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#200

EDO DEVELOPMENT

You're our critical partners, Governor Okpebholo assures health workers

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has commended the resilience and sacrifices of healthcare workers across the

- *Reaffirms commitment to strengthening the sector*

State, describing it as a critical partner in his administration's drive in building a healthier and more prosperous State.

Governor Okpebholo, who gave the assurance at Edo Specialist Hospital in Benin, congratulated the management, staff and partners of the facility for their dedication, professionalism and sustained excellence in healthcare delivery services in the past 7 years.

Represented by his Chief of Staff, Hon. Yakubu Oshiofenua Musa, the governor reaffirms his administration's commitment to healthcare services de-

livery, noting that the government had been strengthening the health sector by supporting institutions that continue to improve access to quality and affordable healthcare for residents across the state.

He commended the hospital for its unwavering commitment to quality service, adding that the institution has continued to distinguish itself through excellence in patient care, innova-

tion and professionalism.

"My administration remains committed to strengthening the health sector by supporting Institutions that continue to improve access to quality and affordable healthcare for residents in the state.

"The achievements recorded by ESH over the past seven years demonstrate what can be accomplished through dedication, visionary leadership and a commitment to putting pa-

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SOLIDARITY VISIT:

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady of Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani (right), receiving an apron presented to her by Edo State Market Women leaders through the Special Adviser to the Governor on Markets, Ms Julian Ikhara (left) during their solidarity visit to Government House Benin City.



Flight 4264 mishap: Not a crash, says Enugu Air CEO

● *Alleged 'hydroplaning' caused the incident*

LAGOS

Amid widespread concerns over last Thursday's serious mishap involving Flight 4264 from Lagos to Benin, the Chief Executive officer of Enugu Air, Captain Tolu Ita, says the aircraft suffered hydroplaning due to high standing water on the runway.

Speaking in an official video statement on the incident, Captain Ita debunked claims that the plane crashed or suffered an emergency landing.

Ita said after the plane touched down, hydroplaning caused it to undergo a runway

excursion during landing roll.

The airline boss reaffirmed that the aircraft landed safely before losing traction on the tarmac contrary to claims that the incident was a crash-landing or mid-air emergency.

She confirmed that all 63 passengers and five crew members safely disembarked from the aircraft without injury or casualty.

"Enugu Air is cooperating fully with the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) and aviation regulators to establish the complete facts surrounding the runway conditions and landing parameters," she assured.

NEWS



A cross section of Edo State Market Women Leaders led by the SA to the State Governor on Market, Ms Julian Ikharo (left, in the middle) on a solidarity visit to the Coordinator, Office of the First Lady of Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani (right, in the middle) in Benin recently.

Edo First Lady, Afemai Women empower small-scale businesswomen with cash grants

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator, Office of the Edo State First Lady, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has reaffirmed the Edo State Government's commitment to empowering women as catalyst for economic growth, declaring that investing in women is essential to building stronger families and a more prosperous society.

Mrs. Anani made the declaration while partnering with the Afemai Daughters and Adorable Wives Association to present cash grants to small-scale businesswomen during the Association's Women Empowerment Programme held at Urokpota Hall in Benin City.

Addressing the beneficiaries, Mrs. Anani said the cash support was designed to strengthen existing businesses, improve household incomes, and encourage women to become financially independent.

"When you empower a woman, you empower a family and, ultimately, the society. This support is a seed for growth. I encourage every beneficiary to invest it wisely, expand your businesses, and create opportunities for others," she said.

She noted that the Governor Monday Okpebholo-led administration remains committed to implementing people-centred programmes under the SHINE

Agenda that promote inclusive economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve the quality of life for Edo residents.

The First Lady also commended the Afemai Daughters and Adorable Wives Association for complementing the government's efforts to uplift women through economic empowerment, describing the partnership as a model for community driven development.

In her remarks, the President of the Afemai Daughters and Adorable Wives Association, Hajiya Zuliatu Bello Osagie, urged the beneficiaries to make prudent use of the grants.

"This cash support is an investment. Use it to grow your businesses, become self-reliant, and positively impact your families and communities," she advised.

Some of the beneficiaries, Ihonre Mary and Alexee Aigbokhaode expressed appreciation to the First Lady and the Association for the intervention, describing it as timely and impactful.

The cash grant initiative underscores the shared commitment of the Office of the Edo State First Lady and the Afemai Daughters and Adorable Wives Association to promoting women's entrepreneurship, enhancing economic inclusion, and improving household livelihoods across Edo State.



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:

Some of the leaders of Afemai Daughters and Wives Association during their partnership with Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani (middle) to empower small scale businesswomen in Benin recently.

2027: Edo market women endorse Tinubu's re-election bid

BENIN CITY

Market women across Edo State have declared their support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election bid in 2027.

The women leaders, who made the endorsement known during a courtesy visit to the Coordinator, Office of the First Lady Edo State, Mrs. Edesili

● Reaffirm support for Gov. Okpebholo

Okpebholo Anani, in Government House, Benin City, while reaffirming their unwavering support for Governor Monday Okpebholo, cited his administration's commitment to market development, infrastructure renewal, and the welfare of traders.

Speaking during the meeting, Mrs. Anani described market

women as indispensable partners in the socio-economic development of the state, noting that thriving markets remain central to commerce, job creation, and community development.

She said Governor Okpebholo's administration would continue to prioritize the transformation of markets through improved infrastructure, enhanced security, and policies that promote a peaceful and business-friendly environment.

"The Governor remains committed to creating modern, safe and accessible markets where traders can carry out their businesses without fear.

"Our markets are vital to the economy, and we will continue to support initiatives that improve the welfare of traders and strengthen commercial activities across Edo State," she said.

The First Lady noted that the Special Adviser to the Governor on Market serves as a bridge between traders and the government by promoting peaceful

coexistence, resolving disputes, and ensuring that the concerns of market stakeholders receive prompt attention.

She assured the market leaders that all issues affecting markets across the state would be addressed through dialogue and stakeholder engagement.

She also urged traders to maintain clean and hygienic market environments, stressing that sanitation remains critical to public health and sustainable commercial growth.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Market, Ms Julian Ikharo, formally declared the support of Edo market women for President Tinubu's re-election in 2027.

According to her, the movement, driven by the slogan "One Market, One Voice, One Movement," represents the collective resolve of traders across Edo State to work together for the continued progress of the state and the success of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Okpebholo – Anani Champions Improved Welfare for Senior Citizens

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has reiterated the state government's commitment to improving the welfare of senior citizens.

Mrs. Anani made this known while receiving the National President of the Elderly Care Alliance of Nigeria (ECAN), Chief Eddy Ogbomo, during a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City.

She disclosed that discussions were ongoing with relevant agencies and stakeholders to secure support for the establishment of an elderly care facility in the state.

The First lady observed that while African culture places the responsibility of caring for elderly parents on their children, many senior citizens still require specialized care and support.

According to her, Governor Monday Okpebholo's compassionate leadership places great

value on the welfare of the elderly, assuring that the state government will continue to prioritize their wellbeing.

She emphasized that persons aged 60 years and above deserve quality care, dignity, and opportunities for social interaction.

"An elderly care home will provide a safe environment where senior citizens can interact with their peers, receive proper attention, and enjoy a better quality of life. We also need more sensitisation and

public awareness on elderly care, as well as policies that will protect the rights and welfare of older persons," she added.

Earlier, the National President of the Elderly Care Allowance of Nigeria, Chief Eddy Ogbomo, explained that the association was established in 2018 during the administration of former Governor of Edo State, Senator Adams Oshiomhole to advocate for the welfare and protection of elderly persons.

NEWS

Seplat, Edo hospital provide free eye care in Edo

BENIN CITY

The NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL)/Seplat Energy Joint Venture (JV) has provided free eye screening, sur-

geries and other healthcare services to thousands of residents in Edo.

The medical outreach was conducted in partnership with the Edo Specialist Hospital (ESH) under the "Eye Can

See" initiative of the NEPL/Seplat Energy Joint Venture.

The three-day programme, held at the Edo Specialist Hospital in Benin, featured free eye screening, cataract and other eye surgeries,

distribution of prescription glasses, basic health checks and dental care services.

While the joint venture supplied medical consumables, the hospital provided personnel and facilities for the outreach, which ended

on Saturday.

Speaking at the event, Seplat Energy's Director of External Affairs and Social Performance, Mrs Chioma Afe, said the initiative was improving access to quality eye care and promoting better vision health in Edo and Delta states.

Afe said the programme had continued to restore sight, improve healthcare access and enhance the wellbeing of communities through sustainable healthcare interventions.

According to her, the impact of the initiative reflects the company's commitment to supporting improved health outcomes and sustainable development in its host communities.

Also speaking, the Chief Medical Director of Edo Specialist Hospital, Dr Antonia Inibukun-Njoku, described the partnership as a major step toward expanding access to quality healthcare in the state.

She said the collaboration marked a new phase in implementing the long-running "Eye Can See" initiative by combining the resources of the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV with the hospital's specialist expertise.

"This year's programme is unique because it is being hosted in collaboration with Edo Specialist Hospital.

"The 'Eye Can See' initia-

tive has been implemented in Edo for several years, but this is the first time we are partnering in this way, and we are delighted to be part of it," she said.

Inibukun-Njoku said the partnership extended beyond eye care, with beneficiaries also receiving access to a broad range of medical and surgical services.

She commended the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV for the collaboration, noting that it would help bridge healthcare gaps and improve health outcomes across communities.

"We appreciate Seplat Energy JV for choosing to work with Edo Specialist Hospital and for remaining committed to initiatives that improve people's lives.

"Collaborations like this strengthen healthcare delivery and enable more people to benefit from quality medical services.

"We hope to see this partnership continue to grow and impact even more lives," she said.

The Edo Government also commended the initiative, describing it as a valuable intervention that complemented efforts to improve access to quality healthcare.

The Special Adviser to Gov. Monday Okpebholo on Health, Dr Andrew Iyamu, said the outreach had brought healthcare closer to the people at no cost.



View of the Indorama Fertilizer Limited, during the Authority Chief Executive, Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), operational visit to Indorama Fertilizer Limited in Eleme Local Government Area in Rivers State on Thursday.

Pension assets can hit N50trn with wider investment, coverage - Expert

By CAROLINE AMEH

LAGOS

A legal expert, Mr Ivo Takor, has urged stakeholders in the pension industry to deepen investment diversification, strengthen regulation and expand pension coverage to sustain the sector's growing asset base.

Takor, who is also the Vice President, Human Rights Committee, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Epe Branch, made the call in an interview on Saturday in Lagos.

The Director-General of the National Pension Commission (PenCom) during a recent State House briefing in Abuja said that pension

assets under Nigeria's Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) had grown by 51 per cent over the past two years, rising from N20.79 trillion in July 2024 to N31.48 trillion as of July 2026, while pension assets rose to N31.48 trillion, representing about 51 per cent growth over the past two years.

According to him, the industry's long-term sustainability should be anchored on real wealth creation rather than inflation-driven increases in asset values.

While describing the growth as commendable, Takor said much of the increase reflected inflation, exchange rate depreciation,

higher interest rates and valuation gains on fixed-income investments, rather than fresh pension contributions.

He said sustaining the momentum would require Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) to gradually diversify investments beyond government securities into infrastructure, corporate bonds, housing finance, private equity, green finance and other productive sectors of the economy.

"Such diversification must be supported by stronger governance, portfolio stress testing, cybersecurity, improved disclosure standards and prudent investment controls," he said.

Twist as Chief Aliu appeals Edo High Court ruling in Wanno chieftaincy dispute

AGENEBODE

The dispute over the stool of the Okumagbe of Wanno Clan in Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State has taken a fresh twist, as Chief Benjamin Aliu has appealed the judgment of the Edo State High Court sitting in Agenebode.

Chief Aliu, suing for himself and on behalf of the Edegebe Community of the Agiode Ruling House, filed a notice of appeal against the July 1, 2026 judgment, challenging the decision before the Court of Appeal, Benin Division.

The appeal, marked Suit No. HAG/05/2026, lists Senator Francis Alimikhena and nine others, including state officials and the Etsako East Local Government Council, as respondents.

In the notice of appeal, Chief Aliu expressed dissatisfaction with the entire judgment, contending that the trial court erred in law on several grounds, particularly in its treatment of jurisdiction and reliance on certain judicial authorities.

He argued that the court misapplied Section 19(1), (2) and (6) of the Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict of Bendel

State (1979), as applicable to Edo State.

Chief Aliu maintained that having allegedly found the suit incompetent, the High Court ought not to have proceeded to determine substantive issues, arguing that jurisdiction is fundamental to the authority of any court.

He also faulted the trial court's reliance on authorities including *Aderemi v. Adeyemi* and *Agbodemi v. Agboola*, contending that they were inapplicable to the circumstances of the case.

Chief Aliu also submitted that, the dispute centres on the validity of the process leading to the selection of a traditional ruler, rather than grievances arising after a ruler had been selected.

Commissioner urges Media Practitioners to uphold credibility, balance in their reportage

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Commissioner for Environment and Sustainability, Mr. Nosa Adams, has advised media practitioners to uphold credibility, balance, and objectivity in their reportage.

The commissioner gave the advice during a courtesy visit by members of the Edo Online Media Practitioners to his office in Benin City.

He noted that for the media to genuinely earn public trust and confidence, it must verify facts and present balanced stories, especially in the age of social media.

Represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mrs Edith Ebomoyi, the Commissioner urged the delegation to take a leading role in efforts to purify social media, eliminating fake news and other harmful influences.

Mrs Ebomoyi emphasised that the fight against misinformation cannot be won in isolation; collaboration with other media associations is essential.

She expressed serious concerns about the current state of journalism, pointing out that with easy access to modern phone technology, anyone can pose as a journalist.

This scenario often results in the dissemination of misguided and damaging information, tarnishing hard-earned reputations and ruining lives.

She drew upon her own troubling experiences as the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, recalling how some students fainted during an event. While the Ministry worked diligently to address the situation, the media spiralled into chaos, spreading unverified claims about what had happened.

This episode left a profound impact on her, marking one of the most distressing moments of her career.

Mrs Ebomoyi decisively highlighted the detrimental effects of the media on society.

He pointed to specific instances where malicious publications have driven individuals to suicide, emphasising that the media frequently only offers apologies and retractions after irreversible harm has been done.

In response, Mr Sam Dada Ayokhai, Chairman of the Edo Online Media Practitioners, asserted that their visit to the Ministry was aimed at seeking meaningful collaboration and support to effectively communicate their projects and policies, as well as their positive impacts on the citizens of Edo State.

FAAN shuts down Benin...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

tients first.

"I praised the resilience and sacrifices of healthcare workers, describing them as critical partners in the government's drive to build a healthier and more prosperous Edo State," the governor concluded.

In her remarks, the Chief Medical Director of Edo Specialist Hospital, Dr. Mrs. Anthonia Inibokun Njoku, expressed appreciation to the Edo State Government, members of staff, patients and development partners for their support throughout the hospital's seven-year journey.

She noted that the hospital has continued to expand its services while maintaining high standards of clinical excellence, compassion, innovation and integrity, assuring the public that the management remains committed to delivering

world-class healthcare services.

The celebration featured goodwill messages and reflections on the hospital's achievements since its establishment in 2019, with stakeholders applauding its growing impact on healthcare delivery services across Edo State.

The anniversary brought together healthcare professionals, government officials, development partners and other invited guests to celebrate seven years of a remarkable journey in providing specialist healthcare services to the people of Edo State and beyond.

The highlight of the event was the renewed optimism and shared commitment by the government, hospital's management, development partners and healthcare stakeholders to continue raising the standard of specialist healthcare for the benefit of Edo people.

Cardo, Okonjo-Iweala to headline 7th Africa emerging Market forum in Abuja

ABUJA

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) says it is set to host a high-level fireside dialogue between its Governor, Mr Olayemi Cardoso, and the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

According to a statement from the Corporate Communications Department of the apex bank, the dialogue will headline the 7th Africa Emerging Markets Forum (EMF), between July 29 and July 30.

It said that the dialogue would be hosted by the CBN in collaboration with the EMF and the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (CSEA).

"The 7th Africa EMF will convene senior policymakers, central bankers, ministers, development partners, private-sector leaders and leading economists from Africa and around the world.

"They will examine practical policy responses to an increas-

ingly uncertain global economic environment," it said.

The statement said that the EMF would be held under the theme, "Building Resilience Amidst Geoeconomic Uncertainties".

"The 7th Africa EMF will be headlined by the Cardoso-Okonjo-Iweala fireside dialogue.

"The dialogue will explore how African economies can build resilience, sustain reform momentum, deepen regional integration and unlock long-term growth amid an increasingly fragmented global economy.

"The 7th Africa EMF will also feature ministerial keynote addresses by the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Taiwo Oyedele, and the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Kingsley Udeh.

"This underscores the importance of coordinated fiscal, monetary and innovation policies in advancing Africa's economic transformation and long-term resilience," it said.

NDLEA intercepts ₦10bn worth of cocaine, others in Lagos port

ABUJA

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has intercepted ₦10 billion worth of cocaine, Loud, opioids and other illicit drugs at the Lagos ports.

The agency gave the breakdown in a statement issued by the Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Mr Femi Babafemi on Sunday in Abuja.

According to Babafemi, a 55-year-old businessman (names withheld) who deals in clothings at the popular Balogun market, in Lagos Island was arrested over an attempt to export 3.30 kilograms of cocaine.

He said that the drugs were concealed in walls of cartons used to package foodstuffs going to the United Kingdom.

Babafemi said the suspect was

arrested on Thursday, following the interception of his cocaine consignment at the export shed of the Lagos airport the previous day, Wednesday, by NDLEA operatives.

He added that in the course of investigation, three cargo agents who handled the shipment were initially arrested leading to the arrest of another suspect who delivered the consignment to the cargo agents for shipment to the UK.

"His arrest provided the lead to identifying the kingpin behind the syndicate and his eventual arrest while attempting to send another consignment of cocaine to the UK.

"Another suspect, a 31-year-old entrepreneur (name withheld) also involved in illicit drug trafficking was on Tuesday, July 21 arrested at her Surulere Lagos residence by NDLEA operatives.

Lebarty Medi-care Hospital opens in Benin, pledges worldclass, patient-centred healthcare

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

Nigerians have been urged to take advantage of the state-of-the-art medical facilities and advanced diagnostic equipment at the newly inaugurated Lebarty Medi-Care Hospital, Aruogba, Benin City, to improve their health outcomes and enhance access to quality healthcare services.

The call was made by the Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Cyril Adams Oshiomhole, who was represented by the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs. Bisi Idaomi, during the grand commissioning of the ultra-modern healthcare facility.

The colourful ceremony attracted an array of distinguished personalities from within and outside Nigeria, including the Iyase of Benin

Kingdom, Chief Sam Igbe; the Esama of Benin Kingdom, Chief Gabriel Osawaru Igbin-edion; and the Oliha of Benin Kingdom, among other prominent guests.

Describing the hospital as a significant addition to Edo State's healthcare infrastructure, Dr. Oshiomhole said the facility, which enjoys the support of the Edo State Government, represents far more than a medical institution.

According to him, "Lebarty Medi-Care Hospital is a symbol of compassion, hope and excellence in healthcare delivery.

In his welcome address, the Proprietor and Chief Medical Director of the hospital, Dr. Nosa Aigbe Lebarty, an internationally trained medical practitioner, said the vision behind the establishment of the hospital is to eliminate barriers to quality healthcare through affordable, inclusive and com-

munity-focused medical services, particularly for underserved populations.

Dr. Lebarty disclosed that the hospital is equipped with cutting-edge medical technology and will continually embrace innovative healthcare solutions, emerging medical advancements and evidence-based clinical practices aimed at improving patient outcomes and enhancing the overall patient experience.

He assured that the institution would uphold the highest standards of clinical excellence, patient safety and ethical medical practice while delivering comprehensive healthcare services across various medical specialties.

While calling on Nigerians, particularly residents of Edo State, to patronise the facility, Dr. Lebarty expressed confidence that the hospital would redefine healthcare delivery

through professionalism, innovation and compassionate care.

Also speaking, the Co-Proprietor and renowned pharmacist, Pharmacist Omoyemwen Aigbe Lebarty, said patients would receive exceptional pharmaceutical and clinical care from a team of highly skilled, experienced and compassionate healthcare professionals dedicated to excellence.

Speaking on behalf of the Lebarty American Leadership Academy, Mr. Okenfe Lebarty said the establishment of the hospital was inspired by a deep commitment to improving lives through accessible and quality healthcare services.

Chairman of the occasion, Mr. Eddie Osayi, commended Dr. and Pharmacist Nosa Aigbe Lebarty for investing in what he described as a world-class healthcare institution that would significantly strengthen medical service delivery in Edo State.



ANNIVERSARY:

Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani (2nd left), the Chief of Staff to the State Governor, Hon. Yakuza Oshiorenuwa Musa (3rd right), Commissioner for Health, Dr. Cyril Oshiomhole (2nd left) and the CMD of ESH, Dr. (Mrs.) Anthonia Inibokun Njokun (left) during the 7th anniversary of the facility in Benin.

Partnership with Private School proprietors, vital in safeguarding the future, says EDOHERMA boss

BENIN CITY

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Edo Healthcare Regulation and Monitoring Agency (EDOHERMA) Dr. Adesuwa Urhoghide-Edigin, has disclosed that building strategic partnerships with private school proprietors is a vital step toward safeguarding the state's future.

Dr. Urhoghide-Edigin who spoke while delivering her address at a two-day stakeholder engagement organised for private school proprietors and stakeholders in the education ecosystem.

The event was held at the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA) in Benin City and jointly organized by EDOHERMA and the Directorate of Education Quality and Accountability (DEQA) Ministry of Education is to provide a critical platform to address school security, child

safety, conflict management, financial planning, regulatory compliance, and environmental hygiene across educational facilities.

EDOHERMA boss said the partnership has become necessary because schools host the largest concentration of children anywhere in the world, ensuring their health, physical safety, and overall well-being is a collective responsibility.

She presented a clear case and reasons why health regulation must be integrated into the core management of educational institutions, nothing that healthy learners demonstrate improved concentration and cognitive function, record fewer sick days, and ultimately achieve better academic outcomes.

"Proactive health management within schools also ensures that physical environments remain safe, directly reducing avoidable accidents

and injuries among pupils.

Dr. Urhoghide explained that the agency's Public Health Monitoring Department with innovation and by law is tasked with inspecting and monitoring school health, hospitality outlets, public spaces, mass gatherings, and general public health safety.

"To ensure continuous transparency, citizen engagement, and institutional accountability. Our active social media platform is a place where parents, teachers, and members of the general public can direct complaints to. They can also report substandard hygiene conditions, and alert regulators to public health hazards in real time.

"Our online verification system would be a one stop health standards verification portal in Edo state for both health facilities/services and public spaces."

The Director General (DG) of (DEQA) Dr. Amen Ogbemudia,

stated that the joint initiative directly reflects Governor Monday Okpebholo's commitment to ensuring every child in Edo State receives top-tier education across both public and private institutions.

She emphasized that the workshop was deliberately structured not as a fault-finding compliance exercise, but as a collaborative platform to support private school growth, financial stability, and sustainable management.

Dr. Ogbemudia explained that when private educational enterprises thrive, more children gain access to learning, job creation expands, and the state's education sector grows stronger.

She noted that outcomes from the engagement will inform continuous professional development programs for teachers, affirming that no education system can rise above the quality of its educators.

NEWS

Gov Okpebholo's Support Has Transformed Edo Hajj Operations — Uduimoh

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH
BENIN CITY

The Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh,

has credited the remarkable transformation in Hajj administration in Edo State to the strong support of Governor Monday Okpebholo, saying the governor's interventions have significantly improved the welfare of

pilgrims and earned the state its first national recognition from the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

Uduimoh made the remarks during a live programme on Qalam Radio in Auchi, Etsako

West Local Government Area, where he also urged all intending pilgrims for the 2027 Hajj to complete their registration on or before September 26, 2026, stressing that the deadline set by NAHCON is non-negotiable.

He explained that early registration would enable the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board to conclude all necessary documentation and logistics in good time, ensuring the state meets the national timetable for the 2027 Hajj exercise.

Reflecting on his experience in Hajj administration spanning over 25 years, Uduimoh said he had witnessed firsthand the difficulties pilgrims encountered before becoming chairman of the Board.

"I think it's been over 25 years now that I have been in the Hajj industry. I have served as a member of the Board and also as a Hajj Guide before becoming chairman, so I know the challenges our pilgrims were facing because many of the complaints came through me," he said.

According to him, feeding and accommodation had always been among the major concerns of Edo pilgrims during Hajj operations.

"Most of the time, feeding and accommodation were major problems. I always prayed to Allah that if I was given the opportunity, I would ensure that Edo pilgrims eat local food while in Saudi Arabia. Today, that dream has become a reality through the support of Governor Monday Okpebholo," he stated.

The chairman also highlighted the governor's intervention in ensuring pilgrims returned safely to their communities after Hajj. He also praised the Secretary to State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilior Esq for his commitment and support throughout the exercise.

**COURTESY VISIT:**

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainability, Mrs. Edith Ebomoyi (Middle) who represented the Commissioner, Mr. Nosa Adams during a courtesy visit by Executive members of the Edo Online Media Practitioners to the Commissioner in Benin City recently.

2027 Hajj: Edo Govt says September 26 registration deadline non-negotiable

LAMAI CASSIUS

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has urged all intending pilgrims for the 2027 Hajj to complete their registration and payment on or before September 26, 2026, stressing that the deadline set by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) will not be extended as Saudi Arabia will not also extend same as experienced in the last Hajj.

The Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar, gave the warning on Thursday during a live interview on KU FM Radio in Benin City.

He said the Board was carrying out an aggressive sensitisation campaign across the state to ensure intending pilgrims complied with the registration timeline.

"The deadline for registration for the 2027 Hajj is not negotiable. We are calling on all intending pilgrims to do the needful by complying with the September 26, 2026 deadline as directed by NAHCON," he said.

Muhammadkabar also advised intending pilgrims to ensure their international passports remain valid, noting that passports with less than six months' validity should be renewed immediately to avoid challenges during the Hajj processing.

"If you know that your passport has less than six months' validity from now, kindly renew it immediately to avoid issues," he advised.

Speaking on the Board's ongoing preparations, the Executive Secretary said extensive awareness campaigns were underway to prevent a repeat of the challenges experienced during the last Hajj exercise.

"Alhamdulillah, we are currently carrying out massive sensitisation because NAHCON has issued deadlines for payment and registration," he said.

He recalled that during the 2026 Hajj exercise, more than 150 intending pilgrims who had paid their fares were unable to perform the pilgrimage because they failed to complete payment before the deadline stipulated by NAHCON.

'Nigeria loses 40m tonnes of food yearly to poor storage'

LAGOS

Nigeria loses between 30 million and 40 million metric tonnes of food yearly because of poor storage, worsening hunger, raising food prices and reducing farmers' incomes.

The President of the Organisation for Technology Advancement of Cold Chain in West Africa (OTACCWA), Mr Alexander Isong, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Sunday.

Isong, also the Country Director, Nigeria World Agriculture, said millions of Nigerians struggled to afford food while enormous quantities of farm produce perished before reaching consumers because of inadequate cold chain infrastructure.

He said between 30 and 50 per cent of fruits, vegetables, tomatoes, peppers, onions, fish,

meat and dairy products were lost after harvest every year.

According to him, the annual losses, valued between N3.5 trillion and N5 trillion, could be drastically reduced through strategic investment in cold storage facilities.

"Every year, Nigeria loses between 30 million and 40 million metric tonnes of food because we lack sufficient cold storage and refrigerated transportation," he said.

He said the wasted food could feed millions, generate income for farmers and create jobs across agricultural value chains if properly preserved and transported.

According to him, dwindling supplies caused by post-harvest losses continue to push food prices beyond the reach of many vulnerable households.

He said reducing post-harvest losses would improve food availability without expanding

cultivated farmland or increasing pressure on limited agricultural resources.

Isong urged governments and investors to expand refrigerated transport, cold rooms, pack houses and processing facilities across major food-producing communities.

He said Nigeria required about 5,000 refrigerated trucks and at least 100 cold rooms to preserve perishable produce and reduce avoidable waste.

He also advocated reliable electricity, solar-powered cold storage systems and improved rural roads to strengthen food distribution and reduce losses.

He urged the Federal Government, states, development partners and private investors to collaborate in building modern cold chain infrastructure nationwide.

According to him, preserving more harvested food would stabilise prices, improve farmers'

earnings and strengthen national food security.

"The food we lose yearly can make a significant difference in reducing hunger if preserved and transported efficiently," he said.

He said Nigeria produced sufficient food in many sectors, but poor preservation prevented much of it from reaching consumers.

He said reducing post-harvest losses, improving logistics, securing farming communities and supporting farmers with infrastructure would lower food shortage risks and stabilise prices.

Isong urged state governments to invest in agricultural infrastructure in spite of concentrating mainly on increasing production.

He recommended aggregation centres, cold rooms, processing facilities and produce markets close to farming communities to reduce waste and improve year-round food supplies.

APC chieftain urges INEC to ease PVC collection ahead of Osun election

OSOGBO

Achieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has appealed to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to introduce a more effective and citizen-friendly framework for the collection of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) ahead of

the governorship election in the state.

Oyintiloye, who spoke with newsmen on Sunday in Osogbo, said the current process has subjected many eligible voters to unnecessary hardship during collection.

He noted that simplifying the PVC collection process would boost voter turnout and enable more citizens to exercise

their constitutional rights during the election.

The former lawmaker urged the electorate not to be discouraged by the perceived cumbersome process, encouraging those yet to collect their PVCs to do so and turn out en masse to vote peacefully for candidates of their choice.

He also cautioned voters against being intimidated by

reports of political tension capable of creating fear.

"No individual or group should be allowed to undermine the democratic process through acts capable of causing panic or discouraging lawful participation in the election," he said.

Oyintiloye further called on security agencies to remain vigilant and professional in safeguarding lives and property before, during and after the poll.

Auchi Polytechnic to Graduate First set of NSQ students, says Rector

AUCHI

Auchi Polytechnic To Graduate First Set Of NSQ Students - Says Rector

Lamai Cassius

The Rector Auchi Polytechnic, Dr Salisu Shehu Umar has said that the Polytechnic is set to graduate over 200 first set of students from the newly established National Skills Qualification (NSQ) centre for skills acquisition of the institution.

Dr Umar disclosed this recently while speaking with journalists in his office as part of his achievements saying the center is to train students on different skills such as welding and fabrication; mechanics and automo-

bile works; phones and computers repairs among others.

According to him, "the centre is one of the programmes newly introduced by me in the Polytechnic to train students outside their classroom academic qualification so they can be employers of labour instead of waiting for white collar job", he added.

He said the graduation ceremony which is slated for August 1, at the main Auditorium will witness over 200 students graduating from different sections of the skills acquisition programme of the Polytechnic.

He further stated that the graduating students will receive their skills acquisition certificates alongside with the result obtained from the school.

Inflation renders N70,000 minimum wage meaningless – AUPCTRE

ABUJA

The Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Professional Services Employees (AUPCTRE) says inflation has eroded the value of N70,000 national minimum wage.

The National President of AUPCTRE, Mr Benjamin An-

thony, said this in an interview with newsmen on Sunday in Abuja.

Anthony said prevailing economic realities had made it increasingly difficult for workers to meet their basic needs inspite of the implementation of the new national minimum wage.

He noted that the rising costs of food, transportation,

accommodation, healthcare, and education had significantly reduced workers' purchasing power.

"Today, a family of six cannot survive on N70,000 because the cost of food, transportation, accommodation, healthcare, education, and other basic needs has risen significantly.

"The current minimum wage has been swallowed up by inflation and the prevailing economic realities.

"Workers are finding it extremely difficult to cope, and that is why we keep saying that the minimum wage and salary review are not the same.

"As inflation continues to rise, the government should regularly review salaries to cushion the hardship," he said "What Nigerian workers need today is a living wage that reflects the realities of the economy and enables them to live with dignity," he said.

Anthony urged the Federal Government to adopt policies that would improve workers' welfare and protect their earnings against rising inflation.

He said salary reviews should be carried out regularly to complement the national minimum wage and cushion the effects of increasing living costs.

"The minimum wage and salary review are two different things.

"When inflation increas-

es, the government should continue to review salaries to reflect current economic realities," he said.

Anthony commended states that had introduced salary adjustments beyond the minimum wage to ease the burden of economic hardship on workers.

"Some states are reviewing salaries upward to cushion the effects of hardship, and we expect the Federal Government to do the same," he said.

Kaduna distributes 500 trucks of free fertiliser, tractors to 150,000 farmers

KADUNA

Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State has inaugurated the distribution of 500 trucks of free fertiliser and tractors to 150,000 small holder farmers.

The distribution, launched on Saturday, covers farmers across the state's 23 local government areas and marks the third consecutive year of the free fertiliser programme.

Sani said the initiative remained one of the largest fertiliser support programmes by any sub-national government, aimed at boosting food production and tackling food insecurity.

He recalled that the state distributed over 500 trucks of fertiliser in 2024 and 400 trucks in 2025 to support

smallholder farmers.

The governor said his administration rejected suggestions to sell the fertiliser at subsidised rates, insisting many smallholder farmers could still not afford the commodity.

He added that free distribution would also prevent middlemen and large-scale farmers from buying and reselling the fertiliser at inflated prices.

According to him, agriculture contributes about 43 per cent to Kaduna's Gross Domestic Product and provides employment for between 60 and 80 per cent of the workforce.

Sani attributed improved farming activities to the restoration of peace, saying about 5,000 hectares of farmland had been reclaimed with residents' co-operation and Federal Government support.



COMMISSIONING: From left- Chairman of the occasion, Mr. Eddie Osayi, The Coordinator, office of the First Lady, Mrs. Edesili Anani Okpebholo, represented by Mrs. Amen Ajayi, the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Barr. Bisi Idaomi who represented the Commissioner for Health, the Oliha of Benin, Pharm. Omoyemwen Aigbe Lebarty and Dr. Nosa Aigbe Lebarty during the Commissioning of Lebarty Medi-Care Hospital in Benin City at the weekend.

NSE emphasises role of engineering skills in economic growth, inducts new members

IBADAN

The Chairman of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Oluyole Branch, Mr Saheed Busari, has stressed the need for urgent investment in engineering skills development to drive innovation and accelerate Nigeria's economic growth.

The Chairman stated this at the 2026 NSE dinner and induction ceremony for new branch members on Saturday in Ibadan.

The event was part of activities lined up for a week-long programme scheduled for the 2026 Engineering Week, which featured an industrial visit, public lecture, outreach, and career talk, among other programmes.

Speaking on the theme for 2026: "Building the Future: Engineering Innovation and Skills for Economic Growth", Busari said the country's industrial and infrastructural ambitions would remain a mirage without a workforce equipped with modern engi-

neering competencies.

He noted that skills in renewable energy, smart infrastructure, AI, and local manufacturing remained critical to reducing reliance on imports.

The NSE Chairman identified the mismatch between university training and industry requirements as a major challenge.

He called on the government, private sector, and tertiary institutions to partner with professional bodies to review curricula, expand apprenticeships, and fund

research that translates into made-in-Nigeria solutions.

Addressing the new members, the chairman reaffirmed the Oluyole Branch's commitment to mentorship and capacity building for young engineers.

"We must build our engineers first before we can build our nation. With the right skills and innovation, engineering will be the engine room for jobs, industries, and sustainable economic growth," he said.

Ecobank unveils podcast to promote entrepreneurship in Africa

LAGOS

Ecobank Nigeria has introduced "Scaling Up!!!", a business storytelling podcast, aimed at inspiring, educating and empowering entrepreneurs, founders and business leaders across Africa.

The bank, in a statement on Saturday, said that the podcast underscored its commitment to supporting businesses beyond financial services by providing a platform for entrepreneurs to learn from successful founders, creatives and industry leaders.

According to it, the podcast will be available on Ecobank Nigeria's official YouTube channel and other major digital streaming platforms.

It said the programme would feature conversations on entrepreneurship, leadership, innovation, resilience and business growth, offering practical lessons and real-life experiences for as-

piring and established entrepreneurs.

It reads, "The inaugural season features guests including beauty entrepreneur and Founder of Beauty by AD, Adeola Adeyemi (Diadem); filmmaker and Founder of Golden Effects Pictures, Kunle Afolayan and music producer and Founder of Coded Tunes, ID Cabasa.

"Others are fashion entrepreneur Ejiro Amos Tafiri; commercial photographer Emmanuel Oyeleke; Co-founder and Lead Interior Designer of Siriano Ltd., Adewunmi Adegbola; and Founder of Windsor Gallery and Nahous Creative Hub, Richard Vedelago."

According to Ecobank, the podcast is targeted at SMEs, entrepreneurs, startups, business executives, creatives, students and young professionals seeking practical business insights.

The bank noted that new episodes would be released regularly on its YouTube channel and other major podcast streaming platforms.

Nigeria Cannot Afford Electoral Failure in 2027, says Amupitan

BY CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan (SAN), has urged staff of the commission to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, warning that Nigeria cannot afford to fail in the conduct of the 2027 general elections. Speaking during an official

working visit and interactive session with management and staff at the INEC office in Minna, Niger State, on Friday, Amupitan said the credibility of the country's electoral process rests largely on the commitment and conduct of the commission's personnel. He reminded staff that both Nigerians and the international community were closely monitoring preparations for the elections, stressing that the commission must deliver a transparent and credible electoral process.

"You are our ambassadors and you cannot afford to fail,"

the INEC chairman said, adding that the presidential and National Assembly elections are scheduled for January 16, 2027, while the governorship and state Houses of Assembly elections will hold on February 6, 2027.

According to him, interest in Nigeria's elections extends beyond the country's borders.

"The whole world, not just Nigerians, is looking up to INEC. I recently attended a meeting of Electoral Management Bodies under the African Union in Egypt, and

many participants expressed their intention to observe Nigeria's elections," he said.

Amupitan assured staff that the commission was strengthening its logistics, infrastructure and transportation capacity nationwide to ensure a smoother electoral process and avoid the operational challenges experienced in previous elections.

"We do not want to repeat the mistakes of the past. Our objective is to continue improving our performance," he stated.

NEWS**JUDICIARY**

Troops neutralise suspected female terrorist spy, nab 14 suspects nationwide

ABUJA

Troops have neutralised a suspected female ISWAP/JAS spy in Borno and arrested 14 suspected criminals, including IPOB/ESN members, cultists and a deserter soldier in separate operations across the country. Operational reports made available to newsmen stated that the suspected terrorist was sighted through CCTV cameras approaching a military position from the Sambisa axis.

The report said troops of 222 Battalion at Forward Operating Base Kawuri in Konduga Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno neutralised the suspect before she could reach the defensive perimeter. It said troops of Operation MESA also arrested a deserter soldier of 13 Brigade at a checkpoint in Bwari Area Council of the FCT. According to the report, the troops recovered a military uniform and a vehicle from the deserter during the arrest.

"The troops also intercepted another vehicle conveying suspected stolen armoured cables and arrested the driver for further investigation. "In the South-East, troops of Operation UDO KA apprehended five suspected IPOB/ESN members at Etuekwe Junction in Orsu LGA of Imo," it said. The report said the suspects were arrested at a secluded location believed to be a movement route used by the criminal group.

It added that troops of 82 Division Garrison and 103 Battalion, working with other security agencies, arrested eight suspected cultists at Eha-Amufu in Isi-Uzo LGA of Enugu. "Preliminary investigation linked the suspects to terrorist activities around the Eha-Amufu border communities between Enugu and Ebonyi states. "The suspects were subsequently handed over to the Nigeria Police Force for further investigation and prosecution," it added.

The report said troops conducting Operations Desert Sanity V, FANSAN YAMMA and Savannah Shield recorded no major incidents within their respective areas of responsibility during the period under review. It also disclosed that a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross

(ICRC) Sub-Delegation, Maiduguri, visited Sector 3 of Operation HADIN KAI/MNJTF at Kinnasara Cantonment in Monguno, Borno.

According to the report, the ICRC team briefed the sector commander on its humanitarian mandate and commitment to promoting International Humanitarian Law and supporting conflict-affected populations across the Lake Chad Basin.



Authority Chief Executive, Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Mr Sailu Mohammed (12th, L); Chief Executive Officer, Indorama Fertilizer Limited, Mr Munish Jindal (9th, R) with management staff of NMDPRA and Indorama Fertilizer Limited during the Authority Chief Executive's operational visit to Indorama Fertilizer Limited in Eleme Local Government Area in Rivers State on Thursday (21/1/26).

RDI urges NASS to fast-track Alcohol Control Bill

LAGOS

The Renewlyn Development Initiative (RDI), a non-governmental organisation, has urged the National Assembly to expedite the passage of the National Alcohol Control Policy Bill to strengthen enforcement of the ban on sachet alcohol.

The Executive Director of RDI, Mr Philip Jakpor, made the call in a statement made available to newsmen on Sunday in Lagos.

Jakpor said speedy passage of the bill would complement enforcement by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) against alcoholic beverages packaged in sachets and polyethylene terephthalate bottles.

He said NAFDAC's enforcement targeted markets, motor parks, retail outlets, bars and other distribution channels to identify, seize and remove the banned products from circulation.

Jakpor urged the National Assembly to support the

agency's efforts by ensuring passage of the bill before the end of the 10th Assembly.

According to him, the House of Representatives passed the bill for a second reading on May 7, 2026.

He said the proposed legislation, sponsored by Rep. Oluwatimhin Adelegbe, seeks to regulate alcohol production, marketing and consumption to reduce alcohol-related harm, particularly among minors.

Jakpor said the legislation would strengthen public health protection and reduce the exposure of young people to harmful alcohol marketing and consumption.

He also urged the Federal Government to fully implement the World Health Organisation's "SAFER" technical package on alcohol control.

According to him, sustained enforcement will reduce alcohol consumption and enable households to channel more resources to essential needs such as nutrition and children's education.

Lawyer urges respect for consent, faster justice in sexual offences

LAGOS

Mrs Adaku Mbama, pioneer chairperson and chairperson emerita, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Badagry Branch, says consent remains central to lawful sexual relations. Speaking with in Lagos on Sunday, Mbama said Nigerian laws criminalised sex without consent, prescribed penalties ranging from four years to life imprisonment and recognised spousal rape under VAPP laws.

She urged faster prosecutions, victim support, public awareness and respect for boundaries to strengthen justice and deter sexual offences.

She said that under the Criminal Code, Penal Code and the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, consent must be voluntary, informed and ongoing. According to her, a clear refusal, coercion, intimidation, fraud, intoxication, unconsciousness or mental incapacity invalidates consent under the law.

She said continuing sexual activity after an express refusal or withdrawal of consent constituted rape or sexual assault, depending on the nature of the act. "Rape involves non-consensual penetration, while unwanted sexual acts without penetration amount to sexual assault under the VAPP Act.

"Courts consider victims' testimony, surrounding circumstances and available evidence in determining whether consent existed. "The law does not require

physical injuries or resistance before a rape allegation can be sustained.

"Marriage, previous sexual relations or dating do not amount to automatic consent for future sexual activity", she said.

Mbama said that before the 2015 VAPP act, the Criminal Code recognised marital exemption and made it hard to prosecute a husband for raping his wife, but under the VAPP act, a spouse could be prosecuted for raping his partner.

PDP crisis: Bode George writes NJC, urges council to protect judiciary's integrity

LAGOS

Former deputy national chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Olabode George, has urged the National Judicial Council (NJC) to protect the independence and integrity of the judiciary.

George, a member of the PDP Board of Trustees, made the call at a news conference while reading an open letter,

addressed to the Chairman of NJC, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, over recent judicial developments relating to the party's leadership crisis.

The letter was tagged "The Imperative of Preserving the Sanctity, Independence and Integrity of the Nigerian Judiciary"

He expressed concern that some court decisions were eroding public confidence in the judiciary and weakening

constitutional democracy, especially the dispute that arose from a suit filed by the PDP Board of Trustees against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

He said the suit sought to compel INEC to implement existing judgments by updating its records to recognise the PDP leadership led by Chief Kabiru Tanimu Turaki (SAN).

The PDP chieftain, however, said the court dismissed

the suit as a waste of judicial time.

George described the development as disturbing and inconsistent with constitutional principles governing judicial precedents.

He said: "Whether rightly or wrongly, whenever judicial pronouncements give rise to a reasonable public perception of political influence or constitutional inconsistency, confidence in the administration of justice is gravely diminished.

Nwosu seeks reform of Igbo apprenticeship system

ABUJA:

A former Chief of Staff to the former Imo Governor, Mr Uche Nwosu, has called for reforms to the traditional Igbo apprenticeship system to make it more inclusive, accountable and suited to today's global economy.

Nwosu made the call in a keynote address titled "Rebuilding the Igbo Apprenticeship System for a New Generation," at the 2026 Igbo National Convention organised by the Igbo Union Canada.

This was according to a statement made available to newsmen on Sunday.

He said the apprenticeship model, popularly known as Igba Boi, Imu Ahia and Imu Oru, remained one of the most enduring indigenous economic systems, empowering generations of entrepreneurs.

According to him, the mod-

el predates modern concepts such as mentorship, startup incubation, venture funding and business networking.

He said it prepares young people for business ownership through practical training in customer relations, negotiation, inventory management, market dynamics and business ethics.

"The master did not merely give the apprentice a certificate at the end of training but provided a pathway into business through capital, equipment, goods, contacts or access to customers," he said.

Nwosu said the system played a key role in rebuilding Igbo businesses after the Nigerian Civil War, helping many families recover from economic losses.

He added that it transformed thousands of young people into traders, manufacturers, transport operators, craftsmen, importers and employers.

FOREIGN

NEWS

**RESIGNATION:**

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke has called Pradhan's resignation a win for democracy

India's 'cockroach' protest called off after education minister quits

India's Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has called off its five-week-long protest, hours after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned.

The CJP has called it a win for democracy and thousands of jubilant supporters continue to celebrate at Jantar Mantar, the main protest venue in Delhi.

An online satirical campaign with an AI-generated cockroach as its mascot, the CJP is not a real party but has evolved into a powerful platform for young people's anxieties and dissent.

The protest has been the most visible expression of public anger against PM Narendra Modi's government in recent years and gained momentum after Monday's police crackdown on people marching to parliament left dozens injured.

Pradhan announced his resignation on X in a post in Hindi saying he "respected the aspirations, dreams, and expectations of the youth" and was "pained by the events" of the past few days.

"Considering the situation at Jantar Mantar and across the country - with the aim of preventing anti-national forces from exploiting it, preserving national unity, ensuring

that not a single Indian student's future gets entangled in legal complexities, and allowing our children to devote their time to studies and focus on building their careers - I have submitted my resignation to the prime minister," he wrote.

As news of Pradhan's resignation broke, a visibly emotional Abhijeet Dipke, CJP's founder, screamed from the makeshift stage at Jantar Mantar: "We have done it."

A loud cheer went up and huge celebrations erupted with the protesters singing, dancing, shouting slogans and handing out sweets.

Several hours since the CJP announced the end of their protest and its leaders left the site, crowds were still gathered at the venue into the night.

Many told the BBC they had waited for this day for weeks, and were not in the mood to leave without celebrating.

The site is increasingly looking like the centre of a party, with volunteers doing their best to manage the crowds. A large number of police are deployed around the area, but they say they will intervene only if they see breaches of the law.

The CJP was formed after the chief justice of India described

some unemployed young people turning to journalism and activism as "cockroaches". He later said he was referring specifically to people with "fake and bogus degrees", but by then, the term had taken a life on its own.

The movement is led by Abhijeet Dipke, a 30-year-old political communications strategist and former student at Boston University.

The CJP quickly gained a huge following online, turning one of the most reviled insects into a symbol of defiance and resilience with 26 million followers on Instagram.

It called for reforms to India's education system, greater accountability over exam paper leaks and the resignation of Pradhan.

The protests gained global attention after activist and educationist Sonam Wangchuk joined them on 28 June and began an indefinite hunger strike in support of their demands.

As his health deteriorated, the crowds began to swell and Wangchuk was forcibly removed from the protest site by the police last Saturday and taken to hospital where he continued to fast. He finally called it off early Friday morning following assurances from the gov-

ernment that his demands would be looked into.

Over the course of the protest, most of India's major opposition political parties, activists and many celebrities turned up to show solidarity.

On the ground at the protest sites, many of the posters and slogans were directed at Modi.

The BBC met several people who said they had once supported the prime minister but had now turned against him.

"I used to support him when he used to do good things, but slowly I am realised that he is only dividing people on the basis of religion, and he's not doing anything else," said Radhika.

On Saturday, opposition leaders welcomed Pradhan's resignation, with many calling it a victory for the youth-led movement.

While the demand was for the resignation of the education minister, it is clear that the protests have dealt a severe blow to the prime minister's personal brand, and his aura of invincibility.

Since coming to power in 2014, Modi's government has rarely tolerated dissent and cracked down heavily on protests, which is why Pradhan's resignation is being seen as a big deal in India.

But this isn't the first time they have faced big protests - and it's not the first time they been

Israeli settlers set fire to mosques, cars and farm land in West Bank, Palestinians say

Israeli settlers have set fire to two mosques, as well as cars and agricultural land in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials say, as tensions in the territory continue to flare.

The latest attacks come two days after a clash between settlers and Palestinians near the village of Tal, which left four Palestinians and two Israelis dead.

Both sides accused the other of provoking the violence.

The confrontation has further inflamed the situation in the West Bank, which has seen ever growing violence by extremist settlers against Palestinians, encouraged by far-right elements in the current Israeli government.

Palestinian reports say that two villages in the occupied West Bank came under attack from settlers overnight - with cars vandalised, property stolen and hate graffiti spray painted on walls.

The mayor of Qusra said that settlers set fire to a mosque that was under construction.

Abdul Azim Wadi said that settlers spray painted graffiti that included the word, "revenge", on the walls of the mosque.

The Israeli military has said that troops were sent to Qusra and that police would investigate and collect evidence.

Palestinian officials say that in a separate incident, settlers set fire to another mosque in the village of Kour and sprayed slogans on its walls.

Since the deadly clash on Friday in Tal, Palestinians say that there have been multiple settler attacks on villages across the West Bank.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has carried out raids and arrested dozens of Palestinians in what it's called a "counter-terrorism" operation.

The Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded to the incident in Tal by vowing to take "powerful action".

That includes the possible demolition of the homes of two of the Palestinians who were allegedly involved.

There's been a sharp increase in settler attacks in the West Bank in recent months.

It's drawn international condemnation, but has shown little or no sign of being reversed.

The situation had already deteriorated before the Hamas-led attacks on Israel on October 7, 2023.

But since the subsequent war waged by Israel against Hamas in Gaza erupted, settler violence in the West Bank has escalated.

The UN says 1,114 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, the vast majority by the IDF. It says at least 35 of the deaths have involved attacks by settlers.

It says 41 Israelis, including civilians and security personnel, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war.

Ten killed in Russian attack on drone exhibition near Kyiv

At least 15 people have been killed in Russian attacks on Ukraine, including 10 dead in ballistic missile strikes on an exhibition near Kyiv showcasing drone technology.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said some 100 people had been injured in the daytime attack on the exhibition, attended by prominent members of the defence sector.

Five people were also killed by Russian glide bombs in the eastern city of Sloviansk. Early on Saturday, military officials confirmed the deaths of two men in the northern city of Sumy.

On Friday evening, Zelensky said he had received intelligence that Russia was preparing another massive missile strike, which could happen "within the next 48 hours".

A Ukrainian strike on Friday killed six people and wounded 26 in the Russian city of Kirov, more than 1,000km (600 miles) behind the front line. Ukraine also attacked warehouses of Wildberries - Russia's biggest online retailer.

After the attacks near Kyiv, there were initially fears for the safety of Defence Ministry adviser Serhiy Beskrestnov, also known as Flash, and Lyuba Shypovych, who has been involved in developing technology for the Ukrainian army.

Following the incident, both took to social media to confirm they were unharmed, and Beskrestnov said he had stayed away from the event because of security concerns.

Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuri Ihnat told Ukrainian TV the attack involved three ballistic missiles, only one of which was intercepted.

Russia confirmed the attack. Its Defence Ministry said high-precision long-range weaponry had been used on a site where drones for use in targeting civil sites in Russia were being demonstrated.

It said producers of drones, as well as representatives of Ukraine's drone forces and security services "directly planning and carrying out strikes on Russian territory" were present.

This is at least the third time since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 that an exhibition of this kind has been hit.

There has been widespread outrage that a public event of this kind was being held at all and had, apparently, been widely advertised.

President Zelensky said the incident was being investigated, while Ukraine's prosecutor-general said efforts were under way to establish who decided to hold the event and what safety measures were in place.

One dead, 16 injured at Berlin Pride event after vehicle driven into crowd

One person has died and at least 16 others have been injured at a Berlin Pride event after a vehicle was driven into a crowd in the city centre.

Police say they have identified a male suspect but have not arrested him or released a name, adding he is "known to the police and is associated with the Islamist spectrum."

An intensive manhunt is still under way, which has expanded to the entire city. The annual pride event, also known as Christopher Street Day, has been cancelled.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said in a statement he would

"make sure this horrific act is fully investigated and punished".

"We believe that a vehicle entered the Tiergarten park and hit several people and injured them," police posted on social media.

Revellers were celebrating the finale of the Christopher Street Day celebrations in front of the Brandenburg Gate, which backs onto the large park in central Berlin, when the incident took place.

Eyewitnesses said a white van sped into a crowd of people in the Tiergarten shortly after 22:00 local time, according to local media.

Witnesses said they saw a car

driving "very quickly" into the crowd and heard screams as people ran into Tiergarten park trying to hide.

A police spokesperson told media at the scene that after driving into the area, the vehicle "came to a standstill after hitting a tree here in the Tiergarten".

The vehicle was later found abandoned there, police said.

Emergency responders treated the injured nearby, including some with life-threatening injuries, according to police.

Images showed a large emergency services presence at the

scene, with one person seen being carried into an ambulance on a stretcher.

A number of police officers as well as rescue units from the fire department were deployed to the area. Police have appealed to the public for information and footage of the incident to aid their investigation.

The mayor of Berlin, Kai Wegner, called the incident "an attack on our free and open-minded society".

"My thoughts are with the victims, their families, and their friends," he wrote on social media.

NEWS**FOREIGN****Man charged with possession of explosive substance after bomb found in car**

A Dublin museum employee has been charged in connection with an investigation into the discovery of a bomb in a car in the Republic of Ireland.

Simon O'Donovan, 44, with an address at Sperrin Road in Dublin 12, was charged with being in possession of an explosive substance at St Lawrence Rd in Chapelizod, Dublin 10 on 22 July.

He appeared before the Special Criminal Court on Saturday evening, where the court heard he was employed by the Collins Barracks National Museum of Ireland.

A vehicle was stopped on the N2 near Carrickmacross near the Irish border on Wednesday. On Friday, a 25-year-old woman was charged in relation to the same incident.

At the sitting of the Special Criminal Court, Det Sgt Shane Noone said he arrested O'Donovan at 17:07 local time on Friday and informed him he would be charged with the of-

fence.

Solicitor Darragh Mackin said he had not taken instruction from O'Donovan as he was observing a strike over changes to criminal legal aid fees and was only appearing in court out of courtesy.

O'Donovan told Judge Patrick McGrath that he had "no representation at all", and had asked for "the services of this gentleman beside me", referring to Mackin.

O'Donovan was remanded in custody until Monday.

Law student Isobella Perrie Sullivan, 25, of Abbeylands Park in Clane, County Kildare, appeared before a district court on Friday charged with possession of explosives in connection with the same incident.

Her solicitor said she had been asked to take a bag to Northern Ireland, and had not been aware what was in it.

Perrie Sullivan was granted bail but remains in custody ahead of a further bail hearing on Monday.

Thousands rally in Tunisian capital calling for end of president's rule

Thousands of Tunisians took to the streets of the capital, Tunis, on Saturday to demand the resignation of President Kais Saied.

Demonstrators held signs reading "Get out," "Game over," and "Only Kais remains happy," while chanting slogans against the president.

The protest came as the country marked five years since Saied suspended parliament and later dissolved it in order to rule by decree.

They were denouncing worsening living conditions, democratic backsliding, and mismanagement of the state.

Academic and sociology researcher, Mouldi Gassoumi, said the march was a call for citizens "to rediscover the values and principles of the Republic".

"Unfortunately, these values began to be abandoned on 25 July 2021, since what I have repeatedly described as a 'coup

d'état against the constitutional order," he said.

The march was the latest in a string of demonstrations opposing crackdowns on dissent, the struggling economy, and limits on press freedom.

Protesters held up portraits of imprisoned journalist Mourad Zghidi, with his sister urging people to resist, saying people today are "oppressed and imprisoned".

"And those who could bring added value to this country are behind bars. The country is facing great dangers, and we must take to the streets to defend its achievements," she said.

Saturday's demonstration comes amid growing social tensions. In recent days, Tunisia has been hit by an intense heatwave.

It has sparked multiple wildfires and caused repeated power and water outages, deepening public frustration over the decline in basic services.

DR Congo says the number of confirmed Ebola cases has surpassed 3,000

Official figures from the Democratic Republic of Congo released on Saturday show that the number of confirmed Ebola cases has surpassed 3,000.

It said this includes 1,354 deaths and 556 recoveries, while 755 patients remain in hospital or in isolation.

This updated figure comes just three days after officials reported more than 1,000 deaths from the outbreak which has now spread to five provinces.

The unprecedented rate at

which cases are increasing and deaths are mounting has made it the fastest-spreading epidemic ever documented.

Halting the spread is complicated by the fact that the outbreak is unfolding in the eastern part of the country which is in the midst of an armed conflict.

Meanwhile, around 100 health workers at a treatment centre in Bunia, the epicentre of the outbreak, have gone on strike over unpaid performance bonuses, disrupting care for patients.

Senegal's President launches his own political party cementing rift with former PM

Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye launched his own political party on Saturday, using the occasion to consolidate his support base.

The move cements his rift with his ally-turned-rival Ousmane Sonko who heads the country's ruling Pastef party.

The two men, who rose to power together in 2024 under the party's banner, are widely expected to face each other in the 2029 presidential election.

In the weeks leading up to the launch of Faye's Kiray or Republican Patriots, a growing number

of Pastef officials resigned to join his camp.

Several members of the opposition party Alliance for The Republic have also joined the president's movement, including several regional leaders and members of its youth wing.

Faye and Sonko's alliance unravelled amid disputes over key policy decisions.

This included how to approach negotiations with the International Monetary Fund over a loan program amid the country's severe debt crisis.

Faye dismissed Sonko as

prime minister earlier this year, but Sonko's party retained its large majority in parliament, and he was elected president of the National Assembly soon after.

A new prime minister, Ahmadou Al Aminou Lo, was appointed in May, but the Cabinet was formed without any ministers from Pastef, after Sonko announced his party would not take part in the government.

In 2024, Faye and Sonko campaigned together on pledges to create jobs for young people, crack down on corruption, and win Senegal a bigger share of rev-

enue from its oil, gas, and mineral wealth.

But those promises have grown harder to deliver.

The country's debt burden has worsened since they took office, after officials discovered that the previous administration had underreported billions of dollars in borrowing.

The formation of Faye's new party sets up a political showdown between the former allies that is likely to play out in local elections in 2027 and could shape the campaign for the 2029 presidential race.



PROTESTERS:

Protesters during a demonstration against President Kais Saied, Tunis, Tunisia, 25 July 2026.

UN chief urges global support for Syria as it recovers from civil war

In a landmark visit to Damascus, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Saturday appealed to the international community to support the people of Syria.

It is the first by a UN chief to the Syrian capital since 2009 and comes as the country is trying to recover from a more than decade-long conflict.

Hundreds of thousands of Syrians were killed and millions displaced in the civil war that ended when rebels ousted pres-

ident Bashar al-Assad in 2024.

They were led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, who was appointed interim president in January 2025 to oversee state reconstruction and the dissolution of separate armed factions.

Guterres, who held talks with al-Sharaa shortly after his arrival, said the country was at a "pivotal moment" as it tries to return to stability.

It is estimated that the widespread destruction caused by the conflict will cost tens of bil-

lions of dollars to rebuild.

While the United States and Europe have lifted many of the sanctions imposed during the rule of the Assad dynasty, the impact on the ground has so far been limited.

Cuts to international aid have worsened living conditions for many. The United Nations estimates that 90 per cent of Syria's population lives in poverty.

The World Bank released an assessment last year that said rebuilding Syria after over a decade of civil war is expected

to cost about \$216 billion.

During his stay in Syria, Guterres is scheduled to visit the UN force deployed along the border with Israel.

After taking power, al-Sharaa said that he had no desire for a conflict with Israel.

But Israel was suspicious of the new Islamist-led leadership and quickly moved to take control of the buffer zone. Israel has launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syrian military facilities and periodic incursions into villages outside the buffer zone, which have sometimes led to violent confrontations with residents.

Ugandan diplomat Olara Otunnu joins race to lead the United Nations

Ugandan diplomat Olara Otunnu has become the seventh candidate to join the race to become the next leader of the United Nations.

The former UN under-secretary-general, who served as a special representative for children and armed conflict, was nominated by Kampala on Friday.

A previous opposition pres-

idential candidate, he also served as Uganda's UN envoy, and as his country's foreign minister for a brief period.

At 75, he is the oldest of the current candidates to replace Antonio Guterres whose mandate as secretary-general comes to an end on 31 December after two five-year terms in the post.

The other potential successors in the running are from

Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Costa Rica, Guyana, and Senegal's Macky Sall.

The six other candidates, four of them women, participated in a televised debate on Thursday.

At the end of this month, the 15 members of UN Security Council are due to hold their first closed-door, anonymous vote on their preferences among the candidates.

That first "straw poll" will be followed by an unspecified number of similar votes until one person secures the required nine votes, without a veto from any of the five permanent members -- the United States, Britain, China, France, and Russia.

The name of the selected candidate will then be sent to the General Assembly for formal appointment to the position.

He or she will take office on 1 January 2027.

FEATURE

Governance is not a popularity contest

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

Politics is inevitable just as facts are indispensable. However when the two collide, responsible citizens know that facts own the day. And also generally for politics in our climes, it has become the reality for perception to be manufactured long before facts are examined. This is the new norm for those who want to malign Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo over his recent diaspora engagements and security policies. A baggage of weird allegations has been presented as truth, whereas a closer look reveals a different story.

Let's take the governor's recent Glasgow engagement. It was actually the Edo State Global Investment Summit held in Glasgow, and brought together investors, development partners and members of the Edo diaspora to discuss ideas, perspectives, investment opportunities and strategies for economic growth. As scheduled, it generated discussions on partnerships and investment, and was so reported. How it's critics woke up a conclusion that the summit collapsed, was disrupted or became an embarrassment to the state is unimaginable!

Take the very unconvincing argument that by his engagements which are native to the office, Governor Okpebholo is desperately trying to outshine his predecessor, by organising such diaspora meetings. Edo diaspora predated his predecessor just as governance cannot not be reduced to a scoreboard of who visited more cities abroad. Moreover the claims that the man engaged Edo people in the diaspora has no publicly verifiable record. Nevertheless those who label his many private trips abroad for selfish gains also know that no governor in Nigeria has matched such ridiculous feat to date.

For the avoidance of doubts, Governor Okpebholo's approach has roots in institutional planning rather than political rivalry. His administration's appointment of a Special Adviser on Diaspora Affairs which birthed



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

structured diaspora programmes, including a UK town hall tour and the Edo SHINE 2026 initiative are policy-driven engagements designed to strengthen relationships with Edo professionals and investors abroad. It is not a surprise that such a concept is alien to the cranial capacity of his critics. Unknown to them the creation of enduring institutions that the governor has embarked on cannot an act of desperation.

It is also misleading to claim that no cultist has been convicted or jailed despite the governor began his campaign against the twin evil which festered under his predecessor's purview namely cultism and kidnapping. That

argument ignores both the law and the timeline. The Edo State Special Criminal Court dedicated to cultism and kidnapping cases only began operations in July 2026 and immediately began hearing high-profile criminal cases, with prosecutors presenting evidence and witnesses. Criminal trials do not end the moment charges are filed. They proceed through investigation, arraignment, prosecution, defence and judgment. Demanding convictions from a court that has only recently commenced operations betrays either a misunderstanding of the judicial process or a deliberate attempt to sell falsehood.

On the demolition of certain build-

ings, fact is the decision and action has not been indiscriminate or targeted innocent families' homes. Properties demolished so far by the Edo State Government were identified by security agencies as locations linked to criminal activities, including cult operations, kidnapping and involving murder. One such property in Uromi, Sean Northeast Local government was demolished after security operatives discovered the decomposing body of a gateman and recovered evidence pointing to cult-related activities. In other instances, affected buildings served as operational bases for criminal networks. Presenting the exercise as random punishment of innocent

relatives ignores the government's stated basis for the action.

It is equally speculative to argue that Edo people in the diaspora are now afraid to invest because of the government's security measures. No credible data has been presented to demonstrate a collapse in diaspora investment or a wave of investors abandoning the state. On the contrary, officials responsible for diaspora affairs have publicly stated that the administration's engagement strategy has renewed confidence among Edo people abroad and encouraged greater participation in the state's development agenda. Such statements may be challenged, but they cannot simply be dismissed and replaced with unsupported assumptions.

None of this position mean the Governor Okpebholo administration should be immune from criticism. Democracies thrive when governments are held accountable. Questions should continue to be asked about public spending, security operations and respect for the rule of law. But accountability loses its value when criticism abandons facts in favour of political storytelling.

The difference between journalism and propaganda is evidence. Journalism verifies. Propaganda assumes. Journalism distinguishes between allegation and fact. Propaganda blurs that distinction to achieve a political objective.

Governor Okpebholo's record should be judged on measurable outcomes: whether security improves, whether investments increase, whether infrastructure expands and whether the lives of Edo people become better. Those are legitimate tests of leadership. What should not pass as public debate are claims unsupported by verifiable evidence or arguments built on speculation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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NEWS

Governor Okpebholo bags Outstanding Commitment to TVET Development Award

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has been recognized with a national award of excellence for his contribution and outstanding commitment to promoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Edo State.

The award which was presented to him by the National Association of Polytechnic Students (NAPS) at a national summit on Technical and Vocational Education, further affirming the state's efforts to equip young people with practical skills for economic growth and self-reliance.

Receiving the award, Gov-

ernor Monday Okpebholo who was represented by his Chief of Staff Hon. Yakubu Musa said the recognition reflects the deliberate investments being made by the Okpebholo led administration in education, skills acquisition, and youth development.

The governor described the honour as one that belongs to the people of Edo State, especially the youth and women, whose growth and empowerment remain at the centre of his administration's development agenda.

He noted that no reward is greater in public service than seeing policies positively impact the lives of citizens, adding that the state government remains committed to expanding access to quality

technical and vocational education as a foundation for industrialization, job creation, and sustainable economic development.

The awards add to the growing list of recognitions earned by the Okpebholo administration for its people-centred policies and reaffirm Edo State's resolve to build a skilled workforce capable of meeting the demands of a modern economy.

The summit brought together government officials, education experts, development partners, and key stakeholders to deliberate on the future of TVET in Nigeria under the theme, "Repositioning Technical and Vocational Education for Nigeria's Industrial Development."

Residents, travelers laud sanitation in Edo without restrictions of movement

BENIN CITY

Residents and travelers across Edo State have applauded this month's environmental sanitation held

on Saturday with no restrictions of movement.

A cross section of Benin residents were seen actively participating in the programme by cleaning their surroundings,



SANITATION IN EDO

clearing drainage channels, and ensuring proper waste disposal in accordance with the sanitation rules and regulations.

The state government, in a statement signed by the Commissioner for Environment and sustainability Hon. Nosa Adams, directed that the exercise should be carried out from 7am to 10am.

The government also added that the scheduled monthly environmental sanitation exercises for July 25th, 2026, should be with no restrictions of movement.

"Your participation is essential to maintaining a cleaner, safer, and healthier environment for all. Full cooperation from all residents will be highly appreciated, the statement advised.

Sports

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

Super Falcons begin WAFCON title defence against Malawi on Sunday

Nigeria's Super Falcons will begin their campaign at the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) against Malawi on Sunday in Morocco as they seek a record-extending 11th continental title.

The tournament, originally scheduled for March, will hold from July 26 to Aug. 16, with

16 teams competing for Africa's women's football title.

Nigeria, the defending champions and Africa's highest-ranked women's national team, are drawn in Group C alongside Zambia, Egypt and Malawi.

The Super Falcons will face Malawi in their opening match on July 27 before taking on

Zambia on July 31 and Egypt on Aug. 4.

Coach Justin Madugu has retained a blend of experienced and emerging players for the tournament as Nigeria seeks to maintain its dominance in African women's football.

Among the key players expected to feature are captain Rasheedat Ajibade, goal-

keeper Chiamaka Nnadozie, and forwards Asisat Oshoala, Chinwendu Ihezuo, Esther Okoronkwo and Folashade Jamilusi.

Zambia are widely regarded as Nigeria's strongest challengers in the group, with reigning BBC Women's Footballer of the Year Barbra Banda and striker Racheal Kundananji leading their attack.

Nigeria defeated Zambia 5-0 in the quarter-finals of the previous WAFCON tournament.

Egypt return to the competition after missing the last edition, while Malawi will make their debut at the expanded tournament.

Madugu said the team remained focused in spite of Nigeria's successful record in the competition.



SUPER FALCONS PLAYERS

Junior Female YellowGreens intensify preparations as open camp enters final selection phase

The Nigeria Cricket Federation (NCF) has stepped up preparations for the Junior Female YellowGreens' campaign at the ICC U-19 Women's T20 World Cup Africa Division 1 Qualifier in Tanzania.

The team's open camp enters its final selection phase in Benin City, Edo.

This is contained in a statement by Zeal Ibe, Media Manager of the federation, issued to newsmen on Friday in Lagos.

According to him, following an initial assessment, the coaching crew has reduced the number of players in camp from 22 to 18, as the race for places in the final squad gather pace.

Ibe said the current phase of the camp was aimed at assessing the players in a high-performance environment, with emphasis on technical execution, tactical awareness, team cohesion and role clarity.

He said the players would take part in intensive training sessions and a series of practice matches against the senior women's national team and other selected opponents, over the coming days.

Ibe said the matches would help the coaching crew assess both the individual and collective readiness of the players

ahead of the qualifier.

He added that the open camp remained a key part of the federation's long-term high-performance pathway.

According to him, it provides emerging talents with a structured platform to compete for national team selection, while maintaining the standards required to represent Nigeria at the international level.



JUNIOR FEMALE YELLOWGREENS

Akwaaba Travel Market targets AFCON 2027 to drive sports tourism

Organisers of Akwaaba African Travel Market say they are leveraging momentum ahead of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) to deepen collaboration between Africa's sports and tourism in-

dustries through the second African Tour Operators Summit.

The organisers said this in a statement on Saturday in Lagos, stating that the summit would bring together East and West African tour operators to build

travel packages for the continental football championship, using sports to boost tourism, trade and regional integration.

It added that the summit would link tour operators from key football travel markets with operators in co-hosts Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda ahead of the 2027 AFCON.

The statement said West Africa remained Africa's football powerhouse, consistently producing the highest number of AFCON qualifiers, while East Africa had emerged as one of the continent's leading tourism destinations, making the convergence a natural partnership.



Favour Comprehensive College wins Customs football tournament in Ogun

Favour Comprehensive College has won the 2026 Secondary Schools Football Tournament organised by Mr Olukayode Afeni, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Ogun 1 Area Comptroller, in Idiroko.

The command's spokesman, Chado Zakari, disclosed this in

a statement issued to newsmen on Saturday in Idiroko.

Zakari stated that the inaugural inter-secondary schools football tournament, organised by the command's Area Comptroller in collaboration with Jonnyeko College of Health Science and Technology, ended on July 24.

He said that 12 secondary school teams from the border region participated in the competition, which lasted for more than two weeks.

Zakari said the tournament was organised as part of the command's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative to engage youths productively,

promote unity and discourage illicit activities, including smuggling, along the border corridor.

He quoted Afeni as saying during the closing ceremony that the initiative was designed to use football to mentor students, promote their development and help them realise their potential.



KEHINDE LANIYAN

WBSC Africa appoints Laniyan as member of commission

The World Baseball Softball Confederation Africa (WBSC Africa) on Saturday announced the appointment of Nigeria's Kehinde Laniyan as a member of its Baseball Commission for Africa.

The appointment was conveyed in an official statement by the Executive Director of WBSC Africa, from the organisation's Secretariat in Cape Verde.

According to the statement, the commission comprises five members drawn from different parts of Africa, with repre-

sentatives from South Africa, Nigeria, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

It added that Laniyan had brought to the commission, several years of distinguished experience in the development and administration of baseball in Nigeria, Africa and beyond.

"He served for many years as Secretary General of the Nigeria Baseball and Softball Association (NBSA) and currently serves as District Administrator for Little League International in Nigeria.

Joshua dismisses concerns over punch resistance after comeback victory

Nigerian-British born heavyweight boxer, Anthony Joshua, has dismissed concerns about his punch resistance after recovering from two first-round knockdowns to defeat Kristian Prenga in a heavyweight bout.

Joshua, a two-time former unified heavyweight world champion, spoke shortly after the fight.

He was floored twice within the opening round by Prenga, who entered the contest as the underdog in what had been billed as a tune-up fight ahead of a potential showdown with Tyson Fury.

However, the British boxer recovered in the second round, knocking down and stopping Prenga to secure victory.

Speaking after the fight, Joshua rejected suggestions that the early knockdowns exposed weaknesses in his ability to absorb punches.

"I got back up. That happened in the first 20 seconds of round one.

"I got back up, took a beating, weathered the storm and came back in round two.

"That is resistance. Resistance is spirit, durability and everything combined.



ANTHONY JOSHUA

SPORTS



23 JULY
TO
02 AUGUST



Glasgow 2026: SWAN applauds NSC over prompt payment of bonuses, to Athletes

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) has commended the leadership of the National Sports Commission (NSC) for the prompt, transparent, and upgraded disbursement of cash rewards to Team Nigeria's medalists at the ongoing Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

The National Leadership of SWAN gave the commendation in a statement released yesterday by SWAN Secretary-General Amb. Ikenna Okonkwo, on behalf of President Mr. Isaiah Benjamin.

The association heaped praise on the NSC Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko and Director General Hon. Bukola Olopade for prioritizing athletes' welfare, stating that the immediate presentation of instant cash rewards at the competition venues, with direct cash deposits into the athletes' personal accounts, represents a highly commendable departure from past administrative bottlenecks practices.

President Benjamin also lauded the recent upward review of financial incentives for both the athletes and their coaches. He noted that this proactive initiative sends a definitive message that patriotism, hard work, and excellence will always be swiftly recognized and rewarded.

"This timely recognition of our athletes' achievements will not only increase their confidence but also serves as a significant morale booster, motivating other members of Team Nigeria

to give their absolute best in pursuit of podium finishes," the statement emphasized.

Consequently, SWAN urged the athletes representing Nigeria at the Glasgow Games to reciprocate the immense support

shown by the Federal Government and the kind gesture of the NSC by remaining disciplined, focused, and determined to increase the nation's medal haul in Scotland.

The association also con-

gratulated the current medal winners for doing the nation proud and expressed the optimism for even greater successes as the Games progress.

SWAN also applauded the ongoing reforms within the NSC, noting that establishing policies that place athletes' welfare in the front burner of sports development programme has effectively restored confidence in Nigeria's sports administration.

Reaffirming its commitment to supporting the growth of Nigerian sports, SWAN pledged to continue promoting constructive engagement, positive narratives, and professional sports journalism to support the NSC's vision.



L-R: NSC Chairman Mallam Shehu Dikko and DG Hon. Bukola Olopade with the Athletes at the ongoing Glasgow 2026

Team Nigeria boosted as Ella Onojuvwevwo, Temitope Adeshina arrive for Commonwealth Games

Team Nigeria's athletics contingent has received a major boost ahead of the start of the track and field events at the 2026 Commonwealth Games, with two of the country's brightest stars, Ella Onojuvwevwo and Temitope Adeshina, arriving in Glasgow, Scotland.

World-class 400m runner Ella Onojuvwevwo linked up with her teammates on Sunday, bringing renewed excitement and confidence to the Nigerian camp ahead of Monday's opening day of athletics competition at Scotstoun Stadium.

The 21-year-old, currently ranked 18th in the world in the women's 400m, arrived wearing a broad smile as she received a warm welcome from

teammates and officials.

Her presence immediately lifted the mood in camp as Nigeria intensified preparations for the Games.

Onojuvwevwo heads to Glasgow in fine form after posting a season's best of 49.47 seconds

in the one-lap event, underlining her status as one of Nigeria's leading medal prospects.

Also joining the team is high jump star Temitope Adeshina, whose arrival has further strengthened Team Nigeria's hopes of a successful campaign.



TEAM NIGERIA

NSC increases bonuses for Team Nigeria athletes at Glasgow Commonwealth Games

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has announced an upward review of performance bonuses and instant cash rewards for

Nigerian athletes competing at the ongoing 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

Kehinde Ajayi, NSC Direc-

tor of Information and Public Relations, disclosed this in a statement on Saturday.

Ajayi quoted NSC Chairman, Shehu Dikko, as saying that the new reward package was approved to further motivate Team Nigeria athletes.

Dikko said gold medallists would now receive 10,000 dollars, comprising 5,000 dollars as an instant cash reward and 5,000 dollars to be paid directly into their bank accounts.

He said silver medallists would receive 5,000 dollars, comprising 2,000 dollars in instant cash and 3,000 dollars paid into their accounts.

According to him, bronze medallists will receive 3,000 dollars, comprising 1,000 dollars in instant cash and 2,000 dollars paid into their accounts.

Dikko said the initial reward structure was 8,000 dollars for gold medallists, comprising 3,000 dollars in instant cash and 5,000 dollars paid into their accounts.

"After meeting the team in Aberdeen, I decided to increase the instant cash reward to 5,000 dollars as added motivation for all gold medal hopefuls," he said.

He added that the three gold medallists who won their events on Friday had already received 10,000 dollars each, contrary to earlier reports that they received 8,000 dollars.



KHADIJAT AJISOLA

Nigeria's Khadijat Ajisola out of Commonwealth Games get

Nigeria's Day 3 action at the Commonwealth Games 2026 in Glasgow Scotland started on a disappointing note as Khadijat Ajisola bowed out of Women boxing.

She lost 3-2 on points in a closely contested round 32 54kg bout against Wales' Helen Jones earlier today in Glasgow.

Afternoon session will see Nigeria's men's 3X3 basketball team face Scotland in a group matchup while Ruth Nyong will represent the country in the 48kg class of women's weightlifting.

The men's 3X3 basketball Tiggers will return to the court later in the evening to face Guy-

ana in another preliminary tie.

Weightlifting comes up again with Agbboro Favour competing in the men's final of the 65kg class.

To round off Team Nigeria's outing today, the country's women 3x3 Wheelchair Basketball team will return to the court to face Wales in a Group A matchup.

The Nigerian ladies had slumped 1-15 to hosts Scotland in their group opener yesterday.

Also yesterday, swimmers Abduljabar Adama, Clinton Ebute and Collin Ebingha failed to progress to the finals of their various events while boxer David AKintola lost in the round of 32 of the men's 54kg bout.

Commonwealth Games: Nigeria Para Powerlifters set world records

Nigeria's Folashade Oluwafemiayo and Rita Ferdinand set new world records on Friday as Team Nigeria made an impressive Commonwealth Games start in Glasgow, Scotland.

Oluwafemiayo lifted 175kg on her third and final attempt, breaking her own world record for the second time during the competition.

She had earlier improved the mark with a 172kg lift before producing another outstanding performance in her final attempt.

The feat earned the Nigerian 134.8 points and the gold medal,

further extending her dominance in women's para powerlifting.

Oluwafemiayo's latest achievement also strengthened her reputation as one of the sport's greatest athletes globally.

Ferdinand also entered the record books after lifting 158kg to set a new world record in her weight category.

Her performance earned her 128.2 points and the silver medal behind her compatriot, Oluwafemiayo.

Earlier, Esther Nwogu won gold in the women's lightweight para powerlifting event, while Esther Onyema claimed silver.



NIGERIA PARA POWERLIFTERS



Team Nigeria at the opening ceremony of Glasgow 2026