

2027: Nigerians will re-elect Tinubu, says Uzodimma

ABUJA

Governor Hope Uzodimma and of Imo has described President Bola Tinubu to Singapore's founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew, praising his economic reforms and expressing confidence that Nigerians would re-elect him in 2027.

Lee, is globally recognized

as the founding father of modern Singapore, spearheading its transformation from an impoverished British colonial outpost and resource-deficient port into a wealthy, highly industrialized global economic powerhouse.

Uzodimma spoke at a state dinner in Owerri marking the end of the three-day Renewed Hope Ambassadors/Presiden-

tial Communications Team National Media Tour of Federal and Imo State Government projects.

This is contained in a statement issued by the Director of Media and Publicity, Renewed Hope Ambassadors, Mr Tunde Rahman, on Saturday.

"In President Bola Tinubu, we have another Lee Kuan Yew," the governor declared, describ-

ing the President's reforms as bold and transformative.

He said Tinubu assumed office on May 29, 2023, fully prepared to confront Nigeria's economic challenges through far-reaching reforms.

"The old order is gone and there is now a new order. President Tinubu knew exactly what he came to do. He started implementing the reforms imme-

diately because he understood the task before him."

The governor compared Nigeria's pre-reform economic situation to the biblical bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, saying difficult but necessary decisions were required to free the country from years of economic stagnation.

He acknowledged the short-term hardship caused by the

reforms but said they were already yielding results through increased revenues available to states for infrastructure and human capital development.

"Everything we are doing in Imo today is made possible because of the Renewed Hope Agenda. We are investing in infrastructure, healthcare, education and technology because the reforms have created the enabling environment for de-

CONTINUES ON PG 4»

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#200

'No Discrimination in Edo' – Okpebholo

- **Swears in 1st non-indigene as commissioner**
- **Inaugurates 1st PLWD as perm sec**
- **Restates commitment to inclusive governance**

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo on Friday made history by swearing in Edo State's first physically challenged Perma-

nent Secretary, Mr Melody Omosah, alongside 19 others.

The landmark ceremony at the Festival Hall of the Government House in Benin City, also featured the inauguration of two commissioners and seven members of the Governing Council of the Edo State Col-

lege of Health Sciences and Technology.

Describing the appointments as a product of a transparent and rigorous selection process, the Governor said only the best candidates emerged after a highly competitive exercise.

"Today is a special day for all of you who have reached the pinnacle of your civil service careers. About 250 officers sat for the examination. I met with 25 candidates, but only 20 were successful," the governor said.

He said the appointments reflected his administration's

resolve to reward excellence rather than favouritism, adding that the Head of Service, Dr Anthony Okungbowa, had attested to the competence of the newly appointed permanent secretaries.

"I congratulate you on this achievement. The Head of Service told me he had interacted with the permanent secretaries and found them to be highly competent. That shows the process was based on merit," Okpebholo said.

In a strong message against undue political influence, the governor warned the new permanent secretaries not to act on directives falsely attributed

to him, insisting that due process must remain the hallmark of his administration.

"This administration believes in due process. Be careful not to act on claims that 'the governor said so.' Many statements are falsely attributed to me.

"If you are uncertain about any directive, seek clarification from me. Where that is not possible, channel your concerns through the Head of Service, who will bring them to my attention," he said.

Governor Okpebholo also reassured members of the Igbo community and other ethnic

CONTINUES ON PG 4»



SWEARING-IN:

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (middle), shortly after the inauguration of two newly appointed commissioners and 20 permanent secretaries in Government House, Benin City, on Friday.

Edo tightens security in communities

- **Operatives arrest 12 suspects over cultism**

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

As part of the bid to improve security, the Edo State Security Squad, codenamed "Operation flush out Kidnappers and Cultists," has arrested 12 suspects in connection with cultism and cult related activities.

Speaking to journalists after the operation, the Publicity Secretary of the Squad, George Aburime, said the Governor Monday Okpebholo led administration will not tolerate any form of criminality or breakdown of law and order in the State.

He warned youths and members of Uzebu and Iyano-

mo Communities in Oredo and Ikpoba-Okah local government areas of the State over the recent leadership crisis and cult related activities.

Aburime disclosed that the Chief Security Officer (CSO) and the Principal Security Officer (PSO) to the Governors led a team of security personnel on a raid of criminal hideout across the two local government areas.

He revealed that the team raided a hideout known for drugs and cultism at Uzebu Quarters at Asoro Hill along Ekenwan road in Oredo local government area of the State where 12 suspects..

"12 persons have been ar-

CONTINUES ON PG 4»

Edo excited over virtually-impaired Lawyer's success

—Pg 2

Boy's Brigade invests Governor Okpebholo as Grand Patron

—Pg 4

US and Iran exchange strikes after two US soldiers killed in Jordan

—Pg 8

Spain champion of the world beat Argentina 1-0 at the World Cup final

—Back Page

NEWS

Edo excited over virtually-impaired Lawyer's success

● **Emerges 1st Permanent Secretary from disability Community after six decades**

BENIN CITY

Disability Community and others in Edo State have been engulfed in jubilation following the appointment of virtually impaired lawyer, Mr. Melody Omosah, as permanent Secretary by Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Speaking on the development, the Network for the Advancement of People with Visible Disabilities (NAPVID) applauded Governor Okpebholo, commending it as a landmark step in advancing inclusive governance Secretary in the Edo State Civil Service.

In a congratulatory message issued by Mr. Kingsley Okojie, Head, Media & Ad-

vocacy, and Mr. Isaac Noble Israel, Manager, Programmes & Strategy, NAPVID, Benin City, Edo State, the organisation described the appointment as a watershed moment in the history of the State.

The statement further noted that Governor Okpebholo had become the first governor of the state to appoint a qualified person with disability to the prestigious office of Permanent Secretary.

NAPVID said the appointment of Mr. Melody Omosah, who currently serves as Director of the Citizens' Mediation Centre in the Edo State Ministry of Justice and Executive Director of NAPVID, represents a triumph of merit, competence and inclusive leadership.

"This historic appointment is not merely a personal achievement for Mr. Melody Omosah. It is a defining victory for merit, equity and inclusive governance.

"It sends an unmistakable message that under the pres-

ent administration, disability is not a limitation where competence has been demonstrated, and that every qualified Edo citizen can aspire to the highest levels of public service," the statement added.

The disability rights ad-

vocacy group noted that the governor's action had broken a longstanding barrier in the state's public service while reinforcing the principle that excellence, integrity and character, rather than disability, should determine eligibility

for leadership positions.

NAPVID also observed that the appointment aligned with the administration's growing record of promoting disability inclusion through deliberate policy actions and institutional reforms.



INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE:

A cross section of the newly sworn in permanent secretaries and two commissioners during the historic ceremony in Government House, Benin City, Edo State on Friday.

2027: Nigerians will re-elect...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

velopment."

Uzodimma expressed confidence that Nigerians would reward Tinubu with a second term in 2027 as the benefits of the reforms become more evident.

Speaking on behalf of the visiting journalists, veteran journalist, Dr. Soni Daniel, commended the governor for what he described as remarkable strides in infrastructure, healthcare, education and digital technology.

Daniel said the inspection tour provided firsthand evidence of prudent use of public resources and positioned Imo among Nigeria's leading states

in infrastructure and economic transformation.

Earlier, the President's Special Adviser on Media and Public Communications, Sunday Dare, praised Uzodimma for the state's infrastructure transformation and effective implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

Dare said projects inspected, including the Imo Digital City, the 2,000-bed Infectious Disease Centre, the Heart Transplant Centre, the University of Innovation, Science and Technology, the Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu International Convention Centre, reflected the benefits of strong Federal-State collaboration and increased FAAC allocations.

Christ chosen church breaks silence on Apostle Igberase's retirement, denies ₦1 million bribery claim

MIKE OSAROIGAGBON

The leadership of Christ Chosen Church of God International has broken its silence on the retirement of its former Director of Administration, Apostle Pius Igberase, dismissing allegations that members of its disciplinary panel were bribed with ₦1 million each.

In a statement issued on Friday in Benin City and signed by Secretary-General Apostle Jones Ikibeh and Church PRO Apostle Newton Egharevba, the Church said the decision followed an internal disciplinary process.

It said concerns arose after the Spiritual Leader returned from a three-month working visit on May 18, 2026, alleging that Apostle Igberase usurped his authority, made inciting remarks against the leadership, wore an unauthorised cassock during the 2026 Baptism Service, and engaged in disorderly conduct during the Women's Convention.

The Church also accused him of promoting tribalism

and failing to provide leadership to his household in line with church standards.

According to the statement, Apostle Igberase was queried on June 10 before a 21-member Special Disciplinary Panel, chaired by Apostle E. Akugue, investigated the allegations on June 12.

The panel reportedly found his explanations unsatisfactory and recommended his dismissal. However, the Spiritual Leader approved his retirement with full severance benefits, describing the decision as an act of restraint.

The Church dismissed as false allegations that panel members were paid ₦1 million each to influence the outcome, insisting that the videos and documents circulating online were edited and misleading.

It also expressed concern over alleged threats by some supporters of the retired cleric to lock church branches and disrupt activities, warning that it would invoke the law to protect its members and properties.

Ramat Park Flyover emerges Benin's newest tourist site

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

Even before its official inauguration and opening to vehicular traffic, the newly completed Ramat Park Flyover in Benin City has become an unexpected tourist destination, attracting hundreds of residents, visitors, families, students and photography enthusiasts eager to experience Edo State's latest flyover.

The landmark infrastructure, constructed by the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, has

transformed the Ramat Park axis into a hive of social activity, with visitors thronging the bridge daily to admire its imposing architecture, take photographs and enjoy panoramic views of Benin City.

For many, the experience of walking on the bridge has become a memorable event.

"I have travelled to other states and admired their flyovers, but today I have one in my own state. I came with my children to take pictures because this is history for Edo," said Mrs. Queen Ehanire, who visited the site with members of her family.

Another resident, Mr. James Osaigbovo, said the

completed structure had already changed public perception of the area.

"The environment has completely changed. People now come here not because they have business around Ramat Park, but simply to admire the bridge. It has become a place people want to visit," he said.

A commercial photographer, Osas Aigbe, said weekends have become particularly busy.

"People come here dressed in their best clothes to take pictures on the bridge. Some even organize family outings here. My business has improved because the flyover has become an attraction," he said.

Urban development analysts say the public fascination with the project reflects the significance of the flyover as the latest of its kind in Edo State and a major addition to Benin City's physical landscape.

Observers believe the growing public interest in the Ramat Park Flyover highlights the role of modern infrastructure in reshaping urban life beyond its primary transportation purpose.

Although the flyover is yet to be officially commissioned, anticipation continues to build among residents who see it as a unique symbol of progress and renewed development in Edo State.

Blocked Ramat flyover access triggers reactions

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

The decision to barricade the two major access points leading to the newly completed Ramat Park Flyover in Benin City has generated mixed reactions among residents, with many describing the measure as necessary for public safety, while others expressed disappointment over being denied access to what has become one of the city's most talked-about landmarks.

The flyover, which is awaiting formal commissioning before being opened to vehicular traffic, has in recent weeks attracted large crowds of residents, families, students and content creators eager to climb the bridge, take photographs and enjoy panoramic views of the city.

The increasing influx of visitors reportedly prompted authorities to block pedestrian access to the structure amid concerns over safety, vandalism and the need to preserve the integrity of the facility before its official inauguration.

Some residents who spoke with our correspondent said the restriction was inevitable considering the growing number of people treating the bridge like a

recreational centre.

A civil servant, Mrs. Esther Omoruyi, said, "People were no longer just admiring the flyover; they were climbing the bridge in large numbers, taking pictures and leaving litter behind. It is a public infrastructure, not a picnic ground. Blocking the entrances is the right thing to do until it is officially opened."

A commercial driver, Mr. Friday Omoregie, noted that allowing unrestricted access could expose residents to avoidable risks.

"If anything happens to anybody on that bridge now, the government will be blamed.

There are no traffic marshals or safety measures in place yet because the project has not been commissioned. Restricting access is simply common sense," he said.

For university student, Miss Anita Egharevba, the closure was understandable but could have been better communicated. "We all wanted to experience the first flyover in Edo State because it is something many of us have never seen before. But I also understand that people started abusing the privilege. Some people were climbing the barriers and making videos in dangerous spots," she said.

NEWS

Shettima departs Abuja for ECOWAS Summit in Freetown

ABUJA

Vice President Kashim Shettima, on Sunday departed Abuja to at-

tend the 69th Ordinary Session of the Authority of the Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS, in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Shettima, who will represent President Bola Tinubu at the regional event, will join other political and business leaders across West Africa and beyond,

at the summit.

The summit is scheduled to take place at the Julius Maada Bio International Conference Centre, Freetown, on Sunday, July 19.

The summit will focus on key policy decisions, strategic reso-

lutions, and reaffirm the leaders' collective commitment to peace, democracy, economic growth, and regional integration.

It will bring together Heads of State and Government, Ministers, senior officials and regional institutions to advance

the community's shared priorities of security, economic integration, trade and sustainable development.

The vice president will return to Abuja at the conclusion of his engagements in the West African nation.

Next Afrobeat Star 2.0: MTN, Ultima raise winning stake to ₦225m recording deal, others

LAGOS

MTN Nigeria and Entertainment Company, Ultima Studios have unveiled Season 2 of the Next Afrobeats Star Talent Competition, and increased the winner's recording deal prize from N150 million to N225 million.

The organisers said at the media parley on Saturday in Lagos that the winner would also receive a brand-new Mercedes-Benz SUV.

The organisers added that the first, second and third runner-ups would earn recording deals valued at N100 million, N75 million and N50 million respectively.

The News Agency of Nigeria

reports that the "Next Afrobeats Star (NAS)" is a prominent Nigerian music reality show powered by MTN Nigeria, Ultima Studios to discover and mentor emerging global musical talents.

Speaking at the unveiling, the General Manager, Brand and Communications, MTN Nigeria, Ms Emamoke Ogoro, said the competition was designed to bridge the gap between musical talent and sustainable careers by giving emerging artistes access to industry opportunities.

Ogoro said, unlike conventional talent shows where contestants performed existing songs, participants on the Next Afrobeats Star are required to create and perform original

music, helping them build lasting careers beyond the competition.

She said all contestants' songs would be released on major global streaming platforms, ensuring wider visibility and commercial opportunities for the young artistes.

According to her, six contestants from MTN's grassroots talent discovery platform, alongside a wildcard entrant, will join the main competition for the first time, expanding access for emerging talents nationwide.

Ogoro said applications would remain open until Aug. 17, urging aspiring musicians to take advantage of the platform to launch professional careers in the music industry.

Edo Govt urges responsible parenting after reuniting runaway kids with family

BENIN CITY

The Edo Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs. Eugenia Abdallah, has emphasised the need for responsible parenting, child protection and proper supervision.

Abdallah made the call on Saturday after the children, who reportedly ran away for fear of punishment after eating food kept by their mother, were reunited with their family in Benin City.

According to her, the incident highlights the importance of creating safe and supportive home environments where

children can communicate freely without fear.

"Every child has the right to safety, care, protection and an environment where they can communicate freely without fear," she said.

The commissioner urged parents and guardians to adopt positive parenting practices and pay closer attention to their children's emotional wellbeing and daily activities.

She also advised families to promptly report cases of missing children to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, security agencies or other relevant authorities to facilitate timely intervention.

Abdallah said the children, who are from Igusi Community in Oredo Local Government Area, were rescued after they became lost while trying to avoid punishment.

She explained that the Chairman of Igusi Community, Mr Osabuohien Aisien, found the children wandering and took them to Amadin Orphanage in Benin City, where they received temporary care and protection.

According to her, the swift action of the community leader, the orphanage management and concerned members of the public helped ensure the children's safety and eventual reunion with their parents.

Fuel price uncertainty forces marketers to temporarily halt supply — IPMAN

IBADAN

The Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) says uncertainty over petrol prices has forced many marketers to halt fresh purchases, leading to the temporary closure of some filling stations.

The Zonal Chairman of IPMAN, Western Zone, Chief Oyewole Akanni, disclosed this on Sunday, in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Ibadan.

Akanni said that the situation was triggered by the suspension of loading of the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) at the Dangote Refinery about four days ago.

This, he said, forced marketers to source products from

private depots at significantly higher prices.

According to him, the cheapest ex-depot price at private depots in Lagos currently ranges between N1,200 and N1,220 per litre, excluding transportation costs.

He said that marketers who bought products on Friday paid between N1,210 and N1,220 per litre.

"The non-availability of fuel at some filling stations and the closure of others are due to fluctuations in the price of lifting fuel from depots.

"Since Dangote Refinery stopped selling PMS about four days ago, private depot owners have increased their prices.

"Many filling stations that have exhausted their stock are waiting to see whether prices

will come down when Dangote Refinery resumes sales or increase further.

"Only a few marketers are buying products for now because of the uncertainty," he said.

Akanni, however, maintained that there was no fuel scarcity, urging motorists and other consumers not to engage in panic buying.

"There is no fuel scarcity, members of the public should not panic.

"Although there is a possibility of an increase in pump price, if the current situation persists," he said.

The zonal chairman explained that Dangote Refinery neither gave prior notice nor explained the reason for the suspension of sales of PMS to marketers.

EDOHERMA launches 'Verify Before You Visit' campaign to curb quack healthcare

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Health Regulation and Monitoring Agency (EDOHERMA) has launched a statewide public health campaign tagged "Verify Before You Visit" to encourage residents to confirm the registration status of private healthcare facilities before seeking medical treatment.

The campaign, unveiled as the agency marked its first five months of operation, is aimed at strengthening regulation of the state's healthcare sector, protecting residents from unlicensed practitioners and eliminating substandard medical practices.

EDOHERMA urged members of the public to verify the

registration and compliance status of any private healthcare provider through its official online portal before visiting such facilities for treatment.

According to the agency, residents can access its centralised digital database through www.edohermareg.com.ng by using the "Health Facilities Search" feature to confirm whether a healthcare facility is duly registered and compliant with the state's healthcare standards.

The agency advised the public not to patronise any private healthcare facility that is not listed on the EDOHERMA verification platform, stressing that the initiative is intended to promote transparency, accountability and informed decision-making by healthcare

consumers.

EDOHERMA said the campaign forms part of its long-term strategy to reform Edo State's healthcare system by combining effective regulation with sustained public awareness.

The agency reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the lives of Edo residents through strict enforcement of healthcare regulations and ensuring that only qualified and compliant healthcare providers operate in the state.

It added that the initiative would help create a safer and more accountable healthcare environment where fraudulent and substandard medical facilities can no longer operate unnoticed.

EDOHERMA
Edo Healthcare Regulation and Monitoring Agency

Protecting Edo Lives
One Regulation at a Time.

VERIFY BEFORE YOU VISIT!

Your health and safety matter.

Before receiving treatment at any private healthcare facility in Edo State, take a few seconds to verify that the facility is **REGISTERED** and **COMPLIANT** with EDOHERMA's health standards.

VISIT:
www.edohermareg.com.ng

Use the **HEALTH FACILITIES SEARCH** to confirm that the healthcare facility is registered before you walk in.

DON'T WALK INTO ANY PRIVATE HEALTHCARE FACILITY YOU CANNOT FIND ON THE EDOHERMA WEBSITE.

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'No Discrimination in Edo'...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

groups of fair representation in his government, saying his administration would continue to provide equal opportunities without discrimination.

"I congratulate my Igbo brothers. There is no discrimination in Edo. We are building an inclusive government, and there will be more opportunities for all groups in due course," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the newly inaugurated permanent secretaries, Omosah thanked the governor for the appointment and pledged unwavering commitment to delivering the administration's policies and programmes.

"We are grateful to the governor for finding us worthy of

this appointment. We will work closely with you, the Head of Service and our political leaders to ensure the successful implementation of your administration's policies and programmes across the state," Omosah said.

Also speaking after the ceremony, the first non-indigenous Commissioner in his cabinet, who was sworn-in as commissioner, Mr Martin Oli, said Governor Okpebholo's appointments were driven by competence, integrity and capacity rather than ethnic or regional considerations.

"The governor does not consider tribe or place of origin when making appointments. His criteria are competence, integrity and capacity. Those are the qualities he looks for," Oli said.

Edo tightens security...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

rested at Uzebu Community at Asoro Hill in connection with cultism and cult related activities and they have been handed over to the Police and after proper investigation they will be charged to Court for prosecution," he stated.

Aburime said the team was also in the Iyanomo Community off Sapele road in Ikpoba-Okah local government areas of Edo State where community members are causing trouble over leadership positions.

He added: "We are in the Community to preach peace and not to intimidate anyone, the team is urging the warring faction to embrace peace and live in unity."

"We appeal to Communities

never to aid criminality as the Okpebholo led administration is doing a lot to ensure a peaceful state and your community should not be the ones to encourage breakdown of law and order or criminality."

Aburime said the Iyanomo community is having leadership tussle on who becomes the Odionwere or Okaighele and warned that those causing trouble in the community should stop forthwith or face the consequences of their actions.

"Anyone having issues or disputes should kindly seek redress from the Palace of the Oba of Benin or the Court of law rather than creating problems in the Community. Anyone trying to cause trouble or a breakdown of peace will be dealt with according to the law," he warned.

Gov. Bago donates ₦100m for IBBU medical set for clinicals, others

MINNA

Governor Umaru Bago of Niger has donated ₦100 million to the College of Medicine, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University, Lapai, and its 41 pioneer medical students.

Bago announced the donation when he hosted the students set for clinicals at the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, and the management team of IBBU, Lapai, on a thank-you visit in Minna.

He explained that out of the ₦100 million, each of the 41 students going for the clinicals was to receive ₦2 million while the College of Medical Sciences was to get ₦8 million.

The governor further said that ₦10 million was to be given to the management of the institution.

Bago also announced that a bus would be provided for the students for easy movement during the period of their clinicals at ABU Zaria.

The governor expressed concern over the challenges faced in getting a place for

their clinicals and assured that the IBBU Teaching Hospital would soon be completed.

He congratulated the students and charged them to be good ambassadors of the state, urging them not to hesitate in communicating with the Commissioner for Health, Dr Murtala Bagana, if they encounter challenges during the clinicals.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr Murtala Bagana, explained that the 41 pioneer medical students of the institution comprised of 21 males and 20 females.

He said they were on the courtesy visit to the governor to appreciate him for making it possible for them to go for the clinical.

Also speaking, Jamilu Mikhail, the President of the IBBU, Lapai, Medical Students Association, on behalf of other students, expressed appreciation to the governor for securing an alternative place for them for their clinical.

He promised that the students would not to disappoint the state and appealed to the governor to include them in the existing bonding scheme to serve the state after graduation.

Boy's Brigade invests Governor Okpebholo as Grand Patron

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Boy's Brigade of Nigeria, Edo State Council, on Friday invested Governor Monday Okpebholo as its Grand Patron and appealed for government support to expand its youth development programs across the state.

The investiture ceremony, held at the Government House in Benin City, was led by the State President of the Boy's Brigade, Dr Bibowe Braie, who praised the governor's leadership and described his administration as people-centred.

Braie said the organisation had observed positive developments under the Okpebholo adminis-

tration, particularly the enactment of anti-cultism and anti-kidnapping laws, which he said had strengthened public safety in the state.

He also commended the governor for restoring salary payments to staff of the Edo State College of Education that had been suspended by the previous administration, saying the move had improved workers' welfare.

"You have saved many lives through these actions, and they deserve commendation," Braie said.

He appealed to the governor to support the organisation by allocating land for its activities, providing a monthly subvention, and donating a 32-seater bus to enhance its operations.

Braie also praised ongoing infrastructure projects, including the Ramat Park flyover and the Sapele Road reconstruction, describing them as visible evidence of development in Edo State.

Responding, Okpebholo thanked the Boy's Brigade for the honor, saying he was pleased to be associated with an organisation committed to promoting discipline, leadership, and moral values among young people.

The governor said he was inspired by the history of the Boy's Brigade, noting that its founding by a schoolteacher underscored the critical role educators play in shaping society.

"I am honored by this recognition and impressed by the caliber of people gathered here today," Okpebholo said.

"I have great respect for teachers, especially Sunday school teachers, because they serve as grassroots mentors who help mold the character of young people."

He directed the organisation to submit its requests formally to the state government, assuring members that they would receive due consideration.

"Write to me officially so the government can process your requests. We will begin looking at the issue of land, and I will also support your organisation personally in whatever way I can," the governor said.



INVESTITURE OF THE GOVERNOR:

President of the Boy's Brigade, Dr Bibowe Braie (2 right) Governor Monday Okpebholo during the investiture of the Governor in Benin City.

50 years after, FCT getting better under Wike – Tinubu

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu says the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, is changing for the better under the leadership of Nyesom Wike as its minister, 50 years after creation.

Tinubu said this in Abuja on Friday night, during a special thanksgiving dinner to celebrate the successful inauguration of 31 projects across the FCT in 28 days.

Represented by the Senate President, Sen. Godswill Akpabio, the president commend-

ed Wike and his team for all the sacrifices to ensure that the nation's capital works for everyone.

He further commended the minister for demonstrating that "leadership is not measured by how loudly one announces plans, but how clearly the people can see the results of the plans".

He said that the FCT belonged to every Nigerian, describing it as a city where unity resides, where diversity meets, and where the hope of every citizen finds a common address.

"Every new road run here

shortens somebody's journey, every new bridge connects more than communities; it connects friendship, it connects love, it connects unity, and also connects opportunities for Nigerians.

"Every completed project quietly tells Nigerians that the government can still work when vision meets determination," he said.

Mr Aliyu Modibbo, a former minister of the FCT and current Special Adviser to the President on General Duties, Office of the Vice President, said that Wike

was among the ministers of the territory that had performed well.

Modibbo, who represented Vice President Kashim Shettima at the event, expressed optimism that Wike would return as FCT minister in Tinubu's second tenure saying, "four years is not enough to complete what you have started".

In his remarks, Wike said that when he assumed office as FCT minister in August 2023, he met depressed civil servants with no motivation to drive Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

2027: Minister mobilises 1m votes for Tinubu, Radda re-election

KATSINA

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Dr Mutaka Rabe-Darma, has vowed to mobilise over one million votes for President Bola Tinubu and Gov. Dikko Radda ahead of 2027 elections.

The assurance was given on Sunday in Katsina by Mr Abubakar Tsanni, Director-General, Grassroots Mobilisation for Tinubu/Dikko (GMTD 2027), during an interactive session with youths and women groups.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Rabe-Darma is the founder and Chairman

of GMTD, a support group established to mobilise grassroots support for Tinubu and Radda.

Tsanni said the engagement was aimed at strengthening mobilisation through partnerships and strategic interactions with political groups across the state.

He said the group was committed to ensuring the success of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2027 general elections, particularly the re-election of Tinubu and Radda.

According to him, GMTD has established strong structures from polling units to ward, local government, zonal and state

levels, with grassroots politicians coordinating activities.

He explained that the group already has 165 votes from each polling unit across the state's 6,651 polling units, translating to more than 1.079 million votes.

"Each of the people involved has a voter card and is waiting for the election period to cast their votes for Tinubu and Dikko," Tsanni said.

He expressed confidence that the structures would deliver the desired success for the APC candidates in Katsina.

Speaking on behalf of the minister, APC chieftain, Mr Danlami Kurfi, described Rabe-Darma as

a strong grassroots mobiliser.

Kurfi said with the minister's commitment and the growing support for APC across the country, the party would emerge victorious in the 2027 elections.

He urged party members to disregard opposition statements and remain committed to the success of the APC.

Also speaking, Alhaji Ali Abubakar-Albaba, Chairman of the Katsina State House of Assembly Committee on Women Affairs, assured the political groups of continued support and inclusion before, during and after the elections.

NEWS

Constitution review: Why we prioritised State Police – Senators

ABUJA

Senators have defended the National Assembly's decision to prioritise constitutional amendments on the establishment of state police, saying the country's worsening insecurity makes the proposal an urgent national priority.

The lawmakers gave the clarification while responding to concerns that the national assembly appeared to be focusing more on state police than on other constitutional amendment proposals.

The Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, in his reaction, said insecurity remained the foremost concern of Nigerians.

Bamidele, who spoke through his Directorate of Media and Public Affairs, said this was why priority seemed to be given to state police.

The senate leader, who is also the Deputy Chairman of the Constitution Review Committee, said the 10th National Assembly could not afford to downplay issues relating to state police.

This, he said, had even be-

come necessary because the issue of state police was coming at a time when security challenges continued to threaten lives and property across the country.

Also, the Senate Minority Leader, Sen. Abba Moro (PDP-Benue South), dismissed

suggestions that other constitutional amendment proposals had been abandoned.

Moro explained that the Constitution Review Committee had deliberately segmented the amendment process to fast-track urgent issues,

particularly state police.

"We're looking in all the directions of constitutional amendments. We decided to segment the amendment process because if we wait for every item to be concluded before submitting them, this

legislative cycle may pass.

"So we're taking the state police now, while other constitutional amendment proposals will follow very soon. In the next couple of months, they will also see the light of the day," he said.

Osun 2026: APC Chieftain debunks claim Tinubu, Oyetola abandoned party's candidate

OSOGBO

A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has dismissed as misleading a report alleging that President Bola Tinubu and the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Mr Gboyega Oyetola, have abandoned the party's candidate for the Osun governorship election, Mr Bola Oyebamiji.

Oyintiloye spoke on Sunday in Ibokun while addressing journalists during the campaign tour of the Oyebamiji Campaign Council in Obokun/Oriade Federal Constituency.

He described the report as false and the handiwork of desperate opposition elements seeking to create division within the APC.

According to him, both leaders remain fully committed to the party's success and are closely monitoring the campaign while providing the political leadership and strategic support required for victory.

"President Tinubu and our leader, Oyetola, have not relented in their support for Oyebamiji.

"Anyone suggesting other-

wise is spreading falsehood to mislead the public.

"The APC remains united, focused and determined to reclaim Osun," he said.

Oyintiloye said the party's leadership at the national and state levels was confident of victory and urged members not to be distracted by propaganda.

He added that prominent party leaders in the state, including Chief Bisi Akande, the National Secretary, Sen. Ajibola Basiru, and the state chairman, Mr Tajudeen Lawal, among others, were working round the clock to ensure victory.

He said those spreading claims that the party leadership, including the President, was not supporting its candidate were deluded.

Oyintiloye urged party faithful across the 30 local government areas and the Area Office to intensify grassroots mobilisation, engage voters and highlight the achievements of the Tinubu administration alongside Oyebamiji's development blueprint.

He cautioned the opposition against violence, intimidation and other forms of lawlessness capable of undermining the electoral process.



ADDRESSING THE PRESS:

The Publicity Secretary of Edo State Security Squad George Aburime addressing the press after a successful operation at Uzebu Community along Asoro Hill in Ekenwan road Oredo local government area.

PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE

NABTEB reforms boosting confidence in technical education – Report

ABUJA

The Chief Executive Officer of CSO Media Integrated Ltd., Mr Dominic Ogakwu, has said that reforms by the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) are strengthening confidence in technical and vocational education across Nigeria.

Ogakwu said this in a report released on Sunday following the firm's independent monitoring of the 2026 NABTEB Common Entrance Examination and the In-School Final Year Certificate Examinations.

He said the assessment covered the Federal Government Technical School, Orozo, Abuja, and selected technical schools in Kebbi State.

According to him, the monitoring found that examination processes were orderly, transpar-

ent and professionally conducted across the centres visited.

"Across the centres we visited, examination processes were orderly, transparent and professionally coordinated.

"Students demonstrated remarkable confidence, while administrators and invigilators carried out their responsibilities with discipline and integrity," he said.

Ogakwu said the findings reflected renewed confidence in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a viable pathway to skills development and employment.

He noted that NABTEB, es-

tablished in 1993, remained central to the development of Nigeria's skilled workforce through the conduct of technical and vocational examinations.

He said the board also contributed to curriculum development, quality assurance, research and assessment to ensure graduates acquired industry-relevant skills.

Ogakwu commended the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of NABTEB, Dr Mohammed Aminu, for initiatives aimed at strengthening the board's operations.

"His administration has focused not merely on conducting examinations but on restoring confidence in techni-

cal education itself," he said.

He said the reforms had led to increased enrolment, expansion of accredited examination centres, improved examination monitoring and curriculum modernisation.

According to him, the board had continued to advocate greater investment in technical and vocational education to equip young Nigerians with practical skills for national development.

"Nigeria must deliberately produce skilled technicians, craftsmen, engineers, innovators and entrepreneurs capable of creating jobs rather than merely seeking them," he quoted the report as saying.

Digital banking: Uwaleke commends growth, wants improvement in cyber security digital literacy

ABUJA

Prof. Uche Uwaleke, the President of the Capital Market Academics of Nigeria (CMAN), has commended the country's digital banking sector, saying it has become one of the most vibrant in Africa.

Uwaleke, however, said in an interview with newsmen in Abuja on Sunday, that there were still gaps to close, particularly in service reliability, rural connectivity, cybersecurity and digital literacy.

He listed some challenges hampering digital banking

operations to include infrastructure, cybersecurity, and consumer confidence.

Uwaleke noted that frequent network failures, unstable electricity supply, and occasional service disruptions could affect transaction reliability.

According to him, cyber fraud has also become more sophisticated, making continuous investment in security essential for both banks and FinTech companies.

He said that many customers still experienced delays in transaction reversals or dispute resolution, which could reduce

trust in digital platforms.

"Nigeria has made significant progress and is now widely recognised as one of Africa's leading digital finance markets.

"The growth of FinTech companies, increasing smartphone penetration, expanding agent banking networks, and supportive regulatory initiatives have all contributed to greater financial inclusion.

"More Nigerians, including those in previously underserved communities, now have access to financial services without necessarily visiting a physical bank branch."

FCT residents express happiness over gradual drop in cooking gas price

ABUJA

Residents of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) say they are beginning to benefit from a gradual reduction in the price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), also known as cooking gas.

The development followed improved product supply and Federal Government's interventions aimed at stabilising the domestic Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) market.

The residents who spoke to newsmen in Abuja on Sunday, said the reduction had provided some relief to households that had struggled with the rising cost, while expressing hope that the trend would be sustained.

Cooking gas is currently selling for between N1,200

and N1,650 per kg across the FCT, depending on the location and retail outlet, while some roadside vendors still sell as high as N1,800 per kg.

The current prices represent a further decline from the N1,650 to N1,498 per kg recorded in recent weeks and are significantly lower than the N2,000 per kg sold during the peak of the price surge.

Speaking on the development, an energy expert, Mr Chris Mordi, attributed the gradual reduction in cooking gas prices to improved product availability and recent Federal Government interventions.

Mordi said increased supply from domestic producers like the NLNG and improved distribution were beginning to moderate prices.

He, however, said further investments in storage, transportation and domestic production were required to achieve long-term price stability.

"If the current improvement in supply is sustained and activities such as product hoarding are effectively curtailed, Nigerians can expect cooking gas prices to become more stable and affordable in the coming months," he said.

Meanwhile, Mrs Chidera Nwanfor, a businesswoman, said the reduction had brought some relief to low-income households.

"I refilled my 5kg cylinder this week at a lower price of N1,500 per kg compared to N1,800 per kg I paid in June.

"It may not be a big reduction, but every naira saved makes a difference for many families," she said.

Badejo-Okunsaya elected as 33rd NBA President

ABUJA

Mrs Oyinkansola Badejo-Okunsaya, SAN, has been elected the 33rd President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

Badejo-Okunsaya polled 12,317 votes, representing 47.18 per cent of the total votes cast, to defeat her closest rivals, Mr Lateef Akangbe,

SAN, who secured 7,934 votes, and Mr Olumuyiwa Akinboro, SAN, who polled 5,855 votes.

Other elected national officers are Oghenero Okoro, who emerged First Vice President with 11,024 votes, Afam Okeke, elected General Secretary with 8,478 votes, Aghogho Gladys, who won the position of Assistant General Secretary with 14,312 votes, and Chinelo Ofoegbunam,

elected Welfare Secretary with 14,911 votes, among other successful candidates.

The Chairman of the Electoral Committee of the NBA (ECNBA), Aham Ejelam, SAN, announced the results at the NBA headquarters in Abuja after the elections, which concluded in the early hours of Sunday.

In his remarks, the outgoing NBA President, Mr Afam Osigwe, SAN, said attempts

by some colleagues to truncate the election failed, adding that every effort to derail the process was resisted.

He described the period leading to the election as a trying time for the bar, alleging that many went to great lengths to rubbish the association.

He urged those who won to be magnanimous in victory and encouraged those who lost to remain hopeful, saying

there was always another day.

Osigwe said the cyberattack showed that more needed to be done in the area of data protection and called for collective efforts to conduct the affairs of the association in an acceptable manner.

He said the story of how the election was almost sabotaged would someday be told.

"The NBA, being an association of lawyers, should be able to determine the course of its electoral process while promoting the rule of law.

"Mistakes might have been

made during the process but I have confidence that my successor will correct them.

"I urge winners to extend the hand of fellowship to those who lost and work together with a united front to move the Bar forward. The unity of the bar can not and should never be negotiated," he said.

He wished the new executive committee a successful tenure and expressed the hope that the NBA would never witness a day when its leaders would be elected by people other than lawyers.

**PARTNERSHIP:**

Dr Umaru Kwairanga, Chairman of the NGX Group and other dignitaries during the investiture of the 53rd President of CIIN on Friday in Lagos.

2027 Polls: NBC, INEC join forces against unethical broadcasting

ABUJA

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) are set to introduce joint broadcast monitoring measures ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The initiative would tackle unethical broadcast practices and promote responsible electoral coverage nationwide.

The NBC Director-General, Charles Ebuebu, disclosed this in an exclusive interview with newsmen in Abuja.

Ebuebu said the commis-

sion would collaborate with the INEC to improve election monitoring through advanced technology.

He said agencies could no longer operate separately, especially with the growth of digital and online platforms.

"We have written to INEC, and we are going to have a joint monitoring outlook over the elections.

"Gone are the days where agencies work in silos. When we coordinate, we're able to monitor more effectively," he said.

Ebuebu explained that joint monitoring would allow NBC and INEC to address violations

collectively instead of handling issues independently. He added that NBC was engaging other stakeholders, including regulators of digital platforms, to strengthen election monitoring.

"We are calling in other stakeholders to reinforce the election monitoring.

"We are signing agreements with the Nigerian Communication Commission and the National Information Technology Development Agency, before the elections," he said.

Ebuebu said the commission was upgrading its facilities with artificial intelligence tools to track the expanding

broadcast environment.

"With online platforms, there are thousands of them.

"You need more than staff; you need AI monitoring facilities," he said.

He noted that NBC had improved its monitoring system and could currently track almost 50 channels from its Abuja facility.

Ebuebu said the commission would set up more monitoring system across the country in line with new technology trends in broadcasting.

The NBC director-general also announced a sensitisation workshop in Ibadan for broadcasters, INEC officials, security agencies and other stakeholders.

Bauchi's ₦29bn erosion control project to restore 9,842 hectares degraded land – Expert

BAUCHI

An environmentalist, Ibrahim Ahmad, has said that the ₦29.69 billion flood and erosion control project in Bauchi metropolis would protect the environment and improve livelihoods.

He said that the gesture demonstrated the Bauchi government's commitment to environmental sustainability for the overall development of the state. Ahmad spoke in Bauchi on Sunday, while re-

sponding to a survey on state governments' utilisation of ecological funds.

He said the project was designed to control gully erosion and stormwater channels in Bauchi metropolis as well as flood control in over 15 flood prone local government areas of the state.

The expert said that such interventions were imperative to control flooding and erosion, as well as protect lives and properties for sustainable development.

While commending the initiative, Ahmad called for ef-

fective execution of the project to achieve its objectives.

It will be recalled that the Bauchi government on May 13, embarked on an \$18.5 million dollars, equivalent to ₦29.69 billion flood and erosion control project.

The project is being funded by the World Bank through its Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) programme.

Performing the groundbreaking ceremony, Gov. Bala Mohammed, said that the

project was to curb gully erosion and stormwater damage ravaging communities.

He said that gully erosion and uncontrolled stormwater channels running from Tsohon Kamfani to Gwallagan Mayaka communities in the metropolis was threatening the topography of the town.

Mohammed said that the state government had paid 40 per cent of the total contract sum as mobilisation fee to the contractor while the full amount was readily available.

Flood Alert: NEMA urges early evacuation as rains intensify

ABUJA

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has urged residents of flood-prone communities nationwide to heed early warning alerts and relocate to safer areas as heavy rains intensify.

NEMA Director-General, Mrs. Zubaida Umar, gave the advice in a statement issued in Abuja, which was made available to newsmen by the agency's Head of Press Unit. Mr Manzo Ezekiel.

The NEMA DG said intensified rainfall across the country required communities to activate flood mitigation measures to reduce the impact of possible flooding.

She urged residents to pay attention to early warning information issued by relevant government agencies and relocate to higher ground whenever flooding threatened.

Umar advised motorists and pedestrians against driving or walking through floodwaters because of the risks to lives and property.

She also warned residents against dumping refuse into drainage channels, saying blocked drains increased flooding risks.

The director-general urged members of the public to promptly report emergency situations to relevant authorities for timely response and rescue operations.

According to her, preparedness and early evacuation remain the most effective ways to prevent avoidable deaths and minimise flood-related losses. Umar said NEMA had directed its Zonal Directors and Heads of Operations Offices to intensify community flood awareness campaigns nationwide.

She said the agency would strengthen collaboration with State Emergency Management Agencies, Local Emergency Management Committees, traditional institutions and other stakeholders.

The NEMA boss added that the agency would coordinate timely search and rescue operations wherever emergencies occurred.

2027: I'll run inclusive, reform-driven govt. LP Presidential candidate

ABUJA

The Labour Party presidential candidate, Dr Chibuzor Okereke, has promised to run an inclusive government driven by reforms, innovation, if elected in the 2027 presidential election.

Okereke who made the pledge while featuring on a Personality Interview Series in Abuja on Sunday, urged citizens to believe in Nigeria again.

He said that Labour Party had overcome all its internal crisis and was ready to pursue its mantra: "Nigerians First, Believe Again."

If elected president, Okereke pledged to strengthen all the critical sectors for a more result-driven government. He explained that his choice of a female vice presidential running mate in the person of Hajia Bintu Konto, was a pointer to an inclusive government.

"The message is simple. This

is a Nigerian first project; Believe again. Our plan is to change the mindset of young people whose key plan is how to travel abroad. We will make them believe again in the Nigerian project.

"Whether you are in the military or in the police, you are at the forefront of the war fighting, the country will care for you; that is the Nigeria we envision.

"You are a woman who feels under-represented; a youth who feels social injustice and high inequality; a pensioner who feels abandoned after serving or a normal person working hard who wants to just get ahead, I ask you to believe again in the Nigerian project.

"This is because we are going to run a government that will collapse ethnic considerations and geo-political expression, and focus on optimising the capacity of the Nigerian people for merit-based opportunities," he said.

NEWS**JUDICIARY**

Group urges stronger judiciary to protect rule of law

LAGOS

A civil society organization, Concerned Nation Builder Initiative (CNI), has called for the strengthening of Nigeria's judicial system for the protection of rule of law and better justice dispensation.

Mr Teslim Sultan, CNI Project Director, made the call in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Lagos.

Sultan said that a strong, independent and well-equipped judiciary remained the cornerstone of every democratic society.

He said democracy relies on the judiciary to ensure that justice is not only done but must be seen to be done at all times.

"Politicians or higher authorities should stop interfering into the judicial matters; they should allow the law to take its course at all times.

"Corruption, embezzlement and illegality will reduce in our society, if the judiciary is allowed to operate independently without interference," he said.

He said that strict enforcement of the law would promote public confidence in the nation's justice system and discourage criminal activities.

Sultan urged government at all levels to provide adequate funding, modern infrastructure to the judiciary, as well as training for judicial officers and prosecutors to improve

the efficiency of the justice delivery system.

He also called on security agencies to collaborate more effectively with the judiciary

by ensuring diligent investigation and prosecution of criminal cases, saying that timely justice would serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders.

He urged Nigerians to respect the rule of law, cooperate with law enforcement agencies and avoid taking the law into their own hands.

Sultan said that collective commitment to justice and accountability was essential for national peace, security and development.



THANKSGIVING DINNER:

Senate President, Sen. Godswill Akpabio (2nd left), FTC Minister, Barr. Neeson Wike (3rd left) and the Majority Leader, House of Representatives, Prof. Julius Ihonvbere (2nd right) during a special thanksgiving dinner on Friday night to celebrate the successful commissioning of 31 projects across FCT in 28 days.

Troops rescue seven kidnap victims, kill two kidnappers, arrest four others

ABUJA

Troops have rescued seven kidnapped victims, neutralised two kidnappers, arrested four suspected ISWAP terrorists and collaborators.

The troops also recovered arms, ammunition and other items in coordinated operations across Borno, Yobe, Benue and Plateau states.

An operational reports obtained by our correspondent on Sunday said troops of Operation HADIN KAI rescued two women and two minors who escaped from an ISWAP enclave in the Agapalawa area of the Mandara Mountains in Gwoza Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno.

The reports added that a woman and her child, believed to be family members of an ISWAP terrorist, also surrendered to troops after fleeing the Gobara enclave in the Sambisa Forest.

According to the reports, troops in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) arrested four suspected ISWAP terrorists in Gwoza, Gujba and Kukawa LGAs of Borno and Yobe.

"One of the suspects con-

fessed to spying on troops conducting clearance operations along the Baga-Cross Kauwa road and supplying logistics to terrorists," it said.

The reports said troops also foiled an attempt by ISWAP fighters to infiltrate Kirawa in Gwoza, forcing them to abandon a motorcycle, while a Nigerian Air Force aircraft later neutralised another terrorist moving towards Marte.

"In a separate operation, troops discovered and safely detonated an improvised explosive device planted along the Maiduguri-Gamboru highway in Dikwa LGA, averting a potential attack on commuters.

"In Benue, troops of Operation WHIRL STROKE, supported by local hunters and the Benue State Civil Protection Guards, rescued four kidnapped victims and neutralised two kidnappers during clearance operations in Katsina-Ala.

The troops recovered one AK-47 rifle, one G3 rifle, one pistol, 221 rounds of ammunition of different calibres, magazines, military camouflage uniforms and a Point-of-Sale terminal from the kidnappers' hideouts," it added.

BEDC Seeks Appeal Court order to stop auction of 3 seized operational vehicles

BENIN CITY

Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) Plc has approached the Court of Appeal, Akure Division, seeking an urgent order to halt the auction of three operational Toyota Hilux vehicles seized to enforce a N20 million judgment.

The company argued that selling the vehicles before its appeal was heard would render the appeal nugatory and cause irreparable harm to its operations.

This was contained in an affidavit sighted by our correspondent on Saturday in Benin.

BEDC's Senior Legal Officer, Mr Victor Mukoro, said the company also filed an affidavit of urgency. He urged the court to hear the application before the scheduled auction.

Mukoro said the request became necessary because the

Court of Appeal was currently on vacation, while the auction was scheduled for July 20.

Court documents showed that BEDC filed a motion seeking an interlocutory injunction restraining retired Justice Williams Akinlolu Akinoroye and the Sheriff of the Ondo State High Court from auctioning the vehicles.

The company also sought an order restraining the respondent, the sheriff, and their agents from disposing of any of its property pending the determination of the appeal.

NAN reports that the application followed a May 4 judgment by Justice Williams Olamide of the Ondo State High Court, awarding N20 million in damages over esti-

mated electricity billing.

BEDC filed a notice of appeal on May 6, challenging the judgment on the grounds of jurisdiction, limitation of action, and the award of damages, which it described as excessive.

The company argued that the cause of action arose years before the suit was instituted in 2024 and was therefore statute-barred.

Ibadan residents decry indiscriminate refuse dumping, seek Oyo Govt's intervention

IBADAN

Residents of the Soka area of Oluyole Local Government Area, Ibadan, have expressed deep concern over the indiscriminate dumping of refuse beneath the Soka Under-Bridge along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway.

In separate interviews with newsmen on Sunday, some residents described the situation as a growing environmental and public health hazard.

They urged the Oyo State Government and relevant environmental authorities to urgently intervene, warning that the continued accumulation of waste poses serious health risks and undermines the aesthetic value of one of the major entry points into Ibadan.

A visit to the location by our correspondent revealed heaps of decomposing waste littering the under-bridge, with offensive odours permeating the surrounding environment.

The refuse dump, which has continued to expand despite previous efforts by landlords' associations in the area to discourage the practice, has become a source of concern for motorists, traders, and

residents living within the vicinity.

A resident, Mr Kamal Aderemi, lamented that the indiscriminate disposal of refuse has not only defaced the environment but was also gradually obstructing nearby drainage channels.

He further warned that the unsanitary condition could encourage the breeding of disease-carrying insects and rodents, thereby increasing the risk of outbreaks of communicable diseases.

Aderemi urged the government to intensify public enlightenment on proper waste disposal, provide accessible waste collection points, and ensure strict enforcement of environmental sanitation laws to deter offenders.

Another resident, Mrs Fisayo Mustafa, said the foul smell from the refuse dump has become unbearable, affecting the daily lives of people living and doing business around the area.

An executive of the Soka Landlords' Association who preferred to remain anonymous said that the association had repeatedly cautioned individuals against dumping refuse at the under-bridge and

had explored various community-based measures to address the problem.

He, however, noted that the efforts had yielded little success, with the refuse still increasing by the day.

The landlord noted that the challenge had gone beyond what the community could handle alone, stressing the need for immediate government intervention through the regular evacuation of the waste and the installation of warning signs.

Also, Mr Mathew Ayotunde, a trader in the community, urged the government to deploy environmental enforcement officers to ensure the prosecution of those found violating sanitation regulations.

Ayotunde also appealed to residents and road users to embrace responsible waste disposal practices, stressing that maintaining a clean environment is a shared responsibility.

He expressed optimism of the prompt response of the Oyo State Government to restore cleanliness to the area, improve public health, and prevent further environmental degradation at the busy Soka Under-Bridge and its environs.

NDLEA arrests 80-year-old grandpa, others in 3 states interdiction operations

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested an 80-year-old grandpa, businesswoman, couple and Chadian woman in Edo, Kogi, Rivers interdiction operations.

The Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Mr Femi Babafemi said this in a statement on Sunday in Abuja.

Giving the breakdown, Babafemi said that NDLEA operatives in Rivers state arrested an 80-year-old grandpa for dealing in illicit substances.

He said that the Octogenar-

ian was found in possession of 800 grams of skunk at the time of his arrest at Ahoada on Tuesday, July 14.

Meanwhile, a Chadian woman and her Nigerian accomplice were nabbed in Lagos following the seizure of 50,000 pills of tramadol 225mg intercepted in Kogi state on Sunday, July 12.

Babafemi said that the consignment was eventually linked to the two suspects who were traced to Lagos and arrested in the Apapa area of the state.

Similarly, two consignments of Canadian Loud, a synthetic strain of cannabis,

with a combined weight of 4.70 kilograms have been intercepted at the import shed of the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) Ikeja Lagos.

Babafemi said that the cargoes which arrived at the Lagos airport from Canada in cartons with 'Odugwu' boldly written on them came aboard British Airways flight and Ethiopian Airlines flight on June 24 and July 3 respectively.

"Two cargo agents linked to the shipments were initially arrested following which another suspect who showed up to take delivery of the consignments from a logistics company was also nabbed.

FOREIGN

NEWS

US and Iran exchange strikes after two US soldiers killed in Jordan

The US launched another round of air strikes against Iran on Saturday night, targeting its coastal surveillance and air defence facilities, US military officials said.

Iranian state media said Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz had been struck.

Centcom said it also targeted Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) responsible for the attack that killed two US troops in Jordan on Friday, where another service member remains missing.

In response to the latest strikes, Iran's army said it carried out drone attacks on two US bases in Kuwait, according to state media. Bahrain has said it intercepted aerial attacks.

The US and Iran have ramped up attacks against each other in recent days, with both sides accused of striking critical infrastructure.

cal infrastructure.

Washington has also reimposed its blockade of Iranian ports and Tehran has declared the Strait of Hormuz closed, as their preliminary ceasefire collapsed less than a month after it began.

On Sunday the IRGC said two vessels had ignored Iranian warnings not to transit the Strait of Hormuz and were consequently involved in "an accident". It warned that all vessels that are "influenced" by the US and "use unsafe routes" will "certainly face accidents".

On Sunday morning, the US embassy in Amman said Jordanian authorities had evacuated the international airport and seaport in the southern port city of Aqaba due to a "specific and credible threat", and strongly advised Americans to refrain from travelling to either.

The US military said its

operation Council accused Tehran of targeting civilian infrastructure after Kuwait said a power plant and a water distillation plant had been hit. Iran said it had also targeted an air base and a depot used by US forces in Kuwait.

The US has meanwhile denied attacking civilian targets, saying it "carried out strikes exclusively on military targets, including military logistics infrastructure" after Iran said bridges and a station were hit.

Under international law, attacking civilians or civilian areas is illegal. However, in certain circumstances, civilian objects - like a bridge or a power plant - lose their protection if they are used to support the enemy's war effort.

Washington and Tehran struck a preliminary deal to end the war in June, but the agreement unravelled within weeks - with President Donald Trump declaring the agreement "over" on 8 July.

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operation Council accused Tehran of targeting civilian infrastructure after Kuwait said a power plant and a water distillation plant had been hit. Iran said it had also targeted an air base and a depot used by US forces in Kuwait.

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Russia launches major ballistic missile attacks on Kyiv

Russia has carried out a wave of ballistic missile strikes on the Ukrainian capital Kyiv, killing one person and wounding at least 14, officials say.

A number of areas in the region were hit overnight. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called it "one of the most massive ballistic attacks on Kyiv" since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

The Ukrainian military said air defences had shot down 18 out of 41 missiles. The systems also intercepted 108 drones.

Meanwhile Ukraine has continued its assault on Russian sites. Drones hit two Russian oil tankers in the Black Sea, the Ukrainian military said.

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which carries Kazakhstan's Caspian oil to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, said its terminal had been hit, but there were no injuries or oil spills.

Separately, the governor of Russia's south-western Stavropol

region said a drone attack had caused a fire in an industrial park.

The latest strikes on Kyiv involved a range of Russian weapons systems, including Iskander and hypersonic Zircon missiles, as well as 125 drones, the Ukrainian air force said.

On Sunday Kyiv Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko said both residential and non-residential buildings had been damaged in the latest attacks, including a supermarket and a dormitory.

Firefighters have been battling blazes at two warehouses.

In his message on Telegram, Zelensky said in the past week Russia had "used about 1,450 strike drones, more than 1,640 guided bombs and 99 missiles of various types against Ukraine".

The overnight strikes came after Ukraine sent drones to destroy two warehouses belonging to Russia's biggest online retailer, Wildberries, killing eight people and causing major fires.



IRAN BRIDGE DAMAGED:

Officials inspect a bridge damaged by a US strike in southern Iran on Saturday.

New EU border system tripling time at passport control, airport boss says

The EU's new border system has nearly tripled the time it's taking for Brits to get through passport control even after improvements have been made, a boss at Rome's main airport has said.

It comes as Ryanair has warned passengers travelling to Europe this summer to prepare for extended waits.

Border police at Portugal's Faro airport also told the BBC the Entry Exit System technology suffered from bugs, but insisted any queues there would go down quickly.

The European Commission (EC) has said in most EU airports disruption is limited, and added that it will continue to support member states in the system's implementation.

It added: "This support will continue to the fullest extent possible."

possible."

The digital Entry Exit System (EES) requires non-EU citizens entering the Schengen area - made up of 29 European countries - to register fingerprints and a photo when they arrive. The information is checked as they leave.

It's often done using standalone, automated machines known as "kiosks" and sometimes with border officers - for example, for children under 12. The new process and machines have been phased in since October.

Some European airports have seen hours-long queues at passport control. Passengers have even reported missing flights home.

This week, Ryanair said "the failed EES rollout" was causing unnecessary delays and long queues.

The airline said UK passengers should "allow extra time for their journey and be prepared for extended waits at passport control."

In Rome, a perennially popular destination for tourists from the UK and around the globe, everyone we spoke to in the Piazza di Spagna had an EES story.

Carl waited two hours to get through border control with young children

Carl and his family travelled to Rome from Yorkshire.

"It was two hours queuing, from getting off the plane to getting through with children. I knew it was going to be bad, but not as bad as that."

David, visiting from the US with his wife Marlo, said the queue took about an hour. "We actually missed our car, our driver."

We met people who'd flown into other airports too. One

group had landed in Barcelona before a cruise brought them to Rome.

Barry, from Bracknell, said passport control had taken 45-50 minutes because some machines weren't working.

His friend Sarah, who'd arrived in Barcelona on a different flight, said passport control took nearly as long as the flight. "The queue was huge, nearly an hour... it was just slow".

System 'needs fixing urgently' Rome's Fiumicino airport has found it impractical to have large volumes of passengers using the self-service "kiosks", despite their €12m (\$13.7m, £10.2m) cost.

Now, UK nationals are among those who can register fingerprints and photos at passport e-gates, instead of having to use the standalone machines too. Children under-12 can't use them and must go to a border officer.

Ferry carrying 116 passengers sinks off Guyana coast, authorities say

Rescuers have had to work through the night in their search for passengers

A ferry carrying 116 passengers has sunk off the coast of Guyana with 53 people so far rescued, local authorities have said.

The MV Barima capsized near Iron Punt, on its route from Georgetown to Port Kaituma.

A distress call was received at 23:01 local time (03:01 +1 BST), triggering an urgent search operation involving state and private boats, Public Works Minister Juan Edghill said in a statement posted on

social media.

The state of the operation is currently unclear and it is not known whether authorities expect to rescue the remaining passengers.

The MV Barima was built in 1939 and is 40m (131ft) long, according to a listing on VesselFinder.

Edghill said it was fitted with 250 life jackets, two rigid life crafts and six inflatable life crafts.

Prime Minister Mark Phillips is said to be leading the government response.

Cuban dissident Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara goes into exile in US

One of Cuba's most prominent dissidents has gone into exile in the US, after leaving Cuba where he had served a five-year prison sentence.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, 38, is the leader of the San Isidro Movement (SIM), a group of artists, journalists and intellectuals who have campaigned for freedom of speech and democracy in the communist country.

He was arrested in 2021 during Cuba's largest anti-government protests in decades and spent five years in the maximum-security Guanajay prison near Havana.

His whereabouts have been unclear in recent days as Cuban authorities held him in an unknown location while the US approved a parole request.

Emerging from the airport in Miami, the 38-year-old was greeted by supporters who sang the Cuban national anthem as he held up his forefinger and thumb in the shape of the letter L to represent "Libertad" - meaning freedom, a recognised anti-government symbol.

"I believe the dictatorship has to end, and the Castro dynasty has to

end, as well," Otero Alcántara later told journalists. "Because as long as there is a Castro in power, there will be corruption."

Cuban authorities allege the SIM is funded by Washington and has been used to subvert the state, claims the movement denies. Many members say they have been constantly targeted by the security forces, and some arbitrarily detained.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the Cuban government's "brutal crackdown against its own people five years ago is yet another reminder of the unique misery and evil that is innate to the communist system".

"Otero Alcántara's only 'crime' was refusing to stay silent and using his art to demand the basic freedoms everyday Cubans have been denied for almost seven decades," he said in a statement.

The cases of Otero Alcántara and fellow SIM member Maykel Castillo, known as "Osorbo", who is serving an eight-year prison sentence, have been a recurring source of diplomatic tension between Washington and Havana.

NEWS**FOREIGN****Russians turn to cash, putting more strain on slowing wartime economy**

Russians are returning to cash, as mobile internet shutdowns disrupt card payments, and more businesses seek to dodge tax under mounting financial pressure more than four years into the war with Ukraine.

Russia has added 1.56tn roubles (£14.8bn; \$20bn) in cash into circulation since the start of the year - the biggest rise for the equivalent period in any year outside the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Central Bank figures analysed by the BBC.

The spike comes amid a wave of Ukrainian drone attacks, which have repeatedly led the Kremlin to shut down mobile internet across large swathes of the country, leaving many unable to pay by card. The government says the aim of the shutdowns is to counter the drone strikes.

"Having cash on hand gives you some sense of control and security," one woman in Moscow told the BBC on condition of anonymity. "If there's an emergency in the city, I know I'll still be able to buy basic necessities, even if the mobile network goes down."

The latest increase follows several earlier wartime surges in cash withdrawals as Russians have sought a buffer against uncertainty.

Cash in circulation jumped after President Vladimir Putin announced a partial mobilisation in September 2022 and during a brief mutiny by the Wagner mercenary group in June 2023.

Now, the shift is making it harder for the state to collect tax, just as it faces a widening budget deficit and needs every rouble it can raise to fund the war in Ukraine.

Although Russia's oil and gas sector, which accounts for about a quarter of state revenues, has benefited from a recent rise in oil prices following the Iran war, the broader economy is slowing.

In May, the Russian economy ministry cut its GDP growth forecast to 0.4% for 2026, putting the country on course for its weakest economic growth since 2022.

To boost revenues, the Kremlin hiked VAT from 20% to 22%

in January, and lowered the threshold at which small and medium-sized businesses have to pay it, pushing many already struggling firms to the brink.

With margins squeezed by higher taxes and a slowing economy, pharmacies, restaurants, beauty salons and corner shops are increasingly steering customers towards cash to keep more income off the books.

"Stalls at our market have been closing one after another because it's no longer profitable to stay open," said one woman, who runs a small clothing shop at a market in the western city of Pskov.

"Most of those still trading ask customers to pay in cash whenever they can, so less money goes through the till."

Taras Skvortsov, chief financial officer of Russia's largest lender Sberbank, warned last month that there were "very serious signs" that more businesses were paying wages "in envelopes" under the table.

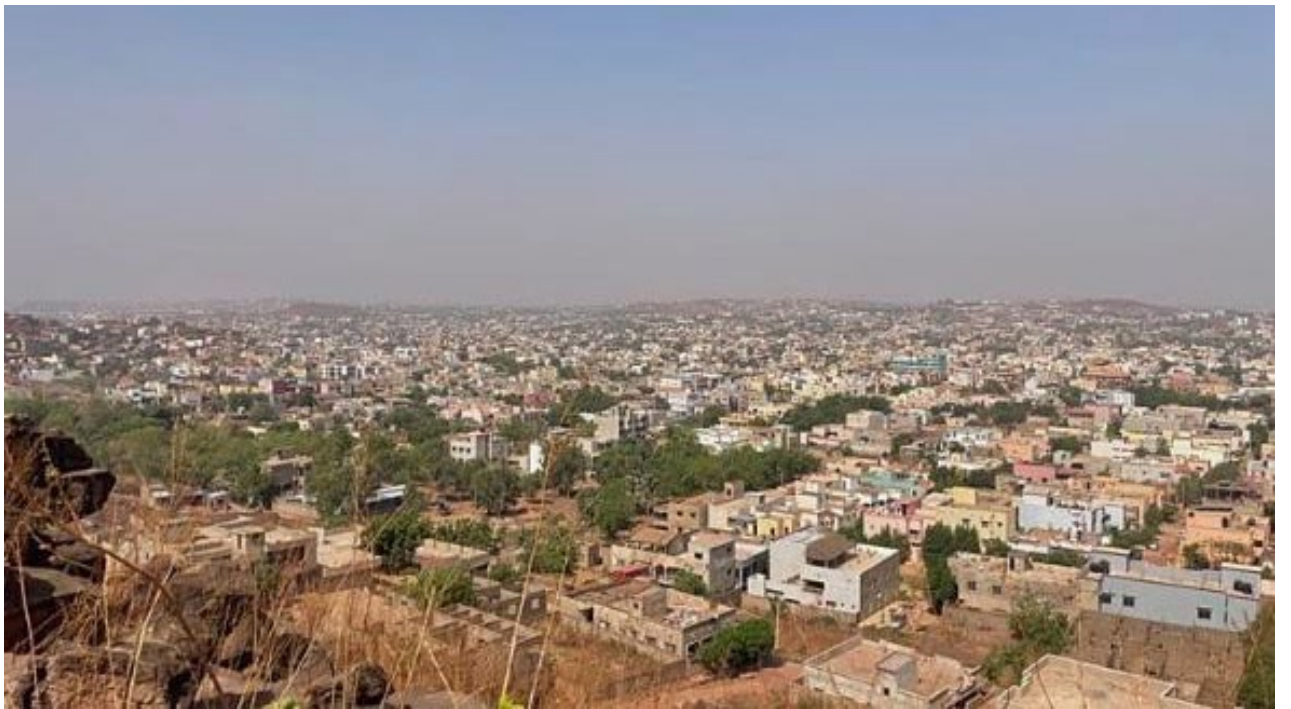
"This is a very worrying moment... We are not seeing cash return to the banking system through cash collection, ATMs or self-service terminals," said Skvortsov, in comments cited by state news agency Interfax. "It is staying in people's hands".

About 6% of entrepreneurs said they had turned to "grey schemes" to cope with the new tax burden, including avoiding cash-register receipts, according to a May survey by Russia's largest SME association, Opora Russia.

Cash payments help businesses understate turnover to stay below the VAT threshold, while cash wages help them avoid payroll taxes.

Cracking down on the shadow economy has become a key goal for the Kremlin. Before the VAT rise took effect, Putin warned the new rules must not push firms into the shadows and called for a "radical reduction in illegal employment".

"One arm of the government is trying to squeeze as much money as possible out of people through higher taxes, fines and other charges," Alexander Kolyandr, a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, told the BBC.

**CAPITAL BAMAKO:**

Aerial view of Makian capital Bamako, on April 25, 2026. (AP Photo).

Casualties after rebels attack Malian army convoy in north

A Malian army convoy leaving the strategic northern town of Anefis was attacked on Saturday morning by Tuareg separatists, military and security officials said.

Fighters from the Tuareg separatist movement FLA and Al-Qaeda-linked jihadist group JNIM temporarily seized the

town on July 4 in the latest in a series of coordinated attacks in the west African country.

"Our convoy that was leaving Anefis for Gao was attacked this morning near Tabankort. The fighting is ongoing. It is an ambush," a military source based in Gao said.

A source within the FLA

also confirmed the incident.

"The army suffered heavy losses, even though the rest of the convoy was able to continue," said a security official requesting anonymity.

"There are many casualties," a local official added.

Images sent by the FLA show what they said were doz-

ens of army prisoners.

The recent violent clashes in Anefis left around 30 Malian soldiers dead and about 60 wounded, according to the official toll released on July 12 by the general staff.

On July 10, the Malian army and Russian paramilitaries from Africa Corps regained control of Anefis after several days of intense fighting.

Mali has struggled to contain a jihadist insurgency that has plagued the country since 2012.

Hungary's president agrees to stand down after parliament backs removal

Hungarian President Tamás Sulyok has agreed to step down, signing an amendment to the country's constitution which will end his presidency at midnight on Sunday.

Prime Minister Péter Magyar's Tisza party had steamrolled the law change through parliament to oust Sulyok - widely seen as a loyalist of former prime minister Viktor Orbán who lost power in April after 16 years.

Sulyok had five days to sign the amendment or risk a protracted constitutional crisis and impeachment proceedings.

He confirmed he would agree to the law change as the deadline passed on Saturday evening, but in a statement accused Magyar's government of violating the rule of law.

He said the amendment marked a "breaking point in Hungarian constitutional democracy" and said the "core values of a free society... have been trampled underfoot for the sake of political power".

It marks the latest and most dramatic move by the Tisza government, which saw Sulyok as a puppet of the former government and had pushed for

his resignation.

It has swept through major constitutional changes since winning a landslide victory in April.

The 17th amendment, passed with an overwhelming majority on Monday, ends the president's term citing "serious loss of confidence" in him.

It also removes the head of the Constitutional Court and forbids MPs who have served three terms from standing again - which applies to more than half the current deputies from Orbán's Fidesz party.

Orbán had described the amendment as an act of tyranny and called for protests.

Since the April election, Fidesz has been in free fall, reeling from the shock defeat. Orbán himself has hardly been seen in public, and refused to take his seat in parliament.

In office from 2010 until 2026,

Fidesz reshaped the Hungarian state to its own will, and filled supposedly independent state positions with party loyalists using its own two-thirds majority.

The 141 Tisza deputies in parliament gave a standing ovation as the results of the vote passing the amendment were announced on Monday.

After the vote, András Baka, former head of Hungary's Supreme Court, told the BBC: "I quite agree with the removal of the president."

Hungary was governed by the rule of law from 1989 to 2010, he argued, after which Fidesz captured state institutions and created an authoritarian state.

"And it is now very difficult to break up a sophisticated authoritarian regime... which was designed to survive even after electoral defeat," Baka said.

Nigeria: UNICEF chief urges child protection amid security, humanitarian crises

The head of the U.N. children's agency visited northwestern Nigeria on Friday as conflict, poverty and rising food insecurity leave millions of children in the region in need of aid.

Catherine Russell, executive director of UNICEF, toured the state of Sokoto, where the agency is seeking to draw attention to worsening humanitarian challenges facing children.

She met with state officials and visited UNICEF-support-

ed programs aimed at improving the health of both mothers and children and protecting vulnerable youngsters.

"We have to make sure that children are protected in these conflicts," she said.

"That their healthcare is protected, that their food is protected, that their education is protected. Children can't waste years of their life because conflicts are going on."

Northern Nigeria is already gripped by an intensifying security crisis that has killed

thousands.

The ongoing Middle East conflict has deepened food insecurity for millions living in poverty, making children in poor households more vulnerable.

According to UNICEF between 18.3 million and 23.4 million more children in monetarily poor households worldwide have fallen into deeper poverty, including 6.5 million to 8.8 million in Africa.

Nigeria has one of the world's largest populations of

impoverished children, and humanitarian organizations warn that those in the country's conflict-torn north remain among the most vulnerable.

For some, UNICEF-supported programs have made a tangible difference.

Zainab Bello, 19, said she had been out of school before joining the agency's "Digital Village" program.

"I was taught digital literacy... how to use a digital tool," she said.

"I also learned how I can promote my vocational skills on various social media platforms."

**HUNGARIAN PRESIDENT TAMÁS SULYOK**

FEATURE

Beyond politics, what Governor Okpebholo's recent actions reveal

BUGIE OKHUEMOI

Imagine a little boy born with a visual impairment somewhere in Edo State.

Long before he is old enough to dream, people have already decided what he cannot become. He grows up believing that some doors were simply never built for people like him.

Then one day, he watches the inauguration of Edo State's new Permanent Secretaries and sees a visually-impaired lawyer, Melody Omosah, sworn into one of the highest offices in the State Civil Service.

In that moment, something changes.

Not just for him, but for every child living with a disability and every parent who has quietly wondered what the future holds. Sometimes, hope arrives in the form of one appointment.

That was the thought that crossed my mind as I watched the inauguration of the new Commissioners and Permanent Secretaries in Edo State.

For the first time in the state's history, a visually-impaired lawyer had become a Permanent Secretary.

For many, it was a landmark appointment. For those who have watched Governor Monday Okpebholo closely, it was part of a pattern.

He had earlier nominated a non-indigene - a South-Easterner - as Commissioner, reminding us that service to Edo is bigger than place of origin. He inaugurated the Edo State Persons with

Disabilities Commission and appointed a lawyer living with a disability as a State Counsel. Now comes Melody Omosah's appointment.

Different decisions. One clear message: everyone deserves a fair chance.

Politics often celebrates the loudest voices. Governor Okpebholo has nev-



HISTORY IN THE MAKING:

Governor Monday Okpebholo (left) and Barr. Melody Omosah, newly sworn-in permanent secretary (2nd right) on Friday.

er been that kind of politician. Calm, reserved and unassuming, he has often seemed more comfortable listening than talking.

Perhaps that is exactly what many Edo people saw before they voted for him.

They saw someone who understood their values - humility, empathy, respect for people and the quiet belief that actions matter more than speeches.

People do not only elect manifestos. They also elect character.

Character has a way of revealing itself after the campaign is over.

Those who have known Governor Okpebholo long before Government

House often speak of his compassion, generosity and deep faith. Increasingly, those personal values appear to be reflected in government decisions.

When xenophobic attacks forced many Edo sons and daughters to return from South Africa with painful stories and uncertain futures, he welcomed and supported them as they began again.

The same spirit can be seen in the payment of long-overdue gratuities, support for market women and small businesses, renewed investment in agriculture, and improvements in healthcare, education, transportation and security.

Taken together, these decisions tell the story of a leader whose attention naturally turns to people who are too often overlooked.

No Governor gets every decision right. That is the nature of democracy. But some decisions deserve recognition because they remind people that they matter.

A child living with a disability may now believe that becoming a Permanent Secretary is possible.

A non-indigene may feel a stronger sense of belonging.

An Edo son or daughter returning home after hardship may know they have not been forgotten.

Those are the victories that rarely make the loudest headlines, yet they leave the deepest marks on society.

If Governor Monday Okpebholo continues on this path, his greatest legacy may not simply be the roads he builds or the projects he completes. It may be the doors he opens, the barriers he removes and the hope he gives ordinary people.

For that little boy we imagined at the beginning of this piece, that may be the most important legacy of all.

Bugie Okhuemai is the Special Adviser on Media & Publicity to the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (SMO).

NEWS

Presidential council intervenes in delayed passport renewal

ABUJA

The Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), says its intervention has resolved a delayed international passport renewal issue for a Nigerian citizen.

The council said this in a statement issued on Sunday in Abuja after the citizen shared her experience on social media.

According to the statement, the citizen experienced delays in renewing her international passport through the Nigerian Immigration Service.

It said she subsequently reported the matter to PEBEC, which promptly engaged the relevant authorities to facilitate resolution of the complaint.

The council said the intervention resulted in the successful issuance of the applicant's passport.

In her online testimony,

she expressed appreciation to the council for its prompt response.

She said, "after reaching out to PEBEC, I received prompt attention, and my passport was successfully renewed. Yes, Nigeria works."

The council said the intervention reflected its commitment to working with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks.

The council said it would continue collaborating with government institutions to improve service delivery and enhance citizens' access to public services.

It added that prompt resolution of service complaints would strengthen public confidence in government institutions.

The Council said it remained committed to promoting a more transparent, efficient and responsive public service environment.



DSO to unlock ₦605.2 billion in advertising markets – NBC

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has said that Digital Switch Over (DSO) project will unlock Nigeria's ₦605.2 billion advertising market through improved audience measurement systems.

Mrs. Clementine Usman-Wamba, NBC Deputy Director of Public Affairs, said this during the South-West community engagement and training of installers for the DSO project in Ibadan at the weekend.

Usman-Wamba said the digital transition would also free the 700/800MHz spectrum band for future auctions that could generate more than one billion dollars in revenue.

She added that the spectrum is valued at more than 50 billion dollars, making the switch economically significant for the country.

According to her, Nigeria's creative industry, contributing about ₦5 trillion to GDP and supporting over 4.2 million jobs, will benefit from improved distribution and export opportunities across West Africa.

She said analogue television transmission would be discontinued, urging viewers still using analogue signals to obtain digital decoders before the switchover.

Usman-Wamba explained that the Free TV platform would provide access to multiple television channels without subscription through digital decoders and satellite dishes.

She said the commission was training installers nationwide to support the DSO rollout in partnership with the Nigeria Communications Satellite Limited (NigComSat).

According to her, installers

are critical to the success of the DSO because of the recently launched Direct-to-Home (DTH) service and mobile application.

She explained that households with Free TV decoders and dishes could receive signals by aligning them with NigComSat satellites.

Usman-Wamba said the installation process required technical expertise, making trained installers essential for connecting households to the Free TV platform.

Some installers commended the Federal Government and NBC for introducing the Free TV initiative and providing training opportunities.

They said the programme would create employment for youths while enabling low-income households to access multiple television channels without subscription.

Sports

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

Edo Sports Commission Chairman congratulates Efe-Amenze as Gov. Monday Okpebholo confirms her Perm.Sec

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has congratulated Mrs. Efe-Amenze Agharese

Patricia on her appointment as substantive Permanent Secretary in the state Civil Service.

The Edo State Sports Commission boss described the appointment and confirmation of Mrs Agharese Patricia

Efe-Amenze as a Permanent Secretary in the Edo state Civil Service as a well-deserved one.

Hon Enabulele said that the confirmation of Mrs Efe-Amenze as PS is in recognition and rewards for her dedication, competence and years of exemplary service to the Edo State Civil Service.

Enabulele in his remarks noted that the historic appointment and confirmation of Mrs Efe-Amenze, a disciplined sports administrator who rose through the ranks in the service is a huge motivation and hope for other civil servants and athletes in the state.

He expressed gratitude to the state Governor for considering Mrs Efe-Amenze worthy. "I

congratulate our own PS for the elevation. This is a beautiful gift for us in the state Sports Commission. And I strongly believe too that it will spur her to do more and will also serve as motivation for upcoming athletes and civil servants in our midst.

"We are grateful to our governor for this honour. It is a big achievement and honour to us because this is happening for the first time. It means that the future is bright for Edo civil servants in the parastatals." He said.

The Sports Commission Chairman expressed confidence in the ability of Mrs. Efe-Amenze to deliver on her duty in advancing the core values of the Edo State Civil Service.



The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele (left) Mrs. Efe-Amenze Agharese Patricia.

Gara-Gombe says ₦2 billion prize money alone cannot transform Nigeria league

Ahmed Gara-Gombe, Former Chairman of Gombe United Football Club, on Saturday says increasing the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) prize money cannot solve the structural problems affecting Nigerian football.

Gara-Gombe, who spoke while briefing newsmen on Saturday in Abuja, said the proposed N2 billion naira prize for league champions was attractive, sustainable football development required stronger foundations.

He said issues such as poor

governance, inadequate infrastructure, weak commercial structures, poor officiating, player welfare and club administration must be addressed before the league can compete with top African leagues.

"You can offer N10 billion to the league champions, but if the fundamentals are not in place, the league will continue to struggle.

"Also identified eight key areas needed for a successful league, including good governance, strong capital base, commercial viability.



GARA-GOMBE

Daniel Amokachi, Gilberto Silva, others rally global support for youth mental health at UN headquarters

The UN initiative mobilises the football community to drive the SDGs, leveraging the world's most popular sport to build a sustainable and peaceful future.

Daniel Amokachi, the Super Eagles legend and Gilberto Silva, World Cup Champion, and FIFA ambassador, amongst others have advocated for global awareness to combat youth mental health challenges.

The football stars spoke at a United Nations (UN) high-profile event tagged 'One World, One Game, One Goal: Football For The Goals (FFTG) Initiative' at the (UN) headquarters in New York.

The event, convened by the UN Youth Affairs Office, brought together member states, young leaders, policy-makers, and athletes including Pop Mensah-Bonsu, basketball executive and former NBA player, Eniola Aluko MBE for-

mer Chelsea FC English Women's National Team and Great Britain Olympic team player to highlight the power of sports in promoting mental well-being.

Sharing his personal struggles, Amokachi the Olympic gold medalist recounted how

an unexpected injury ahead of the 1998 World Cup derailed his career and severely impacted his mental health.

"Before the World Cup in France, a very good friend of mine and I had a planned to end up in Serie A or the Premiership.

We had our calculations, but God had His," Amokachi said.

"We went to the World Cup, I got injured, went under the knife, and six months later, doctors told me I couldn't play football anymore. That was when mental health challenges hit me."

Aaron Akerejola is the Lagos SWAN Chairman, National President, Benjamin Maintains

President, Sports Writers Association of Nigeria, SWAN, Comrade Benjamin Isaiah



AARON AKEREJOLA

has reiterated that Arise Tv Sports reporter, Aaron Akerejola is the recognised Chairman of Lagos State Chapter of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria.

The number one Sports Writer in Nigeria made this disclosure on Friday, 17th July, 2026 during a live interview session in one of the leading Nigerian WhatsApp groups, Sports World Platform, tagged 'Super Interview' hosted by Ibadan based Sports journalist, Sunday Agunbiade

popularly known as Mr VAR.

"On the issue of authentic leadership of Lagos SWAN, which hitherto used to be under Tutu as Chairman and Bello as Secretary, their time ended a very long time. SWAN in Lagos, presently is being headed by Aaron Akerejola of Arise TV as the Chairman.

"Other teething issues are being handled holistically and In just a couple of time, we would see the right result coming up. The truth of the matter is that



PATRICE MOTSEPE

CAF Executive committee meeting postponed amid travel challenges

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) Executive Committee meeting scheduled to take place in the United States has been postponed after several African football officials were unable to travel for the event.

Contrary to reports suggesting that a CAF meeting was held in the USA, no official Executive Committee meeting took place.

The postponement was

largely due to the absence of a significant number of African football leaders, many of whom did not travel to the United States for the FIFA World Cup semi-finals and final.

Some officials reportedly encountered visa-related challenges, making it difficult for them to attend.

CAF is expected to announce a new date for the Executive Committee meeting in due course.

NCF urges NIM to sustain chess championships

The Nigeria Chess Federation (NCF) has urged the Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM) (Chartered) to sustain its Schools Chess Championship initiative.

NCF Vice-President, Adeyinka Adewole, made the call on Saturday at the closing ceremony of the second edition in Lagos.

Adewole commended NIM for promoting grassroots chess development and exposing young players to organised competition and international standards.

He said the partnership between NIM and NCF enabled the championship to receive approval and rating from the International Chess Federation (FID.)

"NIM should sustain the initiative and expand it to provide more opportunities for young chess talents across the country," he said.

NIM President, Commodore Abimbola Ayuba (rtd), said the championship promoted strategic thinking, discipline, sportsmanship and intellectual excellence among pupils and students.

The competition was organised in partnership with Dynamic Chess Ville for primary and secondary school pupils across Lagos State.

No fewer than 22 schools, comprising 11 primary and 11 secondary schools, participated, with 44 contestants competing in the championship.



NCF Vice-President, Adeyinka Adewole presented the prize to the Schools Chess Championship initiative.



SPAIN ARE WORLD CHAMPIONS

Lionel Messi suffers heartbreak as his side lose their crown after going down to 10 men



SPAIN TEAM CELEBRATE WITH THE WORLD CUP TROPHY

The European outfit clinched their second World Cup title after beating Lionel Messi's Argentina 1-0 after extra time, following a late strike from forward Ferran Torres.

Shortly after the full-time whistle, the US President made his way down to the field and onto a stage which had been constructed, along with FIFA chief Gianni Infantino.

Trump and Infantino handed out various awards to match officials and players, before officially welcoming Spain's players up to the stage to lift the

World Cup trophy.

The US President presented the prestigious title to Spain captain and Manchester City midfielder Rodri, who took great pleasure in raising it aloft in East Rutherford.

Much like when he presented the Club World Cup trophy last summer, Trump stood alongside the Spain squad as they raised the trophy and celebrated wildly.

There were an estimated 1.5-1.8 billion viewers who tuned in to watch the summer tournament's showpiece finale, where Trump and Infantino

took center stage.

However, there were loud boos coming from the stands as Infantino and Trump made their way onto the pitch, as fans made their feelings on the duo undoubtedly clear.

There was a degree of irony in regards to Trump presenting Spain with the World Cup trophy, after previously launching a stinging attack on the country at a UN summit earlier in July for not contributing enough money to NATO.

'Spain is a terrible partner in NATO. They don't participate. They don't pay. I don't want

anything to do with Spain. Cut off all trade with Spain, please, including visits,' he said. 'Don't even talk to them. They're hopeless, bad people.'

Then, on his way back to the United States on Air Force One, Trump said Spain had tried to improve their standings with him.

'I did have issues, and I still do. But Spain, they came back all the way today. Spain was very generous today,' he said.

'They honoured a request for lots of payments, and if they didn't, we wouldn't have even talked to them.'



NIGERIA TEAM

Nigeria wins women's, youth NFL flag titles

Nigeria emerged champions in the women's and youth categories at the 2026 NFL Flag Africa Continental Championship in Nairobi.

The three-day championship featured athletes from Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, South Africa and host nation Kenya.

Nigeria defeated Egypt to win the women's title, while Egypt overcame Nigeria to claim the men's championship.

Nigeria also secured the youth title after defeating Ghana, with South Africa winning bronze in the men's and youth competitions.

Kenya earned bronze in the women's category at the championship organised in consultation with the International Federation of American Football (IFAF).

The event marked another milestone in the growth of flag football across Africa ahead of its Olympic debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Games.

It also brought together national federations, coaches, officials and youth athletes from across the continent.

Brian Flinn, NFL Senior Vice-President, Global Flag Football, said the championship reflected the sport's con-



PATRICIA AIYENURO

Aiyenuro hails Lagos fencing championships organizers

Patricia Aiyenuro, President of British Fencing, has described the 2026 Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Lagos as a landmark moment for Nigeria and Commonwealth fencing.

Aiyenuro spoke on Friday in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) ahead of the championships scheduled to hold in Lagos from Aug. 9 to Aug. 19.

She said hosting the championships in Lagos would expand fencing, create fresh opportunities for athletes and prove

major international competitions could succeed beyond traditional host nations.

"I am genuinely excited to see the Commonwealth Fencing Championships taking place in Lagos. It is an important milestone for Nigeria and Commonwealth fencing.

"Hosting major championships in different regions expands the sport, creates opportunities for athletes and shows world-class events can be successfully hosted beyond traditional nations," she said.

England beat France 6-4 in World Cup bronze final thriller

England secured the 2026 FIFA World Cup bronze medal after beating France 6-4 in a remarkable third-place playoff.

The thrilling contest at Miami Stadium produced ten goals, dramatic momentum swings and one of the tournament's most entertaining matches.

England made a sensational start when Declan Rice opened the scoring in the third minute.

Ezri Konsa doubled England's advantage in the 18th minute with a powerful header from a corner.

Bukayo Saka then struck in the 37th minute, giving England a commanding 3-0 lead.

Saka completed his first-half brace in first-half stoppage time, scoring in the 45th min-

ute to make it 4-0.

France responded immediately after the interval, with Kylian Mbappé pulling one goal back in the 48th minute.

Bradley Barcola then reduced the deficit further in the

54th minute, leaving France within two goals.

Mbappé struck again in the 66th minute, completing France's remarkable comeback and making the score 4-3.

England restored their two-

goal advantage when Saka completed his hat-trick from the penalty spot in the 87th minute.

France refused to surrender, with Ousmane Dembélé scoring in the sixth minute of stoppage time.

