

12,000 Edo farmers to benefit from FG free fertilizer initiative

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Over 12,000 farmers across the three Senatorial Districts of Edo State will benefit from the free fertilizer distribution initiative of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration renewed hope agenda to boost Agricultural

products across the nation.

Speaking to journalists during the official flag off ceremony of free fertilizer distribution across the State to small holder farmers, the Commissioner for agriculture and food security Dr. Jerry Uwangué said the fertilizer will be distributed to only profile farmers.

He noted that the State re-

ceived fertilizers in large quality from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and food security for Edo State farmers.

"We are here to officially flag off the fertilizer we received from the Federal government. Before now, we went across the 18 local government areas of the State under the instructions of Governor Monday Okpebholo

who asked that Edo State farmers be profiled for this purpose.

"The free fertilizer received will be sent across the 18 local government areas of the State to be given to only profile farmers.

"We have over 12,000 farmers as of today and we are still profiling more across the State. The fertilizer will be distributed transparently and we would not hide

anything, it will be opened and televised and it will be given to farmers that have been profiled.

"As of today, we have received 8,000 fertilizers that will be shared across farmers in three Senatorial Districts of Edo State. We will use our data based on the distribution processes".

Dr. Uwangué appealed to farmers to remain in their var-

ious local government areas as each council area has an agricultural desk officer who will be in charge of the distribution of the fertilizer to them.

"Distribution will commence next week as the fertilizers will go directly to the genuine farmers", he concluded.

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That The People May Know

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#200

AFTER KOGI COAL MINE TRAGEDY:

Senate urges FG to Establish Compensation Scheme for Miners

ABUJA

CAROLINE AMEH

The Senate on Wednesday urged the Federal Government to establish a comprehensive compensation scheme for mining workers following the July 14 coal

● Incident claims 20 miners, leaves several others injured

mine landslide in Kogi State that claimed 20 lives.

The resolution followed the adoption of a motion sponsored by Senator Jibrin Isah (APC, Kogi) during plenary.

Moving the motion, Isah said unsafe coal mining activ-

ities in Ankpa Local Government Area and other coal-producing communities in Kogi State had created growing safety, environmental and humanitarian concerns.

He noted that coal mining remains a major source of live-

lihood in Enjema, Okaba and Ikah communities in Ankpa LGA, as well as parts of Omla and Olamaboro LGAs, all within the Ankpa coal block of the Anambra Basin.

According to the lawmaker, the area's geological compo-

sition, which includes laterite, loose sandstone, mudstone, clay, shale and unconsolidated sediments, makes mining sites highly vulnerable to subsidence, landslides and ground failure.

He recalled that a major landslide occurred on July 14 at Alufele in Enjema District, trapping artisanal and small-

scale miners underground, while several trucks reportedly sank into mining pits during loading operations.

The incident, he said, resulted in the deaths of 20 miners and left several others injured.

Isah blamed the recurring accidents on unsafe mining

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HOUSE PLENARY SESSION:

R- L: Prof. Roland Otaru, Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General Edo state, Hon Donald Osikhena Boih, Chairman Edo state Law Reform Commission and Barr. Osahon Austin Amiuwu, member Edo Law Reform Commission at Edo State House of Assembly public gallery, to observe the passage of a bill for a law to provide for revised edition of laws of Edo State and preparation printing and publication of the revised laws of Edo State and for matters incidental thereto, during the House plenary session yesterday;

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN.

Senate gives Work Committee 4-week-ultimatum over Bauchi-Ningi Highway

● Demands Urgent Reconstruction of road by FERMA

BENIN CITY

CAROLINE AMEH

The Senate on Wednesday called for the immediate rehabilitation and reconstruction of the Bauchi-Ningi Federal Highway, citing its deplorable condition and the growing risks it poses to motorists, commerce and regional connectivity.

The upper chamber also urged the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) to immediately repair failed sections of the highway, describing the road as a critical transport corridor linking Nigeria's North-East and North-West geopolitical zones.

The resolutions followed the

adoption of a motion sponsored by Senator Abdul Ningi (ADC, Bauchi) during plenary.

Presenting the motion, Ningi said the highway, constructed in the 1980s, had suffered decades of neglect without any major rehabilitation despite its strategic importance to interstate movement and economic activities.

According to him, years of abandonment, increasing traffic volume and the absence of routine maintenance have left the road in a state of severe deterioration, with extensive pavement failures, deep pot-holes and eroded sections that have turned it into what he

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Ethiopia opposition accuses government of pushing Tigray towards new war —Pg 10

Team Nigeria Athletes Hail World-Class Commonwealth Games Camp in Aberdeen —Pg 11

NEWS



PPRO, ASP Eno Ikoedem, addressing Journalists in Iyanomo.



A detachment of the Nigeria Police Force

Cops deployed to Iyanomo Community to restore peace

● **Following renewed leadership crisis**

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

The Edo State Police Command has deployed a team of security men to Iyanomo Community in Ikpoba Okah local government area of Edo State to restore peace and order following the renewed leadership crisis in the Community.

The leadership crisis over who becomes the Odionwere of Iyanomo Community broke out on the 13th of January 2026 leading to the destruction of properties worth millions of naira with residents deserting the area for fear of being killed.

In its determination to restore peace and order in the State, the Edo State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) ASP Eno Ikoedem along with the deployed security team embarked on an operation show of force around the community to register their presence.

Speaking to journalists on the operation, PPRO said following a series of reports on violent attack in Iyanomo Community, the Commissioner of Police Edo State CP Monday Agbonika deployed an intervention team to restore peace.

She noted that the team is not leaving the community soon until total peace is restored, urging the people who deserted the community for fear of being killed to return as the team is on ground to restore law and order as well as maintain peace.

"We are here in Iyanomo Community to ensure peace and the security men will remain here until normalcy is restored. The team is complementing the investigation team that has already started investigating the violent crime committed and will apprehend the perpetrators of the act and ensure they face the law.

"This is not a temporary show of force but a move de-

termined to restore lasting peace. We call on the residence of Iyanomo Community who have been displaced by the crisis to return as the security team is here in the community to restore peace and harmony", she concluded.

Speaking to journalists on the cause of the crisis in the Community, Pa Robinson Izezor second in command to the late Odionwere said who becomes the Odionwere of the community is the cause of the crisis.

He noted that one Felix Ediowe who refused to assume the Odionwere position in 2021 suddenly indicated interest and the community kicked against it and it led to the crisis.

Pa Izezor added that when he refused in 2021, the position was given to one Wilfred Odogie who is now late. He said that he is second in command to the late Odionwere. "After his death, I am supposed to takeover the leadership of the community as the Odionwere but Felix Ediowe showed up and indicated interest, marking the beginning of troubles and crisis in the community".

Another resident of the community, Elder Fred Omo-Edigie said Felix Ediowe and Osawonyi Ikorogie are the cause of the crisis as they led suspected cultists to unleash mayhem, shooting sporadically to cause fear and panic.

He accused Osawonyi Ikorogie of cultism and cult related activities, he noting that he belongs to Eiye Confraternity and has used his members to terrorize the people of the Community.

"From January 13 we were living in fear until the police stepped in June 25th 2026 when Osawonyi was arrested by Edo State Police Command leading to the recovery of cartridges, vehicle plate numbers, clothes, hard drugs, guns and many other incriminating evidence".



A detachment of the Nigeria Police Force

Edo moves to standardise education with unified school calendar, textbook policy

BENIN CITY

ESE AMADASUN

In a major move to strengthen quality assurance and entrench uniform standards across its education sector, the Edo State Government has introduced a harmonised school calendar for the 2026/2027 academic session and released a comprehensive list of recommended and approved textbooks for use in all public and private schools across the state.

The twin policy initiatives, announced by the Edo State Ministry of Education through separate circulars dated July 16, 2026, are aimed at ensuring consistency in academic activities, improving curriculum delivery, enhancing learning outcomes and strengthening regulatory oversight across basic, secondary and technical education institutions.

The Ministry said the harmonised calendar would provide a uniform framework for the commencement, conduct and completion of academic activities in all schools, while the approved textbook policy would ensure that only instructional

materials that meet established curriculum and quality standards are used in classrooms throughout the state.

Under the approved timetable, schools are expected to follow clearly defined resumption, assessment, examination and vacation dates throughout the 2026/2027 academic session.

For the first term, learners are scheduled to resume on September 14, 2026, while the first half of the term will run from September 14 to October 30, 2026. Following the mid-term break, the second half will continue from November 3 to December 16, 2026. First-term examinations are scheduled for December 7 to 11, while vacation and result collection will take place on December 16, 2026. The Christmas and New Year holiday will extend to January 17, 2027.

For the second term, teachers are expected to resume on January 8, 2027, ahead of learners' resumption on January 11. The first half of the term will run from January 11 to February 22, followed by the second half from February 23 to March 25, 2027. The calendar schedules the second-term examination for March 15 to 19, with

vacation and result collection fixed for March 25. The Easter holiday will run from March 25 to April 16, 2027.

The third term will begin with teachers' resumption on April 16, 2027, while learners are expected back in school on April 19. The first half of the term will run from April 19 to May 28, while the second half will extend from June 14 to July 23, 2027.

The calendar also fixes the Basic Education Certificate Examination for June 7 to 11, third-term examinations for July 12 to 16, and graduation, result preparation and end-of-year activities for July 20 to 22. Schools will close for vacation and result collection on July 23, 2027, while the next academic session is expected to begin on September 6, 2027.

These dates provide parents, teachers and school administrators with a common planning framework and are expected to eliminate the differences in resumption, examination and closure dates previously observed among schools across the state.

As part of the reforms, the Ministry also unveiled a comprehensive list of recommend-

ed and approved textbooks covering all subjects and educational levels.

It explained that the textbooks were subjected to rigorous assessment by a Book Review Panel made up of education experts selected based on their knowledge and experience in relevant subject areas.

According to the Ministry, the review process was designed to ensure curriculum alignment, quality assurance, uniformity and effectiveness in teaching and learning across Edo schools.

Schools have therefore been directed to use only textbooks contained in the approved list.

The Ministry warned that no school is permitted to introduce, recommend or use any instructional material that is not included in the official list. School proprietors have also been instructed to communicate the approved list to parents and guardians and display it prominently within school premises.

The approved catalogue spans all major subject areas—including Mathematics, English Language, Basic Science,

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NEWS

NDIC begins payment to depositors of 46 failed MbBs

ABUJA

The Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has begun paying insured deposits to customers of the 46 recently failed microfinance banks.

The NDIC Managing Director and Chief Executive, Mr Thompson Sunday disclosed this in an interview on the side-

lines of the International Association of Deposit Insurers Africa Regional Committee meeting.

Sunday said the corporation was using the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System and customers' Bank Verification Numbers (BVNs) for the payments.

He said NDIC had traced depositors' alternative bank accounts and credited them directly without requiring

physical visits.

He advised depositors without BVNs to visit the nearest NDIC zonal office for verification and payment processing.

"The CBN revoked the licences of the 46 microfinance banks on July 1, 2026," he said.

He said NDIC automatically became the provisional liquidator after the revocation, in line with the law.

Sunday said the corporation had commenced payment of the insured maximum deposit of N2 million to eligible customers.

He explained that further payments would depend on the recovery of the failed banks' assets and outstanding debts.

He said proceeds realised from recoveries would be distributed as liquidation dividends to eligible depositors.

Sunday cited Heritage Bank, Aso Savings and Union Homes as examples of NDIC's prompt reimbursement efforts.

He said insured depositors of Heritage Bank were paid within four days of licence revocation.

He added that customers of Aso Savings and Union Homes received payments within 72 hours.

"The law allows us 30 days,

but we are working to surpass our previous records," he said.

The Central Bank of Nigeria revoked the banks' licences for failing to meet regulatory requirements for continued operations.

The apex bank said the action was aimed at protecting depositors, strengthening financial stability and ensuring regulatory compliance.

**COURTESY VISIT:**

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani (5th from right) with the leadership of the NYCN, Oredo Local Government Area, during a courtesy visit in her office in Government House, Benin City.

UNN to award 168 First Class Honours, 12,895 others

ENUGU

The University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) is set to graduate 12,895 students at its 55th Convocation, with 168 of them to be awarded First Class honours.

The Vice-Chancellor of the university, Prof. Simon Ortuanya, disclosed this on Wednesday during the 55th Convocation Press Briefing held at the university's Business School Auditorium, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC).

Ortuanya said that 10,641 graduands would receive first degrees and diplomas, including the 168 First Class graduates, while 2,944 students

would be awarded higher degrees.

According to him, the higher degrees comprise 1,390 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees, 1,340 Master's degrees and 214 Postgraduate Diplomas.

He said the university would also confer honorary doctorate degrees on four distinguished personalities in recognition of their contributions to leadership, public service and human development.

The vice-chancellor listed the recipients to include the First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu; Chief Williams Agbo; Dr Kaycee Orji; and Dr William Richardson.

He added that two emi-

nent scholars of the institution, Profs. Peter-Jazzy Ezeh and Boniface Obinna Okere, would be honoured with the title of Professor Emeritus.

He described the convocation as a celebration of academic excellence and the fulfillment of the dreams of thousands of graduates and their families.

Ortuanya said the convocation lecture would be delivered on July 23 by the state Governor, Peter Mbah, under the Chairmanship of the 12th Vice-Chancellor of UNN and current Vice-Chancellor of the University on the Niger, Umunya, Anambra, Prof. Chinedu Nebo.

He reaffirmed his admin-

istration's commitment to repositioning UNN as a global competitive institution through quality teaching, research, digital innovation, entrepreneurship and community engagement.

He said that within the past 11 months, the university had embarked on extensive rehabilitation of ageing infrastructure across its campuses.

The vice-chancellor listed the major projects to include the reconstruction of internal roads, rehabilitation of student hostels, ongoing work on the long-abandoned Senate Building, construction of hostels and laboratories at the College of Medicine, Ituku-Ozalla, and restoration of the univer-

FG intensifies grid modernization to boost electricity access nationwide

LAGOS

The Federal Government says it is intensifying grid modernisation, renewable energy integration and strategic partnerships to improve electricity access, strengthen supply and accelerate power sector reforms nationwide.

The Minister of Power, Mr Joseph Tegbe, said this on Tuesday at the 16th Distinguished Engineering Award Lecture organised by the Nigerian Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (NIEEE) in Lagos.

Tegbe, represented by the Director of Renewable and Rural Power Access, Dr Sunday Owolabi, said the government was deploying digital technologies, smart grid solutions and increased private sector participation to modernise the national grid.

He spoke at the lecture titled, "Interconnectivity Strategy for Distributed Generation in Multi-Community Mini Grids with Adaptive Grid Integration Pathways in Sub-Saharan Africa".

According to him, distributed generation offers a practical solution to improving grid stability while expanding electricity access to underserved communities.

He said government alone

could not deliver the desired transformation of the power sector, stressing the need for stronger collaboration among government, academia, professional bodies, development partners and private investors.

Delivering the lecture, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Protogy Global Services Ltd., Mr Isaac Agoro, urged Nigeria to focus more on interconnected mini grids and smart distribution networks to accelerate electricity access.

Agoro said strengthening electricity distribution should take precedence over expanding costly transmission infrastructure.

"We cannot talk about interconnectivity without a smart distribution grid," he said.

Agoro said interconnected mini grids would enable neighbouring communities to share electricity, improve supply reliability and reduce infrastructure costs.

According to him, Nigeria's electricity challenges are driven more by engineering limitations than the lack of technology.

Agoro called on government, universities and industry to develop indigenous technologies tailored to the country's electricity needs.

Edo moves to standardise education with unified school...

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Social and Citizenship Studies, Digital Literacy, French, Physical and Health Education, Literature, History, Quantitative and Verbal Reasoning—as well as indigenous languages such as Edo, Esan, Owan and Afe- mai, reflecting the state's commitment to preserving local languages alongside national curriculum requirements.

The Ministry said routine monitoring and inspection exercises would be conducted to ensure full compliance with both directives.

It warned that schools found violating the harmonised calendar or using unapproved textbooks would face appropriate sanctions in accordance with the regulations governing education in Edo State.

Permanent Secretary, Edo State Ministry of Education, Enodolomwanyi Otamere, who signed both circulars, said

the reforms underscore the government's commitment to improving educational quality and ensuring effective administration of the sector.

He called on school administrators, teachers, parents, guardians and other stakeholders to cooperate fully with the implementation of the harmonised calendar and approved textbook policy to achieve the desired improvements in learning outcomes and educational standards across the state.

The latest directives, Otamere noted, are expected to deepen ongoing reforms in Edo's education sector by promoting greater uniformity, accountability and consistency in school administration while ensuring that every learner, regardless of school ownership, has access to instruction based on approved curriculum materials and a standardised academic schedule.

Edo First Lady partners NYCN to tackle drug abuse, promote girl-child education

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has reaffirmed the State Government's commitment to protecting young people from the dangers of drug abuse through sustained advocacy, awareness campaigns, and community engagement.

She made the call while receiving the leadership of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Oredo Local Government Area Chapter, during a courtesy visit at Government House, Benin City.

The First Lady noted that

the fight against drug abuse requires the collective commitment of government, community leaders, religious leaders, schools, parents, guardians, and young people.

She urged youths to shun all forms of illicit drug use, cultism, and other criminal activities, emphasizing that Edo State Government maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards crime, cultism, and all forms of criminality.

"If you do the crime, you will do the time. Our youths must say no to drugs and embrace values that promote responsible living and a brighter future," she said.

The First Lady also high-

lighted the importance of environmental sanitation, calling for continuous advocacy to instill a culture of cleanliness among school children and communities across the state.

"Let us continue to educate our children on the importance of sanitation. Together, we can build a cleaner, healthier, and more prosperous Edo State," she added.

Earlier, the Coordinator of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN), Oredo LGA Chapter, Comrade Jonah Ogankpolor, expressed appreciation to the First Lady for her numerous empowerment initiatives and humanitarian

interventions, describing them as impactful and inspiring.

He noted that the NYCN is the umbrella body representing youths in Oredo Local Government Area and appealed for a strategic partnership with the Office of the First Lady to strengthen campaigns against drug abuse, cultism, and other social vices among young people.

Comrade Ogankpolor also sought the support of the Office in promoting girl-child education and menstrual hygiene, encouraging young girls to remain focused on their studies and pursue their aspirations without distraction.

Gov. Sule sacks 6 commissioners in cabinet reshuffle

OLIVER IJIOGBE

LAFIA

Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State has relieved six commissioners of their appointments as part of a minor cabinet reshuffle aimed at strengthening his...

Dr. Labaran Magaji, Secretary to the State Government (SSG), announced the devel-

opment while briefing newsmen after the State Executive Council meeting on Tuesday in Lafia.

Magaji said the affected commissioners were those in charge of the Ministries of Works, Women Affairs, Information, Lands, Science and Technology, as well as Security and Sundry Matters.

He explained that the affected officials were asked to

step aside to pave the way for fresh ideas and to strengthen governance in the remaining months of the administration.

According to him, the decision was not a reflection of poor performance, as the council acknowledged the commitment, efficiency and hard work of the commissioners during their service.

"The government appreciates their contributions. The

adjustment is intended to rejig the system, inject fresh energy into the administration and ensure that the mandate given to Gov. Abdullahi Sule is fully delivered within the remaining period of this administration," he said.

Magaji added that the former commissioners would continue to be part of the government and could be considered for other assignments in

due course.

He said names of the new appointees would be announced through the appropriate channels.

The SSG also disclosed that the council deliberated extensively on strategies to enhance the state's revenue by leveraging investments in the lithium sector.

He said the discussion followed the recent inauguration

of one of Africa's largest lithium processing plants in Nasarawa by President Bola Tinubu, represented by Vice-President Kashim Shettima.

Magaji said government was working on measures to maximise the economic benefits of the growing lithium processing industry in the state, adding that details of the decisions reached would be made public at the appropriate time.

Senate urges FG to Establish...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

practices, particularly the widespread use of the room-and-pillar mining method without adequate structural reinforcement.

He further expressed concern that many miners work without written employment contracts, health insurance, life insurance or occupational hazard cover, leaving victims and their families without compensation in the event of fatal accidents.

"The continued occurrence of mine collapses threatens lives, degrades the environment and underscores the need for urgent legislative and executive intervention," he said.

Seconding the motion, Senator Mohammed Monguno (APC, Borno) described fatal mining accidents as a recurring challenge across Nigeria's mining communities.

"The issue of mining collapse has become a recurring decimal with the attendant effects of deaths, injuries and other consequences for miners across the country.

The only lasting solution is to strengthen laws and regulations governing mining operations in Nigeria," Monguno said.

Following deliberations, the Senate urged the Feder-

al Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, particularly its Department of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining, to conduct a nationwide audit of licensed miners to strengthen monitoring and regulatory compliance.

The upper chamber also called on the Federal Government to establish a mining workers' compensation scheme funded through mandatory contributions from licensed mining operators to provide coverage for occupational injuries, permanent disabilities, occupational diseases and deaths arising from mining activities.

It further directed its Committee on Solid Minerals Development to draft legislation establishing the proposed compensation scheme.

The Senate also urged the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), in collaboration with the Ministry of Solid Minerals Development, to develop compulsory occupational accident insurance for all categories of miners, including artisanal and small-scale miners operating under recognised cooperatives or community mining arrangements.

In addition, lawmakers called for the establishment of a Mining Rehabilitation and



ANNUAL LECTURE SERIES:

From left: Vice Chancellor, University of Ibadan (UI), Prof. Kayode Adebawale; Chairman, International Energy Service Ltd, Dr Diran Fawibe; Guest Speaker, Prof. Yinka Omorogbe (SAN); Chairman of the occasion, Dr Layi Fatona, during the Annual Lecture Series of Dr Diran Fawibe in collaboration with Centre for Petroleum Energy Economics and Law (CPEEL) of UI in Ibadan on Wednesday.

Fubara backs Tinubu, Chinda, declares end to political hostilities in Rivers

PORT HARCOURT

Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers has declared support for President Bola Tinubu's second-term bid and the Rivers governorship candidate Kingsley Chinda for the upcoming 2027 general elections.

Fubara made the declaration during the groundbreaking ceremony of the Riven Medical Industries Project in Port Harcourt, on Wednesday.

He said the political differences that had divided stakeholders in the state had been resolved, adding that peace and unity should take precedence over political rivalry.

He added that he had aligned with the Rainbow Coalition, a political group led by his predecessor, the Federal Capital Territory Minister,

Chief Nyesom Wike, to advance the interests of the ruling party in Rivers.

"We have made peace in the state and I am supporting our rainbow coalition. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is our president and the one we are supporting.

"I have gone back to our family. The time of war is over. It is time for peace, and this peace will take us to another level," Fubara said.

He charged his supporters to join him in backing all candidates of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2027 general elections.

He also urged his supporters across the state to remain united and avoid actions capable of creating disunity.

Speaking on the Riven Medical Industries Project, Fubara described it as a strategic investment that would promote

industrialisation, create jobs and strengthen healthcare delivery in the state.

He, however, cautioned the project developers against failing to meet the agreed obligations, recalling past experiences where investors abandoned projects, which resulted in prolonged litigation.

He expressed confidence in the capacity of the new investors to revive the former Integrated Medical Industries (IMI) facility and urged them to complete the first phase of the project within three months.

Fubara also appealed to host communities and the leadership of Obio/Akpor Local Government Area to support the project and ensure a peaceful operating environment.

The governor reaffirmed his administration's commitment to providing the necessary

support for the successful implementation of the project.

He said the project was a Public-Private Partnership between the state government and Enbay Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd, and aimed at re-developing the former IMI into a pharmaceutical manufacturing complex.

He said the project was expected to produce pharmaceutical formulations, gelatin capsules, intravenous infusions and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients to boost local drug production, reduce dependence on imports and strengthen Nigeria's healthcare value chain.

Fubara said it was also expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect jobs, attract investment and position Rivers as a leading pharmaceutical manufacturing hub in Nigeria and West Africa.

Senate gives Work Committee...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

described as a "death trap" for commuters.

He noted that the poor state of the highway had significantly increased travel time, explaining that a journey of about 100 kilometres between Bauchi and Ningi, which previously took roughly one hour, now takes nearly four hours.

The senator said the deteriorating road has also increased transportation costs, reduced productivity and disrupted commercial activities across the region.

Ningi further warned that motorists are increasingly exposed to road crashes, armed robbery and other security threats, as vehicles are often forced to slow down or remain stranded on damaged portions of the highway.

He added that the continued neglect of the road has adversely affected interstate trade, agricultural value chains and regional integration, undermining the Federal Government's commitment to economic growth, national connectivity and efficient transportation.

"Unless urgent intervention is

undertaken, the continued deterioration of the Bauchi-Ningi Federal Highway will further endanger lives and property, increase transportation costs and worsen the hardship currently faced by Nigerians," he said.

Supporting the motion, Senator Babangida Hussaini (APC, Jigawa) urged the Federal Government to undertake a comprehensive redesign and reconstruction of the highway rather than temporary repairs.

Following the debate, the Senate mandated its Committee on Works to conduct an on-the-spot assessment of the road, engage relevant stakeholders and report back to the chamber within four weeks with recommendations for legislative action.

Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Barau Jibrin (APC, Kano), who presided over the session, commended the sponsor of the motion and acknowledged the poor condition of the highway.

He said reconstructing the road would enhance economic activities and strengthen connectivity between the North-East and North-West regions.

Edo Special Criminal Court remands man over alleged Kidnapping

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

The Edo Special Criminal Court in Benin on Wednesday remanded one Glory Ikpomwonsa, 55, at the Benin Correctional Centre for alleged kidnapping.

The order followed an ex parte motion by the Police Prosecutor, Emmanuel Ekibade.

Ekibade after citing relevant sections of the law, prayed the court to remand the suspect in

a Correctional Centre for an initial period of 14 days, pending legal advice from Office of the state Ministry of Justice.

He told the court that Ikpomwonsa conspired with others now at large to commit a felony at Alor Community on the Benin-Auchi Expressway, within the Benin Judicial Division.

The prosecutor alleged that Ikpomwonsa kidnapped one Imagbovwunwan Egharevba to an unknown destination in September 2021 with the intent to receive ransom, adding that the

latter has not been seen till date.

He also alleged that in February, in the same Alor Community, Ikpomwonsa conspired with others at large and attacked one Osazee Ovie with a gun.

Ekibade said Ikpomwonsa is being prosecuted on eight counts bordering on conspiracy, kidnapping, unlawful possession of firearms, attempted murder, and armed robbery.

The offences, Ekibade said, contravened Sections 7(1) and 5(1) of the Kidnapping Prohibition (Amendment) Law of

the state, and Sections 243(9) (b) and 295 of the Criminal Law of Edo, 2022.

However, the Defence Counsel, Mr Emmanuel Afolabi (SAN), did not oppose the prosecution's application.

He cited relevant sections and urged the court to consider the case on its merit.

The trial Judge, Justice Terry Momodu, accordingly granted the prayer of the prosecution and issued the remand order.

Momodu subsequently adjourned the case until Aug. 5.

NEWS

Troops rescue 16 kidnapped victims, nab terrorist logistics suppliers

ABUJA

The Nigerian Army says its troops have rescued 16 kidnapped victims, apprehended suspected terrorist logistics suppliers and informants, and recovered arms, ammunition and other items in separate operations across the country.

This is contained in an operational update covering activities in the last 24 hours, made available on Wednesday in Abuja.

In the North East, the report

said troops of Operation HADIN KAI arrested a suspected female ISWAP informant and logistics supplier at Pulka, Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno.

It said the suspect was intercepted while allegedly attempting to return to her husband in the Sava terrorist enclave within the Sambisa Forest.

According to the report, items recovered from her included a mobile phone and other personal effects.

In the North West, it said the troops of Operation FANSAN

YAMMA repelled a terrorist ambush on personnel of the 2 Nigerian Mobile Force at Abrom village in Kachia Local Government Area of Kaduna.

"The troops fought through the ambush, forcing the attackers to flee and recovered one AK-47 rifle, a magazine and 50 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition.

"Also in Sokoto State, troops rescued 16 kidnapped victims during separate operations in Shagari and Gandhi Local Government Areas.

"The first operation at Wanke and Kaura villages led

to the rescue of six abductees after terrorists abandoned them while fleeing military troops.

"Troops also recovered two motorcycles belonging to the fleeing terrorists," it said.

The report said troops had in another operation at Badanma village, engaged terrorists, forcing them to abandon 10 kidnapped victims who were rescued unharmed.

It added that troops also intercepted a white bus transporting 10 motorcycles along the Biu-Kangiwa road in Kebbi.

According to the report, preliminary investigations revealed the motorcycles were destined for a notorious terrorist identified as Mallam Geho-

wa at Amogoro.

"Four suspected terrorist logistics suppliers were arrested and handed over to the Department of State Services for further investigation.

"In Taraba State, troops of Operation MESA arrested a suspected criminal at Dema Road in Donga Local Government Area.

"Recovered from the suspect were 29 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, three mobile phones, a power bank and N160,000.

"The suspect allegedly confessed purchasing the ammuni-

tion from another individual in the area," it added.

The report further revealed that troops of Operation ENDURING PEACE recovered rustled cattle after engaging suspected terrorists in Wase Local Government Area of Plateau.

It said the troops also raided a suspected drug den at Saya village in Bassa Local Government Area, arresting four suspected drug dealers.

According to the report, items recovered included eight cutlasses, six knives, cannabis and other illicit substances.

NUC approves 24 new programmes for KWASU

ILORIN

The National Universities Commission (NUC) has approved the full-time take off of new programmes at the Kwara State University (KWASU) Malete, with effect from the 2026/2027 academic session.

This is contained in a statement by KWASU's Director, University Relations, Prof. Saheed Aliyu on Wednesday in Ilorin.

Aliyu said the approval is contained in a letter addressed to the Vice Chancellor (VC), Prof. Jimoh Shaykh-Luqman, and signed by the NUC's Director of Academic Planning, Abubakar Girei.

She said that 14 of the programmes were at the undergraduate level, while 10 were at the postgraduate level.

"The approved undergraduate programmes are B.Sc. Architecture, B.Sc. Quantity Surveying, B.Sc. Surveying and Geoinformatics, B.Nsc. Nursing Science, B.Ed. Educational Technology, B.Ed. Guidance and Counselling, B.Ed. Health

Education, and B.Ed. Entrepreneurship Education.

"Others are B.Sc. Insurance and Risk Management, B.Ed. Technology Education, B. Community Health Science, B.Eng. Computer Engineering, B.Eng. Industrial and Production Engineering, and B.Eng. Biomedical Engineering.

"The postgraduate programmes include M.A. and Ph.D. Fine and Applied Arts, M.A. and Ph.D. Performing Arts, M.A. Linguistics, PGD M. Tech, and Ph.D. Food Science and Technology, Ph.D. Hospitality and Tourism Management, Ph.D. Public Administration, and Ph.D. Mass Communication," Aliyu said

She quoted the VC of the institution as expressing excitement and congratulating the staff of the university who worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the resource verification exercise by the regulatory agency.

"The university will continue to sustain the excellence in teaching, research, and community development for which the institution is reputed.

**OPENING OF NATIONAL WORKSHOP:**

From left: Director Academic and Distance Learning, Michael Imodu National Institute for Labour Studies (MINILS), Dr Sylvanus Adamade; Director General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), Dr John Asein; Chief Training Officer, Michael Imodu, MINILS, Dr Chinege Emuchag; Head Human Resources Dept, NCC, Mr Seun Popoola at the opening of National Workshop on Work Ethic and Values for staff of Nigerian Copyright Commission by Michael Imodu National Institute for Labour Studies in Ibadan on Wednesday.

Soludo's wife, Nonye urges nutrition, sleep, exercise for healthy brain

AWKA

Wife of Anambra Governor, Dr Nonye Soludo, has urged Nigerians to adopt healthy lifestyles to enhance their brain health, describing a healthy brain as the foundation for a sound and healthy life.

Soludo made the call in a message on Wednesday in Awka, to commemorate the

2026 World Brain Day, celebrated globally every year on July 22.

World Brain Day is commemorated to raise awareness about brain health and neurological disorders.

The Theme for this year's celebration is "Brain Health: Access for All".

She stressed the importance of good nutrition, regular physical activity, quality sleep, life-

long learning and mental wellness in maintaining optimal brain function.

She said that embracing these healthy habits would help individuals protect one of God's greatest gifts and improve their overall well-being.

"As we commemorate World Brain Day today, it is crucial to remember that a healthy brain is the foundation of a sound and healthy life.

"By embracing good nutrition, regular physical activity, quality sleep, lifelong learning and mental wellness, we can protect one of God's greatest gifts," she said.

Soludo also called on citizens to support one another in promoting mental wellness and building a healthier and more productive society.

"Let us nurture our minds, support one another and build a healthier, more productive society," she said.

NESREA begins probe on Chemical spill on Kaduna-Abuja Expressway

KADUNA

The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) has begun an investigation into a suspected chemical spill on the Kaduna-Abuja Expressway.

The Agency, in a statement on Wednesday, said the incident occurred after a truck accident left a white, foamy sub-

stance at the scene.

The statement signed by Mrs Nwamaka Ejiofor, the Assistant Director (Press), said that a team from the Kaduna State Field Office had visited the site to commence investigation.

According to the statement, the team led by the State Coordinator, Mr Hena Emmanuel, had met with the Police Commander for Jere, Assistant Commissioner of Police Sani

Zubairu, the Federal Road Safety Corps commander in the area, and the community leader.

It said preliminary findings indicated that a heavy-duty truck was involved in an accident, resulting in the spillage of its contents.

The statement said the agency had obtained information from security agencies, relevant officials and residents to support the investigation.

It added that samples of the foamy substance, surrounding

soil and water from a nearby stream had been collected for laboratory analysis to determine their composition and possible environmental impact.

NESREA therefore advised members of the public to avoid contact with the foamy substance, the water and the surrounding soil until the investigation was concluded.

It further said that the precaution was necessary to prevent possible exposure to hazardous materials.

Yusuf hails FG over NECO exam fee hike suspension

KANO

Governor Abba Yusuf of Kano State has commended the Federal Government for suspending the increase in the National Examinations Council (NECO) examination fees.

This is contained in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Mustapha Muhammad, on Wednesday in Kano.

Muhammad said that Yusuf made the commendation while distributing appointment letters to 4,900 teachers for basic and secondary schools as well as the engagement of 3,688 Abba Gida-Gida BESDA Cohort V facilitators.

Yusuf described the federal government's decision as a thoughtful intervention that would reduce the financial burden on millions of Nigerian families and promote access to quality education.

Yusuf further commended

President Bola Tinubu's administration for implementing various reforms aimed at improving access to quality education under the Renewed Hope Agenda.

He also commended the Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) for their commitment towards promoting inclusive and affordable education nationwide.

He added that the timely release of UBEC counterpart funds had facilitated the construction and rehabilitation of schools as well as the implementation of other basic education projects across the state.

Yusuf reiterated the state government's commitment to strengthening collaboration with the ministry, UBEC, NECO and other relevant agencies to investment in education for improved learning outcomes.

C'River Assembly advances bill banning same-sex marriage

CALABAR

The Cross River House of Assembly on Wednesday passed for second reading a bill seeking to prohibit same-sex marriage and civil unions in the state.

The bill also seeks to bar the solemnisation and recognition of same-sex marriages, including those contracted outside the state,

regardless of culture, tradition or existing law.

Sponsor of the bill, Mr Hilary Bisong, Member representing Boki II State Constituency during plenary said the proposal was rooted in biblical teachings on marriage.

Bisong cited Genesis chapter 1, verse 27 and Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, describing marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

He also referenced the account of Sodom and Gomorrah and Leviticus chapter 20, verse 13, arguing that same-sex relationships contradicted biblical principles.

According to him, the bill provides that same-sex marriages or civil unions shall not enjoy legal recognition or benefits of a valid marriage in Cross River.

"It also provides that certificates issued for same-sex

marriages outside the state will not be recognised within Cross River, and courts in the state shall not enforce benefits arising from such unions, whether certificated or otherwise."

Bisong said Section 4(7) of the 1999 Constitution empowers the state house of assembly to legislate for peace, order and good governance.

He said the proposed law

would prohibit the solemnisation of same-sex unions in churches, courts, mosques, traditional shrines and other places of worship.

Lawmakers unanimously supported the bill, describing same-sex unions as inconsistent with their moral and religious beliefs.

Some members characterised same-sex relationships as harmful to society and called for legislation to dis-

courage the practice.

Speaker of the House, Mr Elvert Ayambem, commended members for their contributions during the debate.

Ayambem expressed concern over what he described as increasing sexual perversion in the state.

He said the assembly would ensure that the law prescribed stiff penalties to deter violations if eventually passed.



COMMITTEE'S BUDGET:

From left: Member, House of Representatives Committee on Finance, Rep. Ibe Osonwa; Deputy Chairman of the committee, Rep. Saidu Abdullahi and the Chairman of the committee, Rep. James Faleke, during the committee's budget performance session with heads Nigeria Customs Service and Corporate Affairs Commission, at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Wednesday.

ESTMA boss commends Mbah's initiative in transportation sector

ENUGU

Mr Kenneth Ugwu, the Commander of the Enugu State Transport Management Agency (ESTMA), has commended Gov. Peter Mbah for his giant strides in the transportation sector.

Ugwu made the commendation while speaking to newsmen on Wednesday in Enugu on the occasion of the 9th anniversary of the establishment of the agency.

He said the governor had distinguished himself as one of the best state chief executives in the country through his initiatives in the transportation sector.

"The establishment of EnuguAir with direct flight from China sets him aside as the best.

"He is doing well, he has built transport terminals in different places in the state to ease movements of vehicles in and out of the state capital as well as Nsukka area," he said.

He also lauded the governor for installing traffic lights

at strategic junctions in the state capital, saying this has eased the agency's operations.

Ugwu said that the appointment of the Commissioner for Transportation, Dr Obi Ozor, was in the right direction as he is doing a lot to reposition the ministry.

"The commissioner is doing a lot to reposition the transportation sector in the state. He is working very closely with the governor to achieve results, I commend him," he said.

The commander said that the agency had been able to restore orderliness in the movement of vehicular traffic in Enugu metropolis since its inception in 2017.

According to him, the agency has ensured that motorists obey traffic signs and traffic lights to maintain orderliness on the roads.

Ugwu appealed to the governor to increase the agency's patrol vehicles for enhanced operations within the city.

Highlight of the celebration was a motorcade by the agency's personnel on some major roads in Enugu.

How inflation is driving gadget repairs over new purchases

ABUJA

Mr Abdulfatah Aliyu, Vice Chairman, Abuja GSM Village, says that the rising cost of living and inflation had significantly altered consumer behaviour towards technology and mobile communications gadgets.

Aliyu said on Wednesday in Abuja that for instance Nigerians now prioritise gadget repairs over purchasing new devices.

According to him, previously many Nigerians preferred to replace their handsets if they felt they were giving them lots of problem.

"As it is now, the economy is not how we think it should be so consumers have already made their scale of preference.

"Before you spend anything, you have to make your scale of preference and ensure it is something you definitely need.

"If you have a phone of N500,000 and it has a little problem, you will not easily abandon it to buy a new one.

"You would rather fix it because anything the one million naira phone will do, the N500,000 phone is going to give it to you.

"Why not spend that money to repair it? So there are a lot of repairs now going on," he said.

Aliyu explained that the most frequent repairs handled by technicians at the hub involved damaged screens and charging ports.

He attributed these widespread damage to negligence, accidental drops, and improper handling of devices by children.

"Depending on how you use it, a device will serve you for a very long time if you handle it well.

"Some parents give their children phones to plug, and because they do not know where to face the USB port, they damage it," he said.

He also told NAN that the high cost of brand-new replacement parts had popularised the

use of genuine used components among repairers.

"Some of these new spare parts are very expensive, so we use fairly used original parts from other phones.

"The end user is going to be happy at the end of the day because he is getting a genuine part for the device," he said.

Aliyu advised professional engineers to always maintain transparency by informing clients when alternative parts are being installed.

The Abuja GSM Village is a major technology hub dedicated to the sale and maintenance of digital gadgets.

Bayelsa Education Fund trains 100 teachers on imparting reading, phonics

YENAGOA

A total of 100 teachers from public primary and secondary schools in Bayelsa are currently undergoing a three-day training on imparting reading skills, structured phonics and literacy.

The programme which is ongoing at the Saint Jude's Girls Secondary School, Amarata, Yenagoa is facilitated by the Bayelsa State Education Development Trust Fund (EDTF) in partnership with the Bridge Academy International and Teachers Training, Registration and Certification Board (TTRCB).

The workshop which has 70 teachers from primary schools and 30 from secondary schools in attendance has as its theme "Building Strong Readers".

The Commissioner for Education in Bayelsa, Dr Gentle Emelah represented by the Permanent Secretary, Mr Simon-Peter Okene while declaring open the training programme, commended the EDTF for the initiative and urged the teachers to make the best use of the opportunity to impart the knowledge gained to their pupils and students.

Chairman of the House of Assembly Committee on Education, Dr Charles Daniel, who

harped on the importance of sound foundation in English language, emphasised the need for constant training for teachers to enhance their proficiency.

Executive Secretary of the Bayelsa State Education Development Trust Fund (EDTF), Prof. Ebimieowei Etebu noted that with 75 per cent of pupils and students in the country unable to read and understand age appropriate text, it was imperative to train teachers on structured phonics and literacy.

"Let me start with a number that should trouble all of us: the Honorable Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, recently disclosed that three out of every

four Nigerian children cannot read and understand a simple age-appropriate text by the age of 10.

"Three out of four children in our classroom representing 75 per cent cannot read and write, the statistic is not coming from a distant country or a different decade, but from states across this country."

"Reading is not acquired through exposure alone, as speech is; it must be taught explicitly and systematically: the sounds of our language, the letters that represent them and sufficient guided practice to carry a child from decoding into fluency," Etebu said.

Police foil abduction of 4 residents of Akwanga

LAFIA

The Police Command in Nasarawa State says it has foiled the abduction of four residents of Andaha community of Akwanga Local Government Area (LGA) of the state.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Ramhan Nansel, said this in a statement on Wednesday in Lafia.

Nansel explained that operatives of the command attached to Andaha Division in the local government successfully rescued the four victims during swift tactical response to a distress call.

According to him, the police received a distress call on Tuesday, at about 9:40 p.m., that suspected kidnappers were operating around Megona Filling Station, Andaha, along the Akwanga-Jos Road.

"Upon receiving the report, the Divisional Police

Officer immediately mobilised and led a team of operatives to the scene.

"On sighting the police, the armed hoodlums opened fire on the operatives, leading to a gun duel and the police responded with superior tactical firepower, forcing the criminals to abandon their victims and flee into the surrounding bush with varying degrees of injuries.

"The four kidnapped victims were rescued unhurt, while several provisions believed to have been stolen from a nearby provision store were recovered and taken into police custody."

Nansel quoted the state Commissioner of Police, Shetima Mohammed, as commending the gallantry and swift response of the operatives, describing it as a testament to the command's unwavering commitment to protecting lives and property.

NEWS

Court adjourns trial of 5 men charged with concealing Timipre Sylva's whereabouts

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday adjourned the trial of five men accused of failure to disclose the whereabouts of former Governor Timipre Sylva of Bayelsa until October 5.

The case, which was fixed for commencement of trial

before Justice Peter Lifu, could not go on because the court did not sit.

The matter was subsequently fixed for Oct. 5 after the court vacation.

The five suspects; Reuben Ayuba, Musa Mohammed, Friday Paul, Paganengigha Anagaha and Ayebaifie Suobite, were arraigned on July 1 by the Depart-

ment of State Services (DSS).

They were arraigned on a two-count charge.

Sylva, who is at large, and six others are currently facing a trial in a sister court presided over by Justice Joyce Abdulmalik over alleged plan to topple President Bola Tinubu's government.

He was alleged to have a fi-

nancial link to the six suspected coup plotters presently on trial.

The suspects are retired Maj-Gen. Mohammed Ibrahim Gana, retired Capt. (NN) Erasmus Ohegobia Victor, Insp Ahmed Ibrahim, Zekeri Umore, Bukar Kashim Goni and Abdulkadir Sani, listed as 1st to 6th defendants respectively.

The Federal Govern-

ment filed a 13-count charge, marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/206/2026, against the defendants.

Although Sylva, who is also former Minister of State for Petroleum Resources in the late ex-President Muhammadu Buhari government, is not named as a defendant in the charge, he is listed as being at large.

Meanwhile after the five suspects were arraigned before Justice Lifu on July 1, they pleaded not guilty to the two-count charge marked: FHC/ABJ/CR/299/2026.

The Prosecution Counsel, E.G. Orubor, sought a trial date to enable them establish their case against the defendants.

Justice Lifu thereafter ad-

mitted them to N5 million bail each with two sureties each who must be residents of Abuja and provide their tax clearance certificates.

This was after the defendant's lawyers, including Sunusi Musa, SAN, moved applications for their bail.

The judge adjourned the matter until July 22 for commencement of trial.

In count one, the defendants were alleged to have on or about April 28 in Abuja, became "accessories after the fact of felony by concealing the whereabouts of Timipre Sylva, who is a fugitive of the law."

The offence is contrary to Section 519 of the Criminal Code Act LEN, 2004.

**NATIONAL SECURITY ROUNDTABLE**

From left: Majority Leader, House of representatives, Rep. Julius Ihonvbere, representative of the Chief of Defense Staff, Air Vice Marshal Z. A. Usman, former Chief of Staff/Chairman of the Occasion, retired Gen. Lucky Irabor and the Deputy Chief Whip, House of Representatives, Rep. Ibrahim Isiaka, during the National Security Roundtable to celebrate the NASS Open Week 2026, at the National Assembly in Abuja on Wednesday.

Slow judicial process driving prison congestion — Legal practitioners

KADUNA

Some legal practitioners in Kaduna have lamented on delays in judicial trials as a major contributor to prison congestion in the state and country as a whole.

Speaking on Wednesday, the legal practitioners said that systematic inefficiency, awaiting trial, delayed cases deposition and the prevalent use of holding charges are major contributors to the congestion.

A retired Magistrate, Mr Jonah Praise, said delay trials is a contributor to prison congestion as in many cases suspects are remanded while awaiting Directorate of Public

Prosecutions (DPP) advice or filing of information at the High Court or lack of an interpreter in some cases.

He stated that when these steps are delayed, court routinely grants adjournment rather than discharge detainees even where custody has already been prolonged beyond reasonable limits.

Praise lamented that these delays in trials have resulted in prolonged detention of suspects, many of whom have been held longer than their potential sentences if convicted and such bring about congestion in prisons.

He said many suspects are held in correctional facilities before trials even begin.

Praise advised that more law-

yers should be recruited into the police force to prosecute cases directly at the High Courts, and Chief Magistrate courts should be empowered to try homicide cases to reduce delays and decongest correctional centres.

He said periodic amnesties and pardons relieve prison congestion but observed that these only provide short term relief as they do not offer a sustainable solution and can erode public confidence in the criminal justice system.

He further said that lawyers employed to defend defendants should also take the matter seriously to facilitate justice.

"The Nigeria Bar Association

should enlighten the public and encourage them to report lawyers who abandon their cases or engage in unethical conduct for punishment by the legal practitioners disciplinary committee," he added.

A lawyer, Rachel David, said another cause of delay includes missing cases files and slow police investigations.

David faulted unaffordable bail amounts and stringent bail conditions preventing many suspects from securing pre-trial release, while some courts rely heavily on custodial sentences rather than alternative non custodial options like community service or probation for minor or non violent offenses.

SDP seeks stay of judgment on leadership dispute

ABUJA

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) has prayed the Court of Appeal in Abuja to stay the execution of a Federal High Court (FHC) judgment which sought to give effect to an appellate court decision that had already been set aside by the Supreme Court.

In a motion on notice filed before the Appeal Court, the party is seeking an order suspending the execution of the judgment delivered on June 24 by the Federal High Court, Abuja, pending the hearing and determination of its appeal.

The SDP also wants the ap-

pellate court to restrain the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), its officials, agents or privies, from taking any step to enforce or implement the judgment until the substantive appeal is determined.

Court documents made available indicate that the appeal, marked CA/ABJ/CV/1011/2026, arose from the judgment delivered by Justice Mohammed Umar in suit number: FHC/ABJ/CS/402/2026.

Listed as respondents are Salawu-Adeniyi Mustapha Olaitan, INEC, Alhaji Shehu Musa Gabam and Uchechukwu Chukwuma.

The application was brought

pursuant to Section 17 of the Court of Appeal Act, Order 4 Rule 6(2) of the Court of Appeal Rules, 2021, and under the court's inherent jurisdiction.

At the centre of the dispute is the SDP's contention that the FHC, in its June 24 judgment, directed INEC to enforce the March 27 judgment of the Court of Appeal in Fayemi Tosin Babatunde v. INEC, which the party said recognised Gabam as its National Chairman.

The party, however, argued that the Court of Appeal judgment had already been set aside by the Supreme Court on May 22, and therefore ceased to have legal effect.

Court awards ex-employee N25m damages over unlawful detention

ILORIN

A Federal High Court sitting in Ilorin on Wednesday awarded N25 million in damages against KAM Integrated Company Ltd. and its Chairman, Dr Kamoru Yusuf, over the unlawful detention of a former employee, Mr Samuel Oniyide, for 23 days.

Justice Ariwoola Junior, who delivered the judgment, held that the detention violated Oniyide's fundamental human rights, ruling that Yusuf had no constitutional authority to detain him without a valid court order or police warrant.

Oniyide, through his counsel, Mr Taiwo Hammed, alongside Mr Tajudeen Abdullahi, had instituted the fundamental rights enforcement suit after the company accused him of misappropriating more than

N5 billion.

The judge also awarded damages against the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), holding that its decision to continue investigating a matter already concluded by the police amounted to an abuse of power.

In addition, the court awarded N5 million against the Chief Security Officer of KAM Company, SP Sodiq, for his role in executing the unlawful detention.

However, the court absolved the Commissioner of Police of liability, holding that there was no evidence that he authorised or consented to the detention.

Earlier, Oniyide had urged the court to intervene in what he described as persistent police harassment allegedly instigated by Yusuf, asking that the matter be resolved through due legal process rather than unlawful detention.

NHRC probes chairman, lawyers over alleged property demolition

LAGOS

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has commenced investigation into alleged human rights violations contained in a petition filed by residents of Blue Roof Estate, Surulere Community, Alagbado, Lagos State.

The petition, dated May 5, and submitted by Mr Akeem Aponmade, on behalf of the affected residents, was registered by the commission as case No. C/2026/CPR/1492/HQ.

The commission, in its official acknowledgment, confirmed receipt of the petition and assured the petitioners that the allegations would be investigated in line with its constitutional and statutory mandate.

According to Aponmade, the residents alleged that between January 27 and February 26, 2026 more than 200 armed hoodlums invaded the commu-

nity.

He alleged that the invasion was carried out on behalf of two lawyers, Mr Ademola Akerele, and one Mr Bolu Fakile.

He added that the operation was backed and sponsored by Mr Abiodun Ejigbadero, the Chairman of Agbado Oke-Odo Local Council Development Area.

Aponmade further alleged that the invaders claimed they were executing a court order on behalf of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA).

"However, FHA later published a disclaimer denying any involvement in the purported execution, thereby contradicting claims made during the operation," he said.

The human rights lawyer said the residents alleged that they were subjected to harassment, intimidation and unlawful demolition of homes, fences and other structures.

FEATURE

It's a loss for Gangsterism and Criminality in Edo

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

There was a time, not too long ago, when news out of Edo State was an evil cult war, bloodbath, and killings. Youths in their numbers were losing their lives as residents in particular communities hurried indoors before dusk. Business owners counted losses in silence. Parents watched helplessly as their sons drifted into cult groups, not always because poverty left them with no choice, but because criminality had become, for some, a badge of influence and power.

All that Edo is gradually changing. In its place is an administration that has declared, through words and actions, that the era of tolerance for cultism and kidnapping is over. Governor Monday Okpebholo has made the war against organised crime the defining security policy of his administration. From demolishing criminal hideouts to setting up a Special Criminal Court and deploying a multi-agency security squad, the government is steadily tightening the space within which criminal gangs once operated.

Governor Okpebholo is determined to end the cycle. Speaking to youths from the state's 18 local government areas at the New Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City recently, he made his position unmistakably clear.

"There is no going back in the fight against cultism and kidnapping."

He followed the declaration with a warning to anyone providing shelter to criminals. "If you have a kidnapper in your house, ask him to leave because if we discover that house, we will demolish it."

This warning quickly translated into action.

Across Edo State, buildings identified by security agencies as criminal hideouts are being demolished. One such property in Obagie-N'Evuosa Community in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area was allegedly used by kidnappers to keep victims before moving them to other locations. In Uromi, another building linked to an alleged kidnapping kingpin suffered the same fate after investigators connected the property to a network of abductions involving collaborators from outside Edo State.

For Governor Okpebholo, the demolitions are intended to dismantle the infrastructure sustaining organised crime. "If I can eliminate cultism in Edo State, even if I don't do



Repentant cultist



Surrendered pistol

anything else, I will be satisfied." His message is simple: criminal gangs can not thrive without safe havens.

Driving much of the enforcement is the Edo State Security Squad operating under the codename, 'Operation Flush Out Kidnappers and Cultists'. The operation brings together personnel from the military, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), local hunters, vigilante groups, and even repentmembers providing intelligence on criminal networks. Its operations have been consistent.

It's coordinated raids on suspected cult hideouts in Isiohor, Iguosa, Oluku and the Ibiwe/Lagos Street axis of Benin City led to the arrest of over 20 suspects, while security operatives recovered weapons and illicit drugs.

Another operation at Asoro Hill in Uzebu Quarters resulted in the arrest of 12 suspected cultists from what security agencies described as a drug and cultism den. The squad also moved into the Iyanomo Community to prevent a brewing leadership dispute from degenerating into violence, while intelligence-led operations in Uromi and Auchu led to the arrest of two suspects allegedly found with pump-action guns.

Ahead of July 7, a date traditionally associated with cult "Founders Day" celebrations, the security squad publicly warned that no gathering linked to cult groups would be permitted anywhere in Edo State. The government has also directed business owners to install functional

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras before July 30, 2026, expanding surveillance across commercial districts and making it more difficult for criminal gangs to operate unnoticed.

Beyond arrests, Governor Okpebholo has moved to strengthen the prosecution of suspects. While addressing judicial officers, Governor Okpebholo argued that insecurity was undermining Edo's economic future. "Cultism and kidnapping are major setbacks to economic development. We must reduce them to the barest minimum so our people can feel safe, and investors can have confidence in Edo State."

On June 19, 2026, he formally requested the Chief Judge of Edo State to establish a special court dedicated to cultism and kidnapping cases. Within two weeks, Special Criminal Court 1 commenced sitting in Benin City, with the objective of ensuring that criminal trials no longer spend years moving slowly through the conventional judicial process.

The governor has also adopted a tougher public stance on punishment. While addressing journalists during the parade of suspected kidnappers by the Edo State Police Command in June 2026, he said: "It is better to live according to your means than to go into kidnapping or cultism. A kidnapper loses everything, including his life." He added that he was prepared to sign the death warrant of anyone convicted and sentenced to death for kidnapping.



Many people doubted us before we came into office, but those who believed in us have not been disappointed.

Days later, while addressing officers and journalists at the Police Command Headquarters in Benin City, he appealed directly to young people. "Stay away from cultism and kidnapping. Those are dangerous paths that lead nowhere except an early grave."

While enforcement has been uncompromising, the administration has also offered rehabilitation to those willing to abandon criminal groups. The governor has announced an amnesty program for cult members prepared to surrender their weapons voluntarily.

"Any cultist who surrenders his weapons voluntarily will be com-

pensated. Whatever the value of the weapon, we will pay double." The policy reflects the government's belief that some young people entered cult groups through peer pressure, manipulation, or desperation and could still be persuaded to abandon violence if offered a credible alternative.

Recall that in August 2025, the governor expressed confidence that his strategy was beginning to produce results. "Many people doubted us before we came into office, but those who believed in us have not been disappointed." Cultism was deeply entrenched over several decades, and dismantling those networks will require consistent effort beyond a single administration. Yet the signs of change are becoming increasingly visible.

Hideouts once considered untouchable are being identified and demolished. Suspects are being arrested through coordinated intelligence-led operations. Dedicated courts are ensuring faster prosecution, while communities are being encouraged to work with security agencies rather than shield offenders.

But for the first time in many years, the momentum is shifting. In Edo State, the advantage is increasingly moving away from criminal gangs and towards the institutions determined to dismantle them.

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

NEWS EXTRA

CVR: Participate before Sunday deadline – INEC urges

AKURE

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Ondo State has called on all eligible voters in the state to register for their voters cards before Sunday, July 26.

Dr Mutiu Agboke, INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in Ondo State, made the call on Wednesday while monitoring the ongoing phase 3 extension of the Con-

tinuous Voter Registration (CVR) in the state.

Agboke visited INEC Registration Centre along Oda Road, Akure; St. Anthony RCM Primary School, Araromi Akure; St. Stephen Anglican Primary School, Idanre in Idanre Local Government Area, among others.

The REC, who emphasised the importance of CVR despite the approaching deadline, said eligible voters who

refused to participate in the exercise were insensitive to their civil responsibility.

"In Nigeria, we have a way of saying INEC has disenfranchised us. If you are aware of this campaign and willingly, you choose not to go, it is not the best for you.

"Another point is that you have deliberately disallowed yourself to participate in the coming election

"One thing that makes you

eligible to participate in the coming election is that your name and particulars are in the register of voters," he said.

Agboke, however, expressed satisfaction with the exercise in Ondo State, and urged the eligible voters to continuing registration and collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVC).

"I am assuring those who have registered and those who will do so before Sunday that

their PVC will be ready before the 2027 general election," he said.

Oba Bakare Jimoh, Olu-Ayede of Odo-Ala in Akure North Local Government Area (LGA) of the state, commended the commission for their performance in the exercise.

Jimoh explained that he came to transfer his voters card from Akure South to Akure North LGA at INEC

state headquarters,

Also, Mrs Oluwatosin Rachael Akinde, a resident of Idanre in Idanre Local Government Area of the state, applauded INEC, saying the exercise was not stressful.

"I came to transfer my card because where I am living now is far from where I used to live and I don't want to miss the general elections. I will cast the vote to my choice," she said.

FOREIGN

NEWS

**SMOKE RISING ABOVE A WAREHOUSE:**

A still taken from a social media video verified by Reuters shows smoke rising above a warehouse.

India's Modi government under growing pressure as 'cockroach' protests intensify

Pressure has been growing on India's government with thousands of Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) supporters continuing to protest in the capital Delhi despite heavy rains overnight.

The youth-led movement, seeking education reforms and the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, got a boost on Tuesday when India's main opposition Congress party leaders protested outside the prime minister's house.

They were protesting against the brutal police crackdown on Monday's CJP protest in which dozens of protesters and policemen were injured.

Congress shared videos of their MP Rahul Gandhi and others being dragged into buses and taken to detention centres. They were later released.

Police dragged Congress

leader Rahul Gandhi and put him in a bus after he staged a protest outside Modi's house.

On Monday, tens of thousands of protesters flooded central Delhi after the CJP called for a march to parliament as the monsoon session began. At least 60 people were injured after police used batons and tear gas to disperse the crowds.

Officers also dismantled the stage and makeshift tents at Jantar Mantar, the protest's main base near the 300-year-old observatory. But the demonstrators have refused to leave, maintaining a round-the-clock sit-in.

A day after the violence, they were visited by several senior opposition leaders such as former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and veteran politician Sharad Pawar.

Later on Tuesday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge

and Gandhi led a surprise march to Modi's house, demanding the resignations of Pradhan, Home Minister Amit Shah who the Delhi police report to and PM Modi.

Gandhi said the government must apologise to students for the crackdown, adding that the Congress decided to stage a protest outside Modi's house because they weren't allowed to raise the issue in the parliament.

He said he had met speaker Om Birla to seek a discussion, but "the speaker said he needed to take permission from the government, but it was very clear to us that there was no interest in the government of having a debate".

Federal Minister Jitendra Singh denied Gandhi's allegation - he said he informed the Congress MP that the government had accepted his demand

for a discussion but alleged that Gandhi later also demanded the resignation of Pradhan.

He accused Gandhi of "changing the goalpost" and of refusing to end the protest despite being told that the place wasn't conducive to such demonstrations.

Police used force, including batons and tear gas, to disperse protesters

Later, Pradhan - in his first comments since Monday's violence - criticised the Congress for "shamelessly exploiting students as political tools".

"Even after government conveyed its readiness for a comprehensive discussion, the Congress chose political spectacle over democratic debate. Their objective was never solutions for students, it was disruption for political headlines," he said in a post on X.

Zelensky sacks Ukraine's top army commander after days of protests

Oleksandr Syrskyi was praised by President Zelensky for successfully defending Ukraine's capital Kyiv in 2022.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has dismissed the country's army commander-in-chief, Oleksandr Syrskyi.

It comes just days after the removal of popular Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov - a move that triggered street protests across the country.

Initial rumours that the end of Fedorov's tenure was related to a conflict between him and Syrskyi were soon confirmed.

Fedorov, 35, has been widely praised for energising the ministry and transforming the armed forces, as well as leading a drive against corruption. Syrskyi, 60, is seen by many in Ukraine as a Soviet-school commander reluctant to implement radical

changes in the army.

Syrskyi defended his record in a farewell address, writing on Telegram: "An army that was fighting a difficult defensive campaign two years ago is now on the offensive."

"I am handing over to my successor an army that is not only holding the line but is advancing... I sincerely hope this offensive will continue."

Syrskyi was replaced by Mykhailo Drapatyi, 43, who is a popular, battle-hardened general.

"I will work responsibly, with full focus, and with respect for the people who are defending our country today," Drapatyi said on Facebook.

He also thanked Syrskyi "for his consistent work to strengthen the Ukrainian army," adding: "I grew up in it."

In a video post on social media late on Tuesday, Zelensky

thanked Syrskyi for his military campaigns, including his role in successfully defending the capital Kyiv during the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

Zelensky also revealed that earlier in the day, he met Fedorov and offered him a "worthy position in power", but did not say whether the offer had been accepted.

Fedorov was last week replaced by Yevhenii Khmara, a former top official at Ukraine's Security Service (SBU).

"All decisions will be formalised tomorrow," Zelensky added in his post.

Meanwhile, Fedorov congratulated Drapatyi with his new job, describing his appointment as a "new hope in the fight of free people for freedom and justice".

He said it was "the voice of change that could not be ignored". Fedorov also revealed that he

had called Syrskyi to thank him for the defence of the Kyiv region and other "historic battles".

"But we need to move even faster and write new chapters correcting all previous mistakes," he added.

Fedorov had been appointed defence minister only in January - but has been widely praised for using data to analyse and try to improve performance on the front line.

A former minister of digital transformation, he was active from the early days of the full-scale invasion by setting up a volunteer "IT Army of Ukraine" to launch cyber-attacks against Russia.

Later, he led a successful fundraising campaign called the Army of Drones and brought in elements of "gamification" to the war, designing a system that awarded Ukrainian military units with credits for hitting Russian assets.

Ukrainian drones hit more sites of Russian online retailer Wildberries

Ukrainian drones have hit warehouses belonging to Russia's biggest online retailer again, injuring 15 people, according to the company's founder and regional governors.

Logistics hubs run by Wildberries in two south-west cities were impacted by overnight attacks and workers were evacuated, the founder said.

It is the second time Ukraine has attacked the firm's facilities in four days, with warehouses in Tambov and Elektrostal hit on Saturday, killing eight people.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Wednesday that Ukraine had hit logistics hubs in the Krasnodar and Stavropol regions "involved in providing the Russian army with drone components, navigation equipment and other gear".

Wildberries founder Tatyana Kim confirmed the attacks on two logistics centres in Krasnodar and Nevinnomyssk in the Stavropol region.

"There are no words to describe all the feelings and emotions caused by the attacks on ordinary people, on our employees, on us, who are simply doing our jobs," she wrote on Telegram. "But these situations demonstrate the most important thing: we must continue to do what we do for the benefit of people."

Five people were hurt in a

warehouse complex on the outskirts of Nevinnomyssk, Governor Vladimir Vladimirov said, with everyone receiving outpatient treatment.

In Krasnodar, ten people were injured in an attack on a warehouse complex, with three in a serious condition, the region's governor Veniamin Kondratyev said.

Footage of both warehouses, verified by BBC Verify, shows fires in the aftermath of the attacks.

Video from Krasnodar captures an enormous column of black smoke rising from the structure as flames leap upwards. Nevinnomyssk footage shows people milling around outside as fireballs erupt in smoke streaming from the building.

Krasnodar's governor said the region was hit by a "massive attack last night", with drone debris also hitting the grounds of a company in Armavir and killing one employee. The city administration reported that an oil depot was struck, causing a fire.

Drone fragments also hit two apartment buildings in Krasnodar and two homes in the village of Dinskaya, Kondratyev said. There were no injuries.

Zelensky said Ukraine had struck an oil depot, as well as a tanker and four cargo ships of the Russian shadow fleet in the waters of the Sea of Azov and Black Sea.

Iran war has cost US \$37.5bn so far, Hegseth says, as Pentagon seeks billions more

The war with Iran has cost the US some \$37.5bn (£28bn) so far - an increase of nearly \$8bn since the last estimate in May, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has said.

Hegseth told the Senate Appropriations Committee it was urgent that lawmakers approve another \$87bn in congressional funding for the Pentagon, with \$67bn of that destined for operations in the Middle East.

The hearing was disrupted several times by anti-war protesters and ended in a shouting match between the defence secretary and a senator.

It was Hegseth's first appearance on Capitol Hill since hostilities between the US and Iran restarted last week and comes after three American soldiers were confirmed killed in the region.

The White House asked Congress in April for \$1.5tn for the Pentagon over the next fiscal year, which would raise American military spending to an all-time high in the modern era.

The US carried out an 11th consecutive day of strikes on Tuesday. Iran has been retaliating with strikes of its own against the US and its allies in

the Middle East.

The defence secretary began Tuesday's testimony by saying, "we live in a dangerous world" and that it required bold and swift action.

After being interrupted by protesters, Hegseth went on to say his funding request came at an urgent time.

"Without these funds, we face critical shortfalls that threaten our ability to also simply pay our service members, rapidly replenish equipment and munitions, and sustain vital operations without disruption," Hegseth said.

Every dollar appropriated, he added, would be used to build the "lethality" of US military forces and "reinforce peace through strength".

Senate Appropriations Committee chairwoman Susan Collins, a Republican, questioned Hegseth over what the impact would be if the budget needs were not met.

Hegseth said current and future training for military members would need to be cut without the funds, as he repeatedly blamed former President Joe Biden's administration for what he said was an underfunded military.

NEWS**FOREIGN****Tokyo urges men to wear shorts to work, but some women say it's 'leg hair harassment'**

As temperatures rise this summer, Japanese men are baring more leg at work than ever before.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government is pushing company employees to ditch their usual suit and tie for more casual attire, featuring t-shirts, trainers - and shorts.

Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike introduced "Tokyo Cool Biz" in April, hoping to expand on her signature cool down initiative which has now become a widely recognised annual summer tradition.

Almost four months in, the newly allowed shorts in the office policy is getting mixed reviews.

Some commentators enjoy the relaxed rules, helping them work more comfortably. Others say the policy is unfair to women. Although not an official rule and more about etiquette, women are often still expected to wear tights when their work attire exposes their legs in a traditional Japanese office environment.

And a few women describe the experience of "leg hair harassment" or a term coined online as "sunehara", referring to the discomfort of being forced to see their colleague's leg hair.

"We want to give people more options in the severe heat, not tell them what to wear. There should be no issue as long as the work

attire is not offensive to anyone," Tokyo Metropolitan Government environmental official Noboru Watanabe told the BBC.

A June survey by Gorilla Clinic found 53.5% opposed wearing shorts to work in the summer while 46.5% were in favour of the new recommendation.

For those against shorts in the office the main reason, for both genders, was the concern over body shape and body hair. The clinic says women significantly outnumbered men in their response, indicating that women may be more resistant to seeing a male colleague's bare legs.

In recent years more Japanese workers, notably those working at startups and tech companies, have started wearing casual clothes. But this year, the Tokyo government recommendation has made it more socially acceptable. Still, some men have been feeling self-conscious about their leg hair.

Akifumi Funatsu, the director of Gorilla Clinic, says he has noticed more clients coming to the clinic not just for cosmetic reasons, but as a matter of "social etiquette when wearing shorts". He thinks women believe that "men should have less leg hair", which has prompted them to seek laser hair removal so as not to offend those around them.

Senegal: President faye's backing of Macky Sall signals a political shift

Welcomed as a victory by Macky Sall's supporters, Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's decision to back his predecessor's bid for the post of United Nations Secretary-General marks a turning point after months of strained relations between the two men.

The announcement comes just days after their meeting at the presidential palace, which appears to have paved the way for an unexpected political rapprochement.

According to Moussa Balde, the coordinator of the Republican Academics Networks, home support is crucial when seeking a higher position, especially in global institutions like the United Nations.

"In diplomacy, when a country does not support one of its own, it becomes difficult for its partners to do so. I believe that more than 40 African countries were already backing this candidacy, and now we could see unanimous support across Africa. This puts Senegal's partners at ease. So I believe Senegal's endorsement of the candidacy is extremely important," said Moussa Balde.

The endorsement is seen as crucial, particularly for the president as he navigates his political rivalry with Ousmane Sonko's Pastef party. According to this

political analyst, Bassirou Diomaye Faye's support for Macky Sall is driven by electoral calculations, as the future presidential party positions itself against the political movement that brought him to power.

"Pastef controls the National Assembly and remains a major political force in the country. Meanwhile, Diomaye has activated his own coalition, Diomaye Président, with the aim of creating a political party. He will need support in the inevitable political confrontations ahead with Ousmane Sonko. That is why he needs backing from the APR, and even from the PDS. During his recent trip to Qatar, he unexpectedly met Karim Wade, which shows he is looking for allies. Supporting Macky Sall is therefore also a way of seeking political support in return for the future showdown with Ousmane Sonko," said Alassane Samba Diop, a political analyst.

It is also worth noting that Pastef has not changed its position on Senegal's support for Macky Sall's candidacy for United Nations Secretary-General. Ousmane Sonko's party remains opposed to the initiative, holding the former president responsible for the violence that left nearly 80 people dead during protests in 2021 and 2023.

Ethiopia opposition accuses government of pushing Tigray towards new war

Ethiopia's opposition People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) has accused the federal government of pushing the northern Tigray region towards a new war.

The EPRP says Addis Ababa is waging a propaganda campaign to psychologically prepare

public opinion for conflict.

Last weekend, Addis Ababa organised a demonstration to denounce forced conscription by the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

Human Rights Watch has also accused Tigrayan authorities of abducting and unlaw-

fully recruiting civilians, including children as young as 15.

The TPLF has denied any forced conscription but on Sunday, the group's head urged the people of Tigray to "restore their honour" by preparing to defend the region's

sovereignty.

"Tigray's sovereignty will not be guaranteed by peace," he said.

In 2020, Tigray fought a brutal two-year civil war against the central government that killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions.



PROTESTERS:

Ethiopians protest what they said is interference by outsiders in the country's internal affairs and against the Tigray People's Liberation Front, Addis Ababa, Oct. 22, 2022

Tunnel collapse in India kills 12 workers

At least 12 workers were killed after a portion of an under-construction tunnel collapsed following a gas explosion in India's north-eastern Sikkim state, officials said.

Rescue operations are continuing to locate 13 others who are reported to be trapped in the tunnel since Monday's collapse.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) said the incident happened about 1.5km (0.9 miles) inside the tunnel.

The under-construction tunnel, designed to carry water from the nearby Teesta River to a hydropower plant's turbines, is part of a larger project

in the Himalayan state being developed by the state-owned National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).

The accident happened "after [a] sudden burst of suspected methane gas trapped/embedded inside the rocks which led to [an] explosion generating dense fumes and toxic gases", NHPC said in a statement.

In a separate statement, the Sikkim government said the accident was caused by "methane gas combustion".

Methane is a naturally occurring gas that can sometimes be trapped underground. If tunnelling releases it into a confined space and it comes into contact

with a spark or another ignition source, it can ignite or explode, a government official said.

There were 27 people working in different sections inside the tunnel - of which two managed to escape after the explosion and 25 were trapped.

"Of the 25 people who were trapped, we have recovered 12 bodies so far, and teams are working to locate the 13 other men," Superintendent of Police Sonam D Bhutia told the BBC on Wednesday morning.

The police say they have identified seven victims. One of them is from Sikkim, while others are migrants from West Bengal, Uttarakhand and As-

sam states.

Officials say their cause of death will be ascertained after a post-mortem examination.

The ongoing search-and-rescue operation is focused on a specific 200-metre zone where the remaining people are likely to be located, NDRF officer Mohsen Shahedi told ANI news agency.

Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has set up a special investigation team in connection with the incident.

"We have engaged a team of experts to find out what exactly happened and how. We will take action on the basis of the findings," Tamang told reporters.

Police station opens at Hitler's birthplace in bid to rid site of Nazi link

Austria has opened a police station in the house where Adolf Hitler was born, in the town of Braunau am Inn.

It follows years of controversy about what to do with the 17th-Century former inn, where Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler was born in April 1889.

The building has now been substantially refurbished and its facade changed, but it has been a huge headache for Austrian authorities, who want to prevent it from becoming a site of neo-Nazi pilgrimage.

Hitler only lived in Salzburg's Vorstadt 15 for a few weeks, before his family moved to another address in Braunau.

They left the town for good when he was three years old.

Hitler returned briefly to Braunau in 1938, on his way to Vienna, after he annexed Austria to Nazi Germany.

For decades, the interior ministry rented the building from its former owner, a local woman called Gerlinde Pommer. It paid her a generous rent, in an attempt to prevent the house being used as a site for extreme right-wing tourism.

The building was used for many years by a local charity as a day centre and workshop for people with special needs. But it was forced to move out in 2011, when Pommer blocked renovations.

She also repeatedly refused to sell the property to the government.

The house remained empty for several years, while the authorities and Pommer argued over terms.

In 2016, Austria's parliament passed a law allowing the government to seize the house from Mrs Pommer. It paid her compensation of €812,000 (£690,000). She later took the government to court, saying the sum was too low, but lost her case.

The interior minister at the time, Wolfgang Sobotka, said the building should be torn down and a new one erected in its place. It was an echo of an

earlier offer by a Russian MP who said he wanted to buy the house and blow it up.

But there was a storm of criticism, with many saying that destroying the house would be tantamount to denying Austria's Nazi past.

In 2019, the government announced plans to turn it into a police station, and initiated a EU-wide competition for architects to submit designs.

Millions of euros were spent refurbishing the old yellow building, which now looks very different from before.

Not everyone is happy with the decision to open a police station there, saying it sends the wrong signal.

Sports

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

1 Day to Glasgow 2026: Team Nigeria Primed for Glory as Commonwealth Games finally arrive

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

The wait is almost over. After months of meticulous planning, weeks of intensive high-performance training in Aberdeen, Scotland, and years of preparation, Team Nigeria is finally set for the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games, which officially gets underway in less than 24 hours.

In a statement released by the Media Assistant to Director General of the National Sports Commission Kola Daniels, the Nigerian contingent has now

settled down in the Games Village following the conclusion of its final training camp in Aberdeen, while the national 3x3 basketball team arrived from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to complete Team Nigeria's delegation.

The nation's quest for medals begins on Friday, July 24, when Nigeria's formidable Para Powerlifting team takes to the platform, hoping to set the tone for what the National Sports Commission believes will be another memorable Commonwealth Games campaign.

Leading that charge is Team Nigeria captain Folashade Oluwafemiayo, arguably the greatest para powerlifter of her generation. The reigning Commonwealth Games champion, two-time Paralympic gold medalist, four-time world champion and multiple world record holder has dominated the women's heavyweight division for years. Fresh from successfully defending her Paralympic title in Paris and continuing her reign as the world's No. 1, Oluwafemiayo will be seeking to retain the Commonwealth title she won

in Birmingham and once again give Nigeria the perfect start to the Games.

Joining her on the platform is Rita Ferdinand, one of the fastest-rising stars in world para powerlifting. The reigning world champion heads to Glasgow with enormous confidence after producing one of the standout performances of the season at the African Open Championships in Oran, Algeria, where she lifted 154kg to equal the women's world record while setting a new African record in the up to 79kg category. Her remarkable consistency over the past year has established her as one of Nigeria's strongest favourites to climb the top step of the podium.

On the athletics track,

Team Nigeria boasts one of the most exciting sprint stars in global athletics in Kayinsola Ajayi. The Auburn University sensation has enjoyed a breakthrough season that has elevated him into the world's elite. Ajayi swept collegiate athletics by winning both the NCAA Indoor 60m Championship and the NCAA Outdoor 100m title, before announcing himself on the international stage by equalling the Nigerian national record of 9.84 seconds.



TEAM NIGERIA IN ABERDEEN

Team Nigeria Athletes hail World-Class Commonwealth Games Camp in Aberdeen

Team Nigeria's preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Games have received a major boost, with national hammer throw coach Gabriel Opuana describing the training camp in Aberdeen, Scotland, as the best he has experienced in decades of international competition.

With the Games set to begin in Glasgow on 23 July, athletes are putting the finishing touches to their preparations in an environment widely praised for its quality, organisation and athlete-focused approach.

Speaking from the camp, Opuana said the National Sports Commission (NSC) had created ideal conditions for the country's athletes to perform at their best.

"For a long time in our history of preparations for international competitions, we have never had it so good," Opuana said.

The veteran coach highlighted the high standard of accommodation, training facilities and welfare arrangements, noting that the camp has been free of the logistical challenges that have often affected previous national team preparations.

"The accommodation and training facilities are excellent, the food

is good and, so far, we haven't had any of those usual issues we normally have in camp," he added.

Athletes have been training in a calm and professional environment, supported by coaches, medical personnel and technical staff working to ensure every competitor is fully prepared ahead of the Games.

Opuana also praised the NSC for prioritising athletes' welfare, revealing that competitors have

received their competition kits and daily allowances as scheduled.

He singled out former Nigerian long jump star Yusuf Alli for his commitment to the team, describing his presence in camp as invaluable.

"We are happy to have Yusuf Alli around. He is always available to provide everything that is needed. The NSC has done a job we must commend them," Opuana said.

WAFCON 2026: Falcons to earn \$2m if they win title

Nigeria's Super Falcons stand to receive a record \$2 million if they emerge champions of the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in Morocco.

The increased prize money was announced on Wednesday by Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Patrice Motsepe during the CAF Global Conference held in Jo-

hannesburg, South Africa.

The new reward represents a significant boost in CAF's investment in women's football and provides additional motivation for the participating teams.

The Super Falcons head into the tournament as one of the favourites, having won the previous edition staged in Morocco.

Nigeria will be aiming to extend its dominance on the continent by lifting another WAFCON title.

Beyond the battle for the continental crown, the stakes are even higher, with the four semi-finalists securing automatic qualification for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.



SUPER FALCONS TEAM CELEBRATING

NGF dismisses suspension report, threatens legal action

The Nigeria Golf Federation (NGF) has dismissed reports alleging its suspension by the African Golf Confederation (AGC), saying they were false and misleading.

NGF President, Mr Olusegun Runsewe, said on Tuesday that the reports published by some online platforms were malicious and not verified by the relevant authorities.

He warned that the federation would take legal action against those responsible for publishing the reports, saying the claims could damage the reputation of the federation and Nigerian golf. "We will not hesitate to seek

redress in court against those behind this malicious publication. Journalism must be guided by facts and professionalism, not speculation and misinformation," he said.

Runsewe said the alleged suspension did not exist, adding that the federation had paid its 1,500-dollar affiliation fee to the AGC electronically before the reports emerged.

"The issue of suspension does not arise because the affiliation fee of 1,500 dollars was paid electronically since last week. The information circulated was half-baked and clearly intended to mislead the public," he said.



OLUSEGUN RUNSEWE

Table Tennis: Nigeria, others seek honours at AYC-ITTF semifinals

The battle for honours at the 2026 ITTF Africa Youth Championships will intensify on Wednesday as leading teams pursue places in the finals.

The championship is taking place at the Borteyman Sports Complex in Accra, Ghana.

With several teams already eliminated, Wednesday's fixtures are expected to produce exciting contests and renew some of Africa's fiercest table tennis rivalries.

In the U-15 girls' event, top seeds Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria will battle for places

in the final.

Egypt will renew its long-standing rivalry with Nigeria in the first semifinal, while defending champions Algeria will face Tunisia in another potentially closely contested encounter.

The U-19 boys' competition has already produced exciting results, with Nigeria silencing the home crowd after defeating Ghana 3-0.

The opening match provided plenty of drama as Ghana's Israel Aklie raced into a 2-0 lead against Nigeria's Quadri Atunwon.



NIGERIA TABLE TENNIS TEAM



CAF President Motsepe hails Acting Secretary-General Samson Adamu



SAMSON ADAMU

Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Patrice Motsepe has praised Nigeria's Samson Adamu for his performance as the acting Secretary-General of the continental football governing body.

Adamu was appointed as CAF's acting Secretary-General following the departure of Veron Mosengo-Omba from the position, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

Speaking on Wednesday during the CAF Global Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, Motsepe commended Adamu's commitment and work ethic, describing him as a dedicated administrator.

"Samson Adamu is in Morocco. He's doing a great job and is very hardworking. I really appreciate him," Motsepe said.

Adamu, who has served CAF in several strategic administrative roles over the years, is currently overseeing the day-to-day operations of the organisation in his acting capacity while preparations continue for major continental competitions, including the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco.

Motsepe's remarks are seen as a strong endorsement of the Nigerian football administrator, whose leadership has helped ensure continuity within CAF following the change in the Secretary-General's office

NSSF: Joseph elected ISF Continental President for Africa

President of the Nigeria School Sport Federation (NSSF) Olabisi Joseph, has been elected the International School Sport Federation (ISF) Continental President for Africa.

This is contained in a statement by the Secretary-General of the NSSF, Funsho Usman, issued to newsmen on Tuesday in Lagos.

The statement said Joseph was elected during the 2026 ISF General Assembly held in Belgrade, Serbia.

It noted that the general assembly attracted delegates from 82 countries, with 79 votes cast by member

nations from across the world.

The statement quoted the federation as saying that the election marked a historic milestone for Nigeria and the African continent.

According to the statement, Joseph has become the first African woman and the first female in the history of the ISF to be elected continental president for Africa.

It said the federation also described the achievement as a reflection of Nigeria's growing leadership and influence in the development of school sports across Africa and the global community.



OLABISI JOSEPH

NBBF unveils formidable 3x3 Basketball squad for Glasgow 2026

The Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) has unveiled the highly anticipated men's 3x3 basketball roster that will carry the nation's hopes at the upcoming Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Anchored on the powerful rallying cry of "One Nation. One Team. One Goal." The federation has selected a dynamic, physical, and highly experienced trio ready to take on the world on the half-court in Scotland. The roster perfectly blends homegrown grit with top-tier diaspora talent, reflecting the global reach and depth of Nigerian basketball.

Meet the Gladiators: Team Nigeria 3x3 Roster

The three-man wrecking crew tasked with delivering Commonwealth glory includes:

* Esosa Kelvin Okundaye (Jersey #9) — *Hometown: Benin, Nigeria.* Bringing incredible agility and homegrown pride to the squad, Okundaye is expected to be a dynamic force on both ends of the floor. His explosive style of play will be crucial in the fast-paced 3x3 format.

* Marcel Esonwune (Jersey #12) — *Hometown: New York City, United States.

Representing the powerful Nigerian diaspora, Esonwune brings vital international experience, veteran leadership, and hard-nosed New York grit to the team. His presence ensures Team Nigeria has the physical and mental toughness required to battle through a gruelling tournament schedule.

* Robert Chima Ukawuba (Jersey #4) — *Hometown: La-

gos, Nigeria.

A Lagos-born powerhouse, Ukawuba adds immense tenacity, strength, and defensive versatility to the roster. His ability to lock down opponents and attack the rim will be a cornerstone of Nigeria's strategy in Glasgow.

Ready for the Half-Court Battle.

3x3 basketball is notoriously fast, relentless, and intensely physical—a format where every single possession, defensive stop, and quick decision can be the difference between a medal and an early exit.



Why Lekjaa decides to step down as Moroccan FA President

Royal Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF) president Faouzi Lekjaa is expected to step down from his position after more than a decade in charge as he shifts his focus to politics.

Lekjaa, who has served as

president of the FRMF since 2014, is reportedly preparing to leave the role following an agreement to join the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM).

According to reports, the influential football administrator is expected to contest Morocco's

parliamentary elections scheduled for September 23, 2026, as a candidate of the PAM party.

His anticipated departure would mark the end of a successful tenure during which Moroccan football recorded significant achievements on and off the pitch.

Under his leadership, Morocco hosted major continental competitions, strengthened its football infrastructure, and gained global recognition following the Atlas Lions' historic run to the semi-finals of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

The country also secured the right to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup alongside Spain and Portugal.

An official announcement regarding Lekjaa's resignation from the FRMF is still being awaited



FAOUZI LEKJAA

Motsepe Opens up on WAFCON 2026 postponement

Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Patrice Motsepe has revealed that the postponement of the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) played a significant role in the increase of the tournament's prize money.

Speaking during the CAF Global Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, on Wednesday, Motsepe explained that the decision to reschedule the competition created an opportunity for CAF to secure improved financial backing for the tournament.

According to the CAF president, the additional time allowed

the continental football governing body to attract greater commercial support, resulting in a substantial increase in the prize money for the eventual champions.

CAF earlier announced that the winners of the 2026 WAFCON in Morocco will receive a record \$2 million, marking a major increase from previous editions.

The move is part of CAF's broader commitment to improving women's football across Africa by increasing investment in competitions, enhancing player welfare, and raising the profile of the women's game on the continent.



PATRICE MOTSEPE