

North-East lawmakers demand inclusion in \$530M agro-industrial processing scheme

CAROLINE AMEH

A coalition of lawmakers from the North East geopolitical zone has voiced strong opposition to the exclusion of their region from the Federal Government's Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) initiative, a multi-billion naira programme aimed at revolutionising Nigeria's agricultural value chain.

Senators and Representatives from Adamawa, Bauchi,

Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe States held an emergency meeting at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja to deliberate on what they described as a critical oversight.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Senator Danjuma Goje, Chairman of the North East Caucus, said that the lawmakers were forced to interrupt their legislative recess to confront the issue.

He argued that the omission of the North East, Nigeria's larg-

est geopolitical zone by land-mass and a hub for both crop and livestock farming from the SAPZ rollout is not only unjust, but undermines the spirit of inclusive national development.

The SAPZ programme, which has secured \$530 million in joint funding from the Federal Government, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is designed to

curb post-harvest losses, boost agro-industrial productivity, and create jobs by connecting farmers to processors in specialised economic zones.

Vice President Kashim Shettima had officially launched Phase 1 of the programme on April 8 in Kaduna State.

The initial rollout includes seven states and the Federal Capital Territory, with the beneficiaries drawn from the North Central, South South, South East, and South West re-

gions. No state from the North East was included.

Senator Goje emphasised the urgency of correcting this imbalance, warning that continued exclusion would dampen national efforts to harness agriculture as a driver of economic diversification and poverty alleviation.

The caucus commended President Bola Tinubu's broader commitment to agricultural industrialization, but called on the Federal Government and

its development partners to urgently revisit the selection criteria to ensure equitable representation of all regions.

The lawmakers reiterated their commitment to protecting the interests of their constituents and vowed to continue advocating for the region until justice is done.

They called for transparency, fairness, and regional balance in the implementation of national development initiatives.

The Nigerian Observer



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2027: Gov Okpebholo garnering strong backing for Tinubu —Ohonbamu

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Edo, FG launch probe into Uromi killings

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has announced the establishment of a joint fact-finding committee by the Federal Government and the Edo State Government to investigate the recent killing of hunters in Uromi, Edo State.

The governor made this known on Thursday while receiving a delegation from Kano State, led by the state Deputy Governor, Comrade Aminu Abdulsalam Gwarzo, at the Government House in Benin City.

Governor Okpebholo stated that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is deeply concerned about the incident and is committed to ensuring lasting peace and security across the nation.

He emphasised that the president is personally interested in getting to the root of the matter and is determined to implement lasting solutions.

The governor added that the committee will thoroughly examine the underlying causes of the killings and share its findings with the public in the interest of transparency.

He acknowledged the report submitted by the Kano delegation, describing it as a helpful contribution to the investigation.

Okpebholo highlighted the longstanding relationship between Edo and Kano States, particularly in commerce and industry, and reiterated the peace-loving nature of Edo people.

Deputy Governor Gwarzo thanked Governor Okpebholo for his earlier visit to Kano following the Uromi incident.

He explained that Kano State

had already set up a committee to identify the victims, verify their identities, and compile a detailed report, which was presented during the visit.

According to Gwarzo, 16 people from five local government areas in Kano lost their lives in the attack.

He expressed confidence in the Edo State Government's commitment to justice and called for a transparent process.

The meeting was attended by key figures, including Edo State Deputy Governor Hon.

Dennis Idahosa, Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, security heads, and senior officials from both states.

Following the meeting, Governor Okpebholo and the Kano delegation visited Uromi, where they met with members of the Hausa community.

APC leaders set to receive Delta Unity Group in political realignment

AJUWA VICTOR

In a move described as a major political shakeup in Delta State, top leaders of the All Progressives Congress (APC), including National Chairman, His Excellency Abdullahi Umar Ganduje; Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo and Mr. Chiedu Ebie, Chairman of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Governing Board, will formally receive members of the Delta Unity Group (DUG) into the APC fold this Saturday.

The high-profile event is scheduled to take place at the Old Bendel Hotel, Boji Boji Owa, Agbor, Delta State by 10 a.m. and is expected to be attended by key political stakeholders from across the region.

According to a statement issued by Ebie's media aide, Jerome-Mario Utomi, the defection of DUG members is considered one of the most significant political events in recent Delta history.

The DUG, which has historically operated within the People's Democratic Party (PDP),

comprises largely of grassroots political actors who have been the backbone of the PDP since the advent of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999.

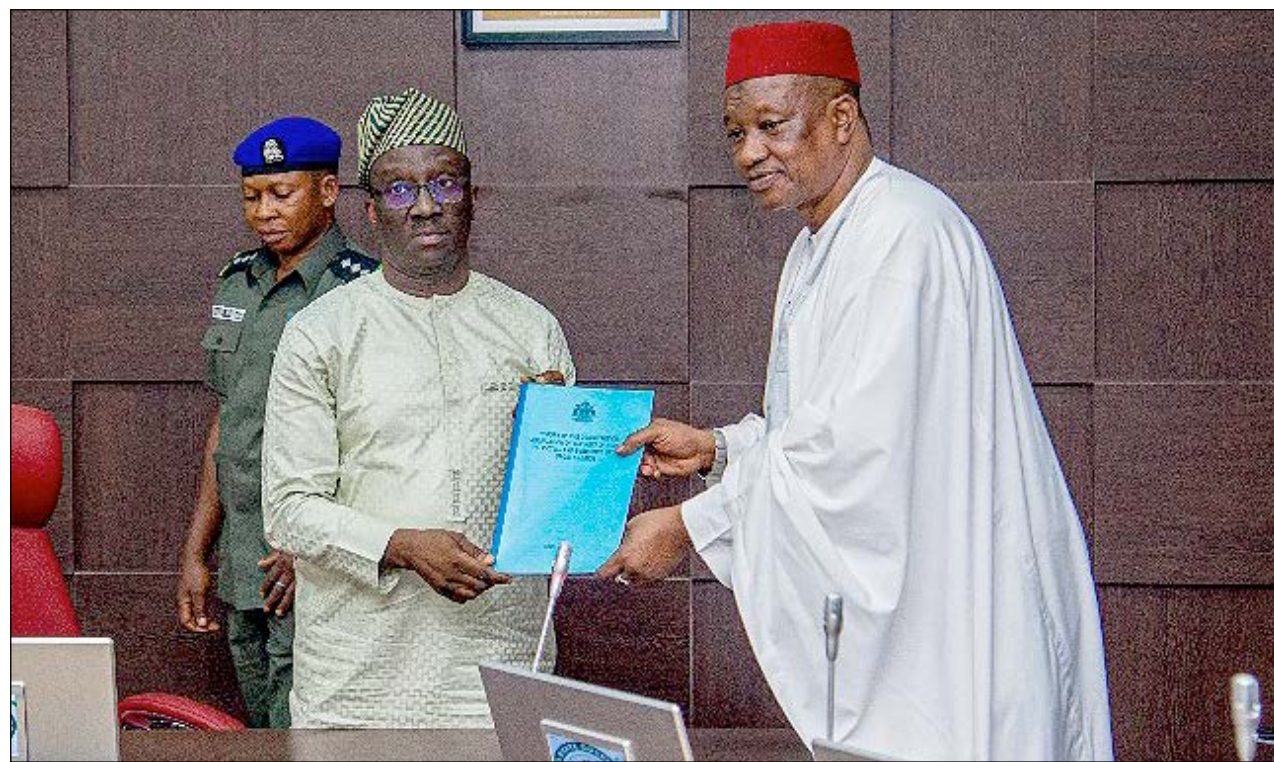
Their mass defection to the APC is expected to significantly alter the political balance in the state and could potentially reshape upcoming electoral contests.

The statement highlights that this move is a deliberate and strategic attempt by patriotic actors in Delta State to rescue the state from what they describe as the incompetent leadership of the PDP.

The decision also aligns with efforts to foster inclusivity, justice, and people-focused governance, which the DUG claims has been lacking under PDP's stewardship.

The statement recalled the case of Mr. Chiedu Ebie, a co-convenor of DUG and former Secretary to the Delta State Government and Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, who was suspended by the PDP in 2023 for alleged anti-party activities.

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GWARZO'S VISIT TO OKPEBHOLO:

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo (left), and Deputy Governor, Kano State, Comrade Aminu Abdulsalam Gwarzo, exchanging a document, during Gwarzo's visit to Government House, Benin City, in respect of the recent killings in Uromi, Edo State.

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Edo govt to reclaim illegally acquired farmlands —Dep. Governor

BERNADETTE IDALU

The Edo State Government has vowed to revoke all farmlands illegally acquired through proxy companies, a move aimed at restoring ownership to indigenous farmers and ensuring transparency in land administration.

This declaration was made by the Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, during a courtesy visit to the Edo State Government House where he met with members of the Association of Cocoa Farmers.

The meeting was convened to address widespread complaints from farmers in Ovia North East and Ovia South West Local Government Areas who claimed they were being systematically evicted from their lands by powerful interests operating under the guise of legal entities.

Speaking passionately to the gathered farmers, Idahosa reaffirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding their rights and assured them that the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo would not stand by while the livelihoods of hardworking citizens were threatened.

He reminded them that one of the governor's campaign pledges was to prioritise the welfare of farmers and he would uphold that promise by using legal means to reclaim farmlands obtained through dubious transactions.

The deputy governor acknowledged the economic and social significance of agriculture in the state, noting that during the election campaign which spanned all 18 local government areas, Governor Okpebholo witnessed firsthand the vital role farmers play in local development.

He emphasised that no farmer who pays their taxes and operates within the boundaries of the law should be subjected to land grabs or displacement by unscrupulous entities.

Idahosa assured the farmers that such lands would be repossessed through due process and restored to their rightful owners.

He further disclosed that the state government is actively working to reduce conflict between farmers and herders and is investing in security infrastructure to protect rural communities.

In a detailed complaint, the cocoa farmers, led by Mr. Bel-

lo Osaretin, alleged that some officials within the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security were complicit in the illegal sale of the Ohusu and Okomu Forest Reserves to foreign nationals, particularly Chinese investors.

These transactions were allegedly endorsed by the chairman of the Forest Commission, a Ghanaian who the farmers claim is unfamiliar with the legal framework governing land tenure in Edo State.

Osaretin warned that with-

out immediate intervention by the current administration, over 40 rural communities in Ovia South West, home to thousands of farmers faced the threat of extinction due to aggressive land grabs.

The meeting ended with re-

newed confidence among the farmers, who applauded the government's promise to take decisive action to protect their ancestral lands.



PRESS BRIEFING:

L-R: Chairmen, North East caucus of the National Assembly, Senator Danjuma Goje; Hon. Aliyu Bappa Misau, and Hon. Ahmed Usman, briefing the press on the zone exclusion from the Federal Government Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) initiative, after their emergency caucus meeting at the National Assembly, Abuja, yesterday.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

Mother, newborn discharged from UBTH after 21-day detention over unpaid bills

After spending 21 days at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital due to unpaid medical bills, a mother and her newborn baby have finally been discharged, thanks to public outcry and media attention.

Mr Umoru Imokha Abdulahi, the father, expressed deep gratitude to the press and to compassionate Nigerians whose intervention led to the hospital's decision to release his wife, Mrs Happiness Peter, and their baby without demanding the remaining balance of the bill.

A resident of Agenebode in Etsako East Local Government Area, Mr Abdulahi had previously made a public appeal for financial assistance to secure the release of his family.

His wife had given birth via Caesarean section on March 20, 2025 and though she was medically cleared for discharge a week later, they

remained detained due to outstanding medical fees.

Initially billed N380,000, Mr Abdulahi had managed to pay N200,000, including N50,000 deposit before admission and another N150,000 after the procedure.

However, as he sought help to cover the remaining amount, the charges rose by another N150,000, pushing the total to over N530,000.

Unable to meet the increased cost, he turned to the media and the public for help.

Following widespread attention and appeals, including one directed at the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, the UBTH eventually allowed the mother and child to go home, lifting a significant burden from the young father.

He has since taken his wife and baby girl home, ending an ordeal that sparked concern and compassion across the country.

Shaibu urges Nigerian youths to embrace nationalism, self-devt

Former Deputy Governor of Edo State, Comrade Philip Shaibu, has called on Nigerian youths to realign their mindset towards self-development and a strong sense of nationalism.

He emphasised the need for young people to cultivate a proactive approach to addressing societal challenges and to take ownership of their personal growth, especially in Nigeria's rapidly evolving socioeconomic climate.

Shaibu gave this charge during a keynote address at the Akwa Ibom State University Alumni Association's Leadership and Entrepreneurship Summit held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

In his remarks on the theme "Igniting Leadership and Entrepreneurial Excellence: Alumni as a Catalyst," the former deputy governor and past

President of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) urged students to think beyond traditional academics and job-seeking.

He encouraged them to pursue entrepreneurial skills and adopt a mindset geared towards creating value, not merely awaiting employment.

According to him, education should be seen as a foundational tool, rather than a final destination, adding that entrepreneurship and skill acquisition break down economic limitations and empower individuals to take control of their futures.

Shaibu underscored that professional development begins within the walls of the university, but must stretch into real-world application for true impact.

He warned against relying solely on formal employment, describing the job-seeking

mentality as one that hands over the reins of one's future to others.

While affirming the irreplaceable value of formal education, he stressed that its true power lies in how students apply it to create economic and professional success on their own terms.

Reflecting on his own academic journey at the University of Jos, where he studied Accounting and served as NANS President, Shaibu recounted his early ambitions and how real-world experience soon revealed that academic credentials alone were not enough.

He noted that certificates represent effort and discipline, but are merely starting points in the broader journey of building impactful careers.

His message to the students was clear: success lies in combining knowledge with practical action, innovation, and the drive to solve real-world problems.

Addressing attendees at the summit, which took place at the University's main complex,

Shaibu urged young Nigerians to look beyond the limitations of fixed salary structures and to chart independent courses that would lead to secure and self-sustained futures.

He also encouraged students to acquire foundational skills necessary for leadership and entrepreneurship and to become sources of opportunity for others, not just themselves.

Shaibu commended the Vice Chancellor of Akwa Ibom State University, Professor Nse Essien, for his role in fostering growth and maintaining a peaceful academic environment.

He praised the leadership of the university's Alumni Association, led by Comrade Nwanfor Michael, and the Student Union Government for their transformative contributions to the student community.

The event featured the presentation of a leadership excellence award to Shaibu by the Alumni Association, in recognition of his outstanding contributions.

2027: Gov Okpebholo garnering strong backing for Tinubu —Ohonbamu

The Edo State Commissioner for Information and Communication, Hon. Paul Ohonbamu, has declared that the All Progressives Congress (APC) is gaining increasing support across Edo State as preparations for the 2027 elections intensify.

Speaking in Benin City, Ohonbamu highlighted that prominent members of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) have been joining the APC in recognition of the positive transformation driven by Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Ohonbamu lauded the governor's leadership, stating that

the APC, under Okpebholo's direction, is elevating the state's development and earning the trust of opposition figures and other well-meaning citizens.

He called on Edo people to remain engaged in the state's political and socio-economic progress, especially at this crucial phase of its development.

Urging grassroots mobilisation, he encouraged residents across all three senatorial districts to take full advantage of the harmonious relationship between the state and the Federal Government.

Ohonbamu expressed con-

fidence that the APC, with Okpebholo at the helm, would outperform other political parties as the 2027 elections approach, ensuring continuity in governance.

He urged full support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, asserting that his leadership will bring continued success to both the state and the country.

He further stated that the APC's current unity in Edo is a clear signal of its preparedness for electoral victory, while the influence of the PDP is steadily diminishing.

Ohonbamu therefore called for prayers and unwavering support for Governor Okpe-

holo's administration, expressing optimism that the present challenges will soon be a thing of the past.



OHONBAMU

APC leaders set to receive Delta Unity...

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His subsequent defection to the APC has reportedly earned him significant goodwill among Deltans, thanks to his role in facilitating several impactful infrastructure and educational projects.

Since its formation in 2023, the DUG has championed a new wave of political engagement centred on equity, fair-

ness, and participatory democracy.

The group has made considerable progress in expanding its influence across Delta State, particularly in Ika Federal Constituency where it now boasts over 5,000 registered members.

Saturday's ceremony is anticipated to symbolise a major consolidation of power for the APC in the state.

INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu calls for greater electoral unity

CAROLINE AMEH

The Chairman of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Mahmood Yakubu, has called for stronger regional collaboration among West African electoral bodies, arguing that such cooperation is crucial for the advancement of democratic governance across the continent.

He made the appeal during the opening of the Extraordinary General Assembly of the ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC), held in Banjul, The Gambia.

The assembly has brought together heads of election

commissions from ECOWAS member states to deliberate on vital reforms, notably, the revision and adoption of updated ECONEC statutes and the proposal to create Africa's first electoral resource-sharing database.

This innovative initiative aims to foster peer-to-peer learning, build institutional capacity, and promote best practices among Election Management Bodies (EMBs).

In his address, Professor Yakubu, who previously served as President of the ECONEC Steering Committee, expressed appreciation to his fellow commissioners for their support throughout his tenure.

Reflecting on earlier mile-

stones, he cited the 2017 General Assembly in Sierra Leone, when all ECOWAS member countries were under democratic rule.

However, he lamented the current political regression in four member states where democratic systems have since collapsed.

Despite these setbacks, he expressed optimism that the region could soon see a restoration of democratic norms.

Yakubu disclosed that this Assembly would be his final appearance as INEC Chairman, as his term comes to an end later in the year.

He used the opportunity to thank colleagues for their cooperation and urged them to remain committed to promoting

electoral credibility and regional solidarity.

Other electoral commissioners present echoed his sentiments, commending ECONEC's technical support and lauding its central role in fostering democratic resilience in West Africa.

Participating countries include Nigeria, Benin, Ghana, Togo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and The Gambia.

As part of the Assembly's activities, Yakubu and ECONEC President, Mohamed Kenewui Konneh of Sierra Leone will visit key Gambian stakeholders to conduct a needs assessment ahead of the country's 2026 presidential election.

Lagos, Rivers, 28 others to experience heavy flooding —FG

The Federal Government has announced that about 1,249 communities in 176 Local Government Areas across 30 states and the Federal Capital Territory will witness heavy flooding between April and November.

The Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Prof Joseph Utsev, disclosed this at the unveiling of the 2025 Annual Flood Outlook by the Nigeria Hydrological Services Agency in Abuja on Thursday.

Utsev identified the high flood-risk states as Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross-River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Gombe, Imo and Jigawa.

Others are Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara and the Federal Capital Territory.

The minister raised concerns that flooding remains one of the most devastating natural disasters in Nigeria, with climate change accelerating its frequency and severity.

He also predicted that coastal and riverine areas such as Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Lagos, Ogun, Rivers and Ondo would experience flooding due to the rise in sea level and tidal surge, and this would impact fishing, wildlife habitation and river navigation.

"The 2025 Annual Flood Outlook shows that 1,249 communities in 176 Local Government Areas in 30 States and FCT fall within the High Flood Risk Areas, while 2,187 communities in 293 LGAs in 36 States of the Federation and the FCT fall within the Moderate Flood Risk Areas.

"Flash and urban flooding are projected in major cities in the country due to high rainfall intensities, low attention to the management of water facilities including drainage systems, waterways and lack of flood resilience structures.

"Nevertheless, the flood, unlike other certain natural disasters, can be contained with proper planning and provision of necessary infrastructure. Rather than just general predictions, forecasts are now tailored to specific communities, enhancing actionable communication and preparedness at the grassroots level," he stated.

Earlier in his address, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation, Richard Pheelangwah, urged stakeholders to prioritise early response.

He said, "This outlook isn't just about numbers; it's about protecting lives and livelihoods."

The Director General and Chief Executive Officer of NI-HSA, Umar Mohammed, noted that this year's flood forecast goes beyond mapping LGAs and now identifies specific communities at risk.

Mohammed added that the AFO's enhanced methodology is the result of continuous feedback, technological advancement, and broad inter-agency collaboration.

"We are transforming flood data into real-time decisions and impactful resilience-building. Our focus has expanded to assess sectoral impacts on health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure, offering more robust tools to policymakers and disaster risk managers," he stated.



GOVERNOR OF THE YEAR AWARD:

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno (right), and his deputy, Senator Akon Eyakenyi, during the hand over ceremony of the Leadership newspaper's Governor of the Year award she received on behalf of Eno, during their ongoing State Executive Council Retreat in Lagos.

Delta govt cracks down on exam bribery, suspect nabbed

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Government has taken swift and decisive action following the arrest of a suspect accused of attempting to manipulate the Preliminary Training School (PTS) nursing examination process through financial inducement.

The examination, which is organised jointly by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria and the Delta State Ministry of Health, is a vital step in the certification of aspiring nurses and midwives.

In a statement issued by the Commissioner for Health, Dr. Joseph Onojaeme, the government reaffirmed its zero-tolerance policy toward examination malpractice and declared that anyone found complicit would face the full force of the law.

The suspect, whose identity has not yet been disclosed to protect the integrity of the ongoing investigation, was apprehended by operatives of the State Police Criminal Investigation Department after they received credible intelligence information of a bribery attempt.

According to the statement,

the suspect was allegedly caught in the act of offering monetary incentives aimed at corrupting the examination process, with the intention of gaining an unfair advantage for certain candidates.

The commissioner stressed that the examination is conducted under stringent regulatory standards to uphold the integrity of the nursing profession and to ensure that only qualified individuals advance through the training system.

Dr. Onojaeme disclosed that the suspect remains in police custody and will be formally charged upon the completion of

investigations.

The government also issued a strong warning to other would-be offenders, underscoring that the sanctity of professional examinations must not be compromised under any circumstances.

Candidates, parents, and stakeholders have been urged to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the authorities.

The commissioner reiterated that the core values of transparency, professionalism, and integrity must continue to serve as the foundation of Delta State's healthcare training and delivery system.

Estimated billing: NERC fines eight Discos N628m for flouting rules

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission has sanctioned eight DisCos for failing to comply with monthly energy caps for unmetered customers between July and September 2024.

The affected DisCos include Abuja, Eko, Enugu, Ikeja, Jos, Kaduna, Kano, and Yola.

The commission, in a statement on Thursday, said these DisCos have been fined over N628 million and must issue credit adjustments to affected customers by May 15, 2025.

The statement reads, "Pur-

suant to Section 34 (1)(d) of the Electricity Act 2023 ("EA 2023"), the commission has sanctioned eight (8) Electricity Distribution Companies (DisCos) – Abuja, Eko, Enugu, Ikeja, Jos, Kaduna, Kano, and Yola, for failing to fully comply with the monthly energy caps issued by the commission between July – September 2024 (2024/Q3)."

The commission said the sanction is vital to ensure regulatory compliance and consumer protection in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry.

Sexual harassment: SSANU rejects FUOYE VC's clearance, threatens strike

The Western Zone of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities on Thursday rejected the resolution of the Governing Council of the Federal University, Oye Ekiti, Ekiti State, which absolved the Vice Chancellor of the insti-

tution, Prof. Abayomi Fasina, of sexual harassment.

The Governing Council absolved Fasina of allegations of sexual harassment.

The Registrar and Secretary to the Council, Mufutau Ibrahim, said the council took the

decision at its 8th Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday.

In a statement issued by the National Vice President of SSANU Western Zone, Dr Abdussobur Salaam, the union faulted the institution council's resolution, saying the governing

council was not being fair and just on the matter.

According to the statement, one of the wrongs of the process was the continued stay in the office of the vice chancellor during the pendency of the investigation into the matter.

It said that had compromised the fairness of the process.

The statement read, "The governing council acknowledged the existence of audio recordings between the vice-chancellor and Engineer Folashade Adebayo gladdens our hearts.

"While we note that the governing council admitted that the recordings were not subjected to any forensic evaluation, we are taken aback that rather than focus on the

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NEWS

Nigeria reaffirms commitment to Global Health Goals at UN population summit

Nigeria has reaffirmed its dedication to advancing health and well-being for all citizens, aligning its national development agenda with global commitments.

This was reaffirmed by Hon. Nasir Isa Kwarra, Chairman

of the National Population Commission (NPC), during Nigeria's address at the 58th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Speaking on the session's theme, "Ensuring Healthy

Lives and Promoting Well-Being for All at All Ages," Kwarra underscored Nigeria's determination to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), implement the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, and pursue the African Union's Agenda 2063.

He also affirmed Nigeria's support for the newly adopted Pact for the Future.

With Nigeria's population now at 227.6 million, over 70 percent of whom are under 30, Kwarra acknowledged the dual challenge and opportunity presented by such a youthful

demographic. He highlighted the need for sustained investments in healthcare and social infrastructure to meet growing demands.

National policy measures such as the Revised National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development (2022), the National Health Policy (2016), and the National Health Insurance Act (2022) were cited as instruments to expand access to Universal Health Coverage.

He also pointed to the Basic Health Care Provision Fund as a mechanism to improve primary healthcare, particularly in maternal and child health,

routine immunisation, and disease prevention.

In terms of social protection, Kwarra noted ongoing efforts to combat gender-based violence and harmful practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), citing the domestication of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act in 34 states and the FCT as a key milestone.

Kwarra further highlighted the enactment of the National Mental Health Act, which seeks to integrate mental health services into primary healthcare, describing this as crucial to the country's broader well-being goals.

Acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic had strained health systems and slowed progress, he called for intensified global cooperation to strengthen national health infrastructure, ensure equitable access to vaccines and treatments, and boost local pharmaceutical production.

He concluded by reaffirming Nigeria's commitment to global partnerships in building a healthier, more prosperous future.

The 58th CPD session, held from 7 to 11 April 2025, brings together UN member states to assess progress on population and development issues.

CCB Chairman urges public accountability as Nigeria launches digital asset declaration platform

Dr Abdullahi Bello Usman, Chairman of the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), has urged Nigerians to take an active stance in promoting transparency by consistently demanding accountability from public officials.

Speaking during a capacity-building workshop in Benin City on the Online Assets Declaration System (OADS), Dr Usman, represented by Mr Koyonda Edward, emphasised that when citizens hold leaders to account and public servants lead with integrity, corruption is less likely to flourish.

The workshop, organised by the CCB in partnership with the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) under the European Union/International IDEA's Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (ROLAC) Programme, served as a platform to introduce the newly launched digital system for asset declaration.

Dr Usman described corruption as a major hindrance to Nigeria's development, eroding public trust, stalling economic progress, and deepening inequality. He stressed that declaring assets is both a legal obligation and a moral imperative.

Highlighting the inefficiencies and susceptibility of manual systems to abuse, Dr Usman called the digital platform a revolutionary step.

He noted that the new sys-

tem would streamline processes, reduce human interference, and enable real-time monitoring by relevant authorities and stakeholders.

He praised the collaboration with CSJ and ROLAC, stating that sustainable reform requires collective effort beyond government institutions. Embracing digital tools, he said, would protect public resources and help restore citizens' confidence in governance.

CSJ's Executive Director, Eze Onyekpere, Esq., explained that the workshop aimed to enhance familiarity with the OADS and encourage its use among public officers.

The initiative focuses on building capacity in federal and state Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) across six key states, Anambra, Edo, Lagos, Plateau, and Kano, as well as the Federal Capital Territory.

Onyekpere highlighted constitutional provisions mandating all public officers to declare their assets, stressing that the outdated paper-based system posed logistical and security challenges.

He underscored the importance of equipping officials with both the knowledge and tools necessary to meet their obligations under the new system. Participants received comprehensive training on asset categories and practical demonstrations on navigating the online platform.

Sexual harassment: SSANU rejects FUOYE...

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contents of the recordings, the governing council attempted to gaslight the public by querying why the recordings were made and concluding it was for the purpose of blackmail.

"We find it further shameful that the council did not query the spate of queries that followed the rejection of the offer by Professor Fashina in his bid to intimidate Engineer Folashade Adebayo into submission.

"We are also further disappointed that the Governing Council did not see anything wrong in a conversation where the Vice-Chancellor compromised and impugned other principal officers of the university, especially the Registrar and Bursar, in a bid to sweet-talk Engineer Folashade Adebayo to

accept his advances.

"To further claim that Engineer Folashade Adebayo never made any complaint of sexual harassment against Professor Abayomi Fasina is a barefaced and brazen lie.

"Consequently, and in view of the compromised decisions of the governing council on this issue, the Western Zone of SSANU rejects in totality, the various sanctions meted out to Engineer Folashade Adebayo for allegedly bringing the name of the institution into disrepute."

To this end, the SSANU called on the Nigeria Labour Congress and other stakeholders in the protection of the rights of Nigerians to wade into the matter, which, according to it, "has the potential of becoming a cause of national industrial unrest in our university system."



ASSENT TO SEVEN BILLS:

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborewori (2nd left); Speaker, Delta State House of Assembly, Rt Hon Emomotimi Guwor (right), and other government functionaries, after assenting to seven bills passed by the state's lawmakers in Asaba.

Governor Otti leads LP delegation to INEC following Supreme Court verdict

In a significant political development, Abia State Governor Dr Alex Otti led a high-level delegation from the Labour Party (LP) to the headquarters of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Abuja on Wednesday, following a Supreme Court ruling that confirmed the party's leadership.

The visit aimed to foster a stronger relationship with the electoral body and resolve internal party disputes that have

threatened unity in recent months.

The LP delegation formally submitted a Certified True Copy of the Supreme Court's judgement to INEC, a move widely interpreted as affirming the legitimacy of the party's leadership and reasserting its commitment to democratic governance.

Addressing journalists after a closed-door meeting, Governor Otti described the visit as one of transparency and con-

structive engagement, stating that the party was committed to upholding the rule of law and ensuring clarity in its institutional relations.

He emphasised that the party's actions were guided by legal principles and a commitment to democratic values, especially as it prepares for future electoral contests.

In response, INEC's Acting Chairman, Mr Sam Olumekun, assured the delegation that the Commission would

maintain its impartiality and continue to discharge its constitutional responsibilities without fear or favour.

He reaffirmed INEC's dedication to neutrality, transparency, and the rule of law.

The visit marked a critical step in the Labour Party's efforts to unify its ranks and align its internal structures with Nigeria's electoral institutions following months of leadership disputes.

Edo Assembly approves consultant to recover State funds

The Edo State House of Assembly has approved Governor Monday Okpebholo's request to engage TIARUS WHITE CONSULTANTS LTD for the recovery of funds owed to the state under the Project Gazelle Afriexim loan and other crude oil loan arrangements.

The approval also covers

a ten percent deduction at source as professional fees for the consulting firm.

The Governor's request, presented to the Assembly during plenary in Benin and read by Speaker Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, highlighted the need to join 36 other states in recovering funds due from the Project Gazelle scheme.

Agbebaku underscored the importance of supporting the governor's initiative, stating that the recovered funds would significantly contribute to the state's socioeconomic development.

Following a voice vote, the Assembly unanimously approved the governor's proposal. In a separate development at

the same plenary, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) nominated Hon. Charity Aigubaru as the new minority leader and Yekini Idiaye as the minority whip. Hon. Aigubaru, the immediate past majority leader, was replaced by an APC member after the party secured a majority in the House.

Feature

A Royal encounter: Egbokor's golden daughter welcomes a mysterious visitor from Cross River

BARR. KENNETH AIGBE

On 29th March 2025, an extraordinary event unfolded at Victoria Villa and Gardens in Egbokor. Mrs Helen Iwanegbe Kroeber, fondly known as the Golden Daughter of Egbokor, received a most unusual guest—a striking visitor who journeyed all the way from Boki Local Government Area in Cross River State.

This wasn't just any visit. It felt like the climax of a grand tale, wrapped in mystery and majesty. Two decades ago, Helen introduced a German national to Egbokor as her husband—a man who has remained in the community ever since. Together, they stood to welcome this unfamiliar traveller.

The visitor's journey was epic: a seven-hour drive from Boki to Calabar, followed by a full-day trip from Calabar to Benin City and onward to Egbokor. All this, simply for a handshake with our beloved daughter at her home.

Tall, broad-shouldered, and radiating regal energy, the visitor looked every inch a prince. Some whispered he might be a descendant of Oba Ovonramwen—exiled to Calabar after the 1897 British invasion of Benin. Could this be a symbolic homecoming after more than a century? Only time will tell, especially as he vowed to return under the banner of Helen Helping Hands.

His bold appearance, commanding presence, and guarded movements mesmerised the crowd. He crossed 14 rivers and numerous states—passing even through volatile zones patrolled by federal forces—just to honour the graduation and award ceremony hosted by Helen's foundation.

I noticed a flicker of concern in the eyes of Mr Kroeber, Helen's devoted husband. Understandably so. Yet, I assured him that any man who dares set eyes on a king's daughter must reckon with the watchful Egbokor Youths and the palace's enduring honour.

A royal gift was presented to the guest, securely handled by his escort. Helen whispered to him not to open it until he had crossed seven rivers on his journey back—urging caution, especially with the visit falling on Eke Market Day and in the shadow of the fateful Ides of March.

From my seat among the elders, I sensed the visitor received something truly powerful. Helen's smile never faded throughout the day—particularly as she led him to greet the Odionwere, the Iyase, the Council of Elders, and several distinguished guests, including:

Chief Osayande from Evbokabua
Barr. Chris Agbonwanegbe from Ugo Niyekorhionmwon
Hon. Saturday Uwuilekhue, former Commissioner from Evbodobian
Dr Mrs Pat Igbinewaka and her husband from the UK
Dr Larry Aghimien

Barrister Kenneth Aigbe, who sat beside him enjoying the famed Mama Odiri Iwanegbe akara
As I said to Dr Larry between bites, "If it's not Panadol, it cannot be Panadol."

Other dignitaries came from Owe, Ugbokhirima, Evbuohenoba, Evbohigahae, and Evbobemwen—all in Iyoba Ward, Orhionmwon LGA, Edo State.

Indeed, this was a day Egbokor will not soon forget.



Governor Okpebholo: Because I am involved

FRED ITUA

At every defining moment in a nation's journey, the call to give account of stewardship becomes not just necessary but inevitable. This duty is more profound for those whom providence has favoured to sit at the helm, guiding the affairs of the state and shaping the future of the people. In 1989, the late Ikemba Nnewi, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, published *'Because I Am Involved'*, a 208-page introspective chronicle that offered a gripping account of his political convictions, nationalist ideals, reflections on Nigeria's unrealised potentials, and the personal sacrifices he made for a country he so deeply loved.

In that same spirit, this article borrows its title and energy from Ojukwu's classic. *'Because I Am Involved'* is not merely a declaration; it is a commitment. Today, in Edo State, Governor Monday Okpebholo personifies that commitment. Since he assumed office, it is no longer business as usual. The tides have shifted, and the wheels of governance are now being turned by a sense of duty, urgency, and resolve.

Because Governor Monday Okpebholo is involved, educational transformation is underway, and a solid foundation is being built for tomorrow's leaders. Governor Okpebholo's approach to education is holistic and strategic. His administration is actively implementing a three-pronged intervention model: infrastructure, manpower, and pedagogy.

Firstly, several dilapidated schools across the three senatorial districts are undergoing comprehensive rehabilitation to create safe and conducive learning environments. Secondly, the recruitment of qualified teachers is ongoing to plug manpower deficits in critical subjects. Thirdly, the retraining and retooling of educators is being carried out to align teaching methodologies with 21st-century pedagogical standards, including digital literacy and learner-centered techniques.

Because he is involved, agriculture has received unprecedented attention. Governor Okpebholo's administration has significantly increased budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector. Over 3,000 hectares of arable farmland are being cultivated under various agricultural empowerment initiatives.

Beyond mere cultivation, partnerships with private investors are being explored to establish agro-processing hubs that will reduce post-harvest losses, promote value addition, and create employment opportunities, especially for youth and women in rural areas.

Governor Okpebholo has embarked on

an ambitious infrastructural renewal program, particularly in road construction. His administration has flagged off several strategic road projects that serve as vital arteries, linking communities, enhancing commerce, and easing transportation. Among these are the Ekpoma-Uromi-Ubiaja Road and the Uromi-Onewa-Udomi-Ibhiolulu-Afuda-Idumoza axis, all crucial to inter-community trade. Urban renewal projects in Benin City are also receiving a facelift, with several roads being re-asphalted, drainages reconstructed, and streetlights installed for enhanced security and aesthetics.

Because he is involved, security is being tackled both in policy and practice. Governor Okpebholo has led the enactment of anti-cultism and anti-kidnapping laws to strengthen the legal framework for fighting insecurity. Complementing this legislative stance is the purchase of thousands of operational vehicles and logistics support for the Nigeria Police and other security agencies across the state.

Community policing structures are being revived, and a feedback mechanism has been introduced where citizens can report threats anonymously to a centralized command center.

In the health sector, the renovation of primary health care centers and recruitment of frontline health workers have been intensified. Governor Okpebholo's administration is also working toward the expansion of the Edo Health Insurance Scheme to cover more vulnerable populations.

His interest in digital governance is birthing innovations that streamline internal processes, curb leakages, and promote transparency. This includes the digitization of land administration, tax payments, and record-keeping for government workers.

Ojukwu once wrote, "I do not seek to please, I seek to serve." Governor Monday Okpebholo, through his visible and people-centered governance, has made it clear: he is not in power for fanfare or personal gain. He is in office because he is involved—involved in the pains of his people, the cries of rural dwellers, the frustrations of commuters, the dreams of schoolchildren, and the aspirations of a new Edo State.

The journey is not without its challenges, but one truth is undeniable: under Governor Monday Okpebholo, Edo State is no longer on autopilot. There is direction. There is purpose. Above all, there is involvement.

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

Edo's Abdullah Abdulkadir nominated among nation's finest at 2025 Spokesperson Awards

Abdullah Abdulkadir of Edo State has emerged as one of three finalists in the "Outstanding Government Spokesperson (State)" category at the 2025 edition of the National Spokespersons' Awards (NSAwards). The other nominees in the category are Ismail Isah of Kogi State and Ismaila Uba Misili of Gombe State.

A total of 62 finalists have been shortlisted across 21 competitive categories in this fifth edition of the NSAwards, which recognises excellence, innovation, and professionalism in public communication across Nigeria's public and private sectors. The shortlist was

released by the adjudication committee led by Dr. Shuaibu Husseini.

The NSAwards, formerly known as the Spokespersons' Communication Awards (SCA), are organised through a strategic partnership between the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and Image Merchants Promotion Limited (IMPR), publishers of PR-Nigeria and Spokespersons' Digest.

This year's award ceremony will double as the grand finale of the 2025 National Spokespersons' Summit and is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 16 April 2025, at the Abuja Continental Hotel.

Finalists were drawn from a wide

range of institutions, government agencies, security bodies, educational institutions, private sector organisations, and multinational companies. The headline category of "Spokesperson of the Year" features ACP Olumuyiwa Adejobi of the Nigeria Police Force, Igo Weli of Shell Petroleum, Olufemi Son-eye of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), Olumuyiwa Akande of Sifax Group, and Osagie Edward Omoruyi of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA).

In the "Outstanding Government Spokesperson (Federal)" category, Bayo Onanuga of the Presidency, Dele

Oyewale of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and Josephine Adokuru Mudasiru of the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) were shortlisted.

Other categories include "Outstanding Corporate Spokesperson," featuring Dr. Jossy Nkwocha of Indorama Eleme Petrochemical, Rafiat Gawat of Tropical General Investment, and Sade Morgan of Nigerian Breweries; and "Outstanding Spokesperson (Security Services)," featuring ACP Olumuyiwa Adejobi, DCC Abubakar Danlami of the Nigerian Correctional Service, and Femi Babafemi of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).



ABDULKADIR

Friday Sermon

Navigating challenges of life with faith and resilience

PATRICK ABANG, CALABAR

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. May His peace and blessings be upon the noblest of messengers, our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and upon his family and companions, all of them.

O Believers! on this blessed day of Jum'ah, we are seeking the guidance and mercy of Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala. As we reflect on the transient nature of this worldly life, it becomes evident that it is interwoven with trials, tribulations, and challenges.

No soul is spared from the ebb and flow of difficulties, for this is the very nature of the test that Allah has placed upon us.

Allah Azza wa Jall states in the Holy Quran: "Do the people think that they will be left to say, 'We believe' and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident those who are liars." (Al-Ankabut 29:2-3)

This powerful verse reminds us that faith is not merely a declaration, but a journey that will inevitably be tested. Challenges are not a sign of Allah's displeasure, but rather an integral part of His divine plan to purify our hearts, elevate our ranks, and distinguish the sincere from the insincere.

The life of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a profound testament to this reality. He faced immense hardships, from the loss of loved ones and persecution by his own people to the relentless opposition to his divine message. Yet, through it all, he remained steadfast, patient, and steadfastness in his faith, demonstrating for us the most exemplary way to cope with life's challenges.

Today, I wish to delve into the Islamic principles and practices that equip us to navigate the storms of life with strength, resilience, and strong faith in Allah's wisdom and mercy.

DEEPENING OUR CONNECTION WITH ALLAH (SWT) IS THE FOUNDATION OF STRENGTH

The cornerstone of coping with life's challenges lies in strengthening our relationship with Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala. When we are firmly rooted in faith, we find solace, guidance, and strong support in His presence.

a) Tawhid (Oneness of Allah): Recognizing that Allah is the sole Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of all affairs is the bedrock of our resilience. When we truly believe that nothing happens without His knowledge and permission, we understand that even the most difficult trials are part of His divine decree and hold a purpose, even if we do not immediately comprehend it.

b) Iman (Faith): Firm belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree (Qadar), both good and bad, provides us with a framework for understanding life's events. We accept that trials are a test from Allah, and with patience and perseverance, we can earn His pleasure and reward.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "How wonderful is the affair of the

believer, for all of his affairs are good for him. If something pleasing befalls him, he thanks Allah and that is good for him. If something harmful befalls him, he is patient and that is good for him." (Muslim)

c) Dua (Supplication): Dua is the weapon of the believer. It is a direct line of communication with Allah, through which we can express our needs, seek His help, and find comfort in His nearness. In times of difficulty, turning to Allah with sincere and heartfelt supplication is a powerful means of seeking relief and guidance.

Allah says in the Qur'an: "And your Lord says, 'Call upon Me; I will respond to you.' Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell in humiliation." (Ghafir 40:60)

Let us make it a habit to turn to Allah in times of ease and hardship, knowing that He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, and the Most Merciful.

d) Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah): Constant remembrance of Allah through tasbeeh (saying SubhanAllah), tahmid (saying Alhamdulillah), tahlil (saying La ilaha illallah), and takbir (saying Allahu Akbar) brings peace and tranquility to the heart. It shields us from despair and connects us to the ultimate source of strength. Allah says:

"Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured." (Ar-Ra'd 13:28)

Make the remembrance of Allah an integral part of your daily life, especially when facing challenges.

e) Tawakkul (Reliance on Allah): Tawakkul is the sincere reliance on Allah after exerting all possible efforts. It is not passive resignation, but rather an active trust in Allah's plan and wisdom. We do our part, and then we entrust the outcome to Allah, knowing that He will choose what is best for us.

Allah says: "And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent." (At-Talaq 65:3)

Cultivate this beautiful state of tawakkul in your hearts, knowing that Allah will never forsake those who sincerely rely on Him.

EMBRACING PATIENCE (SABR) IS THE KEY TO VICTORY

Patience (Sabr) is a vital virtue in Islam, especially when dealing with life's challenges. It encompasses perseverance, endurance, and maintaining a positive attitude despite difficulties.

Allah mentions patience in numerous verses of the Quran, often associating it with great rewards.

"O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient." (Al-Baqarah 2:153)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "No one is granted anything better and more vast than patience." (Bukhari and Muslim)

TYPES OF SABR:

SABR UPON OBEDIENCE TO ALLAH: Persevering in fulfilling our religious obligations, even when it is

Finally, O Believers! Life is indeed a test, and challenges are an inevitable part of our journey. However, as Muslims, we are equipped with the most powerful tools to navigate these trials: a strong connection with Allah, strong patience, the support of our community, and the wisdom of our faith. Let us strive to deepen our Iman, strengthen our reliance on Allah, and cultivate the beautiful virtue of Sabr.

difficult.

SABR UPON ABSTAINING FROM SINS: Resisting temptations and desires that displease Allah.

SABR UPON THE DECREES OF ALLAH: Accepting trials and tribulations with resignation and without despair.

When faced with hardship, let us remember the immense reward that Allah has promised for those who are patient. Let us strive to control our anger, refrain from complaining excessively, and maintain hope in Allah's mercy and relief.

SEEKING SUPPORT AND CONNECTION WITH THE BELIEVERS:

Islam emphasizes the importance of community and mutual support. In times of difficulty, connecting with righteous and supportive individuals can provide immense comfort and strength.

Allah says: "And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty." (Al-Ma'idah 5:2)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The believer to another believer is like a building whose parts support each other." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Seek out the company of pious individuals who can offer encouragement, advice, and support. Share your burdens with trusted brothers and sisters in Islam and be there for them in their times of need. The strength of the Ummah lies in its unity and mutual care.

UNDERSTANDING THE WISDOM BEHIND TRIALS:

While enduring hardship can be challenging, it is crucial to reflect on the potential wisdom and benefits that lie within these trials.

a) Purification of Sins: Allah may use trials to cleanse us from our sins and shortcomings. Just as fire purifies gold, difficulties can purify our hearts and bring us closer to Him.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even to the prick of a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for it." (Bukhari and Muslim)

b) Elevation of Rank: Patience and perseverance through trials can elevate our status in the eyes of Allah and earn us greater rewards in the Hereafter.

c) Strengthening of Faith: Facing

challenges can strengthen our reliance on Allah and deepen our understanding of our own vulnerability and His infinite power. It can make us more sincere in our worship and more grateful for His blessings.

d) Developing Empathy: Experiencing hardship can make us more compassionate and understanding towards others who are going through similar difficulties. It allows us to connect with their pain and offer genuine support.

e) Reminder of the Hereafter: The difficulties of this world remind us that this life is temporary and that true and lasting happiness lies in the Hereafter. It encourages us to focus on our eternal abode and strive for the pleasure of Allah.

PRACTICAL STEPS IN COPING WITH CHALLENGES

Beyond the spiritual foundations, there are practical steps we can take to navigate life's difficulties:

a) Seek Knowledge and Understanding: Educate yourself about Islamic teachings on trials, patience, and resilience. Understanding the Quran and Sunnah provides guidance and perspective.

b) Maintain Perspective: Remember that this life is a test and that difficulties are a natural part of it. Avoid dwelling on the negative and try to see the bigger picture.

c) Focus on What You Can Control: While we cannot control everything that happens to us, we can control our reactions, our efforts, and our reliance on Allah. Focus your energy on what is within your power.

d) Take Practical Steps to Address the Challenge: After seeking Allah's help and relying on Him, take reasonable and permissible steps to address the situation. Seek advice, explore solutions, and work towards overcoming the difficulty.

e) Practice Gratitude: Even in the midst of hardship, try to focus on the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon you. Gratitude shifts our perspective and helps us to appreciate what we have.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Look at those who are below you [in status and wealth] and do not look at those who are above you, for this is more likely to make you appreciate the blessings of Allah that He has bestowed upon you." (Muslim)

f) Be Mindful of Your Physical and

Mental Well-being: Take care of your health through proper nutrition, exercise, and rest. Seek help if you are struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges. Islam recognizes the importance of both physical and mental well-being.

g) Make Istighfar (Seek Forgiveness): Reflect on your actions and seek Allah's forgiveness for any shortcomings or sins. Sometimes, our difficulties may be a consequence of our own mistakes.

h) Have Hope in Allah's Mercy: Never lose hope in Allah's mercy and relief. Remember that He is the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful, and He is capable of turning any situation around.

Allah says: "Say, 'O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'" (Az-Zumar 39:53)

EXAMPLES FROM THE LIVES OF THE PROPHETS:

The lives of the prophets are filled with inspiring examples of how to cope with immense challenges with strong faith and resilience.

Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) (peace be upon him): Faced betrayal by his brothers, slavery, false accusations, and imprisonment. Yet, he remained patient, steadfast in his faith, and ultimately rose to a position of great honour and power.

Prophet Ayyub (Job) (peace be upon him): Endured severe illness, loss of wealth, and the death of his children. His strong patience and reliance on Allah led to his ultimate healing and the restoration of his blessings.

Prophet Musa (Moses) (peace be upon him): Faced oppression, exile, and the immense responsibility of leading his people to freedom. His trust in Allah and his perseverance in the face of adversity are a source of inspiration.

Our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): As mentioned earlier, his life was a continuous series of trials. His strong faith, patience, and reliance on Allah served as the ultimate guide for us.

Reflecting on these stories strengthens our own resolve and reminds us that even the most difficult challenges can be overcome with faith and perseverance.

Finally, O Believers! Life is indeed a test, and challenges are an inevitable part of our journey. However, as Muslims, we are equipped with the most powerful tools to navigate these trials: a strong connection with Allah, strong patience, the support of our community, and the wisdom of our faith.

Let us strive to deepen our Iman, strengthen our reliance on Allah, and cultivate the beautiful virtue of Sabr. Let us turn to Allah in times of need, seek the support of our brothers and sisters, and reflect on the wisdom behind the trials we face.

Remember the words of Allah: "For indeed, with hardship, will be ease. Indeed, with hardship, will be ease." (Ash-Sharh 94:5-6)

Have faith that after every difficulty, Allah will bring ease. Hold onto hope, remain steadfast in your faith, and never despair of Allah's mercy.

May Allah grant us the strength,