

We've embarked on market modernisation initiative —OKpebholo

● *Says reconstruction of Jattu Market, part of broader plan*

RICHARD EWEKA

JATTU

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has said his administration is building a standard market in Jattu to improve economic activities and impact the lives of Etsako West Local Gov-

ernment Area and improve the economy of Edo State.

Speaking during an inspection tour of the ongoing construction of the ultra modern market on Friday, the governor described the project as part of his administration's commitment to providing infrastructure that will enhance trade

and commerce across the state.

He was accompanied on the tour by the Minister of Regional Development, Abubakar Momoh; former Edo State Governor and Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Comrade Adams Aliu Oshiomhole; Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon.

Blessing Agbebaku, among other government officials.

Expressing satisfaction with the progress of work, Governor Okpebholo assured residents that his administration would continue to execute projects aimed at improving their standard of living.

He said the project was not

just the construction of an ordinary market but the development of a modern commercial facility that would serve Edo North, Edo State and Nigerians from across the country.

"We are not just building a market but a modern standard market for our people in Edo North, Edo State as well as Nigerians who will benefit from this project when completed.

"This is a central market for all of us and we are maintaining high standards of construction. We have different floors in this market. A lot of work has been done in the basement, the structure is very strong and solid, and the construction is massive."

The governor said the project was also a way of appreciating

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That The People May Know

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#200

Fear not, Okpebholo tells farmers, residents

● *as Govt moves to tackle insecurity*

RICHARD EWEKA

UROMI

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has assured residents that his administration is taking decisive steps to rid the state of criminal elements and restore confidence among farmers and residents.

He said his government will make Edo safe enough for farmers to return to their farms

without fear, stressing that security remains a major priority of his administration.

The Governor gave the assurance during the flag-off of the All Progressives Congress (APC) LG election campaign for Edo Central Senatorial District on Friday at the Uromi Town Hall, Esan North-East Local Government Area.

He said his administration will continue to work with security agencies and relevant

stakeholders to protect lives and property while ensuring peace, unity, and stability across Edo State.

According to the governor, the fight against insecurity requires seriousness and strong action, adding that criminal elements terrorising communities would be made to face the full weight of the law.

"Governors are ready to fight insecurity across the nation. The perpetrators will be

exposed and they will run away from the country. In Edo State, there will be security and our farmers will be able to return to their farms," he said.

Governor Okpebholo also expressed determination to ensure that kidnappers and bandits do not find a safe haven in the state, noting that decisive action against criminals would serve as a deterrent to others.

"I am serious with the fight against insecurity. By the time we execute one, two, three and more of these criminals, others will run away from Edo State,"

he stated.

The governor who commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his support and partnership with the Edo State Government, described the collaboration as a major factor contributing to ongoing development in the state.

He said President Tinubu had encouraged transparency in the management of local government resources, adding that the implementation of local government autonomy had allowed councils to directly access their funds and pursue grassroots development.

"The President loves Edo State. When I met him, he told me not to touch local government funds, and I obeyed. The funds go directly to the

local governments, and the chairmen are using them to bring development and growth across the 18 local government areas," Okpebholo said.

The governor urged APC members and supporters to mobilise across their communities and work for the success of the party's candidates in the forthcoming local government elections, describing the exercise as a foundation for the party's preparations ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Former Edo State Governor and Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, urged APC candidates to prepare for the responsibilities ahead,

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MODERNISATION:

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (left), and Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Sen. Adams Oshiomhole, during an inspection tour of the ongoing construction of the ultra-modern market in Jattu, Etsako West LGA, at the weekend.

Edo special anti-cultism, kidnapping court for inauguration Wednesday

BENIN CITY

The Special Criminal Court established by the Edo State Government to try cases related to cultism and kidnapping in the state will take off on Wednesday, July 1, 2026.

The Chief Registrar of the State High Court, Mr. Benson Osawaru, who disclosed this in a statement on Friday, said the State Chief Judge, Justice Daniel Okungbowa, has set up the anti-cult and kidnapping special court.

Osawaru said the special court, known as "Special Crim-

inal Court 1," will be sitting in Benin City, the state capital.

The statement read in part, "pursuant to the request by His Excellency, the Governor of Edo state, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for the constitution of a Special Court for offences relating to cultism and kidnapping, an additional court to be known as 'Special Criminal Court 1' is hereby established with effect from Wednesday, the 1st day of July, 2026.

"The court is for offences relating to cultism and kidnapping and such other matters as may be assigned to the court by the Honourable Chief Judge of Edo State."

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NEWS

Gov Okpebholo deepens push for inclusive cabinet

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo's administration has again demonstrated its commitment to inclusive governance by nominating Mr. Martin Anayochukwu Oli, a businessman and community leader from Aninri Local Government Area of Edo State, as Commissioner-Designate in Edo State.

The nomination, announced by the Secretary to the Edo State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq., is another milestone in Governor Okpebholo's deliberate effort to ensure that the state's diverse communities

are reflected in government appointments.

Mr. Oli's nomination is the second major appointment involving a non-Edo ethnic group since Governor Okpebholo assumed office, following the appointment of Hon. Abdulkarim Kadiri, a respected Hausa-Fulani community leader in Edo State, as Special Adviser on Community Matters in November 2024.

It highlights the Governor's vision of building an administration that recognizes the contributions of all residents, irrespective of ethnic background.

Edo State is home to several ethnic communities, including Igbo, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and

● Nominates second non-Edo indigene as commissioner-designate

others, whose economic activities, cultural contributions, and social engagements have become part of the state's growth story.

The nomination of Mr. Oli reflects Governor Okpebholo's commitment to creating a government structure where diverse communities can participate meaningfully in governance and

contribute to policy direction.

Governor Okpebholo believes that inclusive governance is not just rhetoric. It requires listening to the people, understanding their concerns, and giving them seats where decisions are made.

Governor Okpebholo's approach represents a shift towards a more open and par-

ticipatory governance model, where residents who have contributed to the development of Edo State are recognised and given opportunities to serve.

Mr. Oli, an established entrepreneur with considerable private sector experience, has also built a reputation as a community advocate within Edo's Igbo

community, supporting grassroots development initiatives and programmes aimed at improving livelihoods and expanding economic opportunities.

His nomination underscores the importance of recognising competence, commitment, and community service in the selection of public officers.

FG needs N4.5bn to fill PHC vacancies —Official

ABUJA

The Federal Government says it requires an estimated N4.55 billion over three years to recruit 122,696 health workers needed to fill vacant positions in Primary Health Care facilities across 26 states nationwide.

Human Resource for Health and Project Management Lead at the Sector-Wide Approach Coordination Office, Zaiyanatu Umar, said this on Friday in Abuja during the 15th Expanded Ministerial Oversight Committee meeting on national healthcare implementation.

Umar said the estimate followed analysis of baseline data submitted by 26 verified states that self-reported staffing levels against Primary Health Care Minimum Staffing Standards under the Sector-Wide Approach recruitment assessment exercise nationwide.

"The baseline data received from SWAp was based on the recruitment tool that was developed.

"This was majorly to push

forth on the HOPE-GOV 5.2 Disbursement-Linked Indicator (DLI), which spoke around ensuring quality healthcare workforce and availability across the different levels."

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the World Bank-supported HOPE-GOV Programme rewards states for improving governance, financial management and service delivery across Primary Health Care and basic education systems nationwide effectively.

Under Disbursement-Linked Indicator 5.2, participating states focus on recruiting, mapping and deploying essential Primary Health Care workers to underserved communities, strengthening equitable access to quality healthcare services across Nigeria nationwide.

She said assessments showed 220,755 Primary Health Care positions were required across participating states, but only 98,059 were occupied, leaving 122,696 vacancies requiring urgent recruitment to improve healthcare delivery nationwide.

331m people used drugs in 2025 —UNODC

NEW YORK

An estimated 331 million people used drugs in 2024, the UN World Drug Report 2026, released by UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Friday, has disclosed.

This is equivalent to 6.2 per cent of the world's population aged 15 to 64, up from 5.2 per cent a decade ago.

UNODC said more people were using drugs than ever before, while synthetic substances were reshaping illicit markets and exposing vulnerable communities to greater health risks.

The Executive Director of the UNODC, Monica Juma, decried that global drug use reached record high in the past year as increasingly potent synthetic drugs spread.

"We have seen an unprecedented spike in new types of drugs on the market, and worryingly, some are more potent or dangerous than before," Juma said.

The 2026 World Drug Report provides an in-depth analysis of the latest trafficking and use trends on cannabis, cocaine, methamphetamine, opioids and more.

Cannabis remained the most widely used drug, with 256 million users, followed by opioids (63 million), amphetamines (32 million), cocaine (25 million) and ecstasy (21 million).

The report also highlighted the rapid evolution of synthetic drugs.

In 2024, authorities identified 755 new psychoactive substances, including 118 reported for the first time, while the number of different drugs detected in seizures is now five times higher than before the year 2000.



LG ELECTION CAMPAIGN:

Party faithful, and leaders of APC at the Public Field in Auchi, during the flag off of Edo North Senatorial District Local Government election campaign.

Livestock devt: Okpebholo commends Tinubu, woos investors

BERNADETTE IDALU

BENIN CITY

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State has commended the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, stating that Edo State's SHINE Agenda is aligned and already yielding fruits.

The governor made the commendation when the Minister of Livestock Development, Alhaji Idi Mukhtar Maiha, arrived in Benin-City on Friday for the official groundbreaking ceremony of a 40 million dose capacity Solar-Powered Regional Cold Storage Facility and a Model Veterinary Hospi-

tal for the South-South Region.

Okpebholo, who interacted with key stakeholders through his deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, used the opportunity to woo investors as he declared that "Edo State is open for business."

Governor Okpebholo noted that the state offered strategic advantages including "abundant land, improving infrastructure, political stability, investor-friendly policies and a central location that provides easy access to major markets across the South-South, South-East and South-West geopolitical zones.

"We invite investors, processors, exporters and agribusiness operators to partner with us in building a world-class

livestock economy.

"Our administration has already laid a solid foundation through investments in aquaculture, piggery, cattle production, animal health systems, value addition, breed improvement, and modern animal identification and traceability systems that meet international standards."

Interfacing with stakeholders in his Keynote address, at Ikpoba Slope, site of the Edo Ultramodern Livestock Processing Facility, an abattoir being upgraded to meet with international best practices and standards, Okpebholo affirmed that the reduction of human handling of meat to the barest minimum during its processing

(slaughter to distribution) stage, would minimise contamination in the processing and packaging for consumption.

Moreover, Okpebholo stressed that the siting of these investment projects in the state in addition to the cattle ranches in Irrua (Esan Central Local Government Area) and Igarra (Akoko-Edo Local Government Area) for modern livestock production with due follow-up and replication across the three geo-political zones in the state would minimise herder/farmers skirmishes, a reflection of Edo State's SHINE Agenda and a reinforcement of Edo State's growing status as a leading hub for livestock development in Nigeria.

Weekly Review: Stock market records N2.42trn loss

LAGOS

The Nigerian Exchange Ltd. (NGX) All-Share Index and Market Capitalisation depreciated by 1.65 per cent and 1.60 per cent to close the week at 232,049.02 and N148.905 trillion respectively.

This is in contrast with 235,941.27 and N151.327 trillion recorded in the previous week.

Consequently, the market witnessed N2.422 decline in the week under review.

Similarly, all other indices finished lower with the exception of NGX CG, NGX Bank-

ing, NGX AFR Bank Value, NGX AFR Div Yield and NGX MERI Value which appreciated by 2.40 per cent, 3.51 per cent, 3.28 per cent, 9.93 per cent and 0.56 per cent.

Meanwhile, a total turnover of 2.324 billion shares worth N134.486 billion in 249,328 deals was traded this week by investors on the floor of the Exchange.

This is in contrast to 3.075 billion shares valued at N254.614 billion that exchanged hands last week in 287,157 deals.

The Financial Services Industry led the activity chart with 1.523 billion shares val-

ued at N47.542 billion traded in 105,230 transactions.

This contributed 65.53 per cent and 35.35 per cent to the total equity turnover volume and value respectively.

The ICT Industry followed with 198.821 million shares worth N32.622 billion in 29,905 deals.

The third place was the Consumer Goods Industry, with a turnover of 151.635 million shares worth N10.933 billion in 23,951 deals.

Trading in the top three equities, namely Access Holdings Plc, Fidelity Bank Plc and

Chams Holding Company Plc, accounted for 485.749 million shares worth N7.656 billion in 17,843 deals.

This contributed 20.90 per cent and 5.69 per cent to the total equity turnover volume and value respectively.

Eleven equities appreciated in price during the week lower than 40 equities in the previous week.

Seventy-eight equities depreciated in price, higher than 53 equities in the previous week, while 57 equities remained unchanged, higher than 53 recorded in the previous week.

NEWS**Primaries: Purported list of successful candidates, fake —APC****ABUJA**

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has disowned the purported official list of successful candidates from its recently-held primaries in circulation, describing it as fake and unauthorized.

The party's National Publicity Secretary, Mr Felix Morka, in a statement on Sunday in Abuja, said the party had not

released any official list of winners of its primaries.

"The APC hereby informs the general public that it has not released the official list of successful candidates from its recently-conducted primaries," he said.

Morka called on members, stakeholders and the general public to disregard any publication or report announcing the outcome of the primaries.

According to him, success-

ful candidates will be duly notified through the party's official channels and certificates of return will thereafter be issued in accordance with established procedures.

The APC spokesperson urged the public to rely only on official communications from the party, as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had opened its window for political parties to upload the names of candidates emerg-

ing from primaries ahead of the 2027 general elections.

While APC said the original list of its successful candidates at the primaries had not been officially made public, however, it has been confirmed from party sources that internal collation and verification processes are already ongoing pending the release of the list to the public.

According to the source, it has become expedient for the

party to disassociate itself from the circulating fake list in order to guard against misinfor-

mation and prevent confusion among aspirants, members and the electorate.

12 parties completed nomination forms for Edo LG poll —EDSIEC**BENIN CITY**

The Edo Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) says 12 political parties successfully completed the nomination process for the Edo local government election scheduled for July 11.

The commission also said that it has completed and published the final list of candidates.

EDSIEC Chairman, Mr Jonathan Aifuobhokhan, who stated this in an interview in Benin, said the parties include All Progressives Congress (APC), Accord Party (AP), Action Peoples Party (APP), People Redemption Party (PRP) All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), and Allied Peoples' Movement (APM).

Others are the Young Progressive Party (YPP), New Nigeria Peoples' Party (NNPP), Action Democratic Party (ADP), African Action Congress (AAC), Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), and Action Alliance (AA).

He said that EDSIEC is fully prepared to conduct the July 11 local government elections, with logistics and operational plans already in place.

Aifuobhokhan noted that the commission is about 80 per cent ready for the exercise across all 18 local government areas of the state.

"Concerning preparedness, we

are fully on track. Everything is about 80 per cent in place. We are just waiting for the day to come.

"There is nothing we need that we don't have in place," he said.

He added that the commission has been holding grassroots town hall meetings, stakeholder sensitisation, and training sessions for Ad-hoc and permanent staff.

"About 10,000 ad hoc staff are expected to participate in the poll," he added.

Responding to claims by the African Democratic Party that it did not receive notice of the election, the chairman described the allegation as an error.

He said EDSIEC gave notice of the election on July 16, 2025, and has since carried out media publications and stakeholder meetings.

"They cannot claim ignorance unless they don't live in the state. The period for primaries has long gone, the period for substitution of candidates has long gone, and campaigns started on April 24."

"We sent notification to all existing political parties in Edo and the hall was filled," Aifuobhokhan said.

On security, he said the commission has engaged security agencies and the state government to ensure safety of voters and election materials.

**ELECTION CAMPAIGN:**

L-R: Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Comrade Adams Oshiomohle; Gov Monday Okpebholo; Anamero Sunday Dekeri, APC candidate for the Etsako Federal Constituency, and other party leaders, at the flag-off of Edo North Senatorial District Local Government election campaign.

ALGON distributes operational vehicles to security agencies in Osun**OSOGBO**

The Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) in Osun on Saturday distributed operational vehicles to security agencies to strengthen security across the state.

Speaking during the distribution at the State Police Command in Osogbo, the ALGON Chairman, Mr Idowu Abiodun, said the vehicles were part of the completion of an earlier distribution carried out two weeks ago.

"I stand before you today

at this important occasion marking the distribution of the remaining security patrol vehicles to our esteemed security agencies across the state.

"Just a few weeks ago, we unveiled the first batch of patrol vehicles.

"I am pleased to inform this gathering that the remaining vehicles are now ready for distribution to further strengthen security and the maintenance of law and order in the state," he said.

Abiodun described security as the bedrock of meaningful development, noting that no

society can thrive or achieve its developmental goals without peace and stability.

He said the initiative underscored ALGON's commitment to supporting security agencies, adding that local governments, as the closest tier of government to the people, understood the unique security challenges within their communities.

"We are determined to support all necessary efforts to address these challenges effectively," he said.

The ALGON chairman added that the provision of the vehicles was not only a security intervention but also a practical demonstration of the effec-

tiveness of local government autonomy in the country.

He expressed confidence that the vehicles would enhance mobility, improve response time, and enable security agencies to be more proactive.

In his remarks, the Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr Ibrahim Gotan, commended ALGON for what he described as a thoughtful and strategic intervention.

Gotan, who spoke on behalf of other security agencies, stressed that security remained a shared responsibility, noting that the gesture reflected confidence in the capacity of security agencies to deliver effective service.

APC rallies supporters in Edo Central ahead of July 11 council polls

PATRICK ABHULIMEN

EDO CENTRAL

Amid jubilation and encomiums at the All Progressives Congress (APC) on Friday held its Edo Central Senatorial Rally at Ukpujie Primary School, Open Field in Esan North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, Governor Monday Okpebholo urged party supporters to mobilise massively for the July 11, 2026, Local Government elections and reaffirmed his administration's commitment to local government autonomy.

The rally, which attracted a

large turnout of party faithful, leaders, stakeholders and supporters from the five local government areas in Edo Central had in attendance the former Governor of Edo State and Senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, Senator Adams Oshiomohle; APC State Chairman, Emperor Jarrett Tenebe; Deputy Chairman of Edo State APC, Sylvester Aigboboh; Senator representing Edo Central Senatorial District, Senator Joseph Ikpea; Secretary to the Edo State Government, Barr. Umar Ikhilior, Edo Central APC leader, Gen. Cecil Esekhaigbe (Rtd.), APC House of

Representatives candidate for Esan Central/Esan West/Iguben Federal Constituency, Barr. Lucky Esegbe, Member representing Esan North-East/Esan South-East Federal Constituency, Hon. Odionosen Okojie, the five APC chairmanship candidates, 51 councillorship candidates and other party leaders.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Okpebholo reaffirmed his commitment to local government autonomy, stating that his administration would not interfere with council allocations.

"Don't touch local government money, and I promised

the President I will not touch it. You can see what is happening across the state, where local governments are constructing roads. The reason is that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has empowered local governments to function effectively," he said.

The governor also warned criminals operating in the state, declaring that "Edo will be too hot for kidnappers and cultists."

He further pledged to work towards delivering 2.5 million votes for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election, noting that the party's progress would be measured against that target.

Dangote tasks Obasanjo to build capacity for African president**LAGOS**

Africa's foremost industrialist, Aliko Dangote, has urged the Olusegun Obasanjo Leadership Institute (OOLI) to lead high-level leadership training for African presidents, prime ministers and governors.

He also included senior policymakers among those to be trained, describing the institute as the most strategically positioned centre for continental leadership renewal.

Dangote spoke during a courtesy visit by the leadership of the institute and the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library (OOLP) to his petroleum refinery.

Prof. Elvis Otobo, Media Consultant to the Deputy Chief Executive of OOLI, issued this in a statement on Saturday in Lagos.

According to Dangote, there is the need for African leaders, past and present, to embrace the OOLI as a strategic partner in a bid to make a difference in their leadership journey.

"If Africa is serious about changing its development story, then our leaders must embrace continuous learning.

"The OOLI offers the right platform, rooted in African ex-

perience, yet globally oriented, to make that happen," Dangote said.

The industrialist further expressed optimism that the OOLI had the capacity to bridge leadership gaps at continental level, particularly in governance, economic transformation and regional cooperation.

He offered a strong endorsement of the institute's mission and continental relevance.

"The Olusegun Obasanjo Leadership Institute is exactly what Africa needs at this critical time.

"With President Obasanjo and other outstanding African past presidents at its core, the OOLI is uniquely placed to deliver experiential leadership workshops.

"It is also well positioned to offer bespoke training for African leaders, who genuinely want to transform their nations," Dangote stated.

Responding, former President Olusegun Obasanjo recounted the leadership moment that sparked Africa's cement revolution.

"Let me share a previously undisclosed account of my early engagement with Dangote during a visit.

"This is an encounter that would later reshape Africa's industrial landscape."

NDLEA, Edo sensitise students on risk of psychoactive substance, others

BENIN CITY

Students across Edo State on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, received strong double warning against drug abuse as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Edo State Commander Mitchell Ofoyeju, PhD, and Senior Special Assistant to Governor Monday Okpebholo, Hon. Andrew Efe, took the anti-drug campaign directly to the school assembly of Niger College, in the state capital.

The outreach was held ahead of the 2026 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, marked globally on 26th June, with this year's UN theme: "The World Drug Problem: Persisting Issues, New Challenges, Innovative Responses".

"Your brain is your phone's processor - drugs are the virus," Commander Ofoyeju said, while delivering the main

presentation titled, "CHOOSE YOUR FUTURE: SAY NO TO DRUGS," while Commander Mitchell Ofoyeju, PhD, engaged the students with direct questions on trending substances like Colos/Colorado, Mkpuru Mmiri/Ice, codeine syrup, and Tramadol/Rohypnol.

Using simple analogies, Dr Ofoyeju told the SS1-SS3 students: "Your brain is like your phone's processor. Drugs are the virus. They cause memory loss, poor judgement, addiction, and mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Your brain is still growing till age 25. If you damage it now with drugs and WAEC, NECO, and university dreams become hard to attain."

He broke down the consequences into three areas: damage to vital body organs such as lungs, hearts, kidneys and livers. Next is expulsion from school and imprisonment for violating drug offences, while the third is

the trick employed to lure people into drug and substance abuse.

The commander taught the students the five D's to say NO to drugs. They are delay, deflect, decline, distance, and disclose. He assured them that the NDLEA telephone counselling and treatment service is free, confidential, and non-judgemental via the toll-free line 0800-10203040.

The session ended with over 300 students standing up and chanting, MY LIFE, MY FUTURE, NO DRUGS!

The Senior Special Assistant to the Edo State Governor on Drug Policy and Trafficking Control, Honourable Andrew Efe, also addressed the students. He reinforced the Governor Monday Okpebholo ad-

ministration's zero-tolerance stance on drug trafficking and abuse in Edo State.

"Let me speak to you as a father and as a government official," Hon. Efe said. "One decision you make in SS2 can cancel your SS3 results and university admission. Tramadol and codeine make you dull. The only 'high' that lasts is the

high of passing your exams and making your parents proud."

Hon. Efe urged students to see themselves as "future leaders of Edo" and to report anyone offering drugs in school or on social media. He pledged the state government's continued partnership with NDLEA on youth empowerment and school-based prevention programmes.

Fear not, Okpebholo tells farmers...

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stressing that winning elections must be followed by effective grassroots development.

Oshiomhole thanked President Tinubu for granting local government autonomy and encouraged the party's candidates to collaborate with the executive arm of government to achieve the vision of transforming Edo's economy.

The Edo State APC Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe, who welcomed defectors into the party, called on members to unite behind the governor and the party's candidates.

"I call on you all to support our governor to ensure our candidates win the local government election. It will show that we are ready for the general election, where we have promised the President 2.5 million votes, which is achievable," Tenebe said.

The Deputy State Chairman of the party, Sylvester Aigboboh,

who introduced the chairmanship and councillorship candidates, said the governor's achievements had made the campaign easier for APC candidates.

He listed some of the administration's projects to include the completion of 300 kilometres of roads, construction of 68 healthcare centres, acquisition of 50 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses for distribution across the 18 local government areas, and improved funding support for tertiary institutions including Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma; Edo University, Iyamho; Edo State Polytechnic, Usen; and the College of Education, Igueben.

Speaking on behalf of the defectors, former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) senatorial chairman, Bishop Anthony Okosun, commended the governor's development efforts and pledged their support for the APC-led administration's vision of building a new Edo State.

We've embarked on market...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

the support of residents for his administration, the All Progressives Congress (APC), and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

According to him, all ongoing developmental projects across the state would determine the level of support his administration would receive in the forthcoming 2027 general election.

On his target of securing 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu in Edo State, the governor said the achievement would be driven by the impact of all ongoing projects on the people.

"People wonder how we will get the 2.5 million votes, but they forget that this government is doing a lot for Edo people. Our votes will come from the numerous projects we have embarked upon for the benefit of our people," he said.

The governor dismissed

criticism over the target, saying residents understood the focus of the administration and were already supporting efforts towards achieving the goal.

On his part, the Minister of Regional Development, Abubakar Momoh, described Jattu Market as a historic commercial centre that had served the former Midwest Region for decades.

He commended President Tinubu's administration and Governor Okpebholo for reviving the market, saying the project would provide traders with a better environment to conduct their businesses.

"This market will serve the people of Edo North and Edo State in general. Prices are cheap here, and we thank President Tinubu for providing the resources for governors to work for their people and the governor for considering the reconstruction of this market," he said.



COURTESY VISIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Dr. Sanusi Abubakar (left), National Project Coordinator, LPRES, as Idahosa receives some brochures from Alhaji Idi Mukhtah Maiha, Minister of Livestock Development (2nd right), while Engr. Prof. Ikponmwoasa Omorodion, Commissioner of Livestock Development look on, during courtesy visit to Government House.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

Drug risk: Edo Gov, NDLEA, stakeholders affirm readiness for innovative response as students win awards

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Edo State Commander Mitchell Ofoyeju, PhD, and other stakeholders have called for innovative responses in addressing the age-long problem of drug trafficking and abuse.

This position was unanimously adopted by stakeholders who gathered at the Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City, to commemorate the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on Friday, June 26.

The theme for this year, "The

World Drug Problem: Persisting Issues, New Challenges, Innovative Responses," resonated throughout the event, as speakers emphasised the critical need for innovative and collaborative approaches to tackle drug trafficking and abuse in both the state and the nation.

The Governor, who stressed his commitment to establishing zero tolerance for drug trafficking in Edo State, said: "When drug traffickers think they are clever in crime, we will make them understand that we are more innovative in justice delivery.

"Edo State will not be safe for drug trafficking and substance abuse. If you bring drugs into this state, we will find you. We

will seize your drugs, and you will face the full weight of the law. There will be no hiding place and no sacred cow."

Okpebholo, who was represented by his Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Drug Policy and Trafficking Control, Hon. Andrew Efe, said a collaborative approach is vital in winning the drug war.

"This fight cannot be won by government and NDLEA alone. Prevention starts at home. Let us talk to our children at home, in churches and mosques. Schools and faith institutions should make anti-drug education part of the moral curriculum.

"The Edo State government is funding youth empowerment

and skills programmes for our young people. This is aimed at making them productive entrepreneurs who will create wealth and contribute to the economy," Okpebholo noted.

Commander Mitchell highlighted the ongoing battle against drug trafficking and abuse. He reiterated the complexities of the drug landscape, noting the rise of synthetic drugs, the role of the dark web, and the need for a multi-faceted response from various stakeholders.

"We cannot ignore the push factors of ignorance, poverty, unemployment, and peer pressure that drive many of our youth toward drugs," Mitchell said.

NDC de-registration: INEC reserves position as Atiku, Obi kick

ABUJA

As reactions trail the court judgment nullifying the registration of the Nigeria Democratic Party (NDC), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), maintains it will reserve its position on the verdict as it awaits the Certified True Copy (CTC).

The Federal High Court in Lokoja, Kogi State, on Friday, June 26, 2026, set aside an earlier order directing INEC to register the NDC as a political party.

The commission, however, said in a statement issued on Saturday by its Chief Press Secretary and Media Adviser to the Chairman, Adedayo Oke-

tola, that although it is aware of media reports on the judgment, it cannot comment on the ruling until it obtains and reviews the certified copy.

Oketola stated: "Once the Commission's legal department receives and thoroughly studies the CTC of the judgment, INEC will take an informed, lawful decision in line with the court's directives.

"Until then, we cannot comment on the specifics of the ruling, and the public is urged to await the Commission's formal position on the matter."

Recall that Justice Isah Dashen of the Federal High Court in Lokoja had on Friday set aside the court's December 10, 2025,

judgment directing INEC to register the NDC as a political party.

The court ruled that the rights of the Peace Movement Party were infringed upon by the earlier judgment because the party was not joined in the suit despite claiming ownership of the logo relied upon in securing the registration order.

Justice Dashen therefore directed that all parties be restored to the positions they occupied before the December 2025 judgment and directed that the substantive suit be heard afresh with all necessary parties joined.

In a swift reaction, the NDC kicked against the ruling and avowed to appeal the decision as its National Chairman, Sena-

tor Moses Cleopas, maintained that the party had not been de-registered, arguing that the trial court lacked jurisdiction to revisit a matter on which it had already delivered a final judgment.

The ruling has also attracted reactions from former Vice President and presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Atiku Abubakar, and opposition leaders, including the NDC's presidential candidate, Peter Obi and the party's National Leader, Senator Henry Dickson, among others, who described the decision as a threat to Nigeria's multiparty democracy and vowed to challenge it through all available legal channels.

NEWS**NSE lauds Okpebholo's infrastructure drive****● Inducts 42 new members****BENIN CITY**

The Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Benin Branch, at the weekend held the 9th Annual Late Engr. Geoffrey Aiwerioba Public Lecture Series, where it commended the infrastructural development drive of Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo.

The event, which attracted engineers from the national

headquarters of the NSE, sister branches across Edo, Delta and other states, also featured the presentation of scholarships to four outstanding students from public schools in Edo State who excelled in a competitive Computer-Based Test (CBT) organised for public schools in the state.

Two students from Ogbe Primary School, Balogun Divine and Omosefe Osayem-

wenre tied for first place, while another student from the same school, Abhulimen Ofure came second. A student of Akenzua Secondary School, Eze Joseph secured the third position.

The NSE also inducted 42 new members into its fold.

The President of the NSE, Engr. Ali Alimasuya Rabi in his remarks paid glowing tribute to the late Engr. Geoffrey Aiwerioba, describing him as a visionary whose commitment to indigenous engineering practice

laid the foundation for the profession in Nigeria 68 years ago.

The NSE President said that the annual lecture had evolved beyond a routine event into a platform for advancing engineering excellence and national development.

He commended the Benin Branch of the body of engineers for sustaining the legacy of the society's founding coordinator and pioneer president, whose dedication to professionalism and service continues to inspire

generations of engineers.

According to him, Aiwerioba and his contemporaries established the society with the vision of building an industrialised Nigeria driven by indigenous expertise and professional excellence.

He said that the late engineer's advocacy for a recognised engineering institution in Nigeria brought him into confrontation with the colonial administration and local authorities, but his sacrifices ultimately created opportunities for future generations of Nigerian engineers.

He noted that this year's lecture themed, "Infrastructure Delivery through Engineering Governance in Edo State," was timely, stressing that sustainable infrastructure requires, not only physical construction, but also sound governance, ethical standards, accountability and the engagement of certified engineers from project conception to completion.

While acknowledging the infrastructural renewal efforts of

the Edo State Government, the NSE President urged the administration to continue creating an enabling environment for indigenous engineers to thrive, insisting that no nation achieves lasting development by relying solely on foreign expertise.

He charged members of the NSE Benin Branch to remain watchdogs of engineering standards and position themselves as trusted partners in the state's development process.

Chairman of the NSE, Benin Branch, Engr. Tina Oigiagbe, on her part, said the lecture series is a platform to honour the enduring legacy of the late Engr. Aiwerioba, whose contributions to the engineering profession and national development remain a source of inspiration to generations of engineers.

She said the theme of the lecture is particularly relevant as it seeks practical solutions to accelerate economic growth and improve the quality of life of the people through sound engineering governance.

**PRESENTING AWARD TO GOVERNOR OKPEBHOLO:**

President, Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Engr. Ali Rabi (2nd left), presents Governor Monday Okpebholo's award plaque to the Special Adviser to the Governor on Project Implementation and Monitoring, Engr. Mrs Phoebe Bello (2nd right), during the 9th Engr. Geoffrey Aiwerioba Public Lecture Series held in Benin City at the weekend. With them are the Chairman of the NSE, Benin Branch, Engr. Tina Oigiagbe (right), and the 1st Vice President, Professional Development Board, NSE, Engr. Dauda Okoduwa (left).

NSCDC nabs 2 suspected pipeline vandals in Edo**BENIN CITY**

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Edo Command, has arrested two suspected pipeline vandals in Esan West Local Government Area of the state in its determination to combat economic sabotage and protect critical national assets.

The command's Public Relations Officer, CSC Efosa Ogbebor, disclosed this at a news briefing on Sunday in Benin.

Ogbebor said the suspects were arrested during a joint intelligence-led operation.

According to him, the operation was carried out by the NSCDC in collaboration with the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the Edo Governor on Pipeline Surveillance and Security.

The operation, he said, was conducted at a cattle market in Idumabor, Ekpoma, where the suspects were tracked and apprehended.

According to him, the suspects had been on the watch list of the command for some time before their arrest.

"Acting on credible intelligence, the Edo Command, in collaboration with the Office of

the Senior Special Assistant to the Edo State Governor on Pipeline Surveillance and Security, carried out a successful operation that resulted in the arrest of two suspected pipeline persons, who specialise in vandalising NNPC oil pipelines", he said.

The NSCDC spokesperson said that the suspects made useful confessional statements regarding their involvement in the crime.

"Efforts are ongoing to arrest other members of the syndicate and dismantle the entire network behind this heinous crime," he said.

According to the spokesman, one of the suspects, told investigators that he bought the pipeline component for N4 million.

He said both suspects would be prosecuted in accordance with the law after the conclusion of investigations.

Ogbebor reiterated the commitment of the State Commandant, Mr Saidi Akintayo, in protecting critical national assets and infrastructure across the state.

EBSIEC kicks off voter sensitisation ahead Ebonyi council poll

MAXWELL OKECHUKWU

ABAKALI

The Ebonyi State Independent Electoral Commission (EBSIEC) has kicked off voters sensitization across the 13 local government Areas of Ebonyi state.

This exercise was to educate people in the state ahead of 22nd of August 2026, local government council Election.

Chief Collins Agbo Commissioner, Information, Education and Publicity, disclosed that by law the Commis-

sion is in charge of conducting into positions of chairman, vice chairman and councillors in the 171 wards and 2,947 polling units across the 13 local government Areas of the state.

He added that the voters sensitisation exercise was to unveil and enlighten the voting public and registered political parties on their plans of action ahead of the election.

The Commissioner stated also that out of the 17 registered political parties expected to participate in the local government election, only three had

shown interest in that regard.

He listed the parties to include the APC, ADC and Labour party, all of which he said had also submitted letters of intent to participate, while the rest are yet to appear.

Led by the Commission's Chairman Prof. Patrick Enyi and other Commissioners, the sensitisation train is visiting the various local government areas and having meetings with stakeholders including traditional rulers, town unions executives, market traders associations community based or-

ganisations, and labour unions.

He added that following the Electoral Timetable, all political parties are to commence their open public campaigns in accordance with the state Electoral law.

"All political parties are to commence their open campaigns lasting for 150 days and ending 24 hours before the commencement of voting in election day.

The Commission assured that it would do its utmost at delivering credible, free and fair election come 22nd August 2026.

State Police: Lawyer warns against governors' control, political chaos**ABUJA**

Legal practitioner, Mrs Bunmi Aina-Craig, has warned that allowing governors to control the funding and appointments of state police personnel would trigger widespread political repression across the nation.

Aina-Craig, the immediate past President of the National Association of Catholic Lawyers (Abuja Chapter), gave the warning in an interview with newsmen in Abuja on Sunday.

She emphasised that vest-

ing operational control and appointment powers in governors would automatically turn the security outfits into personal tools for harassing political opponents.

According to her, decentralised policing is a better way to tackle the nation's security challenges.

She noted that the current mechanism being considered by the National Assembly contains dangerous structural flaws.

"When you give a governor power to appoint and pay, you only build a personal security

apparatus.

"He will use it to create chaos," she said.

To avert crisis, Aina-Craig urged President Bola Tinubu and the National Assembly to look beyond politics and constitutionally guarantee full independence for the new security forces.

She proposed creating an independent State Police Service Commission to handle recruitment, promotions, and discipline, effectively removing politicians from the management process.

"The commission should

comprise professional bodies like the NBA, the judiciary, civil society, and traditional rulers. It should be headed by a retired judge," she added.

She emphasised that direct, independent funding from the federation account is critical because governors would likely manipulate any security force they financially bankroll.

The legal practitioner urged Nigerians to always think out of the box, noting that the 1999 Constitution must be amended to serve the people's security interests.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct and well-arranged name is **EJEMEARE JOHNSON MOMODU**, not **MOMODU EJEMEARE JOHNSON**. Which was wrongly written in my BVN. All former document remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CORRECTION OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **ABAWEL MERVELOUS**, not **ABAWEL MARVELOUS**, as was wrongly written on my BVN. Also, my correct date of birth is **28/5/2005**, not **24/4/2004**. All former document remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE BIRTH

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **IDONUAGBE DIVINEGRACE**, not **IDONUAGBE DIVINE GRACE**. Also, my correct date of birth is **11-11-2005**, not **11-11-2002** as was wrongly captured on my BVN. All former document remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

CHANGE OF SURNAME

I, formerly known as **ABRAHAM ISHIOMA GEORGE**, now wish to be known and addressed as **EBINUM ABRAHAM ISHIOMA**. All former document remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **ADAMA OBAIKHEDO**, now wish to be known and addressed as **ADAMA OBAIKHEDO ONAIWU**. All former document remain valid. Concerned authorities and the public should please take note.

Cooking gas: Residents welcome price drop, seek further reduction

ABUJA

Residents of FCT have expressed relief over the slight reduction in the price of cooking gas, urging that the downward trend be sustained to ease the burden on households.

The residents, who spoke with our Correspondent in Abuja on Sunday, said a continued decline in prices would improve access to clean cooking fuel and reduce pressure on family incomes.

Cooking gas is currently selling for between N1,498 and N1,650 per kg across the FCT, depending on the location and retail outlet, although some roadside vendors still sell as high as N1,850 per kg.

The development follows months of price increases across the country, during which cooking gas also known as Liquefied

Petroleum Gas (LPG) was sold for as high as N2,000 per kg.

This increased the cost of refilling a 5kg cylinder to about N10,000 and a 12.5kg cylinder to about N25,000

The high prices have forced many households to reduce their consumption or resort to alternative cooking fuels, such as charcoal and firewood.

Mrs Bidemi Ajao, a civil servant, described the reduction as a welcome development.

"I refilled my cylinder on Saturday at N1,498 per kg at NIPCO compared to a few weeks ago when I refilled at N1,650 per kg.

"It may not be a huge drop, but it is a relief for families already struggling with the high cost of living. I plead with the government to sustain this decrease," she said.

Mrs Joyce Asuquo, a public servant, said the reduction

should be sustained to encourage more households to continue using cooking gas.

"Many people switched to charcoal because of the high cost of gas. If prices continue to fall, more families will return to using cooking gas, which is cleaner and safer," she said.

Mr Joseph Bassey, a businessman, said lower cooking gas prices would enable fami-

lies to redirect part of their income to other essential needs.

"Every little reduction counts. We hope the government and marketers will ensure prices become more stable and affordable," he said.

Also speaking, Mr Ahmed Attah, a civil servant, urged that the price reduction should be reflected across all retail outlets in the FCT.

"Some gas outlets have reduced their prices, but others are still selling at very high rates. We want the reduction to be felt everywhere in the city," he said.

Mrs Victoria Cheta, a teacher, said the price reduction was commendable, but it was not significant enough considering the prevailing cost of living in the country.

"Nigerians are still struggling

with low purchasing power, our income is not sufficient to meet our daily needs. The cost of transportation, food, healthcare, education, and rent has all gone up.

"The government must commit to its Renewed Hope Agenda and ease the sufferings of Nigerians. Making cooking gas very affordable to as low as N500 per kg will be a step in the right direction," she said.

Abia: NYSC cultural carnival showcases Nigeria's unity in diversity

UMUNNA (ABIAS)

ABAKALIKI

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Orientation camp in Abia came alive on Saturday with colour, music, and dance as the 2026 Batch 'B' Stream I corps members staged a spectacular cultural carnival.

The event, organised at the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp, Umunna, in Bende LGA, featured 10 platoons, representing major Nigerian ethnic groups.

Each platoon displayed indigenous dances, traditional music and costumes, celebrating the nation's cultural diversity.

The platoons and their represented groups were: Platoon 1 - Ibibio, Platoon 2 - Yoruba, Platoon 3 - Hausa, Platoon 4 - Benin, Platoon 5 - Fulani, Platoon 6 - Urhobo, Platoon 7 - Igbo, Platoon 8 - Efik, Platoon 9 - Tiv, and Platoon 10 - Ijaw.

At the end of the keenly contested performances, Platoon 5, representing the Fulani culture, emerged the overall winner.

Platoon 4, representing

Benin culture, came second, while Platoon 7 representing Igbo, took third position.

In a speech, the state NYSC Coordinator, Alhaji Yunusa Tanimu, described the carnival as a practical expression of the scheme's mandate of fostering national unity and integration.

"Today's carnival is a celebration of one of Nigeria's greatest treasures, our rich cultural diversity.

"Rather than seeing these differences as barriers, we should embrace them as sources of strength that enrich our national identity," Tanimu said.

He said that the carnival served as a "classroom without walls" that teaches tolerance and mutual respect.

He also said the event became significant, especially at a time many young Nigerians were losing touch with their indigenous languages and traditions.

Tanimu advised corps members to carry the lessons of the carnival to their Places of Primary Assignment by respecting the customs of their host communities.



TOMATOES:

50kg basket of tomatoes on display at Mile 12 Market, Lagos.

Tomato prices may ease from August, traders reassure Nigerians

LAGOS

The Tomatoes Growers and Processors Association of Nigeria (TOPAN) has assured Nigerians that the current high prices of tomatoes are expected to decline considerably from late July as the wet-season harvest begins.

The Kaduna State Chairman of TOPAN, Mr Rabiu Zuntu, gave the assurance in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Lagos.

Tomato prices had risen sharply since early May following the end of the dry-season

harvest and reduced supply.

A 50kg basket of tomatoes, which sold for between N18,000 and N20,000 in January, now costs between N100,000 and N130,000, depending on the variety.

Similarly, a 25kg crate currently sells for between N50,000 and N70,000 at wholesale markets in Lagos.

Zuntu said the price surge was seasonal and urged Nigerians to remain patient, noting that supplies would improve once farmers commence harvesting wet-season tomatoes.

"We projected that the increase in tomato prices would last until the end of July when wet-season harvesting begins.

"From August, prices will begin to decline considerably because fresh supplies will enter the market," he said.

According to him, the adoption of flood-resistant tomato varieties has enabled many farmers to cultivate during the rainy season, improving prospects for increased production.

"If farmers had not embraced these improved varieties, Nigerians might have had to wait until October or November before prices dropped," he said.

He attributed the recurring scarcity experienced between May and June to climate change, particularly unpredictable rainfall patterns and extreme heat that limit tomato cultivation in

major producing states such as Kaduna and Kano.

Zuntu added that heat-tolerant seed varieties could also help boost production if made readily available to farmers.

He called on government and private investors to establish more cold-chain storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses and stabilise prices throughout the year.

"When harvest is abundant, proper cold storage will allow farmers to preserve tomatoes for one or two months instead of watching them spoil.

"That will help bridge the gap between supply and demand and reduce seasonal price fluctuations," he said.

Oyo govt. lifts curfew imposed on 10 LGAs, assures residents of safety

IBADAN

The Oyo State Government has lifted the curfew imposed on 10 local government areas following the recent kidnapping incident in Oriire.

The state government initially imposed a 4:00pm to 8:00am curfew on the affected LGAs but later extended it by 24 hours on Thursday.

The LGAs, which include Atiba, Atisbo, Irepo, Iseyin, Itesiwaju, Olorunsogo, Oriire, Oorelope, Saki West Saki East, border the Old Oyo National

Park.

In a statement issued on Saturday in Ibadan by the Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation, Mr Dotun Oyelade, residents can now resume their normal activities.

He expressed appreciation for the cooperation and understanding of the people in the affected areas.

The commissioner added that the state government was closely monitoring the security situation and reassured residents that efforts are ongoing to bring the kidnapping episode to an end.

CSO commends SMEDAN's transparency, seeks wider rural outreach

ABUJA

Social Transparency and Youth Leadership Advancement Initiative (STYLAI), a Civil Society Organisation (CSO), has commended the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) for being transparent in its programmes.

The Executive Director of STYLAI, Mr Jacob Okpanachi, spoke on the sidelines of the celebrations marking the 2026 World MSMEs Day, organised by SMEDAN in Abuja.

Okpanachi said the organisation partnered with SMEDAN to ensure transparency and accountability in the agency's engagement with Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

He said SMEDAN had significantly improved its processes, making CSOs more confident in the agency's delivery of interventions.

"From what we have seen, the processes of engaging small business owners are becoming more transparent and accountable," he said.

Jacob cited initiatives such as

interest-free business financing through organised groups and the agency's partnership with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) to support business formalisation.

He said the interventions would encourage more entrepreneurs to register their businesses and access government support.

The CSO leader urged SMEDAN to expand its interventions beyond Abuja and state capitals to reach entrepreneurs in rural communities.

According to him, many farmers and rural business own-

ers are unaware of SMEDAN's programmes and lack access to information needed to benefit from government initiatives.

"I think there should be a better way to reach them because those in rural communities are more in number than those in the city centres," he said.

The SMEDAN Director-General, Charles Odii, reaffirmed the agency's commitment to supporting MSMEs through skills development, business formalisation, shared production facilities and improved access to business support services.

NEWS**10 suspects in police net over killing of Benue MACBAN's chairman****MAKURDI**

The police in Benue says it has arrested 10 suspects in connection with the killing of the state Chairman of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Ardo Risku Mohammed, and one Yakubu Isa.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Udemé Edet, made the disclosure in a

statement issued on Sunday in Makurdi.

Edet said the arrest followed intensive intelligence gathering and coordinated tactical operations carried out by the command.

She said the suspects were apprehended on the night of June 27 during a coordinated operation by tactical teams in Otukpo Local Government Area.

According to the police spokesperson, the suspects

are Titus Thyodenda, 25; Sam Utibe, 20; Owoicho Ameh, 18; Sunday Useni, 21; Sunday Ogbanje, 46; Daniel Raphael, 23; John Adokole, 24; Samuel Ogazi, 32; Daniel Agbo Daniel, 25; and James Onazi, 30.

Edet said the Commissioner of Police (CP), Cletus Nwadiogbu, commended the tactical teams and investigators for their swift response and professionalism in making the arrests.

She said the commissioner assured residents that investigations were ongoing to identify and apprehend other persons connected with the crime.

"The command remains committed to ensuring that all those found culpable are brought to justice in accordance with the law.

"We are appealing to residents to remain calm, continue to cooperate with security agencies and provide useful

information that could assist ongoing investigations.

"The command is committed to protecting lives and

property while sustaining peace and security across the state," Edet quoted the commissioner as saying.

Proposed textile import ban may hurt economy, jobs —CPPE**LAGOS**

Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) has cautioned against the Senate's resolution seeking to ban the importation of textile fabrics.

CPPE's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Muda Yusuf, via a statement on Sunday in Lagos, warned that such move could undermine key industries, threaten millions of jobs and fail to revive Nigeria's struggling textile sector.

The Senate had urged the Federal Government to implement an import ban for an initial period of five years.

The motion, sponsored by Sen Sunday Katung, is to create a protected window for domestic cotton farmers and local textile mills to scale up production.

But Yusuf noted that while the objective of revitalising the textile industry was commendable, an outright import prohibition would likely create more economic challenges than solving them.

He argued that the decline of the textile industry was driven mainly by structural constraints such as high energy costs, poor infrastructure, expensive credit

and obsolete technology.

Other factors, he listed, driving the decline of the sector included logistics bottlenecks, smuggling and policy inconsistency, rather than import competition.

According to him, restricting textile imports will disrupt production across the country's garment, fashion, tailoring, furniture and interior design industries, which depend heavily on imported fabrics as production inputs.

He said that Nigeria's fashion, garment-making and tailoring industry, valued at about N10 trillion, supported an estimated 10 million livelihoods and represented one of the country's most vibrant creative economy sectors.

According to him, the sector generates significant domestic value addition through design, tailoring, branding, embroidery, merchandising and retailing, often exceeding the value of the imported textile inputs.

"Restricting textile imports would increase production costs, reduce consumer choice and threaten thousands of micro, small and medium enterprises engaged in fashion, tailoring and garment manufacturing," he said.

**NN ROUTE MARCH:**

Personnel of the Nigerian Navy (NN), during the NN Second Quarter Second Route March, in Abuja at the weekend.

Edo Govt sets September 26, deadline for 2027 Hajj registration

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

JATTU

The Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, has announced September 26, 2026, as the deadline for registration and payment for the 2027 Hajj exercise, warning that there will be no extension beyond the stipulated date.

Mallam Uduimoh made the announcement on Friday while addressing members of the Muslim community after the Jumu'ah prayer at the Uzairue Central Mosque in Jattu

and in another gathering of Muslims in Jattu Uzairue in Et-sako West Local Government Area of Edo State.

He explained that the deadline was fixed by the Saudi Hajj authorities and not by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) or the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board.

He said, "This decision is from the Saudi Hajj Authority. It is not within the control of even the NAHCON nor the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board."

The chairman disclosed that pilgrims who completed their payments but could not secure

places for the 2026 Hajj exercise would be given first consideration during the allocation of slots for the 2027 pilgrimage.

He therefore urged all intending pilgrims to begin their payments immediately to ensure they meet the September 26, 2026 deadline.

Mallam Uduimoh also thanked the Muslim community in Uzairue Kingdom for their prayers, support and solidarity throughout the 2026 Hajj exercise, from the pilgrims' departure to the successful completion of the pilgrimage and their safe return to Nigeria.

In a related message, the Executive Secretary of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Eranga Abdulkabir Mu-

hammadkabir, expressed gratitude to Almighty Allah for a successful Hajj exercise.

He said, "Alhamdulillah for a safe and successful journey. May Almighty Allah accept our Hajj as an act of worship and reward us abundantly. Ameen."

He announced that registration for the 2027 Hajj exercise has commenced and advised intending pilgrims to visit the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board for further enquiries and registration.

The board encouraged prospective pilgrims to commence the registration process early to avoid missing the September 26, 2026 deadline, noting that preparations for the 2027 Hajj are already underway.

Army rescues 8 kidnap victims, arrests 39 suspected drug dealers**ABUJA**

The Nigerian Army has said that troops have rescued eight kidnapped victims in separate operations in Zamfara, apprehended 39 suspected drug dealers in Plateau and responded to other security incidents nationwide.

This was disclosed in an operational report made available to news on Sunday in Abuja.

The report said the troops of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Kaura Namoda in Zamfara, rescued two abducted victims after engaging terrorists attacking commuters along the Sabon Gari-Gusau road, forcing the assailants to flee into nearby bushes.

It said that troops discovered two civilians with gunshot wounds during exploitation of the area, and evacuated them to Kaura Namoda General Hospital for medical treatment.

"In another operation, troops and local vigilantes pursued terrorists who kidnapped residents at Kure village in Zamfara, engaged them and rescued six abducted victims after forcing the attackers to flee.

"The rescued victims were identified as Usman, Baba Usman, Hassan, Sunusi, Abdullahi

Yahaya and Sule. Troops later patrolled surrounding communities and urged residents to provide timely intelligence.

"Elsewhere, troops responding to terrorists blocking the Gummi-Anka road engaged the attackers," it said.

The report further stated that troops also responded to a terrorist attack at Danpadama village in Talata Mafara Local Government Area (LGA), to secure the community and restore confidence among residents after the terrorist attack.

In Plateau State, it said the troops conducting raids on criminal hideouts in Bassa LGA apprehended 39 suspected drug dealers and users, recovering suspected illicit substances for further investigation.

"Meanwhile, troops and other security agencies restored calm after suspected cult violence in Ugboren community, Delta, where one person was killed and angry youths destroyed shops and buildings.

"Troops also dispersed protesters who blocked the Gusau-Sokoto highway in Zamfara over persistent insecurity, reopening the road for commuters after restoring normalcy to the area," it said.

Seadogs holds road safety outreach for drivers in Ekpoma

JUDE EHEBHA

EKPOMA

The National Association of Seadogs (NAS), otherwise known as Pyrate Confraternity has held a Road Safety Outreach programme for commercial motor drivers in Ekpoma, Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State as part of efforts to reduce fatalities on the highways.

The outreach which had as its theme: "Arrive Alive: Safety first on the Benin-Ekpoma

Dual Carriage way", was carried out by the San Titanic Deck of NAS, in collaboration with Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

The accident prevention outreach programme which held at the popular Auchu Motor Park in Ekpoma, was occasioned by the increased rate of crashes that had occurred since the dualisation project of the Ekpoma/Irrua Section of the Benin-Auchi Highway.

Dr. Noel Igbinsosa who represented the president of the San Titanic Deck of the National

Association of Seadogs, Mr. Emmanuel Wemambu, gave safety tips to the commercial drivers, emphasising on the need for them to adhere strictly to traffic rules and regulations.

He advised them to always avoid dangerous overtaking, use designated lanes and called on them to at all times, obey speed limit, adding that "Speed thrills, but kills".

He cautioned them against the use of alcohol and drug before embarking on journeys, and equally implored them to

ensure road worthiness of their vehicles before embarking on any journey.

Speaking on the reason for the road safety outreach, Dr. Igbinsosa remarked that it was meant to reduce crashes and the attendant consequences of loss of lives, avoidable disabilities, among others.

He lamented that many were gone to the great beyond, just because they embarked on a journey, adding that the programme was seadogs' way of protecting lives.

Foreign

NEWS

Two boys rescued from Venezuela earthquake rubble after days of being trapped

Two 11-year-old boys have separately been rescued from the rubble of collapsed buildings within hours of each other, after powerful earthquakes struck Venezuela.

Video footage of the first boy, named as Moises, showed him being pulled from the twisted debris - his eyes covered to protect them from the sun - to the applause of rescuers.

Hours later, interim President Delcy Rodríguez announced another 11-year-old boy had been rescued, and posted a video of him on X, being carried down a huge mound of wreckage on a stretcher.

Since the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 quakes on Wednesday, officials have confirmed at least 1,430 deaths. Tens of thousands of people are still missing.

It has now been more than 85 hours since the first quake, but rescuers are not giving up hope, saying people could still be alive, especially if they have access to food and water under the rubble.

The two earthquakes, which struck within 39 seconds,

caused hundreds of buildings to collapse and many people remain trapped inside. Desperate families have been digging through the debris by hand, trying to find their loved ones.

Some have told the BBC that they can hear people under the rubble, but cannot move the heavy slabs of concrete, and are waiting anxiously for heavy machinery to arrive.

Columbia's National Unit for Disaster Risk Management (UNGRD) said Moises was buried under about 3m (9.8ft) of debris, and the rescue team spent six hours conducting "high-precision work" on Saturday to reach him.

Reuters reported that a rescuer was overheard on a walkie-talkie saying the young boy was found near his sister and mother, who had both died.

Hours later, Delcy Rodríguez posted a video on X, purportedly showing the rescue of the second 11-year-old boy in the town of Caraballeda.

"In these hours, every life is hope for Venezuela," she wrote.

Officials said the coastal region

of La Guaira, where Caraballeda is located, has been hit the hardest.

Rescuers' efforts have been hampered by aftershocks, which are in turn terrifying residents.

"To be honest, it makes you feel kind of nervous. Any little noise... horrible," Jesús Andueza, a 64-year-old bus driver told BBC Mundo.

Thousands of people are living in their cars or camping at places like the airport and golf course, away from buildings that could collapse.

The golf course in Caraballeda has become an epicentre for the emergency response.

Its green lawn, which used to be perfectly manicured, is now a makeshift hospital and donation centre, where residents who have lost everything are sifting through piles of donated clothing and boxes of humanitarian aid.

In another part of the golf course, next to a small lagoon, a strip of land has been set up as a landing pad for helicopters arriving with supplies and emergency personnel from within Venezuela and abroad.

In the area surrounding

the golf course, Caraballeda's streets - cracked and covered in rubble - are marked by dust and silence, interrupted only by heavy machinery and those searching among the remains.

Milagros González, who lives in Caribe, told BBC Mundo that her building was one of the few that didn't collapse, and she fled as soon as she could to take refuge at the golf course.

"I left with my two young daughters and my two elderly relatives. But thank God we got out alive. The building can't be lived in. But we're alive, which is what matters," she said.

González admitted that every time she lies down, she wakes up dizzy and thinks it's shaking.

"A psychologist just told me that it's part of the process," she said, while her two young daughters play with dolls on a mattress on the grass.

In a separate video message on Sunday, Rodríguez said the José María Vargas sports complex in La Guaira was also serving as an emergency response centre.

11 killed after plane carrying skydivers crashes in eastern France

Eleven people have died after a civilian aircraft carrying skydivers crashed in the town of Tomblaine in eastern France, local authorities said.

The pilot and 10 passengers died in the incident, including five students and five instructors, according to local officials.

The plane, which was being used by a parachutist school, had taken off from Nancy-Essey airfield when it crashed, local media reported.

Police have urged the public to avoid the area around the airport in the Meurthe-et-Moselle department.

French transport minister Philippe Tabarot said he and interior minister Laurent Nunez were travelling to the scene of the crash, which he called a "terrible tragedy".

Yves Seguy, the prefect of the eastern department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, said that no bystanders were injured in the incident, according to the AFP news agency.

The crash took place in a built up area near a shopping centre, AFP reports.

"The plane fell almost vertically, in the immediate vicinity of a housing estate, on the edge of the airfield," Seguy told French broadcaster BFM, adding it was lucky there were no additional victims.

Half of the skydivers who died were nurses, Thierry Pechey, president of the Meurthe-et-Moselle branch of the Order of Independent Nurses, told BFM.

Local officials also said relatives of the victims were present at the airfield when the crash happened.

Israel strikes southern Lebanon as Hezbollah condemns new deal

Israeli air strikes in Lebanon have killed one person, the country's health ministry said, a day after the two countries signed a deal aimed at paving the way to a lasting peace.

Lebanon's state news agency said an Israeli drone hit the southern town of Nabatieh al-Fawqa, and later reported further strikes in the area, with at least two more people wounded.

The Israeli military said it carried out the drone strike on an individual who posed a threat to its forces, without providing details.

The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group - which was not involved in negotiating Friday's US-brokered agreement - rejected it and accused the Beirut government of undermining Lebanon's sovereignty.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the agreement reached in Washington "historic" and "a blow to Iran and Hezbollah".

Under the four-point framework, Israel will withdraw its forces from the South Litani area, with the Lebanese army taking exclusive control of the vacated territory.

But Israeli forces are permitted to remain in an expanded security area in southern Lebanon.

On Saturday Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem accused the Lebanese government of making damaging concessions.

"The framework agreement in Washington is humiliating, shameful, and a surrender of sovereignty. This agreement is null and void," he said.

Qassem criticised provisions linking Israel's with-

drawal to the group's disarmament, saying they crossed "all red lines".

He accused Lebanese authorities of committing a "grave blunder" which "may even lead to the annexation of these lands", and vowed that Hezbollah would continue its armed resistance.

Later on Saturday Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israeli forces had been ordered to "prepare for an extended stay in the security zone" - referring to an area up to 10km (six miles) inside Lebanese territory.

Lebanon was pulled into the conflict on 2 March, when Iran-backed Hezbollah launched missiles into Israel in retaliation to an Israeli strike that killed Iran's supreme leader.

Israel responded with an air campaign across Lebanon and a ground invasion in the south.

Israeli attacks in Lebanon have killed at least 4,192 people since the current round of hostilities began, according to the Lebanese health ministry. More than 11,600 have been injured, and more than 1.2 million people have been displaced, Lebanon says.

Israel say 36 of its soldiers and four civilians have been killed on both sides of the border.

A US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon on 16 April failed to stop the fighting.

Israel and Lebanon agreed in June to renew their fragile ceasefire, and the US said it would help guide the creation of "pilot zones in which the Lebanese Armed Forces will take exclusive control of the territory to the exclusion of all non-state actors".



VENEZUELA EARTHQUAKE:

11-year-old Moises was pulled out of the rubble after being trapped for days

Australian man charged with murder after girl found dead in suitcase in Thailand

An Australian man has been charged with murder after the body of a 17-year-old girl was found in a suitcase in Thailand, local and Australian media report.

Police in the coastal city of Pattaya said they had found the teenager "stuffed" in the bag, which had been discarded near a railway track, in the early hours of Saturday.

Thai police said they arrested Simon Peter Carman at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport in connection with the death as he was allegedly "preparing to flee the country".

He denies the charges, according to reports. In a message issued to the victim's family after his arrest, Carman said: "I feel bad for what happened to your daughter. It was out of my control."

Pattaya City Police said the 17-year-old, named in local media as Tunchanok Donhomla, had been reported missing at 17:00 local time (12:00 GMT) on Friday.

In a statement on social media, the force said it reviewed CCTV footage which allegedly showed Carman entering a condominium with her before

later emerging alone "carrying a large suitcase".

It said he loaded the bag onto a motorbike before driving towards a railway line.

Officers questioned and arrested Carman at the airport in the Thai capital, some 150km (93 miles) north of Pattaya, at 01:15 on Saturday.

The teenager's naked body was found in a suitcase some 15 minutes later, the force said.

According to reports, Carman denied murder and further charges related to moving or concealing a body and taking a minor for sexual purposes,

and claimed he had acted in self defence.

In a video recorded while he was in custody, the suspect issued a message to the victim's family, saying: "I feel bad for what happened to your daughter. It was out of my control."

"I know you'll be very sad, upset... same [as] me."

He added: "Please tell other girls... just to be careful."

The victim's father said he was "deeply saddened" by his daughter's death, while her step-mother said: "I just want him to face the full consequences."

NEWS**Foreign**

14 killed in Saudi Arabia helicopter crash

The helicopter crashed in Ras Tanura, home to oil giant Aramco's major refinery.

Fourteen people were killed when a helicopter crashed in Saudi Arabia, state media reported on Sunday.

The helicopter, belonging to state oil giant Aramco, crashed in the eastern coastal city of Ras Tanura at 06:00 local time (03:00 GMT) killing all those on board, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

All 14 victims were Saudi citizens, it reported, with in-

vestigations under way to determine the cause of the crash.

Aramco did not immediately comment.

The Saudi energy ministry shared its condolences with the victims' families.

Ras Tanura is home to a major Aramco oil refinery - one of the largest in the Middle East.

The Reuters news agency reported that the company had resumed crude oil loading at the site on Friday after an almost four-month pause due to the war in the Middle East.

Burkina Faso cuts diplomatic ties with France

Burkina Faso's ruling junta on Friday severed diplomatic ties with former colonial ruler France, accusing Paris of persistently acting against its interests. The military regime led by Captain Ibrahim Traore, in power since a coup in September 2022, is pursuing a policy repressive toward critical voices and hostile to Westerners, particularly France.

"The government of Burkina Faso hereby informs the national and international community that it has decided to sever diplomatic relations with France with effect from today, June 26, 2026," it announced in a statement read out on the west African nation's national television.

The junta also accused France of harbouring "neo-colonial ambitions, made evident by its active support for subversive networks and the terrorists who are plunging our country and the Sahel into mourning".

France called it a "hostile and baseless decision" that "illustrated the troubling drift of the Burkinabe authorities", adding that "the necessary reciprocal measures are under review". Burkina Faso, like sev-

eral of its neighbours, has for a decade been hit by deadly violence by jihadists affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

According to the statement, this decision "concerns exclusively the institutional framework of relations between the two states at the diplomatic level". It "in no way calls into question the historical, human, cultural and social ties that unite the Burkinabe and French peoples", the government said. Anti-French sentiment runs high in some former African colonies as the continent becomes a renewed diplomatic battleground, with Russian and Chinese influence growing.

Once master of vast expanses of northern, central and western Africa, France has played a crucial role in the continent's post-colonial history, repeatedly intervening militarily since the early 1960s.

France has vowed to abandon the so-called "Francafrique" strategy, under which Paris sought to keep francophone Africa under its thumb through political collusion, exclusive access for French businesses and oblique financial deals including graft.



UGANDA ARMY GENERAL:
Army Chief General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Uganda.

Uganda's leading media outlets shut down by army chief

Uganda's leading independent media group says it is under "military siege" after the army chief - who is the son of President Yoweri Museveni - ordered the closure of TV stations, newspapers and radio outlets.

The Daily Monitor newspaper said that armed soldiers were stationed outside its headquarters in the capital Kampala and both NTV and Spark TV had been taken off air.

The outlets are part of the Nation Media Group, one of the most influential media companies in East Africa.

It is unclear what exactly led to the crackdown, but in posts on X, Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba said: "I DO NOT believe in a free press! The press should be guided by cadres of the revolution."

Opposition and human rights groups accuse Gen Kainerugaba of being a central figure in a highly repressive re-

gime led by his father.

Supporters of the president and his family say they have guaranteed stability in Uganda, and the economy has improved under their rule.

President Museveni, 81, is a former rebel leader who took power about 40 years ago.

He won a record seventh term in disputed elections in January, with widespread speculation that he is grooming his son to succeed him one day.

Gen Kainerugaba said on X that his "great father" had given him the "power to shut down any media house I want to".

He said that both NTV and Daily Monitor would "not reopen without my permission".

"From now on ALL media in Uganda will follow the rules!" the general added.

The Daily Monitor said on X that the newspaper and its fellow outlets were ordered to close "in a crackdown during

the wee hours of Sunday".

It did not give reasons for the crackdown, but covered the story on its website.

It said staff had reported that "no-one was allowed to enter or leave the compound", while NTV Uganda and Spark TV viewers "were met with blank screens displaying the message 'video unavailable'."

The article pointed out that the Daily Monitor had also been raided by police in 2013 over the publication of a letter allegedly linking senior government officials to a succession plan dubbed the 'Muhoozi Project', while NTV had been forced off air in 2007 following accusations by the government that its news coverage was negative.

"Over the years, Museveni has also repeatedly criticised the Daily Monitor, at one point referring to it as an 'enemy and evil newspaper' over its critical journalism," the article said.

Uganda's National Broadcasters Association said it would seek clarification from the government over the shutdown, saying it was in violation of the constitution.

Defeated opposition presidential candidate Bobi Wine, who is now in exile, said that Gen Kainerugaba had "moved to silence Uganda's remaining independent voices".

"This is the harsh reality we now face, a country under open military rule, where fear replaces law and force replaces accountability," he posted on X.

During January's fiercely contested election, Gen Kainerugaba caused outrage when in posts which were subsequently deleted, he threatened to have the testicles of Bobi Wine removed.

Before the polls, opposition rallies were disrupted, with security forces at times opening fire.

US and Iran exchange strikes and accuse each other of violating ceasefire

The US has conducted new strikes on Iran, following a drone attack on a Panama-flagged vessel in the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday.

US Central Command (Centcom) said it hit multiple targets across Iran in direct response to "continued aggression" against commercial shipping.

In retaliation, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it has launched missiles and drones at US infrastructure in Kuwait and Bahrain, in a statement shared to state media.

Following the exchange of fire, the US and Iran accused each other of violating the ceasefire agreement.

Centcom said in a statement, "Iran was given a chance to honor the ceasefire agreement but elected not to when its forces launched a one-way

attack drone that hit MT Kiku," a Panama-flagged tanker.

In response, it said, US fighter jets conducted strikes on 10 Iranian military targets at multiple locations in and near the Strait of Hormuz. These included military equipment, communication systems, air defense sites and drone storage facilities.

In the IRGC's statement, it said the US had attacked five coastal posts in Iran under what it called "the pretext of the IRGC Navy confronting the offending ship".

In retaliation, the IRGC said it had launched ballistic missiles and drones at "eight key pieces of infrastructure" at the Ali al-Salem base in Kuwait and the Fifth Naval Fleet in Port Salman, Bahrain, "destroying them".

A US official has told Reu-

ters that there were no reported US casualties or major impacts or damage to US facilities in the Middle East.

The IRGC said that under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed earlier this month, Iran has arrangements for controlling passage and navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, and from now on, violating ships will be dealt with more forcefully than in the past.

"Any potential enemy aggression, under any pretext, even if the aggressions are against minor targets, as happened last night and tonight, will have a crushing response," read the statement.

It also accused the US of violating the ceasefire agreed to in the MoU between the two nations, warning that it "will lead to a complete halt to the process".

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has also condemned what it described as the "brutal attacks" a violation of the ceasefire, adding it showed that the US "does not place the slightest value and credibility on its commitments, and breaking promises is part of its nature."

Shortly after the latest US strikes on Iran were announced, Trump said on Truth Social that it was "very possible" that Tehran would "never learn".

"There may come a point when we are no longer able to be reasonable, and will be forced to militarily complete the job that we very successfully started," he wrote on Saturday evening.

The post went on: "If that happens, the Islamic Republic of Iran will no longer exist!"

In the hours following the US strikes, Kuwait and Bahrain both reported that their air defence

systems had been activated.

"Kuwaiti air defenses are currently confronting hostile missile and drone attacks," the Kuwaiti Armed Forces said in a statement shared to X, asking the public to adhere to security instructions.

Bahrain's Ministry of Interior has urged citizens to "remain calm and head to the nearest safe place".

Centcom said that commercial vessels are continuing to operate in the Strait of Hormuz.

The latest strikes come less than a day after the US launched retaliatory strikes on Iran that it said were in response to a drone attack on Singapore-flagged cargo ship, MV Ever Lovely, on 25 June.

Centcom described the American strikes as "a powerful response" to the attack on the cargo ship, adding that

the "unwarranted aggression against commercial shipping by Iranian forces clearly violated the ceasefire".

Tehran said the cargo ship was attacked because it was using an unauthorised route to transit through the Gulf waterway, and said that the retaliatory strikes qualified as a ceasefire violation by the US.

In a statement released on Saturday morning, Iran's foreign ministry said it had carried out more strikes against targets linked to American forces in response, and blamed the "treaty-breaking US regime" for the situation.

The US and Iran agreed on 17 June to end hostilities under a 14-point MoU, which had also called for Iran to use its "best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels with no charge for 60 days".

Governance

Breaking barriers with inclusive governance strategy

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

An innovative governance strategy is unfolding in Benin City as Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo sends a clear message that his administration is prepared to work with communities across all ethnic nationalities from all parts of the country. His belief is that this strategy can foster their contribution and build a state where all have both a voice and a stake in its development.

When he appointed Hon. Abdulkarim Kadiri, a respected Hausa-Fulani community leader in Edo State, as Special Adviser on Community Matters shortly after assuming office in November 2024, the decision attracted different interpretations. Some viewed it through the lens of politics.

Besides Kadiri, Governor Okpebholo appointed other non-Edo indigenes. The list includes several special advisers like Prof Philip Afaha, Special Adviser on Policy and Strategy; Dr. Precious Ogboru, Special Adviser on Health Matters and Personal Physician to the Governor, Hon Paul Ezenwa, Special Adviser to the Governor on Electronic Media and Mr. Jackson Monday Isangofon, Special Adviser on New Media and Visual Communications.

For the governor, the appointments represent a broader governance philosophy — a deliberate effort to ensure that every resident who contributes to the State's progress has a place in government. The appointments also mark a significant departure from the aged practice where minority groups and non-indigenous communities often have limited representation in government structures. Governor Okpebholo has simply created a direct channel for engagement, dialogue, and collaboration with a community that has played an important role in the state's economic and social development.

The decision reflects a commitment to inclusion, unity, and partnership. It demonstrates the governor's belief that Edo State's growth is built not by one ethnic group alone but through the combined efforts of all residents, regardless of their place of origin.

Just now, the governor has amplified this philosophy of inclusive governance by approving the nomination of Mr. Martin Anayochukwu Oli as Commissioner-Designate in the state. A businessman and community leader from Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu State, his nomination further highlights Governor Okpebholo's emphasis on competence, ca-

capacity, and service delivery in select-for key government responsibilities.

Of the truth together, these appointments represent more than political decisions. Even observers have since realised that they reflect a governance model seeking to expand participation and create a government that accommodates diverse experiences, perspectives, and contributions.

In a state like Edo, inclusive governance carries significant implications. Non-indigenous communities contribute immensely to the state's economy through commerce, transportation, agriculture, logistics, and other sectors. Recognising their role through representation and appointments can strengthen cooperation, improve communication, and promote a stronger sense of belonging.

Beyond representation, the strategy also supports social stability. Edo, like many Nigerian states, has experienced moments of tension between communities. Giving different groups a voice within the government can encourage dialogue, strengthen trust, and create a more collaborative approach to addressing challenges.

All this does mean that the political dimension can not also be ignored. Edo remains a politically competitive state with a diverse population. Build-

ing relationships across ethnic and community lines can help broaden political support and counter perceptions that government appointments should be limited to certain groups or interests.

More importantly, the appointments project an image of a government that understands the realities of modern governance — where leadership requires the ability to unite people, manage diversity, and harness the talents of all residents.

Kadiri's role is particularly significant because the Hausa-Fulani community has remained a visible part of Edo's economic landscape. Through trading, livestock business, transportation, and other enterprises, members of the community have contributed to the state's development. His appointment provides an avenue for stronger engagement between the government and the community.

Similarly, Oli's nomination reflects the governor's willingness to draw from broader sources of experience and expertise. His background as a businessman and community-oriented leader is expected to bring additional perspectives to government, especially in areas connected to economic empowerment, investment, and grassroots development.

Government appointments in

Nigeria have often been shaped by considerations of ethnicity, political loyalty, and geographical balance. While those factors remain part of governance realities, Governor Okpebholo is seeking to place increased emphasis on inclusion and the ability of appointees to contribute meaningfully to development.

The underlying message is that belonging to Edo State is not defined only by ancestry but also by commitment, contribution, and willingness to support the state's growth.

By extending opportunities to individuals from different backgrounds, Governor Okpebholo is reinforcing the idea that Edo State is a shared project. Every community that contributes to its economy, security, and social progress has a role in shaping its future.

As the Governor continues to implement his policies, the appointments of nonindigenes remain defining examples of his approach to governance — one that is all inclusive, built around collaboration, broader participation and recognition of diversity as a strength.

• *Dr. Ebojele has his PhD. in Public Administration and is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo.*

Governor Okpebholo reaffirms support for IDPs, donates relief materials to Uhogua camp

Governor Monday Okpebholo has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to the welfare of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), particularly women and children affected by armed conflicts, insurgency, natural disasters, and other humanitarian crises.

The Governor gave the assurance through his representative during the presentation of relief materials

to residents of the Home For The Needy Foundation, an IDP camp located in Uhogua Community, Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

Leading the state government's delegation, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Religious Matters, Apostle Sule Faraday, said the intervention formed part of Governor Okpebholo's longstanding humanitarian outreach aimed

at improving the living conditions of displaced and vulnerable persons across the state.

According to Faraday, the Governor remains committed to ensuring that displaced persons have access to basic necessities and adequate support. He stressed that the administration would continue to prioritize the welfare of vulnerable groups and ensure that no resident is left behind in the state's development efforts.

The delegation donated food supplies, toiletries, and other essential materials to residents of the camp. The visit also featured prayers for the children and other occupants of the facility.

Speaking during the event, the camp's Supervisor, Evelyn Omigie, expressed appreciation to the Edo State Government for its consistent support to the foundation. She noted that the assistance had

helped to alleviate some of the challenges faced by residents but appealed for additional support to meet the growing needs of the camp.

One of the beneficiaries, Sarah Gabriel, who spoke on behalf of other displaced persons, said the donated items would provide much-needed relief to residents. She commended the state government for remembering the camp and extending support to people facing diffi-

cult circumstances.

The Home for the Needy Foundation currently provides shelter and care for displaced persons, including women and children. Stakeholders at the event expressed optimism that the government's intervention would encourage individuals, corporate organizations, and other philanthropists to partner in supporting displaced persons and vulnerable groups across Edo State.





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NVBF adopts October-May league calendar, intensifies continental preparations

KEHINDE OSAGIODE

The Nigeria Volleyball Federation (NVBF) has adopted an October-to-May league calendar beginning from next season as part of efforts to align its domestic competitions with the international volleyball calendar.

The President of the federation, Musa Nimrod, weekend, disclosed this at the end of the first

phase of the 2026 National Premier Volleyball League in Abuja.

According to him, the new calendar will enable foreign-based Nigerian players to honour their club commitments abroad while remaining available for national assignments.

"We have informed all clubs that our season will now start in October and end in May. That is the international standard and it will reduce scheduling

challenges, especially for our foreign-based players," he said.

Nimrod said the League Management Committee have been directed to conclude the Super Cup and the first phase of the Premier League before the end of each year to ease fixture congestion.

He added that the decision also considered the 2027 general elections, which could affect sporting activities across the country.

"We must plan ahead because 2027 is an election year. If we fail to prepare early, it will affect our competitions," he said.

Nimrod also said preparations have commenced for the Zone 3 Beach Volleyball African Nations Cup qualifiers scheduled for July 3 to July 7 in Badagry, Lagos State.

He disclosed that the national teams would camp in Kaduna before moving to Badagry to train on natural sand ahead of the competition.

According to him, Badagry

was selected because of its accessibility for participating West African countries and its favourable environment for beach volleyball.

"We are expecting eight countries in Badagry, and the top three teams will qualify for the African Championship in Morocco later this year.

"Badagry has the facilities, accommodation and the environment needed for a successful tournament. It is also easily accessible for countries within the West African sub-region," he said.

Nimrod said the federation had also relocated its Abuja beach volleyball activities from Jabi Lake Park to the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, where an artificial sand court meeting international standards had been installed.

On Nigeria's preparations for the African Senior Championship in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, scheduled for July 13 to July 23, Nimrod said the men's national team would begin camping immediately.



INTERNATIONAL VOLLEYBALL



FIBA World Cup qualifiers: D'Tigers ranked 12th in latest African Power Rankings

Ahead of the third window of the FIBA Africa World Cup qualifiers, Nigeria's D'Tigers have been placed 12th in the latest FIBA African Power Rankings, raising concerns over the team's chances of advancing to the next stage.

The ranking reflects Nigeria's disappointing performance during the opening window of the qualifiers, where the D'Tigers managed just one win from three games to sit on a 1-2 record.

In a bid to revive the team's fortunes, the Nigeria Basketball Federation appointed former NBA head coach and two-time NBA champion David Fizdale to lead the technical crew.

The appointment is expected to provide the much-needed boost as the team prepares for the decisive fixtures.

However, with only a week remaining before the next round of qualifiers tips off, there has been little communication regarding the team's preparations, leaving fans uncertain about the squad's readiness.

Despite the setback, Nigeria still has a realistic opportunity to qualify for the next round, with one or two victories in the upcoming three matches likely to strengthen their chances of progression.

The D'Tigers will now be aiming to improve on their early performances and keep their FIBA World Cup qualification hopes alive.

Athletics: Choosing athletics over football was the best decision of my life —Patience Okon George

Nigeria's 400m queen, Patience Okon George, has revealed that choosing athletics over football remains the best decision she has ever made, despite initially dreaming of a career on the football pitch.

In an interview on the sidelines of the AFN Commonwealth Games Trials, the 34 year old multiple-time African champion reflected on the difficult choices that shaped her remarkable career.

Fresh from winning the women's 400m title at the trials, Okon George disclosed that football, not athletics, was her first love.

"At first, running on the track was not my goal because I was playing football while also doing athletics," she said.

The Olympian explained that her passion for football became so strong that her then coach, Coach Ogunike, gave her an ultimatum to choose between the two sports.

"It got to a point when I was living with Coach Ogunike while I was in secondary school. One day, I was at the football field when he called me and asked, 'Patience, which event do you want to choose?' I told him I loved football and wanted to choose it. He then said if football was my choice, I should return to my family. So I packed my things and went home because football was my main goal then.

I also noticed that whenever I trained on the track, it drained my strength immensely."

However, the separation was only temporary.

"One day, he came to my school and told me to return to athletics. He even apologized, but I refused. He later spoke to my father, who convinced me to give athletics another chance." She narrated.

Looking back, Okon George believes returning to athletics transformed her life.



PATIENCE OKON GEORGE

Wrestling Federation congratulates Adeniyi on his re-election as WCO chairperson

The Nigeria Wrestling Federation has taken time to celebrate the resounding victory of its President Bashir Adewale Adeniyi MFR after he was re-elected chairperson World Customs Organisation (WCO) Council.

The Comptroller-General of Nigeria Customs Service on Saturday

during the World Customs Organisation (WCO) Council sessions held at WCO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, unanimously emerged chairperson of the Organisation for the second time, adding to the historic record of becoming the first Nigerian to head the 73-year-old organisation, which has

187 member countries and is the highest decision-making body in global customs administration.

The Vice President Nigeria Wrestling Federation, Chris Ampila in a goodwill message issued out through the Federation Media Assistant, Promise Okotoko, on behalf of the board and wrestling family, described Adeniyi's recognition as a significant milestone in projecting Nigeria's image positively on the global stage.

The statement while congratulating the Customs boss, management, and staff of the NCS noted Adeniyi's exemplary understanding of the sector and his steadfast commitment to redefining a sector he knows very well and is creatively remodeling.



BASHIR ADEWALE ADENIYI (MIDDLE)

Rivers United strengthen squad with signing of Bayelsa United goalkeeper

Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) giant Rivers United have completed the signing of goalkeeper Clinton Andy Ezekiel from Bayelsa United.

Ezekiel, who emerged as one of Bayelsa United's standout performers during the 2025/26 NPFL season, has joined Rivers United on a one-year contract ahead of the new campaign.

The highly-rated shot-stopper impressed with a series of commanding displays between

the sticks, attracting interest from several clubs before Rivers United secured his signature.

His arrival is expected to strengthen Rivers United's goalkeeping department as the Port Harcourt-based club prepares for the 2026/27 NPFL season and targets success in domestic competitions.

The club continues its recruitment drive as preparations intensify for the new league campaign.

Sports



NSC expresses confidence in Team Nigeria, as 29 athletes invited

● **Three-week foreign training camp opens July 2 in Aberdeen**

Women's 100m/4x100m Rosemary Chukwura Miracle Ezechukwu Miria-Thompson Onokwe Tajiri Ugbo	Women's Discus Chiagor Amasochi
Women's 200m Jennifer Chukwura Ohi Rosemary Nwankwo	Women's Hammer Oyewade Olatoye
Women's 400m/4x400m Patience Okon George Treasure Olorunke Shelina Osofi	Men's 100m/4x100m Favour Ashe Enoch Adesopeke Chidera Ezeakor Tajiri Odehin
Women's 800m Comfart Arastie James	Men's 200m Badmus Olatari James Taiwo Emmanuel Ushaurita Isahiri
Women's 1500m/5C Aferonke Akantí	Men's 400m/4x400m Emmanuel Nnanyi Ojili Samson Nathaniel Ezekiel Adegunle Victor Sampson Iwe Chidi Okazi Sikiru Adesanya
Women's 100mH Tobi Amusan Akonwa Taburige Janet Standley	Men's 110m Nwanne Onwaeze
Women's High Jump	Men's 1500m/5000m

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has expressed confidence in Team Nigeria's athletics contingent ahead of the 2026 Commonwealth Games, following the invitation of 29 athletes by the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) to represent the nation.

The invited athletes, drawn from various track and field events, will continue preparations alongside representatives from other sports in Abuja before proceeding to a three-week overseas training camp scheduled to open

on July 2 in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Leading the list of invitees is Nigeria's sprint hurdles star and two-time Commonwealth Games champion, Tobi Amusan, whose experience and pedigree are expected to provide leadership for the team as preparations intensify for Glasgow 2026.

Also invited are some of Nigeria's top-performing athletes, including Kayinsola Ajayi, Favour Ashe, Ese Brume and Chukwuebuka Enekeuchi, alongside a blend of established internationals and emerging

talents across the sprints, relays, jumps and throws.

DG, Hon. Bukola Olopade described the composition of the team as a strong indication of Nigeria's determination to challenge for medals at the Games, noting that the selected athletes have consistently demonstrated their ability to compete at the highest level.

According to the Commission, the Abuja camp will provide the training and other support required to sharpen the athletes' preparations before the team moves to Scotland for the final phase of training.

The invited athletes include:
Men's 100m, 200m and 4x100m Relay: Kayinsola Ajayi, Alaba

Akintola, Favour Ashe, Chidera Ezeakor, Adekalu Fakorede, Israel Okon and Udodi Onwuzuruike.

Men's 400m and Mixed 4x400m Relay: Samuel Ogazi, Edidiong Udo, Tyler Johnson and Ezekiel Nathaniel.

Men's 400m Hurdles: Ezekiel Nathaniel.

Men's Decathlon: Jami Schlueter.

Men's Javelin: Chinecherem Nnamdi.

Men's Shot Put: Chukwuebuka Enekeuchi.

Women's 100m, 200m and 4x100m Relay: Blessing Ogun-diran, Rosemary Chukwura, Tima Godbless, Miracle Ezechukwu, Olayinka Olajide and Obi Chukwuka.

Horse Racing: Nigeria bred horses to set global record soon —HRFN National Coordinator

Mustapha Abubakar-Bida, the National Coordinator of Nigeria, HRFN, says Nigeria-bred horses will soon meet up global standards.

Abubakar-Bida disclosed this during the grand finale of the Kano derby competition with the theme, Renewed Hope International Horse Racing Derby, on Saturday.

He said that during the competition, the Nigeria-bred horses increased in their skills, speed and strength.

According to him, horses that always raced for about 1 minute, 10 seconds for 5 furlongs now raced it in 1 minute, describing the feat as one of the highest speeds one can get in a horse.

"Today history has also been made in the sense that our horses that were born and bred in Nigeria are breaking records day by day.

"You know in their final race for today, their skill, their speed has increased. They have always raced for about 1 minute, 10 seconds for 5 furlongs.

"So, we are moving closer to breaking a global record as far as speed of racing is concerned and now this is also putting Nigeria at the global stage.

"What it means is that gradually we are getting there. We are going to have horses that

can be rated as the top speed horses in the world. Now this is one of the major things that happened," he said.

Abubakar-Bida also said that the introduction of the starting gate has improved time management and uplift the horse racing standard.

He said the federation targets to be first in Africa to produce female jockeys with the novelty female race held during the competition.



MUSTAPHA ABUBAKAR-BIDA

2026 World Cup: We'll play Argentina with the right attitude —Bubister

Cape Verde national football team coach, Bubister said his team will approach their 2026 FIFA World Cup knock-out game against defending Champions Argentina with the right attitude.

Cape Verde qualified for the

knock-out stage of the 2026 FIFA World Cup in their debut appearance after playing a goalless draw against Saudi Arabia on Friday, becoming the smallest nation to ever reach the World Cup knock-out.

The West African team finished second in Group H with three points, coming out undefeated in a group that had Spain and Uruguay. The team has been drawn against holders Spain in the round of 32.

Speaking after his team's 0-0 draw against Saudi Arabia, Coach Bubister admitted that what they have achieved is a bit shocking.

"It's a bit of a shock, although we'd always had it in mind that we might reach this stage after the first two matches," Bubister said.

"We told the players they had to work hard and have confidence because the reward would come. And here we are. The people of Cape Verde should be proud of what this



BUBISTER

Eagles striker Arokodare told to leave Wolverhampton

Super Eagles forward, Tolu Arokodare, has been advised to begin seeking new opportunities elsewhere, following the signing of Mexican striker, Raul Jimenez, by Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Chris Gallagher said that the arrival of the North American player could signify the end of Arokodare's stay at Wolves.

Arokodare joined Wolverhampton Wanderers after a successful period in Belgium, where he netted 23 goals and provided seven assists in 45 matches across all competitions.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian international was unable to replicate that success in the Premier League, as Wolves faced a disappointing

season that culminated in relegation to the Championship.

In his article for Football League World, Gallagher suggested that Arokodare's difficulties might have arisen from the club's failure to effectively leverage his strengths, noting that the Super Eagles talent could regain his top form in the Championship.

He said, "It could be argued that Wolves didn't play to Arokodare's strengths, and, in the Championship he could be more effective.

"But, with Raul Jimenez joining, the Mexican is certain to be the main number nine. Plus, Sasa Kalajdzic is back at the club, and Peixoto may want to bring in his own players," he added



TOLU AROKODARE

NPFL: Salisu Yusuf quits Coton Sport, set for NPFL return

Former Super Eagles coach Salisu Yusuf has ended his contract with Benin Republic side Coton Sport after a successful spell with the club, paving the way for a return to the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL).

Yusuf, who guided Nigeria to a silver medal at the 2018 African Nations Championship (CHAN), leaves the Beninese outfit after an impressive debut campaign in the Championnat National du Bénin.

Under his leadership, Coton

Sport finished second in the league to secure a place in next season's CAF Confederation Cup.

The achievement marked the best league finish in the club's history and earned them their first-ever qualification for a continental competition.

The experienced tactician is now expected to make a return to the NPFL, with several clubs reportedly monitoring his availability ahead of the 2026/27 season. His next destination is yet to be officially confirmed.



SALISU YUSUF

Yusuf, Ogunjobi win DavNotch tennis titles

Abubakar Yusuf defeated Canice Abua 7-5, 6-1 to win the men's singles title at the sixth DavNotch National Open Tennis Championship in Abuja.

The final was played at the Ifedayo Akindoju Centre Court, Moshood Abiola National Stadium, on Saturday.

Yusuf produced a dominant performance to overcome Nigeria's number one-ranked player and claim his maiden DavNotch championship title.

The victory ended years of disappointment for Yusuf, who had repeatedly lost to Abua in previous encounters.

An excited Yusuf described the triumph as a dream come true after defeating a player he greatly admired.

Yusuf said: "He is my idol. We have been playing for six years and he has been beating me.

"Today, I told myself it was a do-or-die affair. I capitalised on my opportunities and was able to beat him."

Yusuf attributed his success to mental strength, confidence and focus throughout the contest.

"I was 100 per cent confident because if my confidence dropped even one per cent, he would take advantage.

"I stayed focused because I know what he can do," he said.

The new champion said his next ambition was earning a place in Nigeria's Davis Cup team.

He added that the DavNotch Championship had given him a platform to display his potential.



Colombia, Portugal advance after goalless draw as DR Congo overcome Uzbekistan 3-1

Colombia and Portugal settled for a goalless draw in their final Group K match of the 2026

FIFA World Cup, as both sides booked their places in the Round of 32. The Democratic Republic

of Congo also concluded their Group K campaign with a convincing 3-1 victory over Uzbekistan, progressing to the next round after an impressive display.

The encounter was closely contested, with both teams creating chances but failing to find the breakthrough.

Colombia looked dangerous on the counterattack while Portugal controlled possession for long periods, but solid defending and disciplined goal-keeping ensured that neither side could break the deadlock.

The match was played at a steady pace, with both teams appearing cautious as qualification for the knockout stage

was already within reach.

The 0-0 draw confirmed Colombia's progression as the winner of group K and Portugal's as the runners-up, but Portugal advances to face the runners-up of Group L Croatia, while Colombia faces a best third-placed team.

In spite of the absence of goals, the match showcased tactical discipline and determination from both sides as they shifted their focus to the knockout rounds.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of Congo defeated Uzbekistan 3-1 in their final Group K encounter to secure passage into the Round of 32.



COLOMBIA PLAYERS CELEBRATE

2026 WORLD CUP FIXTURES



World Cup: Argentina conquer Jordan to top group J as Austria, Algeria share six-goal thriller

Argentina finished top of Group J after beating Jordan 3-1, while Algeria and Austria played out an entertaining 3-3 draw in their final group-stage matches at the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

As the defending champions, Argentina won Group J but will face Cape Verde (the Group H runners-up in the Round of 32.

Argentina advanced as Group J winners and are expected to face the runners-up of Group I in the Round of 32, while Austria, who finished second in the group J is projected to face the winner of Group H.

Austria took the lead against Algeria in the 28th minute through Marko Arnautovic after a fine assist from David Alaba.

Algeria fought back and equalised on the stroke of half-time through Belghali R. to send both sides into the break level at 1-1.

The Europeans regained the advantage in the 55th minute when Marcel Sabitzer finished off a move created by Konrad Laimer.

However, Algeria once again responded strongly as Riyad

Mahrez found the back of the net in the 60th minute following an assist from Houssem Aouar to make it 2-2.

Arnautovic was later shown a yellow card in a tense closing period.

Austria looked to have secured victory deep into stoppage time when Sasa Kalajdzic scored in the 90+5 minute from Philipp Mwenes's assist.



MESSI CELEBRATE WITH TEAM MATE

Croatia, England secure World Cup progression

Croatia defeated Ghana 2-1 in their final Group L fixture to secure top spot and qualify for the Round of 32.

England also completed their Group L campaign with

a 2-0 victory over Panama, advancing after a strong display.

Croatia opened the scoring in the 31st minute through Petar Susic, who finished Mateo Kovacic's well-timed assist.

The European side dominated possession in the opening half, creating several opportunities against Ghana's defence. Veteran midfielder Luka Modric controlled proceedings from midfield, helping Croatia maintain their attacking rhythm.

Ghana struggled to penetrate Croatia's disciplined backline in spite of their attempts to create openings before the interval.

After the restart, Ghana improved and found the equaliser in the 73rd minute through Daryl Luckassen.



CROATIA VS GHANA

Africa celebrates historic tournament showing as nine CAF teams reach knockout stage

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has emerged as one of the biggest success stories of the FIFA World Cup 2026 after nine of its 10 representatives secured places in the Round of 32.

With a remarkable 90 percent qualification rate, Africa recorded the highest knockout qualification percentage among all six continental confederations, underlining the

continent's growing strength on the global stage.

South America's CONMEBOL followed with five of its six teams (83 percent) advancing, while Europe (UEFA) saw 13 of its 16 representatives (81 percent) progress to the knockout rounds.

Host confederation CONCACAF managed to send only three of its six teams (50 percent) into the last 32 despite the tournament being staged

across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Asia's AFC endured a difficult campaign, with just two of its nine teams (22 percent) reaching the knockout phase, while Oceania (OFC) failed to produce a Round of 32 qualifier from its lone representative.

The impressive performance by African nations marks another milestone for the continent at the expanded 48-team

FIFA World Cup, reinforcing the growing competitiveness of CAF teams on football's biggest stage as they now aim to make a deep run in the knockout rounds.

The nine African countries that have qualified for the Round of 32 are: Morocco, South Africa, Cote D'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, DR Congo and Algeria.



GROUP	1	2	3	4
A	USA 1-0 CAN	MEX 2-0 USA	MEX 1-0 CAN	MEX 2-0 USA
B	GER 1-0 JPN	GER 2-1 JPN	GER 1-0 JPN	GER 2-1 JPN
C	ARG 1-0 SAU	ARG 2-0 SAU	ARG 1-0 SAU	ARG 2-0 SAU
D	ESP 1-0 URU	ESP 2-0 URU	ESP 1-0 URU	ESP 2-0 URU
E	ITA 1-0 RWANDA	ITA 2-0 RWANDA	ITA 1-0 RWANDA	ITA 2-0 RWANDA
F	USA 1-0 CAN	MEX 2-0 USA	MEX 1-0 CAN	MEX 2-0 USA
G	GER 1-0 JPN	GER 2-1 JPN	GER 1-0 JPN	GER 2-1 JPN
H	ARG 1-0 SAU	ARG 2-0 SAU	ARG 1-0 SAU	ARG 2-0 SAU
I	ESP 1-0 URU	ESP 2-0 URU	ESP 1-0 URU	ESP 2-0 URU
J	ITA 1-0 RWANDA	ITA 2-0 RWANDA	ITA 1-0 RWANDA	ITA 2-0 RWANDA
K	COL 1-0 PANAMA	COL 2-0 PANAMA	COL 1-0 PANAMA	COL 2-0 PANAMA
L	CRO 2-0 GHANA	CRO 3-1 GHANA	CRO 2-0 GHANA	CRO 3-1 GHANA
M	ENG 2-0 PANAMA	ENG 3-0 PANAMA	ENG 2-0 PANAMA	ENG 3-0 PANAMA