

Edo pilgrims in Madinah offer prayers for State's progress

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

Edo State pilgrims currently performing the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia held a special prayer session today at their accom-

modation, the Amjadal Salam Hotel in Madinah.

The prayers, offered with deep devotion, were dedicated to the peace, progress, and prosperity of Edo State, as well as to the success of the state

governor's initiatives.

The session was jointly led by the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musah Muhammad Uduimoh; the Board's Secretary; and the

Amir Hajj, HRH Mallam Ali D. Suleyman, the Oghieaga of Ibvie.

In a voice message from the holy city, Mallam Uduimoh highlighted the importance of the gathering.

"We are offering prayers for our dear Edo State. We earnestly seek Almighty Allah's divine intervention to grant success and strong support to our Governor in all the good and beneficial endeavours he

has planned for the betterment of our state and its people," he stated.

The collective supplications of the Edo pilgrims in the sa-

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...that the people may know

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Tinubu meets Pope Leo XIV at inauguration mass in Rome

● As New Pontiff calls for unity, justice

President Bola Tinubu was among several world leaders present at St Peter's Square on Sunday for the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV, the new head of the Roman Catholic Church.

After the mass, Tinubu briefly exchanged greetings and a handshake with the newly elected pontiff, joining figures such as US Vice President J.D. Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in meeting the pope.

Pope Leo XIV, born Robert Francis Prevost in Chicago, became the first American to lead the global Catholic Church after his election on 8 May.

The 69-year-old celebrated his inaugural mass before tens of thousands of pilgrims, as well as dignitaries from across the world, marking the formal start of his papacy.

Before the ceremony, he made his first tour in the popemobile, smiling and blessing the crowds

gathered at the Vatican.

In his homily, the new pope delivered a powerful message, urging the Church to be a transformative force in a world plagued by violence, hatred, and inequality.

He condemned the exploitation of the Earth's resources and the marginalisation of the poor, while calling for unity that respects cultural and personal diversity.

Drawing from his missionary work in Peru, he warned against isolationism and called

on Catholics to extend love and solidarity to all.

Leo XIV acknowledged the solemnity of his new office, telling the crowd he accepted the role with "fear and trembling" and sought to serve as a brother and a servant of joy and faith.

Earlier, he prayed at the tomb of Saint Peter beneath the basilica and received the papal emblems: the pallium and the fisherman's ring, symbols of his new authority.

Among the attendees were German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Peruvian President Dina Boluarte, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Israeli President Isaac Herzog, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Tight security surrounded the Vatican, with thousands of officers, snipers, and anti-drone units deployed.

Leo's election has sparked widespread enthusiasm in the United States but stirred concern elsewhere over the growing global influence of America.

Still, many pilgrims expressed hope. Inacia Lisboa, a Cape Verdean living in Rome, said Leo had already "entered my heart" and called on him to pray for global peace.

A visiting student from Chicago, Sophia Tripp, expressed hope that the pope would bring people together, saying, "We are

all human, and we should just all be loving to one another."

Leo XIV succeeds Pope Francis, who died on 21 April after a 12-year pontificate.

He acknowledged on Sunday some trepidation in his new role.

"I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy," he said.

Ahead of the mass, Leo visited the tomb of Saint Peter — who in the Christian tradition was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ, and the first pope, located under the altar of the basilica that bears his name.

He then received the pontifical emblems, the pallium, a strip of cloth worn over the chasuble, his robe, and the fisherman's ring, which is forged anew for each pope and which he will wear on his finger until he dies, when it will be destroyed.



INAUGURAL MASS:

President Ahmed Bola Tinubu and Pope Leo XIV after the Inaugural mass in Rome on Sunday

SERAP seeks explanation over alleged N500bn unremitted oil revenue by NNPC

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has called on the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), Mr Bayo Ojulari, to urgently provide a detailed explanation regarding the reported non-remittance of N500 billion oil revenue to the Federation Account between October and December 2024.

In a letter dated May 17, 2025, and signed by its Depu-

ty Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, SERAP referenced recent World Bank findings which revealed that while the NNPC reportedly earned N1.1 trillion from crude oil sales and other sources in 2024, only N600 billion was paid into the Federation Account—leaving a significant shortfall of N500 billion.

The organisation is demanding full disclosure and recovery of the funds, warning that it

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Osimhen inspires Galatasaray to 2024/25 Turkish Süper Lig glory —Pg 10

Edo govt 'll deliver tangible results rooted in Christian values, says Idahosa

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has assured christian faithful that the present state government will produce remarkable success stories, drawing strength from its commitment to using governance as a platform to advance the values of God's kingdom.

He made this declaration while receiving a delegation from the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Nomayo Street, led by Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Raphael Anojie, who visited him in Government House, along with members of the Parish Church

Council and several landlords from the community.

Idahosa emphasised that both the Governor, Senator Monday Okpepholo and himself were not christians in name only, but practicing believers determined to make the christian community proud through their leadership.

He stated that the body of Christ already has a testimony to share, having produced both the state governor and his deputy within a single administration.

He urged christians across Edo State, alongside the Church and the general public,

to offer their prayers and moral support to help the administration succeed and uphold the rule of law while delivering good governance.

He reiterated that under Governor Okpepholo's leadership, the christian community in Edo State would witness renewed strength and increased visibility in public service.

According to him, the government is poised to bring positive change across every sector and ensure that the legacy of the administration reflects both competence

and faith-driven principles.

During the meeting, Idahosa promised to pass on the concerns raised by the Holy Trinity Catholic Church to Governor Okpepholo and assured them of the government's attention.

He also pledged to personally attend their upcoming feast day celebration scheduled for 15 June.

Earlier, Rev. Fr. Anojie expressed gratitude to the deputy governor for honouring his campaign promise to the church and presented him with a customised

card as a token of appreciation.

The priest described the visit as divinely inspired, not only for the church, which is marking 40 years of its existence, but also for the Nomayo Street community, which he noted is in urgent need of road rehabilitation.

He highlighted that the church, in line with its social responsibility, is set to establish a cottage school that will provide educational and empowerment opportunities for local children.

Fr. Anojie also appreciated Hon. Idahosa and the All Pro-

gressives Congress (APC) for their continued dedication to the development of Edo State.

In a related development, the deputy governor received a delegation from communities in Sakponba Dukedom in Orhionmwon Local Government Area.

Led by their Chairman, Godfrey Ogbonmwan, the group presented documents requesting the government's intervention in reclaiming oil wells located within their communities, which they alleged have been taken over by Seplat PLC and other oil companies.

Thunderstorms, sunshine, hazy skies expected across Nigeria in NiMet's latest 3-day weather forecast

The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) has forecast a mixture of weather conditions across the country between Sunday and Tuesday, with thunderstorms, sunshine, and hazy skies expected in various regions.

In its three-day weather outlook released in Abuja on Saturday, the agency warned of a dynamic pattern that will see fluctuating weather, particularly as the rainy season gradually strengthens in the southern parts of the country.

On Sunday, northern states were expected to witness predominantly sunny skies in the morning.

However, thunderstorms are projected to develop by afternoon and evening in parts of Gombe, Bauchi, Kaduna, Taraba, and Adamawa. In the North Central region, clear morning skies will give way to isolated thunderstorms in states such as Kwara, Plateau, Nasarawa, Niger, Benue, and Kogi later in the day.

Southern Nigeria will experience increased thunderstorm

activity beginning Sunday morning, with storms forecast in Cross River, Lagos, Ogun, Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, and Akwa Ibom.

These storms are expected to persist or redevelop in the evening, suggesting unsettled conditions throughout the day.

By Monday, northern states will continue to experience sunny spells, though Taraba and Adamawa may see thunderstorms in the morning. In the afternoon and evening, weather disturbances are expected in Kaduna, Taraba, and Adamawa. North Central areas, including the Federal Capital Territory, Niger, Kwara, Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi, and Plateau, are likely to experience isolated thunderstorms after an initially calm morning.

Southern states will again face thunderstorms in the early hours, particularly in Ondo, Ogun, Lagos, Cross River, and Akwa Ibom. These conditions are likely to persist into the evening, signalling an intensification of wet season weather in the region.



SPECIAL PRAYER SESSION:

Edo Muslim Pilgrims, during a special prayer session for Edo State at Amjadal Salam Hotel in Madinah on Sunday.

Tinubu hails Nigeria Maritime University's role in advancing peace, devt in N/Delta

IJEOMA UMEH

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has praised the Nigeria Maritime University (NMU), Okerenkoko, Delta State, for its outstanding contributions to maritime education and for fostering peace and development in the Niger

Delta region.

Speaking at the second convocation ceremony and 10th anniversary celebration of the university through Professor Edoba Omoregie, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin, President Tinubu noted that the university work aligns with the national goal of positioning

Nigeria as a leading force in the global blue economy.

According to him, the university is growing reputation as a centre of excellence in maritime technology, environmental studies, transport, logistics and offshore engineering

In his capacity as Visitor to the University, the President expressed satisfaction with the institution's strategic vision.

Congratulating the graduating students, President Tinubu described the occasion as a landmark moment, celebrating not just academic achievement, but also the broader national aspiration to develop a world-class maritime institution.

He urged the graduands to see their success as the fruit of perseverance and discipline, and to apply their knowledge to confront contemporary challenges.

As ambassadors of the university, he encouraged them to embody its values of excellence, integrity, and service.

The President commended the Chancellor of the University, His Eminence, King Alfred Di-ete-Spiff, Seryai II, the Amayana- bo of Twon-Brass in Bayelsa State.

He also congratulated the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Munakurogha Adigio, the Governing Council, Senate, students, and the people of Gbaramatu Kingdom for their dedication and hospitality.

He noted that the event marked more than a ceremonial celebration, saying that it reaffirmed the ideals on which the university was founded - to develop human capital for Nigeria's maritime economy and to promote peace and prosperity in the Niger Delta and beyond.

SERAP seeks explanation over alleged N500bn unremitted...

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would initiate legal proceedings if the company fails to respond within seven days.

"SERAP is writing to request that you use your good offices and leadership position to account for and explain the whereabouts of the missing N500 billion," the letter reads.

SERAP further urged Mr Ojulari to identify those responsible for the alleged shortfall, apply financial penalties where appropriate, and hand the culprits over to relevant anti-corruption agencies such as the ICPC and EFCC for investigation and possible prosecution.

Citing the World Bank report, the group pointed out that all revenue from oil sales is expected to be remitted in full to the Federation Account for distribution among the tiers of government, a requirement the

NNPCL allegedly failed to meet.

"Nigerians are entitled to know why only half of the revenue from the removal of petrol subsidies is being remitted by the NNPCL," SERAP noted.

It described the failure to remit the funds as a serious breach of public trust and a violation of the Nigerian Constitution, domestic anti-corruption laws, and international obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

SERAP warned that the disappearance of such a large amount has wide-reaching implications for national development, particularly in the areas of poverty reduction, public service delivery, and economic stability.

"Despite Nigeria's vast oil wealth, most citizens have reaped minimal benefits due to systemic corruption and a deep-rooted culture of impunity," the organisation stated.

It added that the NNPCL's apparent failure to meet transparency and accountability standards has only exacerbated the country's ongoing fiscal challenges.

"The unremitted oil revenue is symptomatic of deeper issues within the NNPCL and its repeated failure to operate with openness and responsibility," SERAP argued.

Quoting paragraph 3112(ii) of the Financial Regulations 2009, the group stressed that any public officer who fails to properly account for government revenue should be surcharged the full amount and referred to the EFCC or ICPC.

SERAP further argued that recovering the missing N500 billion would bolster the government's capacity to fund critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure.

"Had the NNPCL remitted the alleged missing sum, ad-

ditional resources could have been channelled into fulfilling citizens' economic and social rights," the group said.

It also cited Section 1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011, which entitles Nigerians to access public information held by any public institution, including the NNPCL, as well as a Supreme Court ruling affirming the Act's applicability to all public records.

Copies of the letter were sent to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Attorney General of the Federation Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), EFCC Chairman Olanipekun Olukoyede, and ICPC Chairman Musa Aliyu.

"We would appreciate it if the recommended measures are implemented within seven days of receiving or publishing this letter. Failing that, SERAP will consider taking appropriate legal action to ensure compliance," the organisation added.

Edo pilgrims in Madinah offer...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

cred city of Madinah reflect their strong spiritual bond with their homeland.

Their prayers for the governor's success underscore their hope for positive change and effective governance in Edo State.

Throughout their stay in Saudi Arabia, the Edo State Muslim

Pilgrims Welfare Board continues to prioritise the welfare and spiritual fulfilment of the pilgrims, while fostering a connection to the hopes and aspirations of the people back home.

This special prayer session serves as a heartfelt expression of the pilgrims' dedication to the progress of Edo State, even while fulfilling their religious obligations.

NEWS

Legal Documentation: NBA seeks EdoGIS collaboration

BENIN CITY

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Benin Branch, (otherwise known as the Lion Bar) has solicited the collaboration of Edo State Geographic Information Service (EDOGIS) in the actualisation of the minimum standard of legal documentation and remuneration for its members.

The NBA team, led by its Chairman, Idemudia Iredia Osifo Esq. made this known recently during a courtesy visit to the Managing Director of

EDOGIS, Dr Tony Ikpasaja in his office.

The NBA Chairman while congratulating the Managing Director of EDOGIS, Dr Tony Ikpasaja, commended him for taking effective charge of the Agency and hitting the ground running in the discharge of his mandate.

He informed that when his executive committee came on board in August last year and decided to review the regulatory Order that guides how lawyers at branch levels charge their fees in the process of drafting Deed, it was dis-

covered that they were being shortchanged.

Bar. Osifo therefore appealed to the EDOGIS boss to collaborate with NBA in the enforcement of the proposed initiative which enables lawyers collect their 10% fees before the Deed gets to EDOGIS.

He said the NBA was proposing a Bill to the State House of Assembly to give effect to the remuneration process where Lawyers get their percentage; the NBA gets its share and the State Government, through EDOGIS also gets its own fair share.

Responding, the Managing Director, EDOGIS, Dr Tony Ikpasaja welcomed the lawyers and described their proposed initiative as laudable, moreso as it was a novel idea in the Federation.

He said the Agency under his leadership was open to good working relationship well-meaning organizations such as the NBA and pledged his support to them.

While congratulating the NBA executive on their election, the MD used the opportunity to refresh their minds on the critical situation in ED-

OGIS when Gov. Okpbeholo came on board and now, when the Agency is sailing perfectly based on the Governor's reforms and innovations in that regard.

He disclosed that EDOGIS under his watch, has taken its services to Ekpoma and Auchi to enable those at the grassroots access the benefits thereof.

Dr. Ikpasaja however sued for their cooperation in resolving the crises from communities bordering on lands, a development he noted, has nearly turned EDOGIS into an Arbitration Centre.

Consequently, it was resolved that a Stakeholders meeting be convened, consisting of land and legal officers to look into the issue.



SENATE MEETING:

L-R: Senate President, Godswill Akpabio; Senator Ali Ndume; Senator Sampson Asuquo, and Senator Titus Tartengar, shortly after a meeting at the floor of the Senate, National Assembly Complex Abuja.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

INEC publishes personal details of candidates for 2025 Anambra governorship election

CAROLINE AMEH

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has officially published the personal particulars of candidates contesting in the upcoming Anambra State governorship election scheduled for November 8, 2025.

According to a press statement issued on Saturday and signed by Sam Olumekun, National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee, a

total of sixteen (16) political parties successfully uploaded their candidates' nomination forms ahead of the 6:00 p.m. deadline of Monday, May 12, 2025.

The submission was done via INEC's dedicated online portal, which was automatically shut down at the deadline.

In compliance with Section 29(3) of the Electoral Act 2022 and item 4 of the Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the election, the Commission has now displayed the personal particulars of each candidate

and their running mates.

These include the Form EC9, along with accompanying academic qualifications and other relevant documents. These documents are available for public inspection at the INEC State Headquarters in Awka and in all 21 Local Government Area offices across Anambra State.

INEC called on Nigerians to carefully scrutinize the published documents, just the Commission reminded aspirants who participated in the party primaries and believe

that any candidate has submitted false information that they have the right to challenge such nominations in a Federal High Court, as stipulated in Section 29(5) of the Electoral Act 2022.

The final list of candidates for the election will be published on June 9, 2025, in compliance with the 150 days window as contained in Section 32(1) of the Electoral Act and item 7 of the election timetable.

The 2025 Anambra State Governorship Election is slated for Saturday, November 8, 2025.

Okpe union urges caution on govt plan for state creation

AJUWA VICTOR

The Okpe Union on Friday advocated a better structure for Nigerian federalism which will reflect devolution of legislative and governmental powers in favour of the component units.

It also called for the establishment of state police to stem the security menace in most areas of the country.

President General of Okpe Union, Prof Igho Natufe, in a State of the Union Address said

the Union was in close collaboration with other indigenous ethnic nationalities and national organizations, including the Movement for National Reformation (MNR) in crafting a new path for the restoration of federalism and good governance in Nigeria.

"Okpe is one of the more than 400 indigenous ethnic nationalities that constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These indigenous ethnic nationalities, including Okpe, are the core federating units of Nigeria. Thus, like other indigenous ethnic nation-

alities, Okpe has a voice in determining the future of Nigeria."

The Union called for the creation of homogeneous federating states for the 15 most populous ethnic nationalities that have contiguous boundaries, respectively.

"These federating units will be 15 homogeneous ethnic-based states for the Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Kanuri, Ibibio, Okpe, Tiv, etc. It also called for the creation of a maximum of 15 heterogeneous (multi-ethnic) federating states for the other ethnic nationalities.

"An ethnic nationality occupy-

ing a defined contiguous boundary in a heterogeneous state shall constitute an autonomous region with due constitutional jurisdictions. It shall also have concurrent jurisdiction with the heterogeneous state over natural resources discovered in its territory; but shall exercise exclusive jurisdiction over primary and secondary education, culture, language, and traditional institutions, etc."

The Union further urged the Federal Government not to politicize the outcomes of the proposed National Population census.

Boro Day: Gov Diri tasks Bayelsans on patriotism

PHILIP JEREMIAH EKE

YENAGOA

The Governor of Bayelsa State, Sen. Douye Diri has called on Bayelsans to show patriotism to Bayelsa State and the Ijaw Nation by committing to ongoing efforts by the his administration towards building a prosperous, equitable and just State.

The Governor made the call during the wreath laying ceremony marking the 56th Boro Day celebration on Thursday May 16, 2024 at the Ijaw Heroes Memorial Park, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

Sen. Diri stated that celebrating Boro's day was a symbol of gratitude to the late activist, Major Isaac Adaka Boro of the Ijaw nation, adding that the ceremony was a link between the past, present and points the way for the future development of the State.

The Governor advised Bayelsans to sacrifice their time and resources for the good of the State and the Niger Delta people, the same way Boro did during his time on earth, stressing that the impactful contributions of Adaka Boro can never be forgotten.

The governor who was represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Prof Nimbobofa Ayawei urged Bayelsans to join hands with the government to build the state.

Also speaking, the INC representative Chief Ken Odiowel stat-

ed that without Boro, there would not be Bayelsa and Rivers, describing Boro as a courageous and fearless man who fought and died for the cause of the Niger Delta.

The yearly remembrance of the hero Ken Odiowel said was to encourage the Ijaw nation to be united in the struggle for justice and equity for the region.

On his part, the representative of IYC, Mr Victor-Gow Ayebatari described Boro as a freedom fighter, who put resources together for the struggle, stressing that Bayelsans should continue with the Boro day celebration to honor him.

Earlier in his opening remarks, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Ijaw National Affairs, Mr Agala Douglas, averred that Boro Day celebration stands as a symbol of supreme sacrifice for the Ijaws and advised Bayelsans to dedicate themselves to the cause of their respective communities to make the Ijaw nation a land of freedom.

Highpoints of the event was the presentation of Ijaw Nation's map to the Governor by the President of INC and laying of wreaths.

The State government has earlier organised a Public Lecture/Gala Night with the theme, 'Adaka Boro and Ijaw Struggle for Self-Actualisation: Defining New Methods' in honour of the late hero, on the 16th of May, 2024, at the DSP Alamiyesigha Banquet Hall in Yenagoa.

Alika, Ibude assure effective security as Agbor Gha Ihun inaugurates executive members

AJUWA VICTOR

A popular youth leader and Grand Patron, Agbor Gha Ihun security outfit, Mr Alika Monday Onyekachukwu, has assured his Agbor brothers and sisters, including non indigenes resident in Agbor, of the effective security of the area.

Mr. Alika gave the assurance in Agbor, shortly after the inauguration of the executive members of the famous Agbor security group, Agbor Gha Ihun.

He disclosed that that group has been rebranded and fully prepared for the tasks ahead. While stating that the Chief Sunday Ibude led Agbor Gha Ihun security outfit will perform creditably well in the duties assigned

to them by Agbor people, he pledged his continued support for the group.

Himself a pioneer chairman of Agbor Gha Ihun whose tenure was marked with successes as it laid the needed foundation for the growth of the outfit.

On his part, the newly inaugurated Chairman, Agbor Gha Ihun, Chief Sunday Solomon Ibude, JP, assured of his determination to succeed in his new task to lead the fight against criminal activities, particularly drug abuse in Agbor.

He noted that he is fully committed to joining hands with men and women of goodwill to move Agbor forward through effective monitoring and patrol of the locality to deliver effective security to the area.

NUJ @70: Media titans pledge support as planning c'ttee flags-off nationwide tour

In a major step towards the commemoration of its 70th anniversary, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has launched a nationwide advocacy tour to rally support from key media establishments across the country.

The tour, which began on Thursday, 15 May 2025, marks the formal commencement of activities leading to the grand celebration of NUJ @70.

Led by the Planning Committee Chairperson and Deputy President of the NUJ, Dr Abimbola Oyetunde, the delegation visited leading media organisations including TVC, Trust Media Group, and Arise Television. The team was warmly received by senior management at each of the media houses.

Dr Oyetunde commended the organisations for their unwavering commitment to the advancement of journalism in Nigeria and for their long-

standing support to the NUJ.

She described the forthcoming anniversary as a historic milestone, noting that it would be the first time the Union would host an event of such magnitude since its inception in 1955.

According to her, the celebration is intended not only to honour the sacrifices and achievements of past heroes of the Union but also to recognise individuals and corporate entities that have consistently supported the NUJ's mission over the years.

She reaffirmed the Union's dedication to the pursuit of a just society and a better Nigeria, highlighting the vital role journalists have played in defending democracy and upholding the rule of law—even under difficult and repressive conditions.

Dr Oyetunde appealed for enhanced publicity and partnership from media organisations to ensure that the NUJ @70 celebrations receive the

visibility they deserve.

Responding, top executives of the visited media outlets expressed their admiration for the Union's resilience and its pivotal role in national development. They pledged their commitment to supporting the an-

niversary with comprehensive coverage and media backing.

Among those who gave assurances were Ayodele Ozugbakun, Head of TVC Abuja/Northern Operations; Hamza Idris, Acting Editor-in-Chief of Daily Trust Group; and Ade-

bayo Awosemo, Deputy Managing Director of Arise TV.

Other members of the NUJ delegation included veteran journalist Otunba Gbenga Onayiga; Chairperson of the NUJ FCT Council, Comrade Grace Ike; and the Assistant Na-

tional Secretary of the Union, Comrade Tita Onyebuchi Nze.

The visits featured the presentation of advocacy letters and commemorative group photographs. The grand NUJ @70 anniversary event is scheduled to hold on 21 June 2025.

Oba of Benin deposes Chief Priest of Okhoromi over alleged misconduct

LUCKY EFESE

He ar His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin, has deposed the Chief Priest (Ohen) of Okhoromi village in Iyekeogba, Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Kelvin Ovbokhan Igbinovia over allegations of illegal land acquisition and the demolition of properties worth millions of naira, reportedly belonging to both indigenous and non-indigenous developers.

In the wake of the deposition, the monarch has directed the Odionwere (village head), Pa John Edosomwan, to take over the administration of the village so as to prevent a leadership vacuum and restore order to the community.

Ovbokhan was deposed shortly after a group of aggrieved land developers, including members of the village staged a peaceful protest to the Oba's Palace, expressing their frustration over what they described as the Chief Priest's high-handedness.

They accused him of forcibly seizing their lands and destroying their buildings without due process or regard for the rule of law.

Addressing the Odionwere, village elders, residents, and the affected developers at the Palace, Chief Osaro Idah, the Obazelu of Benin Kingdom, conveyed the monarch's decision on behalf of His Majesty.

Chief Idah, accompanied by three Palace Chiefs, emphasised that the actions of the now-deposed Chief Priest betrayed the trust placed in him to manage village affairs under the authority of the Oba.

Chief Idah stated that the Benin monarch maintains a zero-tolerance stance on criminality and disorder within the kingdom.

He urged the Odionwere to collaborate with the elders, residents, and developers to restore peace and encourage unity and development in the community.

Chief Idah assured all aggrieved parties that the palace remains committed to ensuring justice, while cautioning them against fabricating claims.

He added that a team of palace chiefs would soon visit the village to conduct an on-site inspection and assess the veracity and extent of the reported misconduct by the former Chief Priest.



PUBLIC HEARING:

L-R: Senator Patrick Ndubueze, Chairman Senate Ad-hoc Committee on Incessant Crude Oil Theft; Senator Ned Nwoko, and Senator Victor Umeh, during the public hearing on the incessant and nefarious activities of crude oil theft in the Niger Delta and the actors, at National Assembly Abuja at the weekend.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

University Professor urges FG to establish more stem cell transplantation centres in Nigeria

LAMAI CASSIUS

A professor of haematology and blood transfusion at Edo University Iyamho, Prof. Marcellinus Uchechukwu Nwagu, has called on the federal government to establish stem cell transplantation centres across the country, proposing at least one in each of the six geopolitical zones.

He argued that this would make such life-saving treatment more accessible and affordable for the average Nigerian.

Prof. Nwagu made this appeal during the 17th inaugural lecture series of Edo University Iyamho, delivered at the Aliko Dangote Auditorium.

The lecture, titled, "We are transmitters; We are soldiers; We are sealants; We swim in our waters; but we have our problems," explored the complexities and challenges of managing blood disorders, particularly sickle cell disease.

Highlighting the severe short-

age of specialised professionals, Prof. Nwagu revealed that Nigeria has only about 200 registered haematologists serving a population of approximately 200 million, equating to just one haematologist per million citizens.

He stressed that while current treatment for sickle cell disease primarily aims to manage symptoms and improve quality of life, the only known cure remains hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (bone marrow transplant).

The professor also raised concerns about the country's inadequate blood donation culture, describing the availability of blood products as low and irregular.

He pointed out that the Aphaeresis machine, essential for preparing various blood components, is not available in many hospitals, thereby further limiting access to appropriate treatment.

He emphasised the urgent need for greater public awareness, particularly in rural and

faith-based communities, where knowledge about sickle cell disease and genotype testing remains limited.

"We recommend that awareness campaigns be intensified, especially in churches, and that free routine population screening be introduced, even at the primary school level as many adults do not know their haemoglobin genotype," he said.

Prof. Nwagu identified the high cost and scarcity of cytotoxic drugs used in treating haematological conditions as another major challenge.

According to him, many patients are unable to afford or complete their treatment cycles due to the cost, which often leads to poor outcomes.

He recommended that sickle cell genotype testing be made compulsory for all prospective couples before marriage and proposed legislation to enforce this as a national health policy.

Furthermore, he called for

government-backed programmes to subsidise and ensure the steady availability of cytotoxic drugs in hospitals, similar to the PEPFAR programme for HIV medication.

He also proposed that the wives of Nigerian state governors adopt sickle cell transplantation as their pet projects by sponsoring at least one HbSS (sickle cell anaemia) transplant per state annually—amounting to 36 transplants each year and 144 within a four-year tenure.

Prof. Nwagu therefore urged the government to subsidise diagnostic and treatment costs for haematological cancers, provide modern diagnostic equipment, stating that morphology alone is insufficient, and fully implement healthcare policies that prioritise patients with such conditions.

Earlier in the event, the Acting Vice Chancellor of Edo University Iyamho, Prof. Dawood Egbefo, noted that inaugural lectures would soon become a key criterion for academic advancement.

Nigeria Correctional Service Comptroller decries dilapidated facilities, appeals for govt support

The Edo State Comptroller of the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS), Sunday Oyakhire, has raised alarm over the poor state of facilities at the Medium Security Custodial Centre (MSCC) in Oko, Benin City, calling on Governor Monday Okpebholo to intervene and prioritise the rehabilitation of the institution.

Comptroller Oyakhire made the appeal during the grand fi-

nale of the 2025 Inter-Cell Football Competition, tagged 'Civil Rights Cup.'

It was organised in collaboration with the Civic Rights Advancement and Information Initiative (CRAII), a non-governmental organisation committed to human rights advocacy.

Addressing guests at the event, Oyakhire emphasised the need for modern and functional

equipment to enhance the reformation process for inmates, noting that a staggering 95 percent of those incarcerated at the facility are indigenes of Edo State.

"Our facilities are in dire need of attention," he stated. "We have workshops—carpentry, metal works, tailoring, and even a recording studio—but the equipment is obsolete and insufficient.

"The world is evolving tech-

nologically, and if we must properly reform those in our custody, we need up-to-date tools and government involvement."

He described the football tournament as a powerful symbol of the efforts being made within the walls of the custodial centre to engage inmates in constructive and rehabilitative activities. "Today's event has shown that we are not idle behind the

walls. What we're doing here can be compared to correctional programmes anywhere in the world," Oyakhire asserted.

He expressed pride in the talents displayed by the inmates and encouraged the government to see the improvement of custodial facilities not as a luxury but as a necessary investment in the state's human capital.

Also speaking at the event,

Minority Leader of the Edo State House of Assembly, Charity Aiguoarueghian, commended the tournament and praised the inmates for their discipline and sportsmanship.

"They have shown that they possess talents that can be channeled into positive ventures. It's proof that they can return to society and lead meaningful lives," she said.

NEWS

Edo Assembly Commission chairman vows to improve staff welfare, working conditions

The Chairman of the Edo State House of Assembly Service Commission, Honourable Ezechi Igbas, has pledged to improve the welfare and working environment of staff serving in the state's legislative arm.

He made this known during a familiarization visit to the House of Assembly complex, his first since assuming office alongside other members of the commission.

Addressing the workers, Hon. Igbas stated that the commis-

sion under his leadership is determined to create an enabling environment for staff and to prioritise their welfare.

He said that every effort would be made to minimise the challenges facing the workers and ensure better conditions for them to perform optimally.

He noted that while the commission would work hard to uplift the workforce, the staff must also demonstrate dedication and give their best to help achieve qualitative service delivery in the legislative sector.

The interactive session allowed the assembly workers to air their concerns, especially the lack of basic facilities and an unfavourable working atmosphere.

Many said these issues negatively affect their morale and productivity.

Speaking on behalf of the workers, Mallam Haruna Faruk, Chairman of the Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASAN), Edo State chapter, called for a stronger and more effective relationship between the commission and the staff.

He stressed that the inadequate availability of amenities leads to inefficiency and redundancy in the system.

Hon. Igbas, in response, restated the commission's readiness to sustain ongoing efforts such as timely promotions and the provision of other entitlements for deserving workers.

He also warned that those who engage in misconduct or operate as 'ghost' workers would be identified and removed from service.

He further clarified that there were no plans to retrench

staff, urging workers to disregard such rumours. He assured them that retrenchment is not on the commission's agenda and encouraged them to remain committed and focused in the discharge of their duties.

The visit marked a significant step in building trust between the leadership of the commission and the staff, with both sides expressing optimism for improved collaboration and better service conditions going forward.



HEINEKEN LOKPOBIRI

Muslim group appreciates JAMB Registrar's courage in admitting UTME errors

A Muslim group, Daarur-Rahmat Islamic Society, has commended the credibility and accountability of the Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, Professor Ishaq Oloyede, over the inadequate and glitches that marred the 2025 UTME results.

The group however appealed to Nigerians to see the errors as a human error and the body is working round the clock to address the issue.

The National Ameer of

the DARMAT, Sheikh Misibaudeen Olawale, stated this in a statement issued and made available to the newsmen on Sunday.

He said, "The leadership of Professor Oloyede is a great lesson for the nation as he takes responsibility for the hitches with full explanation.

"Apart from this, Oloyede also appreciated constructive comments from various stakeholders to take proactive steps to recover from the injuries."

He said, "The acceptance

of the errors by Professor Oloyede remained uncommon among the top government functionaries in the country.

"The JAMB Registrar should be commended for the credibility and accountability over the inadequate glitches recorded during the recent release of the JAMB results in the country."

Olawale also said that Oloyede has demonstrated rare courage by admitting the error.

The cleric opined, "As a muslim group in the coun-

try, we are not happy with the glitch and the associated issues, but your sincerity of purpose, strength of character, and proven integrity for not trading the blame even with the obvious opportunities and the traceable link to the error."

Olawale, therefore, appealed to Nigerians to see this as human error and put in all necessary mechanisms to assist the body (JAMB) in their proactive steps to recover from injuries, noting that, "For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Q73:20.)"

Nigerians demand indigenous networking platforms to replace meta amid exit threat

Some social media users across the country have advocated for the establishment of an indigenous social networking platforms following the exit threat by Meta.

Meta is the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

The users made the call in separate interviews with the newsmen in Abuja on Sunday.

They said that establishing an indigenous social media platform would ensure easy regulation and implementation of data protection policies in the country.

Mr Moses Atuegwu, a WhatsApp user, said that the exit threat by Meta was uncalled for given the huge number of users and patronage they had received in the country.

Atuegwu said it was worrisome, as citizens were at the mercy of foreign-dominated social media platforms, hence the need for homegrown platforms.

"We cannot continue to be controlled by these foreign platforms.

"We should have an alternative that is indigenous based.

Ms Pearl Adekunle, another user of WhatsApp and Instagram,

said that setting up homegrown social media platforms would help the country to scrutinise the content consumed by users.

Adekunle said the establishment of homegrown platforms would help promote indigenous technology and the country's economy.

"China and Russia have their own indigenous social media platforms, and this enhances the data protection policy of their government.

"Nothing stops Nigeria from adopting the same to promote and advance indigenous technologies," she said.

Miss Esther Indiana-Obong, a Facebook subscriber, said that establishing an indigenous social media platform would help encourage competition and promote innovation in the country's Information Technology (IT) sector.

Indiana-Obong said it would also help to reduce dependence on foreign social media brands.

Alhaji Aminu Zakari, also a social media user, said the homegrown platform would help the government to effectively regulate what goes out on social media.

FG to unveil African Energy Bank, completes governance frameworks

The Federal Government has concluded key legal and governance frameworks required for the operational rollout of the African Energy Bank as preparations for its official launch enter the final phase.

This was disclosed during a high-level review meeting held in Abuja and hosted by the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, with the President of the African Export-Import Bank, Prof. Benedict Oramah, and the Secretary General of the African Petroleum Producers Organisation, Omar Farouk Ibrahim, in attendance.

A statement by the Special Assistant on Media and Communications to the Minister, Nneamaka Okafor, on Sunday, said the meeting assessed progress on the bank's establishment and confirmed that critical milestones had either been completed or were progressing on schedule.

"The AEB is poised to become a transformative financing platform for energy projects across the continent. This review confirms that every critical milestone is either completed or on schedule, and we remain fully aligned with our continental partners," Lokpobiri was quoted as saying.

He expressed appreciation to President Bola Tinubu for his continued support and commitment to the project.

Lokpobiri noted that, beyond the completion of regulatory frameworks, discussions on capital mobilisation had also recorded "encouraging commitments from both member nations and private investors."

He added that Nigeria's role as the host country for the bank reaffirmed its leadership position in Africa's hydrocarbon sector.

Also speaking, APPO's Secretary General, Ibrahim, commended Nigeria's dedication to meeting the requirements for the bank's establishment.

Yabatech bags ICAN award for producing most chartered accountants

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria has conferred its Corporate Merit Award on Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech) for being the most producer of certified accountants and chartered accountants in Nigeria.

According to the Head, Public Relations Unit of Yabatech, Mr Adekunle Adams in a statement, ICAN gave the award at its 2025 Award and Dinner Night at Lekki, Lagos State, on Saturday.

According to the statement, ICAN's first professional examination was conducted at Yabatech.

Adams added that more often, the college's products in accounting qualified as chartered accountants.

It said that the Rector of Yabatech, Dr Ibraheem Abdul, who received the award from the ICAN President, Mr Davidson Alaribe, expressed appreciation to the institute for the recognition.

It quoted Abdul as saying that

the institution was humbled by the award, promising that it would do more in contributing toward the development of the accounting profession.

"I appreciate the body for organising this event to celebrate members, associates and organisations who have distinguished themselves in the accounting profession," it quoted Abdul as saying.

It also quoted Alaribe, the 60th President of ICAN and alumnus

of Yabatech, as saying that the award was in recognition of Yabatech's huge contributions to the accounting profession.

According to the statement, Alaribe also said that the award was to spur Yabatech to do more.

The statement noted that the event was witnessed by the first indigenous Rector of Yabatech and first Registrar/ Chief Executive Officer of ICAN, Oba George Majekodunmi Okufi, the Alara of Ilara.

NEWS

Foreign

India's forgotten actor who lost her legacy to caste oppression

At a time when women's participation in the film industry was frowned upon, a young woman dared to dream differently.

In 1920s pre-independence India, PK Rosy became the first female lead in Malayalam-language cinema, in what is now

the southern state of Kerala.

She starred in a movie called Vigathakumaran, or The Lost Child, in the 1920s. But instead of being remembered as a pioneer, her story was buried - erased by caste discrimination and social backlash.

Rosy belonged to a low-

er-caste community and faced intense criticism for portraying an upper-caste woman in Vigathakumaran.

Almost a hundred years later, there is no surviving evidence of Rosy's role. The film's reel was destroyed and the cast and crew have all died.

Only a few pictures of the film from a contested press release dated October 1930 survive, along with an unverified black-and-white photo popularised by local newspapers as Rosy's only portrait.

Even a Google Doodle celebrating her 120th birthday used

an illustration similar to the woman in the photograph. But Rosy's nephew and others who have researched her life told the BBC that they could not conclusively say that it is her in the picture.

PK Rosy was born as Rajamma in the early 1900s in the erstwhile kingdom of Travancore, now Kerala.

She belonged to a family of grass cutters from the Pulaya community, part of the Dalits, who are at the bottom of India's harsh caste hierarchy and have been historically oppressed.

"People from the Pulaya community were considered slave labour and auctioned off with land," says Malavika Binny, a professor of history at Kannur University.

"They were considered the 'lowliest'. They were flogged, raped, tied to trees and set on fire for any so-called transgressions," she adds.

Despite the dire social challenges, Rosy chose to dream differently.

She was supported by her uncle, who was a theatre artist himself, and with his help Rosy entered the field of entertainment.

"There are few available facts about Rosy's life, but it is known that she was popular for her performances in local plays," says Vinu Abraham, the author of *The Lost Heroine*, a novel based on Rosy's life.

While her acting skills earned admiration, it was rare for a Dalit woman to take up acting at the time.

"She was likely aware of the fact that this was a new arena and making herself visible was important," says Prof Binny.

She soon became a well-known figure in local theatre circles and her talent caught the eye of director JC Daniel, who was then searching for a lead actor for his film - a character named Sarojini.

Daniel was aware of Rosy's caste identity and chose to cast her in the role.

"She was paid five rupees a day for 10 days of filming," said Mr Abraham. "This was a substantial amount of money in the 1920s."

On the day of the film's premiere, Rosy and her family were barred from attending the screening.

They were stopped because they were Dalits, Rosy's nephew Biju Govindan says.

And so began a chain of events that pushed Rosy out of the public eye and her home.

"The crowd that came to watch the movie were provoked by two things: Rosy playing an upper-caste woman and the hero picking a flower from her hair and kissing it in one scene," said Mr Abraham.

"They started throwing rocks at the screen and chased Daniel away," he added.

There are differing accounts of the extent of the damage to the theatre but what is clear is the toll the incident took on both Rosy and Daniel.

Daniel had spent a lot of money to establish a studio and gather resources to produce the film, and was heavily debt-ridden. Facing immense social and financial pressure, the director, who is now widely regarded as the father of Malayalam cinema, never made another film.

Rosy fled her hometown after an angry mob set her house on fire.

She cut all ties with her family to avoid being recognised and never spoke publicly about her past. She rebuilt her life by marrying an upper-caste man and took the name Rajamma.

She lived the rest of her life in obscurity in the town of Nagercoil in Tamil Nadu, Mr Abraham says.

Her children refused to accept that PK Rosy, the Dalit actor, was their mother, Rosy's nephew Mr Govindan says.

"Her children were born with an upper-caste Kesavan Pillai's identity. They chose their father's seed over their mother's womb," he says.

"We, her family, are part of PK Rosy's Dalit identity before the film's release," he said.

"In the space they inhabit, caste restricts them from accepting their Dalit heritage. That is their reality and our family has no place in it."

In 2013, a Malayalam TV channel tracked down Rosy's daughter Padma, who was living in financial strain somewhere in Tamil Nadu. She told them that she did not know much about her mother's life before her marriage but that she did not act after that.



CENTER DAMAGED:

The damaged premises of the American Reproductive Centers in Palm Springs, California.

Two dead as Mexican Navy ship crashes into Brooklyn Bridge

Two people have been killed and at least 19 others injured after a tall Mexican Navy training sailing ship crashed into New York City's Brooklyn Bridge.

Police said the Cuauhtémoc, with 277 people on board, lost power on Saturday as the captain was manoeuvring the vessel, forcing it to head for the bridge abutment on the Brooklyn side.

Footage shows the ship's towering masts clip the bridge as it passed under the structure. Crew members were standing on the masts as they snapped and fell to the deck,

authorities said.

Brooklyn resident Nick Corso, who witnessed the accident, said the area erupted in panic. There was "lots of screaming, some sailors hanging from the masts," he told AFP.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams confirmed on X that two people died and two of the 19 injured were in critical condition.

Brooklyn Bridge did not suffer any major damage and was reopened after a preliminary inspection.

Police said they believed "mechanical issues" and a power cut had caused the collision.

The New York Coast Guard said the Cuauhtémoc lost all three masts. All personnel on the ship had been accounted for and no-one had fallen in the water.

Crowds fled from the water's edge as the ship hit the bridge.

Another witness, Kelvin Flores, told the BBC he was at work when he saw the crash.

He came out into the street to find a lot of "commotion and a lot of chaos" with fire engines and police trying to reach the scene but the roads clogged with traffic.

"Just seeing the actual dam-

age was insane," he said. "People carrying stretchers... they were trying to get the injured out."

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum said she was deeply saddened by the loss of two crew members in the accident.

The Cuauhtémoc was towed from the scene after the crash.

The vessel, which measures 297 feet long (91m) and 40 feet (12m) wide, according to the Mexican navy, sailed for the first time in 1982.

Each year it sets sail at the end of classes at the naval military school to finish cadets' training.

Fatal blast near Palm Springs fertility clinic 'act of terrorism' —FBI

A bomb explosion outside a California fertility clinic has killed one person and injured four others in an "intentional act of terrorism", FBI officials have said.

The blast happened just before 11:00 local time (19:00 BST) less than a mile from downtown Palm Springs, near several businesses including the American Reproductive Centers (ARC). The clinic said no-one from the facility was harmed.

The FBI later said it had "a person of interest" in its investigation, but officers were "not actively searching" for the suspect.

Michael Beaumier, a witness, said he was knocked off his bike by the blast. "It was that big of an explosion and I could hear windows shattering all around me," he said.

Rhino Williams, who was at his restaurant nearby, told the BBC he initially thought the

explosion was a plane or helicopter crashing.

He said he ran to the scene to see if he could help, finding a badly damaged building with walls blown out and the front axle of a car on fire in the car park.

"That's all that was left of it," Mr Williams said. He also saw an iPhone on a tripod still standing in the car park, as if it was set to film or stream the explosion.

Mr Williams said he rushed through the building shouting for any injured people - but did not find any. A few minutes later first responders arrived.

Nima Tabrizi, another witness, said he heard a "big boom", a large cloud of smoke and the front of the clinic "completely blown out".

The FBI said in a Saturday briefing that it was a deliberate attack.

"This was an intentional act of terrorism. As our investigation will unfold we will deter-

mine if it's international terrorism or domestic terrorism," said Akil Davis, the head of the FBI's Los Angeles field office.

Palm Springs police chief Andy Mills said the blast damaged several buildings, some severely.

He added that the identity of the person who was killed was not known.

The ARC in Palm Springs said the explosion occurred in the car park near its building.

Palm Springs Mayor Ron De Harte told BBC's US partner CBS News that the source of the explosion "was in or near the vehicle".

The fertility clinic said their lab, including all eggs and embryos, remained "fully secure and undamaged".

"We are heavily conducting a complete safety inspection and have confirmed that our operations and sensitive medical areas were not impacted by

the blast," the clinic said in its statement.

But Dr Maher Abdallah, who runs the clinic, told the Associated Press that the clinic's office was damaged.

"I really have no clue what happened," he said. "Thank God today happened to be a day that we have no patients."

According to its website, the ARC clinic is the first full-service fertility centre and in vitro fertilisation lab (IVF) in the Coachella Valley.

It offers services including fertility evaluations, IVF, egg donation and freezing, reproductive support for same-sex couples and surrogacy.

California Governor Gavin Newsom said the state was co-ordinating with local and federal authorities, while US Attorney General Pam Bondi said she had been briefed on the incident.

All hospitals in north Gaza out of service, says health ministry

All three public hospitals in north Gaza have been put "out of service", the Hamas-run health ministry has said, as Israel continues its offensive to seize areas of the territory.

The ministry said on Sunday Israeli forces had besieged the Indonesian hospital in Beit Lahia, "with heavy fire... preventing the arrival of patients, medical staff, and supplies".

The hospital was the last in the north to be operating, it said.

Israel's military on Saturday announced the launch of "Op-

eration Gideon's Chariot", amid the deadliest wave of strikes in Gaza in months.

Hamas offered to release nine hostages in exchange for a 60-day truce and the release of Palestinian prisoners, a Palestinian official told the BBC after new negotiations were held on Saturday.

The health ministry said on Sunday: "After the destruction of Beit Hanoun Hospital and Kamal Adwan Hospital, and the Indonesian Hospital being put out of service, all public hospitals in the northern Gaza Strip are now out of service."

Will Romania vote take country away from European mainstream

When Romania's presidential election was annulled late last year after claims of Russian interference, a far-right conspiracy theorist was blocked from the top job.

Many Romanians were deeply relieved; many others were angry their votes had been stolen.

But six months later, with the country back at the ballot box, another hard-right Euro-sceptic is in the running for president.

George Simion won the first round of the new elections on 4 May by a large margin. Now the former football casual turned nationalist politician is facing off against Nicusor Dan, the liberal mayor of Bucharest.

It's a vote that could see Romania, a member of both Nato and the European Union (EU), take a sharp turn away from the European mainstream.

Both candidates cast their votes on Sunday morning, with Simion saying he had voted for the future "that should be decided only by Romanians, for Romanians and for Romania".

Dan told reporters he was voting for "collaboration with our European partners and not for [the] isolation of Romania".

The polls have been too close to call.

Teleorman county is one of Romania's poorest areas and has been solidly social-democrat territory for many years. But earlier this month, 57% of voters here chose Simion for president in the first round of voting.

A couple of hours' drive south-west from Bucharest, entry to the region is announced in blue letters on a rusty metal arch over the main road.

The streets are lined with wild poppies, not campaign posters for the candidates. There's no obvious sign of the elections.

But social media feeds on people's phones are full of political content.

The latest clip to go viral features a folk fantasy world of embroidered tops, prayers and bears and has the slogan "I choose Romania".

"It was an anti-system, anti-mainstream vote," is how Felicia Alexandru of Aperio Intelligence explains the nationwide surge of support for the far-right candidate in the first round.

After more than three decades of the same parties dominating politics, frustration with corruption and poor performance has been building.

"People are so unhappy with what happened in high level politics, this is a vote against that," Felicia says.

The protest vote is not confined to the poorest or most disaffected.

The Comalat dairy firm is unrecognisable from the business Petre Filip launched 25 years ago.

Back then, he would set out at 05:00 every day in his Dacia to drive round farms buying up milk. Then, each evening, he hand-delivered the cheese and yoghurt produced by his three workers to clients.

His old packaging machine now stands in the lobby as a reminder of the early days. But Petre has since been granted €1.5m (£1.3m; \$1.7m) in EU funding to modernise and expand his business. It's money he never has to pay back.

"That was a really, really good thing for us," the businessman enthuses, showing off a production line of glistening metal machines in several rooms.

He employs more than 50 staff.

"I like George Simion," staff member Mihaela announces with a smile, while squeezing liquid from big clumps of curd cheese.

She shrugs when I mention the fear in Brussels that he would make EU-Romania relations very turbulent.

"He's on the side of Romanians. He's for the people. To create jobs and better lives," Mihaela replies.

Simion talks a lot about "making Romania great again", echoing the MAGA politicians in the US he so admires. He has the same isolationist approach, too: Romania first, in everything.

When pushed, he has called Russian President Vladimir Putin a war criminal for his invasion of Ukraine.

But like Donald Trump, he has also pledged to end military aid to Kyiv and he's left the future of Ukraine's vital grain exports via Romania unclear.

Simion has been banned from Ukraine and Moldova for calling for territory there to be part of Romania.



THE PROTESTERS:

Protesters gather in solidarity with Palestinians in San Francisco, California, United States.

PHOTOS: TAYFUN COSKUN/ANADOLU

Pro-Palestinian protesters rally around the world to mark 'Nakba Day'

Tens of thousands of people have rallied across the world in solidarity with Palestinians amid Israel's brutal war on Gaza and to mark the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by Jewish militias, remembered as the Nakba, or catastrophe.

The Nakba resulted in the permanent mass displacement of Palestinians after the creation of Israel in 1948. Activists say that history is repeating itself today in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

In Stockholm, thousands assembled at Odenplan Square, responding to calls from various civil society organisations to protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza.

Participants waved Palestinian flags, displayed photographs of

children killed, and carried banners stating: "Stop the Zionist regime's genocide in Palestine".

Many demonstrators bore placards listing the names of civilians killed in Gaza, seeking to highlight the ongoing massacre.

Meanwhile, in London, United Kingdom, hundreds of thousands marched towards Downing Street, demanding an end to what they described as Israel's genocide in Gaza, 77 years on from the Nakba. Protesters, some dressed in keffiyehs and waving Palestinian flags, chanted slogans such as "Stop the genocide in Gaza", "Free Palestine", and "Israel is a terror state".

The demonstrators denounced the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, accusing it of deliberately starving more than two

million Palestinians, and criticised the UK government for its political and military backing of Israel, alleging complicity in the humanitarian crisis.

In Berlin, Germany, people gathered at Potsdamer Platz to protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza. Demonstrators waved Palestinian flags and held signs reading: "Your silence is complicity" and "You cannot kill us all". Women in traditional dress carrying Nakba-themed visuals were also present.

The event took place amid heavy security measures, with at least three people reportedly detained.

A solidarity march was held in Athens, Greece, where protesters, adorned in keffiyehs and carrying Palestinian flags, marched first to the embassies

of the United States and Israel.

Protests have erupted after hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in the past few days as Israel intensified its attacks, with the announcement of a new ground offensive.

Globally, May 15 was observed as the 77th anniversary of the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians from their homes following the establishment of Israel in 1948.

The Israeli military has killed 53,272 Palestinians and injured 120,673 since it launched an offensive on October 7, 2023, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health. The Government Media Office updated the death toll to more than 61,700, noting that thousands still missing beneath the rubble are presumed dead.

Press Release: Letter in support of Prof. Ali Khan Mahmudabad

Professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad is an associate professor and head of the Department of Political Science at Ashoka University (Haryana, India). He has recently been maliciously targeted by the Haryana State Women's Commission about some posts he made on social media following the hostilities between India and Pakistan. (Links to his original posts

are copied below.) Following the summons, it has been highly unfortunate that a large number of media houses have also chosen to distort and misquote him in order to malign his image and spread misinformation.

The Commission has completely, and it seems deliberately, misread his posts and has accused him of "vilifying" India's army, "violating dignity

and outraging women's modesty, disparaging women in uniform and attributing malicious communal intent to the

Government of India and Indian Armed Forces as well as inciting communal distress and attempting to disturb internal peace."

From a bare reading of his original posts, it is clear that Prof. Khan praised the strategic restraint of the armed forces, analysed how any distinction between the terrorists or non-state actors and the Pakistani military has now collapsed, and said that the optics of the women officers chosen for media debriefs was 'important' as proof that the secular vision of the founders of our Republic is still alive. He even applauded the Indian right wing for their support for Colonel Sofia Qureshi and invited them to also equally loudly oppose mob lynching and the bulldozing that Indian Muslims and others are frequently subjected to.

Most importantly, he emphasized the importance of peace and pointed out that it is the poor

who suffer disproportionately during conflict. Far from being misogynist or anti-national, Prof. Khan's posts are driven by a clear moral vision of what being a good citizen means and are actually the words of a true patriot who is concerned with the lives of both soldiers and citizens.

Anyone acquainted with Prof. Khan knows that he has been engaging with and writing about issues of national, regional and international importance for many years. His knowledge of languages and his deep understanding of the social, political and religious landscape of India are reflected in his articles. His social and public work at the grassroots has always been concerned with bringing people together, and he has always advocated for resolving differences through dialogue. In his post titled 'The blind bloodlust for war!', Prof. Khan has used the Gita as well as instances from Islam to illustrate the moral conundrums of going into wars that are driven by egos, pride and self-interest.

Indian professor arrested over social media post on military operation

A professor from an elite, private liberal-arts university in India has been arrested for a social media post about news briefings on the military operation against Pakistan more than a week after the two nuclear-armed neighbours agreed to a ceasefire, according to local media reports.

Ali Khan Mahmudabad, an associate professor with the Department of Political Science at Ashoka University, was arrested on Sunday under

sections of the criminal code pertaining to acts prejudicial to maintaining communal harmony, incitement of armed rebellion or subversive activities, and insults of religious beliefs.

A police official told the Indian Express newspaper that Mahmudabad, 42, was arrested in the capital, New Delhi, 60km (37 miles) south of the university, located in Sonapat in Haryana state.

A report by the online publication Scroll.in on Sunday

quoted Mahmudabad's lawyer as saying the case against him was filed on Saturday based on a complaint by Yogesh Jatheri, general secretary of the youth wing of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Haryana.

The arrest was made days after the Haryana State Commission for Women summoned Mahmudabad for his comments on the daily briefings on India's military operation in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Colonel Sofia Qureshi and Wing Com-

mander Vyomika Singh from the Indian armed forces held media briefings on Operation Sindoor, launched on May 6.

In a Facebook post on May 8, Mahmudabad had said: "I am very happy to see so many right wing commentators applauding Colonel Sophia Qureshi but perhaps they could also equally loudly demand that the victims of mob lynchings, arbitrary bulldozing and others who are victims of the BJP's hate mongering be protected as Indian citizens.

Feature

THE HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY IN FUNDING PUBLIC UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:

Stop the lamentation and do the needful (3)

SPENDING MONEY TO TEACH IRRELEVANT ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

The Nigerian economy is a developing one that requires the production of critical skills in Health, Engineering, Agriculture, Education, Life Sciences, Information and Communication Technology among others. Sadly, it is commonly observed that universities do not prioritize allocation of funds to these relevant faculties. As a matter of fact, 68 percent of university funds are spent on academic programmes that have little or no relevance to the needs of industry (Obogare and Igbineweka, 2015). The implication of this is that many graduates from the universities are not gainfully employed to fill existing vacancies in the industry.

PREFERENCE FOR THE ANALOGUE METHOD OF TEACHING

Analogue teaching mode requires the combination of physical classrooms, library resources, stationeries and physical contacts. For adequate availability of these resources in universities that are usually very overcrowded, Igbineweka (2023) reported that universities spend about one-fifth of available funds to maintain physical facilities and procure stationeries. This method no doubt is wasteful particularly where options for e-learning opportunities are available.

SPENDING MONEY TO SECURE EXPANSIVE LANDMASS

Another reason for the unending lamentation of poor funding in Nigerian public universities is the expansive and under-utilized landmass. Igbineweka and Anukaeyi, (2016) found out that each of the first generation universities occupy a landmass not less than 40,000 hectares on the average. Apart from the inability of providing perimeter fencing for securing the land, significant proportion of available funds are spent to fight trespassers and clear bushes to keep away wild animals. It is needless to emphasize the waste in the funds that is being spent to control ecological threats in the vast land with little or no direct impact on teaching and learning.

SPENDING MONEY TO MAINTAIN ACCOMMODATION FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

This intervention is not a bad one. What is however wrong is the fact that staff and students pay little or nothing to enjoy the accommodation services. This is another needless concern that public universities according to Igbineweka, Iguodala and Anukaeni, (2016) spend over 36 percent of available funds to finance.

THE UNFAIR PAYMENT OF SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES TO WORKERS

Payment of workers in public universities as reported by Igbineweka and Adeyemi, (2017) is based on staff qualifications and not necessarily productivity. It is a situation where two workers for example with same qualification and experience are paid the same salaries without recourse to their level of job performance and productivity. The system of payment

does not even have a way of identifying late comers and absentees but pays all workers whether they work or not. Vice Chancellor sir, the money spent to pay staff for coming late to work (or not coming at all) is a waste and could be the reason why universities funds are perpetually inadequate.

DYSFUNCTIONAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Academic and non-teaching jobs are not functionally described to make performance seamless. For this reason, more personnel struggle or idle away to perform jobs that very few people can do. In the study carried out by Igbineweka and Mani (2015) to investigate teachers' job productivity and supervision in Nigerian schools, it was discovered that so many people do the same job that few experts can effectively do. In another study that assessed the level of fund utilization and accountability in Nigerian public universities, Igbineweka and Ajah (2018) found out that teaching and non-teaching personnel are arbitrarily recruited just for the purpose of helping friends and family members, a situation of needless employments that drains available funds.

PROVIDING SOCIAL AMENITIES THAT GOVERNMENT OUGHT TO PROVIDE

Cost in education comprises institutional cost, household cost and social cost. Household cost is borne by learners for attending school while institutional and social costs are borne by school administrators and government respectively (Igbineweka and Nwadiani, 2017). School administrators provide needed inputs and finance the cost of processing to achieve pre-defined school goals and objectives. The role of government is to finance social cost which include but not limited to providing roads, water, electricity, internet and security services. Igbineweka, Iguodala and Iwerebor (2018) in a study that assessed the academic cost and level of compliance with minimum standards in Nigerian universities found out that public universities helplessly look for money to fund both institutional and social costs. In some instances, they even identify indigent students and assist in financing their household costs. This situation no doubt places enormous financial burdens on the universities to spend limited funds on such needless expenditures.

NEEDFUL STRATEGIES TO END LAMENTATION

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, I am a Christian and Pentecostal one for that matter. I therefore know that God abhors lamentation, the reason a whole section of the Holy Bible is written to dissuade those who lament. As a student of culture and tradition, I also know that it is forbidden to express lamentation in the royal presence of Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, the Oba of Benin. Students, workers, parents or even Vice Chancellors are therefore not to be seen or heard again lamenting the perennial poor funding situation in Nigerian public universities if the following strategies are thoughtfully considered.

APPROPRIATE REMUNERATION

The quantum of available fund notwithstanding, its management is very crucial for the universities to achieve their purpose. In this regard, budget formulation, budget implementation and budget evaluation are strategic and very important routine activities that Vice Chancellors must carry out. Public universities in Nigeria can seamlessly deliver on their mandate when needed funds are provided and the providers of such funds superintend over its management

STRATEGY

It is the law of God and nature that people who work should eat and vice versa for those who do not. In public universities, management should look for a way to identify productive workers and pay them handsomely while those who loathe working should henceforth not be paid. To be specific, no more should anybody be paid for the hours or days not worked for. This is the practice in the United Kingdom, United States of America, China, Japan and even private universities in Nigeria.

COST SHARING STRATEGY

Universities all over the world are expensive to fund. Only Vice Chancellors cannot source the fund that will finance the total cost of university education. In this regard, students who enjoy free tuition should be encouraged to pay appropriate maintenance fees for accommodation, medicare and other support services as it is the practice elsewhere.

THE STRATEGY OF HYBRIDIZING ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL MODES IN PERFORMING UNIVERSITY FUNCTIONS

The analogue method adopted in discharging university functions by the first-generation universities since the 1970s is still predominantly in vogue in many public universities. There is no doubt that this cost-wasting method has become outdated with little or no impact on teaching and learning. It has therefore become imperative to consider the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the online environment in carrying out university activities. I make bold to therefore suggest Mr. Vice Chancellor, that the theoretical component of all courses be taught virtually and the practicals physically taught. This strategy may positively impact on the quality of university programmes and save needless expenses for students, parents and the university management.

CURRICULUM REVIEW STRATEGY

Digitalization has globalized the world, a situation that creates very urgent critical needs in the cyber space. Such needs include training people to acquire skills in Cybernetics, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Robotics and other known tech relat-

ed fields. In this regard, it is suggested that existing academic programmes in public universities be overhauled to meet the needs of industry. Irrelevant courses must be scrapped and relevant ones introduced into the curriculum. The courses that appear relevant such as Agriculture, Education, Medicine, Engineering, Computer and Life Sciences will therefore need to have their curricula contents and teaching methods reviewed in line with the needs of industry.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES MERGING AND ALIGNMENT STRATEGY

The National Universities Commission (NUC) needs to wake up and recraft the purpose of university education in Nigeria. The present situation where academic programmes are duplicated in virtually all public universities is not healthy or cost saving. For example, Engineering, Agriculture, Business Administration, English Language, Economics, Computer Science, Mathematics and many others are offered as academic programmes in every public university in Nigeria. There is no single university at the moment that has specialty or monopoly in any academic discipline. The disadvantage in terms of cost effectiveness in such an arrangement need not be over-emphasized. The way to go therefore is to make universities specialise in awarding degrees in just one area of academic discipline such as Law, Education, Computer Science, Medicine, Agriculture, Business Administration etcetera. One or two universities can be left in each of the 6 geopolitical zones as conventional schools to award degrees in all areas of academic disciplines.

DISTANT LEARNING STRATEGY

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) at the moment is the largest university in Nigeria in terms of student enrolment. It is also the only public university with the most stable academic calendar and with little or no lamentation about the issues of funding. The university has no walls, no hostels, and no landmass or complex architectural buildings that usually make funding problematic. All other public universities should be patterned along this model to save cost and end lamentation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Tuition-free university education is an extant policy in all Nigerian public universities. What this means is that government pays the tuition fees for all undergraduate students. This is a commendable policy that should be sustained but modified to ascertain the cost of the free-tuition because nothing is free, not even in Freetown. Going forward, routine grants from government should be based on the unit cost of academic programmes multiplied by the student enrolment for such programmes.

2. Consequent upon the above recommendation, universities should be given autonomy to henceforth pay wages and allowances to deserving staff and no more permanent salary jobs, a new regime that will obliterate ineptitude and redundancy among university workers.

3. Government through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) should continue to provide needed infrastructures in all public universities. Priority attention should however be given to the provision of internet and digital facilities to encourage e-governance, e-learning and e-teaching.

4. Public universities must generate funds internally to finance the cost of consumables and maintain facilities. For this reason, parents and students going forward must pay appropriate university development and maintenance fees including charges for the use of internet, water and electricity. In addition to entrepreneurialising the usage of available university facilities, all business operators on campus must pay appropriate rents to supplement the grants received from government.

5. The quantum of available funds notwithstanding, it is the effective utilization that matters in achieving the purpose and objectives for which universities are established. It is therefore recommended that universities should be more circumspect and efficient in utilizing available funds.

CONCLUSION

University education is to among other purposes produce graduates equipped with requisite skills for the continuous identification of socio-economic problems and create solutions. The attainment of this purpose requires enormous fund that government alone cannot provide. Significant stakeholders in university education such as government, students, parents and employers of labour must therefore resolve to collectively contribute needed funds for its sustenance. The quantum of available fund notwithstanding, its management is very crucial for the universities to achieve their purpose. In this regard, budget formulation, budget implementation and budget evaluation are strategic and very important routine activities that Vice Chancellors must carry out. Public universities in Nigeria can seamlessly deliver on their mandate when needed funds are provided and the providers of such funds superintend over its management.

Concluded

Sports

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

Ogun Games: Team Edo shines at National Sports Festival opening ceremony

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As the Vice President. His Excellency Kashim Shettima officially declares the 22nd National Sports Festival Open in Abeokuta, the Ogun state capital, the Executive Chairman Edo state Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele has urged the Federal Government and states to invest more in the development of sports in the country.

The Edo state sports Commission boss said that money and other resources invested in the development of the youth of the nation is never a waste, insisting that sports remained a part of the pillars that hold the unity of the country.

● Enabulele urges FG to Sustain Sports Festival

Hon Enabulele who was speaking with journalists during the colourful ceremony which held at the MKO Abiola International Stadium in Abeokuta, Ogun State, commended the organizers of the Ogun Games and the federal government for sustaining the national sports fiesta which is a fulcrum upon which the unity of Nigeria stands.

He maintained that the national sports festival is not only about celebration of sports excellence but also the celebration of the existence of Nigeria as a big nation and its unity in diversity.

"We are happy to be here and

to be a part of the celebration of our dear country and sports. I could feel the strong spirit that goes with sports; the enthusiasm and friendship going with it. It goes to show that whatever resources invested in sports in this country is never a waste. I urge the government at all levels to consciously invest more in sports because it plays a pivotal role in shaping the lives of our children and the society."

"I will always be grateful to our Governor senator Monday Okpebholo for making it possible for us to participate in this Ogun Games. We will reciprocate his gesture with spectacular performance. Our athletes

are in Ogun Games to express themselves and show what we have. We are here to compete clean." He said.

Meanwhile, team Edo was

the center of attraction during the march past, preceding the vice president's address and declaration as they filed out in a spectacular fashion, proudly sporting their traditional attractive red and white

tracksuits to add colours to the ceremony.

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele led the large team of the heartbeat state in the exercise



Edo Governor's Cup 2025: Grand finale set for Children's Day in Benin

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The stage is set for the grand finale of the Edo Governor's Cup 2025, with the final matches slated to hold on Children's Day, May 27, at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City.

The annual grassroots football tournament, organized by the Schools' Sport Foundation in collaboration with the Edo State Ministry of Education and the Edo State Sports Commission, under the sponsorship of Peculiar Ultimate Concerns Limited, has continued to serve as a breeding ground for young football talents across Edo State.

Now in its latest edition, the competition has featured thrilling matches among secondary schools from all 18 local government areas, with both boys and girls categories competing for top honors.

SEMI-FINALS SET FOR MAY 19 & 20

The semi-final matches will be hosted at Western Boys High School, Benin City on Monday and Tuesday May 19, and 20, 2025 with the following fixtures:

MAY 19, 2025

10:00 AM (Girls): Umagbae Secondary School vs Idia College

12:00 PM (Boys): St. David Mixed Model School vs Ogbe Secondary School

MAY 20, 2025

10:00 AM (Girls): St. Angela's Girls Grammar School vs Eguare Secondary School

12:00 PM (Boys): St. Peter's Grammar School vs Agba Grammar School

In the boys' category, St. David Mixed Model School's attacking flair will clash with Ogbe Secondary School's defensive resilience. Meanwhile, St. Peter's Grammar School, known for their intense pressing, will face off against Agba Grammar School, whose counter-attacking strategy has seen them upset several top con-

tenders.

The girls' fixtures are equally compelling. Umagbae Secondary School brings a methodical build-up against the fast-paced offense of Idia College, while title favorites St. Angela's Girls Grammar School will need to overcome the determined underdogs from Eguare Secondary School.

THIRD-PLACE AND FINAL MATCHES

Set to be played on May 26 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, the third-place matches starting with the girls' game is slated for

10:00 am, while the boys' match will start at 12:00 pm.

The grand finale on May 27 will begin with the girls' final at 9:00 AM, to followed by an opening ceremony at 10:00 am, and the boys' final game is set for 12:00 pm.

The closing ceremony which promises to be colorful would feature cultural performances, and awards recognizing exceptional players, teams, and coaches.

Speaking ahead of the final, Yomi Elijah, CEO of the Schools' Sport Foundation, applauded the Edo State Government and tournament sponsors for their commitment to youth development through sport.

Elijah also praised the sportsmanship and dedication of the participating schools, expressing confidence that the 2025 edition would be remembered as a landmark in the state's football history.

Over the years, the Governor's Cup has become a launchpad for young talents, many of whom have progressed to represent Edo State and Nigeria at various levels of professional and youth football.

As the tournament nears its climax, excitement continues to grow among students, parents, schools administrators, and football enthusiasts eager to witness which schools will lift the coveted trophies and etch their names in Edo's football legacy.

16 teams to participate in Maiden Legal Football Tourney in Edo

Determined to stem the tide of cultism and other related social vices in Edo State, the executive members of the Edo State legal Sports Campaign committee, has said that plans are underway to host a football tournament for youths in the state.

This was made known by Darlington Omokaro, leader of the group during a courtesy visit to the Office of the Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Rt.Hon.Blessing Agbebaku recently in Benin City.

He said that the overall winner of the tournament will take home N10 million naira while N5m and N3m will go to the first and second runners-up respectively.

Omokaro stated that the visit was to officially inform the House about plans to actively engage young people through sports to fight social vices in the State.

According to him, the Edo Legal Sports 2025 campaign would involve 16 teams selected from the three Senatorial Districts of the state.

Speaking further, Omokaro said that four teams each would represent Edo North and Central, while the remaining eight teams would come from Edo South.

"Five Universities will join, including Igbinedion University, Ambrose Alli University, Edo University, Iyamho; and the Benson Idahosa University, he explained

Omokaro informed that the tournament is scheduled to hold in July and August 2025 with matches played at the university of Benin sports complex in Benin.

"Key partners include the Edo Sports Commission, Edo State House of Assembly, Edo State Police Command, and the University of Benin", Omokaro disclosed.



Osun Handball Team Captain, Ayegoro hails Osun State government, eyes ultimate price at Gateway Games

As excitement builds ahead of the opening ceremony of the National Sports Festival tagged Gateway Games, Captain of the Osun State Handball Team, Ayegoro T Emmyboi, has commended the Osun State Government for its support and expressed his team's readi-

ness to compete for top honors.

Speaking with the Osun State media team, Ayegoro acknowledged the efforts of Governor Senator Ademola Jackson Adeleke and his deputy, Prince Kola Adewusi, who doubles as the state's Commissioner for Sports. He highlighted their dedication to sports

development and the motivational reward pledge for medal-winning athletes.

"We've been training really hard and I can assure you that we are targeting ultimate price, especially now that the government led by Senator Adeleke and Deputy Governor Osun State Prince Adewusi has promised a massive

reward for athletes that do well at the festival," Ayegoro said.

Acknowledging the stiff competition expected at the National Sports Festival Gateway 2024, Ayegoro noted the quality of handball teams from across the country but remained confident in his team's abilities.

"The handball event is go-

ing to be a tough one as some of the best handball teams in Nigeria will be participating. Regardless, we believe in our ability," he affirmed.

He also urged the state government not to relent in its efforts towards sports development, pledging that Team Osun will do everything pos-

sible to make the state proud and further cement its place on Nigeria's sports map.

The Gateway Games officially open today, Sunday, May 18, with Team Osun set to participate in the ceremonial match past. The handball event kicks off tomorrow, Monday, May 19, 2025.

SPORTS

AFN President Chief Tonobok Okowa hails CAA inspection team

● **Inspection team pleased with facilities ear marked for Africa U-18/20 Athletics Championship**

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The President of the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN), Chief Tonobok Okowa, has heaped praises on the four man Confederation of African Athletics (CAA), inspection team for the forthcoming Africa U-18/20 Athletics Championship scheduled to hold in Abeokuta, Ogun State, South-West, Nigeria from the 16th - 20th of July, 2025.

The inspection team, was led by the Confederation African Athletics (CAA), Director General, Lamine Faty, of Senegal.

Other members of the team include CAA Technical and Development Director, Aziz Daouda, Lombard Melinda Amana and Maraire Mun-

yaradzi Nkosasa Wilbert.

Okowa, praised the team for the professional manner in which they went about the inspection which started on Friday and was concluded on Saturday.

"I'm really impressed with the way they handled their assignment, very thorough and diligent, with eyes for details as well as a human touch. The hotels they settled for were the very best in the Rock City of Abeokuta."

The inspection started with the MKO Abiola Stadium, Kuto, Abeokuta on Friday and the inspection of hotels took place on Saturday with the 153 room Green Legacy Resort and it moved to Park Inn with 173 rooms.

Over 800 rooms in the different hotels were ear marked



for athletes, officials, journalists and World Athletics special guests.

The AFN President, appealed to the inspection team and CAA to work with the selected and available hotels and

the standard practice in Nigeria of single in a room.

The Local Organizing Committee for the Championship was represented by Shagaya Abdulmumeen, who serves as the secretary of the LOC.

Osimhen inspires Galatasaray to 2024/25 Turkish Süper Lig glory

Nigerian forward Victor Osimhen played a crucial role in Galatasaray's successful 2024/25 campaign, guiding the club to clinch the Turkish Süper Lig title with a convincing 3-0 win over Kayserispor.

In a decisive match held on May 18, Osimhen gave Galatasaray an early advantage by scoring in the 26th minute with a sharp finish. Just three minutes later, Berkan Arslan Yilmaz made it 2-0, putting the hosts firmly in control.

Veteran shot-stopper Fernando Muslera added a surprising third from the penalty spot in the 89th minute, securing a memorable win and sealing the league crown for the Istanbul giants.

Galatasaray ended the season in dominant fashion, recording 28 victories, five draws, and only one defeat across 34 league

matches. Their 89-point total placed them comfortably ahead of rivals Fenerbahçe, who finished seven points behind.

Osimhen's first season in Turkey proved transformative. The 25-year-old striker featured in 29 league games, netting 25 goals and providing five assists, making him one of the most impactful players in the league.

His explosive pace, clinical finishing, and attacking presence quickly earned him admiration from Galatasaray fans and made him a constant threat to opposition defenses throughout the campaign.

Osimhen also played an instrumental role in Galatasaray's successful Turkish Cup run, helping the club secure a domestic double, an achievement they hadn't accomplished in several years.



NWFL Super six: We are proud of Edo Queens —Enabulele

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Executive Chairman of Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has commended Edo Queens FC for their resilience in the just concluded Nigeria Women Football League (NWFL) Super six championship in Ikenne.

The Edo state Sports Commission boss gave the commendation while addressing the players after their thrilling last game of the tournament which ended in a goalless draw with Nasarawa Amazons.

The 2023/24 champions could not retain the league title that took them to the CAF champions league for the first time in Casablanca where they finished 4th best after conquering the west African zone last season, leaving for Bayelsa Queens to lift it again.

According to him: "I want to thank you all for your determi-

● **Says we won't throw blames**



nation and resilience. We have all watched the game, I commend you all for coming out strong and show commitment in this competition, though we lost the trophy but you all did very well was a tough match no doubt, and you all did your best. We will go back to the drawing board and strategise for next season.

"Coach Aduku, we are not throwing blame at anyone. We won it last season, it is football. You can't win all, so let's take it in good fate. We would all go back to our drawing board and strategize. Good game girls." He said.

Recalled that Edo Queens won the Super six last season and represented Nigeria at the

CAF level.

Edo Queens, after the goalless draw with Nasarawa Amazons finished in third position with 8 points from five matches

The NWFL came to an end with Bayelsa Queens emerging champions.

Six NWFL giants took part in the Super Six championship and four teams Bayelsa Queens, Nasarawa Amazons, Edo Queens, and Remo Stars Ladies were in contention for the title. at the end Bayelsa Queens were crowned champions.

Edo Queens were rewarded with four million Naira for the third place while Nasarawa Amazons got N6M as the new champions Bayelsa Queens got the star prize of N10M while the remaining teams, Rivers Angels, Remo Stars Ladies and Naija Ratels got 1.5 million each.

Meanwhile, Edo Queens will have to put the Super six.

Ronaldo receives tempting offer to play at FIFA Club World Cup

Al-Nassr captain, Cristiano Ronaldo, has received a "tempting" offer to join a Brazilian club that would see him participate at the FIFA Club World Cup.

According to Marca, a transfer would give Ronaldo the opportunity to play in this summer's Club World Cup, taking place in the United States from June 15 to July 13.

The report added that the four

Brazilian clubs involved in the Club World Cup are Fluminense, Flamengo, Botafogo and Palmeiras.

Ronaldo was close to signing a new contract at Al-Nassr a few months ago.

But it is claimed the Portugal forward could now decide to leave the Saudi Pro Lig club following the enticing offer from Brazil.

Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr in 2023 after leaving Old Trafford for the second time in his career.

Flying Eagles claim U-20 AFCON bronze after penalty shootout triumph over Egypt

Nigeria's Flying Eagles sealed a third-place finish at the TotalEnergies CAF U-20 Africa Cup of Nations Egypt 2025 after defeating hosts Egypt 4-1 on penalties in a thrilling bronze medal match on Sunday.

The tie had ended 1-1 after regulation time, with Egypt's Omar Osama opening the scoring in the 3rd minute before Nigeria equalized through Bidemi Amole just two min-

utes into the second half.

In a tense shootout at the 30 June Stadium, it was goalkeeper Ajia Yakubu who emerged as the hero for Nigeria — saving Egypt's second and third spot-kicks in sensational fashion to hand the West Africans the edge.

The Flying Eagles held their nerve from 12 yards, converting four straight penalties with clinical precision, while Egypt faltered under pressure.

This victory ensures that Nigeria wraps up their AFCON U-20 campaign on a high note, finishing on the podium and reaffirming their status as one of Africa's most successful youth sides.

With a World Cup ticket already secured, the bronze medal adds another layer of pride to a campaign marked by resilience, tactical discipline, and emerging young talents ready to shine on the global stage

