

PSC appoints ex-police spokesman Moshood Jimoh Lagos CP

The Police Service Commission has appointed Moshood Jimoh as the new Commissioner of Police for Lagos State Command.

Jimoh served as the force spokesman from January 2017 to January 2019.

He later held various positions, including Deputy Commissioner of the Airport Police, Deputy Commissioner

of Finance and Administration, Deputy Commissioner of General Investigation, and Commissioner of Police for the Ports Authority, Eastern Ports.

A statement released on Monday by the PSC's spokesman, Ikechukwu Ani, stated: "The Police Service Commission, on Monday, February 17, 2025, approved the appointment of Moshood Jimoh as the Commissioner of Po-

lice for Lagos State Command." "Jimoh, who hails from Kwara State, was a former Force Public Relations Officer. He later served as Deputy Commissioner of the Airport Police, Deputy Commissioner of Finance and Administration, and Deputy Commissioner of General Investigation. Before his appointment, he was Commissioner of Police for the Ports

Authority, Eastern Ports." "He has undergone several professional training programmes, including: Combat Operations Course at the Mobile Training College in Maiduguri; African Union Mission in Darfur, Sudan; Weapons of Mass Destruction Countermeasure First Responder Training at the United States Institute; Social Construction and Management

Reform at the China Executive Leadership Academy, Pudong, China; Maritime Rescue and Salvage for Developing Countries at the China Maritime Academy in Ningbo, China; Anti-Hijacking Techniques and Tactics for Developing Countries at Yunnan Police College in Kunming, China; and Police Training at the Police Training Institute, Seoul, South Korea.

"CP Olohundare Moshood Jimoh is also a recipient of the Presidential Award for Public Relations Personality of the Year, recognising his sterling qualities and outstanding contribution to the development and use of Public Relations, awarded by the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations."

Ani confirmed that CP Jimoh appeared before the Commission today.

The Nigerian Observer



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Edo Civil Society warns against actions that could lead to BORBDA's relocation

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DSS operatives invade Lagos assembly complex

The Lagos State House of Assembly was rocked by a shocking invasion on Monday when operatives from the Department of State Services (DSS) and the Nigeria Police forcefully entered the legislative complex.

The surprise raid was met with swift condemnation from the assembly members, who labeled the act as a "rape of democracy," calling it both a national embarrassment and an aberration of the democratic process.

During the plenary session attended by 36 lawmakers, the legislative body demanded immediate clarification from the Lagos State DSS Director regarding the motives behind the security forces' sudden presence.

In a strong call for accountability, the assembly also sought a thorough investigation from the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, into the incident, urging that the findings be made public.

The lawmakers expressed their collective outrage, decrying the security breach as a direct threat to the principles of democracy in Lagos State.

"This is not a government ruled by the barrel of a gun. This is an aberration of democracy and a step toward anarchy," said Abiodun Tobun, one of the lawmakers. "What happened today is a total embarrassment and an act of harassment."

The assembly's unanimous stance condemned the security invasion as an abuse of legislative

process, further asserting their firm allegiance to the Speaker of the House, with Tobun affirming, "Nobody can dictate to us. God chooses and removes leaders. We are solidly behind your leadership, Mr. Speaker, nobody can remove you."

Lawmakers like Gbolahan Yishawu described the intrusion

as an "unacceptable overreach" by the security agencies, emphasizing the critical importance of legislative independence.

"The Nigerian Constitution clearly spells out the separation of powers. The legislature is a key pillar of democracy, and any attempt to intimidate or disrupt its activities must be condemned

in the strongest terms," he said.

The assembly also raised concerns about the possible involvement of powerful individuals or groups behind the raid, demanding an exhaustive investigation to expose those who may have orchestrated the invasion.

The Lagos House of Assembly made it clear that it would

remain united in defending the independence of the legislature and preventing such actions from undermining the democratic processes in the state.

As of now, both the DSS and the Nigeria Police have yet to release any official response to the condemnation and demands for an explanation.

First 100 days: EIRS boss lauds Okpebholo achievements

BERNADETTE IDALU

The Executive Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), Otunba Oladele Bankole-Balogun, has lauded Governor Monday Okpebholo for the rapid and transformative developments witnessed in Edo State within his first 200 days in office.

In a chat with newsmen in Benin City, Balogun expressed admiration for Okpebholo's leadership, emphasizing that

his victory at the polls and swift actions since assuming office have exceeded expectations, silencing skeptics and igniting renewed hope across the state.

He noted the governor's impressive strides in infrastructure, citing the construction of new roads and the rehabilitation of previously neglected ones at an unprecedented pace.

Additionally, he highlighted



A CEREMONY:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, at a ceremony in Government House, Benin City recently.

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Edo Civil Society warns against actions that could lead to BORBDA's relocation

The Edo Civil Society Coalition for Justice has cautioned against any actions that could result in the relocation of the Benin-Owena River Basin Development Authority (BORBDA) from Edo State.

Speaking at a press briefing on Monday, the group's Coordinator, Comrade King David, emphasized the critical role BORBDA plays in the state's industrial and economic development.

The coalition's concerns stem from a recent protest at the (BORBDA) headquarters in Benin City, where certain individuals,

claiming to represent the interests of the Benin ethnic group, demanded that the position of Managing Director be assigned to a Benin indigene.

They argued that Edo State, as the host of the agency, deserves to produce the present leadership.

However, the civil society group dismissed these claims as both misleading and dangerous.

Comrade King David clarified that BORBDA serves four states, including, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, and Delta that and leadership within the agency fol-

lows due federal procedures, including the Federal Character Commission's guidelines.

The coalition further pointed out that Edo State has, in fact, had the privilege of occupying the Managing Director's seat more than any other state under BORBDA's jurisdiction. Out of the 13 Managing Directors since the agency's inception, five have been from Edo State, including individuals of Benin extraction.

Additionally, the immediate past MD, who served an uninterrupted eight-year tenure, was

from Edo, the coalition noted

"This clearly disproves the notion that Edo State is being marginalized in the leadership of BORBDA," King David stated.

"The protesters either lack proper information or are pushing a self-serving agenda that does not align with the true interests of the Benin people or Edo State as a whole."

The coalition warned that the agitation could have dire consequences, including the potential relocation of BORBDA from Edo State, which would only deepen the state's

industrial deficiencies.

King David stressed that development thrives in a peaceful and stable environment, not in one where baseless ethnic agitations disrupt governance and progress.

In response to the protest, the coalition declared that all protests targeted at BORBDA's leadership selection must stop immediately, and the newly appointed Managing Director, Dr. Femi Adekanbi, should be allowed to assume office without hindrance.

Protesters were urged to refrain from divisive actions and allow peace to reign for the benefit of Edo State and the other member states.

The Edo State Commissioner of Police was also called upon to ensure adequate security at BORBDA's headquarters

to prevent further disruptions.

The Edo Civil Society Coalition reaffirmed its commitment to promoting justice, equity, and development while urging residents to resist being misled by individuals pursuing narrow political or personal gains.

King David stated that the Benin people are known for their integrity, structured leadership, and wisdom, and their political and traditional institutions remain strong and aligned.

He maintained that the protest does not reflect the will of the Benin people.

As Edo State continues to navigate its path toward industrial and infrastructural growth, the coalition emphasized that unity and informed advocacy, not ethnic sentiments, are the keys to sustainable progress.



OFFICIALLY COMMISSIONING:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa (centre), cutting the tape to officially commission Eagle Watch Security office in Benin City. He is flanked by with Eng. Greg Ogbeifun (right), Chairman, Eagle Watch Security Ltd, and Chief Lucky Nosakhare Igbinedion, former governor of the state.

Govt committed to combating insecurity, says Idahosa

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has lauded the contributions of the organized private sector to the development of the state, particularly Engr. Greg Ogbeifun, for investing in the security sector, which aligns with the state government's efforts to tackle insecurity.

Idahosa made the remarks while commissioning Eaglewatch Security Limited, a security service company located at the Edo Production Centre on Sapele Road, Benin City.

As the Special Guest of Honor, Idahosa emphasized that the Edo State Government, under the leadership of Senator Monday Okpebholo, had made significant investments in security.

These, he said included the purchase of 75 new vehicles for distribution to security agencies and motorcycles for the Edo State Security Corps, aimed at enhancing the state's ability to combat crime effectively.

Idahosa further noted that the state government has been proactive since its inauguration in overhauling the security architecture.

This overhaul, he said included renewed efforts to fight crime, such as the signing of a bill into law that imposes stricter penalties for secret cults and related offenses.

He highlighted new measures to curb kidnapping, including a law that mandates the demolition of properties where kidnappers plan their crimes.

The deputy governor urged all Edo State residents, regardless of political or religious affiliations, to support the security agencies in their quest to foster peace and stability, which in turn would stimulate investment and unlock the state's economic potential.

Idahosa also commended Ogbeifun for his entrepreneurial spirit and investment in the security sector, wishing him a happy 74th birthday and continued good health.

He encouraged the management and staff of Eaglewatch Security to remain committed to their duties.

Also, Idahosa visited the "Diverse Autocare Centre," a modern motor repair workshop also owned by Ogbeifun, located with-

in the Edo Production Centre.

Former Governor Mr. Lucky Igbinedion lauded the security outfit's impact on the state's development, particularly the "central control center" that allows Eaglewatch to monitor its personnel's activities efficiently.

In his speech, Ogbeifun expressed gratitude for his good health and the opportunity to positively impact younger generations.

He thanked his staff, friends, and well-wishers, including the 1965 set of the Edo College Old Boys Association (ECOA) for their support.

He also urged fellow Edo nationals in the diaspora to invest back home, helping to boost the state's internally generated revenue and contribute to its legacy.

EdoSEMA assesses 3 fire incidents in Benin

Assures victims of govt support

The Edo State Emergency Management Agency (EdoSEMA) has conducted an on-the-spot assessment of three separate fire incidents in Benin City, following distress calls from affected areas.

The agency's Executive Secretary, Hon. Jerry Idahosa, alongside the operations team led by Engineer Michael, visited the scenes to evaluate the extent of the damage and offer government support.

The first fire, which broke out at No. 20 Uselu, Lagos Road, resulted in the destruction of multiple shops and goods worth millions of naira.

Victims, overwhelmed with grief, recounted their losses as Hon. Idahosa assured them of the state government's commitment to protecting lives and property under the leadership of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

"We received this call this morning and have come to assess the situation. Based on our findings, we will compile a report and present it to His Excellency," Hon. Idahosa stated, urging affected traders to remain calm and patient. He emphasized that the government is aware of their plight and will take necessary steps to alleviate their suffering.

During the visit, he also took the opportunity to educate residents on fire safety, advising

shop owners and homeowners to turn off electrical appliances when leaving their premises.

He encouraged the public to report emergencies promptly through the toll-free number 739 or EdoSEMA's official lines.

While still assessing the Use-lu incident, EdoSEMA received another distress call about a fire outbreak at Siluko Road, near Chicken Republic.

Upon arrival, it was discovered that the fire had been caused by indiscriminate bush burning.

The timely intervention of the Edo State and Federal Fire Services prevented further destruction, reinforcing the importance of swift emergency response.

Hon. Idahosa commended the fire services for their rapid action and called for stronger collaboration among emergency management agencies to enhance disaster response and prevention.

"Disasters are best managed when all stakeholders work together. We must strengthen our synergy to safeguard lives and property," he emphasized.

Shortly after, EdoSEMA was alerted to a third fire outbreak at the Obakhavbaye axis. Despite the unfortunate recurrence of fire incidents, Hon. Idahosa reassured the public that EdoSEMA remains committed to proactive disaster management.

Edo govt reaffirms commitment to strengthening Microfinance Cooperatives

The Edo State Government, through the Ministry of Business, Trade, and Cooperatives, has reiterated its commitment to creating a more supportive environment for microfinance cooperatives in the state.

Speaking at the maiden edition of the Micro-Finance Cooperatives Engagement, held in Benin City, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Barr. (Mrs.) F. N. Edokpolor, assured

participants of the state government's dedication to addressing the challenges facing the sector.

In her address, Mrs. Edokpolor acknowledged the difficulties microfinance cooperatives encounter, including funding limitations and regulatory concerns.

She emphasized the ministry's readiness to collaborate in strengthening their operations, stating that the government recognizes their impact and understands the obstacles they face.

She urged stakeholders to focus on practical solutions, such as improving funding accessibility, strengthening cooperative policies, and enhancing partnerships to ensure the sustainability of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the state.

Delivering a lecture at the event, Dr. Osarenren Aigienohuwa, Chairman of the Association of Non-Bank Microfinance Institutions of Nigeria (ANMFIN), highlighted the vital role

of microfinance cooperatives in promoting financial inclusion and economic development.

He emphasized their importance in bridging the gap for individuals, small businesses, traders, and rural communities by providing access to credit, savings, and investment opportunities.

Despite their contributions, he noted that challenges such

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the revitalization of critical infrastructure and the strengthening of the state's security framework with a clear and determined approach.

Balogun described Okpebholo as "God-sent" and commended his vision and sincerity, affirming that the governor's leadership embodies the human-centered governance that Edo people longed for and de-

cisively voted into power.

He also acknowledged Okpebholo's impact on the Edo State Internal Revenue Service, stating that under his leadership, the agency has reached an unprecedented milestone, marking a historic achievement for the state.

He assured the people of Edo that with Okpebholo and his deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, at the helm, the state is in safe and capable hands.

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NEWS

Women empowerment: Edo commissioner seeks partnership with Vesa Fisheries

PEACE OSEMWEGIE

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Edo State, Chief Bisi Idaomi has expressed the State government's commitment to collaborate with private business concerns in its efforts to grow the State's economy.

Chief Idaomi stated this recently when she paid a courtesy visit to the CEO, Vesa Fisheries, Mrs Veronica Igbe.

She said such collaboration in areas of knowledge, skills sharing, and jobs specific training for women was needed to

support the economic lives of the target group and the State at large.

The Commissioner solicited the support of Vesa Fisheries in the area of promoting women's economic development.

Other areas of support the commissioner sought, included building of a crèche for market women because of the special care nursing mothers who are market women needs to effectively take care of their babies and at the same time, do their business.

Chief Idaomi commended the Business mogul for support for women develop-

ment, describing her as an outstanding business leader and an inspiration to women

entrepreneurs.

Mrs. Igbe in her remarks expressed her willingness to sup-

port the Commissioner's initiative, to the best of her ability.

This partnership aligns with

the Ministry's mandate to promote women's welfare and development.

Lawmaker opposes global taxation at UN global parliament in New York

CAROLINE AMEH

Senator Jimoh Ibrahim, representing Ondo South Senatorial District, has expressed his strongly opposition to the proposal for a global tax to fund the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), describing it as inappropriate and unacceptable.

Speaking at the inter parliamentary opening session of the United Nations Global Parliament in New York, Ibrahim argued that the international system is anarchic and lacks the necessary authority to enforce such a taxation framework.

The senator warned that imposing global taxes would deepen inequality within the geocentric system and could further increase poverty, contradicting the United Nations' efforts to eradicate poverty by 2030.

As an alternative, he proposed that environmental polluters should compensate Africa to help alleviate its debt

burden.

"It is time for African legislators to act decisively and compel the rest of the world to pay compensation for climate impacts so that we can finance our SDGs," Ibrahim stated.

He highlighted several critical issues hindering the SDGs, including the exclusion of key stakeholders, a lack of transparency, a deficit of trust, the failure of multilateralism, and insufficient support from non-state actors.

With the 2030 deadline fast approaching, Ibrahim stressed the urgent need for a comprehensive review to assess progress toward poverty eradication.

The senator also commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his commitment to the SDGs, as reflected in his budget proposal.

He urged the United Nations to take a more introspective approach to ensure the success of the SDGs within the limited time frame remaining.



BURIAL CEREMONY:

L-R: 2023 Delta State governorship candidate of the Labour Party (LP), Ken Pela; presidential candidate of LP in the 2023 General Election, Mr Peter Obi; 2023 Lagos State governorship candidate, Arch. Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, and senator representing Anambra North Senatorial District in the National Assembly, Senator Tony Nwoye, at the burial ceremony of the murdered Anambra State House of Assembly member, Hon. Justice Azuka, at St Mary's Catholic Church, Onitsha in Anambra State.

Ned Nwoko explains role in push for Anioma State

AJUWA VICTOR

The Senator representing Delta North Senatorial District at the National Assembly, Senator Ned Nwoko has revealed how he reached out to the three members of the House of Representatives and members of the Delta State Assembly from Delta North over the renewed quest for Anioma State creation.

Speaking with journalists, the Senator who recently switched party from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), said he also consulted the immediate past governor of Delta, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa and did all that was re-

quired of him as a legislator to carry every stakeholder along.

"I reached out separately to each of the three members of the House of Representatives. In fact, Hon. Ngozi Okolie said he fully supports the creation of Anioma State and was physically present at the Anioma Stakeholders Summit on August 31st, last year.

"Nnamdi Ezechi also said he supports the renewed quest for Anioma. It was only Hon. Victor Nwokolo that told me he needed to consult the former governor, Dr Okowa. I also consulted the former Governor Okowa, consulted the nine members Delta North caucus of the Delta State House of Assembly through the majority leader, Hon. Emeka Nwaobi.

"These consultations were done before we organised the Anioma Stakeholders Summit which was held on August 31st, 2024. I believe I have done what I ought to do as a Senator representing my people of Delta North," Sen Nwoko stated.

He said that the present political leadership of Delta North owes the people the responsibility to ensure the actualization of the Anioma dream, stressing that he needn't lobby any Anioma stakeholder to support the actualisation of Anioma State.

"I'm not the initiator of the creation of Anioma State. In fact I joined the clamour during the 2014 Constitutional Conference under the Jonathan administration. Now that I'm in the Senate,

I took it up from where all of us left it at that conference.

"Again, what I'm doing in the Senate does not stop my people in the House of Representatives from also doing the same. It makes the effort easier. In fact, that is why I'm happy about the Bill for the creation of Warri State before the House of Representatives.

"I'm giving the initiators of the Warri State my 100% support. With the push for Warri State, automatically Anioma State becomes easier to achieve. At the stage we are in the Senate, it would no longer be necessary to undertake all the processes since there's another Bill also pushing for the split of the present Delta State," the senator explained.

Delta govt approves N275bn for 76 projects

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Government, at its maiden Executive Council (EXCO) meeting for 2025, has approved over N275 billion for the execution of 76 projects spanning different sectors and across the three senatorial districts of the state.

The approval was given at the Exco meeting presided over by Governor Sheriff Oborewori at the Government House, Asaba.

The Commissioner for Works (Rural Roads) and Public Information, Mr Charles Aniagwu, who briefed the press after the meeting, said that the approvals were record-breaking, outstanding and deafening to critics.

Joined by his counterparts in Works (Highways and Urban Roads), Mr Reuben Izeze;

Economic Planning, Mr Sonny Ekedayen; Health, Dr Joseph Onojaeme; the Director-General, Delta State Capital Territory Development Agency, Chief Patrick Ukah; his counterpart in Warri Uvwie and environs, Prince Godwin Ejinyere, and the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Sir Festus Ahon, Mr Aniagwu said Governor Oborewori was determined to ensure Deltans get value for money spent on projects in the state.

He said, "Not long ago, we informed you that Governor Oborewori is not interested in joining issues with critics, but will be responding to them with projects.

"But little did we know that his response is going to be so outstanding and deafening that even those who have some auditory challenge will hear the sound.

"Today, Governor Sheriff Ob-

orewori led us to make history since the 34 year-life of Delta State where, in one Exco meeting over N275 billion worth of projects were approved for the good people of Delta cutting across the three senatorial districts.

"These projects span different sectors targeted at giving value to our people; improving connectivity by way of roads, advancing their health by way of efforts in the health sector and, of course, urban renewal by making our cities much more liveable.

"Virtually all the projects we approved today are coming with 40 per cent mobilisation without our government having to go and borrow, and that tells you how solvent we are as a state, thanks to the very accountable and transparent governance philosophy of Governor Oborewori."

He said the Exco also ap-

proved the remodelling of the Warri City Stadium, describing it as a bold step to ensure that legacy projects were not in short supply in the state.

He listed the approved projects to include construction of Uruagbesa Oria-Abraka Road, phase 1; construction of Egado-Ogbeinebene Road, and the construction of Faculty B at the Southern Delta University, Orerokpe campus.

Others he said included the construction of Amai-Aragba road; construction of Inam-Abi access road; construction of internal roads at Ugbolu Hilltop Government layout (Phase 1); the construction of Umuoshimi Road with spurs to Ogbe-Aku and market road in Onicha-Ugbo; the construction of Okerenkoko - Pepeama - Kokodiagbene road with a spur to Teiteipur in Warri South-West, and the con-

struction of Benikrukru Township Roads (Phase II).

Also approved are the rehabilitation of Bomadi-Gbaregolor road, the construction of Okwetolor - Okobia - Aragba Road; the construction of Ogbe-Isogban Road in Abavo; Owa-Ewere Road in Owa-Oyibu; approval for upward review of Ayakoromo bridge; the rehabilitation and asphalt overlay of Okpanam Road from Post Office Junction to Catholic Church Roundabout to Okpanam Bypass Junction, among others.

The Commissioner for Works (Highways and Urban Roads), Comrade Reuben Izeze, commended Governor Oborewori for the massive provision of 40 per cent mobilisation for all the approved projects.

Izeze added that Governor Oborewori had cleared out-

standing certificates owed contractors, including N8bn previously owed on the Trans-Warri Road and bridges, as well as putting the project on the Irrevocable Standing Payment Order, ISPO module.

On his part, the Commissioner for Health, Dr Joseph Onojaeme, said that Exco approved N1.6bn for the Contributory Health Insurance Scheme and a monthly release of N100m to ensure sustainability of the health coverage for Deltans.

He said Exco equally approved the establishment of a Specialist Hospital at Osubi, with Public Laboratory and Psychiatric Clinic; total rehabilitation of the General Hospital, Expan, and the completion of the Library Building at Delta State University Teaching Hospital, Oghara, to ensure increased students intake.

Chevron Nigeria Ltd denies alleged influencing employment in vocational programs

Chevron Nigeria Limited (CNL), the operator of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and CNL Joint Venture, has rejected recent claims made by an online media re-

port which suggested that a company employee, referred to as the "General Manager of EGP," had influenced the employment status of graduates participating in its Vocational Training Program (VTP) and

Operations Training Program (OTP).

In a statement signed by Olusoga Oduselu, the General Manager of Policy, Government and Public Affairs, CNL refuted the allegations, clari-

fying that no such position as "General Manager of EGP" exists within the company.

The company also stressed that its recruitment process is transparent, merit-based, and free from external interference.

CNL further clarified that the VTP and OTP are part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, aimed at providing beneficiaries with industry-relevant skills.

However, the company made it clear that these programs do not guarantee employment for participants.

Reaffirming its commitment to being an equal-opportunity employer, CNL emphasized that all hiring decisions are based

solely on business needs and organizational requirements.

While the company encourages qualified candidates from host communities to apply, it assured the public that its recruitment process remains competitive, fair, and open to all eligible applicants.

"CNL remains committed to transparency, fairness, and community development in Nigeria's oil and gas industry," the statement concluded.



OATH TAKING CEREMONY:

The recently inducted medical graduates of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, MDCN, during the oath taking ceremony.

MDCN inducts 128 AAU medical graduates

The Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) has inducted 128 medical graduates of Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, in a ceremony held in Ekpoma, Edo State.

The swearing-in and oath-taking event was presided over by the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of MDCN, Dr. Fatima Kyari, who was represented by the Deputy Registrar, Dr. Enjoy Abdu.

Addressing the newly inducted doctors, Dr. Kyari emphasized that their induction marked the beginning of their medical careers and urged them to embrace the profession as a service to humanity.

She acknowledged the challenges they had faced during their training and encouraged them to uphold the values of Ambrose Alli University and the medical profession.

In his goodwill messages, Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Cyril Oshiomhole, and Commissioner for Education, Dr. Paddy E. Iyamu, advised the new doctors to see their profession as more than just a means of acquiring wealth.

They stressed the importance of their contributions to the

healthcare system in Edo State and the nation, reminding them that society had nurtured them and now expected them to give back through dedicated service.

The guest lecturer, Prof. Reuben A. Eifediye, the Chief Medical Director of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, urged the inductees to remain committed to their professional oaths.

He acknowledged the challenges involved in transitioning from medical students to practitioners and encouraged them to uphold the highest ethical standards in their careers.

In his opening remarks, the Acting Vice Chancellor of Ambrose Alli University, Prof. Sunday Olowo Samuel, highlighted the challenges faced by the university's College of Medicine and noted that the current management had successfully resolved some of these issues.

He expressed gratitude for the support of the state government and assured that ongoing challenges would be addressed with continued dedication and assistance.

The event's high points included the oath-taking and swearing-in of the new doctors, as well as the presentation of awards to outstanding graduates.

Step-by-step guide to check 2024 WASSCE results for private candidates

The West African Examinations Council, on Sunday, announced the release of the 2024 West African Senior School Certificate Examination results for Private Candidates, Second Series.

This was disclosed in a statement by the Acting Head of Public Affairs, Moyosola Adesina.

According to Adesina, a total of 65,023 candidates participated in the examination, with 43,923 candidates, repre-

senting 67.55%, scoring credit and above in a minimum of five subjects.

Furthermore, 34,878 candidates, accounting for 53.64% of the total candidates, obtained credit and above in five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics.

Adesina noted that the results reflect a promising performance among candidates.

"The performance of candidates in this year's examination is encouraging, with a signif-

icant percentage achieving credit and above in key subjects," she said.

For candidates eager to check their results, WAEC has provided a simple online procedure:

Visit the WAEC official results checker website: www.Waecdirect.Org.

Enter your 10-digit WAEC Examination Number in the designated field.

Input the four-digit Examination Year, for example, 2024. Select the Type of Examination

as 'Private Candidate Results'.

Enter the e-PIN Voucher Number.

Provide the Personal Identification Number (PIN) from the e-PIN.

Click 'Submit' and wait for the results window to display your performance.

Candidates who experience any difficulties accessing their results are advised to contact WAEC through its official communication channels for assistance.

Heifer Int'l partners Edo to drive women's economic empowerment, agric growth

BENIN CITY

In a move to foster economic empowerment and sustainable development, Heifer International is expanding its footprint in Edo State through strategic partnerships with the government.

During a high-level engagement at Government House, representatives from the global nonprofit organization met with Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, the Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady, to discuss initiatives aimed at improving women's livelihoods and boosting local agriculture.

Mrs. Anani emphasized the resilience and dedication of women in economic activities, stressing the importance of collaborations that prioritize

their welfare.

She highlighted the critical role of nutrition, noting that a well-balanced diet is key to both maternal health and child development.

"We must ensure that women have access to proper nutrition, not just for their own well-being, but also to secure a healthier future for the next generation," she stated.

She further expressed confidence in Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration, assuring that its policies would significantly uplift communities across Edo State.

Drawing comparisons with Rwanda's post-revolution transformation, Mrs. Anani pointed out that increased female participation in governance and economic activities

has led to notable progress in the country.

"In Rwanda, women now own properties, hold leadership positions, and play key roles in decision-making. When women are empowered, societies thrive," she remarked.

Speaking on Heifer International's mission, the Programme Coordinator, Mrs. Onyekachi Ayevbomwan reaffirmed the organization's commitment to eradicating poverty and improving agricultural productivity.

She noted that while Heifer has an 80-year global legacy, its presence in Nigeria is still growing.

"Our goal is to lift 6.5 million households out of poverty by 2030. We recognize that we cannot do this alone, which is why partnerships with the Edo

State Government and other stakeholders are crucial," she explained.

Mrs. Ayevbomwan also outlined recent research on the commercial viability of their poultry products, revealing that improved taste quality at fourteen and sixteen weeks presents strong market potential.

Additionally, she announced the establishment of an advanced irrigation system designed to support local farmers, with training programs already underway across all 18 local government areas in the state.

With a firm commitment to women's leadership and economic sustainability, Heifer International is positioning itself as a key player in Edo State's development agenda.

Edo govt reaffirms commitment to...

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as limited access to funding, short-term financial planning, and weak corporate governance continue to hinder their growth.

He proposed solutions, including long-term strategic planning, government-backed loan schemes, public-private partnerships to attract investors, and internal savings mobilization strategies to reduce dependence on external funding.

A former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Mr. Joel Edionwe, provided insights on the distinction between microfinance cooperatives and microfinance banks, stressing the importance of clear understanding to avoid misconceptions.

He emphasized that strengthening microfinance cooperatives requires capacity building, financial inclusion, technolog-


ical innovation, and regulatory support.

Encouraging participants to take advantage of such engagements, he highlighted the significant benefits they stand to gain.

The Director of Cooperatives, Mrs. Efeoma Enoma, reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to working closely with microfinance cooperatives to understand their challenges and provide solutions.

She stressed the government's recognition of their role in supporting SMEs and the need to facilitate access to affordable funding.

She assured cooperatives of the ministry's support, encouraging compliance with legal frameworks without fear and highlighting the arbitration department's role in resolving disputes and ensuring smooth operations.

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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
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EFFECTIVE FROM FEBRUARY 1, 2023

Foreign

News

Can Europe and UK persuade Trump they're relevant to Ukraine's future?

Europe's leaders are scrambling. Their hastily convened security summit in Paris on Monday is proof of that.

They are still reeling from not being invited by the US to talks with Russia over the future of Ukraine. US President Donald Trump said on Sunday he could be meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin "very soon".

Can Europe, under pressure, put

political differences and domestic economic concerns aside, and come up with a united front on security spending and on Ukraine's future, including potentially sending troops there - to force themselves a spot at the negotiating table?

They are going to try.

On Monday morning, UK prime minister Sir Keir Starmer said the UK was "ready and willing to put troops on the ground". Even

in Germany, ahead of a heated election, the foreign policy spokesman of the CDU party, expected to win the most seats, said Europe's largest country would also be willing to commit troops within an international framework.

The Trump administration is clearly not 100% sure what it wants to do about Ukraine. There were a number of mixed messages over the weekend.

This allows Europe a tiny window of opportunity to try to persuade the American president it's an invaluable partner.

It hopes to do that via this Paris meeting, getting the ball rolling on two major issues demanded by Donald Trump: That Europe spend and do more for its own defence, and that Europe send troops to Ukraine after a ceasefire.

Europe's leaders insist Kyiv be directly involved in ceasefire talks too. They've long maintained the view that "there can be no decisions about Ukraine, without Ukraine".

But it's about even more than that for Europe.

It is the cold realisation - much dreaded, but not entirely unexpected - that the Trump administration does not prior-

itise relations either with European partners, or their defence.

Europe has relied on a security umbrella provided by the US since World War Two.

Depending on the parameters of the Russia-US talks over Ukraine, and how emboldened Putin feels by them, there is also a European fear this could end up changing their continent's security architecture.



RESCUE TEAM:

A rescue operation in Clarksville, Tennessee

Pope's health a 'complex clinical situation', Vatican says

Pope Francis is being treated for a "complex clinical situation" and will remain in hospital for as long as necessary, the Vatican has said.

The 88-year-old was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital on Friday to undergo treatment and tests for bronchitis.

In an update on Monday, the Vatican said the pontiff has a "polymicrobial infection" of his respiratory tract, which has required a change in his treatment.

Before his admission last week, the Pope had bronchitis symptoms for several days and had delegated officials to read prepared speeches at events.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Brunni told reporters on Monday that the pontiff was in good spirits.

A short statement on his condition said: "All tests carried out

to date are indicative of a complex clinical picture that will require appropriate hospitalisation."

The pontiff's weekly general audience, which is usually held each Wednesday, has been cancelled for this week, the statement added.

A further update on the Pope's condition would be released later on Monday, Mr Brunni added.

Over the weekend, the Vatican said the Pope was stable and that he'd been told to have "complete rest" to aid his recovery.

The Pope was unable to deliver his regular weekly prayer on Sunday in St Peter's Square or lead a special mass for artists to mark the Catholic Church's Jubilee Year.

Last Wednesday, the Pope asked a priest to read part of his speech because of his difficulties with illness.

China anger as US amends wording on Taiwan independence

The US State Department has dropped a statement from its website which stated that Washington does not support Taiwan's independence - a move which has sparked anger in China.

China said the revision "sends a wrong... signal to separatist forces advocating for Taiwan independence", and asked the US to "correct its mistakes".

The department's fact sheet on Taiwan-US relations earlier included the phrase "we do not support Taiwan independence" - this was removed last week as part of what

it said was a "routine" update.

A US spokesperson was quoted as saying that it remains committed to the "One China" policy, it said, where US recognises and has formal ties with China rather than Taiwan.

China sees self-governed Taiwan as a breakaway province that will eventually be part of the country, and has not ruled out the use of force to achieve this.

But many Taiwanese consider themselves to be part of a separate nation, although most are in favour of maintaining the status quo where Taiwan

neither declares independence from China nor unites with it.

As well as dropping the phrase, the factsheet, which was updated last Thursday, also says the US will support Taiwan's membership in international organisations "where applicable".

Commenting on the changes, a spokesperson at the American Institute in Taiwan - the US' de facto embassy on the island - told local media that the fact sheet had been "updated to inform the general public about [the US] unofficial relationship with Taiwan".

"We have long stated that we

oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side."

On Sunday, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung thanked the US for what he called "positive, Taiwan-friendly wordings".

But in their regular press conference on Monday, Beijing's foreign ministry slammed the move, calling the revision a "serious regression" in the US' stance on Taiwan.

"This sends a wrong and serious signal to separatist forces advocating for Taiwan independence and is another example of the U.S. stubbornly persisting with its wrong policy of using Taiwan to contain China," said Chinese spokesperson Guo Jiakun.

"We urge the US to immediately correct its mistakes [and] earnestly adhere to the One China principle."

Why Saudi Arabia is the venue of choice for Trump talks on Ukraine

The choice by the Trump administration of Saudi Arabia as the location for key talks on Ukraine underscores how far the Kingdom has come diplomatically from the near pariah state it became after the murder of the Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

The shadow that cast over the country and its de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in particular, appears to have lifted, although there are still concerns occasionally raised at international forums over Saudi Arabia's human rights records.

On many fronts - in entertainment and sport in particular - the country has spent huge amounts of money to further

its ambitions to be a major player on the world stage.

Diplomatically, the Saudi leadership has also been enhancing its role. During the Biden years, the Kingdom increased its pivot away from reliance on the US as its key international ally.

The Saudis made clear that they would follow what they perceive as their interests first and foremost - striking up closer relationships with countries viewed as key rivals to the US, such as Russia and China.

The return of Donald Trump to the White House will have been welcomed by the Saudis.

His first foreign visit in his first term was to Saudi Arabia - and the transactional nature

of his foreign policy is more conducive to the current Saudi leadership.

One of the possible achievements that Mr Trump would most like to chalk up on his record would be a peace deal between the Saudis and Israel - which would be the culmination of the Abraham Accords that he initiated in his first term.

But the war in Gaza has subsequently got in the way and may well raise the price that Saudi Arabia will demand for a peace agreement.

The Saudis were very quick to announce their definitive rejection of Mr Trump's plan for Gaza - to remove all the Palestinians and rebuild it as a resort.

At least 10 dead in US floods and heavy rain

At least 10 people have died as torrential downpours over the weekend drenched parts of the south-eastern US, submerging roads and houses.

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear said nine people have died in his state, after making an emergency disaster declaration.

About 1,000 people stranded in flood waters had to be rescued, he also said on Sunday.

The same areas could now be affected by drier but colder conditions, and the risk of snow, ice and significant disruption - according to BBC forecaster John Hutchinson.

The other death over the weekend was in Georgia, where a man lying in his bed was struck by an uprooted tree that crashed into his home.

Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina were under some type of storm-related alert over the weekend. Almost all of those states also suffered catastrophic damage in September from Hurricane Helene.

Hundreds of thousands of homes ended up without power - a number that reduced to tens of thousands early on Monday, according to monitoring site Poweroutage.us.

Some parts of Kentucky received up to 6in (15cm) of rain, National Weather Service (NWS) figures show, resulting in widespread flooding issues.

The rapid influx of rain caused river levels to rise quickly and trapped vehicles in feet of water, images posted online show. Hundreds of roads were closed.

World's 'first openly gay imam' shot dead in South Africa

Muhsin Hendricks, a pioneering figure dubbed the world's first openly gay imam, has been shot dead in South Africa.

The 57-year-old cleric ran a mosque in Cape Town intended as a safe haven for gay and other marginalised Muslims. He was killed on Saturday morning after the car in which he was travelling near the southern city of Gqeberha was ambushed.

"Two unknown suspects with covered faces got out of the vehicle and started firing multiple shots at the vehicle,"

police said in a statement.

News of Hendricks' death has sent shockwaves through the LGBTQ+ community and beyond, prompting an outpouring of tributes from across the globe.

Julia Ehrt, executive director at the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (Ilga), called on the authorities to thoroughly investigate "what we fear may be a hate crime".

"He supported and mentored so many people in South Africa and around the world in their journey to reconcile with their

faith, and his life has been a testament to the healing that solidarity across communities can bring in everyone's lives," she said.

Hendricks was killed after he had reportedly officiated at a lesbian wedding, though this has not been officially confirmed.

The details of the attack emerged through security footage that was shared on social media.

It shows a car pulling up and blocking the vehicle in which Hendricks was travelling as it was pulling away from the curb. According to police, the imam was in the back seat.

News

Foreign

Second DR Congo city falls to Rwanda-backed rebels

Rwandan-backed M23 rebels have entered Bukavu, the second-largest city in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, seizing the regional governor's office.

Some people lined the streets to clap and cheer the fighters as they marched and drove into the city centre without resistance. It is the second city after Goma to fall to the rebels in the mineral-rich region in the past few weeks.

The Congolese government has acknowledged its fall and urged residents to stay at home "to avoid being targeted by the occupying forces".

The UN and European countries have warned that the latest offensive, which has seen hundreds of thousands of people forced from their homes, could spark a wider regional war.

A resident in Bukavu, who asked to remain anonymous because of concerns for her safety, told the BBC on Sunday that most people were still

afraid to leave their homes.

"Since yesterday the children and the youth took the weapons. They are shooting everywhere in all directions, they are looting," she said.

"This morning the M23 entered and they were acclaimed by the people, very happy to see them. We don't know if it's because they are afraid or because they found that there were no authorities in the city.

"The place where I live the crackling [gunfire] can still be heard."

On Friday, the M23 captured Bukavu's main airport, which is about 30km (18 miles) north of the city - and then began advancing slowly towards the city, which is the capital of South-Kivu province.

The provincial governor, Jean-Jacques Purusi Sadiki, confirmed to the Reuters news agency the fighters were in Bukavu city centre by Sunday morning, adding that Congolese troops had withdrawn to

avoid urban fighting.

This left a security vacuum in the city on Saturday with chaotic scenes playing out, including a reported prison break from the central prison.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) said a warehouse with nearly 7,000 tonnes of food was looted.

The city of around two million people on the southern tip of Lake Kivu borders Rwanda and is an important transit point

for the local mineral trade.

Its fall represents an unprecedented expansion of territory for the M23 since their latest insurgency started in late 2021 - and is a blow to the government of President Félix Tshisekedi.

Government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said Rwanda was violating DR Congo's territorial integrity through expansionist ambitions and human rights abuses.

The Congolese government

accuses Rwanda of sowing chaos in the region - as well as having troops on the ground - so it can benefit from its natural resources, something Kigali denies.

President Tshisekedi wants his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame to face sanctions over the latest unrest.

But President Kagame has dismissed such threats - and has repeatedly pointed out that Rwanda's main priority is its security.

He has long been angered by what he sees as the failure of the Congolese authorities to deal with the DR Congo-based FLDRC rebel group, which he sees as a danger to Rwanda.

The group is made up of some members of the ethnic Hutu militia accused of involvement in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda when over 100 days around 800,000 people, mainly from the Tutsi ethnic group, were killed.

South Korean actress Kim Sae-ron, 24, found dead

South Korean actress Kim Sae-ron has been found dead in Seoul, police have said.

The 24-year-old was found in her home in the city's Seongsu-dong district by a friend at around 16:55 (07:55 GMT) on Sunday.

Officers said no signs of foul play had been found and they were investigating the cause of death.

Kim began her career as a child actor and was seen as one of South Korea's most promising young actresses.

Born in Seoul in 2000, she rose to prominence with her role in 2009 film *A Brand New Life* - which saw her appear at the Cannes Film Festival.

She went on to star in South Korea's highest grossing film of 2010 *The Man from Nowhere* and 2012 thriller *The Neighbour*, for which she received award recognition.

Other notable roles include the 2014 film *A Girl at My Door* and television roles such as *Mirror of the Witch* in 2016.

The actress largely withdrew from the public eye in 2022 due to a drink driving incident, for which she was fined 20 million won (£11,000) in April 2023.

Kim's last role was in Netflix's 2023 Korean drama *Bloodhounds*. Variety reported that most of her role was edited out due to the driving incident.



COURTESY VISIT:

The US Secretary of State met the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in Jerusalem on Sunday

Dozens killed in Mali illegal gold mine collapse

More than 40 people, mostly women, were killed after an illegal gold mine collapsed in Mali on Saturday.

The collapse took place near Kéniéba, in Mali's western, gold-rich Kayes region.

The victims had climbed into open-pit areas left by industrial miners to look for scraps of gold when the earth around them caved in, a gold miner's union leader told Reuters.

This is Mali's second deadly mining accident in three weeks, after at least 10 people were killed when a mining tunnel flooded late in January.

There are conflicting reports on the number of people who died in Saturday's accident.

A local police source told the AFP news agency that 48 people were killed in the collapse, while the head of an industry union told Reuters there were 43 victims.

"Some of the victims fell into the water. Among them was a woman with her baby on her back," the local police source told AFP.

Rescue workers have been able to retrieve the bodies, local sources told the BBC.

Mali is one of the biggest gold producers in the world.

Accidents are common in the country as much mining activity is unregulated, with miners using unsafe methods to dig for gold.

Just over a year ago, at least 40 people were killed after a tunnel collapsed in a mine.

It is also common for illegal miners - mostly women - to try to recover gold from abandoned sites due to poverty.

A spokesperson from the country's mines ministry confirmed to Reuters that the accident had taken place between the towns of Kéniéba and Dabia, but declined to give further details.

What's the fighting in DR Congo all about?

The mineral-rich east of the Democratic Republic of Congo has been dogged by conflict for more than 30 years, since the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

Numerous armed groups have competed with the central authorities for power and control of the potential fortune in this vast nation.

The instability has sucked in neighbouring countries to devastating effect - notoriously in the 1990s when two huge conflicts, dubbed Africa's World Wars, resulted in the deaths of millions of people.

What is happening at the moment?

After a rapid advance in the east, fighters from the M23 rebel group have captured a number of key cities and towns.

Their first major coup was at the end of January with the taking of Goma - a city in the North Kivu province that is home to more than a million people.

Sitting on the border with Rwanda and the shores of Lake Kivu, Goma is a vital trading and transport hub that is within reach of mining towns supplying metals and minerals in high demand.

When the rebels took over Goma, UN aid agencies warned of a major humanitarian crisis with shortages of food and water, hospitals overwhelmed by casualties and bodies lying on

the streets.

The M23 have also seized another key city in the region, South Kivu provincial capital Bukavu.

Other locations now under M23 control include Masisi, Rutshuru and Katale.

The rebels previously threatened to continue their offensive to the capital, Kinshasa, although analysts say this may be unlikely, as the city is 2,600km (1,600 miles) away, on the other side of this vast country.

Who are the M23?

The M23 are led by ethnic Tutsis, who say they needed to take up arms to protect the rights of the minority group.

They say that several previous deals to end the fighting have not been respected - they take their name from a peace agreement that was signed on 23 March 2009.

Shortly after its creation in 2012, the M23 rapidly gained territory and seized Goma - acts that were met with international opprobrium and accusations of war crimes and human rights violations.

It was forced to withdraw from Goma, and then suffered a series of heavy defeats at the hands of the Congolese army along with a UN force that saw it expelled from the country.

M23 fighters then agreed to be integrated into the army in return for promises that Tutsis would be protected.

Netanyahu praises Trump's 'bold vision' for Gaza at Rubio meeting

Israel's Prime Minister has said he is working to make US President Donald Trump's plan to remove and resettle Gaza's population "a reality".

Benjamin Netanyahu said he was co-operating with the US on a "common strategy" for the Palestinian territory after a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Jerusalem on Sunday.

The talks come after US President Donald Trump proposed a US takeover of Gaza and removal of the two million Palestinians there to neighbouring countries.

The UN has warned that any forced displacement of civilians from occupied territory is strictly prohibited under international law and "tantamount

to ethnic cleansing".

America's top diplomat said President Trump's plan may have "shocked and surprised" people, but it took "courage" to propose an alternative to "tired ideas" of the past.

Netanyahu said he and Rubio had discussed ways to implement Trump's vision, adding that the US and Israel had a common position on Gaza.

The Israeli leader warned that the "gates of hell" would be opened if all Israeli hostages held by the armed group Hamas were not released.

"Hamas can not continue as a military or government force," Rubio added. "And as long as it stands as a force that can govern or administer or a force that

can threaten by use of violence, peace becomes impossible."

The Israeli military launched a campaign to destroy Hamas in response to an unprecedented cross-border attack on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 were taken hostage.

The fighting has caused devastation in Gaza, where more than 48,200 people have been killed during the 16-month war, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

Most of Gaza's population has also been displaced multiple times, almost 70% of buildings are estimated to be damaged or destroyed, the healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene systems have

collapsed, and there are shortages of food, fuel, medicine and shelter.

Palestinian and Arab leaders have widely rejected Trump's Gaza takeover plan, with the Palestinian Authority and Hamas emphasising that Palestinian land is "not for sale".

Unlike previous US peace efforts in the region, the US top diplomat did not meet any Palestinian leaders to discuss the future of Gaza.

Speaking at a joint news conference on Sunday, Rubio and Netanyahu outlined areas of agreement, including a desire to eradicate Hamas's governing capacity in the enclave, prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon, and to monitor developments in post-Assad Syria.

Sports

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

Jonathan flags off new Bayelsa stadium project as FG, NFF hail Diri



Former President Goodluck Jonathan, on Monday, turned the sod of the new Olympic-standard 25,000-capacity Bayelsa stadium project at Igbogene, Yenagoa, as part of the activities marking the fifth anniversary of the Senator Douye Diri administration.

The former Nigerian leader performed the groundbreaking ceremony on a day Governor Diri restated his appeal to the federal government, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), oil firms operating in the state and

the private sector to join hands with his administration to develop sporting talents.

The Federal Government through the National Sports Commission (NSC) and the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) equally thumped up Governor Diri for initiating the project.

Dr. Jonathan expressed delight over the project, saying as a Bayelsan, he was duty bound to celebrate with the state government for the progress so far achieved.

He lauded Diri's developmental strides, urging him not

to rest on his laurels and that the contractor and the state government should ensure the project met the highest standards.

Jonathan also called on the state and federal governments to set up a sports fund to cater for sportsmen after their active days and encourage younger ones to be involved in sports.

He said: "This is my state and I have to celebrate with the government for the progress so far made. This is an iconic project that will develop the state. Please do not rest on your laurels as we want this stadium to meet the best standards.

"I am happy with the presence of relevant federal government officials. I hope they will guide the state well and support where necessary.

"As a country, we must have

a fund to care for sportsmen. The federal and state government can think about it so that the younger generation will be interested in sports.

"I am happy that you gave a target of 24 months and I hope that by that time I will escort President Tinubu to Bayelsa to inaugurate it."

In his remarks, Governor Douye Diri said the groundbreaking ceremony embodied a transformative advancement for the state with the potential to reshape the identity and aspirations of Bayelsa in the realm of sports and beyond.

He said the project was in line with the Assured Prosperity mantra of his administration, which prioritises urbanisation, sports, and youth development as the cornerstones of development.

NFF pays tribute to AFCON 1990 late midfielder, Ayo Ogunlana

The Nigeria Football Federation has condoled the family of former Nigeria international midfielder Ayo Ogunlana, who died in Kaduna on Friday after observing his early-morning walk.

NFF General Secretary, Dr Mohammed Sanusi, showered tributes on the departed midfield pearl, who was a star attraction during several important Nigeria FA Cup battles in the 1980s and held sway in the middle for the Super Eagles in the late 1980s, and at the 1990 Africa Cup of Nations finals in Algeria.

"We are very sad to learn of the sudden passing of Ayo Ogunlana, only a couple of

weeks after the demise of another former Eagle, Moses Efiogun (a member of the 1980 AFCON-winning Green Eagles squad, in faraway USA).

Ogunlana was a great midfielder who made playing football look so easy with his ma-

gestic touches and turns, and his magnificent free-kicks.

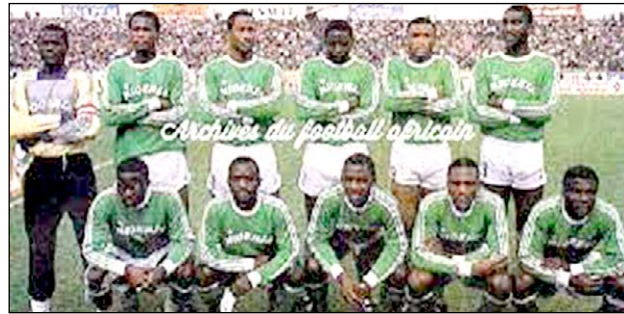
"We pray that the Almighty will grant both of them eternal rest and grant the families they have left behind the fortitude to bear the losses."

Ogunlana was magisterial

in the midfield as Nigeria overhauled Guinea and Zimbabwe to qualify for the 1990 Africa Cup of Nations and was imperial against Cameroon in a 1990 FIFA World Cup qualifying match in Ibadan that the Super Eagles won with an emphatic 2-0.

He also played in the 1990 ECOWAS Cup competition that Nigeria hosted in Kaduna.

In March 1990, the midfield generalissimo earned rave reviews as Nigeria finished with the silver medals at the 17th Africa Cup of Nations in Algeria, even coming close to bagging Nigeria a late equalizer in the final against hosts and winners Algeria, from his favourite dead-ball position.



Madojiemu Schools Athletics Championships: Entries outnumbered expectations

With only a few days left for the 2025 Princess Mabel Madojiemu Schools Athletics Championships, officials have been overwhelmed by the number of entries for the meet bill to run February 20-22.

The competition, which will hold at the Igueben Grammar School sports ground, Igueben Edo State will coincide with the 40th anniversary celebration of the coronation of the Onojie of Igueben.

It is the first time the championships will hold outside Benin City and as at Monday, over 50 school from Edo central and north have register to participate.

as Gadzama offers support

"We are looking at close to a thousand youth athletes and this is totally overwhelming, but we will see how we can manage the situation," said Mutiu Oluwa technical director of the Princess Mabel Madojiemu Schools Athletics Championships.

He said the venue has been made ready for the competition and they are expecting a good outing.

Meanwhile, former 400m runner and the Athletics Federation of Nigeria vice president, Fidelis Wadzani Gadzama has made a princely donation to enable successful outing of the competition.

"I really appreciate Gadzama's contributions, it is so heart warming and encouraging," said Princess Mabel Madojiemu.

Gadzama and Madojiemu were teammates during active days in track and field. They were both in the Nigerian team to the 2000 Olympics Games in Athens, Greece and other international contests.



All Africa Senior Championships: NSC DG, Olopade lauds Nigeria's Badminton team's impressive Performance



The Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, has commended Nigeria's badminton team for their remarkable performance at the All Africa Senior Badminton Championship in Douala, Cameroon.

The team secured a third-place finish in the overall medal table, winning one gold and

two bronze medals at the prestigious continental event.

Hon. Olopade expressed his pride in the team's resilience and dedication, despite facing an upheaval task.

"I followed the team closely throughout the tournament, and I must commend the leadership of the Badminton Federation of Nigeria, the players, and the coaching staff for their

unwavering dedication. Even in the face of difficulties, they represented Nigeria with pride and delivered commendable results. The NSC remains fully committed to supporting badminton and other federations in achieving their goals," he said.

A special highlight of the championship was Anulowapo Opeyori's historic

achievement, as he clinched his fifth consecutive gold medal in the Men's Singles event.

Opeyori continued his dominance on the African stage, defeating Egypt's Adam Hatem in the final to solidify his reputation as Africa's best badminton player.

"Opeyori has once again proven why he is Africa's finest. Winning five consecutive

titles is no small feat, and he continues to inspire a new generation of Nigerian badminton players," Olopade added.

Nigeria wrapped up the tournament with a gold in the Men's Singles, a bronze in the Men's Doubles, and another bronze in the Mixed Doubles. Algeria and Egypt secured the top two positions on the overall medals table.



Tour de France and Olympic champion Geraint Thomas to retire at end of season

Tour de France winner Geraint Thomas will call time on his cycling career at the end of the season, the 38-year-old revealed on Monday.

Thomas, who won two Olympic gold medals at the 2008 and 2012 Games, will bring an end to a 19-year career in the peloton.

The Welshman, who was also part of the British team pursuit trio that won three golds in the Track Cycling World Championships between 2007 and 2012, made the announcement on social media

"Thought it was time we made it official. Yes, this will be my last year in the peloton," Thomas wrote on X.

"It's not been a bad run eh? Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine being a pro for 19 years. There'll be lots of time to reflect but, before then, I've got some big races to prep for."

Thomas debuted at the Tour de France in 2007, where he ended among the top three thrice, including second overall in 2019 and third overall in 2022.

He narrowly missed out on a Giro d'Italia title in 2023, having finished 14 seconds behind champion Primoz Roglic. Thomas finished third in the tour in 2024.

"An incredible career, with one last chapter to write," his team Ineos Grenadiers posted on social media.

NPFL25: Busy week as Bendel Insurance FC arrive Maiduguri ahead of clash with Elkanemi Warriors



KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin, on Monday afternoon arrived in Maiduguri ahead of Nigeria Premier Football League Match Day 25 clash with Elkanemi Warriors of Maiduguri. The game is scheduled for Wednesday.

It is indeed a busy week for the resurgent Bendel Insurance Football Club of Benin as their Maiduguri bound team had to leave Benin City shortly after tomorrow dismantling Niger Tornadoes 3-0 on Sunday evening in order to catch up with the first flight to Maiduguri en route Lagos-Abuja on Monday morning.

The team which also defeated Enyimba FC 1-0 on Wednesday in the rescheduled match day 20 engagement before playing against Restoration FC and their Feeders with 2-1 and 1-0 results respectively to progress to Edo FA Cup semifinals on Saturday, travelled throughout Sunday night after beating Niger Tornadoes.

They arrived at the Murtala Mohammed Airport in Lagos at 4.00 AM where they boarded AirPeace flight which jettied out of Lagos at about 12.30PM and landed in Abuja at about 1.30 PM.

The team finally arrived at the Muhammadu Buhari International Airport, Maiduguri, Borno state at about 2.30PM aboard Airpeace.

The Benin Arsenal, on return from Maiduguri will be welcomed back home with Edo FA Cup semifinals match against BJ Foundation on Saturday.

The Benin Arsenal, no doubt are going into the Match Day 25 battle with Elkanemi Warriors with the confidence from the 3-0 thrashing of Tornadoes on Sunday evening at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium after bringing down the People's Elephant on Wednesday.

Bendel Insurance FC have been in fine form in the resumption of the second round of the league and currently occupy 10th position on the log on 34 points, a point close to their midweek opponents Elkanemi Warriors.

Jennifer Echegini scores and assists PSG to victory against Ifeoma Onumonu's Montpellier

Nigeria forward, Jennifer Echegini had hands in two of PSG's four goals as they defeated Montpellier 4-1 in Matchday 15 of the 2024/25 French Premiere Ligue women on Saturday.

Grace Geyoro scored the opening goal of the game in the 23rd minute from a rebound at the Paris Saint-Germain Training Centre.

In the 35th minute, former Portland Thorns and Gotham FC player Crystal Dunn set up Echegini, who released a left-footed shot from outside the box into the back of the net to double the lead.

Four minutes after the hour mark, Echegini released a long pass to Sakina Karchaoui who scored her side's third goal.

Romee Leuchter rounded up the goals for the host from the

penalty spot in the 87th minute. Cameroon's Nina Ngueleu pulled a goal back for the travelers in the 90th minute.

Echegini was replaced by Griedge Mbock in the 69th minute after scoring her fourth

league goal with her third assist in nine games.

Her compatriot, Ifeoma Onumonu was also replaced by Rose Kadzere in the 69th minute.

PSG maintained their third position on the log with 35 points

after 15 games, eight points behind leaders Lyon, and a point short of second-placed Paris FC.

They will next face DFCO Dijon on March 1, 2025, after the international break; the same day, Montpellier will visit Stade de Reims.



Ajayi hails players' response in gritty 2-1 Victory over sporting Lagos

Head Coach of Osun Utd, has praised the team spirit and players' response in victory over Sporting Lagos based side, Sporting Lagos after the crucial clash.

Seye Ajayi, visibly elated after his team's gritty 2-1 victory over Sporting Lagos, was full of praise for his players. "I'm proud of the way the lads responded today. We've been drilling specific tactics, and they executed them brilliantly on the pitch. This was an intense match, and to come out on top, especially in such a hard-fought contest, is a testament to their hard work and determination. The commitment they showed was exceptional, and that's what gave us the edge."

While celebrating the win, Ajayi was quick to temper expectations, emphasizing that the journey is far from over. "It's a huge victory for us, but

we have to keep our feet on the ground. We can't afford to get carried away. There's still a lot of work to do, and we must maintain this momentum. The players must keep their focus, as we face even tougher challenges ahead. This win is just a step, and we need to build on it, stay disciplined, and continue doing what's required."

Ajayi also gave an update on the injuries sustained by key players, Emmanuel Essien and Ganiyu Gberefun. "It was worrying to see both of them go down, especially after their vital contributions. We'll get a full assessment of their injuries later, and I'm hoping it's nothing too serious. We'll know more after today, but they're warriors, and they gave everything for the team. Regardless of their situation, we'll continue to support them and hope for a speedy recovery."

Sports Ville Award 2025: Arise TV anchor, Rufai appointed chairman as Uyi Akpata bags sports personality of the year award

The organisers of the annual Sportsville Special Recognition Awards, have announced the appointment of Arise TV Anchor, Oseni Rufai, as the Chairman of the Day for the 2025 edition of the ceremony.

The appointment of the highly sought after Rufai was made public via a release signed by Frank Ilaboya, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Sportsville

Comm Services, the organisers of the yearly award.

He says: "We're extremely delighted to announce Oseni Rufai as the Chairman of this year's edition of Sportsville Special Recognition Awards. We want to use this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to him for accepting to chair this year's ceremony."

"Rufai has been a keen follower and supporter of the award ceremony since inception

five years ago and agreeing to be part of this year's edition is no doubt a huge plus to the integrity of the event which is fast becoming Nigeria's most reliable and prestigious award ceremony," Mr Ilaboya further stated.

Reacting to the appointment, Mr Rufai described the recognition as a big honour.

"This appointment and recognition is a big honour to me. Honestly it came as a huge surprise but knowing the calibre

of Frank Ilaboya and his team, I cannot but to accept it."

This year's ceremony comes up on Friday, March 21st, 2025 at the Prestigious Eko Club, Surulere Lagos.

Over 15 top sports personalities and corporate organisations have been pencilled down for the various award categories with Dr Uyi Akpata, the President of Nigeria Cricket Federation, emerging as the Sports Personality of the Year.



Oseni Rufai



Uyi Akpata

NFF refereeing committee suspends Wilfred Charway of Delta State Referees Council over controversial decisions

The Refereeing Development Committee of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has suspended referee Wilfred Charway from officiating in Nigeria National League (NNL) matches.

According to the committee, the decision was taken due to Charway's questionable

officiating during the match between Solution FC and Godswill Akpabio FC, played in Awka on Saturday, February 15, 2025. The referee reportedly awarded an unjustified penalty, which was not in line with the Laws of the Game.

The committee stated that Charway's actions not only

influenced the outcome of the match unfairly but also brought the game into disrepute.

"I am therefore directed to notify you that you have been stepped down indefinitely and with immediate effect from the league," the directive signed by the Committee Secretary, Mohammed Ameenu, stated.



OPINION

N96bn LG Fraud: Nazi Obaseki and fellow treasury looters have murdered Sleep in Edo State

FRED ITUA

Governance at the grassroots level is the most fundamental pillar of democracy. When local government councils, which are closest to the people, fail in their responsibilities, the impact is felt directly by citizens through stalled development, poor infrastructure, and diminished public trust. This is why the recent report of the Investigative Panel on Local Government Finances in Edo State is not just another document; it is a call to action.

The decision to set up the Investigative Panel was not arbitrary; it was necessitated by growing concerns over financial mismanagement across the 18 Local Government Councils. The alarming lack of visible developmental projects, despite substantial allocations, raised critical questions that demanded answers. It was in response to these concerns that the government, committed to transparency and accountability, constituted the panel to conduct a thorough investigation into the financial activities of the councils.

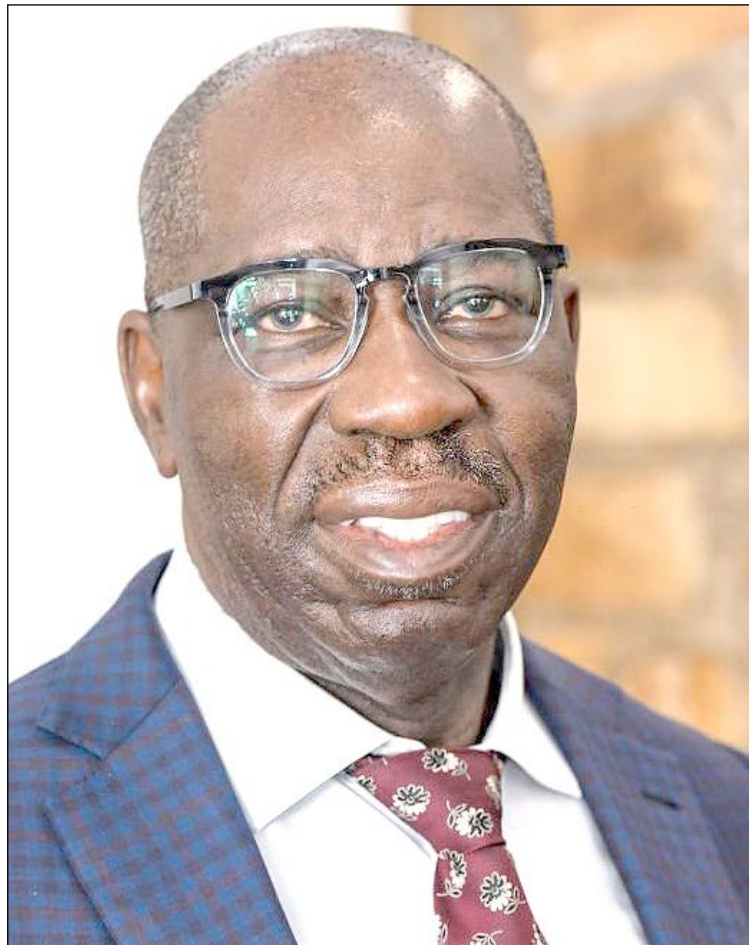
With a mandate to examine revenue inflows, expenditure patterns, and the overall financial integrity of the councils, the panel embarked on a meticulous process, employing forensic analysis, document reviews, and interviews with key stakeholders. Although some challenges were encountered, including late and incomplete financial records, the panel was still able to piece together a revealing and deeply troubling picture.

The panel's findings are damning. Over ₦95 billion accrued to the councils between September 4, 2023, and the present, yet very few meaningful projects were executed. Instead, the panel uncovered widespread financial recklessness, including:

1. Diversion of public funds – the sum of ₦10.4 billion was funneled into an ALGON (Association of Local Governments of Nigeria) account under the guise of “Security, Trainings.” This account, rather than serving the public, became a conduit for siphoning government resources, with funds being transferred to private individuals and companies.

2. Dubious transactions through private entities – the report identified corporate beneficiaries such as Rokuosa Enterprise (₦3.4 billion), Demarriots Hotels Limited (₦1.07 billion) — a hotel owned by the impeached Orhionmwon Local Government Chairman — and Kezmith Global Ventures (₦2.01 billion). These funds, meant for local government development, were instead funneled into private hands.

3. Unjustifiable withdrawals from



OBASEKI

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local government accounts – the report details over ₦5.1 billion in suspicious withdrawals across various councils, with notable individuals pocketing significant sums. For instance, Ahonsi Ogieegbaen Osifo withdrew over ₦556 million across multiple councils, while others, like

Eric Agbonmwane (₦394 million) and Abraham Burma (₦337 million), also benefited from this financial hemorrhage.

4. Obstruction of investigations – the panel also faced deliberate attempts to hinder its work, with council personnel failing to provide timely re-



OKPEBHOLO

cords and later attempting to influence the process through unethical means.

The revelations in this report are not just numbers on paper—they represent stolen opportunities for development, broken trust in leadership, and a blatant disregard for the welfare of the people. To allow these findings to be swept under the carpet would be a gross injustice to the citizens who depend on local governments for basic amenities and services.

GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO-LED ADMINISTRATION WILL TAKE DECISIVE ACTION

1. Full implementation of sanctions – those implicated in financial mismanagement will face legal consequences. Public officials should be held to account, and no political cover will be provided to shield the guilty.

2. Recovery of stolen funds – every kobo illegally taken from the public treasury will be traced and recovered. The government will work with financial institutions, the EFCC, and other anti-corruption agencies to retrieve misappropriated funds.

3. Strengthening financial oversight – this report has exposed weaknesses in the system that is being urgently addressed by the Okpebholo administration. There will be stricter monitoring of local government accounts,

mandatory public disclosures of budgets and expenditures, and independent auditing mechanisms to prevent future abuses.

4. Prosecution and deterrence – it is not enough to simply remove corrupt officials; they must face legal consequences. Governor Okpebholo is sending a strong message that corruption at the grassroots level will no longer be tolerated.

This investigative report will not gather dust in government archives. It will serve as a turning point for local governance in Edo State. The government has taken a bold step by uncovering these irregularities, but it will further show its commitment to accountability in its resolve to act on these findings. Implementing the recommendations to the letter is not just an administrative necessity by the Okpebholo administration—it is a moral obligation to the people, and Governor Okpebholo is ready to act fast.

The grassroots deserve better. The people deserve accountability. For Godwin Obaseki, PDP public funds looters and impeached local government chairmen, their sun will set at noon.

Fred Itua is the Chief Press Secretary to Edo State Governor.