

IOM commends Edo govt for tackling poverty, reintegration of returning migrants

As Oba of Benin lauds Okpebholo's road projects

BENIN CITY

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has lauded the Edo State Government for its proactive measures in combating irregular migration, reducing poverty, and supporting the reintegration of returning migrants.

Ms. Dimanche Sharon, Chief of Mission for IOM Nigeria, led a delegation on a courtesy visit to Governor Monday Okpebholo, praising the administration's commitment to making migration a choice rather than a necessity. Speaking during the visit, Ms. Sharon highlighted Edo State's unique potential, noting her experience visiting

13 states across Nigeria over the past nine months. "Nigeria has a beautiful story to tell. I pledge to join in highlighting this story and reshaping its narrative internationally," she said. She commended the state government for empowering youths, revealing that over 500,000 individuals have ben-

efited from skills development programmes. She also noted Edo State's collaboration with IOM in supporting more than 9,000 returnees, helping them restart their lives and reintegrate into society. "Your administration is working to ensure migration is a choice, focusing on livelihoods, skills development, and entrepreneurship. We are ready to partner with Edo State to

strengthen collaboration around migration," Ms. Sharon added. The IOM Chief of Mission also praised the state's humanitarian and poverty reduction initiatives, citing programmes such as the EdoJob Centre, support for fish farming, and assistance for survivors of gender-based violence. She said the organization would explore ways to link Edo youths' digital skills to employment and en-

trepreneurship opportunities. Governor Okpebholo welcomed the delegation and reiterated his administration's commitment to collaboration with IOM and other partners to curb irregular migration. He noted that cult-related violence had historically driven migration from the state but

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...that the people may know

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Court of Appeal adjourns PDP convention dispute indefinitely —Pg 7

APC strengthens grip on Senate as 3 PDP senators defect

CAROLINE AMEH ABUJA

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) on Wednesday tightened its hold on the Senate following the defection of three lawmakers elected on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), further altering the balance of power in the upper chamber. The senators who switched allegiance are Amos Yohanna, representing Adamawa North; Aminu Abba, representing Ad-

amawa Central; and Ikra Aliyu Bilbis, representing Zamfara North. Their separate letters announcing their departure from the PDP were read on the floor of the Senate during plenary by the President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio. In their letters, the lawmakers attributed their decision to the protracted internal crisis rocking the PDP, which they said had eroded cohesion within the party and weakened its effectiveness as a political platform. They lamented that persis-

tent leadership disputes and unresolved factional battles had deepened divisions across the party's structure, affecting both its national leadership and operational stability. The senators explained that their defection followed extensive consultations with political associates, stakeholders and constituents across their respective senatorial districts. They added that joining the ruling party would enable them to more effectively support the national development agenda of President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu. The lawmakers further cited the lingering leadership tussles, internal factionalisation and a string of court cases within the PDP as factors that had created uncertainty about the party's future and long-term stability. With the latest defections, the PDP's representation in the Senate has dropped sharply to 14 members, compared with the 36 senators it had when the 10th National Assembly was inaugurated in June 2023. The APC, on the other hand, has expanded its dominance in

the chamber. From 59 senators at the start of the current assembly, the ruling party now controls 84 seats, consolidating its clear majority in the upper legislative chamber. Other political parties have also witnessed changes in their representation since the inauguration of the assembly. The Labour Party, which initially had eight senators, currently has no member in the chamber. The New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) now has one senator, down from two at the beginning of the assembly. Similarly, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which started with two senators, currently has none, while the All

Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) retains one seat. The African Democratic Congress (ADC), which had no senator at the inauguration of the 10th National Assembly, now has five members. A newly registered political platform, the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), currently has one senator in the chamber — Seriake Dickson. At present, the Senate has 106 serving members out of the constitutionally required 109 seats. The three vacant seats include Nasarawa North, which became vacant following the death of Godiya Akwashiki; Enugu North, after the passing of Okechukwu Ezea; and Rivers South East, which fell vacant after the death of Barinada Mpigi.



A COURTESY VISIT: Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (right), and Chief of Mission, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Nigeria, Ms. Dimanche Sharon, who led other officials of the agency on a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City yesterday.

APC backs grassroots mobilisation, reinforces progressive ideology

LAGOS

The Lagos State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has welcomed initiatives aimed at strengthening grassroots mobilisation and reinforcing the party's progressive ideology. The Lagos APC Vice Chairman, Mr Moshood Maiyegun, stated this on Wednesday during an event organised by the SMA Movement at Police College Field, Ikeja. Party leaders, members and supporters attended the gathering where mobilisation efforts and political ambitions within the party were highlighted.

Maiyegun also commended APC chieftain, Mr Samuel Ajose, for formally declaring his intention to seek the party's governorship ticket ahead of the next electoral cycle. "The APC remains committed to internal democracy and inclusiveness. Aspirants are free to pursue their ambitions within the framework of our party and we encourage healthy competition that strengthens our structure," he said. He urged party members to sustain their support for President Bola Tinubu's administration.

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Idahosa assures health workers of better welfare, stronger partnership

BENIN CITY

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has assured members of the Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria (MHWUN) of the state government's commitment to improving the welfare of health workers and strength-

ening collaboration within the health sector.

Idahosa gave the assurance while receiving members of the State Administrative Council (SAC) of the Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria, Edo State Council, led by its Chairman, Comrade Ogbeide Omon Osagie, during a

courtesy visit to his office at the Edo State Government House.

The deputy governor, who engaged the union leaders in a cordial exchange, thanked them for the visit and said that it provided an opportunity for the government to deepen cooperation and build stronger synergy with stakeholders in the health sector.

He stressed that healthcare delivery remains a major priority of the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo under its policy framework, the SHINE Agenda.

"If you look at the SHINE Agenda of the Executive Gover-

nor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, you will see that the number two item on the agenda is health. It is very important to us," Idahosa said. "The governor has laid strong emphasis on the health sector, and we have worked together to ensure that the welfare of health workers is improved. There is strong collaboration between the state government and all critical sectors, especially the Ministry of Health."

Reaffirming the administration's commitment to the sector, Idahosa assured the union that the government would continue to prioritise the wel-

fare of health workers while working closely with them to deliver on its promises.

"The welfare of health workers is paramount to us. We will continue to work closely with you to ensure that what we promised Edo people, particularly in the area of health, is implemented fully," he said.

He also reiterated the administration's resolve to fulfil its campaign promises, expressing confidence that Edo residents would soon begin to see the dividends of democracy across the state.

"In no distant time, the people of Edo State will begin to notice

the dividends of our democracy," Idahosa added, stressing that the government would maintain close engagement with stakeholders in the health sector to achieve its development goals.

Earlier in his remarks, the MHWUN chairman, Comrade Ogbeide Omon Osagie, described the union as a strong and influential trade union within the health sector and said the visit also provided an opportunity to appreciate the Edo State Government for improvements recorded in healthcare delivery since Governor Okpebholo assumed office.

APC backs grassroots mobilisation,...

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tion and continue promoting the Renewed Hope agenda across Lagos communities.

"With unity, discipline and strategic mobilisation, the APC will remain the dominant political force in Lagos and deliver victory for our candidates in future elections," Maiyegun said.

Earlier, Ajose formally declared his intention to seek the governorship ticket of the APC during the event attended by thousands of supporters.

No fewer than 25,000 supporters from Local Government and Local Council Development Areas across the state attended the gathering.

Ajose said his decision to contest was driven by the desire to sustain Lagos' progressive governance legacy.

"It is with humility, gratitude and conviction that I stand before you today.

"This is not just a declaration; it is a reaffirmation of our collective destiny," he said.

He described Lagos as a beacon of hope and opportunity shaped by visionary leadership, including that of President Tinubu, whom he called the architect of modern Lagos.

"I declare my intention to seek the gubernatorial ticket of our great party, the APC, and ultimately serve as the next Governor of Lagos State," Ajose said.

He said his vision would align with Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda aimed at accelerating development and expanding opportunities for residents.

"For Lagos, Renewed Hope means accelerating development, expanding opportunities and ensuring no one is left behind," he said.

Ajose pledged that his administration would prioritise good governance, transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

He identified housing, transportation, education and healthcare as core pillars of his agenda.

"We will provide affordable housing through public-private partnerships and innovative financing to meet the growing demand of Lagos residents," he said.

Ajose also promised improvements in integrated road, rail and water transportation to reduce congestion across the state.

"Education remains the cornerstone of societal development.

"We will prioritise accessible and inclusive education with emphasis on girl-child education and skills development," he said.

He added that his administration would strengthen primary healthcare and pursue universal health coverage for residents.

Ajose further pledged to align Lagos development strategies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

He said the strategy would target lifting at least two million residents out of poverty through investments in small and medium enterprises, agriculture and technology.

Also speaking, the Director-General of the SMA Movement, Mr Biodun Coker, said the event marked the launch of a statewide grassroots mobilisation campaign.

IOM commends Edo govt for...

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highlighted the progress made under his leadership.

"In 2024, Edo State was plagued by cult-related violence, leading to over 360 deaths. By 2025, we brought the scourge to near zero, restoring peace and encouraging people to return," he said.

The governor further emphasized efforts to maintain security while creating an environment conducive to business growth.

"We are working to create a friendly environment that allows businesses to thrive and our people to live peacefully. The trust of the Edo people drives us, and we owe it to them to deliver good governance," he said.

Governor Okpebholo also showcased Edo State's rich historical significance, noting its status as one of the oldest cities in the world and its impor-

tance as a hub for Portuguese and British explorers.

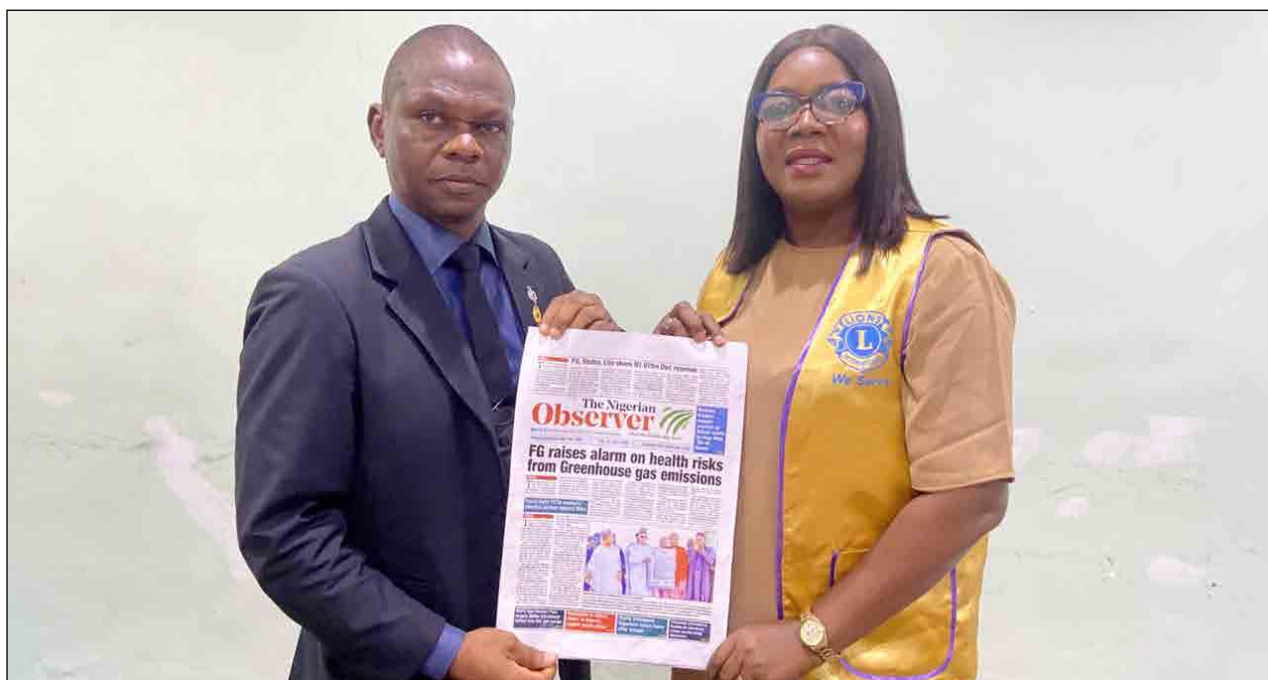
The visit reinforces Edo State's growing reputation as a leader in youth empowerment, poverty reduction, and safe reintegration of migrants in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, has commended Gov. Monday Okpebholo's achievements, particularly on road projects in Edo.

Oba spoke on Wednesday, when the Commissioner for Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Mr Chris Okaeben, and his management team visited the Palace.

Ewuare II urged the government to continue to execute people-centred projects for the overall progress and development of the state.

He expressed the hope that the development of the road infrastructure would stimulate economic growth and enhance the wellbeing of Edo people and Nigerians in general.



STRATEGIC MEDIA ADVOCACY VISIT:

Acting General Manager, Bendel Newspapers Corporation, Mr Sylvester Oboh (left) presenting a copy of *The Nigerian Observer* to the First Vice District Governor and District Governor-designate, Lion Doris Ken-Otokiti, who led a delegation of Lion leaders on a strategic media advocacy visit to the Bendel Newspapers Corporation, publishers of *The Observer* titles.

Edo holds inaugural humanitarian summit, pledges N3bn for poverty alleviation

FRANCIS ODUPUTE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (MHAPA) convened its first-ever strategic and inclusive platform, the MHAPA 2026 Summit, aimed at galvanizing a coordinated, impact-driven response to poverty and humanitarian challenges across the state.

The summit brought together a broad spectrum of development stakeholders, in-

cluding government agencies, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, health institutions, and the media.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Bisi Idaomi, the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, described the summit as a defining moment in Edo State's effort to build a people-centred, sustainable approach to addressing social vulnerability.

Dr. Idaomi emphasised that the establishment of MHAPA "underscores the commitment of

the Edo State Government to, not only respond to humanitarian needs, but to address the structural drivers of poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion."

She added that the summit would serve as a working platform to build partnerships, unlock resources, and co-create sustainable solutions, noting that government alone cannot solve the complex challenges of displacement, unemployment, food insecurity, and social vulnerability.

In a bold demonstration of fiscal commitment, the Edo State Government approved a N3 billion allocation for humanitarian response and poverty al-

leviation in the 2026 fiscal year, reflecting the administration's determination to safeguard vulnerable citizens, restore livelihoods, and strengthen community resilience.

The Special Guest of Honour, Dr. Bernard M. Doro, the Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, highlighted that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda continues to guide Nigeria's national resolve to tackle poverty and humanitarian challenges.

Dr. Doro described the summit as more than a stakeholder meeting, calling it a collective responsibility

Delta First Lady flags off distribution of learning materials to schools

ASABA

Wife of the Delta State Governor, Deaconess Tobore Oborevwo, has reaffirmed the commitment of the state government to improving the quality of education, pledging sustained support for initiatives that promote learning and academic excellence among children across the state.

She gave the assurance during the flag-off ceremony for the distribution of teaching and learning materials to basic and special schools across the 25 local gov-

ernment areas of the state.

The programme was organised by the Delta State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) in collaboration with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).

Deaconess Oborevwo said the MORE Agenda of the administration of Governor Sheriff Oborevwo remained firmly committed to strengthening education at all levels, stressing that investment in education remains the foundation for meaningful and sustainable development.

"Education is the foundation of any progressive society.

No state or nation can achieve sustainable development without investing in the education of its children," she said.

She added that the current administration would continue to support initiatives aimed at improving teaching and learning in public schools across the state.

The governor's wife expressed optimism that the distribution of the materials to public basic and special schools would significantly improve learning outcomes for pupils.

"These teaching and learning materials will go a long way in supporting both teachers and

pupils. I encourage our children to take their studies seriously because they are the future leaders of our state and nation," she said.

She commended the Chairman of SUBEB, Hon. Samuel Mariere, his management team, the Universal Basic Education Commission and other partners for their efforts in improving educational standards in the state.

Earlier in his welcome address, the SUBEB Chairman, Hon. Samuel Mariere, disclosed that more than 6,000 textbooks, notebooks and other instructional materials were being distributed to basic schools across Delta State.

Idahosa hails teachers, says SHINE agenda boosting Edo education

BENIN CITY

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has commended members of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) for their dedication to delivering quality education aligned with Governor Monday Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda, noting that the policy has already begun to improve academic performance across the state's primary schools.

Speaking during the union's

courtesy visit to his office at the Government House, Benin City, Idahosa praised the NUT State Chairman, Comrade Imaruaghe-ru Lucky, other executives, and teachers for their consistent commitment to shaping young minds.

"On behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo, I thank you for your effort, commitment, sincerity, and endless support towards the development of our younger ones. What you give to these children is what our society will become tomorrow," he said.

Idahosa highlighted the state government's efforts to rescue and revitalise the education sector.

He recalled the challenges inherited by the administration, including teacher shortages and dilapidated infrastructure, and affirmed that significant progress had been made. "Governor Okpebholo has not only reconstructed and revitalised facilities, he has also employed over five thousand teachers in line with his campaign promises," he said, adding that the administration is committed to providing secure

and conducive learning environments, including perimeter fencing for schools where needed.

The deputy governor also stressed the importance of trust in leadership, praising Governor Okpebholo as a reliable and committed leader. He urged the NUT leadership to continue providing strong guidance for teachers across Edo State.

Responding, NUT Chairman Comrade Imaruaghe-ru Lucky thanked the government for creating an enabling environment for teachers to thrive.

He lauded the Edo State

Government for clearing the backlog of promotions, renovating schools, employing thousands of teachers, ensuring prompt payment of salaries including the 13th month, and implementing professional development and retraining pro-

grammes for teachers across the three senatorial zones.

"These initiatives are welcome developments that will strengthen the teaching profession and enhance the quality of education in Edo State," Comrade Lucky said.

NDLEA arrests 56 suspects, seizes 2.17 tonnes of drugs, destroys cannabis farms in Edo

BENIN CITY

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has intensified its crackdown on illicit drug trafficking in Edo State, arresting 56 suspects and seizing more than two tonnes of narcotic substances in February 2026 alone.

The Edo State Commander of the agency, Commander of Narcotics Dr Mitchell Ofoyeju, disclosed this while presenting the operational scorecard of the command for the month under review.

According to Ofoyeju, the arrests were made during a series of intelligence-led operations conducted across various drug trafficking flashpoints in the state.

He said the 56 suspects arrested comprised 34 males and 22 females who were apprehended in connection with different forms of illicit drug trafficking and distribution.

The NDLEA commander revealed that the command seized a total of 2,167.74 kilograms of illicit drugs during the operations.

He explained that the seizures included 900.89 kilograms of nar-

cotic substances recovered during raids and enforcement operations, while three cannabis farms located in forest areas were destroyed.

The cannabis farms, he said, covered a combined area of 0.506739 hectares and had an estimated yield of 1,266.85 kilograms of cannabis.

According to him, the bulk of the drugs seized during the operations was Cannabis Sativa.

Other substances recovered included 5.1253 kilograms of psychotropic drugs and 0.0605 kilograms of methamphetamine.

Ofoyeju said the command also recorded significant success in its prosecution efforts during the same period.

He disclosed that the prosecution unit secured 14 convictions in February, while three new cases were filed in court.

The new filings, he said, increased the total number of pending cases before the Federal High Court in Benin City to 96.

On the prevention side, the NDLEA commander said the command's Drug Demand Reduction Department provided counselling services to 28 individuals referred for rehabilitation.



SIGNING OF MoU:

Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Youth Development (FMYD), Dr Maryam Keshinro (2nd L); Director of Legal, FMYD, Pamela Ohabor (L), and the Management Staff of the Chartered Institute of Management and Leadership Professionals, Nigeria Limited, during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the FMYD and the Chartered Institute, to enabling Nigerian youth to convert research results into enterprise innovation and socio-economic impact in Abuja.

Momodu sworn in as Commissioner, tasked with protecting Edo people

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo has sworn in Hon. Andrew Momodu as a new Commissioner in the Edo State Executive Council, charging him to safeguard the interests of Edo residents and contribute to the delivery of the SHINE Agenda.

Speaking after the swearing-in ceremony at the Governor's Office, Governor Okpebholo congratulated Momodu and urged him to join the administration in improving the lives of the people of Edo State.

He described Momodu as a hard-working individual capable of advancing good governance.

"I congratulate you. You are joining at a crucial time, and I know you can perform, which is why we chose you for this role. Go on and do your best to protect Edo peoples' interest," the governor said.

In his response, Commissioner Momodu thanked God and the governor for the appointment, pledging to deliver value and support the governor's programmes.

"I am here to key in and add

value to the programmes of Governor Okpebholo. I assure Edo people that the governor has much to offer, and I will join hands with him to make Edo people smile," he said.

The new commissioner emphasised his commitment to good conduct, effective service, and collaboration with the state government to ensure the success of ongoing initiatives aimed at transforming Edo State.

Lighthouse University inaugurates endowment c'ttee to boost funding, scholarships

BENIN CITY

In a major step towards strengthening financial sustainability and expanding academic opportunities, Lighthouse University (LHU), Evbuobanosa, Edo State, has inaugurated a seven-member Endowment Committee aimed at mobilising resources to support the institution's long-term development.

The inauguration was performed by the Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Felix Omobude, who charged members of the committee to add value to the growth and future of the university.

The committee is chaired by

Engr. (Dr) O.S. Owieador, while members include Rev. M.O. Jimoh Kadiri, Rev. (Prof.) David Osifo, Hon. Dns. (Mrs.) Irene Imilar, Rev. Jerry Ibekwe, Dns. (Mrs.) Mabel Ewansiha, and Deacon (Engr.) Smart Omoragbon.

Also appointed to the committee are Prof. Conrad Omonhinmin, who will serve as adviser, and the Registrar of the university, Mr Olugbenga Olajide, who will function as secretary.

Speaking at the ceremony, Omobude said the inauguration of the committee marked a significant milestone in the growth and development of the university, noting that institutions of higher learning require

stable funding and diversified sources of support to thrive.

According to him, the true strength of universities goes beyond financial resources, resting on broader foundations such as shared vision, intellectual engagement, ethical leadership, honour and loyalty, research partnerships, volunteer services, mentorship networks and community goodwill.

He emphasised that universities flourish when they cultivate strong relationships with scholars who dedicate their expertise, mentors who offer guidance and advocacy, and industry partners who share innovations and invest resources

in academic advancement.

"These forms of support, both tangible and intangible, create continuity beyond the annual budget. They strengthen scholarships, advance research, reinforce governance structures, inspire character formation and deepen institutional identity," he said.

The Chancellor commended the governing council for recognising that sustainability in a private university requires not only diversification of funding streams but also expanded collaboration, partnerships and philanthropic contributions, including monetary and asset donations for infrastructure and system development.

Benin community crisis: Igueshodin N'Budin denies attacking Ogbeson, seeks Government Intervention

BENIN CITY

Elders and youths of Igueshodin N'Budin community in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State have denied allegations that they collaborated with local vigilantes to attack residents of Ogbeson Quarter, insisting that the claims circulating in the community are false and misleading.

Speaking to journalists in Benin City, the Public Relations Officer of the community, Mr Bright Ehimanniegbo, said that the clarification became necessary to set the record straight and inform the public about the true circumstances surrounding the recent tension in the area.

Ehimanniegbo stated that contrary to allegations made by some residents of Ogbeson Quarter, the youths and leadership of Igueshodin N'Budin were not involved in any attack against them.

He explained that Igueshodin N'Budin is made up of four quarters — Ogbeson, Agobahenhen, Igueidu and Iduhunadagba — and that all the

quarters have coexisted peacefully for many years under the traditional structure recognised by the Benin Kingdom.

According to him, the current dispute began about four to five years ago when a member of the community, Ikponwonsa Upkosisi, allegedly began creating tension by attempting to establish what he described as a separate community within Igueshodin N'Budin.

Ehimanniegbo said the development was unprecedented in the Benin Kingdom, noting that only the Oba of Benin has the authority to grant autonomy to any settlement or community.

He said elders and leaders of the community confronted Upkosisi and cautioned him about the consequences of his actions, but he allegedly ignored their advice and continued with his activities.

"As a law-abiding community that does not want to take the law into its hands, we decided to report the matter to appropriate government authorities so that peace could be restored," he said.

NEWS

C'River targets 400,000 children in massive school deworming campaign

CALABAR

The Cross River State Government has set a target to treat about 400,000 school-aged children in its 2026 mass deworming campaign aimed at combating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) across selected local government areas of the state.

The intervention, which focuses on children between the ages of five and 14, forms part of Nigeria's broader plan to eliminate neglected tropical diseases by 2030.

Speaking with journalists in Calabar, the Senior Manager at Evidence Action, the implementing partner for the pro-

gramme in the state, Mr Tochi Ohaji, said the initiative would focus on treating two major parasitic diseases affecting children—soil-transmitted helminthiasis and schistosomiasis.

Ohaji explained that the programme was part of sustained efforts to control and eventually eliminate the diseases, noting that an impact assessment conducted in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health showed significant progress in Cross River.

According to him, the prevalence of soil-transmitted helminthiasis has dropped by 48.5 percent, while schistosomiasis has reduced by 76 percent after more than seven years of sustained intervention.

He disclosed that the state government had demonstrated commitment to sustaining the

programme by approving N64 million to support deworming and disease elimination activities.

Ohaji added that health workers had already been trained to administer medicines in schools and communities across participating local government areas.

"The exercise will run for five days, beginning on Wednesday, with trained teams visiting

schools to administer treatment to eligible children," he said.

He called on parents, school authorities and community leaders to support the campaign to ensure that all eligible children receive the medicines.

The programme targets 14 of the state's 18 local government areas where disease prevalence qualifies communities for mass

drug administration.

Ohaji, however, noted that seven local government areas would participate in the current phase of the campaign, while the remaining councils would be covered in subsequent rounds.

Also speaking, the Programme Officer for Schistosomiasis and Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis Elimination at the

Federal Ministry of Health, Mr Jacob Solomon, raised concerns over declining donor funding for NTD programmes globally.

Solomon said international partners were beginning to experience donor fatigue, making it necessary for governments to increase domestic funding for neglected tropical disease programmes.

9,975 applicants compete for police recruitment slots in C'River

CALABAR

About 9,975 applicants have applied for Cross River State's slots in the ongoing recruitment exercise into the Nigeria Police Force.

The spokesperson for the Police Command in the state, ASP Sunday Eitokpah, disclosed this while speaking with journalists in Calabar.

Eitokpah explained that the available recruitment slots allocated to the state would be evenly distributed across the 18 local government areas.

He assured prospective applicants that the recruitment process would be conducted strictly on merit.

According to him, the exercise commenced on Monday with physical and credential screening for applicants who successfully completed their online registration.

He said the 2025/2026 recruit-

ment exercise covers both General Duty Police Constable and Specialist Police Constable positions in the Nigeria Police Force.

Eitokpah emphasised that the recruitment screening process was completely free of charge and would be conducted in line with the highest standards of professionalism, transparency and accountability.

"The Command reiterates that the recruitment screening process is completely free of charge and will be conducted strictly on merit in line with the highest standards of professionalism, transparency and accountability," he said.

He urged members of the public to report any individual or group demanding gratification or inducement in connection with the recruitment exercise.

The 2025/2026 nationwide recruitment exercise is expected to bring 50,000 new personnel into the Nigeria Police Force.



OATH OF OFFICE:

Hon. Andrew Momodu (left), taking his oath of office during his swearing in ceremony as Commissioner in the State Edo State Executive Council by the State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo at Government House, Benin City yesterday.

Ondo Assembly backs safe schools initiative amid rising security concerns

AKURE

The Speaker of the Ondo State House of Assembly, Mr Olamide Oladiji, has assured legislative support for initiatives aimed at strengthening security in schools across the state.

Oladiji said the Assembly was ready to support measures that would guarantee a safe and conducive learning environment for both students and teachers.

The Speaker gave the assurance while hosting the Coordi-

nator of the Safe School Response Coordination Centre of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Ondo State, Mrs Folasade Olakanse, at the Assembly complex in Akure.

He noted that insecurity remained a major concern for Nigerians, stressing that the Safe Schools Initiative would help curb incidents of kidnapping, banditry and other criminal activities targeting schools and surrounding communities.

Oladiji stated that the Assembly remained committed

to the welfare and safety of residents, adding that protecting lives and property remained a critical responsibility of government and lawmakers.

He urged officials of the centre to maintain close engagement with the Assembly and keep lawmakers informed about their programmes and activities.

Earlier in her remarks, Olakanse explained that the Safe School Response Coordination Centre was established by the Federal Government to strengthen security in both public and private schools across the country.

Olakanse, who is also a Dep-

uty Commander in the NSCDC, said the centre was responsible for coordinating security agencies to safeguard schools and carry out risk assessments of educational institutions.

She added that the centre would also provide timely reports on schools requiring urgent security intervention, including infrastructural improvements such as perimeter fencing, access control systems and other safety measures.

According to her, legislators remain key stakeholders in the implementation of the initiative, hence the visit to the Assembly to seek collaboration.

Police arrest 2 suspected armed robbers in A'ibom

UYO

The Akwa Ibom State Police Command has detained two suspected armed robbers over their alleged involvement in criminal activities in Ikot Otu, Ikot Ek-pene Local Government Area of the state.

The Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Timfon John, disclosed this while speaking with journalists in Uyo on Wednesday.

John said the arrests followed credible intelligence provided by members of the public.

According to her, operatives of the command carried out a raid on a criminal hideout in Ikot Otu on February 8, during which a 48-year-old suspect was apprehended.

She added that a second suspect, aged 32, was arrested during further investigation into the case.

The police spokesperson said several items were recovered during the operation, including a single-barrel gun, gunpowder containers, expended cartridges, two Special Protection Unit uniforms and police badges.

"This is a strong indication of criminal impersonation and an attempt to disguise as law enforcement personnel to perpetrate violent crimes," she said.

John noted that the illegal possession of police badges and locally reloaded ammunition constituted a serious threat to public safety.

She said the suspects were currently in police custody while investigations continued to track down other members of the criminal network.

The police urged members of the public to remain vigilant and promptly report suspicious movements in their neighbourhoods to security agencies.

ADC denies APC involvement in party crisis in C'River

CALABAR

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Cross River State has dismissed claims that the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) is responsible for the internal crisis currently rocking the party in the state.

The State Chairman of the party, Dr John Ogar, made the clarification during a press briefing in Calabar while reacting to an earlier altercation involving some individuals alleged to be members of the party.

The development followed a disruption on Tuesday when the party leadership reportedly stopped an event organised by some individuals said to be acting without proper authorisation.

Represented by the Vice-Chairman of the party in the Central Senatorial District, Dr McFarlane Ejah, Ogar insisted that the APC had no involvement in the dispute.

He maintained that the ADC in Cross River remained united and operated strictly in accordance with its constitution.

According to him, the party recognised only one leadership structure in the state and condemned attempts by individuals allegedly organising meetings in the name of the party without approval from the state leadership.

Ogar described such actions as unacceptable and capable of creating confusion among members.

He explained that the controversy was triggered by plans by some unknown individuals to

inaugurate a Membership Mobilisation, Registration and Revalidation (MMR) Committee.

"The composition of the committee was not submitted to or approved by the state leadership of ADC, and the group also failed to recognise the existing party structure in the state.

"This move is an attempt by some individuals to hijack the party for personal interests," he said.

Ogar disclosed that a formal complaint was lodged with the Commissioner of Police over the planned meeting.

According to him, the police invited the organisers for discussions with representatives of the party leadership.

Despite the intervention, he said the organisers insisted on proceeding with the meeting.

"The party leadership intervened to stop the meeting scheduled to hold at Ascot Event Centre in Calabar because ADC abhors violence and remains committed to peaceful political engagement," he said.

Ogar challenged the individuals allegedly behind the move to openly declare their intentions.

He noted that the party had earlier set up a fusion and engagement committee to accommodate groups interested in joining the ADC.

According to him, while some groups had worked harmoniously with the leadership, a bloc largely made up of dissatisfied members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had allegedly refused to cooperate.

Tinubu approves recruitment of 50 doctors, 100 nurses for Correctional Centres

ABUJA

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has approved the recruitment of 50 medical doctors and 100 nurses to strengthen healthcare services across correctional centres in the country.

The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, disclosed this when the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, paid him a courtesy visit in Abuja.

Tunji-Ojo explained that the

approval followed the shortage of medical personnel in several correctional centres nationwide.

He cited the correctional centre in Rivers State where, according to him, the facility had no medical doctor available to attend to inmates.

The minister added that some correctional facilities, including the one in Kuje, possessed equipment capable of handling major surgical procedures but lacked sufficient medical personnel to utilise

them.

"The President understands that he is the President of all Nigerians, including inmates. As a father to all, he has consistently shown that he cares," Tunji-Ojo said.

He further disclosed that the Federal Government had introduced programmes aimed at equipping inmates with vocational and technical skills through a "train-the-trainer" initiative.

According to him, the government conducted a comprehensive skills audit of inmates in correctional centres to identify their existing talents and

abilities.

"We empower those with skills to train others within the correctional facilities. Those who graduate from the programme are further empowered so that they can become productive members of society," he said.

The minister also noted that the Federal Government had implemented reforms in the correctional system, including improving the welfare of inmates.

He said the administration had increased inmates' feeding allowance by 50 per cent in order to enhance their living

conditions.

Tunji-Ojo emphasised the need for the Ministry of Information and National Orientation to help publicise the reforms and achievements of the Ministry of Interior.

"We want Nigerians to see some of the things we have been able to achieve. In terms of national security strategy, we want to collaborate more so that there will be coordinated communication," he said.

He also highlighted security initiatives undertaken by agencies under the ministry, including the creation of "mine marshals" within the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in collaboration with

the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development to protect mining sites.

According to him, the initiative has helped reduce criminal activities and violence within the mining sector while safeguarding critical national assets.

Responding, Idris called for stronger collaboration between the two ministries to improve communication between the Federal Government and Nigerians.

"Our responsibility is to ensure that whatever the government does, the Nigerian public hears about it and understands it. That is our primary mandate," he said.



MATRICULATION CEREMONY:

A cross-sections of the 2025/2026 matriculating students taking oath during the matriculation ceremony of the University of Ibadan on Wednesday.

71yr-old retiree among 4,430 students matriculating at UI

IBADAN

A 71-year-old retiree, Dr Bolaji Ojo-Oba, was among the 4,430 newly admitted students who matriculated at the University of Ibadan for the 2025/2026 academic session.

Ojo-Oba, a former Secretary-General of the Nigeria Football Federation and former Commissioner for Information, Culture, Youth and Sports in Oyo State, has been admitted to study Law.

Speaking after the ceremony, the septuagenarian said studying law had always been a lifelong ambition.

"I have always had interest

in studying law, and now that I am less busy I decided to pursue my dream," he said.

In his address, the Vice-Chancellor, Kayode Adebawale, disclosed that the newly admitted students emerged from a highly competitive admission process.

He said that 46,916 candidates applied to the university through the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board as their first-choice institution.

According to him, 4,171 students gained admission through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), while 259 were admitted through Direct Entry, bringing the total number of

fresh students to 4,430.

Adebawale said the admitted students represented only 9.4 per cent of the total number of applicants, underscoring the competitiveness of the admission process.

He advised the students to uphold the institution's long-standing tradition of discipline, diligence and academic excellence throughout their stay at the university.

Delivering a matriculation lecture titled "University Education: The Journey, The Gains and The Responsibilities," the lecturer, Dr Olusola Ayoola, founder of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Nigeria (RAIN), urged the students to embrace hard work,

integrity and personal responsibility in their academic pursuits.

Ayoola stressed that university education should go beyond the acquisition of certificates, noting that it should shape character, develop critical thinking and prepare students to contribute meaningfully to society.

He encouraged the new students to take full advantage of opportunities available within the university environment to develop themselves academically and socially.

At the ceremony, the students were formally admitted into the university community after taking the matriculation oath administered by the institution's registrar, Mr Ganiyu Salau.

ICPC denies arrest, prosecution of Justice Omotosho

ABUJA

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has dismissed as false a video circulating on social media, alleging arrest of Justice James Omotosho of the Federal High Court, Abuja.

This was contained in a statement in Abuja, by the commission's Spokesperson, Okor Odey, who described the video content as false and malicious.

According to him, the commission states categorically that the claim contained in the video is entirely untrue and intended to spread mischief and mislead members of the public.

"ICPC wishes to clarify that it has neither arrested nor invited Justice James Omotosho in relation to any investigation.

"The commission is also not investigating the Honourable Judge as alleged in the video.

"The commission therefore urges members of the public to disregard the misleading content and refrain from spreading unverified information capable of causing unnecessary public concern and damaging reputations."

He added that the ICPC had no mandate to investigate serving judicial officers.

"The commission is an agency that has very high regards for not only the honourable Justice James Omotosho but for all judicial Officers in Nigeria.

"ICPC reiterates its commitment to professionalism and due process in the discharge of its statutory mandate and advises the public to rely only on official communication from the commission for accurate information regarding its activities.

"The public is also encouraged to exercise caution and verify the authenticity of information circulating in social media before sharing," Odeh further said.

NOA moves to stop diversion of malnutrition treatment food in Jigawa

DUTSE

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has engaged key stakeholders in Jigawa State to curb the illegal diversion and sale of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), a nutritional product used in the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in children.

Speaking during the engagement in Dutse, the State Director of the agency, Mr Ahmad Tijjani, stressed the need to ensure that the life-saving food reaches severely malnourished children rather than being diverted to local markets for sale.

He explained that the engagement was organised in collaboration with UNICEF and the Jigawa State Primary Healthcare Development Agency.

According to him, the forum brought together communi-

ty leaders, health officials and other stakeholders to strengthen vigilance and ensure the proper distribution of RUTF to the children who need it most.

"It has been estimated that each malnourished child requires a carton of RUTF to survive. If a single carton is diverted, there is the possibility that a life could be lost," Tijjani said.

He disclosed that a rapid survey conducted in states under the UNICEF Kano Field Office — Kano, Katsina and Jigawa — identified poverty as one of the major factors driving some parents to sell the therapeutic food meant for their malnourished children.

In his remarks, the Deputy State Health Educator, Mr Nura Ado, warned adults against consuming the commodity, explaining that it could lead to obesity and other health complications, including high blood pressure.

Ramadan: Islamic scholar urges Muslims to pray for global peace

EPE (LAGOS)

Lecturer in the Department of Islamic Studies at Lagos State University, Prof. Nosirudeen Onibon, has called on Muslims observing the Ramadan fast to intensify prayers for global peace and stability.

Onibon made the appeal while speaking with journalists on Wednesday in Epe, Lagos State.

According to him, the holy month of Ramadan is a period that calls for deep spiritual reflection, intense supplication and devotion, as well as prayers for humanity.

He said that the numerous challenges facing the world today, including armed conflicts, economic hardship and social unrest, require sincere prayers and spiritual commitment from the faithful.

The Islamic scholar urged Muslims to seek divine intervention for leaders and nations so that policies promoting peace, justice and sustainable development would prevail across the globe.

He also encouraged Muslims to demonstrate compassion, charity and unity during the fasting period by extending support to the needy and less privileged in their communities.

According to him, acts of kindness and prayers during Ramadan would greatly strengthen harmony and peaceful coexistence among people of different backgrounds.

Onibon further advised Muslims to uphold the true teachings of Islam by promoting tolerance, discipline and mutual respect, stressing that such virtues remain essential for achieving global peace.

NEWS

Nigeria launches Nat'l assessment to strengthen fight against IED threat

ABUJA

Nigeria has taken a major step to confront the growing threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with the inauguration of a nationwide capability assessment designed to evaluate and strengthen the country's counter-IED architecture.

The initiative, spearheaded by the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), was unveiled on Wednesday in Abuja during the Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices Baseline Self-Assessment Workshop organised in partnership with the United Nations Mine Action Service and the British High Commission.

Speaking on behalf of the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, the National Coordinator of the NCTC, Adamu Laka, said the exercise would critically review Nigeria's existing counter-IED capabilities and identify operational gaps across security institutions.

Laka explained that the

assessment forms part of a strategic effort to improve the country's response to the use of improvised explosives by terrorist groups, particularly in the North-East where insurgent attacks have remained a persistent security challenge.

According to him, the initiative is a direct follow-up to the Counter-IED Symposium held in March 2025 and represents a crucial step toward the development of a comprehensive National Counter-IED Strategy.

He noted that improvised explosive devices remain among the most dangerous weapons deployed by terrorist organisations, posing serious risks not only to military personnel but also to civilians and national infrastructure.

"IED attacks have caused significant loss of lives and injuries while also disrupting farming and economic activities in affected communities," Laka said.

He added that the attacks have also restricted humanitarian operations, displaced thousands of residents, weakened investor confidence and slowed post-conflict recovery efforts across several parts of the country.

"These impacts go far be-

yond the battlefield and continue to affect the stability and recovery of communities across the country," he said.

Laka further explained that the assessment would adopt the Counter-IED Self-Assessment Framework developed

by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research to generate empirical data that would guide policy formulation and strengthen coordination among security agencies.

In her remarks, the First Secretary at the British High Commission, Anup Vyas, said the United Kingdom was proud to support Nigeria in tackling the persistent threat posed by improvised explosive devices.

She described the workshop as a significant milestone in the growing security and defence partnership between the United Kingdom and Nigeria aimed at promoting national and regional stability.



A SYMPOSIUM:

L-R: Project Manager, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Ghana, Dr John Pokoo; Director of Finance and Administration, Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Mr Chudi Offordile; Project Director, KAIPTC, Dr Emma Birikorang and Deputy Commandant, KAIPTC, Brig-Gen. Zibrim Ayorogo, during a symposium on Digitalization and Empowerment of Women in the Maritime Sector of West Africa in Lagos on Wednesday.

Customs seizes smuggled goods worth N478m in Kwara

ILORIN

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Kwara Area Command, has intercepted various contraband items with a Duty Paid Value (DPV) of N478,171,315 in a series of intelligence-driven anti-smuggling operations across the state.

The Comptroller of the Command, Najeem Ogundeyi, disclosed this on Wednesday during a press conference in Ilorin.

Ogundeyi said the seizures were recorded across different operational corridors within the command's jurisdiction through sustained enforcement operations.

"It is barely two months since our last press briefing where we highlighted successes recorded through robust anti-smuggling operations," he said.

"I made it clear then that smuggling would not be tolerated under my watch, and that the Kwara Area Command would remain firm and uncompromising in enforcing the mandate of the Nigeria Customs Service."

He, however, lamented that some individuals had continued to engage in smuggling activities in pursuit of illegal profit despite repeated warnings.

According to him, the command has continued to respond decisively to such activities through intelligence-led enforcement operations.

The comptroller noted that while the command is committed to combating smuggling, it also supports policies that promote legitimate trade, economic development and national prosperity.

He explained that the Federal Government's ban on the importation of foreign parboiled rice was designed to encourage local rice production, empower farmers and strengthen national food security.

However, he said the persistent smuggling of foreign rice continues to undermine these national objectives.

Among the items seized were five second-hand vehicles popularly known as "Tokunbo" vehicles intercepted at the Alapa Patrol Base and Bode Saadu axis.

FG disburses interest-free loans to Plateau farmers to boost food production

JOS

In a renewed effort to tackle food insecurity and strengthen agricultural productivity, the Federal Government has commenced the disbursement of interest-free and collateral-free loans to farmers in Plateau State.

The Plateau Coordinator of the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), Mrs Mary Fom, disclosed this during a

one-day stakeholders' engagement held on Wednesday in Jos.

Fom explained that the intervention, known as the "Farmer-Moni Intervention Programme," is being implemented under the Renewed Hope Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (RH-GEPP).

According to her, the initiative was developed by the NSIP in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction

as part of broader efforts to support small and medium-scale farmers and address food shortages across the country.

She said each beneficiary would receive up to N300,000 to support farming activities for both the dry and wet seasons.

The coordinator added that the facility comes with a six-month moratorium before beneficiaries begin repayment.

"This is a strategic intervention under the Renewed Hope Agenda of the Federal Government," she said.

"It is designed to promote

interest-free financial support, capacity building, insurance coverage and market access for small and medium-scale farmers, especially those operating in rural communities."

Fom said the programme seeks to boost agricultural output, enhance food security, expand financial inclusion and reduce poverty among farming populations.

She noted that the scheme would also generate employment opportunities while improving the socio-economic well-being of farmers in Plateau and other parts of the country.

NDLEA raids Kano drug joints, arrests 56 suspects

KANO

Operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have arrested 56 suspected drug dealers and users during a major crackdown on notorious drug joints across Kano State.

The operation, carried out by the agency's Kano Strategic Command, also led to the dismantling of several illegal drug distribution centres in the state.

The Command's spokesman, Sadiq Muhammad-Maigatari, disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday in Kano.

He quoted the NDLEA State Commander, Dahiru Yahaya-Lawal, as saying that the arrests were made during a three-day raid conducted as part of the ongoing "Operation Ramadan Mubarak"

According to the commander, the operation is aimed at ensuring a safer and drug-free environment in Kano during

and after the Ramadan period.

Yahaya-Lawal explained that between February 6 and February 8, NDLEA operatives targeted several notorious drug locations in Kofar Mata, Fagge, Kasuwar Rimi, Medile, Badawa and Sabon Gari areas of the state.

The operation also extended to other locations within and outside the Kano metropolis in an effort to dismantle drug distribution networks operating in the region.

"The operation is a continu-

ation of earlier enforcement efforts aimed at sustaining pressure on criminal networks that have long operated in these communities," he said.

"The focused action was designed to disrupt drug distribution channels and restore safety to neighbourhoods affected by drug-related activities."

During the raids, NDLEA operatives recovered various illicit substances, including cannabis sativa, Exol-5 tablets, diazepam and pregabalin, among other controlled drugs.

CloD seeks Lagos support to strengthen public sector governance

LAGOS

The Chartered Institute of Directors Nigeria (CIoD) has called for stronger collaboration with the Lagos State Government to deepen corporate governance capacity within the public sector.

The President and Chairman of the Council of the insti-

tute, Adetunji Oyeibanji, made the appeal in a communiqué issued on Wednesday following a visit by the institute's leadership to the Lagos State Government.

Oyeibanji explained that the visit was aimed at formally introducing the institute's new leadership and strengthening institutional collaboration with

the state in promoting ethical leadership and professional integrity in public institutions.

He noted that the institute's new administration, which assumed office on June 27, 2025, is guided by its IMPACT values—integrity, meritocracy, professionalism, accountability, customer-centricity and teamwork.

According to him, the lead-

ership is also driven by a vision anchored on implementation, collaboration and engagement to advance governance standards across both public and private sector organisations.

Oyeibanji commended the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, for supporting the institute, particularly through the approval of CIoD

membership for permanent secretaries, directors and other senior officials in the state civil service.

He said the participation of Lagos public officers in the institute reflected the government's commitment to institutionalising sound governance practices.

The CIoD president disclosed that the institute was proposing a strategic partner-

ship framework with Lagos State built on two major pillars—membership expansion and executive training programmes.

He explained that the first pillar would expand membership of the institute among senior public officers, including members of the state executive council and other top officials who have not yet joined the body.

JUDICIARY

NEWS

EFCC arraigns businessman, firm over alleged \$1.5m oil scam

IKEJA

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Wednesday arraigned businessman Ufoma Joseph and his company, Intermediate Investment Holdings Ltd., before

an Ikeja Special Offences Court over an alleged \$1.5 million (about N2.9 billion) oil investment fraud.

Joseph and the firm were charged on a two-count accusation of obtaining by false pretence and forgery.

EFCC prosecutor Babatunde Sonoiki told the court that the defendants allegedly obtained the money from the complain-

ant, Adebisi Adebute of R28 Holdings Ltd., between April 2022 and October 2023, under false pretences, promising reimbursement, payment of development capital fees, and allocation of shares in Intermediate Investment Holdings Ltd.

The prosecution further alleged that Joseph forged a document titled "Term Sheet," purportedly executed

by Sheriff Oluwo and Olaniran Osotuyi, to facilitate the transaction, which contravenes Sections 1(1)(a) and 1(3) of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act, 2006, and Section 363 of the Criminal Laws of Lagos State, 2015.

The defendants pleaded not guilty.

Sonoiki requested the court

fix a trial date and urged that Joseph be remanded with Interpol pending the conclusion of investigations.

He also alleged that on March 2, defence counsel Olu-seun Awonuga (SAN) physically assaulted a colleague, Emenike Mgbemele, at the court staircase, adding that a video exists and would be tendered in court.

Awonuga did not respond to the allegation but later filed a preliminary objection urging the court to discountenance the prosecution's counter-af-

fidavit, citing a Federal High Court ruling that allegedly prohibited Joseph's arrest. Sonoiki countered that the ruling related to a civil case that had been withdrawn and should not affect the criminal proceedings.

Justice Mojisola Dada adjourned the case until May 7 for ruling and ordered that Joseph be remanded with Interpol pending the conclusion of investigations, after which he would be transferred to a correctional centre pending the hearing of his bail application.



GRAND OPENING:

L-R: The Uloho of the Ancient Irri Kingdom, High Chief Gabriel Abighe; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Apices Finance Company Limited, Sir Daniel Oniko; Mother of the Day, Amb. Eberechi Ananti; The Igbogidi 1, Odilogbo of the Ancient Irri Kingdom, HRM Simon Wajutome Odhomo; Igbidigbi of the Ancient Irri Kingdom, Chief Oboke Ogbodu, and Prince of Irri Kingdom, Isoko South Local Government Area, Delta State, Prince Olomo Chris and others during the Grand Opening of Apices Finance Office, in Abuja on Wednesday.

4 police officers remanded over Owode market killings

LAGOS

An Ebute Metta Chief Magistrates' Court on Tuesday ordered the remand of four police officers accused of shooting and killing traders at the Owode Onirin International Spare Parts Market.

The defendants, Manu Bala, 41; Jibrin Samaila, 47; Ibrahim Garuba, 29; and Ibrahim

Kashimu, 26 were remanded at Kirikiri Custodial Centre pending legal advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Police prosecutor O.W. Ologun told the court that the alleged offences occurred on August 27, 2025, around 9 a.m., when the defendants and others still at large allegedly conspired and shot several traders to death with AK-47

rifles. The charge sheet listed six victims, including Bamidele Dare Mufutau, Adebayo Adewale Mathew, Adeoye Taiye, Abraham Idowu Temilola, Ak-inboye Oluwaseyi Olamilekan, and Akeem Aderemi Adeoye.

The prosecutor said the offences contravened Sections 223 and 233 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015, and that the suspects were brought to court to obtain a remand

order pending DPP advice, which will determine if a prima facie case exists.

Counsel to the defendants, Azuri Ejiofor, argued that the officers had already spent more than five months in detention.

Chief Magistrate E. Kubeinje granted the prosecution's request and ordered their remand at Kirikiri, adjourning the case until April 15 for mention.

Court of Appeal adjourns PDP convention dispute indefinitely

IBADAN

The Court of Appeal in Ibadan has adjourned indefinitely an appeal arising from the leadership dispute within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) over the November 15 and 16, 2025 national convention held in Ibadan.

The convention produced Al-haji Tanimu Turaki as National

Chairman, while another faction of the party is led by Alhaji Mohammed AbdulRahman.

The AbdulRahman-led faction had earlier obtained a Federal High Court judgment invalidating the convention outcome, while a separate suit filed by the Turaki faction in the Oyo State High Court ruled the convention complied with the PDP constitution and

Electoral Act.

Both factions filed appeals at the Court of Appeal in Ibadan.

The three-member panel, led by Justice Biobele George-will, asked the parties to report progress on an amicable settlement.

Counsel to both factions confirmed ongoing discussions, while INEC's representative, Mrs F. Ajiboye, urged the par-

ties to settle matters amicably.

Justice Georgewill adjourned the case indefinitely, warning that INEC's election timetable will not wait and urging the lawyers to guide their clients on the settlement process.

He directed the parties to notify the court once an agreement is reached to assign a hearing date if necessary.

Mechanic arraigned over alleged N13m fraud

IBADAN

A 35-year-old mechanic, Babatunde Sikiru, appeared before an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court on Wednesday for allegedly com-

mitting N13 million fraud.

Prosecutor Insp. Olagoke Adegbenro told the court that in May 2025, Sikiru allegedly conspired with others to sell trucks belonging to Mr Olalekan Tajudeen without remit-

ting the proceeds.

The complainant had entrusted trucks worth N19 million to Sikiru's care while abroad, but they were sold for N13 million.

The offences contravene

sections 390(9) and 516 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000. The defendant pleaded not guilty and was granted bail of N1 million with two sureties. The case was adjourned until April 30 for hearing.

Man remanded over alleged rape of 17yr-old girl

ADO-EKITI

An Ado-Ekiti Magistrates' Court on Wednesday remanded 31-year-old Harry Terry in a correctional centre for allegedly raping a 17-year-old girl.

Magistrate Olubunmi Bamidele ordered that Terry be kept in custody pending legal advice from the Director of Public Prosecutions and adjourned the case until April 8 for mention. Police prosecutor

Insp.

Olubu Apata told the court that the defendant encountered the teenager on the street at midnight on March 1, 2026, pretended to assist her, lured her to his home, and allegedly raped her.

The alleged offence contravenes Section 31 of the Child Rights Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The defendant's plea was not taken, and the court granted the prosecution's request for remand.

Man, 29 docked over alleged theft of motorcycle worth N650,000

IBADAN

A 29-year-old man, Damola Bankole, was on Wednesday arraigned at an Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan for allegedly stealing a motorcycle worth N650,000.

The defendant pleaded not guilty to charges of conspiracy and theft.

Prosecutor David Adepoju told the court that the offences occurred on December 29,

2025, at about 7.10 a.m. in Ido area of Ibadan, when Bankole allegedly conspired with others to steal a Bajaj motorcycle belonging to Mr Oyewumi Kolawole.

The offences contravene sections 390(9) and 516 of the Criminal Law of Oyo State, 2000. Magistrate Mrs Kausarat Ayofe granted the defendant bail in the sum of N200,000 with two sureties in like sum and adjourned the case until May 18 for hearing.

Truck driver arraigned over alleged N80m vehicle damage

IBADAN

A 45-year-old truck driver, Abednego Nathaniel, was arraigned at an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court in Ibadan on Wednesday over alleged reckless driving and causing damage to a Hyundai Santafe car valued at N80 million.

The prosecutor, Olapeju Durodola, told the court that on January 23, 2026, at about 4:30 p.m., Nathaniel drove his

articulated vehicle recklessly along Ibadan-Lagos Expressway, damaging the vehicle belonging to Alhaji Omodele Rufai.

The offences contravene Section 18 and 23 of the Road Traffic Act and Vol. V Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Chief Magistrate Olabisi Ogunkanmi admitted the defendant to bail of N7.5 million with two sureties and adjourned the case until August 25 for hearing.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OGUDE JOY** and **OGUDE JOY OKERIKUMA**, are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known and address as **OGUDE JOY OKERIKUMA**. All former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and general public please take note.

ADDITION/ CORRECTION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OGBOBAMEHI EMMAFOR**, now wish to be known and address as **OGBOBAMEHI EMMAFOR MONDAY**. All former documents remain valid. The general public please take note.

NEWS

Foreign

Countries agree to record release of emergency oil reserves as prices surge

Dozens of countries have agreed to release a record amount of oil from their emergency reserves to try to tackle supply shortages and soaring prices.

The 32-member states of the International Energy Agency (IEA) will release 400 million barrels to combat what organisation said were challenges "unprecedented in scale".

The US-Israel war with Iran has caused oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz — which carries 25% of global oil supplies by sea — to virtually stop and production in the region to slump.

The oil price is nearly a quarter higher compared to when the conflict started and experts say the IEA's move would only be a short-term solution.

The release is more than double the previous record amount

released by IEA members following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

However, it would only amount to around three or four days' worth of global supply or roughly a fortnight's worth of what would normally be shipped out of the Strait of Hormuz.

The IEA's member and associate countries represent two thirds of global energy production and 80% of consumption.

Member countries, which include the UK, the US and many of the world's richest nations, are required to keep 90 days' worth of their nation's oil use in reserve in case of global disruption.

Collectively, the members hold over 1.2 billion barrels in emergency stockpiles, with a further 600 million barrels of industry stocks held under government obligation.

The oil itself is not in a single place. For example, producers like Shell and BP keep stocks at terminals and refineries around the UK and can earmark stocks held elsewhere as counting towards their reserves.

When it is released, it does not mean a sudden flood of new oil starts moving.

Instead, producers will make more available in the market for refineries to order, though energy analysts have told the BBC that there is a shortage of refining capacity.

The other issue with releasing reserves is that it is not something you can do again.

"Once you release them, they don't exist," Nick Butler, former head of strategy at BP, told the BBC.

Jorge Leon, an energy analyst at Rystad Energy, said the release "helps but it doesn't fully offset that disruption".

"Everyone knew there would be a release of emergency reserves [...] but prices haven't come down as much as you would expect," he added.

Meanwhile, the IEA's executive director Fatih Birol said the decision will not help the global gas market, which he described as "very challenging".

He said there are "few options" available to deal with a 20% slump in liquid natural gas (LNG) supplies caused by the conflict.

The benchmark UK LNG price has shot up around 70% since the conflict began, though it remains far from the heights it reached following the Russia-Ukraine war.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said: "The UK is playing our part in working with our international allies to address the disruption in oil markets."



RUSSIAN 'MISSILE COMPONENT' PLANT:

Russia says civilians were killed and injured in the attack.

EU and UK demand Israel stop surge in West Bank settler violence since Iran war

The European Union and United Kingdom have demanded that Israel halt a surge in violence by Jewish settlers against Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank that has taken place since the start of the country's war with Iran.

The Palestinian vice-president said the deadly attacks constitute "a major escalation of settler terrorism".

Six Palestinians have been killed during attacks by settlers across the West Bank over the past 11 days, according to the United Nations.

The UK said it was appalled by the killings, while the EU said the level of settler violence was unacceptable. Both urged Israeli authorities take action to ensure accountability and prevent further attacks.

The Israeli military con-

demned the violence and said it was working to bring those responsible to justice.

Israel has built about 160 settlements housing 700,000 Jews since it occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem - land Palestinians want, along with Gaza, for a hoped-for future state - during the 1967 Middle East war. An estimated 3.3 million Palestinians live alongside them.

The settlements are illegal under international law.

On Sunday, three Palestinians were killed during a settler attack on the Palestinian village of Khirbet Abu Falah, north-east of Ramallah.

Witnesses told the Reuters news agency that dozens of settlers raided the village before dawn that day. When residents confronted them, including by throwing stones, armed settlers

arrived and opened fire, they said.

The Palestinian health ministry said two residents - Thaer Hamayel, 24, and his cousin, Farea Hamayel, 57 - were both shot in the head and killed.

A third resident, Mohammed Murra, 55, suffered a cardiac arrest and died in hospital after inhaling tear gas that was fired by Israeli security forces, according to medics.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said security forces were dispatched to the area following a report of Palestinians being attacked by Israeli civilians near their homes, and that they acted to disperse those involved. It added that a criminal investigation had been opened.

On Saturday, Amir Shanaran, a 28-year-old man, was shot dead by settlers and his brother, Khaled, 34, was seriously

wounded on their land in Wadi al-Rakhim, near Susya in the South Hebron Hills, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

The head of the nearby Tuwani village council told AFP news agency that settlers entered Palestinian homes in the area and attacked the Shanaran family.

The IDF said soldiers and police were dispatched to the scene after reports of a violent confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. Initial information indicated that a reserve soldier opened fire, it added, without identifying him as a settler.

The previous Monday, settlers shot and killed two brothers - Mohammed Azem, 51, and Fahim Azem, 47 - during an attack on the village of Qaryut, which is located between Ramallah and Nablus, according to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem.

Ukraine says it has hit Russian 'missile component' plant

Ukrainian forces have struck one of Russia's "most important military factories", President Volodymyr Zelensky has said.

"The plant produced electronics and components for Russian missiles. The very missiles that strike our cities, our villages and civilians," he said.

British Storm Shadow missiles were used to hit Kremniy El plant in the border region of Bryansk, Ukraine's military said.

Russian local authorities say at least six civilians were killed and 42 injured in the "terrorist missile attack". President Vladimir Putin's spokesman said it was "obvious that the launch of these missiles was impossible without British specialists".

"In order to prevent such barbaric actions by the Kyiv regime from continuing, the special military operation is being conducted," Dmitry Peskov said, using the Russian description for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine that Putin ordered on 24 February 2022.

Peskov said one of the goals of the Russian operation was to demilitarise Ukraine. Putin himself has often stated that demilitarisation is a central objective of the war.

But it is due to the Russian invasion that Ukraine has been receiving Western support - including sophisticated weapons

aimed at defending its territories.

Russia, for its part, has also been receiving help from its allies, including Shahed drones supplied by Iran and soldiers sent by North Korea.

One of those drones was used in an attack which killed two people and injured another five in the second-largest city of Kharkiv on Wednesday, Ukrainian officials said.

Another Russian attack a day earlier in Sloviansk, in eastern Ukraine, killed four and injured 16.

Both sides have continued attacks, even though the war has reached a stalemate recently.

Russia has been making slow advances in the battlefield, but Ukraine also says it is reclaiming more land seized by the Russians.

Zelensky says another round of talks - involving Russian and American negotiators - may be held next week.

The process is being led by US President Donald Trump, who has been trying to end the war.

The outcome of the talks hinges on part of his proposals that envisages Ukraine giving up to Russia areas it does not currently control in the Donbas - an industrial area composed of the administrative regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Russia currently controls more than 80% of those areas - which Ukraine says it cannot agree to relinquish.

No evidence Swiss bus fire was terrorism, officials say

Swiss officials say they suspect a bus fire that killed at least six people and injured five in western Switzerland was started deliberately but was unlikely a terrorist act.

The incident took place on Tuesday night in the town of Kerzers - known in French as Chiètres - in Fribourg canton, about 20km (12 miles) from the capital, Bern.

Officials said on Wednesday that a survivor told them a Swiss man in his 60s had sprayed a flammable liquid on his body before setting himself on fire. He is thought to be among the dead.

Fribourg's general prosecutor said the man appeared to be "psychologically unstable", adding: "There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that this was a terrorist act."

According to police, initial findings suggest the man boarded the bus in the Düringen municipality, 17km south of Kerzers, at around 17:45 local time (18:45 GMT) before setting himself on fire roughly 40 minutes later.

Video posted by local media

shows a bus in flames, and a local resident described seeing a thick column of smoke.

Of the five people injured in the fire, police said three had to be taken to hospital and two were still there.

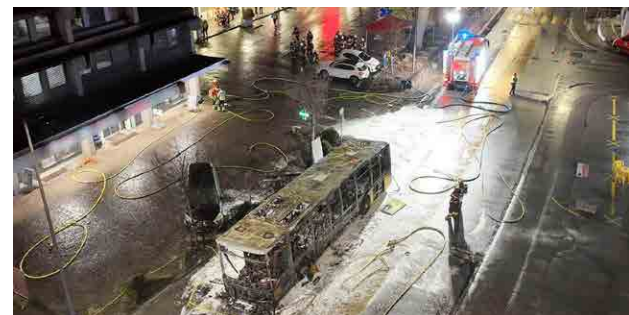
Cantonal police commander Philippe Allain said it was not known where the fire started but that it appeared the doors of the bus had been open. It is not known why passengers did not get out of the vehicle.

Investigators have also been checking the fuel-powered bus to rule out any potential technical cause.

Allain said the victims had not been identified yet but that they were all born between 1961 and 2009.

In a post on X, Swiss President Guy Parmelin said: "It shocks and saddens me that people have once again lost their lives in a serious fire in Switzerland".

Forty-one people were killed in a deadly fire that broke out in a Swiss ski resort on New Year's Eve.



Foreign

NEWS

Mugabe's son drops bail request - what has happened to the family after losing power

The arrest in South Africa of the youngest son of Zimbabwe's former President, Robert Mugabe, has brought renewed attention to the former first family and their controversies over the years.

Bellarmino Mugabe, who appeared in court on Wednesday for a bail hearing, is accused of attempted murder, among other charges, after a 23-year-old man was shot and injured at a property in an upmarket suburb of Johannesburg.

He has not commented on the charges but in an unexpected move, he abandoned his request for bail and agreed to plea negotiations with South African prosecutors. He is charged alongside his bodyguard.

Their lawyer Sinenhlanhla Mnguni said it was "premature to say... whether we will plead guilty to anything at this stage". The matter returns to court next Tuesday.

His father led Zimbabwe for 37 years before being forced out of power at the age of 93 in 2017. He died two years later.

The long-serving president and his second wife Grace had three children together:

- Bona Mugabe - now 37
- Robert Mugabe Jr - now 33
- Bellarmino Mugabe - now 28.

GRACE ALSO HAD A SON FROM AN EARLIER MARRIAGE:

Russell Goreraza - now in his early 40s.

Managing editor of Zimbabwean privately owned News-Hawks website, Dumisani Muleya, told the BBC that the Mugabe family had "lived a life of privilege" and that the children "grew up in that environment where they were protected from the broader realities of the Zimbabwean political and socio-economic situation".

The family had amassed a vast personal fortune, including \$10m (£7.5m) in cash, four houses, 10 cars, a farm and an orchard among other assets.

These details emerged three months after Robert Mugabe's death in a legal letter submitted to the high court in Zimbabwe by his daughter Bona. At the time, a lawyer for the family, Terrence Hussein, told the BBC that none of the properties were under the former leader's name.

In 2013, Grace denied that her husband was accumulating wealth while in office, saying her husband did not earn as much as people thought as he was a civil servant.

"The allowance I get is just a pittance. I'm a business-minded person [and] I support my husband [by] running our private businesses," she said.

Here is a run-down of what has happened to the family members:

BELLARMINE MUGABE

Like his siblings, he grew up in

the public eye and was subjected to scrutiny from a young age.

But as a teenager it was Bellarmine's approach to studying that appeared to have been a concern for his parents.

In a wide-ranging interview in 2013 on South African television, they described his playfulness and lack of focus on academics.

Grace said she wanted him to "change his ways" and "concentrate on his studies".

"He should be more serious than he is at the moment," his father added.

Bellarmino sheepishly admitted to spending more time on video games than his schoolwork.

Bellarmino and his older brother Robert Jr have made headlines over the years for their flashy lifestyles in the face of rising poverty in Zimbabwe.

In 2017, a few weeks before the coup in which his father was ousted, he posted a picture of a \$60,000 watch he was wearing on Instagram.

A few months earlier, the brothers were reportedly kicked out of a luxury apartment block in the affluent Johannesburg suburb of Sandton after complaints about the noise they were making.

There have been also several brushes with the law more recently.

In 2024 he was arrested for allegedly assaulting a police officer in the Zimbabwean border town of Beitbridge.

He was given bail but a warrant for his arrest was then issued after he failed to appear in court, Zimbabwe's state-run Herald newspaper reported at the time.

A year later in June, he was again arrested for assaulting a security guard at a mining site in Mazowe, an hour's drive north of the capital, Harare.

He was bailed and the case has not yet concluded.

The current case in South Africa against Bellarmine has faced several delays since his arrest in mid-February and his bail application hearing has already been postponed twice.

ROBERT MUGABE JR

Also no stranger to run-ins with the police, Robert Jr was arrested in 2023 over allegations he damaged property at a party in Harare.

He faced three counts of malicious damage to property and two charges of assault on a police officer, his lawyer said at the time. He was accused of smashing car windscreens and spitting on a police officer.

He maintained his innocence and was later freed after agreeing to an out-of-court settlement with the complainant, who was a friend of his.

In 2025, after pleading guilty, Robert Jr was convicted and fined in Zimbabwe for possession of cannabis.



ZIMBABWE'S FORMER PRESIDENT:

Grace pictured supporting Robert Mugabe, aged 93, days before he was ousted as president in 2017.

French aid worker among three killed in drone strikes in rebel-held DR Congo city

A French national working for the UN in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been killed, the French president has said, following reports of drone strikes on the eastern city of Goma.

Two other people were killed in the attack but their identities have not been made public.

Witnesses say the drones hit Lake Kivu and a two-storey residential building frequently occupied by expatriates and aid workers in the rebel-held city early on Wednesday morning.

In a post on X, French President Emmanuel Macron confirmed the death of Karine Buisset, who worked for the UN children's charity Unicef, and urged "respect for human-

itarian law".

Unicef said it was "devastated and outraged" by her death and described Buisset as "a dedicated humanitarian who worked tirelessly to support children and families affected by conflict and crisis."

The head of the UN mission in DR Congo denounced the escalation of violence.

"I condemn in the strongest terms the use of weapons, including armed drones that endanger civilian populations and United Nations personnel," said Bruno Lemarquis, in a statement on Wednesday.

The M23 rebels took control of Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, near the border with Rwanda, early last year.

The group has since 2021 seized swathes of mineral-rich eastern DR Congo, with multiple ceasefires brokered only to collapse soon after.

The DR Congo army, stationed several hundred kilometres from Goma, regularly launches long-range drone strikes on M23 positions, while security sources say the M23 also deploys explosive drones at the front lines.

Videos circulating on social media on Wednesday showed flames engulfing the building as thick smoke rose into the night sky and residents scrambled amid the debris.

Images from the scene showed the building heavily damaged, with the roof partially

ly torn apart, walls peppered with shrapnel marks and windows blown out.

Residents said they had heard the sound of bomb blasts and the buzzing of drones in the neighbourhoods of Goma, sparking panic. One Goma resident told the BBC that they heard a detonation around 04:00 in the Katindo neighbourhood, but at the time was unaware of what had happened.

An aid worker close to the house hit told AFP news agency that he had heard the sound of a drone, followed by a loud explosion that blew a "hole in the roof" of the building.

Firefighters, UN staff and M23 officials were seen at the scene on Wednesday morning.

Carney inches closer to majority, as fourth MP defects to Liberals

A fourth MP of the current Canadian parliament has defected to join the Liberals, bringing Prime Minister Mark Carney closer to a majority in the House of Commons.

Lori Idlout, a member of the left-leaning New Democrats (NDP), is joining the governing party. In a statement issued by the Liberals, she said she had undergone "much personal reflection and encouragement from my community, family, and supporters".

Interim NDP leader Don Davies said he was "very disappointed", adding: "We believe that when someone rejects the decision of their electors and wants to join another party, they should put that decision to their voters."

The Liberals said they were "deeply excited to welcome"

Idlout.

Idlout was first elected as an MP from the Canadian territory of Nunavut in 2021.

In its statement, the Liberal Party said she is "well known as a tireless champion for Nunavut".

"We are looking forward to working with her on our priorities, including addressing the high cost of living and improving the lives of Nunavummiut," the party said.

Idlout said that she believed her northern community needed "a strong and ambitious government", citing concerns about Canada's sovereignty, climate change and affordability.

"At this turning point in our history, I am ready to work with (Carney) to build a strong future for Nunavut and for all of Canada," Idlout said.

She told the CBC in January

that she had been asked to consider joining the Liberals but was not yet ready to make the move.

Carney, who leads a minority government, has been closing in on a majority in recent months - largely helped by recent defections by three former Conservative members of parliament.

In February, Matt Jeneroux, a Conservative from Edmonton, joined the Liberal caucus. Two other Conservative MPs, Chris d'Entremont of Nova Scotia and Michael Ma of Ontario, had crossed the floor late last year to join Carney's government.

Opposition Conservatives have accused the Liberals of using "pressure tactics" on their members.

Over the weekend, Carney also announced three by-elections

on 13 April - races that could secure the Liberals the majority government that they crave.

Two of the by-elections will be held in Toronto, in constituencies that are considered Liberal strongholds. The third will be a closely-watched contest in Montreal that his party won by just one vote in the last election - a result that was nullified by the Supreme Court.

If the Liberals win all three seats in April, following the addition of Idlout, they would secure 173 seats in the House of Commons, allowing the prime minister to likely avoid an election for three more years.

In the federal election a year ago, the NDP won just seven seats after losing significant vote share to rival parties.

The NDP will vote for a new leader later this month.

PHOTO SPEAK

NIGER DELTA GAMES

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo hosts the victorious 'Team Edo' at Government House Benin City



CORRIGENDUM / ADDENDUM NOTICE

RE: 2024 FGN/UBEC/SUBEB INTERVENTION PROJECTS – EXTENSION OF BID SUBMISSION DATE

The general public and prospective bidders are hereby informed that further to the Invitation for Bids for the 2024 FGN/UBEC/SUBEB Intervention Projects published in The Nigerian Observer of 2nd February 2026 and Vanguard Newspaper of 8th February 2026, the Bid Submission Deadline earlier stated as 15th March 2026 has been extended.

This extension has become necessary to ensure compliance with the statutory minimum bid preparation period of six (6) weeks from the date of publication.
New Bid Submission Deadline: 31st March 2026

All other information, requirements, and conditions contained in the original advertisements remain valid.

N/B: Payment for the standard bidding document should be made to the following account details
ACCOUNT NAME: EDSG Internally Generated Revenue A/C
BANK NAME: Premium Trust Bank
ACCOUNT NUMBER: 0080050728

Bidders are advised to take note of this amendment and be guided accordingly.

EDO STATE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION BOARD
EDUCATION HUB, IYARO, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR YEAR 2024 UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION INTERVENTION
FGN/UBEC/SUBEB/PROJECTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION:**
Edo State Universal Basic Education Board just received approval by the **Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)** to commence implementation of the **UBEC/SUBEB 2024 Basic Education Action Plan on Universal Basic Education Intervention Fund Programme**. The Edo State Universal Basic Education Board therefore wishes to invite interested registered, competent, capable and reputable vendors, contractors, consultant service providers and suppliers to submit their tender documents for the underlisted jobs:
 - a. that the company is not in receivership of any form of insolvency, bankrupt proceedings
 - b. that none or any of the Directors of the company has been convicted of fraud or financial improperly
 - xiii. Evidence of payment of appropriate non-refundable tender fee of N10,000.00 only.
 - xiv. All documents for submission must be transmitted with a covering letter on the company's letter head paper bearing all necessary details.
- 2. The scope of work is highlighted below based on different categories:**
 - A. Construction of Classroom Blocks - LotA1 - A3
 - B. Construction of Perimeter Fence - LotB1 - B3
 - C. Renovation of Classroom Blocks – LotC1 – C4
 - D. D. Water Supply and Sanitation – LotD1
 - E. Supply of Furniture
 - i. Pupil's Furniture - LotE1
 - ii. Teacher's Furniture - LotE2
 - iii. ECCDE Furniture - LotE3
- 3. REQUIREMENTS FOR TENDERING/ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**
 - i. Evidence of Certificate of incorporation with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including forms CAC 1.1 or CAC2 and CAC7
 - ii. Evidence of Current Company Income Tax Clearance (FIRS) for the last 3 years (2022, 2023 & 2024) having expiry date of 31st December 2025
 - iii. Evidence of current Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2025
 - iv. Evidence of Pension Clearance Certificate (PENCOM) valid till 31st December 2025
 - v. Evidence of Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December 2025.
 - vi. Evidence of registration on National Database of Federal Contractor, Consultants and Service Providers of the Bureau of Public Procurement by submission of Interim Registration Report (IRR) expiring on 31st December 2025.
 - vii. Company audited accounts for the last 3 years i.e 2022, 2023 and 2024.
 - viii. Company Profile including organization structure, key professional staff with their names and registration with appropriate regulatory bodies (COREN, QRSBN, ARCON, CORBON e.t.c) with their current practicing license
 - ix. Verifiable documents evidence of at least 3 similar jobs executed in the last 3 years including letter of award, evaluation certificate, job completion certificate and photographs of the projects.
 - x. Equipment and technology capacity, with evidence of ownership or lease.
 - xi. Letter of consent to allow verification of documents submitted.
 - xii. An affidavit disclosing:
- 4. COLLECTION OF BID DOCUMENTS**
Interested Companies are to collect the bidding documents from the office of **The Executive Chairman, Edo State Universal Basic Education Board, Education Hub, Iyaro, Benin city, Edo state.**
- 5. SUBMISSION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS**
Prospective bidders are to submit bids for each lot desired, two (2) hard copies each of the Financial and Technical Bids packaged separately in sealed envelopes and clearly marked "Technical Bid" or "Financial Bid". Thereafter, put the two sealed envelopes together in a big envelope should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to **The Executive Chairman, Edo State Universal Basic Education Board, UBEC/EDOSUBEB/2024/LOT Number** clearly indicated on the top right-hand corner. Furthermore, the reverse of the envelope should bear the name and address of bidder and be dropped in the designated tender box at the premises of the Board before **12PM on 31st March, 2026.**
- 6. OPENING OF TECHNICAL BIDS**
The Technical Bids will be opened immediately after the deadline for submission of tenders **31ST MARCH 2026 by 12 noon** at the **PREMISES** of the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (EDO SUBEB) in the presence of bidders or their representatives, while the financial bids will be kept unopened. Please ensure that you sign the Bid Submission Register in the open registry of the Physical Planning Department as the Board will not be held liable for misplaced or wrongly submitted bids.
- 7. GENERAL INFORMATION**
 - a. Bids must be submitted in English Language as official authorized by the bidders
 - b. Bids submitted after the deadline for submission would be returned un-opened
 - c. Bidders may not bid for more than 2 Lots in a category
 - d. All costs will be borne by the bidders
 - e. **Edo State Universal Basic Education Board** is not bound to pre-qualify any bidder and reserves the right to annul the Procurement process at any time without incurring any liabilities in accordance with Section 28 of the Procurement Act 2007.

Signed:
Executive Chairman
Edo State Universal Basic Education Board

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Golf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

FIFA's Silence Deepens Uncertainty Over Nigeria's Petition against DR Congo



SUPER EAGLES PLAYER

Since the Nigeria Football Federation submitted a petition to FIFA on December 15, 2025 alleging that the DR Congo national football team fielded ineligible players during a World Cup play-off encounter, football followers across Nigeria have been waiting anxiously for a decision from the world football governing body.

While FIFA's disciplinary procedures do not always follow a fixed timeline, many observers expected that a ruling might have been reached by now, particularly with the next international window scheduled for March 21–31, 2026.

At the centre of the controversy is a four-page petition reportedly submitted by the NFF questioning the eligibil-

ity of some Congolese players, including Aaron Wan-Bissaka. According to the petition, the players allegedly held dual nationalities that could conflict with Congolese eligibility laws.

The Nigerian federation has therefore urged FIFA to investigate the matter and, if necessary, apply appropriate sanctions should any breach of regulations be established.

If the petition were to be upheld, the implications could be significant. One possible outcome could see DR Congo sanctioned and the match result awarded in favour of Nigeria.

Such a decision would potentially place the Nigeria national football team back into contention for the intercontinental play-off stage of the qualification process.

However, disciplinary cases of this nature often involve extensive verification of documents and player eligibility records,

which may explain the delay.

A comparable situation occurred in African football when South Africa national football team was petitioned over the alleged use of an ineligible player, Teboho Mokoena, in a World Cup qualifying match against Lesotho national football team. In that case, FIFA took nearly six months to conclude its investigation before eventually docking South Africa three points and awarding Lesotho a 3–0 victory in a ruling announced on September 29, 2025.

The precedent highlights that FIFA disciplinary decisions can take considerable time, especially when issues of player nationality and eligibility are involved.

NFF Moves On—For Now

With no ruling yet from FIFA, the NFF appears to have adopted a pragmatic approach. On February 21, 2026, the



VOLLEYBALL PLAYER

African Volleyball leaders brainstorm on developmental plans in Accra

President of the Confederation of African Volleyball (CAVB), Bouchra Hajji, presided over the Zone 3 General Assembly in Accra, Ghana, as volleyball stakeholders from across the region gathered to deliberate on strategies for the sport's growth and development.

The meeting brought together representatives from national volleyball federations within the zone to review past activities, evaluate progress and chart a roadmap for the future of the game across the region.

Key discussions during the assembly focused on strengthening regional competitions, expanding youth and grassroots programmes, and improving collaboration among member federations.

Addressing the delegates, Hajji stressed the importance of unity, transparency and active engagement among member associations to ensure sustainable development of volleyball across Africa.

She reaffirmed CAVB's commitment to supporting initiatives that will improve the sport's ecosystem, including capacity building for administrators, enhanced training opportunities for athletes, and improved support structures for referees and coaches.

Delegates at the assembly also reviewed reports from the Zone leadership while examining upcoming competitions and development programmes designed to promote volleyball across Africa.

D'Tigress open training in France ahead of World Cup Qualifiers, Wakama vows to make Nigerians proud

Africa's best female national basketball team, D'Tigress of Nigeria, who landed France yesterday to a warm reception, quickly got of the marks as the Coach Rena Wakama led team held its first training session ahead of the FIBA Women's World Cup Qualification tournament.

Speaking with NBBF media on the team's readiness to face some basketball powerhouses in the tournament in Lyon-Villeurbanne, France, the multiple awards winning Rena Wakama, responded confidently that the team is very focused and excited.

"Our preparations have been intense, and this tournament here in Lyon, is an important part of that process. It gives us the opportunity to test ourselves against strong competition and evaluate where we're as a team."

"The players have shown great commitment, discipline and hunger, so I believe we're moving in the right direction as we prepare for the World Cup in Germany," she remarked.

Going into the tournament in Lyon, France, the roster for the final 12 players, represents a mix of experience, youth and dynamism, and which she described as a balanced team.

"What's different this time is the balance we have within the squad. We have a strong core of experienced players who understands the expectations and the culture of D'Tigress, and at the same time, we've integrated some younger talents who bring fresh energy and competitiveness. Tactically, we're

also evolving, that's focusing on faster transitions, stronger defensive communication, and better team chemistry," noted.

While acknowledging the huge expectations of the millions of Nigerians home and diaspora ahead of the FIBA Women's World Cup Championship, the highly-rated female basketball coach, Wakama remarked that her girls are ready, proud to represent Nigeria and play the game they love.



We shall continue to make Nigerians proud – Rena Wakama



RENA WAKAMA

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Norwegian court sentences Ex-Flying Eagles star to six months

Former captain of Nigeria's U-20 National Football Team, Daniel Daga, has been sentenced to six months in prison in Norway after a court found him guilty of committing a non-consensual sexual act.

The midfielder, who plays for Norwegian club Molde FK, received the sentence following legal proceedings in the Scandinavian country.

Daga's lawyer has confirmed

that the player intends to appeal the verdict, maintaining that the encounter in question was consensual.

In response to the ruling, Molde FK released a statement acknowledging the court's decision and indicating that the player will not take part in matches for the time being.

The case is expected to continue as Daga's legal team pursues an appeal against the verdict



DANIEL DAGA

SPORTS

The Nigerian Observer
...that the people may know

Former NSC DG, Ekeji, urges NFF to restore prestige of Nigeria's National Cup



FORMER NSC DG, DR PATRICK EKEJI

Former Director General of the National Sports Commission, Dr Patrick Ekeji, has again called on the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) to take deliberate steps to restore the prestige of Nigeria's national football cup competition.

Ekeji, a former international footballer and one of the most experienced administrators in Nigerian sport, reiterated his earlier suggestion that the competition should return to its historic name, the Challenge Cup, arguing that the

brand once commanded nationwide passion and respect.

Chatting with Sports Village Square, Ekeji lamented that the competition—now known as the President's Federation Cup—has lost much of the appeal that once made it one of the most anticipated events in the Nigerian football calendar.

Decades ago, the national cup was a major crowd-puller that captivated football fans across the country, especially during the final stages. Stadiums were packed, and the

competition enjoyed massive media attention.

Today, however, the tournament struggles to attract similar interest. Even the national final rarely fills stadiums or commands the level of media attention expected in an era when coverage has expanded from traditional platforms to digital media.

The competition has also faced organisational challenges. In recent seasons, some clubs have withdrawn from fixtures during the national stage of the tournament, prompting the NFF to announce on Monday, the imposition of sanctions, including a 1 million fine on teams that fail to honour matches.

Reacting to the situation, Ekeji said the football authorities must undertake a comprehensive review of the competition and the broader domestic football structure.

"The NFF has to rejig the competition along with the NPFL," he said.

According to him, the financial realities facing Nigerian clubs have also contributed to the tournament's decline.

"There is no income to owners of clubs, and the businesses are not expanding. Those still running clubs are really struggling and are hardly breaking even," he said.

Ekeji also raised concerns about broader structural challenges affecting Nigerian football.

"Security is not guaranteed, and our politics is, at best, very unpredictable. As I proposed in my communication with you last year on this subject, the NFF, by not injecting a strong strategy into its management of our football, cannot expect a turnaround in any aspect of the game," he added.

The veteran sports administrator believes restoring the historic name Challenge Cup could help reconnect the competition with its rich heritage and emotional appeal among Nigerian football fans.

"Challenge Cup resonates in the minds of all football followers in Nigeria and automatically connects with football, its development and follower-ship," Ekeji said.

"This cup is synonymous with the game in our country,

just like the FA Cup is with the game in England, where it has remained so."

He suggested that commercial sponsors could still benefit from associating with the competition without discarding its traditional identity.

"In my thinking, sponsors of the ever-changing name of this historic competition would gain more mileage if their names are linked to the original name as a suffix, such as: The Challenge Cup — sponsored by..." he said.

"Indeed, there is something in a name. The Challenge Cup evolved into a brand, but sadly, our younger generation football managers failed to link it up as such."

Nigeria's national cup competition has undergone several name changes over the decades.

It began in 1945 as the Governor's Cup, initially organised as a Lagos-based tournament. At the Annual General Meeting of the then Nigeria Football Association on February 28, 1955, the competition was renamed the Challenge Cup.

The original trophy was do-

minated by Nigeria's then Governor-General, Lord Milverton, formerly known as Sir Arthur Richards. He died on October 27, 1978—20 days after Bendel Insurance defeated Rangers International in a dramatic final.

Commercial sponsorship later introduced new identities for the competition. In 1999, it became the Coca-Cola FA Cup. In June 2009, the NFF announced another change, renaming it the Federation Cup.

Further sponsorship deals saw it renamed the Aiteo Cup in 2017 and the NFF/Tingo Federation Cup in 2023.

In April 2024, during a ceremony in Lagos, the competition was renamed the President's Federation Cup, the seventh title since the tournament began eight decades ago.

This year marks the 81st anniversary of the national cup competition, an institution that once stood at the heart of Nigerian football culture.

For Ekeji, reviving its historic identity may be the first step toward restoring the prestige it once commanded across the country.

Nigeria Paravolley Federation refutes claim of West Africa Development Commission appointment

The President of the Nigeria Paravolley Federation, Kayode Ladele, has dismissed reports circulating on social media alleging that Paravolley Africa has appointed Jackson Imandi as President of a so-called West Africa Development Commission.

Ladele stated that the Nigeria Paravolley Federation categorically rejects the claim, noting that the purported "West Africa Development Commission" is unknown within the West African Paravolley sphere.

"At no time was the establishment of such a body discussed with member countries in the region, nor were its objectives, structure, or operational framework presented for consideration," he said.

According to the federation president, the Nigeria Paravolley Federation was neither consulted nor formally notified before or after the alleged announcement. He added that the federation has received no correspondence from Paravol-



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ley Africa regarding the commission's creation or the purported appointment.

Ladele described it as deeply concerning that any decision affecting West Africa would be announced without proper engagement with the relevant national federations, particularly the appointee's home fed-

eration.

"How can Robinson Tumwesigye from Uganda unilaterally make an appointment for West Africa without consulting the national federation of the country from which the appointee originates?" he queried.

He emphasized that such a

process is inconsistent with established principles and codes guiding sports administration in Nigeria and is therefore unacceptable. The federation urged stakeholders and the general public to disregard the reports until an official and properly communicated position is established.

Onuachu emerges as Africa's goal-scoring king

Super Eagles' marksman Paul Onuachu is now the first African to reach a 20 goal tally across top leagues in Europe.

The Nigerian international attained the record after scoring two goals in his club Trabzonspor's 3-1 away win over Kayserispor yesterday in the Turkish Super Lig.

Onuachu hit target twice in the first half stoppage time to give Trabzonspor a 2-0 lead.

First, with a header off a cross from the right and then from the penalty spot.

Week after week, Onuachu has maintained a strong presence in front of goal, com-

binning physical strength with clinical finishing to keep his scoring numbers on the rise.

His current streak of nine consecutive matches with a goal places him among the most prolific attackers currently performing in European football.

On the back of tonight's 3-1 victory, Trabzonspor consolidated third place in the standings with 54 points from 25 matches, seven points behind leaders Galatasaray.

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PAUL ONUACHU