenue collection efforts.

Earlier, Hon. Bankole-Balo-

gun and the EIRS Board also met with the Director of the Department of State Security Service (DSS) to strengthen collaboration on revenue enforcement and operational security.

Meanwhile, the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) has

held stakeholder meetings with representatives from the transportation sector and government agencies on the implementation of the Stamp Duties Act.

The meetings, presided over by the Executive Director of Other Revenue, Hon. Michael

Ohio-Ezomo, on behalf of the EIRS Executive Chairman, Hon. Barr. Oladele Bankole-Balogun, aimed to enhance service delivery, protect motorists from fraudulent activities, and ensure compliance with tax regulations.

Stakeholders in the trans-

portation sector called for the reintroduction of the joint Road Check Exercise, which they believe will help sanitize the transport system in Edo State.

They also urged the EIRS to

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ASSETS VERIFICATION REPORT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (left), receiving the report of the Assets Verification Committee from the Chairman, Dr. Ernest Afolabi Umahikhe, at Government House, Benin City on Wednesday.

Election tribunal dismisses SDP's petition against Okpebholo

FRIDAY OBANOR

The Edo State Election Tribunal sitting in Abuja has dismissed the petition filed by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) challenging the victory of Senator Monday Okpebholo of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the September 21, 2024, governorship election.

The three-man panel, led by Justice Wilfred Kpochi, terminated the case on Tuesday after the SDP, through its counsel Mr. Jackson Ehiavhie, filed a motion to withdraw the petition.

Ehiavhie informed the tribunal that he had received a directive from the party's national secretariat instructing him to discontinue the case.

Following the withdrawal, the tribunal asked if there were any objections. With no opposition from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Governor Monday Okpebholo, or the APC, the tribunal chairman ruled in favour of the petition's dismissal in a brief ruling.

It would be recalled that the SDP was among six political parties that initially approached the tribunal to challenge INEC's decision to issue a certificate of return to Senator Okpebholo as the winner of the Edo governorship election.

INEC had declared Okpebholo the winner of the

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Edo gov launches free malaria testing, treatment initiative

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has launched a free malaria testing, treatment, and drug distribution program to combat the disease across the state.

The governor, accompanied by his Deputy, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edesili Anani Okpebholo; Secretary to Edo State Government, Barr. Musa Ikhilior; Chief of Staff, Gani Audu; permanent secretaries, health officials, and program partners, flagged off the initiative, emphasizing his administration's determination to eradicate malaria.

"Malaria is a major health challenge, but we are determined to eliminate it in Edo State. We will follow the example of Algeria, Ivory Coast, and Mauritius in achieving a malaria-free state," Governor Okpebholo declared.

He highlighted the crucial role of the Islamic Development Bank's support in ensuring the success of the initiative, adding that his administration is committed to making healthcare affordable and accessible.

Over the next two years, the state government aims to ensure that 80% of pregnant women receive malaria prevention kits and treatment, while 95% of residents benefit from the program. Additional-

ly, the initiative seeks to reduce infant deaths caused by malaria to below 10%.

To achieve these goals, the governor announced that malaria testing and treatment would be completely free in all government hospitals.

He also warned against unauthorized charges, stating that any health worker caught extorting patients for the free service would face consequences.

"We need everyone's support. While free testing and treatment are in place, raising awareness is key. We will run statewide campaigns to ensure every resident is informed. Anyone caught charging for this service will be dealt with accordingly," he warned.

Governor Okpebholo also expressed appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his commitment to healthcare, as well as the Islamic Development Bank and the Federal Ministry of Health for their guidance and support.

Edesili Anani Okpebholo, the Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady, praised the initiative, noting that malaria, despite its seemingly simple nature, remains a deadly disease.

"Statistics show that 30% of Edo residents are exposed to malaria, making this initiative a necessary intervention," she said.

Edo State Commissioner for

Health, Dr. Cyril Oshiomhole, reiterated that the program, sponsored by the Islamic Development Bank, ensures free malaria testing and treatment

in all government hospitals for the next two years. He warned that no health worker should charge patients for the service.

Director General of the

Edo State Health Insurance Commission, Mrs. Augusta Ikpea-Enaholo, described malaria as a "pandemic" and praised the governor for prioritizing its

eradication.

"With this initiative, the administration has taken significant steps to eliminate malaria in Edo State," she said.



INAUGURATION:

L-R: Chairman Senate Committee on Diaspora, Sen. Victor Umeh; Chairman, Senate Committee on South East Development Commission, Sen. Natasha-Akpoti Uduaghan, and Sen. Orji Kalu, during the inauguration of the Senate Committee on Diaspora, in Abuja. PHOTO OMOYE AMINU

Kidnappings: Edo APC chairman calls for arrest of PDP leaders

Edo State All Progressives Congress (APC) Chairman, Emperor Jarret Tenebe, has urged security agencies to investigate and arrest Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leaders allegedly involved in a wave of kidnappings across the state.

Tenebe accused PDP-affiliated individuals of orchestrating

kidnappings, linking them to a group responsible for the killing of a policeman during the last governorship campaigns.

According to Tenebe, PDP leaders, after leaving office, have resorted to kidnapping as a means of generating income, using arms allegedly procured for them by former Governor Godwin Obaseki's administra-

tion.

"I am calling on the Commissioner of Police, heads of other security agencies, and relevant stakeholders to immediately arrest these PDP leaders. We have credible intelligence linking them to recent kidnappings cases," Tenebe stated.

He alleged that the weapons acquired during the last elec-

tions are now being used to destabilize the state and undermine Governor Okpebholo's administration.

"As a party, we will not fold our hands and watch an irresponsible opposition party destroy the state. We will work with security agencies to unmask the criminals and restore safety in Edo State," he added

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for demonstrating the tenacity to bring all armed criminals to book.

"This has been instrumental in ensuring peace and stability within our country. Let me assure you that I have prioritized Nigeria's security and will remain committed to supporting our Armed Forces and other security and para-military agencies in discharging assigned tasks and responsibilities."

He emphasized the need for synergy among all security arms to effectively tackle the evolving security landscape.

Tinubu urged participants to explore innovative solutions, integrate emerging technologies, and foster multi-agency cooperation to counter the nation's security threats effectively.

The Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, highlighted the growing security threats posed by the proliferation of improvised explosive devices and the increasing use of armed drones by terrorists.

He stressed the urgent need for the military to adopt innovative and adaptive strategies to counter these threats effectively.

"While we celebrate our achievements, we must remain vigilant as the security landscape continues to evolve, presenting new and complex challenges.

"Evolving threats such as armed drones, transnational crimes, and the proliferation of IEDs demand innovative and adaptive responses. We must leverage technology, enhance intelligence-sharing, and strengthen interagency cooperation to counter these threats effectively."

In his remarks, the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Defence, Senator Ahmed Lawan, called for greater investment in the defence and intelligence sectors to address the country's security challenges effectively.

Lawan also advocated for a restructuring of military procurement processes to ensure they align with the operational needs of various security services.

Also speaking at the event, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Yusuf Tuggar, represented by the Permanent Secretary, Amb. Dunoma Ahmed emphasized that promoting peace and security remains a core pillar of Nigeria's foreign policy.

He stated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the military share a common goal in ensuring Nigeria remains a beacon of hope for Africa and the global community.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes seriously the crucial task of translating our government and people's vision and aspirations into effective diplomatic action," he noted.

IGR: Edo records over N10bn in...

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address delays in the issuance of number plates and driver's licenses while advocating for more public engagement to reduce road crashes. Additionally, they called for strict action against unauthorized revenue collectors.

Regarding the Stamp Duties Act, stakeholders commended the EIRS for the informative session and pledged to comply with relevant tax laws.

They requested further engagements, particularly with local government chairpersons, to enhance tax compliance.

In his remarks, Hon. Ohio-Ezomo assured the stakeholders that the EIRS is working with the Federal Road Safety Commission to increase the supply of number plates and establish additional driver's license data capture centers.

He also reiterated the government's ban on unauthorized revenue collection and directed security agencies to arrest and prosecute violators.

He further emphasized the obligation of government ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs), as well as local governments, to deduct and remit a 1% stamp duty on specific transactions, including land documents and contract awards.

The meetings were attended

by local government chairpersons, representatives of the Edo Geographic Information Service, the Edo State Transport Authority, security agencies, and the Federal Road Safety Corps.

Meanwhile, the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has announced plans to review government contracts and agreements following revelations of financial mismanagement and irregularities in the state's assets and liabilities.

Speaking after receiving the report from the Assets Verification Committee at the Government House in Benin City, Governor Okpebholo assured that his administration would take necessary steps to address the findings.

"I appreciate the committee for a job well done and the time invested in this exercise. I understand the challenges you faced, yet you successfully carried out this crucial assignment. Rest assured that your findings and recommendations will be implemented appropriately," the Governor stated.

Presenting the report, the committee's chairman, Dr. Ernest Afolabi Umakhihe, disclosed that their investigation uncovered improper allocation of resources, questionable government agreements, and financial misconduct, some of which

could have long-term consequences for the state's economy.

"This report serves as a pivotal moment for Edo State, marking the need to take stock of our current position and chart a course toward greater accountability, financial prudence, and responsible asset management," Dr. Umakhihe stated.

He explained that the committee's work involved weeks of diligent research, site inspections, stakeholder engagements, and thorough verification to ensure transparency in handling the state's assets and liabilities.

The report provides a comprehensive breakdown of Edo State's assets and liabilities, including outstanding debts, contractual obligations, and financial commitments.

Dr. Umakhihe highlighted concerns over mismanagement, improper allocation of resources, and the misuse of consultants in government operations, which created opportunities for corruption and abuse.

"One of the critical aspects of this report is the revelation of significant financial obligations left behind by the previous administration, some of which pose a heavy burden on the state's fiscal health.

"These liabilities, including outstanding debts and contracts, require urgent attention and

strategic management," he explained.

Among the key recommendations is a reassessment of contracts signed by past administrations to ensure they align with Edo State's best interests.

The committee also recommended a review of certain government contracts and agreements to prevent financial exploitation.

Dr. Umakhihe also revealed that during their investigation, the committee uncovered evidence of financial misconduct, mismanagement, and possible corruption.

"In light of these findings, we strongly recommend that the relevant authorities launch further investigations to hold those responsible accountable.

"Prosecuting individuals found culpable will send a strong message that Edo State is committed to integrity and transparency in governance," he stated.

Additionally, the report suggests a re-evaluation of government agreements, leases, and tenancies to ensure fairness and economic advantage for the state. The committee also advised the government to scrutinize corporate entities suspected of having unclear ownership structures linked to past administrations.

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With this ruling, Okpebholo's victory remains undisputed, and the legal challenge by the SDP has officially come to an end.

Village head, elders decry alleged falsehood over land grabbing

OUR CORRESPONDENT

The odionwere (village head) of Ogiza village in Iyekogba, Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Pa Isaiah Otenghahun

Eghonmwanre and elders of the community have decried what they regarded as alleged falsehood on land grabbing levelled against them by one, Lawrence Alohan in a bid to paint them black before the

palace of the Oba of Benin and the entire public.

The elders who included John Ogborhue, Monday Eholor, Matthew Obasohan and Frederick Omonon, the Village's Secretary as well as

Emmanuel Enabulele, the youths leader (okaeghele) among others, decried the resort to deliberate falsehood by Lawrence Aloha.

They said they wondered why their accuser Lawrence

Alohan has decided to stay away from the Village's activities for two years even without recourse to his Odion status as ozukpogiehan (number 6) in the edion hierarchy.

Speaking with Journalists during an enlarged meeting of the Council of Elders at the weekend, Pa Eghonmwanre and the elders said in their reaction to false media reports published in the Nigerian Observer Newspaper online and other social media platforms, against them, argued that the Odionwere and his elders do not have personal problems with their accuser, (Lawrence) except now he has instituted a legal action which is now pending before the High Court 7 Benin.

To set the records straight, according to the odionwere, Lawrence Alohan has been enjoying all rights and privileges associated with his Odionship until recently when he started to behave in a manner unbecoming of his status as an edion.

The Odionwere faulted Lawrence's claims that the village elders acting on his instructions, encroached on his father's 56 acres of land and another 56 acres of land belonging to his mother including a rubber plantation which he alleged was bulldozed on the orders of the Odionwere.

Pa Eghonmwanre explained that the allegations that he is not an indigene of Ogiza village were disheartening, noting that he was born and bred in Ogiza village.

He added that he was going to BDC School, now Umegbe Primary School from Ogiza village in 1944 and that Lawrence Alohan's father actually came from Uzuogo and Irhe villages stressing that Alohan was brought to Ogiza as a sick child where his (Odionwere's) father treated him of the ailment.

The odionwere flayed Lawrence Alohan on his statement on the three edions, saying they are all bonafide indigenes of the village, stressing that his going to the palace of the Oba of Benin as the Odionwere in November 2024, was to pay homage to the Oba in line with the tradition of Benin kingdom and not to tell lies to the Oba as alleged by Alohan.

He said he was installed in 2017 and that the Enogie of Umegbe, being the chairman of the Iyekogba Elders' Council, as well as the elder brother to Lawrence Alohan, late Jackson Alohan witnessed it.

Pa Eghonmwanre faulted Lawrence's claims that he was not eligible to be the odionwere, querying why the same Lawrence accepted his approval to be elevated to the rank of Odion and the privilege of being one of the signatories to some vital documents for the village use under his authority.

Meanwhile, the odionwere disclosed that all the allegations by Lawrence Alohan were calculated attempts to smear his good name for his personal gain and that he should not be taken seriously.



RENEWED HOPE INITIATIVE:

First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu (3rd left); Governor of Niger State, Dr Muhammed Bago (3rd right); The Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Dr Yahaya Abubakar (right), other dignitaries, when Tinubu through the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI) donated N100m to victims of various disasters in Niger State.

DTSG, NDLEA take drug awareness campaign to Delta schools

AJUWA VICTOR

In a bid to safeguard youth of Delta State the State Government through the State Orientation and Communications Bureau, in partnership with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has taken its anti-drug use campaign to primary and secondary schools in the State.

The Director-General of Delta State Orientation and Communications Bureau Dr. Fred Latimore Oghenesivbe led the campaign to students of Ebu and Illah Grammar Schools in Asaba municipality on Wednesday.

Dr. Oghenesivbe, while addressing the students, con-

veyed Governor Oborevwo's deep concern regarding the alarming rise of substance abuse in Nigeria.

He emphasized that drug involvement often serves as a gateway to criminal activity, effectively robbing young people of their potential.

"His Excellency, the Governor of Delta State, has sent us here because he is deeply impacted by the devastating impact of drug abuse on our youth.

"Drugs are destiny killers. They can prevent you from achieving the bright futures that God, the Governor, and your parents envision for you," he said.

To drive home his message, Dr. Oghenesivbe challenged the students to envision their

future aspirations. "How many of you aspire to be lawyers, doctors, engineers, or politicians?" he asked. "I can assure you that none of these dreams can be realized if you fall victim to drug abuse."

The State Bureau of Orientation DG, further engaged the students by testing their knowledge of current affairs related to Delta State, rewarding those who demonstrated a strong understanding of their community.

The NDLEA representative followed this by delivering an impactful session on the perils of drug abuse, outlining the various consequences, teaching them how to identify common illicit drugs, and stressing the importance of

avoiding social situations that could lead to drug experimentation.

The staff and principal of Ebu Grammar School warmly welcomed the sensitization team, expressing their gratitude for the proactive initiative. They pledged to reinforce the anti-drug message by strengthening the school's newly established "War Against Drug Abuse" WADA Club, empowering students to become advocates for a drug-free environment.

The sensitization team then moved to Illah Grammar School, where Dr. Oghenesivbe continued his interactive engagement with the students, posing questions about current events in Delta State.

Edo extends 2025 hajj payment deadline

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has extended the payment deadline for the 2025 Hajj pilgrimage from February 7 to February 14, following directives from the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

This announcement was made by the board's Chairman, Mallam Musah Muhammad Uduimoh, and Executive Secretary, Alhaji Eranga Muhammadkabar Abdulkabir, during a sensitization programme held today, February 4, 2025, at the board's office in Benin City.

They assured intending pilgrims of improved services for the upcoming Hajj and con-

firmed that the final Hajj fare has been set at ₦8,784,085.54.

Chairman Uduimoh and Executive Secretary Alhaji Eranga emphasized that the board has secured prime accommodations and catering services, ensuring that both Nigerian and Edo State cuisine will be served throughout the pilgrimage—an effort aimed at addressing past pilgrims' complaints.

"The board has secured accommodation close to the Haram, minimizing the distance pilgrims will have to travel to reach Masjid al-Haram," Uduimoh stated.

He further highlighted the board's commitment to grassroots sensitization across Edo State.

"We have reached various parts of the state, including Edo Central and Okpella in Edo North, and we plan to visit Akoko Edo soon. Our goal is to bring Hajj sensitization to every doorstep," he added.

In his remarks, the Chairman of the Muslim Elders' Forum, Alhaji Musa Sule, praised the board's leadership and commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for promoting inclusivity in governance.

"I have been in politics since 1979, and no government has appointed a Muslim as Secretary to the State Government (SSG) or Chief of Staff. Governor Okpebholo deserves our prayers," he said.

The board's sensitization efforts included a recent out-

reach programme in Okpella, Etsako East Local Government Area, Edo North, on February 2, 2025.

The Benin City sensitization programme also saw the attendance of dignitaries, including the League of Imams, Edo South, and the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN).

Additionally, the board reminded intending pilgrims that the refund process for the 2023 Hajj is still ongoing and urged those affected to contact the board for further details.

Throughout the event, the board reiterated its commitment to providing quality services and making the Hajj pilgrimage more accessible for the people of Edo State.

Nigeria's FX reserves fall \$1.16bn as CBN increases dollar supply

OLUWATUNMISE OMOSEYIN

Nigeria's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$1.16 billion in January 2025, reversing the \$592.58 million increase recorded in December 2024.

According to figures from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the country's foreign exchange reserves declined steadily throughout January.

Reserves stood at \$40.75 billion on January 10 before falling below \$40 billion on January 22 and closing at \$39.72 billion by month end. This represents a 2.84% drop, raising concerns about Nigeria's ability to meet external obligations such as debt servicing and import financing.

The decline follows the CBN's decision to increase dollar sales to Bureau De Change (BDC) operators to stabilise the naira. In December 2024, the apex bank resumed dollar sales to BDCs, allowing them to purchase up to \$25,000 weekly from the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market.

The arrangement, initially set to run until January 30,

2025, has been extended to May 30, 2025, according to a circular signed by Dr W.J. Kanya, CBN Acting Director of the Trade & Exchange Department.

This intervention has helped ease pressure in the parallel market, with exchange rates moving closer to the official rate. The naira, which traded at N1,535/\$1 at the end of December 2024, strengthened to N1,473/\$1 by January 31, gaining N60 or 3.91% within the month.



CBN GOV. YEMI CARDOSO

NEWS

INEC enlists CSOs to curb vote-buying in party primaries

CAROLINE AMEH

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has called on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to intensify efforts in curbing vote-buying in Nigeria's electoral process, particularly during party primaries.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, made this appeal on Monday during the commission's first Quarterly Consultative Meeting for 2025 with CSOs in Abuja.

He urged them to extend their oversight beyond general elections and focus on the growing trend of delegate-buying by aspirants in party primaries.

"It is time to cast your net wide by addressing the issue of aspirants buying delegates during primaries," Yakubu stated.

He acknowledged that while CSOs have played a vital role in monitoring general elections and exposing vote-buying at polling units, the prob-

lem starts much earlier during primaries, where candidates emerge through heavily monetized processes.

"Some delegates openly boasted about how much money they made from aspirants during party primaries," Yakubu said, stressing the urgent need for CSOs to raise awareness and advocate for reforms.

The INEC Chairman commended CSOs for their previous recommendations on tackling vote-buying, many of which the commission had adopted. He urged them to further support efforts by security and law enforcement agencies to eliminate the practice.

Yakubu also provided an update on the preparations for the upcoming Anambra State Governorship election, scheduled for November 8, 2025.

He reminded stakeholders that, according to INEC's timetable, political parties would commence their primaries on March 20 and conclude by April 10.

Igbinedion University holds 26th matriculation ceremony Feb 22

EDWARD OSEGHE

Igbinedion University, Okada (IUO), Nigeria's premier private university, will hold its 26th matriculation ceremony on Saturday, February 22, 2025.

This was announced in a communique released on Tuesday and signed by the university's Deputy Director of Public Relations, Lucky Eboh-Onokwe.

According to the statement, the event, which will be presided over by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, is scheduled to take place at the university's

main auditorium in Okada, beginning at 10:00 AM.

The ceremony will officially welcome new students into the university's seven colleges, which include Law, Health Sciences, Engineering, Business and Management Studies, Natural and Applied Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, and Pharmacy.

As part of the occasion, a lecture titled "Work: A Call" will be delivered by Farmer Ogbale Samson, an alumnus of the university and the Team Lead of Eupepsia Place Limited, a Soilless Farm Laboratory based in Awowo, Ewekoro Local Government Area of Ogun State.

Senate terminates appointment of 3 suspended RECs

The Senate has officially terminated the appointment of three Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) following a request from President Bola Tinubu, invoking Section 157(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

The affected officials as read by the Senate Majority leader are Dr. Nura Ali (Sokoto State REC), Barrister Hudu Yunusa Ari (Adamawa State REC), and Professor Ikemefuna Chijioke Uzochukwu (Abia State REC). They had been suspended in 2023 over allegations of electoral misconduct, including violations of the Electoral Act, election compromise and fraud and abandonment of duty.

Security reports from the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, and the Department of State Services (DSS) had revealed that Dr. Nura Ali was indicted for allegedly compromising the 2023 Presidential

and National Assembly elections through incompetence and corruption, confessing to receiving \$150,000 from politicians.

Barr. Hudu Yunusa Ari was suspended by former President Muhammadu Buhari after unlawfully declaring a governorship election result, an action outside his jurisdiction.

Prof. Uzochukwu was found guilty of mismanaging election logistics, abandoning the Governorship and State Assembly elections, and refusing to reschedule supplementary elections.

Citing Section 157(1) of the Constitution, which allows for the removal of officials based on inability to perform duties or misconduct, the Senate voted with a two-thirds majority to endorse their dismissal.

In line with this resolution, the Senate has directed the Clerk to formally communicate the decision to President Tinubu for implementation.

EdoSEMA aligns with NiMeT's 2025 climate prediction to enhance disaster risk mgt

The Edo State Emergency Management Agency (EdoSEMA) has pledged to collaborate with the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMeT) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to implement NiMeT's 2025 Seasonal Climate Prediction

(SCP) for improved disaster risk management.

Hon. Idahosa, a key official in the initiative, emphasized the importance of the climate predictions in mitigating risks associated with extreme weather conditions such as flooding, erosion, and prolonged dry spells—challenges

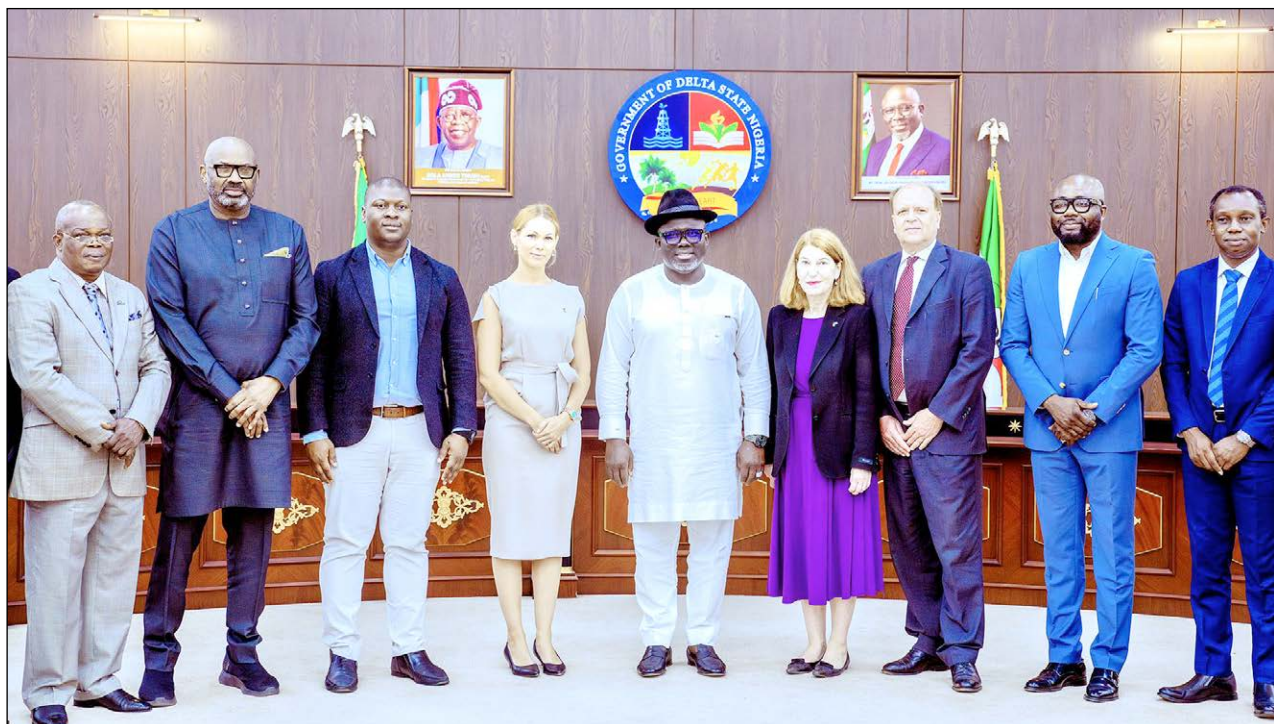
that Edo State has frequently faced.

"These predictions are key to planning and mitigating climate-related risks, particularly in states like Edo, which are vulnerable to extreme weather events," Idahosa stated.

He assured that EdoSEMA is fully committed to down-

scaling the predictions to local communities to ensure preparedness.

The agency will embark on a comprehensive sensitization campaign, ensuring that even the most remote areas of the state are informed and equipped to handle potential climate challenges.



COURTESY VISIT:

Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori (middle); Swedish Ambassador to Nigeria, Her Excellency Annika Hahn-Englund (4th right), and her entourage, during a courtesy visit to Oborevwori at Government House, Asaba.

UNILORIN undergraduate commits suicide over 'hardship'

A 200-level male student of the University of Ilorin (UNILORIN), Kwara State, has reportedly committed suicide over economic hardship.

The deceased, whose identity was yet-to-be confirmed, was from the Faculty of Communication and Information Sciences (CIS).

It was also gathered that the student was on the cumulative aggregate of 4.5 academic standing at the Department of Mass Communication before

his unfortunate death.

The incident, it was further learnt, happened at his private residence located at Oke-Odo axis of Tanke community, Ilorin, the state capital.

Sources in the university community said that the deceased committed suicide due to financial challenges facing him.

It was also learnt that the deceased lost his father a few years ago, while his mother, a retired school teacher, had taken over financial responsibility

for his academic since.

The deceased's financial crisis reportedly started when he resumed school last year. The development said to have made his colleagues raise some funds to pay his tuition fees and buy foodstuffs for him.

However, it was gathered that the deceased decided to take a poisonous substance last weekend, just after his roommate had left for lectures, leaving a note for his roommate which stated his inability to cope with his financial situation as a rea-

son for committing suicide.

It was learnt that his roommate raised the alarm on the incident when they returned from lectures.

A senior administrative officer in the school management, who sought anonymity on the development, confirmed the incident to journalists in Ilorin on Tuesday.

He described the incident as shocking, saying that the development had thrown the university and students into a mourning mood.

NCDF 'll partner Edo government to drive devt goals

The Nigerian Capital Development Fund (NCDF) has pledged to support and collaborate with the administration of Senator Monday Okpebholo, the Governor of Edo State, to achieve its developmental objectives.

NCDF Chairman, Hareter Babatunde Oralusi, made this commitment during a press briefing with newsmen in Benin City, emphasizing the organization's readiness to contribute to the state's growth through strategic partnerships.

"Our mission in Edo State is to support His Excellency's administration in achieving its developmental objectives and delivering significant progress in the shortest possible

time through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)," Oralusi stated.

He commended Governor Okpebholo's proactive leadership, which he said has attracted NCDF's interest and the involvement of foreign investors.

"What drew us to Edo State is the governor's dynamism and the progress he has made in a short time.

"His leadership encourages investment, and that is why our technical team, alongside representatives of foreign investors, is in Nigeria to collaborate in achieving the state's goals," he added.

Oralusi highlighted NCDF's focus on renewable energy in-

vestments, local government capacity development, and promoting Edo State's cultural and tourism potential to the international community.

"The government alone cannot provide enough jobs for its growing youth population, which is why we are investing in multiple sectors across Nigeria," he noted.

He further explained that NCDF, an impact investment institution operating for over 15 years, has made significant contributions to sustainable infrastructure, affordable housing, community development projects, and startup funding.

"We are committed to creating 10,000 businesses for young people across Nigeria.

Our investments generate both financial returns and social impact," he stated.

Recognizing Edo State's rich cultural heritage, Oralusi stressed the importance of boosting its tourism sector.

"We aim to organize international fairs and roadshows in partnership with the state government to showcase Edo's creative and cultural potential.

This will attract international markets, increase foreign direct investment, and establish Edo as a major tourism hub," he explained.

He reaffirmed NCDF's commitment to working closely with Governor Okpebholo to support the state's development initiatives.

Trump sows uncertainty - and Xi Jinping sees an opportunity

If China was angry at the United States for imposing an extra 10% tariff on all Chinese goods, it did a good job of hiding it.

It urged Washington to start talks after repeated warnings that there would be no winners in a trade war.

It held its fire until midnight in Washington - and then just as the tariffs on China kicked in, Beijing announced retaliatory tariffs of 10-15%, starting 10 February, on various US imports, including coal, crude oil and large cars.

The Chinese government may have remained calm in the hope of doing a deal with Washington to avoid further tariffs - and to keep the relationship between the world's

two largest economies from spiralling out of control.

After all, US President Donald Trump agreed to reprieves with Canada and Mexico just hours before the tariffs on them took effect. Trump and China's President Xi Jinping are expected to talk this week.

The US levy will sting - especially because it adds to a slew of tariffs Trump imposed in his first term on tens of billions of dollars of Chinese imports. And China's population is already concerned about their sluggish economy.

Beijing and Washington have gone toe-to-toe on tariffs before. But a lot has changed since Trump 1.0.

For one, the Chinese econo-

my is not as reliant on the US as it was back in 2020. Beijing has strengthened its trade agreements across Africa, South America and South East Asia. It is now the largest trading partner of more than 120 countries.

A deal could still be in the offing but the additional 10% may not offer the leverage that Trump wants, says Chong Jian from Carnegie China.

Xi's 'win-win' as America retreats President Xi Jinping may also see a bigger opportunity here.

Trump is sowing division in his own backyard, threatening to hit even the European Union (EU) with tariffs - all in his first month in office. His actions may have other US allies wondering what is in store for them.

In contrast, China will want to appear a calm, stable and perhaps more attractive global trade partner.

"Trump's America-first policy will bring challenges and threats to almost all countries in the world," says Yun Sun, director of the China programme at the Stimson Centre.

"From the perspective of US-China strategic competition, a deterioration of US leadership and credibility will benefit China. It is unlikely to turn well for China on the bilateral level, but Beijing surely will try to make lemonade..."

All three are concerned about China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, along with the Philippines.

Second woman confirmed dead in Australia's floods

A second woman is confirmed to have died in flooding which has inflicted "incredible" devastation on communities in northern Australia.

Police said the 82-year-old woman's body was found in a cane paddock in Queensland on Tuesday, two days after a 63-year-old woman died when a dinghy she was in overturned during a rescue attempt.

The region has been inundated since Saturday, with parts of northern Queensland seeing nearly 2m (6.5 ft) of rain.

By Tuesday, conditions were starting to ease - although Queensland Premier David Crisafulli warned it was still "a disaster that's going to test the resolve of people" during an interview with broadcaster ABC.

He described the devastation as "incredible", but noted weather conditions had been "really kind" in recent hours. Thousands had begun to return to their homes.

In Townsville, locals woke on Tuesday to grey skies and drizzle, and the news that predicted flooding levels had not materialised there. It was a stark con-

trast to the intense downpours which have battered the region over the past few days.

"We believe that the danger has passed," Townsville Local Disaster Management Group chair Andrew Robinson told reporters.

Pointing to earlier forecasts which had suggested up to 2,000 Townsville homes could have faced flood risks, Crisafulli said that "the city had dodged a bullet".

Local resident Jo Berry told the BBC she and her family were among those returning home on Tuesday, after spending a sleepless night monitoring the rainfall.

"People talk about PTSD when it rains here and I totally understand," says Ms Berry, formerly from Leicester in the UK.

"We've been in the house here for over 20 years, and have been through a few cyclone events and the 2019 flooding so it is not our first rodeo," she adds, referring to a flooding disaster which caused A\$1.24bn (£620m; \$770m) in damage.

On Monday night, other local residents told the BBC they were "on a knife edge" as they waited to see whether their houses would survive.



US IMPORTS:

Large-engine cars are among the US imports that Beijing has said it will tax

Rebels declare ceasefire in DR Congo for 'humanitarian reasons'

The alliance of rebel groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have declared a humanitarian ceasefire that started on Tuesday.

In a statement, the group - which includes the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels - cited "humanitarian reasons" for the ceasefire, after it has been capturing territory in eastern parts of the country.

The UN said at least 900 people have been killed and 2,880 injured in recent fighting in and around Goma, DR Congo's largest eastern city, after it was seized by rebels.

The G7 nations and the EU have condemned the offensive as a flagrant violation of DR Congo's sovereignty.

The alliance of rebel groups - known as the Congo River Alliance - has accused the Congolese military of killing people using aircrafts to bomb areas it holds.

It added it does not intend to

seize any further territory, despite saying otherwise last week, and it will hold its positions. In a statement, the alliance said: "We reiterate our commitment to protecting and defending the civilian population and our positions." Regional fighting has seen hundreds of thousands of people displaced over the last three years. Since the start of 2025, more than 400,000 people have been forced from their homes, according to the UN's refugee agency.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame - who is also commander-in-chief of the Rwanda Defence Force - said he did not know if his country's troops were in the DR Congo. "There are many things I don't know. But if you want to ask me, is there a problem in Congo that concerns Rwanda? And that Rwanda would do anything to protect itself? I'd say 100%," he told CNN on Monday. Meanwhile, human rights groups have been calling for

more pressure on Rwanda to back down.

The DR Congo's communications minister called for the international community to impose sanctions on Rwanda. "A strong decision (must be taken) not only to condemn, but to stop what Rwanda is doing, because it is not acceptable if you want to preserve peace in Africa and in our region," Patrick Muy-

aya told Reuters. "Sanctions are the minimum," he added.

The Congolese and Rwandan presidents are due to attend a regional peace summit in Tanzania on Friday. With 30 years of conflict behind them, it is expected that any negotiations if they do not break down - as they have several times in the last year - could go on for months.

El Salvador offers to lock up US criminals in its mega-jail

El Salvador has offered to take in criminals deported from the US, including those with US citizenship, and house them in its mega-jail.

The deal was announced after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met Salvadorean President Nayib Bukele during his visit to the central American nation.

Bukele - whose iron-fist approach to gangs has won him plaudits from voters but been heavily criticised by human rights groups - said he had offered the US "the opportunity to outsource part of its prison system".

Rubio said the US was "profoundly grateful" to Bukele, adding that "no country's ever made an offer of friendship such as this".

Rubio told reporters: "He has offered to house in his jails dangerous American criminals in custody in our country, including those with US citizenship and legal residency."

Referring to two of the region's most notorious transnational crime gangs, Rubio added that El Salvador would also take in deported migrants and "criminals

from any nationality, be the MS-13 or Tren de Aragua".

Bukele later confirmed the offer on X, specifying that "we are willing to take in only convicted criminals (including convicted US citizens) into our mega-prison (CECOT) in exchange for a fee".

He added that "the fee would be relatively low for the US but significant for us, making our entire prison sustainable".

Find out more about El Salvador's mega-jail

Since he came into office in 2019, Bukele has made cracking down on crime his government's priority.

The newly built maximum-security jail he referred to, Cecot [Terrorism Confinement Centre], is at the centre of his drive to lock up and punish the most violent gang members.

The government celebrated the opening of the jail - which it says can hold up to 40,000 inmates - by releasing photos and videos of shaven-headed and tattooed prisoners stripped down to the waist being frogmarched along its corridors.

Five sentenced to death in Nigeria over 'witchcraft' murder

Five men have been sentenced to death by hanging in Nigeria's Kano state for the 2023 murder of a woman they accused of witchcraft.

The convicted men attacked Dahare Abubakar, 67, as she was working on her farm, beating and stabbing her to death.

Ms Abubakar's family went to the authorities and the suspects were swiftly arrested in a village 45km (28 miles) from Kano - the largest city in northern Nigeria.

The case gained attention across the country and raised discussions over how people in rural areas continue to be murdered following witchcraft accusations.

The ones who make the claims without any proof believe that those they accuse are responsible for either a death of a family member, sickness or misfortune.

Giving his ruling, Judge Usman Naabba said the prosecution had proven its case against the five men beyond

reasonable doubt.

The prosecutor, Abba Sorondiki, said he hoped the judgement would deter others from making wrongful accusations and then taking matters into their own hands.

The court heard that the victim was murdered after the sick wife of one of the accused, Abdulaziz Yahaya, had a dream that she was being pursued by Ms Abubakar, who was holding a knife.

Yahaya then organised a

group to confront Ms Abubakar, which resulted in her murder.

"There have been similar cases like this but this is the first time we are seeing up to five people sentenced to death for murder over wrongful witchcraft accusation," Mr Sorondiki told the BBC.

The victim's son, Musa Yahaya, said that the day his mother was killed was the worst day of his life and that he was pleased to see justice being served.

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Gulf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

Edo State Sports Commission Chairman restates commitment to grassroots sports Devt.

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele has stated that the Commission under his watch will not encourage athletes poaching but invest in grassroots sports development through talents hunt and nurture programmes.

The Executive Director, representing Edo South Senatorial District in the Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Baldwin Bazuaye, MON, made the disclosure as his committee rounded off the familiarization tour of the Edo South Local Government Councils in Abudu, Orhionmwon Local Government Area.

The Edo State Commission

● as LGAs promise support, collaboration

under the leadership of the Executive Chairman Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele embarked on the tour of the Southern Edo LGAs last week, beginning with Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha LGAs with the Executive Director, representing Edo South Senatorial District Hon. Baldwin Bazuaye, MON, and the Zonal Coordinator, Edo South Senatorial District in the Edo State Sports Commission Mrs. Doris Omoragbo leading the delegation.

Hon Bazuaye told the Edo South Local Government council chairmen including Orhionmwon council boss Rt Hon. Daniel Osariemen that the Edo State Sports Commission led by Hon Amadin Enabulele is committed to the im-

plementation of the development programme of the Commission in line with the mandate given him the state government.

According to him, grassroots sports development is a critical component of the Edo state sports development programme.

"In demonstration of the Edo State Sports Commission commitment to the realization of Governor Okpembolo's social development agenda and our goals to reenact the feat of the state when it was referred to as 'Bendel Number One', we have begun the drive for talents hunt with the tour of Local Government Councils in the Edo South Senatorial District. We decided to go round the Local Govern-

ment Headquarters to deliver the message of the Sports Commission chairman, seeking collaboration with them on how to spread the message to the various local communities on the need to raise athletes from the grassroots and nurture them to stardom.

"We all know that Edo is heavily blessed with natural and human resources. I was discovered and picked from street and school football competitions and developed to international level. I believe we still have the talents everywhere in our state, hence we are going through a thorough process of catching them young. Who knows, the kids we discovered today could represent



Hon Enabulele

Edo and the country tomorrow and have a glorious career"

Hon Bazuaye revealed that the Edo State Sports Commission plans to comb the local

government areas in its talent hunt and grassroots development agenda and called for collaborative efforts to make it easier for the state.

2026 World Cup ticket: South Africa coach dismisses Super Eagles chances of qualifying under Chelle

South Africa's head coach of the male senior national team, Hugo Broos, has revealed what his team need to do which will negate whatever the Nigerian team under new coach Eric Chelle do in the remaining Rwanda and Zimbabwe games of the qualifiers.

In March the Super Eagles of Nigeria will return to action with a match away to Rwanda, before hosting Zimbabwe at home three days later.

Broos has laid out how he

thinks his team will beat all comers in their group to the 2026 world cup ticket.

South Africa are currently joint leaders in the group on seven points, but in second position behind Rwanda who have a superior goal difference. They are also level on points with Benin Republic their next opponent when the qualifiers resumes in March.

Broos has analyzed his team's chances with Nigeria still seen by many as a threat

despite their poor start to the series with just three points and still without a win and also four points behind the leaders.

"All the teams are still in the running. Therefore, March can be a key month, and things will be a little bit clearer. We now have seven points, and then I count six (in March), it's 13. And then we have four games, which tally up to 12 points. I think if you have 16/17 points, you have qualified," the coach explained.



Joshua urged to turn down fight with 'most avoided heavyweight'

EDWARD OSEGHE

Anthony Joshua is at a crossroads in his heavyweight career after being brutally knocked out by Daniel Dubois in September, has been advised to steer clear of a huge showdown with Martin Bakole despite claims the deal is complete.

Joshua has yet to pencil in concrete details over a return fight.

AJ was keen to face bitter rival Tyson Fury, but the fight appears now off the cards with the 'Gypsy King' having announced his retirement from the sport.

● earn £200 million in stead

He then faced off with Bakole recently, who issued a video call-out on social media, with a huge showdown in Africa on the table.

Incredibly Bakole's promoter Ben Shalom told talkSPORT recently that a deal was 'done', although it is unclear if Joshua has signed on the dotted line.

It would be a tough test for the former two-time champion, with Bakole considered the avoided boogeyman in the blue-riband division.

In the latest episode of talk-BOXING, former boxing icon and now renowned promoter Barry McGuigan, insisted he wouldn't go near Bakole in the current climate.

"If I was managing Anthony Joshua I wouldn't go near Martin Bakole," trainer McGuigan said.

"In my opinion there is only another four fights for Joshua. And in reality, he needs to fight for a title or against Tyson Fury."

Spencer Oliver, former boxer and talkSPORT pundit interjected and insisted the fight with Bakole makes sense for both fighters.

McGuigan then continued: "But for Anthony Joshua, he has probably earned in the region of £200 million.

"So for him, why would he want that fight? I know Turki Alalshikh has taken away the issue of not enough money being in the pot.

"Those fights we have always wanted to see can happen,

people used to use the issue of money, but now that has all been eliminated.

"There is absolutely every chance Bakole could be [a world champion in the next 12 months.

"If he gets a fight against any of those guys he can beat them, he is a nightmare of everybody."

Joshua has always had a desire to fight in Africa, and Bakole plans to get his native Congo involved with the clash.

Bakole recently defeated Jared Anderson, a promising talent, in dominant fashion to cement his name as a rising challenger.

He will next face Efe Ajagba in May, in an IBF world title eliminator, which could position him closer to the world title mix.

Should he face and beat Joshua, it could be the biggest scalp of his career and send his growing reputation to new unprecedented levels.

On Bakole, McGuigan added: "I think he's a tremendous talent, the biggest threat in the heavyweight division.

Shields becomes undisputed heavyweight champion

Claressa Shields added to her charming professional testament by outpointing Danielle Perkins to become female boxing's first undisputed heavyweight world champion.

Shields outpoints Danielle Perkins to become first undisputed heavyweight champion in women's boxing; 29-year-old only boxer, female or male, to achieve undisputed status across three different divisions in four-belt era; Shields hindered by shoulder problem and set for surgery.

Shields is also the first boxer, female or male, to achieve undisputed status across three different divisions in the four-belt era (heavyweight, middleweight, light-middleweight) after her win over the previously unbeaten Perkins.

Shields, boxing in her native Flint, took her unblemished record as a pro to 16-0 after flooring Perkins with a right hook in the 10th and final round, ahead of the judges scoring the fight 97-92, 99-90, and 100-89 in her favour.

The 29-year-old later revealed a shoulder problem she sustained last week meant the fight almost did not take place.

"I actually think I'm going

to have to have surgery on my left arm. I tore my labrum last week, so the fight almost didn't happen," Shields said.

"I didn't want to let Flint down, but I really couldn't use my jab the way that I wanted to. I iced it, I did therapy and now I think I'm going to have a shoulder surgery."

Perkins, who had been victorious in her first five fights, had a weight and height advantage but was second best throughout the contest despite absorbing numerous shots, notably being wobbled in round three.

"Danielle was strong, she was definitely a problem but my experience and my skills got me over it," added the 2012 and 2016 Olympic gold medalist.

"I've been in plenty of street fights with bigger people and I had to use some of my skills in that today, too. So, when I dropped her in the last round, it's because she got greedy."

Shields said the fight could have taken place at Barclays Center in New York but she was determined to bring the first undisputed heavyweight contest in female boxing history to Michigan.



Again, Nimrod splashes ₦1.9m educational support on volleyball players

In yet another historic feat, the Chairman Kaduna State Volleyball Association (KADSV), Engineer Musa Nimrod has provided educational support to young volleyball players in the state.

Beneficiaries are 13 WAEC students and 18 JAMB hopeful.

A statement signed by Okpani Jacob Onjewu Dickson, member of KADSV Board, said that also, monthly allowances of eight volleyball play-

ers in the state have been paid, with each receiving N150,000.

The statement informed that the Secretary of KADSV, Adamu Mohammed who disclosed this, said a total of N1.9m was used in sorting out the allowances, JAMB and WAEC fees.

Nimrod, who is also the President Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF), Secretary General Zone 3 (CAVB) and President African Beach Volleyball, did the noble gesture,

in his quest to see volleyball players perform well both on the field and in the classroom.

For a breakdown of the beneficiaries, payment for WAEC was given to 13 students at #40,000 each and for JAMB, 18 students got N10,000 each, making a total amount of N700,000:00.

The players that benefitted from the WAEC support of ₦40,000 per candidate, are, Rabi'atu Adamu, Daniel Nwobodo, Winnifred Duru, Isaac

Michael, Deborah Yakubu, Rhoda Danjuma and Rejoice Samuel.

Others are, Ramatu Abdulmaliq, Jamiu Zakariyawu, Miracle Haruna, Faith Augustine, Joeslyn John and Chinonye John.

For JAMB candidates, who were given N10,000 each, the beneficiaries are, Joy Lawrence, Ibrahim Albir, Dominion Amos, Chinaza Otti, Bathsbeba Joshua and Ozioma Ikechukwu.

Others are, Godwin Adamu, Bobai Andrew, Isaac James, Samuel Ahar, Rosemary Sunday, Mohammed Abubakar and Aderokpo Alamor.

The remaining JAMB registration beneficiaries are, Simon Peter, Sylvanus James, Jonathan Leo, Ramatu Hamza and Stephanie Chisom.



NIMROD

Dikko, Gusau inspect proposed NFF hotel, training pitch site in Abuja



Gusau leads Dikko, Sanusi and former NFF GS, Barr. Musa Amadu (left) round the project site.

President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau MON, on Wednesday conducted the Chairman of National Sports Commission, Mallam Shehu Dikko round the proposed site for the NFF Hotel and new training pitch, which is adjacent to the NFF Headquarters inside the MKO Abiola National Stadium, Abuja. This ambitious project is designed to establish a state-of-the-art accommodation facility intended specifically for the national football teams.

The vision behind the proposed hotel, which has been a project close to the heart of the Ibrahim Gusau administration since it took office 28 months ago, is to free the NFF of the humongous expenses incurred regularly in accommodating the different National Teams. In drastically reducing expenses on accommodation, the football-governing body intends to redirect such funds towards more critical areas, such as nurturing local football talent and bolstering the overall infrastructure of Nigeria football.

During the site inspection, Mallam Dikko and NFF President Gusau evaluated multiple aspects of the location under consideration. Key factors included the ease of accessibility for both players and support

staff, the level of security provided by the surrounding area, and the proximity of the site to essential training facilities.

Their discussions extended beyond site assessment, as they

also strategized about the project's overall timeline, budget considerations, and the potential for partnerships with private investors or corporate entities that might be interested in sup-

porting the laudable initiative. They were in company with top NFF officials including the General Secretary, Dr. Mohammed Sanusi and Technical Director, Coach Augustine Eguavoen, as well as principal aides of the NSC supremo, including Barr. Musa Amadu (former NFF General Secretary) and Mallam Salihu Abubakar.

The NFF National Teams Hotel project is in alignment with the overarching mission of the NSC, which is to promote and enhance the development of sports across Nigeria. As the principal authority entrusted with regulating sports in the nation, the NSC is dedicated to endorsing programs and initiatives that bolster Nigeria's sporting framework.

NSC pledges support as Team Nigeria heads to 2025 All-African Senior Badminton Championship

D G Olopade motivates athletes with camp visit before departure.

With just days to go before the 2025 All-African Senior Badminton Championship in Douala, Cameroon, the Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, has reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to supporting

Nigerian sports federations, including badminton, as they strive for excellence.

Speaking ahead of Team Nigeria's departure, Olopade emphasized the growing importance of badminton in Nigeria's sporting landscape, commending the leadership of Francis Orbih, President of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria, for elevating the sport's profile.

"For us at the NSC, and speaking in the mind of our chairman, Mallam Shehu Dikko, badminton has become a very important sport in the Nigerian sports ecosystem. President Orbih and his leadership team have created a buzz around badminton, and it is evident in what athletes like Aanu have achieved," Olopade said.



PFAN National Executives appoints caretaker committees in FCT, Kogi State

The Professional Footballers Association of Nigeria (PFAN), in its continued bids to strategically reposition the player's union for better services to past and current footballers, have announced the appointments of caretaker committees for FCT, Abuja and Kogi State.

While announcing the appointments of the com-

mittees, President of PFAN Tijani Babangida stated that the committees are to run the affairs of the union in their respective states for 2 years till formal elections are held.

Speaking further, the General Secretary of PFAN Comrade Edema Fuludu stated, "we have some states with existing executive committee in place like Delta and Ekiti for exam-

ple. But most states, do not yet have and every state has to have an executive committee in line with our constitution for ease of administration.

"Therefore those states with serious minded members have to take the mantle of leadership to work with the national executives. The creation of caretaker committees is a precursor to formal

elections in line with constitutional provision," Fuludu explained.

The FCT Caretaker Committee is a 10-man team led by Comrade Mustapha Mubdiyu as Chairman and Umar Giwa, Secretary. While Hon. Adama Yahaya and Tijani Ibrahim leads the Kogi State Caretaker Committee as Chairman and Secretary, respectively.



Team Nigeria set for championship battle

The Nigerian badminton team, comprising 10 players (five men and five women), will compete in Men's Singles, Women's Singles, Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles, and Mixed Doubles categories.

Among them is Anuoluwapo Opeyori, Nigeria's number one player, who is determined to defend his singles title after his gold-winning performance last year.

During a visit to the team's camp in Abuja on Wednesday to bid them farewell, Hon. Olopade assured the athletes of the Commission's full support, urging them to give their best effort.

"I convey the chairman's commitment to supporting all sports, and we recognize the growth of Nigerian badminton. It is our responsibility to encourage these athletes to keep excelling for the country. They are the defendAndroid champions, and my visit is to show our love, our support, and to ensure they are well taken care of. The confidence is there—it's all up to them to deliver," Olopade stated.

Badminton Federation President Francis Orbih expressed confidence in the team, highlighting their readiness for the championships.

"I'm confident they will perform very well. We have a lot of potential, and the Director General's visit will further boost their morale. We appreciate the support," Orbih said.

Meanwhile, Opeyori is eye-

ing back-to-back victories, aiming to retain his African singles title and lead Nigeria to another strong performance at the championships.

At the previous edition in Cairo, Egypt, Team Nigeria secured one gold, two silver, and four bronze medals.

With the 2025 edition set to run from February 10–16, expectations are high for another remarkable showing from the country's top shuttlers.

Super Falcons Striker Ijamilusi Seals 2 year Deal With Top Chinese Women Super League Side Liaoning Baiye

Super Falcons striker Fola-shade Ijamilusi has signed a 2-years deal with top Chinese Women Super league side Liaoning Baiye.

The deal which was facilitated by FIFA licensed agent Ayodele Thomas, would see free-scoring Ijamilusi fondly called Ijaball, by her teeming admirers helping the Shenyang city based team to win laurels in the new season.

Thomas who is also the President of TopPro Sports Management Company, remarked confidently, "We believe in the immense potentials of Fola-shade Ijamilusi to take the competitive Chinese Women's Super league by the storm."

He added that this transfer would not be a one-off, as he expressed confidence that there would be more lucrative deals from his reputable company.

FEATURE

Snapshot of the 2024 cancer budgetary allocation for Nigeria

Before the advent of this government, there were only about three or four functional cancer treatment centres across the country. However, within the first year of this administration, just last year, Mr. President approved the procurement of six brand-new cancer treatment machines for six centres of excellence within the country. This means the government has more than doubled the provision of these critical machines.

Additionally, this year, the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment is planning to introduce state-of-the-art screening services in the six geopolitical zones—a first of its kind. More equipment, including nuclear medicine technology, which is highly needed for specialised cancer treatments, is also being acquired. This includes more linear accelerators to improve the quality of care for cancer patients.

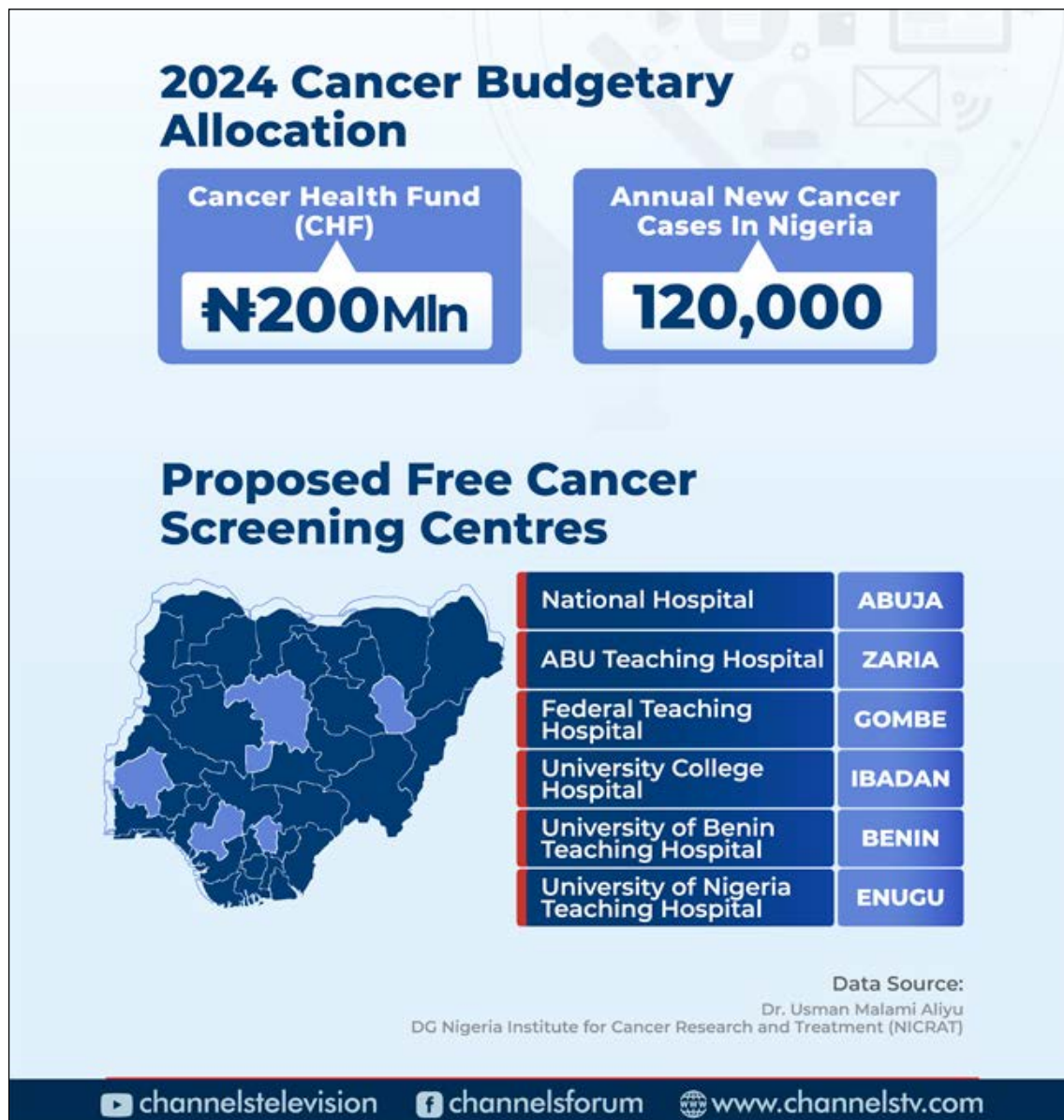
With these improvements, the government is actively working to provide oncologists with the necessary tools for their practice. Many oncologists have expressed concerns, saying, “Yes, I have graduated, but what do you want me to do? If I stay in Nigeria, there are no centres where I can practice what I have learned.” Meanwhile, I have job offers abroad in well-equipped centres with up to six cancer treatment machines, where I can upgrade my skills and advance in my career.

Through these efforts, we hope to retain more oncologists in the country. If you look at most of the centres where this new equipment is being provided, you will notice that newly graduated oncologists are the ones occupying these positions. This means, in some ways, there is now a level of retention in the field of oncology, thanks to the innovations introduced by the current government.

Is this administration’s approach fit for the purpose of ensuring accessibility and affordability for advanced terminal diseases?

If you look at what the Federal Ministry of Health is doing in collaboration with NIKRA through the Federal Ministry of Health, the Honourable Minister for Health and Social Welfare of the Alip Party has a special interest in ensuring that the needed healthcare provisions and services required by our communities are provided at their doorstep. It was through this vision that he decided to introduce a wide-set approach to healthcare services, and cancer is not exempted.

Last year, there was a Cancer Access Program in the country. This Cancer Access Program, which is now under the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment, consists of two parts. The first one is what we call the “Cancer Health Fund.” This



is a special fund set aside to support indigent patients in accessing cancer treatment in the country. It has been piloted in the six regions, and many have accessed this fund.

We also have another program called “The ENCAP.” Through this initiative, the Federal Ministry of Health, in collaboration with NICRAT, entered into an agreement—an MoU—with pharmaceutical companies that provide chemotherapy and targeted therapy needed by cancer patients. These pharmaceutical companies supply high-quality medications for cancer treatment at 50% of the original cost. In turn, we worked with the Federal Ministry to secure a waiver from NAFDAC and the Immigration Customs Service to facilitate access.

Through this initiative, the government has drastically improved accessibility to cancer treatment. Additionally, I just mentioned the provision of six brand-new cancer treatment equipment, which we hope to complete by the second to third quarter of this year. This will further enhance access to cancer care and improve the availability of services that were previously unavailable in the country.

We are currently in Phase 2, interfacing with the National Assembly to get more funding so that once we have that, we will have a robust referral system. From primary healthcare, you can be referred to a general hospital where you will be able to access some form of healthcare service

We are also working on the provision of screening services. We have procured the necessary machines and are currently renovating and constructing sites within the six geopolitical zones. This

will ensure that individuals with suspected cancer cases can walk in and get screened. Once screened, if you test positive, we are hopeful that at this stage, we will be able to cure the disease because it is expected to be detected at a very early stage. If you do not feel any symptoms but undergo screening and something is detected, you have a high chance of being cured because it is identified early.

Early detection is not only safer but also significantly more affordable. Through these efforts, we hope to improve accessibility to the essential healthcare services that our people need.

Yes, the Cancer Health Fund is free. All you need to do is inform your doctor that you need these services, and he will assist you in going online to apply for the Cancer Health Fund. However, there are certain criteria you must satisfy before you are allowed to enroll on the platform.

The centres, what states are they?
North-Central – We have Abuja, the National Hospital

North-West – Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria

North-East – Federal Teaching Hospital, Gombe

South-West – University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan

South-South – University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH)

South East – University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH), Enugu.

All these centres have been providing these services, and we’ve been interfacing with the National Assembly and other philanthropists in the country to improve funding for the Cancer Health Fund. What we got for the fund last year was 200 million, and you know it will not be enough. So, we are hoping to increase it remarkably so that, at least, we will be able to cover more Nigerians with these funds.

Is there a collaboration with States for this Cancer Health Access Program?

I mentioned earlier that what we got for the Cancer Health Fund from the budget was 200 million, so it was minimal. It was out of the wisdom of the Federal Ministry of Health, NICRA, and the agency that currently manages this fund to limit the coverage because of the amount we had—to three cancers: breast, cervical, and prostate cancer.

We limited it to these six. Our hope is that if we get better funding this year, we are going to open our program to include all the tertiary hospitals in the state to be the hub for the republic. Then, we have the sub-hubs, which are the general hospitals within the country that offer some form of cancer treatment services based on surgery.

We also have the feeders. The feeders are the primary healthcare centres that we have in the country. This, we have all completed because we divided the expansion program into phases, and we are done with Phase 1. We are currently in Phase 2, interfacing with the National Assembly to get more funding so that once we have that, we will have a robust referral system. From primary healthcare, you can be referred to a general hospital where you will be able to access some form of healthcare service.