

Edo highlights untapped potential for industrial growth at Lagos agri-investment forum

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

In alignment with Governor Monday Okpebholo's vision to transform Edo State into a thriving economic hub, the Edo State Investment Pro-

motion Office (ESIPO) showcased the state's vast potential for industrial growth at the recently held Lagos Agri-Investment Forum.

The fifth edition of the Agri-Investment and Capital

Markets Forum, themed "Cultivating Change: Agri-Food Investments as a Catalyst for Industrialization," centred discussions on how targeted investments in the agri-food sector can drive broader industrial development.

Edo State emerged as a key focus at the event, represented by Hon. Amen Odigie, Managing Director of ESIPO, through Abdul-Kadir Abdullah, Team Lead of the Investment Promotion and Global Outreach

Department.

Echoing the forum's central message, Abdullah emphasised the enormous opportunities within Edo's agricultural sector, which he described as a springboard for industrial

transformation.

"Edo State stands ready to serve as a critical hub for agri-food investment, directly advancing Nigeria's industrializa-

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The Nigerian Observer

...that the people may know

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Tinubu's wife empowers Edo women, as Okpebholo assures of greater things —Pg 2

Federal revenue surges amid looming cuts to state allocations

● **FG nets N84bn from electronic transfer levy as NSIA pushes N100bn sovereign fund boost**

The Federal Government's efforts to bolster its non-oil revenues appear to be gaining significant momentum, even as concerns mount over a new funding proposal that could slash allocations to state governments across Nigeria.

New data shows that the Federal Government raked in a remarkable N84.05bn from the Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL) in the first quarter of 2025, reflecting a 76 per cent surge from the N47.74bn collected in the same period last year.

The figures, obtained from a

document by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), underscore the increasing importance of digital levies in the nation's revenue mix amid ongoing economic diversification efforts.

The sharp rise in EMTL collections was driven largely by stronger enforcement meas-

ures and the expanding use of electronic payment platforms nationwide.

A month-by-month analysis revealed that in January 2025, N21.40bn was collected, up 29.1 per cent from January 2024's figure of N16.59bn. February 2025 recorded the most dramatic leap,

with collections more than doubling year-on-year to N36.64bn from N15.79bn.

In March 2025, the government earned N26.01bn from the levy, marking a 69.2 per cent rise compared to the same month in 2024.

Despite a month-on-month decline between February

and March, the cumulative first-quarter gains signal a strong performance that has fed into the Federation Account.

According to data from the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, a total of N80.69bn from EMTL collec-

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BURIAL OF THE LATE PONTIFF:
L-R: Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Matthew Hassan Kukah; Minister of State Foreign Affairs, Amb. Bianca Ojukwu; Senate President and leader of Nigeria's delegation to Pope Francis Funeral Ceremony, Godswill Akpabio, and President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, Archbishop Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji, during the burial of the late pontiff in Vatican City. PHOTO BY OMOYE AMINU

North accounts for 79% of insecurity in Nigeria —Report

Northern Nigeria continues to bear the brunt of the country's insecurity challenges, accounting for a majority of recorded incidents between January 2 and April 22, 2025.

According to data sourced from Beacon Consulting, an indigenous firm tracking situations in the country, the North West, North East and North Central accounted for 79 per cent of the insecurity incidents.

The region has been ravaged by Boko Haram, Islamic State of West African Province, bandits, herders-farmers conflict and lately Lakurawa and Mahmuda terrorist groups.

The data shows that the North West alone was responsible for 37 per cent of all reported insecurity incidents within the period, recording 1,095 occurrences.

It also witnessed the highest number of casualties, with 1,642 individuals killed and 2,512 kidnapped.

The North East followed, accounting for 25 per cent of the total incidents, with 745 occur-

rences leading to 770 deaths and 461 kidnappings. The North Central region recorded 17 per cent of the incidents, with 493 occurrences, resulting in 999 deaths and 433 kidnappings.

In contrast, the southern regions recorded significantly lower incidents. The South West accounted for 10 per cent, with 304 occurrences leading to 261 deaths and 76 kidnappings.

The South South followed with 7 per cent, recording 207 occurrences, 155 deaths, and 47 kidnappings.

The South East which in the past was under the grip of unknown gunmen and members of the Indigenous People of Biafra emerged as the region with the least number of insecurity incidents, accounting for just 4 per cent. Within the period under review, the region witnessed 129 occurrences, resulting in 186 deaths and 32 kidnappings.

In total, Beacon Consulting's data indicated that 4,013 individuals were killed and 3,561 kidnapped across the country in less than four months.

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Tinubu's wife empowers Edo women, as Okpebholo assures of greater things

The First Lady of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu has empowered 500 vulnerable women in Edo state with various items under the Renewed Hope Agenda Initiative for Financial Inclusivity.

The 500 beneficiaries who cut across the three Senatorial Districts of the state, were urged to make judicious use of the items to enhance their living standards and empower others.

Sen. Tinubu noted that the programme is taking place simultaneously in the states of the South South geo-political zone namely Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Edo and Delta.

She added that it is only Rivers State in the zone that is not participating in the exercise as the event has been rescheduled to May 2, 2025.

"This programme acknowledges the vital roles women play in nation building and also aligns with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu.

"The empowerment items being distributed here today aims to equip women with the necessary tools and resources they need to build successful businesses and contribute to the prosperity of Nigeria.

"A total of 18,500 women across the country's six geo-political zones will benefit

from this empowerment.

The North Central zone received their items on February 21, 2025. Today it is the turn of the hard working women in the South South zone.

"These women will be provided with items like gas cookers (with ovens), deep freezers, generators, industrial grinding machines which will support them in starting or growing their existing businesses.

"I encourage the beneficiaries to use the resources judiciously to grow their businesses. These items serve as a platform for a better life as we pray that what you receive will grow in your hands", she said.

Gov Monday Okpebholo thanked the president and the first lady for their visionary leadership and unwavering support for the people and government of Edo State.

He noted that the commitment to inclusive development by the president and the first lady continues to inspire hope and progress across the nation.

The governor, represented by his Special Adviser on Media Projects, Godswill Inegbe appreciated the noble objectives of the empowerment initiative which is aimed at unlocking the potentials of Edo women, fostering their economic independence and cre-

ating sustainable opportunities for growth and prosperity.

"By equipping our women with these items, we are strengthening their abilities to build lasting livelihoods thereby enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the inclusive and sustainable development of our nation.

"As a responsible government, we remain committed to the economic empowerment of our women, recognizing it as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development and

societal advancement.

"We believe that when women are empowered, families are strengthened, communities flourish and nations thrive.

"I thank the Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady of Edo State, Edesili Anani Okpebholo for her passion, dedication and tireless efforts towards the economic liberation of women in Edo State.

"Gov. Okpebholo said his administration will not leave any woman in the State behind in

the collective journey of his administration towards building a peaceful, progressive and prosperous Edo State", he stated.

Senior Special Assistant to the president on Sustainable Development Goals, Princess Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire represented by Nura Ali Rano said the empowerment which was flagged off in the FCT under the Renewed Hope Initiative is held across the South South zone.

He noted that the programme will continue to serve

as a beacon of hope and empowerment to create opportunities to build sustainable livelihoods for Nigerian women in line with SDG's 5 and 8.

One of the beneficiaries, Faith Mbah thanked the first lady and her husband as well as the state governor for the items which she said is a big relief to her.

She assured that she and other beneficiaries will utilize the items to grow their businesses, improve their lives and contribute to the development of the nation.



OBI VISITS CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY:

Presidential candidate of Labour Party in the 2023 General Elections, Mr Peter Obi (2nd left); President of California State University, Sacramento, Dr. Luke Wood (2nd right); Professor of Political Economics, Prof. Pat Utomi (right), and another guest, during a reception for Obi when he visited to institution recently.

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tion agenda.

With our fertile land, strategic location, and strong government support, we offer a robust platform for businesses to grow and contribute to national economic development," he said.

He further outlined a broad range of investment prospects across agribusiness, healthcare, tourism, and energy—underscoring Edo State's multi-sectoral potential for industrialization.

These opportunities, he noted, are integral to the state's long-term economic development strategy.

Abdullah also highlighted Governor Okpebholo's Back to Farm initiative, aimed at achieving food sufficiency in the state.

He explained how this strategy aligns with the forum's objectives, demonstrating Edo's commitment to innovative financing models, strategic partnerships, infrastructure investment, and the adoption of modern technology to enhance agricultural productivity and foster industrial processing.

The forum brought together a cross-section of stakeholders, including the Permanent Secretary of Edo's Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Peter Osagie, to discuss sustainable financing mechanisms for agricultural growth and industrial development across Nigeria.

Key discussions tackled issues such as climate change, population pressures, and food insecurity, stressing the need

for innovative financial tools.

While existing initiatives like the Food and Tuber Expansion Programme and NIRSAL were acknowledged for their contributions to job creation and input accessibility, participants highlighted persistent challenges such as limited coverage, short-term funding, and infrastructural gaps, especially affecting small holder farmers.

A central theme was the untapped potential of Nigeria's capital markets in financing agriculture. Experts explored instruments such as agricultural bonds, insurance-linked products, and private sector collaborations as means to attract essential capital and accelerate industrialization.

Programmes like the Nigerian Agricultural Development Fund (NADF) were praised for advancing this agenda through strategic interventions and financial innovations that promote value chain development and industrial links.

Panel sessions further stressed the importance of robust public-private partnerships in boosting agricultural finance, presenting successful models of capital market engagement to stimulate agribusiness expansion and industrial growth.

The overarching message from the forum was clear: transforming Nigeria's agri-food landscape into an engine of industrialization requires bold financial innovation, strategic collaboration, and a firm commitment to sustainability.

Property owners on govt layouts to verify, re-certify documents

BENIN CITY

Edo State Government has called on all property owners in Six different Govt Layouts in Benin City to come forward to verify and re-certify their documents.

A Government Special Announcement endorsed on behalf of Edo State Government

by the Managing Director, Edo State Geographic Information Service (EDOGIS), Dr. Tony Ikpasaja explained that property owners in the Under-listed Layouts in Benin City are to comply without fail.

The affected layouts include Etete Government Layout; Iyekogba Housing Estate; Egbuoriararia layout and Ikpoba River

Dam Acquisition.

Others are Oka-Oseni/Egba/Okanaruovia and Evbuodia Acquisition.

In addition, property owners and corporate organizations with their old Certificates of Occupancy (C of O) have been advised to come forward for the new digital Certificate of Occupancy (CofO).

The Government Statement further clarifies that the verification and recertification exercise will commence on Thursday May 1, 2025 and end on Friday, 30th instant.

According to the Statement, the venue of the exercise is the EDOGIS office, Plot 102, Sapele Road, Benin City, Edo State.

Federal revenue surges amid looming cuts to...

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tions was disbursed to the three tiers of government in the first quarter of 2025 an impressive leap from the N46.45bn shared in the corresponding period of 2024.

The Electronic Money Transfer Levy, introduced through the Finance Act 2020 and operational since 2021, imposes a N50 charge on electronic transfers of N10,000 and above.

Proceeds are shared among the Federal, state, and local governments under an agreed formula, offering a growing lifeline for public finances at all levels.

In January 2025, FAAC distributed N20.548bn from EMTL proceeds: the Federal Government received N3.082bn, state governments

got N7.192bn, and local councils took N10.274bn.

February's figure rose sharply to N35.171bn, with the Federal Government collecting N5.276bn, states N17.585bn, and local governments N12.310bn. March saw N24.971bn shared, again favouring all tiers of government compared to 2024 distributions.

However, even as these revenues rise, states could soon face financial pressures from a separate federal initiative seeking to channel N100bn monthly into the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA).

At the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) meeting held on April 14 and 15, 2025, NSIA's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Aminu Umar-Sadiq, proposed

that N100bn be deducted each month from residual funds defined as revenues in excess of projected hydrocarbon earnings to boost the sovereign wealth fund.

In his presentation, titled "Activating Residual Funding for the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority - Unlocking Opportunities for Large-Scale Investments to Drive Nigeria's Economic Growth," Umar-Sadiq argued that the move would unlock long-term investment opportunities critical for national infrastructure development.

He assured that the derivation component of the revenue formula would remain untouched, and only non-derivation portions of excess revenues would be utilised.

The NSIA chief maintained that positioning Nigeria's sov-

ereign wealth fund among the top globally was essential for sustainable economic growth, providing a buffer against fiscal shocks while supporting savings and infrastructure projects.

If FAAC approves the request, deductions would commence with the March 2025 allocation, potentially shrinking the sums available for immediate disbursement to cash-strapped state governments already grappling with budgetary shortfalls.

While the Federal Government's soaring EMTL revenues offer some fiscal breathing space, the NSIA proposal introduces fresh tensions in federal-state financial relations, highlighting the ongoing balancing act between short-term budget needs and long-term economic planning.

NEWS

Bankole-Balogun, Eribo inducted into Taxation Institute

Executive Chairman, Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), Otunba (Hon.) Oladele Bankole-Balogun and Hon. (Engr.) Jackson Eribo, Executive Director MDA Services, EIRS have been inducted into the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria, (CITN).

A press release from the Head, Corporate Communications, EIRS, Courage Eboigbe, stated that the induction took place during the Institute's 52nd Induction Ceremony held in Abuja. Prof. Yusuf Alli, a Senior

Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), in his remarks, stressed the importance of taxation to the development of any society.

He likened the non-payment of taxes to killing everyone. He noted that when citizens pay taxes, they hold their government accountable.

According to Alli: "In the first republic, each of the three regions was contributing to the national purse.

"Nigerians showed interest in the common wealth of the country because they were all contrib-

uting to generate the revenue.

"But when oil money came, we went off target and taxes became relegated. When people pay taxes, they hold those in charge responsible. In advanced societies, the central government taxes the states for the resources they generate. For us to make progress, we must retrace our steps.

"If we rely on taxes, we will be more interested in making our leaders account for the way they spend our money. All Nigerians should imbibe the habit of willingly fulfilling their tax

obligations," he said.

Making suggestions to ensure tax compliance, Yusuf Alli advised the tax Institute and Revenue Authorities to put in place reward systems to identify and reward tax compliant entities and tax practitioners who follow the rules of the Institute.

Addressing the 1,427 inductees after administering the Oath of Allegiance, the 16th President of the Taxation Institute Samuel Agbeluyi, (mini, FCTI), congratulated the inductees for having satisfied the requirements set

out by the Council and got inducted into the noble profession.

He admonished the new inductees and members of the taxation profession to eschew all forms of professional misconduct and uphold the integrity of the Institute in all their dealings.

"The Institute's Council frowns at any conduct deemed to be at variance with the Code of Ethics for members.

"Considering the multi-dimensional nature of the profession and dynamic nature of the economic environment, members should constantly update themselves with current information and seek knowledge."

Agbeluyi, said that the Institute, the foremost professional taxation body in Nigeria, had been at the forefront of driving excellence, ethical and professional standards in the tax profession for over 43 years.

He urged members to be well acquainted with the tax and fiscal policy reforms being proposed through the Economic Stabilisation Bill presented by the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms.

"The Bill is currently awaiting concurrent approval from the Senate, having been passed by the House of Representatives. Amongst other things, it rec-

ommends the introduction of tax agents who will serve as intermediaries between tax payers and revenue authorities.

"This legislative effort is certainly commendable; however, as tax professionals, we have a critical role to play. The Institute is committed to ensuring that taxation remains a specialised and regulated profession, ensuring that only individuals with the required expertise and certification are allowed to practice," he said.

Dr. Titilayo Fowokan, Chairman, Membership and Professional Conduct Committee, said that taxation was imperative to national development.

According to Fowokan, as tax professionals, members of the CITN play a crucial role in ensuring compliance, promoting fiscal responsibility, and contributing to the economic growth of our country.

Hon Oladele Bankole-Balogun Esq, Executive Chairman, Edo IRS, who responded on behalf of the inductees, commended the President and Members of the Governing Council of the CITN for deeming him and other inductees fit and admitting them as members into the prestigious institute of the noble profession.



AGRI-BUSINESS AND CAPITAL MARKETS FORUM:

L-R: Abdul-Kadir Abdullah, Team Lead, Investment Promotion and Global Outreach Department, Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO); Tajudeen Abubakar, Manager, Access to Innovative Finance and Technology Integration, HEIFER International; Dr Peter Osagie, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and Dr Lekan Tobe, Country Director, HEIFER International, at the Agri-Business and Capital Markets Forum held in Lagos

APC best option for Delta —Fred Latimore

AJUWA VICTOR

Director General, Delta State Bureau for Communications and Orientation, Dr (Barr) Fred Latimore Oghenesivbe, has said that the recent defection by governor Sheriff Oborevwori and the entire party structure of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in the state to the All Progressives Congress, APC was and still the best option.

Dr Oghenesivbe who as a guest of TVC News "Standpoint" public affairs program on Saturday, stated that the massive defection was democratic, because it was well debated and all grey areas thoroughly examined before the governor, party leaders and stakeholders across the three senatorial districts

unanimously agreed that it was the right thing to do.

He assured that come 2027 general elections, the good people of Delta State will vote massively for President Bola Tinubu, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori and all candidates of APC, adding that the recent defection was necessary to upscale the overall development of the state.

The Director General commended governor Oborevwori over his visionary leadership, foresight, and for displaying uncommon humility and political maturity throughout the process leading to the massive defection.

He pointed out that the political cross carpeting from PDP to APC in Delta State and elsewhere would have been averted if some persons at the national level had agreed to shift ground

for peace to reign in the party.

He noted that the crisis crippling PDP reared its ugly head immediately after the party's presidential primary in 2023, and that it lingered on to the general elections, pointing out that the unresolved internal conflicts impacted negatively on PDP's chances during the presidential election.

Dr Oghenesivbe noted that whenever personal interests or interests of a few individuals override the overall interests of a political party it becomes almost impossible to mend fences and move forward as it is today in the Peoples Democratic Party.

"The massive defection to the APC in Delta was not the sole decision of governor Sheriff Oborevwori. It was decided by leaders and stakeholders across

the 25 local government areas.

"The political cross carpeting was and still handsomely democratic, because it was decided by leaders and stakeholders after intensive and extensive deliberations wherein all the issues were tabled, discussed and agreed upon.

"We agreed to embrace APC, and here we are in party APC. Democracy and good governance entails collective responsibility in choices that we make and in decision making.

"Most importantly, defection to enhance development and good governance is unarguably democratic. Our collective decision to embrace APC in Delta State remains flawless and in tandem with universal principles of democracy. We are in good standing, no shaking," Oghenesivbe said.

Police kill 5 suspected kidnappers in Delta, recover AK-47 rifles

Operatives of the Delta State Police Command have killed five suspected kidnappers terrorizing Ubulu-Uku, Issele-Uku, Issele-Asagba and surrounding areas of Delta State.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state Command, SP Bright Edafe stated this in a statement on Sunday in Asaba, the Delta State capital.

According to Edafe, acting on intelligence, the operatives stormed one of their hideouts in Agu-Amawbia forest, Anambra State, where they recovered one Ak-47 rifle, and 132 rounds of live ammunition.

He said, "Investigation was extended to another of the criminals' hideouts in a forest between Issele-Asagba and Otulu, where one Bellow Abubakar and his gang

members were waiting in ambush.

"On sighting the policemen, the suspected kidnappers attacked them in a fierce gun battle but the operatives, who were aware of the battle ahead reciprocated in like manner.

"The suspects could not withstand the firepower of the operatives, as they ran in different directions with various degrees of bullet injuries.

"Five of the suspects, including the said bellow Abubakar, who could not escape due to severity of their injuries, were taken to the hospital but they were confirmed dead"

Edafe also said two additional AK-47 rifles and 18 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition were recovered in the forest, while a manhunt for other injured fleeing suspects is ongoing.

PESMDAA inaugurates nat'l taskforce officers in Edo

The Edo State chapter of the Petroleum and Solid Minerals Degradation Awareness Association (PESMDAA) has inaugurated its National Taskforce officers at a ceremony held in Benin City, with a renewed commitment to tackle irregularities and environmental degradation in the petroleum and solid minerals sectors.

The event, themed "Sensitization to Eliminate Degradation and Irregularities in the Petroleum and Solid Minerals Sector," brought together government officials, traditional leaders, and stakeholders from across the state.

Chairman of PESMDAA, Pastor Dr. Robert Adah, represented by the State Commissioner, Mr. Marvellous Ighodalo Uzebor, described the inauguration as a call to action rather than a ceremonial gathering.

He stressed that the future of communities depends on responsible management of natural resources, and emphasised the association's commitment to transparency, sustainability, and collaboration in combating environmental degradation.

"The health of our environment is non-negotiable. This taskforce must lead with integrity and purpose in addressing the degradation that has long plagued our petroleum, environment, and solid minerals sectors," he said.

The Executive Governor of Edo State, represented by his Special Adviser on Religious Matters and Chaplain, Apostle

Sule Farade, charged the newly inaugurated officers to carry out their duties responsibly.

He assured that the Edo State Government would support the taskforce in its efforts to enforce best practices in resource management.

Traditional institutions also pledged their support. Representing the Royal Fathers, His Highness Prince Alhaji Igiekhume Zubairu Afe, the Bagudu of Auch Sacred Kingdom, called for greater partnership between the taskforce and grassroots traditional rulers, noting that community leaders remain vital to ensuring compliance and driving awareness.

In his remarks, the State Commissioner, Hon. Marvellous Ighodalo Uzebor, said the inauguration was timely, warning that urgent actions were necessary to prevent future disasters linked to the mismanagement of petroleum and mineral resources.



ADAH

JAMB nabs 40 impersonators as parents decry exam resumption time

No fewer than 40 persons have been arrested and are facing prosecution for impersonating candidates during the ongoing 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board has disclosed.

This is as many parents and guardians are lamenting that the 6.30 am resumption time for the exam was too early for candidates, adding that many may have to travel several kilometres to their examination centres.

The 2025 UTME, which commenced on Thursday, April 24, will run until Monday, May 5.

According to JAMB, over 2,030,627 candidates are sitting for this year's examination across accredited Computer-Based Test centres nationwide.

A mother of a candidate who claimed to live in Awoyaya in the Lekki area of Lagos but whose 14-year-old son was posted to a centre in Ikorodu stated that the young man may miss the examination because of the time.

"The examination slip states that candidates are expected at the centre by 6.30am. So, that means my son must be on the road by 4 am. I don't drive. We don't have a car. He would have to take a bus. Even if I decide to go with him, how are we supposed to get a bus at that time, and how are we supposed to get to Ikorodu before 6.30am?"

"This is wickedness. JAMB should look into this and move the exam forward. 6.30am for an examination is too early."

A guardian, Olaoluwa Yin-ka, lamenting on X, wrote, "My younger sister has just travelled today for her UTME tomorrow morning. From Abeokuta, she was sent to Ijebu Igbo by 6.30am. This is very absurd."

"When I wrote JAMB, I did so around 9 am and the heavens did not fall. This CBT is the problem. Students get to the centre, and sometimes the systems don't work as well."

Another X user, Lucas Oluwadare (@lucasoluwadare1), wrote, "My younger sister is scheduled to sit the exams tomorrow by 6.30am, too. She has to come sleep over at my apartment since it's closer, so she will meet up as early as possible tomorrow morning. The anyhowness of this country is top notch."

Social media activist, Rinu Oduala, tweeted, "Again, why are you scheduling exams for 6.30am, @JAMBHQ? And expect teenagers to find their ways 50km plus away from home? How can educated people make nonsensical policies for citizens and kids in this country? Does it make any sense?"

A mother, Nnem Chacha-Gold, who spoke to this reporter on Saturday, said her only daughter had to leave home by 4.30am to get to the venue of her exam by 6.30am.

"I had to follow my daughter to her centre in Ikorodu from Ejigbo. When I got there, they said we (parents) were not welcome at the centre. I even learnt that candidates slept outside their centres to meet up. I can't imagine my own child sleeping on the street overnight just to meet up. Goodness!"

Edo govt onboards CIEs in 18 LGAs to strengthen local oversight

In a move aligned with Governor Monday Okpebholo's pledge to revitalise education in Edo State, the Ministry of Education has formally inducted Chief Inspectors of Education (CIEs) assigned to each of the state's 18 Local Government Areas.

The onboarding initiative, held at the Ministry's Conference Hall in Benin City, marks a significant step towards reinforcing grassroots educational oversight and policy implementation.

The event brought together key stakeholders from Edo's education sector, including ministry officials and the newly appointed inspectors. Designed to equip the CIEs with operational tools and administrative knowledge, the programme focused on empowering them to uphold educational standards and effectively drive reforms within their respective LGAs.

Addressing the gathering, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Mrs Edith Ebomoyi, emphasised the strategic importance of the appointments.

"These inspectors are pivotal to our efforts to sustain quality education across Edo. They will be responsible for monitoring teaching standards, ensuring curriculum compliance, and promoting community involvement in school governance," she stated.

Mrs Ebomoyi further noted that the decentralised approach will provide consistent supervision at the local level, thereby improving educational outcomes statewide.

Facilitators, including Alhaji Bako Yusuf, guided the new appointees through key areas such as ethical conduct, examination integrity, evaluation methods, report writing, quality assurance, and revenue strategies, reinforcing the administration's comprehensive approach to reform.

Edo to participate in Nat'l Immunization Plus Days to combat Polio

Edo State will join the rest of the country in observing the National Immunization Plus Days scheduled to take place from May 3 to May 8, 2025.

This was confirmed by Dr Esigbe Efomon, Director of Disease Control and Immunization at the Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency (ED-SPHCDA), who emphasised the importance of the campaign in halting the transmission of the circulating variant poliovirus and protecting every child under the age of five from the dangers of polio meningitis, a condition that can lead to permanent disability or even death.

Throughout the campaign period, dedicated healthcare workers will move across various communities, worship centres, schools, markets, and other public places, ensuring that every eligible child is vaccinated.

Dr Efomon appealed to parents and caregivers to seize the opportunity to protect their children, highlighting that immunisation not only shields the individual child but also fortifies the health and immunity of the wider community.

Stressing the importance of full coverage, he noted that by safeguarding every child, the state was safeguarding the future of its people, while assuring that the vaccines are safe, free, and highly effective.

In preparation for the exercise, a stakeholders' meeting was convened where members of the Social Mobilisation Committee were briefed on their roles and responsibilities during the immunisation period.

Addressing the gathering, the State Health Educator, Mrs Irene Uabor, reiterated the importance of the exercise in preventing vaccine-preventable diseases.

She warned that although Edo State had not yet recorded any cases, the circulating poliovirus had been detected in other parts of the country, and beyond, making the upcoming vaccination drive a critical.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that the Edo State Public Procurement Agency (EDPPA) has redesigned its Contractor Registration Certificate. The certificates are now available in electronic formats and can be verified for its authenticity.

The new features of the electronic contractor registration certificates include:

- 1. QR Code for Authenticity:** Each certificate has a unique QR code that can be scanned to verify its authenticity. This will help to prevent fraud and ensure that only genuine certificates are accepted.
- 2. Contractor's TIN Number:** The Tax Identification Number (TIN) of the registered contractor is included on the certificate. This will improve transparency and accountability in the tax system.
- 3. Business Address:** The registered business address of the contractor is displayed on the certificate. This will provide important contact information and enhance transparency.
- 4. Validity of the Certificates:** Each certificate has a clearly stated validity period. This will help to ensure that contractors maintain compliance with all relevant regulations.

The redesign of this certificate is not merely a cosmetic change. It represents commitment to:

- a. Strengthening Governance:** By ensuring that only qualified and compliant contractors are eligible to participate in government projects.
- b. Promoting Local Content:** By empowering our local businesses and contractors, and creating more economic opportunities for our people.
- c. Improving Service Delivery:** By fostering a competitive and transparent environment that will ultimately lead to better quality projects and services for the citizens of Edo State.

All contractors that they are duly registered with Edo State Public Procurement Agency will be issued the new certificates going forward.



EDO STATE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AGENCY

Certificate of Registration

This is to certify that
XXXXX Limited
Is duly registered with Edo State Public Procurement Agency in line with sections 11(1)(e) and (f) of the Edo State Public Procurement Law 2020

REGISTRATION DETAILS

Registration Number: EDPPA/CR/2025/AXXXXXX
Registration Category: D
TIN: XXXXX-0001
Issue Date: 1st April, 2025
Expiry Date: 1st April, 2026
Address: 1 XYZ Road, Nigeria


Deborah Okunbo
Managing Director/CEO



Idahosa showcases Edo's education security policies at SPS forum

BERNADETTE IDALU

The Deputy Governor of Edo State, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, represented Governor Monday Okpebholo at the Nigeria Police Force Schools Protection Squad

(SPS) stakeholders forum where he outlined the state government's efforts to make school environments safer and more conducive to learning.

Addressing participants as the special guest of honour, Idahosa detailed the admin-

istration's initiatives aimed at safeguarding schools, aligning them with Governor Okpebholo's "SHINE" Agenda which prioritises secure and nurturing educational settings.

He highlighted measures already underway across Edo State,

including the construction and reconstruction of perimeter fences around schools, the enactment of an anti-cultism law to curb cult-related activities, and the deployment of the State Security Corps to address security concerns on school premises.

Idahosa also spoke of the introduction of guidance and counselling officers in schools, tasked with mentoring students, conducting psychological assessments, and fostering positive attitudes among learners, all while maintaining strict confidentiality.

Stressing that school safety is a shared responsibility, he urged government, law enforcement agencies, parents, teachers, and host communities to play active roles.

He maintained that collective vigilance and cooperation are essential for achieving lasting security improvements.

The deputy governor commended the Federal Government for selecting Edo as one of the pilot states for the SPS initiative, describing the move as timely given national security concerns such as the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction.

He also praised the Nigeria Police Force and Inspector General of Police, IGP Kayode Egbetokun, for taking bold steps to secure educational institutions.

Reflecting on the theme of the forum, "Strengthening Security Resilience and Integration of Host Communities in the Protection of Education," Idahosa noted that collaboration and partnership were crucial to tackling the security challenges confronting schools and the broader society.

He added that every child de-

served to grow in a secure and nurturing environment, describing education as the bedrock upon which a nation's future is built.

Delivering the Inspector General's message, AIG Zone 5, Benin, Salman Garba Dogo, explained that the SPS project is a community-based strategy designed to protect schools, empower students, and foster trust between law enforcement, educators, and families.

Dogo said the initiative was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, government authorities, and the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), with emphasis on promoting vigilance, unity, and compassion within communities.

National Coordinator of the SPS under the Nigeria Police Force, Commissioner of Police Abayomi Shogunle, announced that 35 trained police officers have been deployed across Edo State's three senatorial districts and are ready to begin sensitization campaigns under the Safe Schools Initiative.

A student of Western Boys High School, Emmanuel Osasere Egberanmwun, speaking during the forum, stressed the link between investment in education and national prosperity.

He observed that investing in an insecure environment yielded little benefit, and thanked Governor Okpebholo for his commitment to securing schools.



LAGOS ZEN ARCHERY ARENA:

Archers testing the facility, as Lagos State Sports Commission, in collaboration with Zen Archery recently unveiled the Lagos Zen Archery Arena at Teslim Balogun Stadium, Surulere.

Investigate shooting at pro-Wike group's rally, Bayelsa urges IG

The Bayelsa State Government has called on the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, to investigate the shooting that occurred during a rally organised by the NEW Associates at the Church of God Mission Camp Ground, Igbogene, Yenagoa, on Saturday.

In a statement issued late Saturday by the Commissioner for Information, Orientation and Strategy, Mrs Ebiuwou Koku-Obiyai, the government condemned the incident and

urged the police to identify and prosecute those responsible.

The statement urged the police to immediately commence an investigation to bring to book anyone found culpable.

The statement partly read, "The government highlighted the troubling nature of the incident, noting that it was not an isolated occurrence, as the rally's organisers had previously issued a warning that 'the good, the bad, and the ugly' would be present at the event."

"Concerned about the shift

from what was expected to be a peaceful gathering to a violent confrontation—resulting in several reported injuries—the government emphasised the need for swift action from law enforcement. They called for an immediate investigation to hold those responsible for the violence."

While noting that the event negated guidelines for political activities as stipulated in the Electoral Act and by the Independent National Electoral Commission, the government observed that it was held on

the campsite of a religious organisation.

It warned political groups in the state not to drag religious organisations into their partisan activities that desecrate sacred places of worship.

It further stated that it would not hesitate to sanction any religious organisation that breached the law.

The government restated its commitment to sustaining the peace in the state as well as ensuring the security of lives and property of all residents.

Ignore calls to rejoin PDP, LP chieftain tells Obi

The Deputy National Chairman of the Labour Party, Dr Ayo Olorunfemi, has advised the 2023 LP presidential candidate to ignore all calls to dump the party ahead of the 2027 general election.

Olorunfemi, who was the LP candidate in the 2024 Ondo governorship election, told journalists on Sunday in Lagos that Obi should rather focus on rebuilding the party.

Olorunfemi, who noted that though Obi was at liberty under the law to associate with any political party of his choice, said he needed to be wary of what he called dangerous advances.

He said, "Now that he has contested and he has seen the LP force, if he decides to go to another political party, it will then speak volumes of his intention."

"It will tell whether he truly believed in the ideology of the Labour Party before coming to run, or he just wanted to use the opportunity of the platform."

"So, it will now be left for Nigerians to decide whether Obi, who got millions of votes under the Labour Party, can still be voted for under the PDP or another party."

"He (Obi) must use his tongue to count his teeth. If I were he, what I would be doing now is working to restore peace in the Labour Party and rebuild it."

"He should find a way to resolve the issues in the party and remain on the platform. He should remain in the party and restore peace. He should stay and resolve the crises he and others created in LP."

"Moving around will portray

him as an opportunistic politician, not different from these politicians jumping here and there."

Noting that Obi could resolve the crisis in LP, Olorunfemi said that some aspirants shelved their ambitions in 2022 to allow Obi to use the LP platform to run for president.

He, however, said that if Obi decided to dump the LP, the party would continue to exist as a strong opposition party.

Speaking on the leadership crisis in the party, Olorunfemi said that Mr Julius Abure-led LP National Working Committee never wronged Obi and others fighting against it.

He said that members of the NWC, including himself, risked their lives and endured vitriolic attacks from different groups and persons for supporting Obi's

presidential ambition in the last election.

The chieftain added, "What is the offence of Abure? He stood in the sun, stood in the rain. All of us in the NWC stood by him (Obi). In spite of all the attacks, we stood by him."

"My own people, in the course of fighting for him (Obi), called me names for fighting for someone not from my tribe. LP is blind to ethnicity, and I supported him because I believe in politics devoid of ethnic sentiment."

"There is bound to be a crisis. People will come with different things in mind, but we have to moderate everything like we are doing now in LP."

"Everything we are doing in the Labour Party is in line with our constitution. That is our strength."

Ex-general opposes armed self-defence

The President of the Birch Freeman Old Boys Association, Anthony Onibasa, a retired Brigadier-General in the Nigerian Army, has called on the Federal Government to recruit more security personnel. He stated that citizens do not need to bear arms for self-defence.

Onibasa spoke at the weekend during the group's homecoming event, themed, 'The Reunion,' held in Surulere, Lagos State.

Speaking to our correspondent, Onibasa emphasised that Nigerians should advocate a larger armed forces rather than taking up arms themselves.

The president stated that doing the latter would portray the country as a failed state where anyone could bring out a gun.

He said, "We have local militia groups. There must not be a plethora of non-state actors to protect its citizenry."

"The security agencies are overstretched; this is because we have a very small army compared to our challenges, the size of this nation, and our population."

"The security agencies are overstretched; this is because we have a very small army compared to our challenges, the size of this nation, and our population."

"It is also unfortunate that the service personnel are not appreciated enough, and that speaks to how much support they can get. It is not child's play

to run a military campaign."

Speaking on the event, Onibasa stated that the homecoming was an opportunity for old students to unite, as there had been divisions among them.

He said, "We want to bring everyone together, and the Ministry of Education is involved."

"They want to help us midwife a unified body. The Old Boys Association has been giving back to the school effectively under my leadership. We are transforming the school. We have several sets contributing their quota."

In his remarks, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Johnson Agholor, said, "When the issues were on, we tried to bring people together, and people were still doing what they were doing for the school."

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Francis Van-Lare, commended members of the association for the unity.

He stated, "I am glad we are here today. Everyone is talking like brothers. We have had factions for the past five years."

"The factions in the association have been dissolved today, and a transition committee is in place. They will midwife us to an election later in the year."

Also speaking, the Chairman of the 1983 set, Akan Udoh, said the mediation reunion was long overdue, noting that the 1983 set was privileged to resolve the issues between the two factions.

Feature

Museums as the bedrock of cultural heritage

JULIET OMOIKHOJE

Museums in Nigeria represent the legacy of both physical artefacts and intangible attributes inherited from past generations. These institutions reflect the cultural backgrounds of various societies, preserved in the present and sustained for the benefit of future generations (Onyeche and Okidim, 2020). Museums act as custodians of cultural heritage, interpreting and safeguarding the collective history, traditions, and expressions of humanity.

They are spaces dedicated to collecting, conserving, and exhibiting objects of artistic, historical, and scientific significance. In doing so, they help maintain the intellectual and emotional legacy of past civilisations.

The origins of museums in Nigeria are closely tied to ancient palaces and shrines, where valuable artefacts and sacred artworks were traditionally stored. These royal and spiritual spaces formed the early models of modern museums. In historical times, kings commissioned artists to produce symbolic pieces that expressed the religious, social, and political lives of their people. Today, museums continue this legacy by collecting, conserving, researching, and interpreting the cultural heritage of communities.

THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

At their core, museums are institutions that gather and protect items of historical, artistic, scientific, or cultural importance. These range from archaeological artefacts and artworks to ethnographic materials and technological innovations, all of which document societal practices and beliefs.

Without museums, many ancient objects, sculptures, and artworks would likely have been lost to time. Their preservation ensures that these materials remain accessible for research, education, and reference by future generations.

Conservation is one of the museum's most vital functions. Through climate control, careful restoration, and advanced handling techniques, museums extend the life of fragile items. For instance, the British Museum employs both traditional restoration methods and modern technologies like 3D scanning to preserve its collection (Dawson, 2018). This work is crucial, especially in cases where objects are threatened by environmental damage, neglect, or conflict.

Moreover, museums are increasingly involved in preserving intangible cultural heritage—such as rituals, languages, and traditions—which form the core of a society's identity. UNESCO recognises the significance of these non-material elements, and museums play a central role in documenting and showcasing them. A prime example is the Smithsonian Institution's Folkways Recordings, which archive music and oral histories from various cultures worldwide (UNESCO, 2020).

MUSEUMS AS EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

A key mission of museums is public education. Through their collections, they provide tools for people to understand their past, relate to the present, and anticipate the future. Many tertiary institutions conduct academic research in museums, taking advantage of their extensive resources.

Museums offer opportunities to engage directly with history, art, and science through exhibitions, interactive installations, and educational programming. According to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), 93% of adults in the United States believe museums provide valuable educational experiences (AAM, 2015).

By allowing visitors to experience history firsthand, museums promote reflection and critical engagement with the past. They also encourage intercultural understanding by presenting



By educating the public, promoting dialogue across cultures, and embracing technological change, museums remain vibrant spaces of learning and reflection. Their role as the bedrock of cultural heritage is not only indispensable but also ever-evolving in our pursuit of a more inclusive and empathetic global society.

objects and stories from around the world. This helps to dispel myths, counter stereotypes, and nurture respect for cultural diversity.

In Nigeria, the National Museum of Antiquities at Onikan in Lagos is a striking example of cross-cultural heritage, housing artefacts from across the country. Likewise, the Louvre Museum in Paris exhibits art from civilisations ranging from Ancient Egypt to the European Renaissance, prompting dialogue about cultural exchange and shared human achievement.

MUSEUMS AS CATALYSTS FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Cultural heritage is not static—it evolves continually. Museums, with their diverse collections and inclusive programming, are uniquely positioned to foster intercultural dialogue. They bring together communities, scholars, and visitors from different backgrounds, reinforcing identity and promoting social cohesion.

In multicultural societies, museums provide platforms for presenting varied narratives and building mutual understanding. According to Hein (2000), museums allow different groups to assert their identities while engaging with others in meaningful dialogue.

This dialogue is especially important in debates over colonial history, the restitution of artefacts, and the ethics of museum collections. Efforts to return looted items have gained momentum, especially with regards to objects taken during colonial rule. A prominent case is the Benin Bronzes, many of which are now being returned to Nigeria by institutions such as the British Museum (Onyeka, 2021). These restitution efforts are a step toward historical justice and shared

responsibility in heritage preservation.

Museums also encourage reflection on cultural diversity and national identity. For example, the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden, highlights global cultural histories and engages visitors with themes such as migration, identity, and globalisation (Museum of World Culture, 2024).

MUSEUMS AND THE PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE IN A DIGITAL AGE

In today's digital era, museums have embraced technology to expand access and safeguard their collections. Many have digitised their archives,

ensuring global availability and protection against threats like natural disasters or theft.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for instance, has made over 400,000 objects available online, enabling users around the world to engage with its collections without visiting in person (The Met, 2024).

Digital tools such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and interactive displays have transformed how exhibitions are presented. These innovations attract younger, tech-savvy audiences and promote virtual tourism. According to Harrison (2017), the digitalisation of museum content has created more dynamic, accessible platforms for learning.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., uses VR to offer immersive experiences of historical events like the Civil Rights Movement—allowing visitors to understand the perspectives of those who lived through them (Smithsonian, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Museums are essential institutions for preserving, interpreting, and sharing cultural heritage. They bridge the past and present, ensuring that humanity's achievements, stories, and lessons are not lost.

By educating the public, promoting dialogue across cultures, and embracing technological change, museums remain vibrant spaces of learning and reflection. Their role as the bedrock of cultural heritage is not only indispensable but also ever-evolving in our pursuit of a more inclusive and empathetic global society.



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GOVERNMENT SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

THIS IS TO INFORM ALL PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE UNDER-LISTED LAYOUTS IN BENIN CITY TO COME TO EDOGIS OFFICE, AT PLOT 102, SAPELE ROAD WITH THEIR DOCUMENTS FOR VERIFICATION AND RE-CERTIFICATION.

IN ADDITION, PROPERTY OWNERS AND CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS WITH THE OLD CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY ARE ENCOURAGED TO COME FORWARD FOR THE NEW DIGITAL CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY.

THIS VERIFICATION AND RE-CERTIFICATION EXERCISE WILL COMMENCE ON THURSDAY 1ST OF MAY, 2025 AND END ON 30TH MAY, 2025.

1. Etete Layout.
2. Iyekogba Housing Estate.
3. Evbuoriararia layout.
4. Ikpoba River Dam Acquisition.
5. Oka-Oseni/Egba/Okararuovia.
6. Evbuodia Acquisition

Thank you for your cooperation.

DR. TONY IKPASAJA
Managing Director, EDOGIS

Foreign

NEWS

Vancouver Police are investigating a "mass casualty incident" in which "several people were killed" after a car was driven into a crowd in a southern neighbourhood of the Canadian city.

Authorities said "multiple others" were injured during the incident, which occurred at approximately 20:14 local time on Saturday (03:14 GMT on Sunday) at a street festival.

Police said a 30-year-old male suspect was in custody.

'Mass casualty incident' as car driven into Vancouver street festival

It is not yet known how many people have been killed.

Police said the suspect had driven into pedestrians at the annual Lapu Lapu festival, which celebrates Filipino culture, at East 41st Avenue and Fraser, in the south of Vancouver.

Steve Rai, Vancouver Po-

lice's interim chief, told a news conference that there had been one vehicle and one suspect involved in the incident. He said more details would be released in the morning.

Unverified footage posted on social media showed a number of police cars, ambulances and

fire engines at the scene, with injured people lying on the ground.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a statement on X that he was "devastated to hear about the horrific events at the Lapu Lapu festival in Vancouver".

He continued: "I offer my deepest condolences to the loved ones of those killed and injured, to the Filipino Canadian community, and to everyone in Vancouver. We are all mourning with you."

He also thanked emergency responders for their "swift action".

Vancouver Mayor Ken Sim said he was "shocked and deeply saddened by the horrific incident", adding in a post that his "thoughts are with all those affected and with Vancouver's Filipino community during this incredibly difficult time."

The leaders of different political parties have also been sharing messages of condolence.

Pierre Poilievre, leader of Canada's Conservative Party, called the incident a "senseless attack", while the leader of the British Columbia New Democratic Party, David Eby, said he was "shocked and heartbroken".

New Democratic Party leader Jagmeet Singh - who had attended the festival but was not present when the incident occurred - said he was "horrified to learn" that innocent people had been killed and injured.

"As we wait to learn more, our thoughts are with the victims and their families - and Vancouver's Filipino community, who were coming together today to celebrate resilience," he added.

Singh, Poilievre and Eby are all running in Canada's federal election on Monday. Singh's constituency of Burnaby Central lies just east of where the incident took place.



QUEUED PAY THEIR RESPECTS:

Mourners queued outside the church early on Sunday morning to be among the first to pay their respects.

Eighty years on, survivors and families remember horrors of Bergen Belse

There had been rumours. There had been aerial photographs. There had been the written testimony of a few escapees. But it took liberation for the revelation of the shocking reality of the Nazi's concentration camps.

Nowhere was this more true than when British and Canadian troops advanced on the camp at Bergen-Belsen, near Hanover, in April 1945.

A truce with local German commanders enabled them to enter without a fight. They were met with a stomach-churning vista of death, a torrid panorama of human suffering.

The troops calculated there were 13,000 unburied corpses. A further 60,000 emaciated,

diseased, spectral-like survivors stood and lay amongst them.

On Sunday, to mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Belsen, more than a thousand survivors and families will attend commemoration events at the camp.

"To me, Belsen was the ultimate blasphemy," wrote one British soldier, Michael Bentine, who, after World War Two, went on to become a famous entertainer.

Other chroniclers, film-makers and diarists struggled to convey in words and pictures the scenes that made unwanted incursions into their minds.

The BBC's Richard Dimbleby was the first broadcaster to enter the camp shortly after liberation. In his landmark broadcast he includ-

ed the words: "This day at Belsen was the most horrible of my life."

Belsen's notoriety soon stood out, not just because of the chillingly vivid accounts of journalists, soldiers and photographers, whose testimonies were sent around the world, but because it was found with all its grotesqueness intact.

Other camps further east, like the death camps of Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz, had either been destroyed by the Germans to hide their crimes in the face of Soviet advances or emptied of their inmates.

At Belsen, the huts, the barracks, the evidence, remained.

At Belsen, there were witnesses, perpetrators, victims.

It was where many of those eastern concentration camp prisoners ended up. Overcrowding led to dysentery, malnutrition and typhus.

There were no gas chambers at Belsen. It was Nazi cruelty and incompetence that accounted for the 500 deaths a day that the camp endured.

And most of it came in the final weeks of the war, well into April 1945.

As the Third Reich collapsed and freedom came to those in other occupied territories, the dying continued at Belsen: between 50,000 and 70,000 people in total, more than 30,000 of those between January and April 1945.

Huge blast at key Iranian port kills 25 and injures 800

At least 25 people have been killed and 800 injured in a massive explosion at one of Iran's key ports, authorities say.

The blast took place at Shahid Rajaei, the country's largest commercial port, near the southern city of Bandar Abbas on Saturday morning.

It blew out windows and roofs of nearby buildings and destroyed cars. Residents reported feeling the impact of the blast up to 50km (31 miles) away. Six people remain unaccounted for, state media reports.

Videos verified by the BBC show a fire growing in intensity before a huge explosion, with people subsequently fleeing the blast and others lying wounded on roads surrounded by smoking debris.

"The entire warehouse was filled with smoke, dust and ashes. I don't remember if I went under the table or was thrown there by the blast," one person who was in the area told Iranian state TV.

Aerial footage showed at least three areas ablaze and Iran's interior minister later confirmed that the fire was spreading from one container to another. Schools and offices in the region have been ordered to remain closed on Sunday.

One private maritime risk consultancy said it believed the affected containers had contained solid fuel destined for ballistic missiles.

The fire was the result of "improper handling of a shipment of solid fuel intended for use in Iranian ballistic missiles", Ambrey Intelligence said.

Ambrey added that it was aware that an Iran-flagged ship "discharged a shipment of sodium perchlorate rocket fuel at the port in March 2025".

The Financial Times newspaper had previously reported that two vessels had shipped fuel to Iran from China.

State media quoted witnesses as saying the explosion occurred after a fire broke out and spread to unsealed containers storing "flammable materials".

Customs officials later released a statement reported by Iranian state TV saying the explosion had probably resulted from a fire that had broken out in a hazmat and chemical materials storage depot.

In a later update Ambrey quoted Iran's National Disaster Management Organisation as saying officials had previously issued warnings to Shahid Rajaei port regarding the safe storage of chemicals.

Shahid Rajaei port is Iran's largest and most advanced terminal, through which much of the country's commercial shipping transits.

It is located on the Strait of Hormuz, a major shipping channel for oil cargo, and is about 20km (12 miles) west of Bandar Abbas, Iran's major port city on its south coast and home to the Iranian Navy's main base.

Iran's national oil production company said the explosion at the port had "no connection" to the country's oil refineries, fuel tanks and pipelines, local media reported.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has expressed his "deep regret and sympathy" for victims. He has announced a government investigation and sent the interior minister to the region to lead it.

Saturday's explosion coincided with the latest round of negotiations between Iranian and US officials on Iran's nuclear programme, with US President Donald Trump aiming to make a deal that would prevent Tehran from gaining nuclear weapons.

Negotiating through Oman mediators, both sides reported that progress had been made, but Iran's top representative said work was still needed to narrow differences. Negotiations will continue next week.

Iran has said it is open to curbs on its nuclear programme in return for sanctions easing but has insisted it will not stop enriching uranium. It insists its nuclear programme is for civilian use.

A stunning reversal of fortunes in Canada's historic election

At a rally in London, Ontario, on Friday, the crowd booed as Mark Carney delivered his core campaign line about the existential threat Canada faces from its neighbour.

"President Trump is trying to break us so that America could own us," the Liberal leader warned.

"Never," supporters shouted back. Many waved Canadian flags taped to ice hockey sticks.

Similar levels of passion were also on display at the union hall where Pierre Poilievre

greeted enthusiastic supporters in the Toronto area earlier in the week.

The Conservative leader has drawn large crowds to rallies across the country, where "Bring it Home" is a call to arms: both to vote for a change of government and a nod to the wave of Canadian patriotism in the face of US tariff threats.

In the final hours of a 36-day campaign, Donald Trump's shadow looms over everything. The winner of Monday's election is likely to be the party able to convince voters they

have a plan for how to deal with the US president.

National polls suggest the Liberals have maintained a narrow lead entering last stretch.

Still, Trump is not the only factor at play - he was only mentioned once in Poilievre's stump speech.

The Conservative leader has focused more on voters disaffected by what he calls a "Lost Liberal decade", promising change from a government he blames for the housing shortage and a sluggish economy, and for

mishandling social issues like crime and the fentanyl crisis.

His pitch resonates with voters like Eric and Carri Gionet, from Barrie, Ontario. They have two daughters in their mid-20s and said they were attending their first ever political rally.

"We're pretty financially secure - but I worry about them," said Eric Gionet. While he and his wife could buy their first home while young, he said, "there's no prospect" their children will be able to do the same.

"I'm excited to be here," said Carri Gionet. "I'm hopeful."

NEWS

Foreign

What should Democrats do now? Everyone has a different answer

Democrats have struggled to land a unified message in President Donald Trump's first months in office, with fractures both in Congress and among supporters. What comes next for a party in a difficult spot?

The rural, agricultural town of Bakersfield, California, is an odd stop for a pair of East Coast progressive politicians.

After all, Trump won the surrounding county by 20 points in the last election, and the dusty fields and endless orchards feel a world away from the party's power centres in Los Angeles and the Bay Area.

Yet Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Independent Senator Bernie Sanders packed a local auditorium during a recent stop on their Fighting Oligarchy tour. The rally felt like a 1960s-style sit-in with attendees singing along to a gentle rendition of Woody Guthrie's This Land is Your Land. They launched rowdy boos and jeers every time Sanders inveighed against Trump and tech billionaire Elon Musk.

The visit also felt like an answered prayer for local Democrats and left-leaning Independents who oppose Trump and his policies, while directing much of their fury at their own party, which they feel has failed to mount an effective opposition.

The Democratic party "should be doing more to try to protect everybody," said Karla Alcantar, 26, who attended the rally. "I feel like some of them have just folded over completely, and there are some that are trying to do the work of all."

"I definitely feel like they should be doing way more," she said.

Democrats at a crossroads

It is not a great time to be a Democratic politician in the United States. The party is out of power. Elected officials cannot agree on a course of action to counter Trump's agenda. No clear leader has emerged to unify the unwieldy coalition. Various ideological and generational factions are warring against each other and nobody seems to be winning.

"I understand that they don't have the power to, like, change like things drastically, but they do have the power to slow down like things even a little bit," said rally attendee Juan Dominguez,

26. "It honestly feels like I'm not seeing any of that."

The anger extends beyond the rally-goers.

Fifty-two percent of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents said their party's leadership is moving in the wrong direction, according to a CNN/SSRS poll conducted in mid-March, as opposed to 48% who said it is moving in the right direction.

That same survey suggested a desire for strong opposition: 57% wanted Democrats in Congress to try and stop the Republican party's agenda. It's a complete reversal of a poll in 2017, the year after Trump first won the presidency, that suggested 74% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents wanted leaders to work with Republicans following a divisive election.

"What they're pressing for is not just Democratic leaders to lash out because that's going to make their followers feel good," said former Pennsylvania congressman Conor Lamb, who held a town hall-style event in Pittsburgh last week.

Though Lamb said he is not currently running for office, he felt a hunger within the Democratic base.

"I think they feel like the survival of the system we have all counted on is itself on the line, and they want us to act with that level of urgency," Lamb told the BBC. "I think it's important for us not to forget just to be advocates for things that are specific and concrete, and really affecting people."

Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez's tour is just one attempt to solve that. It stops in conservative-dominated areas and remains laser-focused on the economy, citing cost of living grievances that propelled Trump to a second term, while framing him and his billionaire supporters like Musk as the culprits.

Ocasio-Cortez put the argument simply: "Oligarchy or democracy?"

But the Fighting Oligarchy tour is only one theory about how the Democratic Party should evolve.

"It is completely normal when a party loses, especially the presidency, for there to be this period of soul searching and asking, 'What's next?'" said Professor Christian Grose, a political scientist at the University of Southern California.



MEETING:

Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky at the Vatican meeting.

Trump questions Putin's desire for peace after meeting Zelensky at the Vatican

Donald Trump has questioned Vladimir Putin's willingness to end the war in Ukraine following his meeting with the country's leader Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral.

Posting on social media after leaving Rome, Trump said he feared Putin was "tapping me along" after Moscow's strikes on Kyiv earlier this week, adding there was "no reason for Putin to be shooting missiles into civilian areas".

Earlier in the day Trump and Zelensky were seen in deep discussion in St Peter's Basilica shortly before the funeral began.

The White House described the 15-minute meeting with Zelensky as "very productive". The Ukrainian president said it had

the "potential to become historic".

It was Trump's first face-to-face encounter with the Ukrainian president since February's acrimonious Oval Office showdown.

Writing on his Truth Social account, Trump said the Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities "makes me think that maybe he doesn't want to stop the war, he's just tapping me along, and has to be dealt with differently, through 'Banking' or 'Secondary Sanctions?'".

Trump had previously said Russia and Ukraine were "very close to a deal" following three-hour talks between his envoy Steve Witkoff and the Russian president on Friday.

The Kremlin meanwhile said on Saturday that Putin had confirmed

Russia's readiness to enter into direct talks with Ukraine "without preconditions" to Witkoff.

During their last face-to-face meeting at the White House, Trump had told Zelensky "you don't have the cards" and that he was not winning against Russia.

Trump repeated that message this week, saying the Ukrainian leader had "no cards to play". He has previously blamed Ukraine for starting the war and has accused Zelensky multiple times of being an obstacle to peace negotiations.

But the White House struck a more positive tone about Saturday's meeting, while Zelensky described the sit down as a "very symbolic" and one which could prove significant "if we achieve joint results".

Two images were released of the meeting, showing the US leader in a blue suit and Ukrainian president in a black top and trousers, locked in intense conversation while sitting opposite each other.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha also posted an image of the meeting on X with the caption: "No words are needed to describe the importance of this historic meeting. Two leaders working for peace in St. Peter's Basilica."

Another image posted by the Ukrainian delegation from inside St Peter's showed the two men standing alongside UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron, whose hand is on Zelensky's shoulder.

End conflict to honour Pope, Vatican diplomat tells South Sudan

South Sudan's rival leaders should "honour" Pope Francis' legacy by ending the country's conflict, the Vatican's diplomatic representative to the nation has said.

"We must try to make concrete in the daily life of South Sudan his ardent wish to see a true, durable peace, to see dialogue as the condition of that peace and to see the silencing of the weapons of war," Archbishop

op Séamus Patrick Horgan said.

The Pope, who died aged 88 on Monday, had urged the two sides of South Sudan's conflict to forge a permanent peace during a historic trip to the east African nation in 2023.

Recent violence has threatened to end a fragile peace agreement struck in 2018 between the civil war's two factions.

The head of the UN mission in South Sudan, Nicolas

Haysom, recently warned that the country was "on the brink of a return to full-scale civil war".

Tensions rose at the start of March, when a militia group allied to Vice-President Riek Machar during South Sudan's civil war clashed with the army.

Archbishop Horgan said Pope Francis "spoke firmly" during his 2023 visit, calling for "no more bloodshed, no more conflict, no more violence", adding that the late pontiff's message was still "relevant".

The Archbishop, who spoke to congregants attending Mass at St Theresa's Cathedral in the capital, Juba, on Friday, said it was "disheartening" to see continuing reports of violence.

The same day, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (Unmiss) called for an end to the clashes in the country after reports of fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army In Opposition (SPLM-IO) and South Sudan People's Defence Forces.

Meanwhile, Machar, who leads the SPLM-IO, remains under house arrest, facing accusations of trying to spark a rebellion.

Shortly after South Sudan's birth in 2011, the country descended into civil war between supporters of Machar and President Salva Kiir.

Archbishop Horgan reminded congregants that South Sudan held a special place in the Pope's heart, outlining his "extraordinary relationship" with the country and "affection" for the people.

The Mass was also attended by Kiir and Vice-President Taban Deng Gai – two of the four South Sudanese leaders – whose feet were kissed by Pope Francis in the Vatican in 2019.

Speaking at the end of the Mass, Kiir said: "As an icon of peace, tolerance, forgiveness, reconciliation, harmony and inclusivity, Pope Francis' message resonated with the people of all faiths all over the world."

Images of Pope Francis' tomb released

Images of Pope Francis' tomb at the Santa Maria Maggiore church in Rome have been released.

A single, white rose was pictured lying on the stone tomb that bears the name he was known by during his pontificate, below a crucifix illuminated by a single spotlight.

The late pope was laid to rest at the church – one of four major basilicas in the Italian capital, and one he would regularly visit

during his time as cardinal and pontiff – in a private ceremony following his public funeral in the Vatican on Saturday.

Mourners queued outside the church early on Sunday morning to be among the first to pay their respects to Pope Francis, who died aged 88 last Monday.

Francis was particularly devoted to the Virgin Mary, and Santa Maria Maggiore was the first church to be dedicated to her when it was built in the 4th Century.

The basilica sits near the Colosseum, a stone's throw from the city's endlessly bustling and chaotic central Termini station – well beyond the limits of the Vatican, where popes are traditionally entombed.

But it was one the South American pontiff had a long-held affinity for.

It's senior priest previously told an Italian newspaper that Pope Francis had said he wished to be laid to rest there in 2022, citing inspiration from the Virgin Mary.

Francis' funeral was attended by heads of state, heads of government and monarchs from around the world – as well as hundreds of thousands of Catholics who lined the streets leading to the Vatican to pay their respects.

Hymns played out on giant speakers, occasionally drowned out by the sound of helicopters flying overhead, before 91-year-old Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re gave a homily on the pope's legacy.

Sports

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

NNL 25: FC Basira gets cash reward for beating Kebbi United



Founder of FC Basira, Salisu Galadima has rewarded the team with a sum of Five hundred thousand Naira in recognition of the team's performance and resilience against Kebbi United, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

In a dramatic encounter, Basira defeated Kebbi United 2-1 in the NNL25 matchday 11 on Saturday at the Lafia City Sta-

dium, Nasarawa State.

Strike from Sunday Aluku and a brilliant header from Ibrahim Adamu was all needed for the bafia boys to secure the all important win as they keep fighting for a place in one of the slot for the NNL Super-8.

With the victory against Kebbi United, the Aminu Musa tutoured side demonstrated their strength both in attack

and resilience, securing yet another important win to top the NNL Conference D with Sixteen points from eleven game-week, thereby keeping their dream for a final playoff spot alive.

FC Basira will now have a trip to Gombe, to face Doma United next Sunday 4th May, 2025 at Pantami Stadium Gombe.

NFF celebrates football investor and philanthropist Kunle Soname on 59th birthday

President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau, has warmly felicitated with notable football investor and proprietor of a number of football clubs in the country, Hon. Kunle Soname, as the billionaire business mogul celebrated his 59th birthday anniversary on Sunday.

Soname, a former Chairman of a local government in Lagos State, has gradually but steadily built a charming profile as one of the biggest investors in the beautiful game on the African continent, and indeed the universe, with a portfolio that includes proprietorship of elite League club Remo Stars (poised to win this year's title in Nigeria), second-tier side Beyond Limits and a women's team, Remo Stars Ladies. He also owns a Portuguese LigaPro side, Clube Desportivo Feirense.

All his teams have remained very competitive in their different cadres and jurisdictions.

"As a Football Federation, we are enamoured by the worthwhile investments that Hon. Kunle Soname is making in the game of football in Nigeria, Africa and the world. To be proprietor of four different clubs across continents and gender is no mean feat. We celebrate his love for the game and wish him a very happy birthday and many happy returns.

"Apart from the clubs, what he has on ground at the Remo Stars Sports Institute in

Ikenne-Remo marks him out as a serious and committed investor. A number of our National Teams continue to benefit from the facilities and equipment therein, and the project is still ongoing. We pray that God will grant him good health and long life to fulfil his dreams," Gusau said.

Nigeria's age-grade National Teams, including the U20 boys (Flying Eagles) and girls (Falconets) and the U17 boys (Golden Eaglets) and girls (Flamingos), as well as the senior women team (Super Falcons) have camped and played matches at the magnificent family in the serene town in

Ogun State.

Only last week, Soname gifted the Flamingos the sum of four million naira after their 4-0 defeat of Algeria's U17 girls in a FIFA U17 Women's World Cup qualifying match at the Remo Stars Stadium, at the sum of one million for each goal.

Pascal Football Tournament ends in Igbanke, as Ake-Igbanke's Indomitable lift cup



KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The maiden Pascal Football Tournament 2025, came to an end on Easter Sunday in Igbanke, Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State with the Indomitable of Ake-Igbanke emerging winners.

In the tough football final decided on Easter Sunday, at Ika Grammar School, Igbanke, the Indomitable of Ake defeat-

ed Idumuodin team 10-9 on shootouts after a 1-1 stalemate at 90 minutes of regulation time had ended

The football fiesta was initiated and sponsored by a prominent son of Igbanke, Mr. Lawrence Ekuguem popularly known as Law Pascal for youths in Ake, Idumuodin, Omolua, Oligie, Ottah and Igbonor.

Speaking to journalists at the end of the tournament, Mr.

Lawrence Ekuguem a.k.a Pascal described football as a game that unites people and praised the various communities for their unwavering support in the development of Igbanke, adding that the football fiesta which is going to be an annual event is a catalyst for uniting the people of Igbanke.

"I am very happy to sponsor this football competition among youths of the six communities, which is aimed at deepening healthy relationship in Igbanke. Today, I am proud of what this tournament has achieved," Ekuguem said.

Notable guests including House of Representatives member, Hon. Billy Osawaru Adesuwa, Dr. Fidit Okhiria, Managing Director, Nigeria Railway Corporation, Mr. Fred Omorogbe, Prince Barr. Henry Igbinoba, Mr. Smart Ugbekile, a.k.a Tu Pac were among spectators that watched the football match.

Mamelodi Sundowns beat Al Ahly on away goals to reach CAF Champions League final

Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa secured their place in the CAF Champions League final after a dramatic 1-1 draw against Al Ahly of Egypt in Cairo on Friday night, progressing via the away goals rule.

Following a goalless first leg in Pretoria, Al Ahly took control of the return leg when Taher Mohamed fired the hosts into the lead midway through the first half, finishing off a pass from Emam Ashour.

With a raucous crowd behind them, the Egyptian giants dominated the opening half and looked poised to end their winless streak against the South Africans. But Sundowns had other plans.

In the 80th minute, a dangerous low cross into the box forced Al Ahly defender Yasser Ibrahim into an own goal under pressure from Peter Shalulile, giving Sundowns a crucial away goal.

Al Ahly pushed for a winner, with Achraf Bencharki and Wessam Abou Ali coming close, but Sundowns held firm to secure qualification.

This result marks Sundowns' ninth consecutive unbeaten game against Al Ahly and sees them advance to the final, where they will meet either Pyramids FC or Orlando Pirates.

It was a crushing blow for Al Ahly, whose hopes for another continental crown ended on home soil.



Australian female players to see minimum pay double in four years

- Agreement marks a historic milestone, biggest single leap forward in WNBL history – Jacob Holmes
- Putting them on par with men



Australian female basketball players are set to see their minimum salary levels double over the next four years and gain base-level pay parity with men in the third year, in what the country's basketball bodies called "a historic" deal.

A new collective bargaining agreement will lift the minimum salary for players in the Women's National Bas-

ketball League from A\$23,000 to A\$46,952 (\$30,016) by the 2028-29 season, with the league's salary cap jumping by 8% every year.

"This agreement marks a historic milestone and is the biggest single leap forward in WNBL history," Jacob Holmes, chief executive of the Australian Basketball Players Association said in a statement.

"WNBL players are now go-

ing to be invested in at a level that truly reflects their talent and dedication," he said.

The 8% salary cap will mean a maximum salary of just over A\$723,000 by the 2028-29 season.

The agreement, which is aimed at retaining talent in Australia long-term, also includes full contract protection insurance payments for injured players and higher investment in players' wellbeing.

SPORTS

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Nigeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire qualify for FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup

- **The Flamingos advance to the finals at the expense of Algeria**
- **Cameroon see off Kenya as Côte d'Ivoire stops Guinea in the final qualifying round**

Despite a chilly weather in Blida, Algeria, on Friday night, Nigeria's U-17 girls admirably called the Flamingos secured a scoreless draw against Algeria to punch their ticket for this year's FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup finals on a 4-0 aggregate win.

The Flamingos had done the needful in the first leg at the Remo Stars stadium Ikenna, Ogun State, South West, Nigeria when they hit their Algerian counterpart 4-0 to make the second leg easier to navigate and that they did.

Similarly the U-17 Lionesses of Cameroon and the Young female Elephants of Côte d'Ivoire are through the finals of the 2025 FIFA U-17 Women's World



scheduled to hold in the Kingdom of Morocco later this year.

The U-17 Lionesses of Cameroon reached the World Cup finals courtesy of a 4-1 aggregate win over their Kenyan counterpart in Yaounde today (Friday), the 25th of April, 2025.

The Central African side won the first leg 1-0 away and completed the job with a 3-1 beating in Yaounde with goals from Beatrice Lafortune, Ange Tazanou and Tiwa Lys.

On the other hand, Côte d'Ivoire advanced to the finals

on the away goals rule at the expense of Guinea.

Côte d'Ivoire won the first leg at the Felix Houphouët Boigny Stadium, Abidjan 1-0 but lost the return leg 2-1 at the Stade Mamadou Konaté, Bamako the Malian capital but forge ahead on away goals.

Rolande N'Guessan gave the Elephants an early lead in the 6th minute but Aïssatou Diallo levelled the score in the 33rd minute but Zaddy's own goal three minutes before the hour gave the Guineans 2-1 but it was not enough to see them through to the finals.

The 2025 U-17 Women's World Cup will take place in Morocco from October 17th to November 8th this year.

NPFL boss Elegbeleye appointed as member of IBB Golf Club board

The Chairman, Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL), Honourable Gbenga Elegbeleye has been appointed as a member, Interim Management Board of the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) Golf Club.

According to a press release signed by Lere Olayinka, the Senior Special Assistant, Public Communication and Social Media, the appointment of the former member, House of Representatives and other members of the board, headed by Dr Peter Deshi, was approved by the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike.

With the Nigerian topflight

(NPFL) witnessing a tremendous turnaround under his leadership, Honourable Elegbeleye would definitely bring his midas touch to bear as he gets another huge responsibility

Other members of the board, include Barrister Yomi Oyekola, who will serve as the secretary, Arc. Nanwor Mamven, Arc. Arabi Bello, Mrs Ekanem Ekwueme, Lawan Aboki, Okey Nnaedozie, Fred Otobo and Julius Fadairo.

The FCT Minister, while congratulating the appointees, urged them to work assiduously for the repositioning of the IBB Golf Club.

The board is expected to assume duty immediately.



Francis Orbih elected into Badminton World Federation Council

President, Badminton Federation of Nigeria (BFN), Francis Orbih, has been elected as a council member of the Badminton World Federation (BWF).

The election took place during the BWF Annual General Meeting held on Saturday, April 26, in Xiamen, China, where Orbih emerged victorious over top contenders from other African countries.

He will join Cameroon's Odette Assembe Engoulou on the council, while Chipso Zumburani (Zimbabwe) and Hadia ElSaid (Egypt) missed out.

An elated Orbih expressed his gratitude to fellow badminton presidents across the globe for their trust and support.

He said, "I am deeply honoured by the trust placed in me by my peers across the badminton world.

"I look forward to quality representation, driving development initiatives, and strengthening badminton's global reach over the next four years."

Orbih also acknowledged the support of the Federal Government of Nigeria, particularly the National Sports Commission (NSC), which he

said played a significant role in his successful bid.

"The Chairman and the Director General of the NSC monitored the entire process. I'm grateful for their involvement and confident Nigeria will benefit from this," he stated.

He further appreciated the BFN board members and the Nigerian badminton community for their prayers and continued belief in his leadership.

"From the day I declared my intentions, the board members of BFN have been supportive, and I promise not to disappoint them," Orbih concluded.



Pyramids reach first CAF Champions League final with dramatic win over Orlando Pirates



Egypt's Pyramids FC reached the CAF Champions League final for the first time in their history after a 3-2 victory over South Africa's Orlando Pirates in the second leg of the semi-final at Cairo's Air Defense Stadium on Friday, setting up a showdown with Mamelodi Sundowns.

Congolese striker Piston Mayele was the hero, scoring

twice in first-half stoppage time and netting the winner in the 86th minute. Ramadan Sobhi was also on target as the hosts came from behind to complete a dramatic comeback.

The visitors had taken the lead twice through goals from Relebohile Mofokeng in the 41st minute and Mohau Nkota in the 51st, but were unable to hold on, falling short of their

first Champions League final appearance since 2013.

The rising Egyptian powerhouse entered the match determined to rewrite history and achieve their first-ever final qualification, relying on their home advantage after a 0-0 draw in the first leg last Saturday.

Both teams exchanged attacking attempts, but the Buccaneers appeared more

dangerous with their rapid counterattacks.

Pyramids FC almost opened the scoring early in the first half when talented winger Mostafa Fathi connected with defender Mohamed Chibi's cross but sent his close-range effort high over the bar.

The visitors responded in the 10th minute when striker Evidence Makgopa connected with Deon Hotto's pass, forcing goalkeeper Ahmed El-Shenawy to make a brilliant save in the bottom left corner.

Despite both teams trying to penetrate each other's defenses, clear-cut scoring opportunities were scarce. Mofokeng managed to break the deadlock for the visitors in the 41st minute, exploiting a defensive lapse.

Following a free kick executed by Nkota, Pyramids FC failed to clear the ball effectively, allowing Thapelo Xoke to head the ball into the penalty area for Mofokeng, who struck

Remo Stars crowned NPFL champions after 1-0. victory over Niger Tornadoes

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Remo Stars of Ikenna have been emerged champions of the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) for the first time in their history after a hard earned 1-0 victory over Niger Tornadoes in the match day 35 in Ikenna.

Adedayo Olamilekan scored the only and much needed goal in the 84th minute to hand the prestigious cup to the Skyblue Boys.

The Proprietor of the new champions Hon Kunle Soname has made history as his team is the first privately owned club to win the nation's premier league for over 25 years wait.

Remo Stars won the title on Sunday, April 27 at home with three games to spare. They have been miles away on top of the table with 68 points while second placed Rivers Utd have 58 points.

The Skyblue Boys have maintained a high level of consistency since gaining promotion to the elite division. After finishing third three years ago

and securing second place in two consecutive seasons, Remo Stars have finally gotten their hands on their first major title this season. It is significantly a birthday gift for their proprietor Hon Kunle Soname whose birthday is coincidental celebrated same day.

They are the first private club to win the title in 20 years.