

# SEC bans promotion of unapproved Dangote Refinery IPO

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has banned the marketing and promotion of an alleged Initial Public Offering (IPO) by Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals FZE.

The commission, in a public notice issued on Tuesday, said no application for such an offer had been filed with or ap-

proved by it. SEC said it had become aware of advertisements, flyers, digital banners and targeted electronic mails circulating on social media platforms and investment channels concerning a purported securities offering of the refinery.

The commission expressed concern over the involvement of

some registered Capital Market Operators (CMOs) in what it described as an unwholesome and manipulative exercise of actively soliciting advance subscriptions for an offering that had not been presented to it.

According to SEC, no application for the registration of an IPO or public offer of shares of the refinery has been filed with

or approved by the commission. It said the ongoing pre-marketing activities were capable of misleading investors, distorting market expectations and undermining the integrity of the capital market.

The commission said the marketing campaign and invitations to create accounts, pre-fund or secure guaranteed allocations

amounted to market manipulation and constituted a serious violation of the Investments and Securities Act (ISA) 2025.

Consequently, SEC directed all registered CMOs, particularly stockbrokers and digital platform promoters, to immediately cease all promotional activities relating to the purported offer.

The commission ordered

operators to stop publishing, reposting or distributing any promotional material, flyers or commentary relating to the acquisition or allocation of shares in the refinery.

It also directed them to remove all unauthorised marketing materials from web-

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PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968      VOL. 47, NO. 1,292      WEDNESDAY 24TH JUNE, 2026.      #200

# Tinubu transmits State Police Bill to Senate

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has transmitted the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Alteration) State Police Bill, 2026, to the Senate for consideration.

The correspondence, dated June 15, 2026, was read on the floor of the Senate by the

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, during plenary on Tuesday.

In the letter, Tinubu said the proposed legislation sought to amend the 1999 constitution to provide a constitutional framework for the establishment of state police services across the country.

"I am delighted to present

to the Senate for consideration the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Alteration) State Police Bill, 2026. It seeks to amend the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, to create a constitutional pathway for the establishment of state police services in Nigeria," he stated.

According to him, the bill

builds on previous legislative efforts by both chambers of the National Assembly and includes safeguards to support the implementation of a dual policing system.

"This bill builds on the significant work already done in this regard by the House of Representatives and the Senate. It incorporates additional safeguards to ensure that the creation of a dual policing structure to address our nation's evolving security challenges will be achieved quickly

and effectively for the benefit of all Nigerians," the letter read in part.

The President described the proposal as a key component of his administration's efforts to reform Nigeria's security architecture.

"The proposed legislation is a critical component of our administration's strategy to reorganise Nigeria's security architecture to better protect our citizens," he stated.

Tinubu urged the upper chamber to give the bill expeditious consideration.

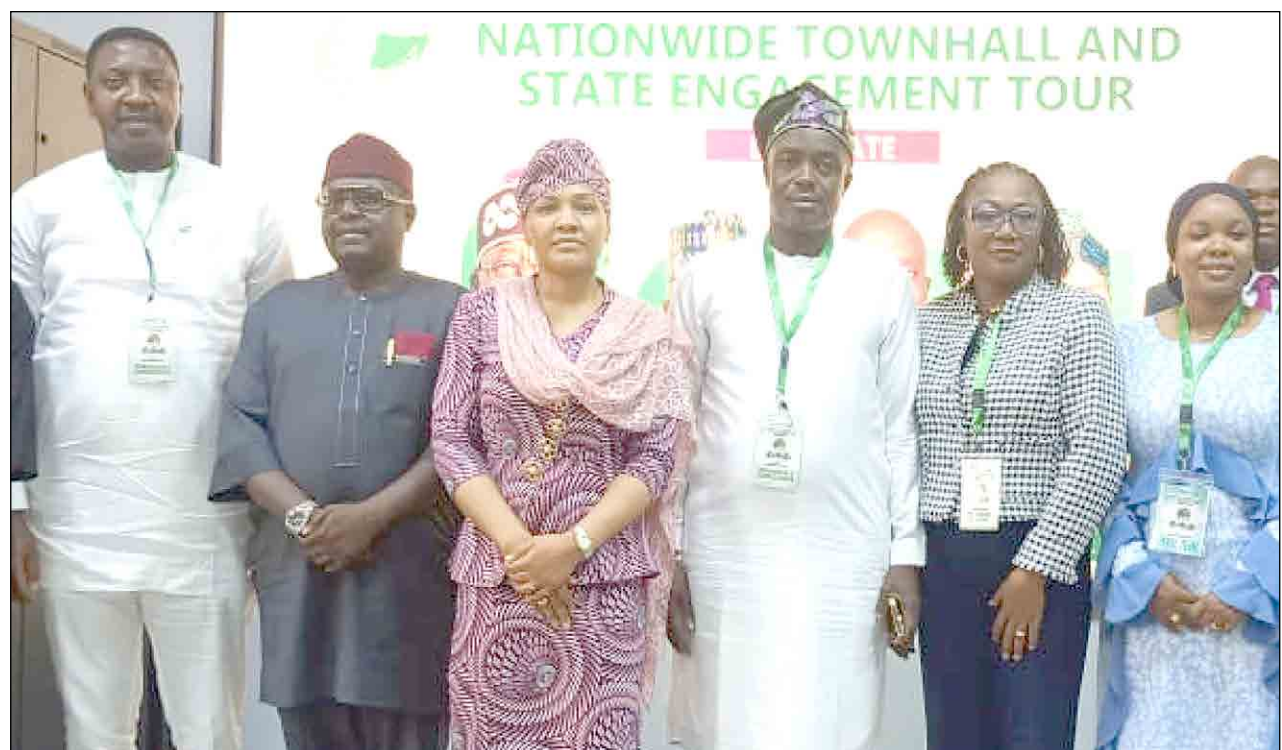
In his remarks, Akpabio

stressed the need for all senators to be at plenary on Wednesday to consider the bill for passage.

He said: "As we struggle to become senators, let us also remember the responsibilities of being a senator. It is not enough for us to secure a ticket and, when we get elected, fail to come to the chamber or make meaningful contributions. It is extremely important that we all report tomorrow (Wednesday)," he said.

Also speaking, the Senate

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**EASE OF DOING BUSINESS:** DG, PEBEC, Princess Zahrah Audu (3rd left); Commissioner for Trade, Business and Cooperatives, Hon. Omoh Anabor (3rd right), and other participants at the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), sub-national engagement and technical reforms workshop 2026 held in Benin City Edo State.

## Edo moves to harmonise single tax code payment platform

RICHARD EWEKA

PORT HARCOURT

The Edo State Commissioner for Business, Trade, and Investment, Hon. Omoh Anabor, has disclosed that the Edo State Government has put modalities in place to harmonise a single tax code payment platform to ease doing business in the state and boost investors' confidence.

The Commissioner spoke on the sidelines of the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) Nationwide sub-national engagement and technical reforms workshop 2026 held in the state.

The Commissioner commended the governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpehlo, for creating the platform for the engagement, as the SHINE agenda of his administration is

in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the ease of doing business in Nigeria.

He noted that Edo State is on the right track, as most of the PEBEC reforms have been embarked on by the Edo State Government.

He added that the state has implemented many policies around trade and commerce and has also implemented other policies related to the ease of doing business in Edo State.

"We have engaged the Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS) on the need to harmonise a single tax code payment platform, which is the basic presentation from the Director-General (DG) of PEBEC, whose focus is to harmonise the payment platform. The har-

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# NEWS

## We're laying foundation for new Nigeria — Tinubu

### ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu says his administration is laying the foundation for a new Nigeria that works for the common prosperity of all citizens.

Tinubu made the remarks on Tuesday while inaugurating the

construction of the two service carriageways of the Southern Parkway from Arterial Road S20 (Oladipo Diya Way) to Ring Road II, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

The President, represented by the National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress, Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, not-

ed that his administration's reforms in the last three years were tough but necessary.

He, however, said, "The results are here – the roads, the bridges, the rails, and housing. We are laying the foundation for a new Nigeria that works – and works for all and for our common prosperity.

"Stay with us, support us, stand by the Renewed Hope Agenda. The best of Abuja and the best of Nigeria are still ahead of us."

Tinubu said that in line with

the Abuja Master Plan, the road, when fully developed, would enhance vehicular traffic circulation within the southern part of the city and provide vital inter-district connections across Phase I to Phase 4 of the FCT.

He explained that the main carriageway (Bola Ahmed Tinubu Way) was inaugurated earlier by his administration, adding that the service carriageways were not a luxury but would ease access.

The President noted that the

residents of Duste, Gudu, Gaduwa, Duboyi, and a housing estate in Phase II face heavy vehicular congestion daily in S2 (Abdulsalami Abubakar Way) and S20, especially at peak periods.

He said that when the service carriageways are completed, the pain will reduce, adding that traffic will then flow freely, while travel time will drop, just as businesses will be able to save money, and families will spend less time.

"That is the dividend of democracy, and that is the re-

newed hope that you can feel and you can touch every day.

"This inauguration is part of the broader infrastructure revolution we promised Nigeria. In the last three years, we have refused to accept excuses; we choose actions.

"From the Arterial Road N20, now Prof. Wole Soyinka Way, to N16 Interchange, linking Jahi and Gwarinpa, to the roads in Kuje, Gwagwalada, and Mambushi, the FCT is transforming before our eyes," he said.

## Int'l Widows Day: Edo Govt urges end to discrimination, harmful cultural practices

### BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the welfare, dignity, and economic rights of widows across the state, as the world marked International Widows Day on Monday, June 23.

The State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Eugenia Abdallah, gave the assurance in a statement commemorating the UN-designated day observed annually on June 23.

She noted that widows globally face economic hardship, social exclusion, discrimination, and limited access to support services after the loss of their spouses.

"Today, we honour the strength, resilience and invaluable contributions of widows in Edo State and across the world. Many widows continue to face social, economic and emotional challenges after the loss of their spouses," Abdallah said.

"As a government, we remain committed to ensuring that no widow is left behind in our quest for an inclusive,

equitable and compassionate society," she added.

The Commissioner stressed that society must move beyond sympathy to deliberate action. She said the Ministry will continue to push for policies on social protection, economic empowerment, access to justice, and psychosocial support for widows and other vulnerable groups.

Abdallah also commended Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo for what she called his "people-centred approach to governance" and his administration's focus on women, children, and vulnerable persons.

She called on families, communities, civil society groups, faith-based organisations, and development partners to join government efforts to end harmful cultural practices, stigmatisation, and discrimination against widows.

"As we commemorate International Widows Day, let us renew our collective resolve to uphold the rights, dignity and wellbeing of widows. Together, we can build a society where every widow is respected, supported and empowered to thrive," she said.

## Legal expert applauds Edo special courts

BENEDICT OKATE

### BENIN CITY

A constitutional lawyer, Notary Public of Nigeria and former Senior Special Adviser to the Edo State Government on Legal Matters, Barrister Adams Aliu, has thrown his weight behind the Edo State Government's proposed establishment of Special Courts to handle cases involving kidnapping and cult-related offences.

Speaking on the initiative, Aliu described the proposal as a timely and commendable response to the prevailing security challenges confronting the state and the nation at large.

He emphasised that the protection of lives and property remains the primary responsibility of every government, as clearly stipulated in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

Citing Section 14(2)(b) of the Constitution, Barrister Adams Aliu noted that "the security and welfare of the people shall be

the primary purpose of government," stressing that every lawful measure aimed at safeguarding citizens deserves support.

According to him, the proposed Special Courts would help expedite the administration of justice, particularly in cases involving kidnapping and cultism, which have continued to pose serious threats to public safety and socio-economic development.

"The proposed Special Courts is a welcomed development in view of the current security situation in the country," he said.

Aliu further asserted that specialised courts have proven effective in handling specific categories of offences in several jurisdictions across the world, adding that such courts often enhance efficiency, reduce delays and ensure speedy dispensation of justice.

"If constituted, the Special Courts would represent one of the most significant judicial interventions in recent years aimed at accelerating the prosecution of kidnapping and cultism cases in Edo State," he noted.



### JUSTICE SUMMIT:

Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa (Left) The Secretary to Edo State Government (SSG) Barr. Umar Musa Ikhilor (centre) The Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice Edo State Prof. Roland Itoya Oturu, SAN, during a 2-Day Justice Summit held at John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy Benin City. PHOTO: MOSES OBOH.

## Edo Assembly steps down NDC's request for minority leadership

### BENIN CITY

The Edo House of Assembly on Monday stepped down a request by the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), lawmakers to change the minority leadership positions in the assembly.

The request followed the defection of the three remaining PDP lawmakers to the NDC.

The house faulted the request for failing to adhere to the standard parliamentary procedures, noting that the letter was addressed to the Speaker, Blessing Agbgbaku, by the NDC state Chairman, David Olukoga.

In the letter, Olukoga informed the house of the defection of Natasha Osawaru, (Egor PDP) Charity Aiguoba-ruughian, the Minority Leader,

(Ovia North-East 1 PDP); and Uyi Omosigho (Oredo East, APC) to the NDC.

The letter also nominated Osawaru as the new minority leader and Omosigho as minority whip.

The development sparked debate in the house, with the majority of lawmakers faulting the letter for not following due process.

In a related development, a Commissioner-Nominee, Mr Jeffrey Iriabekhai was cleared by the house.

Iriabekhai, an intelligence expert and former staff of the Department of State Services was found academically sound by the lawmakers.

The house also adopted the business calendar for the first quarter of the fourth session in 2026.

The majority leader of the house, Jonathan Aigbokhan (Esan West), said the proposed 51 legislative days from June to August would enable the house to meet its mandate for the period.

## Tenants in dilemma over skyrocketing rents, demand intervention

### BENIN CITY

Growing concerns are emerging among residents of Benin City over what many described as increasingly exploitative practices by house agents operating across the Edo State capital.

Tenants and prospective renters who spoke with our correspondent alleged that some agents have turned the city's housing market into a lucrative enterprise at the expense of ordinary citizens struggling with the rising cost of living.

Residents claim that excessive agency fees, inspection

charges, and multiple undocumented payments have become commonplace in many parts of the city.

According to several residents, house seekers are often required to pay non-refundable inspection fees before being allowed to view available properties.

In some cases, prospective tenants reportedly pay inspection fees for multiple properties without eventually securing accommodation.

Mr. Osahon Efe, a civil servant residing in the Ugbor road axis, described the situation as "deeply frustrating."

"Before you even get to see a house, you may have spent thousands of Naira on inspection fees. Some agents keep taking people around without providing accurate information about the properties. Many people end up losing money," he said.

Similar concerns were raised by students and young professionals, who noted that agency charges have continued to rise despite the challenging economic conditions facing many households.

Miss Joy Aigbokhan, a recent university graduate searching for accommodation, said she was shocked by the ad-

ditional costs attached to renting a modest apartment.

"The rent may be affordable, but when you add agency fees, legal fees, caution fees, and other unimaginable charges, the total amount becomes overwhelming. Sometimes the extra charges are almost as much as the rent itself," she explained.

Community leaders and housing advocates have also expressed concern over the lack of regulation in the sector. They argue that the absence of clear guidelines has created opportunities for unscrupulous individuals to exploit desperate house seekers.

# Two remanded over alleged cultism, murder, firearms offences

OLIVER IJIOGBE

**BENIN CITY**

A court in Benin City has ordered the remand of two men,

Omoruyi Osazee (40) and Innocent Okunozee (30), who were arraigned on charges of conspiracy, murder, unlawful possession of firearms, and other offences allegedly linked

to cult-related activities.

While presenting the case, the prosecution alleged that the defendants, alongside other suspects still at large, conspired among themselves on February 15, 2025, to murder a victim in furtherance of their alleged cult-related activities, an offence punishable under the relevant laws of Edo State.

The prosecution further informed the court that the defendants and their accomplices allegedly carried out an armed attack on residents in part of Benin City, an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 64 of the Criminal Law of Edo State, 2022.

According to the prosecution, the defendants were also

found to be in unlawful possession of firearms while carrying out the alleged criminal acts.

However, when the charges were read to them, both defendants pleaded not guilty.

Following their plea, the court ordered that the defendants be remanded in a correctional facility pending the de-

termination of the case.

Before adjourning the case, the court cautioned youths and other individuals involved in criminal activities to desist from acts capable of undermining public peace and security, warning that anyone found culpable of violating the law would face the full weight of the law.

## Military Rescues 47 Captives in Borno State

KELECHI UGWUADU

**MAIDUGURI**

In an operation carried out on Monday June 20, 2026; the troops of Operation Hadin Kai rescued 47 persons, mostly women and children, from captivity in an Islamic State West Africa Province enclave in Kangarwa, Kukawa Local Government Area of Borno State.

In a statement issued on Monday by the Acting Military Information Officer, Headquarters .The Joint Task Force North-East Operation Hadin Kai led by Capt. Mohammed Goni swung into action to combat the terrorist group.

Goni said the victims regained their freedom following sustained military offensives against terrorist hideouts in the Lake Chad region.

"The Joint Task Force (North East), Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), has recorded yet another significant humanitarian success with the rescue of over 47 persons, mostly women and children who were held captive by ISWAP terrorists in Kangarwa, Kukawa Local Government

Area of Borno State on 20 June 2026," the statement read.

He further explained that the operation was made possible by intensified ground and air assaults on terrorist strongholds, which forced the insurgents to abandon their positions.

In his words.. "The successful rescue operation was made possible through sustained aggressive pressure and relentless offensive operations conducted by OPHK troops against ISWAP enclaves in the Lake Chad region.

"The unrelenting ground and air offensives forced the terrorists to abandon their positions in confusion, enabling the victims to escape from prolonged captivity,"

Military sources disclose that the rescued persons are currently receiving medical attention and other forms of support at a secure location.

"The rescued persons are currently being seen by medical professionals at a secure location. Necessary humanitarian support is being provided in coordination with relevant agencies to facilitate their eventual re-integration," the statement reads.

## Ambrose Alli University (AAU) inducts 60 new medical doctors

KELECHI UGWUADU

**BENIN CITY**

Ambrose Alli University (AAU) Ekpoma, Edo state on Monday celebrated her newly graduated medical students as they were inducted into the medical profession.

Speaking at the swearing-in ceremony and oath taking of the 60 medical doctors at the university's international conference and students' centre, the Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof Mrs. Eunice Eboiserehimen Omonezejie, in her address, congratulated the inductees and other stakeholders over the 20th induction ceremony of the institution.

"Today is not just an induction ceremony but a celebration of the hard work of the students who have proven themselves in their field of study. For the college of medicine, it is a record of the effort of the college and a reward of hard work," she stated.

Prof. Omonezejie paid glowing tribute to the executive governor of Edo, state, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, for his various interventions in the institution, while urging the inductees to see the privilege

as an opportunity to serve humanity and make a mark.

In a statement issued by the Public Relation Officer of the Edo State Ministry of Education, Mr Osobase Oseremen, the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mr. Otamere Enodolomwanyi commended the university community and the entire Edo state over the induction ceremony.

He praised Governor Okpebholo for his tireless efforts in transforming education and other sectors for the benefit of all Edo citizens

He extolled the governor for increasing the school subvention to 500 million. He also applauded the governor for investing in the infrastructure of the varsity by constructing halls, lecture rooms and hostel accommodations among others

The guest lecturer, Prof. Sylvester Eshiotse Idogun, who spoke on the theme: Ethical Practices in a challenging Ecosystem, described medical ethics as a set of moral and principles that guide doctors/patient relationship.

He therefore urged the newly inducted medical doctors to uphold the highest standard of professionalism in the discharge of their duties.

**CERTIFICATE OF RETURN:**

L-R: Senators-elect for Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Sen. Johnson Nwogu; Nasarawa North Senatorial District, Sen. Halilu Envulu-Anza and Enugu North Senatorial District, Sen. Ikeje Asogwa, after receiving their Certificate of Return at the INEC headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

## Edo LG poll: Oredo stands with Iduseri

BENEDICT OKATE

**BENIN CITY**

As political activities gather momentum ahead of the local government elections, residents and stakeholders in Oredo Local Government Area are being urged to support Hon. Engr. Gabriel Iduseri, widely regarded by supporters as a dependable and results-oriented leader committed to grassroots development.

Popularly known as "Gabros" and "Mr. Project," Iduseri has continued to attract support across communities in Oredo on the strength of his reputation for service, accessibility, and commitment to the welfare of the people.

Supporters described him

as a viable, amiable, trusted, and dependable leader whose vision for Oredo is anchored on practical development initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for residents.

According to his campaign team, Iduseri's agenda focuses on critical areas including road infrastructure, effective drainage systems, market development, youth and women empowerment programmes, and enhanced community security.

The team further stated that his administration, if elected, would prioritize both urban and rural transformation through the timely execution of projects designed to address the needs of the people without unnecessary delays.

In addition, Hon. Iduseri has

pledged to sustain environmental sanitation efforts, support local security initiatives, preserve the rich cultural heritage of Oredo, and create a business-friendly environment capable of attracting traders and investors to the local government area.

His supporters also believe that his leadership will complement the development vision of Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, particularly through the implementation of policies and programmes aligned with the administration's Project SHINE Agenda.

Speaking on the importance of the forthcoming election, community leaders noted that the choice of leadership at the local government level remains crucial to ensuring responsive

governance and sustainable development.

As campaigns intensify, many residents see Hon. Engr. Gabriel Iduseri as a candidate whose slogan, "Talk Less, Do More," reflects a commitment to action-driven leadership and tangible results for the people of Oredo Local Government Area.

Political observers say the election will provide voters with an opportunity to determine the future direction of governance and development within the council area.

"Oredo deserves effective leadership, and Hon. Engr. Gabriel Iduseri has demonstrated the capacity and commitment to deliver meaningful progress for the people," a supporter stated.

## Bandit Kingpin, wife arrested while trying to flee Nigeria

**LOKOJA**

In a coordinated operation carried out on Monday men of the Nigeria Police Force Intelligence Department Special Tactical Squad (FID STS) arrested a wanted bandit kingpin, Mohammed Usman, popularly known as "Yellow Lawani," while he was attempting to travel out of Kogi State with his wife.

The arrest reportedly followed an intelligence gathering that tracked Usman to an airport after he purchased flight

tickets worth ₦9.8 million for himself and his wife.

The Assistant Commissioner of Police and Commander of the FID STS, Victor Ogbeide, explained that the suspect was intercepted on his way to the airport as part of an intelligence-led operation. He stated that the tactical squad followed the suspect based on credible information and later took him into custody.

Ogbeide further disclosed that the operation extended to a forest area in Kogi State, where security operatives re-

portedly recovered two AK-47 rifles linked to the suspect.

However, the arrest demonstrated the efforts of the tactical squad in monitoring and disrupting criminal activities, noting that Usman was taken into custody after being tracked successfully through coordinated intelligence operations.

Usman was arrested alongside his brother, Abubakar Usman, during the operation.

Abubakar reportedly denied any involvement in alleged criminal activities linked to his

brother. He stated that he was unaware of Mohammed's alleged involvement in banditry until the moment of their arrest by the police tactical team.

Security sources said the arrest is part of ongoing efforts by the Nigeria Police Force to combat armed banditry and dismantle criminal networks operating in Kogi State and surroundings

The ACP Ogbeide urged members of the public to provide the police force with useful information to free Kogi citizens from security threats.

**NEWS**

# By-election: INEC issues Certificates of Return to winners in 6 states

**ABUJA**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has issued Certificates of Return to newly elected lawmakers in Saturday's by-elections across various constituencies and senatorial districts in six states.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the certificates were issued to the

lawmakers-elect on Tuesday at INEC headquarters in Abuja.

Among the recipients were Chief Ikeje Asogwa (All Progressives Congress, Enugu North Senatorial District); and Halilu Envulu-Anza (APC, Nasarawa North Senatorial District).

Others are Johnson Nwogu of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Rivers South-East Senatorial District; and Rabiu Shuaibu (APC, Dawakin Kudu/Warawa Federal

Constituency, Kano State).

In her remarks, the INEC National Commissioner, Mrs May Agbamuche-Mbu, described the by-elections that produced the lawmakers-elect as credible, peaceful, and violence-free.

She commended the political actors and their supporters for maintaining order and allowing for a smooth electoral process.

While congratulating the winners, Agbamuche-Mbu

advised them to prioritise effective representation for their respective constituencies and senatorial districts.

"Today, INEC will be issuing your certificates of return, and we pray you represent your people very well. That's what matters most to us," she said.

Agbamuche-Mbu noted that both elections were held on June 20.

The National Commissioner disclosed that the certificate of return would be issued for Zuru State Constituency, in Kebbi, Kebbi State, while that of Eki-

ti governorship election would also be issued in the state.

Speaking with newsmen shortly after receiving his certificate, the Senator-elect for Enugu North Senatorial District, Asogwa, expressed his readiness to deliver the dividends of democracy to his constituents.

"We are going to get things done starting from infrastructural development, improving the education and health sector, and then empowerment especially for the youth," Asogwa stated.

He attributed the APC's victory to the visible developmental strides of the party in govern-

ment, in education, healthcare, infrastructural development and good governance.

Asogwa also expressed confidence that President Bola Tinubu would win Enugu State in 2027 presidential election.

"The reason the APC won is because of what is going on in our state right now. Complete transformation and development strides by our governor, it is tremendous and commendable.

"For President Tinubu; in Enugu, he is going to win. When you come and see what the APC government is doing, you will be impressed.

**INVESTMENT SUMMIT:**

Managing Director, Steron Mining Company, Mr Abubakar Omar (2nd, R), with participants of the 5th African Natural Resources and Energy Investment Summit (AFNIS) 2026 on a tour around Steron Mining Company where lithium and other solid mineral are produce, at Wasa Community in Abuja on Tuesday.

## Idahosa highlights policy tilt of govt at Edo Justice Summit

BERNADETTE IDALU

**BENIN CITY**

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, Tuesday declared open the 2026 Edo State Justice Summit, using the opportunity to highlight the judicial and legal policy tilt of the Governor Monday Okpebholo led administration.

"Our administration is resolute in tackling the menace of Kidnapping and Cultism. Edo State will never be a safe haven for such vices, that is why His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo has set machineries in place to fast track dispensation of justice in criminal cases including kidnapping and Cultism."

Speaking on behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo, Idahosa commended the organisers of

the two day justice summit - the Edo State Justice Sector Reform Team in collaboration with the Rule of Law and Anti-corruption (RoLAC) Programme, at the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA), for coming up with an apt theme, "Accelerating Justice Reform, Coordination And Accountability In Edo State: From Commitment To Results."

Addressing judicial stakeholders, Idahosa stated, "I extend welcome to our distinguished judges, judicial officers, members of the Bar, law enforcement agencies, development partners, particularly RoLAC II, traditional rulers, oil society organisations, and all stakeholders committed to strengthening the administration of justice in our dear State.

## Okpebholo hails Ewu leaders peaceful conduct over kingship dispute

**BENIN CITY**

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has commended the people and leaders of Ewu Kingdom in Esan Central Local Government Area for maintaining peace and order despite the lingering kingship dispute involving His Royal Highness,

Barrister Razak Ojeifo, and Prince Jafaru Israel Ojeifo.

The governor's commendation was conveyed by his Chief of Staff, Hon. Musa Yakubu, when a delegation of leaders from Ewu Kingdom paid a courtesy visit to the Government House in Benin City.

Addressing the delegation on behalf of the governor, Hon.

Yakubu praised the maturity, restraint and peaceful disposition demonstrated by the people of the kingdom throughout the period of the dispute.

He noted that the peaceful conduct of the community had helped prevent a breakdown of law and order and created an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and resolution.

The Chief of Staff assured the delegation that Governor Okpebholo remains commit-

ted to ensuring justice, fairness and lasting peace in all communities across Edo State. He said the governor values the concerns raised by the Ewu leaders and would give them the attention they deserve.

Yakubu, who listened to the grievances and requests presented by the delegation, assured them that all issues raised during the visit would be communicated directly to Governor Okpebholo.

## Tinubu transmits State Police Bill...

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Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, appealed to his colleagues to ensure participation in 'a major constitutional duty that we owe to our people who elected us as their representatives.'

"As we all know, based on constitutional provisions and the rules of the Senate, we need a minimum of two-thirds of distinguished senators to vote on constitutional alterations. Therefore, it is important for all of us to be present. I know that mem-

bers of the public who elected us will also be interested in knowing those who participated in this important constitutional responsibility. The issue of state police is one that cuts across all political parties. It has become a non-partisan issue. It is also something that transcends geopolitical zones and sectional interests," Bamidele said.

The Senate President, thereafter, referred the bill to the Senate Committee on the Review of the Constitution for further legislative action.

## Edo moves to harmonise single tax code payment...

**«CONTINUED FROM PG 1**

monisation will certainly boost investors' confidence in the state, as it will do away with doubts about double taxation as investors look at the principles and drive investment into Edo State."

Anabor said Edo State will improve on the ease of doing business and partner with the federal government to ensure that the state gets all the collaborative advantages that it stands for.

"We have recognised our brand, which is our cultural heritage, and will build our investments around it. We have identified our brand, and we would put strategies in place to help the state drive more investment."

Speaking to journalists at the workshop, the DG PEBEC, Princess Zahrah Mustapha Audu, said to ensure sustainability, PEBEC is working to ensure that the policies at the federal level are also duplicated and implemented at the sub-national level.

She noted that there is a need for public servants and the government to build public trust and confidence in the processes, assuring participants that there is a lot of accountability in the process, as PEBEC would be consistent and deliberate in its actions.

"We can assure you of accountability at both the federal and sub-national levels in the processes of the ease of doing

business. This is the second nationwide tour that PEBEC is conducting, and today we are here in Edo State for a one-day technical workshop on business-enabling reforms and investment competitiveness. We would have two sessions; one is a technical session, which has already ended this morning, while the afternoon session is an interactive session for sub-national government and business or private sector stakeholders' engagement. In November last year, we released a sub-national list of the ease of doing business for the ten top states, the middle-tier states, and the lowest states. These are not just reports but reports for accountability. For post-accountability,

we work with states to help them build up. We spoke to the state to help them digitalise their processes as the program is ongoing and verifiable by this administration. We are in every state working to ensure that we provide and monitor what the states are doing, and we will guide them," she said.

Speaking further, the DG during the private sector stakeholders' engagement stated that the government will emphasise their brand. "We are capable of holding states accountable, but the businesses here in this meeting should be responsible for holding the states accountable. This is necessary to enable them to know what to expect from the sub-national government.

## SEC bans promotion of unapproved...

**«CONTINUED FROM PG 1**

sites, social media platforms and message groups within 24 hours.

SEC further instructed operators to desist from accepting deposits, commitments, account openings or expressions of interest from investors in connection with the purported public offering.

The commission also directed operators to reverse and refund all funds already collected from clients in relation to the alleged offering within 24 hours.

It warned that non-compliance would attract sanctions under the ISA 2025 and the

SEC Rules and Regulations.

The commission advised investors to exercise caution and rely only on official pronouncements issued through its approved channels.

It urged the public to disregard high-pressure marketing tactics and requests for fund transfers linked to any purported pre-IPO placement, stressing that such activities had not received its approval.

SEC added that if it received and approved an application for a public offering by the refinery, an approved prospectus would be made available to investors in line with the provisions of the ISA 2025.

# ActionAid faults IMF over social, public service cuts

**ABUJA**

The ActionAid Nigeria (AAN), in collaboration with ActionAid International, Education International, the Tax and Education Alliance, and other stakeholders, has faulted the IMF on its latest advice on social and public service cuts.

ActionAid conveyed its reaction on Tuesday during a virtual report unveiling.

The report reviewed IMF country advice on social spending, public services, debt, tax, and gender equality.

The report is titled "Still Cooking with a Failed Recipe: A Review of IMF Country Advice on Social Spending, Public Services, Debt, Tax and Gender Equality."

Arthur Larok, Secretary General of ActionAid, said that the IMF policy unmasked the stark disparities on how it

treated the Global North versus lower-income nations.

Larok noted that the new report, which examined IMF policy advice to 11 countries (including Nigeria) from February 2022 to February 2025, revealed that the IMF still functioned as a colonial 'debt enforcer' in spite of transformation rhetoric.

"African countries are spending an average of 7.6 per cent of their national budgets on public service wage bills, below the global average of nine per cent.

"The IMF social spending advice still perpetuates unequal and colonial systems that treat countries very differently.

"While rich countries like the UK are encouraged to expand public sector investments, those like Brazil, Nepal, Nigeria and other African nations are advised to cut spending on essential public services to repay external debt."

The secretary general said the report further revealed how the IMF's rigid, one-size-fits-all approach to public spending was disproportionately harming low-income countries across Africa and Asia.

He cited instances with UK adding that it spent 15.9 per cent of its gross domestic product on

its public workforce, and it was advised to increase public spending.

"Similarly, lower-income nations like Nigeria and Nepal spend a mere 1.9 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively, but are still forced to freeze or cut spending on public services that cripple their ability to rebuild while repaying debt to Global North

countries and lenders.

"The IMF's recipe book is completely outdated.

"By forcing lower-income nations to squeeze public workers, cut social spending, and prioritise foreign creditors over education and healthcare, the IMF is functioning as a global debt enforcer rather than a global de-

velopment partner.

"Reviewed documents from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe revealed that while the IMF talks about protecting the vulnerable, its actual budget rules do the opposite by enforcing cuts to public spending that would benefit them.

## Lagos seals Lekki gym over sewage discharge

**LAGOS**

The Lagos State Wastewater Management Office (LSWMO) has sealed I-Fitness Gym at Jakande Roundabout, Lekki Peninsula, Eti-Osa, for allegedly discharging untreated sewage into public drains.

The Lagos State Commissioner for Environment and Water Resources, Mr Tokunbo Wahab, disclosed this in a post on his Facebook page on Tuesday.

Wahab said the enforcement action followed the discovery of a pipe channeling raw wastewater from the facility into the public drainage system.

According to him, the act constitutes a public nuisance,

causes environmental pollution and poses serious risks to public health.

He said improper wastewater disposal remained a major environmental challenge requiring strict compliance with environmental and sanitation regulations.

The commissioner reiterated the state government's call on residents and organisations to adopt proper wastewater management practices to protect public health and the environment.

He warned that individuals and organisations found violating environmental laws would face appropriate sanctions, including possible prosecution in accordance with extant regulations.

## 2026 Hajj: NAHCON concludes return airlift of Nigerian pilgrims

**ABUJA**

The National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) says it has officially concluded the return airlift of over 38,000 Nigerian pilgrims from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the 2026 Hajj exercise.

A statement by NAHCON's Spokesperson, Hajia Fatimah Usara, said that the final flight conveying pilgrims from Zamfara was expected to arrive in Nigeria yesterday.

Usara said that the completion of the return leg brought to a close the 2026 Hajj operations.

She said that it marked the end of a major national exercise that involved the successful airlift of Nigerian pilgrims to and from the Saudi Arabia.

She, however, said that 12 Nigerian pilgrims were currently receiving treatment in different

hospitals in Saudi Arabia for various health conditions.

"NAHCON is closely monitoring their situations and has made arrangements to facilitate their safe return to Nigeria as soon as they are discharged from the hospitals.

"NAHCON also appreciates the cooperation and hard work of state pilgrims' welfare boards, licensed tour operators, service providers, aviation partners, medical teams, security personnel, the media and, most importantly, Nigerian pilgrims.

"The commission acknowledges that, as with every major operation of this scale, there were challenges encountered in the course of the exercise," she said.

Usara said that valuable lessons had been learnt from the exercise, which would be applied toward improving subsequent Hajj operations.



### NEWS CONFERENCE:

L-R: Female President, Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria (MSSN) Lagos State Area Unit, Hajia Rofiat Tijani; former President, Malam Kamoldeen Abiona; President (MSSN), Dr Ajibola Salami; Vice President, Ridwan Adetolu, and General Secretary, Muhammad Mustapha, during a news conference on the unveiling of its new Amir (President) and other executive in Lagos on Monday.

## Oborewori lauds Delta civil servants for unwavering commitment, resilience

**ASABA**

Gov. Sheriff Oborewori of Delta has commended workers in the state for their unwavering commitment and resilience, describing them as driving force of successful execution of his administration's M.O.R.E Agenda.

Oborewori said this on Tuesday during the state Public Service Lecture organised to mark the 2026 International Public/Civil Service Week, entitled: "Reforms, Resilience and Results."

Represented by his Deputy, Monday Onyeme, the governor said: "ideas and infrastructure

mean little if the workforce is not secure."

According to him, the government is aware of the sustained calls from labour unions and associations for affordable workers' housing estates to address the deficit confronting the state workforce.

"Evidently, your request is a just call; haven't spent your career building Delta for others, you deserve decent shelter for your own family. housing is dignity, and dignity is part of results.

"My government is already engaging the Ministry of Housing, the Delta State Mortgage Trust Bank, and other private sector partners

and real estate developers to design a phased, transparent workers' housing scheme for the state.

"The project will prioritise serving officers and retirees, with flexible, salary-friendly payment structures; we will also adequately fund existing Staff Welfare Schemes, including the officers' housing loan; and vehicle loan committees.

"We will revamp the Workers' Owner-Occupier Housing Scheme through a strategic Public-Private-Partnership with recognised Real Estate Developers for results and workers' expectations.

"We will not make promises we cannot keep, but I assure you the framework of our vision is very promising and advancing; as the M.O.R.E Agenda believes that opportunities

for all must include opportunities for decent living," he said.

He said the purpose of "International Public/Civil Service Day celebration was to recognise the people who formed the backbone of governance.

"It is to also reaffirm the core values that define public service, viz - integrity, honesty, impartiality, professionalism, and dedication to duty.

"These values are the soul of governance. Where they thrive, trust grows; and where they weaken, service fails.

"This year's theme of celebration, Reforms, Resilience and Results" is not just a slogan, it is a clarion call to action for structural and policy changes for modern governance."

## NDLEA secures 28 convictions, files 61 cases in C'River within 6 months —Commander

**CALABAR**

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Cross River Command, says it secured 28 drug-related convictions and filed 61 cases between January and June.

The state Commander, Mr John Anteyi, disclosed this on Tuesday in Calabar during a press briefing to mark the 2026 United Nations International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Anteyi said the command remained committed to combating drug abuse in the state, adding that 132 cases were currently pending at various stages

before the state High Court.

According to him, 262 suspects, comprising 207 males and 55 females, were arrested within the period under review.

He noted that the arrests were linked to the seizure of 6,575 drug consignments within the same period.

Anteyi gave a breakdown of the seizures to include: 6,398kg of Cannabis Sativa, 1.47kg of Cannabis Sativa seeds, 60.4g of cocaine, 20.2g of heroin, 778.6g of methamphetamine, and 166.4kg of psychotropic substances.

He added that the command also destroyed 14 hectares of cannabis farms in Akamkpa Local Government Area.

The commander expressed concern over the rising prevalence of drug abuse among youths and its impact on public safety and national development.

He said drug abuse had become a growing concern across educational institutions, urban centres, rural communities, and among vulnerable groups.

He noted that the United Nations International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking served as a reminder of the collective responsibility to protect communities.

According to him, the day provides an opportunity to raise awareness, mobilise action, and strengthen partnerships for a drug-free society.

Meanwhile, the Cross River Government has pledged continued partnership with the NDLEA to combat drug abuse and trafficking in the state.

The Chairperson of the state Drug Control Committee, Mrs Enyoanwan-Itam Otu, made the pledge through her media aide, Mrs Faith Okon.

She said the committee would intensify advocacy, awareness campaigns, prevention programmes, and community engagement across the state.

Otu called on residents to join the fight against drug abuse, urging parents to monitor their children closely and encouraging youths to embrace discipline and productivity.

**NEWS****Motorists, commuters hail fuel price drop in Ebonyi****ABAKALIKI**

**M**otorists and commuters in Abakaliki have welcomed the recent reduction in petrol pump prices across filling stations in Abakaliki.

The respondents, who spoke in separate interviews with newsmen on Tuesday in Abakaliki described the drop as a welcome relief but called for further cuts to ease economic hardship.

Our correspondent who monitored the situation in selected filling stations reported

that major filling stations in the state capital reduced the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from about N1,350 per litre to between N1,270 and N1,280 per litre.

The adjustment followed recent developments in the international oil market amid the conflict involving Iran, the United States and Israel.

Some of the filling stations visited, including AA Rano, Sharfa, Tycoon and Echemas Rainoil along the Abakaliki-Enugu Expressway and Ogoja Road sold petrol at N1,270 per litre, while

others pegged the price at N1,280. Mr Chinedu Nwankwo, a commercial bus driver, described the reduction as encouraging but said more needed to be done.

“Every reduction in petrol price brings some relief to transport operators and consumers. However, government should ensure that fuel becomes more affordable for ordinary Nigerians,” Nwankwo said.

Another transporter, Mr Emeka Ogbu, said the current price remained too high. “We appreciate the reduc-

tion, but petrol is still expensive; government should intervene to bring the price down significantly because fuel affects every sector of the economy,” he said.

Similarly, Mrs Ngozi Eze, a private car owner, linked the high cost of living to the increase in fuel prices following subsidy removal.

“The prices of transportation, food and other essentials rose after subsidy removal; if fuel becomes cheaper, many goods and services will also become more affordable,” Eze said.

A taxi operator, Mr Samuel

Nnachi, noted that PMS remained a major driver of economic activities.

“When petrol prices rise, everything rises; the hardship many Nigerians face today is largely connected to high energy and transportation costs,” he noted.

Also speaking, Mr Kingsley Uche, a truck driver, urged government to encourage more local refining.

“Nigeria should support modular refineries and grant licences to capable investors to complement the Dangote Refinery. Increased local production will help stabilise prices,” Uche said.

The motorists maintained that expanding domestic refining capacity would reduce de-

pendence on imported petroleum products and help make fuel more affordable.

Meanwhile, commuters at the Abakaliki Central Motor Park in separate interviews expressed happiness over the price reduction and urged transport operators to reduce fares accordingly.

Miss Esther Nworie, a trader, who said she was travelling to Aba in Abia State said transport costs continued to consume a large portion of traders’ earnings.

“If fuel prices have dropped, transport fares should also come down to reflect the new reality,” Nworie said.

Mr John Nwali, another commuter, described the reduction as a positive development.

**OATH-TAKING CEREMONY:**

Inductees in the 56th Physicians’ Oath-Taking Ceremony (Sponsio Academica) at the University of Calabar on Tuesday.

**UniCal VC charges new doctors on compassion****CALABAR**

**T**he Vice Chancellor of the University of Calabar (UniCal), Prof. Offiong E. Offiong, has urged new doctors to prioritise compassion.

Offiong gave the charge on Tuesday during the 56th Physicians’ Oath-Taking Ceremony for medical and dental graduates.

The ceremony inducted 92 graduates into the medical profession after successfully completing their academic training.

Represented by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics), Prof. Ekaette Enang, Offiong congratulated the inductees, stating that the university was

proud of producing skilled medical practitioners ready for global competitiveness.

According to him, UniCal’s reputation was built on excellence, professionalism and quality manpower training.

He expressed confidence that the new doctors would uphold the institution’s tradition.

“Be great ambassadors of this institution and uphold the ethics and oath you are taking today,” he advised.

The vice chancellor urged the graduates to listen carefully to patients and show kindness.

He stressed that doctors must demonstrate genuine commitment towards helping people in need.

Offiong said empathy remained essential in building trust between medical professionals and patients.

The Provost, College of Medical Sciences, Prof. Ngim Ngim, praised the graduates’ resilience.

Ngim commended their dedication despite challenges experienced throughout their medical training.

He advised them to remain loyal to their alma mater and protect its values. The provost urged the new doctors to place patients at the centre of their practice.

He also encouraged strict adherence to professional ethics and medical standards.

The Registrar of the Medical

and Dental Council of Nigeria, Dr Fatima Kyari, warned against misconduct.

Kyari urged the inductees to embrace discipline, integrity and professionalism throughout their careers.

Delivering the Sponsio Academica Lecture, Prof. Maxwell U. Anah described medicine as noble.

According to him, the profession is dedicated to preserving lives and serving humanity.

Anah noted that medical excellence required lifelong learning, teamwork and resilience.

He urged the graduates to pursue continuous knowledge and mentorship opportunities.

**School destroyed, 150 households affected by rain storm in Kaduna community****KADUNA**

**R**ainstorm has hit Kuli Community in Kubau Local Government Area of kaduna affecting a school and 150 households.

Mr Mubarak Zakari, Director of Disaster Relief at the Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency (KADSEMA), made the disclosure on Tuesday in Kaduna.

Zakari said that while some houses were damaged, others were completely destroyed by the rainstorm.

According to him, the disaster, which occurred on Thursday, resulted in extensive damage to the community Primary Health Care Centre, a school and several residential buildings.

He said the figures emerged during a joint assessment by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the

Kaduna State Emergency Management Agency (KADSEMA).

“Some houses were damaged while others were completely destroyed by the storm.”

“The assessment is aimed at determining the extent of the damage and generating data for response planning.”

“The assessment is part of ongoing efforts by NEMA and relevant stakeholders to provide accurate information for response planning and support in the affected communities,” he said.

The assessment team was led by Mr Abbas Hamisu of NEMA’s Relief and Rehabilitation Unit.

Other members included officials of KADSEMA, Kubau Local Government Council and community leaders.

The exercise forms part of efforts by emergency management agencies to support victims and strengthen disaster response in affected communities.

**Osun violence claim against Oyetola malicious, baseless —Aide****OSOGBO**

**D**r Bolaji Akinola, Special Adviser to the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboye-ga Oyetola, has dismissed as “mischievous and politically motivated” allegations by the Speaker of the Osun House of Assembly, Adewale Egbedun, linking the minister to recent violence in the state.

In a statement issued on Tuesday in Osogbo, Akinola described the claim as a “desperate and malicious attempt” to tarnish the minister’s reputation.

Akintola portrayed Oyetola as a statesman whose record in public office is untainted by violence or the sponsorship of thuggery.

Akinola further said Egbedun’s remarks were “reckless and unfounded,” questioning the Speaker’s judgement.

According to him, it is unreasonable to accuse Oyetola of involvement in violence, given his track record of promoting peace, stability and lawful conduct throughout his four-year tenure as governor of the state.

Akinola also alleged that Egbedun had previously led thugs to disrupt a gathering organised by a faction of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), during which several individuals were assaulted and injured.

“We urge Egbedun and Governor Ademola Adeleke to stop providing cover for criminal elements.”

“That is the only way to preserve and sustain the peace Oyetola bequeathed to Osun State four years ago.”

“How can a man who did not retaliate even when he was attacked during the EndSARS protests now be accused of orchestrating violence?”

**FPIS intensifies crackdown on adulterated export commodities****KANO**

**T**he Federal Produce Inspection Service (FPIS), Northwest Zone, says it has intercepted more than 20 exporters involved in attempts to ship adulterated and sub-standard commodities from January to date.

The Zonal Commander of FPIS, Northwest, Mr Obi Anthony-Ikechukwu, disclosed this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Kano.

He said the agency had significantly reduced incidents of commodity adulteration and illegal export practices since the establishment of the FPIS Northwest office in 2010.

He said: “Before the agency’s presence in the region, some exporters bypassed mandatory inspection procedures and transported commodities directly to seaports for export without quality checks, fumigation, or certification.”

“Some exporters attempt to evade inspection by shipping

their products directly to seaports without undergoing the required quality assessment and fumigation processes.

“With the establishment of FPIS in the Northwest, we have been able to reduce such practices to a minimal level, although efforts are ongoing to ensure full compliance with export regulations,” he said.

According to the zonal commander, the agency inspects export commodities, certifies product quality, verifies packaging standards, and ensures

proper fumigation before shipment.

He added that FPIS also scrutinises export documentation to prevent under-declaration of commodity values and other forms of sharp practices aimed at circumventing government regulations.

“The agency recently intercepted consignments of unclean soybeans intended for export and compelled the owners to clean and reprocess the products before approval,” he said.

**JUDICIARY****NEWS****El-Rufai opts for no-case submission as DSS closes case**

ABUJA

**BENIN CITY**

Former Governor Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State on Tuesday opted for a no-case submission in his ongoing trial over alleged breach of national security.

The ex-governor made this known through his lawyer, Paul Erokoro, SAN, before Justice Joyce Abdulmalik of the Federal High Court in Abuja, shortly after the Department of State Services (DSS) closed

its case.

When the case was called, the DSS lawyer, Oluwale Aladedoye, SAN, informed the court that the prosecution would not be calling further witnesses in the matter.

Aladedoye said with the evidence led so far, the prosecution was satisfied that it had been able to establish the offences with which El-Rufai was charged.

Following the development, Erokoro notified the court that the defence planned to file a

no-case submission, arguing that the prosecution had failed to establish sufficient evidence against the former governor.

He, therefore, sought two weeks to file the application, while the prosecution requested two weeks to respond.

Erokoro also applied for a variation of some of the bail conditions earlier granted to El-Rufai, describing them as stringent and difficult to meet.

He argued that the bail terms were too stringent, particularly the requirements for level 17

civil servants with properties in Maitama or Asokoro, as well as verification and attestation letters from the Kaduna State traditional council.

Aladedoye, however, opposed the request, insisting that qualified public officers who meet the conditions exist and urging the court to refuse the application.

Justice Abdulmalik, in her ruling, declined the application to vary the bail conditions.

The judge held that there are civil servants who own proper-

ties at the said location.

She adjourned the matter until September 22 for the filing of the no-case submission and continuation of trial.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the DSS had sued El-Rufai after he claimed, during an Arise Tv interview, that he intercepted a telephone conversation involving the National Security Adviser (NSA), Mr Nuhu Ribadu.

The ex-governor had alleged that the conversation, on the

telephone, revealed instructions to security operatives to arrest him.

He linked the alleged directive to an incident at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport on Feb. 12 after his return from Cairo, Egypt.

El-Rufai, who was arraigned on April 23 for allegedly intercepting the phone conversations of the telephone line of the NSA, pleaded not guilty to the five-count further amended charge.

**VISIT OF RMRDC DG TO NAN:**

MD, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Malam Ali M. Ali (middle); Director-General/CEO, Raw Material, Research, Development Council (RMRDC), Prof. Nnanyelugo Ike-Muonso (2ND L) and others during the visit of RMRDC DG to the Agency's Headquarter in Abuja on Tuesday

**Court adjourns Nafiu-Bala Gombe's suit against Mark, Aregbesola until June 30****ABUJA**

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday adjourned a suit filed by Mr Nafiu-Bala Gombe, seeking to stop the David Mark-led leadership of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) from parading themselves as leaders of the party until June 30.

The matter, which was fixed for hearing of all pending applications, earlier, could not proceed.

When the matter was called, all the lawyers to the parties were present except Mr Sulei-

man Usman, SAN, counsel for Sen. Mark, the embattled National Chairman of ADC.

With the agreement of counsel, Justice Peter Lifu stood down the matter for 15 minutes to give Usman the opportunity to also be heard, and another case was called pending the senior lawyer's arrival.

However, after the case ended, Justice Lifu stood down proceedings and rose.

Lawyers were then asked to take another date after waiting for some minutes.

Justice Lifu had, on June 16, fixed yesterday for hearing of all

the pending applications after he dismissed the application seeking his recusal from the case.

The judge, who held that the two motions filed by ADC and Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola (1st and 3rd defendants) lacked merit, awarded a fine of N1 million each against ADC and Aregbesola, the embattled National Secretary of the party, in favour of Gombe.

ADC and Aregbesola had, in separate motions, asked Justice Lifu to withdraw from the suit filed by Gombe, an aggrieved party member, citing alleged bias.

Gombe, in the suit, is seeking an order restraining Mark, Aregbesola and members of

their interim National Working Committee (NWC) from parading themselves as the party's leaders.

He had argued that the emergence of Mark, Aregbesola and other interim NWC members as party's leaders breached the provisions of the party's constitution and the Electoral Act.

Gombe had sued ADC, Mark, Aregbesola, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and Ralph Nwosu as 1st to 5th defendants respectively in the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1819/2025.

Nwosu was the former ADC National Chairman who stepped down for David Mark leadership of the party.

**Police intercept 174 rounds of AK-47 ammunition in Nasarawa, detain suspect****LAFIA**

The Police Command in Nasarawa State has intercepted 174 rounds of 7.62mm live ammunition for AK-47 rifles and arrested a suspect in connection with the seizure.

SP Ramhan Nansel, the Command's Public Relations Officer, disclosed this in a statement issued on Tuesday in Lafia.

Nansel said that the suspect, identified as Abubakar Abdullahi, was arrested on June 22 by operatives attached to the Toto Division during a routine pa-

trol along the Toto-Abaji Road. He said a search conducted on the suspect led to the recovery of 174 rounds of 7.62mm AK-47 live ammunition concealed in his possession.

According to him, preliminary investigation revealed that the suspect could not give a satisfactory account of the source, ownership or intended destination of the ammunition.

"The suspect is currently in police custody, while intensive investigation is ongoing to uncover the criminal network behind the illegal movement of the ammunition and appre-

hend all those connected with the crime," he said.

The spokesperson quoted the Commissioner of Police in the state, CP Shetima Mohammed, as reaffirming the command's commitment to combating criminality, particularly the proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition.

He said that the commissioner warned criminals to desist from unlawful activities or face the full weight of the law, adding that the command had intensified intelligence-led policing, surveillance operations and strategic deployments across the state.

**Businesswoman jailed 2 years for defrauding friend of N6.7m****KADUNA**

Kaduna Magistrates' Court on Tuesday sentenced a 34-year-old businesswoman identified as Dogo, to two years imprisonment for defrauding her friend of N6.7m.

The Magistrate, Ibrahim Emmanuel, sentenced the convict after she pleaded guilty to the charge and begged for leniency.

While delivering his judgment, Emmanuel said the essence of sentencing a defendant of a crime is to serve as a deterrent to others.

He however gave the convict an option of N200,000 fine and warned her to desist from crime.

He further ordered her to restate the sum of N6.7m, to the complainant, Damaris John, being the money of the

children's clothes she collected.

He further ordered that in the event the convict failed to restate the complainant, she shall serve an additional two year prison term.

Earlier, the Prosecutor Insp. Chidi Leo, told the court that the defendant committed the offence sometimes in January at Mahuta, Kaduna.

Leo said that the defendant collected children's clothes valued at N6.7m from the complainant on the pretence that she would pay for the items after sales but thereafter defrauded her.

He said the defendant refused to return the items or pay for them and all effort made by the complainant to get her money back proved abortive.

The prosecutor said the offence contravened the Kaduna State Penal Code, 2017.

**How millions of Naira was allegedly laundered in Malami, others' trial, —Witness****ABUJA**

Prosecution Witness Ms Munawwarah Anas, on Tuesday told the Federal High Court in Abuja how millions of Naira was allegedly laundered in the ongoing trial of Abubakar Malami, former Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), and others.

Anas made this known while being led in evidence by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)'s lawyer, Jibrin Okutepe, SAN, before Justice Joyce Abdulmalik.

She identified before the judge millions of naira inflows and outflows in Alkausar Farm's account, a company linked to the ex-AGF.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Malami, who was also the former Minister of Justice, is charged alongside his wife, Hajiya Asabe Bashir, and son, Abdulaziz, by the EFCC.

At the resumed trial, Okutepe informed the court that the matter was for continuation of trial and that the commission was calling the 5th prosecution witness (PW-5).

Testifying, Anas, a compliance officer with Jaiz Bank, said she interfaces with law enforcement

officers, including the EFCC.

She said Jaiz Bank received a request from the EFCC seeking documents relating to the account opening package of Alkausar Farm.

According to her, the bank responded through a letter dated Feb. 4 and addressed to the anti-graft agency.

The prosecution subsequently sought to tender the bank's response, certificate of compliance letter and account opening documents as evidence.

Defence lawyer, Adedayo Adedeji, SAN, reserved his objection until the final address.

The court admitted the documents and marked them as "Exhibits E Series."

The witness testified that on June 13, 2018, the account received a cash deposit of "N1 million" from Hassan Aliyu, while on June 20, 2018, it received another cash deposit of "N2.25 million" from Aliyu Mohammed.

The witness further told the court that on Dec. 7, 2018, the account received multiple inflows from Kalamu Wahid Global Concept, including transfers of "N10 million" each on four occasions and an additional transfer of "N8 million" on the same day.

**NEWS****Foreign****UN commission of inquiry says Israel committing genocide in Gaza by deliberately targeting children**

A UN commission of inquiry says Israel has deliberately targeted Palestinian children, resulting in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Gaza Strip, as well as war crimes in the occupied West Bank.

A new report alleges that Israeli authorities and security forces have "deliberately carried out acts inflicting death and severe bodily and mental harm on hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children", and that the killings continued even after last October's ceasefire in Gaza.

The commission says it has reasonable grounds to conclude that those acts "form part of a deliberate strategy to destroy the future of the Palestinians in Gaza

by targeting their children".

Israel's foreign ministry said it "utterly rejects" the commission's report, calling it a "libellous sham" and "a propaganda piece as outrageous as its previous ones".

The Israeli military launched a campaign in Gaza in response to the unprecedented Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 were taken hostage.

At least 73,035 people have been killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza since then, including more than 21,280 children, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry, whose figures are seen as reliable by the UN.

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the

Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021 to investigate alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Its three-member expert panel does not officially speak for the UN.

Last September, the commission accused Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. A report said there were reasonable grounds to conclude that four of the five acts of genocide defined under the 1948 Genocide Convention had been carried out by Israeli authorities and security forces. Israel strongly rejected that report, calling it distorted and false.

The commission has previ-

ously concluded that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups committed war crimes and other grave violations of international law on 7 October 2023, and that Israeli security forces have committed crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza.

Last October, Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire as part of US President Donald Trump's plan to end the war.

Since then, both sides have accused each other of violating the truce repeatedly. Gaza's health ministry says more than 1,020 Palestinians have been killed, among them 265 children. The Israeli military says four soldiers have also been killed.

**Trump anticipates better relationship with Colombia under new leader**

US President Donald Trump has predicted a "much better relationship" between his government and Colombia after preliminary results suggested that the right-wing candidate Abelardo de la Escriella had won in Sunday's presidential run-off.

The official, but not legally binding, preliminary vote count showed de la Escriella beating his left-wing rival, Iván Cepeda, by a razor-thin margin of less than one percentage point.

Cepeda has not yet conceded, saying he would wait for the results to be cross checked, a process which usually takes several days.

Trump had endorsed de la Escriella ahead of the run-off vote and derided Cepeda as a "radical Left Marxist".

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Trump said that de la Escriella had "won easily", even though his lead of 0.96 percentage points in the preliminary count is the narrowest in recent Colombian history.

Writing on Truth Social, Trump said he was looking forward to working together "to build a powerful relationship".

The relationship between the two historic allies had suffered in recent years as Trump traded insults with Colombia's outgoing president, the left-winger Gustavo Petro.

Trump had called Petro a "sick man" and a "drug-trafficking leader" without providing any evidence, while Petro

had said that the US president was basing his immigration policy on that of the Nazis.

Following the US military operation to seize Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro in January, Trump had also remarked that a military operation targeting neighbouring Colombia sounded "good".

Asked by a Colombian journalist about how he saw the relationship between the US and Colombia developing following Sunday's election, Trump said "it'll be better, he [de la Escriella] is going to be a great president".

De la Escriella campaigned on a promise to crack down on drug-trafficking gangs and criminal organisations which have long blighted the country, which is the world's largest producer of coca, the raw material used to make cocaine.

He has said that he wants Colombia to join the "Shield of the Americas", an alliance of Latin Americans countries and the US aimed at combating cartels.

President Petro had derided the alliance's inaugural summit held in Miami in March, saying that "the 17 countries gathered are the least experienced in the fight against drugs in the Americas".

De la Escriella has promised to co-operate more closely with the US in the fight against drug trafficking, saying that he plans to bomb drug-trafficking gangs and allow the US to have military bases inside Colombia.



**CHILDREN IN GAZA WAR:**

About 30% of those killed in the Gaza war have been children, according to the UN commission of inquiry.

**Iran says no new commitments on nuclear sites after Vance says inspectors to be invited back**

Iran has denied a claim by Vice-President JD Vance that it will allow nuclear inspectors back into the country, after the first round of talks between Washington and Tehran to reach a final deal to end the war.

Following negotiations in Switzerland, Vance said discussions with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) could be happening "as soon as today".

But Iran's foreign ministry told state media that Tehran had made "no new commitments" on nuclear inspections.

It came as the US temporarily waived sanctions, allowing Iran to sell oil in US dollars for the first time in decades.

In a joint statement released on Monday, mediators Qatar and Pakistan said that after the first round of talks in the Swiss resort of Bürgenstock, the US and Iran had agreed to "a roadmap towards reaching a final deal within 60 days".

Vance described the talks as having laid a "very good foundation".

The US vice-president said the teams had discussed the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and "de-confliction for the regional ceasefire".

The 60-day sanctions waiver issued by the US Treasury on Monday dismantles central pillars of Washington's long-running embargo, which has historically choked off Tehran's economy.

The emergency licence authorises the production, sale and delivery of Iranian crude and petrochemicals until 21 August.

Iranian oil can even be imported directly into the US, under the sanctions relief.

It unlocks banking transactions, insurance and transportation and does away with the complex networks that Iran has previously used to sell crude.

Treasury Secretary Scott

Bessent said that in exchange for the 60-day waiver, Tehran had committed to keeping the vital Strait of Hormuz open and allowing IAEA nuclear inspectors back into the country.

Speaking in Switzerland on Monday morning, Vance was asked by reporters when nuclear inspectors would be returning to Iran.

He said he expected the process to start "at a minimum this week", but conversations with inspectors "could happen as soon as today".

US President Donald Trump also posted on social media that Iran "will agree to have Major Weapons Inspections".

However, in an interview with Iranian state news agency Irna, foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqai said Tehran had made "no new commitments" on nuclear inspectors.

He maintained that any engagement with UN inspectors would take place "under exist-

ing procedures set by Parliament and the Supreme National Security Council".

The IAEA did not immediately comment.

Iran suspended IAEA access to sites bombed by Israel and the US during the 12-day war last summer.

The following month, the UN's nuclear watchdog said it had pulled out its remaining inspectors from the country.

In 2015, Iran and six world powers – the US, China, France, Russia, Germany and the UK – struck a deal allowing IAEA inspections of nuclear sites in Iran.

During Trump's first term, in 2018, he withdrew the US from this agreement, arguing it was a "bad deal".

Vance said on Monday that the Iranians had threatened to walk out of the talks on Sunday after Trump warned on Truth Social that the US could "hit Iran very hard again".

**Drowning deaths soar in France as Europe buckles in peak of heatwave**

Forty people have drowned in heatwave-related deaths in France since last Thursday, Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu has said, as temperatures hit record levels in several major cities and the heatwave reaches a peak in several European countries.

"It's not something to be taken lightly, going swimming in unsupervised areas during a heatwave," sports and youth minister Marina Ferrari told French radio.

France, along with Spain and Italy, have been hardest hit by the heatwave so far.

France saw its hottest June day on record on Monday and its hottest ever night on Monday night, with a minimum average of 21.6C according to Météo France, and with well over half the country on red alert.

Meanwhile, in Spain temperatures are set to peak above 40C in some areas, with red alerts in Andalusia in the south, and Cantabria and the Basque Country in the north, on the third day of a national heatwave.

Spain is more exposed to the effects of climate change than almost any other European country. State weather service Aemet says June heatwaves are becoming increasingly common, with

10 recorded in mainland Spain between 2000 and 2025, and just two in the previous 25 years.

And in Italy, a red heatwave alert has been declared in 15 cities, including Rome, Milan, Florence, Turin and Venice. The alert signals conditions that can pose health risks even to healthy adults, not just the elderly or chronically ill.

France's sports minister said too many people were trying to cool off in rivers and canals without necessarily taking the risks into account.

Among the fatalities was a 13-year-old girl who had gone for a dip with her family in the River Seine at Fontaine-La Port on Sunday evening, although she did not know how to swim.

The Golfech nuclear power plant in southwestern France had to be shut down on Monday night because of rising temperatures in the River Garonne.

Meanwhile, a young professional footballer was in critical condition in hospital after being pulled out of the River Rhône in a park near Lyon. Emergency services were called to the area to rescue four young men who had got into difficulty in an area of the river where swimming is banned.

**Foreign****NEWS****Montreal shooting leaves officer, civilian and suspect dead**

A midday shooting in the Canadian city of Montreal left a police officer, a civilian and the armed assailant dead on Monday.

The unidentified male suspect, who is believed to have acted alone, was shot and killed right away, the city's police chief said. One other police officer was severely injured and was reportedly in stable condition.

The attack unfolded in a diverse part of the city, Côte-des-Neiges. A witness saw a "gun sticking out of a window", heard shots and called police, investigators said.

Quebec's security minister said the motive was unclear.

After the attack, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) sent an alert to other police forces in Canada, the Globe and Mail newspaper reported. The bulletin said to have warned about a document that had been circulating which allegedly encouraged citizens to shoot police officers.

Speaking to the AFP news agency, local resident Danny Wilk said he was near his home when he heard shots fired.

"I tried to take shelter in the nearby pizzeria, and that's when I saw the shooter, who looked ready to fire his weapon, dressed in military clothing," Wilk said.

The resident said he had seen the officer on the ground after being shot, before the attacker was himself shot by police.

Monday's incident marked the first time a Montreal police officer had been killed in the line of duty in nearly a quarter of a century.

Becoming emotional during a press conference, Montreal Police Chief Fady Dagher told reporters: "It's a nightmare."

The police department later named the officer who was killed as Mohamed Lamine Benredouane, 34. He had been part of the force since 2021.

The department said it would fly its flags at half staff in his honour, adding that Benredouane would be remembered for his hard work, professionalism and dedication to his job.

The civilian killed in the attack was named by the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs as Michael Moshe Mizrahi, "a beloved member of Montreal's Jewish community".

The Canadian advocacy group posted on social media that Mizrahi was "an innocent victim of today's events". Police have not said that it was an antisemitic attack.

French language public broadcaster Radio Canada said the gunman drew inspiration from the misogynistic "incel" movement - mostly online groups of young men who blame their lack of sexual activity on women.

One of Canada's most deadly mass killings, a 2018 vehicle-ramming in Toronto that killed 10, was connected to "incel" ideology.

**South Sudan sets December date for long-delayed first-ever election**

There have been a number of false dawns when it comes to elections in South Sudan, but the authorities have said the long-delayed first-ever vote will take place in December.

The leaders of the world's youngest country have not been tested at the ballot box since independence in 2011 and President Salva Kiir has been in office for 15 years.

According to the original plan, the general election was supposed to have happened in 2015 but a civil war meant that had to be postponed.

The 2018 peace deal, which created a unity government with Kiir at its helm and rival Riek Machar as his deputy, envisioned an election in 2022 but the vote was never organised amid tension between the country's leaders.

Continued issues between the two men could yet delay the vote further.

Machar was sacked as vice-president and arrested earlier last year and charged with murder, treason and crimes against humanity, which he denies. He has been under house arrest in the capi-

tal, Juba, since March last year as fighting persists in some areas of the country.

There have been warnings, including from the UN, that the violence could once again spill over into full-scale civil war.

When announcing the 22 December date for the vote, electoral chief Abednego Akok Kacuol acknowledged that unresolved legal amendments and persistent funding gaps continued to hamper poll preparations.

"The political will is not ours; it lies with the government," he said.

Asked what would happen if funds were not secured within six months, Kacuol said his commission would continue planning while adjusting toward a "realistic electoral timeline".

In a statement on Monday, the presidency said Kiir was committed to implementing the 2018 peace agreement and keeping South Sudan on track toward peaceful, democratic elections.

It said preparations for inter-party dialogue on election-related issues were progressing and would provide a platform for building consensus among political stakeholders.

**ZAMBIA'S FORMER PRESIDENT:**

Edgar Lungu is reported to have said he did not want his successor at his funeral or "anywhere near" his body

**Zambia ex-president's family wins latest legal battle over what should happen to his body**

Edgar Lungu is reported to have said he did not want his successor at his funeral or "anywhere near" his body.

More than a year after the death of Zambia's former President Edgar Lungu, his family have won their appeal to have his body buried in South Africa where he died - overturning a previous high court ruling that allowed the Zambian government to repatriate the corpse.

It is not clear whether Tuesday's ruling at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein puts to rest a legal battle over what should happen to his remains following

a long-standing feud between Lungu and his successor, President Hakainde Hichilema.

All eyes will be on the Zambian government's next move, as its lawyers await instruction. It has long maintained that, as a former head of state, Lungu should be honoured in the country.

The Zambian government wished to see him laid to rest alongside his predecessors in the special presidential burial ground in the capital, Lusaka.

But Lungu's family wanted a private burial after negotiations with the government over the funeral arrangements broke down.

Last August, the South Af-

rican high court in Pretoria ruled that Zambia's government could repatriate the body and give him a state funeral - an outcome that left Lungu's relatives visibly distraught in the courtroom.

The family appealed against the decision but, in a surprise announcement in April Zambia's government said Lungu's remains had been "formally transferred" to the state by the South African court.

But just a few hours later, the same South African court ordered the Zambian government to return the body until the matter went to court again.

The former president died of an undisclosed illness aged 68

at a clinic in Pretoria. Chaos ensued following his death, with mourners receiving conflicting information from the government and Lungu's political party, the Patriotic Front (PF).

Two separate mourning periods were announced and at one point there were competing condolence books.

Lungu, who led Zambia from 2015 until 2021, had numerous rows with Hichilema, who was the opposition leader for many years before finally unseating his bitter rival.

After Lungu's death, his family said the ex-president did not want Hichilema to be at his funeral or "anywhere near" his body.

**Myanmar army killed over 700 civilians in six months, UN says**

Myanmar's military was responsible for more than 700 civilian deaths over the six-month election period last year, the UN says.

A new report covering from August to January says credible sources have verified a minimum of 702 people were killed, including 224 women and 153 children.

It covers the six months from when the military - who waged a coup five years ago - announced elections, a process widely derided as a sham due to main opposition parties being excluded.

The report warns a "decline in international assistance is further compounding the suffering of millions of people".

Inside Myanmar, rebels are losing ground as military forc-

es men into army

The Myanmar military launched its coup in 2021, sparking a civil war where thousands of people were killed and millions displaced.

Large areas of the country remain under the control of armed opposition groups.

The report, from the UN's Human Rights Office, states that air strikes "remained the single largest cause of destruction and suffering".

The region of Sagaing was the "most dangerous region for civilians as the military pressed to gain ground", with 191 deaths, including of 60 women and 30 children, the report says.

During an attack in October 23 people, including four

children, were killed and more than 60 others wounded when munitions struck civilians gathered in front of a school in Chaung-U, Sagaing.

"At the time of the attack, participants were holding a candlelit event to celebrate the end of Buddhist Lent, and to call for the release of political prisoners, oppose military conscription and reject military elections," the report states.

In December, it says a military aeroplane bombed a tea shop in Tabayin, Sagaing, as people had gathered to watch a football match, killing at least 19 and wounding 20 others.

The report also references abuse of Rohingya people who have been exposed to forced recruitment by the Arakan Army, as well as to killings, arbitrary arrests and sexual violence.

"As if the people of Myanmar have not suffered enough at the hands of the military, they have now seemingly been forgotten by those outside the country," UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk said.

"Funding for localised protection efforts was in many areas

the only solace from the suffering caused by constant targeting and indiscriminate attacks by the military. This pullback just compounds that injury."

The military seized power five years ago from the democratically elected government, jailing its leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

More than two years ago, the rebels made a series of sweeping gains, but they have since been put on the back foot. Forced conscription and increased drone power has put the military on the offensive in most parts of the country.

In April, Min Aung Hlaing, the general who launched the coup, became president.

The election was a foregone conclusion, with many popular parties banned from standing and large areas of the country not allowed to participate because of the civil war.

The parliament is filled with his loyalists. The armed forces are guaranteed one quarter of the seats, and the military's own party, the USDP, won nearly 80% of the remaining seats in an election which was tilted heavily in its favour.





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FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595
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# FEATURES

## Governor Okpebholo's home-grown war against crime: A necessary reset?

BUGIE OKHUEMOI

Last week Sunday was like a movie. A couple just coming from church made a stop-over at Vegetable Market to buy groceries to prepare lunch.

Then it happened. A kidnapping. In broad daylight. In the heart of Benin-city.

Another family thrown into panic. Another wave of fear. Another reminder of how criminals and derelicts of society were increasingly trying to assert their dominance over the decent.

But this story, like many others recently, ended differently.

Following Governor Monday Okpebholo's directive to security agencies, a manhunt was launched. Within twenty-four hours, the victim was rescued. One suspect was arrested. Another was neutralized after an exchange of gunfire.

For many keen observers, beyond being just another security success story, this was evidence of something they have increasingly begun to notice: a governor who appears determined to fight crime not only with money and equipment, but with practical ideas rooted in the realities of Edo society.

And perhaps that is what makes his approach different.

Governor Okpebholo has supported security agencies with vehicles, logistics, funding, and operational assistance. Those interventions are important. Security agencies cannot function effectively without them.

But the governor seems to understand a truth many of us have long avoided: crime survives not only because criminals exist, but because society often creates an environment where criminals can thrive.

There was a time when communities helped raise children. A time when family names mattered. There was a time when a father would rather endure poverty than enjoy wealth he could not explain.

Somewhere along the way, that changed.

Gradually, we began to celebrate wealth without asking questions. We started measuring success solely by what a person owned, not how it was acquired. Men with questionable sources of income became community heroes. They received chieftaincy titles; occupied front-row seats at events; entire ceremonies paused to recognize them whenever they arrived.

The message was loud, even when nobody spoke it - Money is everything.

Children were listening. Teenagers were watching.

Young people learned that society often cared more about possession than character. They saw respect being accorded to wealth without scrutiny.

They saw honour being attached to affluence without accountability.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that many began searching for short-



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO (RIGHT)

cuts.

Internet fraud became attractive to teenagers. Parents condoned and in some cases, encouraged their children's indulgence in fraud. Parents celebrated their teenage children buying them cars and building houses. They didn't care to ask questions. They knew, but failed when it mattered most.

Cultism became fashionable. Kidnapping became lucrative.

The tragedy is that these crimes did not emerge in isolation. They grew from a society that gradually stopped condemning ill-gotten wealth and started admiring it.

Today, many of the same communities that once applauded suspicious riches now find themselves living in fear of the monsters those values helped create.

Governor Okpebholo's response appears to recognize that security cannot be outsourced entirely to the police, military, or other agencies.

The battle must also be fought within homes, neighbourhoods, and communities.

That thinking is reflected in several of the policies his administration has adopted.

One of the most significant steps was the amendment of the anti-kidnapping and anti-cultism laws, with new provisions to do something unusual - to spread responsibility.

Property owners whose buildings are used for kidnapping, cultism, or other violent crimes risk having those properties demolished. As many have been.

Some critics may view this as harsh. Yet the policy has achieved something important.

Parents who previously dismissed warning signs are now paying closer

attention. Landlords are asking more questions about prospective tenants. Families are becoming more interested in the activities of children whose conduct they once ignored.

Suddenly, crime is no longer seen as "the government's problem."

Everyone now has a stake in preventing it.

The whistleblower policy follows the same practical logic.

Under the initiative, anyone who provides information leading to the arrest of kidnappers or the prevention of a kidnapping receives N5 million. Information leading to action against cultism attracts N3 million.

For years, communities often knew where criminals lived. People heard conversations. They noticed suspicious movements. They saw strange visitors arrive at odd hours.

Yet many remained silent.

Now, silence carries an opportunity cost.

The prospect of earning legitimate money while helping protect society has encouraged citizens to become more attentive to criminal activity around them.

The result is a growing partnership between government and ordinary people.

The governor has also actively engaged community leaders, local vigilantes, and hunters in security efforts.

This may appear simple, but it is remarkably practical.

A hunter who knows every path through a forest often possesses intelligence no technology can provide. A village elder can identify unfamiliar faces long before outsiders notice them.

Community leaders understand local dynamics in ways distant authorities cannot.

Rather than treating local knowl-

edge as irrelevant, the administration has chosen to harness it.

And the results have become increasingly visible.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Governor Okpebholo's approach emerged during his visit to the Edo State Police Command following the rescue operation. Speaking on the proposed special courts for kidnapping cases, he made it clear that convicted kidnappers, who are sentenced to death according to the law, would have their death warrants signed by him. For added weight, he said "I will take you to the ring road roundabout so that the whole Edo people will see you, and I will have no regrets about it"

His words sparked debate.

Some considered them too blunt. Others viewed them as necessary.

Yet, to understand why many residents support such rhy rhetoric, one must first understand the level of frustration that insecurity has created.

For years, some families, who were 'fortunate', buried loved ones. Those who were not, didn't find a body to bury. Their loved ones were brutally murdered and left to rot far away in a jungle.

Parents sold properties to pay ransom. Business owners altered travel plans. Communities lived under constant anxiety.

In moments like these, people begin to demand consequences that are visible, certain, and swift.

Older generations often recall a different era. An era when public punishment served as a powerful warning.

Children who witnessed such events carried the memory for life. Families feared the shame associated with criminal conduct. Communities openly distanced themselves from

those who brought dishonour upon their names.

Whether one agrees with public executions or not, supporters argue that society has reached a point where deterrence must once again become real and tangible.

Many believe that if the first convicted kidnapper is publicly executed under the law, conversations will immediately begin in homes across Edo State.

Mothers will plead with wayward sons. Fathers will issue ultimatums. Families will intervene earlier. Some may even refuse to shield relatives whose actions threaten to bring disgrace upon the household.

The social message would be unmistakable: crime has consequences.

Edo State did not arrive at this point overnight.

The insecurity confronting the state today is the product of years of moral decline, weakened community accountability, and the gradual normalization of criminal behaviour.

It is therefore unrealistic to expect ordinary solutions to produce extraordinary results.

Governor Okpebholo's strategy appears built around a simple principle: if society played a role in creating the problem, society must also play a role in solving it.

The rescue of kidnapped victims, the disruption of criminal networks, the decline in cult-related activities, and the increasing cooperation between citizens and security agencies suggest that this philosophy is already producing results.

Will every measure be universally accepted, and free from criticism? Certainly not.

But leadership is often tested not when solutions are comfortable, but when they are necessary.

At a time when many Nigerians have become accustomed to governments merely reacting to crime, Governor Okpebholo has chosen to attack both the criminals and the social conditions that empower them.

His methods may be unconventional. His rhetoric may be controversial. His tactics may make some people uncomfortable.

Yet for many Edo residents, comfort is no longer the priority. Safety is.

And if restoring safety requires a fundamental reset of societal values, a renewed culture of accountability, and tougher consequences for those who choose crime, then perhaps these are precisely the kinds of practical and daring measures the moment demands.

Sometimes, before a society can move forward, it must first remember what it once stood for.

Governor Okpebholo's home-grown war against crime may well be the necessary moral reset Edo State needs.

• Bugie Okhuemoui is the Special Adviser on Media & Publicity to the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo

# Sports

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

## World Cup 2026: DR Congo arrive in Guadalajara ahead of crucial Colombia clash



DR CONGO TEAM ARRIVED

DR Congo delegation have arrived in Mexico ahead of their second Group K fixture at the 2026 FIFA World

Cup, with preparations now in full swing for a decisive encounter against Colombia.

The Leopards touched down in

Guadalajara on Tuesday, 23 June, as attention quickly shifted to their next test in the tournament being jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

DR Congo opened their World Cup campaign with a hard-fought draw against Portugal, a result that boosted confidence within the camp and kept their qualification hopes firmly alive.

Now, Sébastien Desabre's side are targeting all three points as they look to strengthen their position in Group K and move a step closer to securing a place in the knockout stage.

Their opponents, Colombia, provide a stern test, with the South Americans also pushing for progression in a tightly contested group. The match is scheduled for

Wednesday, June 24 at the Estadio Akron in Guadalajara.

The Leopards will be relying on their organisation, physical intensity, and quick transitions to trouble a Colombian side known for its attacking quality and technical ability.

After earning a valuable point in their opening fixture, DR Congo know that another positive result could significantly boost their chances of advancing, with the final group games approaching quickly.

As the stakes rise, anticipation continues to build around what promises to be a high-intensity clash in Guadalajara, where both teams will be aiming to take a major step toward the Round of 32.

## The English Premier League, EPL releases 2026/27 fixtures ahead of August kickoff date

### ALL EPL 2026/27 PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURES

Friday 21 August 2026

20:00 Arsenal v Coventry City

Saturday 22 August 2026

Hull City v Manchester United

Everton v Crystal Palace

Ipswich Town v Sunderland

Nottingham v Leeds United

Brentford v Tottenham

### SUNDAY 23 AUGUST

Brighton v Aston Villa

Man City v Bournemouth

Newcastle United v Liverpool

### MONDAY 24 AUGUST

20:00 Fulham v Chelsea

(Sky Sports)

### SATURDAY 29 AUGUST

AFC Bournemouth v Everton

Aston Villa v Arsenal

Chelsea v Brighton

Coventry City v Hull City

Crystal Palace v Man City

Leeds United v Brentford

Liverpool v Nottingham

Manchester United v Ipswich

Sunderland v Fulham

Tottenham v Newcastle United

### SATURDAY 5 SEPTEMBER

Arsenal v Chelsea

Brentford v Sunderland

Brighton v Leeds United

Everton v Manchester United

Fulham v Crystal Palace

Hull City v Aston Villa

Ipswich Town v Liverpool

Man City v Coventry City

Newcastle Utd v Bournemouth

Nottingham v Tottenham

### SATURDAY 12 SEPTEMBER

Bournemouth v Brentford

Aston Villa v Nottingham

Chelsea v Hull City

Coventry City v Brighton

Crystal Palace v Ipswich Town

Leeds United v Newcastle Utd

Liverpool v Fulham

Manchester United v Man City

Sunderland v Arsenal

Tottenham Hotspur v Everton

### SATURDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

Bournemouth v Liverpool

Brentford v Chelsea

Brighton v Arsenal

Everton v Ipswich Town

Fulham v Manchester United

Leeds United v Crystal Palace

Manchester City v Sunderland

Newcastle United v Hull City

Nottingham v Coventry City

Tottenham v Aston Villa

### SATURDAY 10 OCTOBER

Arsenal v Leeds United

Aston Villa v Brentford

Chelsea v AFC Bournemouth

Coventry City v Newcastle Utd

Crystal Palace v Nottingham

Hull City v Everton

Ipswich Town v Fulham

Liverpool v Manchester City

Manchester Utd v Tottenham

Sunderland v Brighton

### SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

Bournemouth v Sunderland

Brentford v Liverpool

Brighton v Crystal Palace

Everton v Chelsea

Fulham v Hull City

Leeds United v Man United

Man City v Ipswich Town

Newcastle United v Aston Villa

Nottingham Forest v Arsenal

Tottenham v Coventry City

### SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER

Arsenal v Everton

Aston Villa v Manchester City

Chelsea v Tottenham Hotspur

Coventry City v Fulham

Crystal Palace v Newcastle Utd

Hull City v Brentford

Ipswich Town v Nottingham

Liverpool v Brighton

Man United v Bournemouth

Sunderland v Leeds United

### SATURDAY 31 OCTOBER

Bournemouth v Leeds United

Aston Villa v Fulham

Brentford v Nottingham Forest

Chelsea v Manchester United

Coventry City v Sunderland

Hull City v Ipswich Town

Liverpool v Arsenal

Manchester City v Brighton

Newcastle United v Everton

Tottenham v Crystal Palace

### SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER

Arsenal v Hull City

Brighton & Hove Albion v

Brentford

Crystal Palace v Liverpool

Everton v Coventry City

Fulham v Newcastle United

Ipswich Town v Bournemouth

Leeds United v Tottenham

Manchester Utd v Aston Villa

Nottingham Forest v Man City

Sunderland v Chelsea

### SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER

Bournemouth v Nottingham

Aston Villa v Sunderland

Brentford v Everton

Chelsea v Leeds United

Coventry City v Crystal Palace

Hull City v Brighton

Liverpool v Manchester United

Manchester City v Fulham

Newcastle United v Arsenal

Tottenham v Ipswich Town

### SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER

Arsenal v Manchester City

Brighton v Newcastle United

Crystal Palace v Hull City

Everton v Liverpool

Fulham v AFC Bournemouth

Ipswich Town v Aston Villa

Leeds United v Coventry City

Manchester United v Brentford

Nottingham Forest v Chelsea

Sunderland v Tottenham

### WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER

20:00 Bournemouth v Brighton

20:00 Aston Villa v Everton

## CAF A-License return signals new era for Nigerian Coaches – Sanusi

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has reinforced its commitment to developing world-class coaches and referees, unveiling a series of capacity-building initiatives aimed at aligning Nigerian football with international best practices.

The General Secretary of NFF Mohammed Sanusi stated this while speaking on behalf of NFF President, Ibrahim Musa Gusau, at the opening of a six-day CAF B-License Refresher Course in Abuja on Monday.

Sanusi said the federation had put in place structured programmes designed to strengthen technical and officiating standards across the country.

According to him, recent initiatives such as the Young Talent Programme, Beach Soccer Programme and FIFA Elite Referees Programme form part of a broader strategy to enhance the capacity of key stakeholders within Nigeria's football ecosystem.

He also announced that Nigeria has regained admission into the CAF A-License Coaching Convention, a development expected to provide local coaches with greater opportunities to attain the highest coaching quali-

fications on the continent.

"The NFF Technical Department is working diligently towards resuming the CAF A-License course in Nigeria in August for the first time in nine years," Sanusi said.

Addressing participants at the refresher course, Sanusi stressed the importance of dedication and excellence, noting that only half of the 50 participants would gain admission into the CAF A-License programme scheduled to begin in August.



CAF A-LICENSE REFRESHER

## US Smash 2026: Quadri Aruna secures wildcard entry, eyes redemption

Nigeria's table tennis sensation Quadri Aruna has been awarded a wildcard entry into the highly

anticipated US Smash 2026, offering the veteran campaigner a fresh chance to compete against the world's elite.

The wildcard invitation comes as a timely boost for Aruna, who has endured a difficult season plagued by inconsistent results.

The Nigerian star, long regarded as the flagbearer for African table tennis on the global stage, will be determined to seize the opportunity and restore his competitive edge at one of the sport's premier international events.

A former African champion and one of the continent's most decorated players, Aruna brings a wealth of experience to the American showdown.



QUADRI ARUNA

## World Cup: Algeria stage strong comeback to beat Jordan 2-1 in group J thriller

Algeria produced a strong second-half performance to come from behind and defeat Jordan 2-1 in a tense Group J encounter of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The match was played at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California.

The match was full of energy, pressure and fast attacking football, with both teams

showing strong desire to collect maximum points.

Jordan started the match with confidence and played with good structure in midfield.

They defended well and tried to hit Algeria on quick counter-attacks. Their hard work paid off in the 36th minute when Nizar Al-Rashdan scored the opening goal.

The goal came after a sharp pass from Mousa Al-Tamari, who broke through Algeria's defensive line and created space for the finish.

Jordan celebrated the goal with high spirit as they went into halftime leading 1-0.

In the second half, Algeria came back more aggressive and controlled possession better.

They pushed Jordan deep

into their half and increased pressure from the wings. Their effort brought results in the 69th minute when Nadhir Benbouali scored the equaliser.

The goal came from a well-delivered cross by captain Riyad Mahrez, who once again showed his experience and vision. Benbouali finished calmly to bring the score to 1-1.



# NPFL champions to receive record ₦1bn prize money in 2026/27 season

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The winners of the 2026/27 Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) season will receive a record N1 billion in prize money, marking a significant increase in financial rewards for clubs

competing in the country's top-flight football competition.

According to the new prize structure, the league champions will pocket N1 billion, while the runners-up will receive N500 million. The third-placed team will also earn a substantial financial reward, with details expected to be officially

confirmed by league authorities.

The development represents another major step in the NPFL's ongoing efforts to improve the league's commercial value and competitiveness.

Prize money for the NPFL champions has witnessed steady growth in recent years. In the past,

the league winners received N100 million during the 2022/23 season, a figure that later rose to a record N210 million in subsequent campaigns. The proposed N1 billion reward for the 2026/27 champions signals a dramatic increase and underlines the league's ambition to attract greater investment and raise professional standards.

In a related development, the minimum wage for NPFL players has been set at N2 million, a move aimed at improving player welfare and enhancing professionalism across the league.

The increased financial incentives are expected to boost competition among clubs while strengthening the overall profile of Nigerian domestic football. Note: Your original draft appears incomplete regarding the exact amount for the runners-up and third-placed team. If the runners-up are meant to receive N500 million or N5 million, I can revise the article accordingly, as there is a significant difference between the two.



2025/2026 Nigeria Premier Football League NPFL Champions

# NFF slams fake news on Ashley Plumptre, appeals to journalists to verify stories

The Nigeria Football Federation on Tuesday passionately appealed, once more, to journalists and persons in the public space to consistently make the effort to verify news items they see on social media or any public space before escalating the same to other spaces.

This further appeal comes against the background of a fake news item on Tuesday, propagated by an internet scamster who imagined and published

on Facebook, a report that Super Falcons' defender Ashley Plumptre was lamenting her exclusion from the Nigeria team 'selected' to defend the Women Africa Cup of Nations title at the 14th WAFCON taking place in Morocco 25th July - 16th August this year.

NFF's Director of Competitions, Ruth David, cleared the air on the news item: "This is totally false. Last year, Ashley Plumptre made a video in which she categorically said that she is NOT on

Facebook; that some fellows are impersonating her and that she has tried several times to bring down the page without success. Nothing has changed about her absence from Facebook; the player is not on Facebook and nobody should believe anything that emanates from the cloned account.

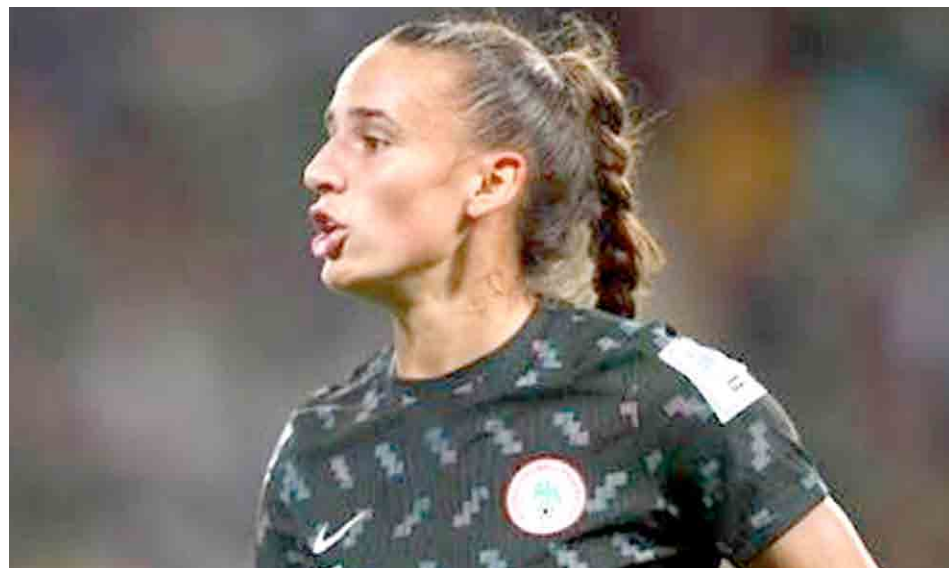
"The other issue is that the Coach has not submitted any list of players for the Women AFCON, so the scamster got it all wrong. The same scamster

was at work some weeks ago stating that Esther Okoronkwo (a Super Falcons' striker) made the same claims, when in fact the player was not invited for the Senegal friendly matches simply because she was nursing an injury.

"We recall that some time ago, there was a report that Asisat Oshola (a Super Falcons' striker) said she had retired from international football, which was patently false.

"We appeal to well-meaning individuals to double-check whatever news item they see anywhere before escalating the same to other spaces. The incidence of fake news has become overwhelming and it is important that media owners and media workers consistently verify what they push out there for the sake of their own integrity and credibility."

Ashley Plumptre herself debunked the news item yesterday: "Awful false accounts. I've posted on my IG and X for people to report. They are using my identity and scamming people. I'm currently contacting someone in Saudi (Arabia) to help me take these accounts down because this has been happening for well over a year now."



ASHLEY PLUMPTRE



The Lagos State Sports Trust Fund (LSSTF) committee

## LSSTF to renovate Rowe Park Hall, squash courts-Chairman

The Lagos State Sports Trust Fund (LSSTF) has announced plans to restore the Mobolaji Johnson Sports Complex at Rowe Park, Yaba, with a full renovation of its Indoor Sports Hall and long-neglected Squash Courts.

The project is expected to revive the complex, which has for decades served as a centre for grassroots sports development and talent discovery in Lagos and across Nigeria.

The Chairman of LSSTF, Wahid Oshodi, disclosed this during an inspection of the facility in Lagos on Tuesday.

He described the Park as a symbol of Nigeria's sporting heritage and a place where countless young athletes began their careers before rising to national prominence.

According to him, the facility has played a major role in developing athletes who have gone on to represent Lagos State and Nigeria in various competitions.

"This is the home of talent discovery in Nigeria. Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu has approved that we update, renovate and do whatever it takes to bring this facility back to international standard.

He said the renovation would cover the Indoor Sports Hall and the Squash Courts, which have been neglected for years.

Oshodi said that the goal was to transform the facility into a modern sports centre capable of hosting major competitions.

"Facilities like this are very important because they provide opportunities for young people to develop their talents.

"We cannot talk about sports development without having quality infrastructure in place," he said.

Oshodi said the project

comes at a crucial time as Lagos prepares to host the maiden edition of the National Intermediate Games in October.

"We have just a few months, but work is ongoing. The plan now is to accelerate progress and ensure completion before the end of September," he said.

He said the facility would be ready ahead of the games and capable of accommodating athletes and officials expected from different parts of the country.

According to him, the governor's commitment to sports development has made it possible to embark on the projects, which will have a lasting impact on young people and the sports community.

The LSSTF chairman stressed that the renovation was not only about preparing for competitions but also about creating a safe and productive environment for young people.

"This project is about recreation, youth engagement and community development. We want to create opportunities for young people to channel their energy positively and stay away from social vices," he said.

According to him, sports remain one of the most effective tools for promoting discipline, teamwork and healthy living among youths.

Oshodi said the emotional and historical significance of Rowe Park occupies a special place in the memories of many Lagos residents.

"For many people, the Park is where their sporting dreams started. It has produced champions and inspired generations of athletes.

"We are determined to preserve that legacy and ensure that future generations can benefit from it," he said.