

Why opposition parties bereft of candidates to contend with APC in Edo LG poll – Afegbua

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, said opposition parties in the just concluded Local government election in the State lacked credible candidates to contest the local

government election against the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC).

Afegbua disclosed this to journalists in Benin City during a press conference held at the State Secretariat in Sapele road in Edo Benin City Edo State.

He dismissed the claims of purported boycott of the election as baseless, saying the op-

position parties in the election lacked credible candidates to field for the Chairmanship, Vice Chairmanship and councillorship positions across the 18 Local government areas.

He added that the governor has destabilized the opposition party as the current administration had embarked on projects and infrastruc-

ture renewal to a point that the opposition parties could pose a challenge to the ruling APC.

"Share resilience, diligence and ability to embark on projects and infrastructural renewal to the point that the opposition parties are feeling that with this kind of development, it will be difficult to challenge the ruling APC in the State.

"The news that opposition parties boycotted the local government election last week is not true. The truth is that they don't have candidates to contest that election.

"There is nothing like an absolute boycott of elections under our constitution, you can't have a perfect boycott. I was one of those who start-

ed opposition politics in the fourth Republic in 2001 under the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo we started the national frontier".

Afegbua noted that it's not easy to play opposition as the APC have defeated them in the local government election and will also defeat them in the presidential election come 2027.

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That The People May Know

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#200

Xenophobia: FG evacuates 1,490 Nigerians from S/Africa

ABUJA

The Federal Government says it has evacuated 1,490 Nigerian nationals from South Africa through a series of humanitarian flights following ongoing xenophobic attacks and related security concerns.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs disclosed this in a state-

ment on Wednesday by its Spokesperson, Kimiebi Ebienna, following the completion of the fifth phase of the voluntary evacuation programme.

Ebienna said the fifth evacuation flight, operated by Air Peace, departed O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg, at 6:30 a.m. South African time on Wednesday and arrived at the Murtala

Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, at 11:30 a.m.

He said the aircraft conveyed 308 passengers, comprising 305 returnees and three Nigerian government officials who coordinated and supervised the evacuation.

"The Federal Government has now evacuated a total of 1,490 Nigerians from South Africa through a series of co-

ordinated humanitarian flights undertaken in partnership with Air Peace Limited and South African Airways," he said.

Ebienna said the evacuation followed sustained diplomatic engagement with the South African government in response to security concerns arising from xenophobic attacks targeting foreign nationals, in-

cluding Nigerians.

He reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to protecting the welfare of Nigerians abroad in line with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

According to him, the evacuation programme began on June 10, when Air Peace evacuated 258 Nigerians, followed by South African Airways, which airlifted 66 returnees on June 24.

He said Air Peace subse-

quently evacuated 272 Nigerians on June 30, 268 on July 2, 282 on July 9 and 305 on July 15, while South African Airways returned another 39 Nigerians on July 11.

Ebienna said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinated the evacuation in collaboration with the Nigerian High Commission in Pretoria, the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, NEMA, Nigeria Immigration Service,

CONTINUES ON PG 4



PRESS CONFERENCE:

Commissioner for information and strategy Prince Kassim Afegbua (Standing), Commissioner for environment and sustainability Barr Nosa Adams (L), Managing Director of the Edo State Parks and Gardens Agency, Mr Stanley Ighodaro (2nd right) and The Managing Director of the Edo State Waste Management Board (EWMB), Dr Lucky Enehita-Inegbenehi at a press conference in Benin City.

EDSG engages additional 500 sweepers, declares Operation Free Edo

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

Edo State Government (EDSG) has engaged the services of an additional 500 Sweepers, declared Operation free Edo to ensure a cleaner environment across the State.

The 500 newly engaged sweepers have been deployed by EDSG across the 18 local government areas of the State to complement the already existing workforce and ensure the people live in a cleaner and safer environment in Edo State.

The Managing Director of the Edo State Waste Management Board (EWMB), Dr Lucky Ene-

hita-Inegbenehi, who spoke to journalists in Benin City during a press conference on Wednesday in Benin said the State government engaged the sweepers as part of renewed efforts to maintain a cleaner environment across Edo.

He noted that the 500 newly engaged sweepers have been deployed across the 18 local government areas of the state to complement the existing workforce.

Enehita-Inegbenehi added that the State government also acquired modern equipment, including bulldozers, payloaders, tippers and compactors,

CONTINUES ON PG 4

Shettima unveils \$500m Niger Delta Agricultural Investment Fund

—Pg 2

20 new permanent secretaries emerge in Edo Civil Service

—Pg 4

Trump retreat over Hormuz tolls suggests he is struggling to end Iran war

—Pg 10

Eko2026 Games: Enabulele Charges Coaches, technical officials on adequate preparation, results

—Pg 12

NEWS

World Bank to establish environmental lab in Edo – Commissioner

BENIN CITY

Edo Commissioner for Environment and Sustainability, Mr. Nosa Adams, says the Federal Ministry of Environment, with support from the World Bank, will establish an environmental laboratory in the state.

Adams disclosed this on Wednesday during the biweekly ministerial news conference organised by the State Ministry of Information and Strategy in Benin.

According to him, the proposed laboratory will serve Edo, Delta, Bayelsa and Ondo states.

This laboratory, he asserted, would strengthen environmental monitoring, pollution control and scientific testing in the South-South region.

“We have reached out to the Federal Ministry of Environment, which has pledged, with the support of the World Bank, to build three environmental laboratories.

“One will serve Edo, Delta, Bayelsa and Ondo states and will be located in Benin City,” he said.

The commissioner said the other laboratories would be located in Gombe and Enugu to serve other parts of the country.

According to him, the minister of the environment is

expected to visit Benin within the next month to perform the groundbreaking for the project.

“That will be a very big boost because somebody coming from Ondo, Bayelsa and Delta to carry out environmental laboratory tests will be able to do so in Benin City,” Adams said.

He said the facility would enhance scientific assessment of environmental pollution, improve regulatory compliance and strengthen environmental governance in the region.

Adams said the state government had also established standard discharge limits for industries to regulate pollutants released into the environment and protect water bodies.

He noted that the ministry had conducted environmental audits in 230 facilities across the state, served 93 abatement and violation notices to environmental offenders and prosecuted 30 habitual offenders.

The commissioner attributed the improved enforcement to the state Environment, Sanitation and Pollution Management Law, which was assented to on Oct. 25, 2025.

“The law has given the ministry and indeed the Edo State Waste Management Board the teeth to bite.

Shettima unveils \$500m Niger Delta Agricultural Investment Fund

ABUJA

Vice President Kashim Shettima, on Wednesday in Abuja, unveiled the 500 million dollars Niger Delta Agricultural Investment Fund.

Shettima, unveiled the fund during the Niger Delta Agricultural Development and Investment Summit jointly convened by the Office of the Vice President and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

The vice president described the fund as a laudable development for a nation whose foundation was built on agrarian economy and whose soil paid its bills before the discovery of oil.

According to him, Nigeria cannot afford to take the promise of an agricultural boom for granted.

The vice president noted that while nations survive on many resources, they endure because they can feed themselves.

Shettima said agriculture was not only the foundation of civilisation but also the first guarantee of political stability.

“Before a people raise cities, they must learn to feed them, and before a state earns the loyalty of its citizens, it must secure their daily bread.

“The groundnut pyramids of the North, the cocoa estates of the West, and the palm produce of the East and the Delta financed our earliest schools and hospitals and underwrote the young institutions of a new republic.”

Shettima regretted that the oil boom came with an ease that “dulled the industry of the cutlass,” teaching the country that once fed itself to, instead, “import what its own soil could grow.”

The vice president, however, applauded the Nigerian Delta region for the Agriculture Investment fund Initiative.

“What makes this vision inspiring is that it arises from a region that could have rested on its oil wealth and left feeding the nation to other hands.

“The Niger Delta has instead chosen to return to an identity older than crude itself, for the palm oil of these creeks fuelled the commerce of continents long

before the first barrel was drilled.

“It has chosen to transform this region, feed the nation, and attract the world. This is where philosophy must give way to action.”

VP Shettima explained that the fund was a commercial, returns-driven vehicle spanning the value chain, from aquaculture.

“And palm oil to cassava, cocoa, rice, horticulture, marine resources, and livestock.

“Around it, we coordinate the commitments already pledged by the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and our private and commercial financiers.

“Above both stands the Niger Delta Agricultural Development and Investment Council, which I am honoured to chair, with the NDDC as its Secretariat.

“Beneath it lies a demand-side strategy preparing bankable projects across all nine mandate states.”

“On assumption of office in 2023, President Bola Tinubu,

placed food security among the earliest priorities of his administration.

“The idea was driven by the understanding that “nations that lose control of their food eventually surrender control of their future.

“His July 2023 declaration of a state of emergency shifted our national approach from the boardroom to the ground, across production, market stabilisation, and food access.

“This is why mechanisation has been the centrepiece of the drive, and why the administration launched the Renewed Hope Agricultural Mechanisation Programme for 10,000 tractors over five years, alongside local assembly plants.

“And in parallel with the John Deere Tractorisation Programme, the Greener Hope Project, and the Green Imperative Programme,” he further stated.

He implored investors, development partners, and state governors to treat the summit “as the start of an obligation rather than the end of a ceremony.”

Nigeria's inflation rate drops to 15.9% in June – NBS

ABUJA

Nigeria's headline inflation rate dropped slightly to 15.91 per cent in June, 2026, from 15.93 per cent in May, says National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

The NBS disclosed this in its Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Inflation Report for June 2026 released in Abuja on Wednesday.

The report said that on a month-on-month basis, headline inflation stood at 1.66 per cent in June, down from 1.75 per cent recorded in May, indicating a slower pace in the rise of average prices.

On a year-on-year basis, the inflation rate was 15.91 per cent, compared with 25.29 per cent recorded in June 2025.

According to the report, the major contributors to headline inflation were food and non-alcoholic beverages (6.37 per cent), restaurants and accommodation services (2.06 per cent), and transport (1.70 per cent).

The Consumer Price Index rose to 143.0 points in June from 140.7 points in May.

Food inflation stood at 17.52 per cent year-on-year in June, lower than the 25.41 per cent recorded in June 2025.

However, on a month-on-month basis, food inflation

increased to 3.75 per cent from 2.98 per cent in May, driven by higher prices of items including crayfish, fresh pepper, tomatoes, yam flour, beef, garri and potatoes.

The report also showed that core inflation, which excluded volatile agricultural produce and energy prices, stood at 15.92 per cent year-on-year in June, compared with 25.41 per cent in June 2025.

On a month-on-month basis, core inflation slowed to 1.66 per cent from 1.94 per cent recorded in May.

The NBS said urban inflation stood at 16.08 per cent year-on-year, while rural inflation was 15.48 per cent.

On state-by-state analysis, Niger recorded the highest year-on-year headline inflation rate at 42.23 per cent, followed by Kogi (41.59 per cent) and the FCT (39.91 per cent).

The lowest year-on-year inflation rates were recorded in Imo (19.74 per cent), Ebonyi (20.79 per cent) and Katsina (21.87 per cent).

For food inflation, Kogi recorded the highest year-on-year rate at 53.02 per cent, followed by Niger at 43.83 per cent and Benue at 40.83 per cent.

Katsina recorded the slowest rise at 19.15 per cent, followed by Rivers at 23.81 per cent and Imo at 24.60 per cent.



NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON ELECTORAL:

From left: Deputy Chief Whip, House of Representatives, Rep. Ibrahim Isiaka; Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development, Rep. Kafilat Ogbara; representative of the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rep. Julius Ihonvbere and the wife of the Speaker, Hajiya Fatima Tajudeen Abbas, during the National Dialogue on the Electoral College Model for the Special Seat Bill, at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Wednesday.

Police Recruitment; PSC releases names of 50,000 successful applicants

ABUJA

The Police Service Commission (PSC) has released the names of 50,000 successful applicants for recruitment into the Constable cadre of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

The Head of Protocol and Public Relations of the PSC, Mr Terty Kalu, said this in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja.

Kalu said that the release of the list followed the successful conclusion of a comprehensive, inclusive, equitable and transparent recruitment exercise.

He also said that the exercise was conducted in collaboration with major stakeholders

including the NPF, Federal Character Commission (FCC), Ministry of Police Affairs, States Career and Counseling Departments and the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC).

He urged all candidates who participated in the recently concluded written examination to login to the official recruitment portal on npfaplication.psc.gov.ng to check their recruitment status.

According to him, the portal will be opened by 12:00 am on Thursday.

He further said that successful candidates would also receive email and SMS notifications on the email addresses

and phone numbers they provided during the initial application.

“The successful candidates are expected to report to their designated police training institutions on dates and times to be communicated in due course for medical examination and documentation.

“Candidates who fail to report within the stipulated time will be considered to have declined the offer.

“Those who fail the medical examination that will be conducted by the police medical team on resumption of training will be declared unfit and shall be required to leave the training,” he said.

Kalu said the candidates were to report with their training call-up slip, NIN slip, BVN slip, original and photocopies of their certificates and other required documents and items as would be listed in the recruitment portal.

He quoted the Chairman of the PSC, Mr Hashimu Argungu as commending the Federal Government for approving the recruitment of the 50,000 police constables as part of measures to strengthen the nation's security architecture.

The PSC Chairman enjoined the successful candidates to see the opportunity as a clarion call to serve the nation with dignity, integrity and unwavering commitment for a safe and secured Nigeria.

NEWS

Edo holds stakeholders engagement workshop to advance digital economy

ODIGIE ETINOSA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy has convened a stakeholder engagement workshop aimed at advancing the state's digital transformation agenda and

strengthening collaboration among key stakeholders.

The workshop, held on Tuesday, at the John Odigie-Oyegun Public Service Academy, was hosted by the Honourable Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy, Hon. Ohimai Ehijimotor, alongside the Per-

manent Secretary, Mrs. Jennifer E. N. Aisuan.

It brought together representatives of ministries, departments and agencies, ICT professionals, development partners and other stakeholders.

In his welcome address, the Commissioner for Communi-

cation and Digital Economy, Hon. Ohimai Ehijimotor, reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to driving the Edo State Government's digital transformation agenda.

He said the workshop was organised to foster dialogue, strengthen partnerships and generate practical recommendations for the successful implementation of digital initiatives across the state.

The Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Osas Okungbowa, in his goodwill message, commended the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy for organising the stakeholder engagement workshop, describing it as a timely initiative that aligns with the state's digital transformation agenda.

He said the Edo State Government is driving digital transformation to enhance effective service delivery across the public service.

According to him, the various digital solutions and portals developed by the ministry will promote efficiency, strengthen governance, enhance service delivery and ultimately drive the state's economic growth.

Delivering the keynote address on the theme, "Digital Transformation in the Civil Service: Building an Efficient and Responsive Public Service," the Chief of Staff to Edo State Governor, Hon. Yakubu Oshiohena Musa, said digital transformation has become imperative for improving service delivery, transparency,

accountability and operational efficiency in government.

He noted that embracing digital technologies would simplify administrative processes, reduce bureaucracy and enable the civil service to respond more effectively to the needs of citizens.

He also urged public servants to embrace innovation, develop digital skills and adopt a culture of continuous learning.

The workshop also featured a panel discussion on "Future-Ready Civil Service: Harnessing the Digital Economy," comprising Mr Osahon G. Okoh, Mrs Isimeme Whyte, Dr. Benjamin Ben, Mr Osayi Tres Omokaro and Dr. Iyen Joy Akhigbe.

Discussions focused on innovation, digital literacy and institutional readiness as critical drivers of a modern public service.

Participants exchanged ideas and practical experiences on leveraging digital technologies to improve governance, boost productivity and enhance public confidence in government institutions.

They also stressed the need for sustained capacity build-

**STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP:**

L-R: Hon Yakubu Musa, Chief of Staff, Hon. Ohimai Ehijimotor, Honorable Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy, Mrs Jennifer EN Aisuan, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa, Head of Service, Edo State Government at the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy Stakeholders engagement workshop at John Odigie-Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA), Benin City.

Edo LG poll: APC secures 2,158,610 votes – Tenebe

● **Says result validates 2.5m votes the State promised Tinubu in 2027 Presidential Election**

The All Progressives Congress (APC) secured a total of 2,158,610 votes to clinch all the chairmanship and councillorship seats in last weekend Edo State Local Government Election contested by 12 political parties, the state chairman of the party, Jarret Tenebe, has disclosed.

Addressing journalists in

Benin City on the outcome of the election, Tenebe said it also reinforces the conviction of the party faithful that the commitment they made to deliver 2.5 million votes to President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election is not only achievable but firmly within their reach.

However appealed to resi-

dents of the state, irrespective of their political or religious orientation to support the ruling party and Governor Monday Okpebholo for the development and growth of the state.

"To those who did not emerge victorious, I extend a hand of fellowship. Elections come and go but the devel-

opment of Edo is a shared responsibility.

"The time for political contest is over; the time for unity, reconciliation and collective progress has begun. We invite all well-meaning Edo people to join hands with Monday Okpebholo as we continue to build a strong and more prosperous Edo State," he added.

Extra-judicial killing: 5 cops docked in Asaba

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

Five suspected officers in Delta State Police Command, an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Usman Nuhu, and four others, have been arraigned before a Delta State High Court sitting in Asaba over the alleged ex-

tra-judicial killing of 28-year-old musician, OG Million.

The accused officers, who pleaded not guilty of the charge preferred against them, reportedly committed the offence in April 26, 2026, in Effurun, Uvwie Local Government Area of the state.

The police first information report in the court shows ASP Nuhu faces a murder charge,

while two other Assistant Superintendents of Police, Owoloko Daurou Pamo and Okoh Kel-echi, alongside police Inspectors Goodluck Kingsley and Omonigho Ahweyevu, are charged with negligent acts causing harm.

According to the prosecution, OG Million was allegedly restrained on the ground before being shot at close range by ASP Nuhu in the

presence of the other officers.

Delta State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Ekemejoro Ohwovoriole, who stressed the government's readiness to prosecute the case, urged the public to remain calm and allowed the judicial process to unfold.

Justice M. Nduka has adjourned the case for commencement of trial.

Man nabbed for self-kidnap to extort ₦20m ransom

ASABA

Men of the Delta State Police Command, Owa-Oyibu Division, Ika North East Local Government Area, have arrested a 22-year-old-boy, Michael M. James, for allegedly staging his own kidnap and demanding the sum of 25-million naira ransom from his parents.

Investigations revealed that the parents of the young man

reported his sudden disappearance after he was sent to dispose their household waste in the early hours on Thursday, July 2, 2026.

Acting on a tip off, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of the area, Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP) Chidozie Okebugwu, led his team with the collaboration of volunteer security outfits tracked the young man to a bush at Akumazi Umuocha, within the Ika North East Local Government

Area

The Edo state - born Owa-Alero based, Michael James, who confessed to the crime is currently in police custody, waiting for the next line of action.

However, the police have debunked the fears of possible presence of kidnappers in the area following the purported case of abduction, calling on all to desist from such condemnable act.

In another development,

the DPO has called on Ika residents and Deltans in general public to shun illicit drugs and embrace positive values that promote personal growth, public safety and national development.

He described drugs as one of the greatest threats confronting today's youth, noting that the abuse of illicit substances has continued to destroy lives, weaken families, fuel criminal activities, and undermine societal progress.

Iyamu will boost capacity of consumer protection committee

– Aguobasimwin

BENIN CITY

The leadership of a socio-cultural organization, Aguobasimwin Movement-Wide, has described the recent appointment of its president, Destiny Osaro Iyamu, as Chairman, Edo State Consumer Protection Committee, as truly well deserved.

The Assistant Secretary and the Diaspora Coordinator of the group, Uhunmoma Ewere and Monday Uhuimumwen, in a joint statement made available to newsmen in Benin, expressed confidence that the appointment would give Edo residents a unique opportunity to feel the impact of a people-oriented government through the pro-active work of the consumer protection committee.

According to the group, the

appointment also represent a testament that Governor Monday Okpebholo desires capable hands to rid the state of fake and counterfeit products.

Recall that the State Government in July 13, 2026, letter signed by the Secretary the State Government, Barr. Umar Ikhlil, also commended the appointment as a reflection of the governor's commitment to strengthening institutions protecting the interest of consumers and ensuring effective service delivering across the state.

"He is widely recognized as an exceptional mobilizer of human and material resources, with a proven ability to galvanize individuals and communities towards achieving shared goals.

"He is the founder and President of the Aiguobasimwin Movement World-Wide and has held several leadership positions," Ikhlil stated.

LOSS OF DOCUMENTS

I SOLOMON EGUAVOEN hereby inform the public that I am the rightful owner of a 50ft by 100ft landed property with an old structure on it at number 1 Ora Crescent, of Stadium Road, Benin City. The said property is an inheritance from my late mother **Madam EUNICE EGUAVOEN** who died intestate on the 19th of February, 2002. A documents of sharing according to the Bini native law and custom which were handed to me is lost, hence this publication. I have peacefully being in possession of the said property for over ten years. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Signed: Mr. **SOLOMON EGUAVOEN**

20 new permanent secretaries emerge in Edo Civil Service

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has approved the appointment of 20 new permanent secretaries in a move aimed at strengthening the state's public service and enhancing effective policy implementation across ministries, departments and agencies.

A statement signed by the Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Osas Okungbowa disclosed that the successful officers emerged after the completion of the selection process.

The newly appointed Perma-

nent Secretaries are: Otamere Gina; Irusota Pauline Ighoomo; Bamaayi Rebecca Osedebamen; Anelu Wilson Oziegbe; Ukpebor Ehiabhi Jonathan and Erhaze Samson. Others are Sadoh Martins Imonmion; Otamere Enodolomwanyi; Enabulele Abdulfatai Ikponmwonsa; Akhimien Emmanuel Eboime and Obanor John Osarobo.

The statement further named Aliu Nurudeen Obogai; Balogun Aiyegbeni Aina; Imoisili Edith Amenawon; Momoh-Odihinrin Justina Akhazimeye; Ozigbo Osayande Duke; Egbiremolen Godson Tunde; Efe-Amenze Agharese Patri-

cia; Ohunyon Ernest Ehikioya; and Omosan Melody Ismaila as new permanent secretaries designate.

According to the Head of Service, the newly appointed Permanent Secretaries will be sworn into office on a date to be announced by the state gov-

ernment.

The appointments are expected to bolster the administrative capacity of the Edo State Civil Service by providing strategic leadership in the implementation of government policies and programmes, in line with the ongoing reforms

to promote professionalism, efficiency and merit within the public service.

Dr. Okungbowa congratulated the appointees and urged them to justify the confidence reposed in them through exemplary leadership, integrity, diligence and unwavering commitment to ser-

vice delivery for the benefit of the people of Edo State.

The appointments, he said, reflect the government's resolve to build a dynamic, result-oriented and responsive civil service capable of driving sustainable development across the state.

FG evacuates 1,490 Nigerians...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, Port Health Services and other relevant agencies.

He commended Air Peace for its support throughout the evacuation exercise, outlining the airline's role as patriotic and instrumental to its success.

According to him, the operation reflects Nigeria's commitment to its citizens' diplomacy policy, which prioritises the protection, welfare and dignity of Nigerians abroad.

Ebiefenfa said the government

would continue to engage South Africa through diplomatic channels to promote the safety and peaceful coexistence of all residents while maintaining that xenophobia, racial intolerance and violence against foreign nationals remained unacceptable.

He also urged Nigerians living abroad to obey the laws of their host countries, register with the nearest Nigerian diplomatic mission and maintain regular contact with the missions to facilitate timely consular assistance when required.

EDSG engages additional 500...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

to improve waste management services.

"We declared 'Operation Free Edo', which entails the evacuation of refuse heaps that had remained in different locations for years. We also launched 'Operation Clean Edo North'," he said.

The managing director identified dump-site maintenance as one of the board's major challenges in the past but noted that existing dump sites had been expanded and were now being maintained regularly.

He said the board had dump sites across the 18 local government areas of the state, adding that waste collection had become more efficient.

Enehita-Inegbenehi further disclosed that the board had launched "Operation Show Your Receipt", under which officials move from house to

house to verify that residents are patronising accredited waste collectors and complying with waste disposal regulations.

He warned that waste should only be disposed of through government-accredited waste collectors, stressing that defaulters would face the full weight of the law.

Also speaking, the Managing Director of the Edo State Parks and Gardens Agency, Mr Stanley Ighodaro, said the agency had embarked on a free tree-planting initiative aimed at preserving the state's natural ecosystem.

Ighodaro said the agency had developed plans to transform the city centre through the planting of trees at strategic locations in Edo South.

He warned that individuals who deliberately destroyed trees planted to beautify the environment would face stiff penalties if apprehended.



COURTESY CALL:

R-L: The Honourable Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy, Hon. Ohimai Ehijimotor, Mr. Dean Bezi, Chairman, Edo State Esports Association, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, Mrs. Jennifer EN Aisuan, Mr. Bright Igbineweka from Edo State Esports Association. during Courtesy call by Edo State Esports Association to the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy.

Edo Esports Association seeks strategic partnership with Ministry of Communication, Digital Economy

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government is taking another significant step towards building a digitally empowered future as it explores strategic collaboration between Edo Esports Association and its Ministry of Communication and Digital aimed at expanding opportunities for young people through technology and innovation.

The esports' delegation was received by the Commissioner for Communication and Digital Economy, Hon. Ohimai Ehijimotor, alongside the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Jennifer E. N. Aisuan, and members of the Ministry's management team at the Commissioner's Office, Government House, Benin City.

Welcoming the delegation, the commissioner disclosed

that the meeting underscored a shared commitment to harnessing the growing potential of esports as a platform for digital skills development, entrepreneurship, innovation, and youth empowerment.

Hon. Ehijimotor commended the association for its forward-thinking vision and reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to supporting strategic partnerships that promote digital inclusion, innovation, and economic empowerment across Edo State.

In her remarks, the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Jennifer E. N. Aisuan, said the ministry remains committed to initiatives that align with Governor Monday Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda, particularly programmes that leverage technology to create employment opportunities, inspire innovation, and equip young people with the skills

needed to compete in the global digital economy.

Speaking on behalf of the association, the Edo State Chairman, Mr. Dean Bezi, alongside Mr. Bright Igbineweka, described esports as a rapidly expanding global industry that had extended far beyond entertainment.

They noted that the sector had created career opportunities in software development, game design, digital content creation, event management, marketing, animation, and emerging technologies, making it a powerful driver of economic growth and youth development.

Contributing to the discussions, Mr. Donatus Igiekhume and Mr. Frank Egbe Obawaye, emphasized the enormous opportunities within the gaming and e-sports ecosystem.

They noted that through

strategic collaboration with the Ministry, more young people in Edo State would gain access to digital skills, innovation programmes, and career pathways that would prepare them for success in today's technology-driven world.

Both parties explored potential areas of collaboration, including digital skills training, esports education, talent discovery, innovation programmes, technology-driven competitions, and other initiatives designed to equip Edo youths with globally competitive skills.

The meeting concluded with both organisations expressing optimism about a long-term partnership that will strengthen Edo State's digital ecosystem, nurture emerging talent, and position the state as a leading destination for innovation, technology, and the creative digital economy.

Edo's progress requires collective commitment, not politics — Asije

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

Recently appointed Global Sustainability Ambassador to the United Nations Association of Africa (UNAA), Amb. Victor Asije, has called on Edo indigenes at home and in the diaspora to put aside political differences and work collectively for the sustainable development of the state.

Asije said Governor Monday Okpebholo would require the support, goodwill and contributions of patriotic Edo sons

and daughters to accelerate development across the state.

According to him, development is a shared responsibility that transcends political affiliations, urging well-meaning Edo people to invest their resources, expertise and influence in the growth of their homeland.

"Across the world, patriotic and public-spirited citizens are giving back to their communities, cities, states and countries through financial support, investments, knowledge transfer and voluntary service," he said.

"Edo State is blessed with exceptional sons and daughters

both at home and in the diaspora. I appeal to them to rally behind the current administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo and become dependable partners in the state's development journey. Together, we can expand the frontiers of progress across Edo State."

Asije said Governor Okpebholo would require the support, goodwill and contributions of patriotic Edo sons and daughters to accelerate development across the state.

According to him, development is a shared responsibility that transcends political affiliations, urging well-mean-

ing Edo people to invest their resources, expertise and influence in the growth of their homeland.

"Across the world, patriotic and public-spirited citizens are giving back to their communities, cities, states and countries through financial support, investments, knowledge transfer and voluntary service," he said.

"Edo State is blessed with exceptional sons and daughters both at home and in the diaspora. I appeal to them to rally behind the current administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo and become dependable partners in the state's

development journey. Together, we can expand the frontiers of progress across Edo State."

On environmental sustainability, Asije called on the Edo State Government to intensify efforts towards protecting the environment through stronger measures against deforestation, indiscriminate land use, illegal land grabbing and environmental pollution.

"We did not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrowed it from our children," he said.

"This places a responsibility on all of us to conserve our natural resources and ensure

sustainable environmental management. Government, traditional institutions and communities must continue to safeguard our forests, regulate land use and promote responsible environmental practices."

He appealed to the state government, traditional rulers, community leaders and private organisations to embark on large-scale tree planting and reforestation programmes to preserve the state's ecological heritage.

Asije pledged his readiness to contribute his global experience to Edo State's development if called upon.

NEWS

Army warns commanders against drug abuse, unprofessionalism

BENIN CITY

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Lt.-Gen. Waidi Shaibu, has warned its commanders of the consequences of engaging in drugs, warning that such act is unacceptable and would not be tolerated because it might

compromise military operations.

The COAS also directed commanders at all levels to systematically integrate lessons from joint military operations into tactical planning.

Shaibu gave the directive on Wednesday in Benin at a sensitisation seminar organised by the

Army Headquarters Department of Transformation and Innovation.

The directive, he said, was to reduce casualties, improve combat readiness and strengthen operational effectiveness.

The theme of the seminar was: "Lessons Learned/Feedback Mechanism: Integrating Lessons

from Joint Operations into Nigerian Army Tactical Planning and Drug/Substance Abuse and PTSD Management for Troops of 4 Brigade, NASST and NASEME."

The COAS, represented by the Commandant, Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport (NASST), Maj.-Gen. Adebayo Adegbite, said lessons learnt remained central to operational success and should be drawn from both successes and failures.

"Lessons must continually be identified, properly analysed and applied in our day-to-day planning processes in order to reduce human casualties and operational costs," he said.

Shaibu said the seminar formed part of the Nigerian Army's efforts to equip junior and middle-level commanders with the capacity to respond effectively to Nigeria's increasingly volatile and complex security environment.

He urged commanders to embrace innovation and critical thinking while continually reviewing tactics, techniques

and procedures to improve battlefield performance.

"This seminar aims to reawaken critical thinking among commanders by fostering creativity and strengthening their ability to draw lessons from operational engagements," he said.

According to him, the initiative aligns with his command philosophy of building "a more professional, adaptable, combat-ready and resilient force capable of decisively discharging its constitutional responsibilities within a joint and multi-agency environment."

**COURTESY VISIT:**

From left: Director, Planning Research and Forecasting, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Dr Godwin Tepikor, Director General, NEMA, Mrs Zubaida Umar; Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Waidi Shaibu; Special Adviser to the Director General, NEMA, Hajiya Rakiya Bello Umar and Director, Search and Rescue, NEMA, Air Commodore Bature Usman, during the visit of the Director General NEMA to the Nigerian Army Headquarters in Abuja.

Expert urges early detection to curb psychosis

ABUJA

Mental health expert, Prof. Taiwo Obindo, has urged Nigerians to prioritise early detection, public awareness and timely medical intervention to prevent psychosis.

He identified stigma and inadequate mental health services as major barriers to effective care and improved treatment outcomes.

Psychosis is a condition in which a person loses contact with reality and may experience symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions and disorganised thinking.

Obindo, a former President of the Association of Psychiatrists in Nigeria, made the call in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Wednesday in Abuja.

According to him, although many mental health conditions have no definitive cure, early diagnosis and appropriate treatment can prevent psychosis from worsening and significantly improve patients' quality of life.

Obindo said psychosis often occurred when there was an imbalance in neurotransmitters, the brain chemicals responsible for transmitting in-

formation between nerve cells.

"These chemicals must have balance in the brain, and if that balance is tilted for whatever reason, it may lead to an individual developing psychosis. The hormones must remain balanced or risk instability," he said.

The psychiatrist added that psychosis could also be triggered by overwhelming emotions, persistent fear, grandiose thinking and mental health conditions such as schizophrenia.

He emphasised the importance of recognising symptoms early, noting that proper diagnosis was essential for

determining the most effective treatment approach.

"You cannot know the means of approach without identifying the symptoms of the illness, which is most important for proper diagnosis," he said.

Obindo urged parents, relatives, friends and caregivers to monitor individuals at risk and seek professional guidance when behavioural changes or warning signs were observed.

"Observation must be firmly put into the process. Parents, family and friends must speak out and approach experts for directives," he said.

Mrs. Soludo urges youths to embrace skills acquisition, lifelong learning

AWKA

Wife of the Anambra Governor, Dr Nonye Soludo, has urged young people to embrace skills acquisition and lifelong learning, describing them as critical tools for self-reliance, innovation and sustainable development.

Soludo made the call on Wednesday in Awka in a message to commemorate the 2026 World Youth Skills Day, marked every July 15.

World Youth Skills Day is observed globally to celebrate the importance of equipping young people with technical, vocational, and digital skills for employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship.

She said investing in the skills, creativity and potential of young people remained the greatest investment any society could make.

According to her, youths who are equipped with the right knowledge and practical abilities become job creators,

problem solvers and agents of positive change in their communities.

"As we celebrate World Youth Skills Day, let us remind ourselves that the greatest investment we can make is in the skills, creativity and potential of our young people.

"When youths are well-equipped with the right knowledge and practical abilities, they become job creators, problem solvers and agents of positive change in their communities," she said.

The governor's wife said her Healthy Living Initiative would

continue to promote education, innovation and entrepreneurship to empower young people.

She encouraged youths to embrace continuous learning and never stop acquiring new skills, noting that every skill mastered was a step toward a more confident, productive and prosperous future.

Soludo urged young people in Anambra and beyond to remain focused on developing their talents and preparing themselves for future opportunities.

"Keep learning, keep creating and keep believing in yourselves.

Over 100 commercial drivers, passengers benefit from FRSC free medical outreach in Ondo

ONDO

Over 100 commercial drivers and passengers in Ondo State on Wednesday benefitted from the free medical health services by the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the free medical outreach was organised by the Ondo Town Unit Command, FRSC, held at the Lagos Park, Oka, Ondo.

The free health screening includes blood pressure (BP) test, blood sugar screening, health counselling among others.

Speaking at the event, the Unit Commander, Assistant Corps Commander (ACC) Joseph Ajayi, said that the initiative was part of the Road Transport Safety Standardisation Scheme (RTSSS) Week.

Aiayi, who led the exercise, said that the initiative was executed in collaboration with the Ondo State Specialist Hospital, Ondo Town.

According to him, driver's health is directly linked to road safety, saying the unit command

will also continue to engage in intensive public enlightenment.

"The blood pressure (BP) tests is to monitor hypertension risks, while blood sugar screenings to check for diabetes and prevent sudden medical emergencies behind the wheel," he said.

The unit commander who sensitised fleet operators and drivers on the core pillars of the FRSC mandate, said that the RTSSS week was also to raise awareness among fleet operators.

"One of the objectives of the FRSSS week is to facilitating the immediate onboarding and registration of unregistered fleet operators into the scheme.

"So, FRSC remains committed to reducing road traffic crashes by ensuring that drivers are both physically fit and legally compliant with established transport safety standards," he said.

Speaking, Mr. Akindolani Koleola, Chairman of the Lagos park, Oka, Ondo, appreciated FRSC for the initiative, describing it as noble and timely innovation.

Modern technologies transforming research, development, says scholar

ABUJA

Prof. Johnson Abimbola, President, Nigerian Society of Physical Sciences (NSPS), says emerging technologies are transforming research and development in the physical sciences therefore require increased funding.

Abimbola said this on

Wednesday in an interview with newsmen in Abuja while speaking on the impact of emerging technologies on physical sciences research.

He said physical sciences encompass disciplines such as physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, geography and geosciences, all of which increasingly depended

on advanced technologies to accelerate discoveries and innovation.

The president said scientific progress and technological advancement had always evolved together, with each driving the other.

"Historically, scientific dis-

coveries have produced new technologies, while those technologies have, in turn, accelerated scientific research.

"We moved from manual calculations using four-figure tables to mechanical calculators and later electronic calculators powered by silicon tech-

nology.

"Each technological breakthrough has made scientific research faster, more accurate and efficient," he said.

Abimbola said AI, big data analytics, cloud computing, high-performance computing, drones, remote sensing and internet-enabled sensors had significantly improved data collection, analysis and predictive modelling across scientific

disciplines.

He cited meteorology as an example, explaining that the accuracy of weather forecasting depended largely on the quantity and quality of available data.

The professor also highlighted advances in renewable energy technologies, particularly the development of perovskite solar cells, which he described as one of the most promising emerging technologies.

Harnessing technology key to sustainable blue economy – Expert

BENIN CITY

An agriculture technology scientist, Dr Edet Imuk, says emerging technologies in fisheries and aquaculture are transforming fish production while safeguarding Nigeria's aquatic ecosystems.

Imuk said this during an interview with our correspondent on Wednesday in Abuja.

He said innovations were becoming increasingly important as Nigeria positioned fisheries and aquaculture at the centre of its blue economy agenda.

According to him, technology is helping farmers produce more fish with fewer resources while reducing pressure on natural water bodies.

"The future of fish production lies in sustainable innovations that increase productivity without compromising the health of rivers, lakes and coastal ecosystems," he said.

Imuk said modern aquacul-

ture technologies, including recirculating aquaculture systems, biofloc technology and smart water quality monitoring, were changing fish farming practices.

He explained that such technologies reduced water consumption, improved fish survival rates and minimised pollution from aquaculture operations.

The scientist said digital monitoring tools also enabled farmers to detect changes in water quality early, preventing disease outbreaks and reducing production losses.

He further said that improved fish breeds and better feed formulations were helping farmers achieve faster growth and higher yields with lower production costs.

According to him, precision feeding technologies also reduced feed waste, one of the major contributors to water pollution in fish farms.

Imuk said Nigeria should invest more in research, inno-



EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME:

from left: Superintendent of the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCS), Eytayo Olayemi; Chief Superintendent, NCS, Akeredolu Olufemi, Assistant Controller in charge of Agodi, Adekunbi Sunday and the General Superior, Jelitop Skill and Empowerment Development Association, (J-SEDA), Mr Tobi Oyekunle, during an empowerment programme organised for inmates by J-SEDA in Ibadan on Wednesday.

NECO targets full CBT transition as hitch-free exam boosts confidence

ABUJA

The Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaila Ahmad has expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the National Examinations Council (NECO) Computer-Based Test (CBT) Senior School Certificate Examination, Ahmad, while monitoring the ongoing examination at Redeemers Teap School and Anglican Girls' Grammar School on Wednesday in Abuja, described the exercise as a major step towards eliminating examination malpractice.

She said feedback from candidates at both centres indicated that most of them preferred the CBT format to the traditional paper-based examination.

According to her, the candidates also confirmed that they experienced no technical glitches and that the examinations commenced on schedule.

"I spoke with a lot of the students and most of them said they prefer the CBT examination.

"They also confirmed that they had not seen the exami-

nation questions before the test and that each candidate answered a different set of questions randomly.

"The CBT makes communication between candidates impossible and is one of the best ways of tackling examination malpractice," she said.

The minister said the successful deployment of CBT represented significant progress in the education sector, adding that the government would only proceed with full transition after ensuring adequate infrastructure nationwide.

"We will not begin the full transition until we have everything in place because we do not want to put any student at a disadvantage.

"We are working with the National Assembly, state governors, private partners and other stakeholders to provide the facilities required for a seamless nationwide transition," she said.

Ahmad added that the adoption of CBT would ultimately improve the quality of education by promoting merit and integrity in examinations.

Gov. Fintiri swears in newly elected council chairmen

YOLA

Governor Ahmadu Fintiri of Adamawa, on Wednesday, swore in 21 newly elected council chairmen to administer the local governments in the state for the next three years.

The ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state won the election conducted by the Adamawa State Independent Electoral Commission (ADSIEC) on June 13.

The governor at the ceremony in Yola, congratulated the chairmen and the 226 councilors for their victory.

He called on them to discharge their responsibilities

diligently, and warned against corrupt practices.

Fintiri also advised the elected officers to stay in their respective local government areas instead of living in the state capital.

"As Chairmen of Councils, you are the government at grassroot.

"You are at the vantage position to create the right image for government policies which are not only pro-poor and largely intended to change the life of our rural dwellers for the better.

"You must be the vanguards for stimulating developments in your respective areas.

"You must let the people

feel the impact of governance by way of making yourselves available and willing to listen and solve problems at that level.

"Governance is better appreciated when its impact is felt at the bottom. You must be a symbol of government at your various duty posts", he said.

"Fintiri further called on the chairmen to work with their respective traditional rulers and Development Area Administrators to ensure the reconstruction of trust and confidence in the government's good intentions.

In his remarks, Alhaji Ibrahim Jibrin, Chairman, Yola

North LGA, who spoke on behalf of the other chairmen, expressed gratitude to God, the governor and electorate.

Jibrin assured that he and his colleagues would discharge their duties diligently and provide more dividend of democracy to the people at the grassroots.

"We heard you loud and clear during our campaign tour and therefore assure you of our commitment to providing the needed dividends of democracy by ensuring we carry you along," he said.

the oath of office and allegiance was administered by the State Chief Judge, Justice Hafsat Abdulrahman.

OYSIEC, DSS deepen collaboration for credible LG election

BENIN CITY

Oyo State Independent Electoral Commission (OYSIEC) has reaffirmed its commitment to conducting a credible local government election by deepening collaboration with the Department of State Services (DSS), Oyo Command.

The OYSIEC Chairman, Dr Afees Adeniyi, stated this during a courtesy visit to the DSS office in Ibadan.

This is contained in a statement issued by the commission's Spokesman, Damola Adegoke, on Wednesday.

Adegoke quoted Adeniyi as

saying that the visit was aimed at strengthening collaboration with DSS in recognition of the role security plays in the successful conduct of elections.

Adeniyi, who noted that maintaining peace before, during and after the election remained the commission's top priority, appealed for continued support and professional expertise of the DSS throughout the electoral process.

"We are here to formally notify the DSS that another round of local government elections will be held in Oyo State on Dec. 29, 2026, and preparations are already in

full swing," he said.

He reiterated that the choice of the election date was made in strict compliance with relevant electoral laws, adding that every activity of the commission was guided by the provisions of the law.

He commended DSS and other security agencies involved in the intelligence-driven operations that led to the safe rescue of the victims of the recent kidnapping in Oriire Local Government Area of the state.

"Your professionalism and expertise are highly appreciated. "We look forward to your

continued support in creating a peaceful and secure environment that will guarantee a free, fair, credible and violence-free local government election," Adeniyi stated.

Responding, the State Director of DSS in the state, Usman Biu, assured OYSIEC of the service's unwavering commitment to supporting a peaceful and secure electoral process.

Biu said that DSS would build on its existing partnership with the commission through intelligence gathering and proactive security measures to prevent threats to the electoral process.

NEWS

Court orders final forfeiture of 48 properties linked to Malami

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday ordered the final forfeiture of 48 properties, including a university, linked to Mr Abubakar Malami, former Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), to the Federal Government.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, in a ruling, held that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission's (EFCC) had been able to prove that the properties were reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities.

Justice Abdulmalik held that Malami had failed to show that the properties were acquired through lawful

sources.

Earlier, the judge dismissed several applications, motions on notice and applications to show cause filed by Mr Malami, his family members and some companies linked to the properties, describing them as "wanting in merit."

She held that the issue before the court was not "who owns the properties, but how legitimate are the funds used to acquire the properties."

According to the judge, the respondents had "not dislodged the reasonable suspicion that the properties were acquired by unlawful activities."

Justice Abdulmalik relied on Section 17 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act in granting the final forfeiture order.

The judge, however, vacated the interim forfeiture order in respect of nine other prop-

erties sought to be forfeited by the EFCC.

She held that the anti-graft agency was unable to prove that the nine properties located in Kebbi and Kaduna State were gotten through unlawful

activities.

Justice Abdulmalik had fixed today for judgment in the forfeiture suit filed by the EFCC against 57 properties linked to Malami.

The anti-graft agency had,

in the suit, sought the final forfeiture of the properties for reasonably suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activities.

Justice Emeka Nwite had, on Jan. 16, made an order for interim forfeiture of

the 57 properties after Ekele Iheanacho, SAN, moved the motion ex-parte.

The EFCC instituted the suit, seeking the permanent forfeiture of the 57 properties worth N212.8 billion.



OPENING OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP:

Director Academic and Distances Learning, Michael Imodu National Institute for Labour Studies (MINILS), Dr Sylvanus Adamade; Director-General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), Dr John Asein; Chief Training Officer, MINILS, Dr Chinege Emuchag and Head, Human Resources Manager, NCC, Mr Seun Popoola, during the opening of the National Workshop on Work Ethic and Values and Investiture of Dr John Asein as Fellow, MINILS in Ibadan on Wednesday.

Man arraigned over alleged receipt of \$30,000 through internet fraud

IBADAN

A 26-year-old man, Aminu Isaac, was on Wednesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly receiving \$30,000 into his bank account through internet fraud.

Isaac, of Onikun Street, Akala Express, Ibadan, is facing a six-count charge bordering on conspiracy, receiving stolen funds, conversion, and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace.

The defendant, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Insp Funmilayo Ige, alleged that the defendant conspired with others still at large to commit the offences.

Ige alleged that on Oct. 5, 2025, at about 10.00 p.m., the defendant received \$30,000 through his United Bank for Africa account by unlawful means.

She alleged that the defendant converted the proceeds of

the alleged fraud to personal use by purchasing a Toyota Venza with registration number LSD 543 KE.

The prosecutor alleged that the vehicle, valued at N16.8 million, belonged to Smith James and Jotter William.

Ige also alleged that on July 10, at about 11.00 a.m., the defendant was apprehended at Taska, Akala Express, while allegedly moving about without any visible means of subsistence.

The prosecutor alleged that the defendant conducted himself in a manner likely to cause a breach of peace by obstructing the free flow of traffic along Akala Express Road.

She also alleged that the defendant assaulted and obstructed Insp Tomiwa Adedotun of the State Intelligence Department while he was carrying out his official duties.

According to Ige, the offences contravened Sections 249(d), 250(4), 356(2), 383(3), 390(9), 427 and 516A(1) of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

Cannabis dealer bags 10 months imprisonment in Ibadan

IBADAN

The Federal High Court, Ibadan, on Wednesday, sentenced one Kudus Adewale, 28, to 10 months in the correctional centre for dealing in 250g of Cannabis Sativa.

Justice Uche Agomoh convicted and sentenced Adewale after he had pleaded guilty to the one-count charge of unlawful dealing in narcotics preferred against him.

The judge added that she considered the fact that the convict did not waste the time and resources of the court before pleading guilty.

"Furthermore, this judgment took cognizance of the objective of sentencing which is reformation as well as the defence counsel's plea for mercy for his client.

"But, to serve as deterrent, Adewale is sentenced to 10 months in prison, starting from the date he was first arrested.

"The dried weed exhibit found in his possession is forfeited to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and shall be destroyed," Agomoh held.

Earlier, the prosecuting counsel, Mr D.O. Otunla had

told the court that the convict committed the crime on Feb. 4, at Apata area, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Otunla further stated that the NDLEA operatives arrested Adewale following credible intelligence by concerned

Nigerians that he was a drug dealer.

He said that the operatives recovered from the convict a nylon bag with dried weed substance suspected to be Cannabis Sativa, weighing 250g.

Court declares political parties' diaspora chapters illegal, nullifies UK Congress

ABUJA

A Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court in Maitama has declared diaspora chapters of Nigerian political parties illegal and subsequently nullified the All Progressives Congress (APC) party congress held in the United Kingdom.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) had in a suit marked No: CV/187/2025 asked the court to nullify the UK Diaspora chapter of APC.

Justice Peter Kekemeke, on Wednesday, delivered the judgment that settled the long-running controversy surrounding the existence and operation of diaspora chapters of political parties registered

in Nigeria.

He also ordered the transfer of over N30 million generated from the sale of forms by the APC to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The court held that diaspora chapters of Nigerian political parties were illegal, unconstitutional, and unknown to the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The court, while ruling in favour of INEC, said no political party registered in Nigeria had the constitutional authority to maintain, establish, or conduct congresses outside the country's territorial boundaries.

He however, said Nigerians in the diaspora could support and mobilise for their pre-

ferred candidates in Nigeria, but political parties were not constitutionally permitted to have chapters abroad.

Kekemeke added that political parties could also not manage or arrange congresses for Nigerians living in the diaspora.

According to the court, any political party, individual, or group that operates, sponsors, promotes, or associates with a diaspora chapter of a Nigerian political party commits an offence.

The judge also held that any individual or group chairing or managing such chapter and soliciting membership dues or other financial contributions committed an offence punishable by a fine of N5 million and imprisonment.

Alleged abuse of office: Court admits ex-CCT Chairman to bail

ABUJA

A Federal Capital Territory High Court, Maitama, on Wednesday admitted Danladi Umar, a former chairman of the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), to Bail in the sum of N100 million.

In addition, the defendant is to produce one surety in like sum with proof of property ownership in Abuja.

Justice Peter Kekemeke admitted Umar to bail after his counsel, Sunday Edward, argued for it, though the pros-

ecution counsel, Christopher Mshelia, objected.

Justice Kekemeke, in granting the bail, held that the prosecution did not prove that the defendant would interfere with proceedings.

He then adjourned until Oct. 29 for the commencement of trial.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) had charged Umar with abuse of office in a four-count charge.

It was alleged that in 2021 he used his wife's bank account to collect N5.5 million

from a contractor engaged to paint the headquarters of the CCT in Abuja.

The anti-graft agency further alleged that on Jan. 25, 2024, the defendant also used his wife's account to collect N6 million from a contractor who handled the digitisation of the CCT's records.

The defendant was also accused of directing another contractor to pay N2.43 million for the tuition fee of his daughter at Baze University, Abuja.

He was said to have committed offences that are punishable under section 19 of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000.

FHC Chief Judge amends 2026 pre-election rules

ABUJA

Justice John Tsoho, the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court (FHC) has amended the 2026 Pre-Election Practice Directions.

Justice Tsoho said the new practice directions amended the initial Federal High Court (Pre-Election) Practice Directions, 2026, came into effect in June 26.

The Director of Information of the court, Mrs Cath-

erine-Oby Christopher, made this known in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja.

The Chief Judge said the amended practice direction was made pursuant to Sections 254 and 285(9), (10) and (14) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

"It is also in line with Sections 29(5) and 88(2) of the Electoral Act, 2026, and all other powers enabling the Chief Judge to effect the

amendment."

The amendment is aimed at enhancing the speedy, efficient and fair determination of pre-election matters ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"In line with the initial Practice Directions, the amendment is intended to enhance the speedy, efficient, and fair determination of pre-election matters in keeping with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

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10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
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FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770	
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FEATURE

Rescue Line That Beats South Africa's Xenophobic Storm



Gov. Monday Okpebholo (middle) with Edo State returnees from S/Africa in Government House, Benin City on Monday.

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

When the aircraft carrying dozens of Nigerians among them 41 Edo indigenes touched down in the nation's commercial capital city of Lagos, after fleeing xenophobic violence in South Africa, many stepped onto home soil with little more than the clothes they were wearing. The homes and businesses they had spent years building were gone - dreams shattered overnight. Some returned with a single suitcase, while others came back with nothing at all. They were not thinking about politics or protocol. They wanted safety, dignity, and a chance to begin again: at Home!

For many of those of Edo State origin, that chance appeared to arrive on Monday when Edo State Governor Monday Okpebholo re-

ceived the returnees at the Festival Hall of the Government House in Benin City and announced a N1 million grant for each person to support their resettlement.

The governor said the money was intended to help the returnees secure accommodation and meet immediate needs while the state government developed longer-term programmes to help them rebuild their lives. The announcement drew an emotional response from many in the hall, some of whom had endured weeks of fear before finally making the journey home.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Okpebholo told the returnees that their future should not be defined by the violence they had escaped.

"Your success begins today. Many of you possess knowledge and skills in different areas. Once you

identify what you want to do, come to us. We will give you a soft loan to start with because we want you to fully reintegrate into society," he said.

The governor stressed that the state's intervention would not end with the cash grant. According to him, the government intends to provide soft loans and other forms of support to help those affected establish businesses, regain financial independence, and settle back into their communities.

"Between now and tomorrow, you will receive that money so you will not be stranded. There is no place better than home. Nobody will chase you away from here. We have peace here. Edo is safe, and Nigeria is safe," he added.

His remarks reflected an effort to reassure people who had watched years of hard work disappear during

the attacks in South Africa. While acknowledging the scale of their losses, the governor said preserving their lives remained more important than replacing property.

"They may have taken everything away from you, but your life is more important than the things they took. As a government, we will continue to support our people wherever they are. If they are in distress, we will rescue them and ensure they do not go through such experiences again," he said.

Governor Okpebholo also recalled Nigeria's support for South Africa during the struggle against apartheid, saying Nigerians had historically stood by South Africans during difficult periods. Despite the attacks, he urged the returnees not to allow bitterness to define their future or replace one form of hatred with another.

The stories shared by the returnees illustrated the human cost of the violence far more vividly than official statistics ever could.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Riches Evbagbe Unubun from Igor/Emuhi in Ekpoma said many had returned home after losing virtually everything they owned while sojourning in South Africa. He said some of them operated successful businesses and accumulated significant assets over several years before the violence erupted. Others had built homes, raised families, and established lives they believed would last.

Instead, many fled with only a few personal belongings. According to Unubun, some returned with what he described as "one luggage which is our breath," a phrase that captured the reality of escaping with...

NEWS EXTRA

365 Nigerians turned home-owners under FMBN's Rent-To-Own Scheme in 2025 – MD

ABUJA

The Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) says no fewer than 367 Nigerians have become homeowners under its Rent-to-Own Scheme in 2025, valued at more than N7.1 billion.

The bank's Managing Director and Chief Executive, Mr Shehu Osidi, disclosed this during the FMBN Day, at the ongoing 2026 Legacy Edition of the Africa International Housing Show (AIHS) in Abuja on Wednesday.

Osidi, while speaking on the theme, "Leveraging Partnerships for Sustainable Affordable Housing for Low-Income and Informal Workers," said that solving Nigeria's housing deficit required stronger collaboration among stakeholders.

"Our Rent-to-Own product continued to provide opportunities for Nigerians with 367 beneficiaries accessing homes valued at over N7.1 billion.

"The scheme was designed to help Nigerians to transition into homeowners through affordable monthly payments, eliminating the burden of

making large upfront payments typically associated with purchasing homes," he said.

He said the performance of the Rent-to-Own scheme formed part of the most successful products in the Bank's history, driven by stronger partnerships and improved housing finance delivery.

Beyond the Rent-to-Own Scheme, the FMBN boss said the Bank recorded significant growth across its housing finance products in 2025.

He said that the bank disbursed N13.8 billion to 15,290 beneficiaries under its Home

Renovation Loan programme in 2025, representing an unprecedented growth of 86 per cent over the previous year.

He added that regular National Housing Fund (NHF) mortgage disbursements also rose by 38 per cent to N8.2 billion, while NHF refund payments increased to N15.6 billion.

This, Osidi said, benefited 55,068 contributors in 2025, compared to the 44,333 beneficiaries in 2024.

He said that the bank also improved loan recovery, from N14 billion in 2024 to N27.3

billion in 2025.

"This reflects stronger operational efficiency and growing public confidence in the management of the NHF scheme," he said.

Osidi added that through strategic collaborations with stakeholders, the FMBN has financed 6,911 housing units during the year, representing about 96 per cent of its annual target.

"This is a remarkable 300 per cent increase over the 2,165 housing units financed in 2024.

He said that as a strong pillar of support for President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Housing

Agenda, the bank is currently financing a total of 3,139 housing units.

"This is through the provision of N27 billion construction finance for Renewed Hope housing projects at Ibeju Lekki Lagos.

"A total of N19.9 billion is being spent on Renewed Hope Housing in Karsana, FCT, N10 billion in Port-Harcourt and N7.8 billion in Enugu," he said.

He noted that the investments were creating thousands of jobs for artisans, engineers, architects, suppliers, transporters and other professionals across the housing value chain.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Italy's Meloni suffers surprise setback in close vote on electoral reform

Italy's Giorgia Meloni coalition government has lost a crucial vote on an amendment to electoral reform - a significant setback ahead of next year's general election.

In a secret ballot in Italy's lower house of parliament on Wednesday evening, MPs rejected a proposal spearheaded by her party, Brothers of Italy (FdiI), by 188 votes to 187 - indicating that several of Meloni's MPs voted against the amendment.

In an angry post on social media after the vote, she said the result had been "a missed opportunity for Italians".

"The opposition celebrating as if they had won the World Cup, for preventing citizens from choosing their parliamentarians says it all," she added, referencing jubilant scenes in parliament by opposition parties.

Meloni did not address calls from the opposition to resign and bring forward the general election, currently planned for autumn 2027.

The proposed reform would see Italy move to a fully proportional system which would award a bonus to the party or coalition with the largest share of the vote, even if they fall short of a majority.

Coalitions would also be required to agree on a common platform and a single prime ministerial candidate - something that many parties, which tend to campaign separately, would find unpalatable.

The amendment that was rejected in Tuesday's vote was a provision on preference voting, allowing voters to choose preferred candidates from a list. Although that element was rejected, the government can continue to press ahead with the rest of the electoral reform.

Meloni has argued the reform would result in less shaky government coalitions and greater stability in Italy.

But opposition parties had criticised it as "authoritarian" and an attempt to secure a majority in next year's general election.

Since 2022, Giorgia Meloni has led a coalition government made up of centre-right and right-wing parties, plus her own hard-right FdiI.

But tensions within the coalition have increased as the parties' individual popularity has declined. They became exacerbated ahead of Tuesday's vote - which FdiI's junior partners had reservations about - eventually culminating in the defeat of the amendment.

Meanwhile, centre-left and left-wing opposition parties are preparing to form a united front against Meloni next year, adding to her concerns.

They already teamed up successfully in a campaign against a government-backed referendum on constitutional reform in the spring, which Meloni's camp lost in the first major blow to her government.

If she is going to win a safer majority next year, Meloni will have to broaden her appeal either to the centre or towards more extremist groups, such as Roberto Vannacci's fledgling National Future (FN).

Vannacci, a former para-trooper, launched FN earlier this year after splintering from Matteo Salvini's League party. The FN is a Eurosceptic, hard-right proponent of remigration - the mass deportation of people with a migrant background. It now polls at around 6%, ahead of the League's 5.6%.

Bar an early vote or a reshuffle, if elections are held in September 2027, Meloni will be the first Italian prime minister to have governed for a whole term with just one government since 1946.



GIORGIA MELONI



END IRAN WAR PROTESTS:

Iran's state-run broadcaster reported that the country's army had carried out separate attacks on US targets

Trump retreat over Hormuz tolls suggests he is struggling to end Iran war

Donald Trump's latest Iran war demand lasted all of 24 hours and suggests a president searching for unorthodox ways out of a difficult position.

On Monday morning, in a social media post announcing the resumption of an American naval blockade on Iranian shipping, he said that all vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz - including those of US allies - must pay a 20% fee to reimburse the US "for any and all costs necessary to do the job of providing safety and security to this very volatile section of the world".

The following day, he abandoned that proposal completely, offering instead that he would strike "trade and investment deals" with America's Gulf allies, implying the US would offer them safe passage through the Strait in return.

The abrupt about-face was the latest twist in a conflict that has now lasted more than four months and, despite a month old "memorandum of under-

standing" that secured a temporary ceasefire and set up a framework for negotiations, shows no sign of ending.

Trump may be reluctant to escalate the war given its continued unpopularity, the likelihood of rising energy prices and the risks associated with American forces and allies once again coming under Iranian attack. He might find the prospect of ending the conflict without reaching an agreement he can claim is better than the one Barack Obama's administration negotiated in 2015 also distasteful, however.

"I think the most likely ending is a non-ending," Rosemary Kelanic, Director of the Middle East Program at Defense Priorities, said. "This has turned into a war of attrition, and wars of attrition tend to go on for a long, long period of time."

The US-Iran memorandum of understanding (MOU) - and the hopes that came with it for an end to the war - died at 10:16 EST (15:16 GMT) on Tuesday on Truth Social, when

Trump announced a resumption of the US blockade of Iranian shipping, amidst a flurry of new US military strikes on targets across Iran.

The Iranians countered by stepping up attacks on US allies and commercial shipping in the region, grinding traffic through the Strait of Hormuz to a near standstill once more.

After nearly a month of on-again, off-again negotiations between the two nations, punctuated by occasional hostilities that tested the definition of a "ceasefire", Trump and the Americans appear to be facing the same challenges that had been present through much of the Iran war.

While militarily, the Americans were achieving their objectives, as measured in Iranian ships, planes and targets destroyed and defence capabilities degraded, politically the conflict was far from resolved.

Iran, militarily weakened though it may be, could still deny access to the Strait of Hormuz. And unless the Americans were willing to dramatically escalate their military operations in the region, there was little they could do to stop them.

Trump's new twist of a 20% fee - possibly a means of making that military commitment more palatable to the American public - wasn't entirely new. He had suggested such an arrangement on several occasions over the course of the war.

But just last month, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had condemned an Iranian plan to charge "fees" on shipping through Hormuz.

"No country is allowed to charge tolls or fees on an international waterway," he said. "That's existing international law. That's the way it is in international waterways all over the world, and that's the way we expect it here."

Trump's Hormuz U-turn is just the latest evidence of a president who does not appear to have a clear path forward. The memorandum of understanding, which both Americans and Iranians claimed as a victory for their side, was intentionally vague, leaving much up to later negotiation.

The document envisioned some role for Iran in overseeing shipping in Hormuz. It read: "The Islamic Republic of Iran will make arrangements using its best efforts for the safe passage of commercial vessels with no charge."

This is a role that Iran has been intent on asserting. The MOU also included billions of dollars in promised "investment" in Iran and an end to international sanctions.

Americans may have believed those sweeteners, accompanied by warnings of the consequences of noncompliance, would be enough to dissuade Iran from attempting to use its geographic advantages to more forcefully assert control over Hormuz. That calculation, at least for the moment, appears incorrect.

"The MOU is completely dead," said Kelanic. "All of the things that it stipulated have now been undone."

Now Trump, and the Iranians, find themselves in a familiar predicament. The latter are once again facing American military attacks across their territory, underlining their inability to defend their territorial sovereignty. With the reimposed blockade, their oil revenue - a lifeline for the Iranian regime - is again cut off.

Meanwhile, Trump is again facing a choice between escalation, which comes with domestic economic and political costs, and settling for some kind of resolution that leaves a hostile Iranian regime in power.

Russian attacks kill six as Ukraine targets Black Sea oil tankers

Six people have been killed in Ukraine following an overnight Russian attack on the Black Sea port of Odesa and the eastern city of Sumy, according to local officials.

Governor of Odesa region Oleh Kiper said the "massive" drone and missile strike marked the fifth day in which Russia has attacked the region.

Across the country, three people were killed and 17 injured in a "guided aerial bomb" attack on Sumy, the city's acting mayor, Artom Kobzar, said.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's military said its drones hit 20 Russian vessels, including 17 oil tankers, in the Black Sea overnight.

The Russian ministry of de-

fence confirmed it had attacked Odessa, saying it had deliberately targeted port infrastructure, "used for the unloading of petroleum, oil, and lubricants".

Writing on Telegram, Kiper accused Russia of deliberately targeting the civilian population and said residents were killed and injured when a Russian missile struck a multi-storey residential building.

He added that a non-residential building and a gas pipeline were also hit.

In its statement, Russia claimed to have targeted sites involved in the manufacture of military hardware, and the transport of cargo.

Russia's attacks in recent days have targeted Ukraine's

deep-water Black Sea ports in the wider Odesa area, which handle much of the country's grain and other cargo and are vital to its wartime economy.

It follows intensive attacks on Russian ships in the Sea of Azov, which sits between Crimea, Ukraine's eastern coastline, and Russia.

The Ukrainian attacks have forced Russia, the world's top grain exporter, to restrict shipping in the Sea of Azov - a route that handles about a quarter of its grain exports, according to news agency Reuters.

As the attacks continue, Ukraine is attempting to navigate a tumultuous political situation which has seen President Volodymyr Zelensky dis-

missing Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko after less than a year in the post.

A motion to accept Svyrydenko's resignation was passed in Ukraine's parliament on Tuesday, despite some lawmakers questioning whether the reason for the change had been explained.

Serhiy Koretskyi, the head of state oil and gas firm Naftogaz, is seen as a likely successor to Svyrydenko, with parliament set to vote on the appointment on Thursday.

On Wednesday morning, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen arrived in Kyiv to discuss co-operation between European and Ukrainian defence industries.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

China economic growth falls sharply, missing target

China's economic growth slowed sharply between the start of April and end of June as weak domestic demand and the Iran war's impact on oil prices overshadowed the country's strong exports.

Official gross domestic product (GDP) figures showed the world's second largest economy grew in the second quarter by 4.3%, below Beijing's annual target, and after a 5% rise in the first quarter.

It comes a day after separate data showed China's exports had jumped by 27% in June compared to a year earlier.

In March, China cut the growth target to a range of 4.5%-5%, its lowest econom-

ic expansion goal since 1991, a move some analysts say has given Beijing space to acknowledge pre-existing economic weakness.

The announcement represents the first full quarter of GDP data since the start of the Iran war on 28 February and marks the lowest quarterly expansion since the end of 2022, as China was emerging from its strict Covid-19 restrictions.

"There are more external instability and uncertainty factors," China's National Bureau of Statistics said in a release accompanying the figures.

It also noted an imbalance between strong supply and weak demand in the domestic

economy.

Separate data released on Wednesday highlighted the economic challenges Beijing is facing at home - including a long-running property market slump and weak consumer spending.

New home prices contracted again, although the 0.1% fall in June was at a slightly slower pace than the previous month.

But retail sales rose by 1% in June, improving from a 0.6% decrease in May.

Fabien Yip, a market analyst at investment platform IG told the BBC that China's businesses are absorbing higher energy and raw materials costs "because demand at the till is too

weak to bear it".

The situation will become more difficult to manage the longer the Iran war goes on, she added.

However Capital Economics's head of China economics Julian Evans-Pritchard said the actual slowdown in the country's economy may have less to do with changing conditions, and more to do with a change in the national growth target which had "given the authorities more room to acknowledge the reality on the ground".

"This may largely represent a greater willingness to acknowledge pre-existing weakness rather than a sudden deterioration in underlying growth," he said, noting that the official figure is now closer in line with Capital's own estimate of Chinese growth.

Trump says ICE agents should not give up traffic stops

Donald Trump has said agents working for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should not give up traffic stops, which he has described as one of the agency's "most important and effective Crime Fighting tools".

The president's intervention comes after ICE agents were told to halt most vehicle stops nationwide immediately, following two fatal shootings in Texas and Maine that involved ICE.

The planned suspension was seen as a significant tactical shift for the agency, which has faced criticism in the past year over allegations of excessive use of force and scrutiny over deaths that have occurred during its operations.

Trump's border tsar Tom Homan said the move would be a temporary one.

Speaking to Fox News on Tuesday, Homan added that deportations would continue.

In the interview, Homan, who is an adviser to Trump, said that agents already had extensive vehicle-stop training.

Officers have only a few moments to react during stops and "every arrest is different," he said.

The pause, Homan added, would be brief and would allow leadership to conduct a short-term review.

Trump expressed his opposition to giving up traffic stops in a social media post on Wednesday morning, without referring to Homan's statement that the move would be temporary.

The president wrote: "We CANNOT give up one of I.C.E.'s most important and effective Crime Fighting tools, THE TRAFFIC STOP! Once we do, we are playing right into the criminal's hands."

Referring to the wider purpose of the agency's operations, Trump added: "The men and women of ICE are doing a GREAT job, one that has to be done. CRIME IS WAY DOWN IN AMERICA, in many cases with numbers that haven't been seen in decades."

The suspension reported on Tuesday was due to apply to most circumstances except cases involving serious criminal targets, according to US

media reports that cited unnamed law enforcement sources.

After reports of the suspension first emerged, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) declined to comment, telling the BBC: "We are always evaluating our procedures to keep our officers safe and criminals off our streets."

"We will not disclose or discuss law enforcement tactics."

Also on Tuesday, Democratic Senator Dick Durbin told the BBC News Channel that he was fearful more incidents like the recent fatal shootings would happen due to what he called "quotas" at ICE for deportations and arrests.

Durbin, a ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee which oversees federal policing as well as immigration and criminal justice reform, said people at ICE "are not following the basic rules and principles when it comes to good policing".

"Saying that they're just going to adjust things is not enough," the senator insisted. "This is creating a wave of terror and fear in our country. It is interfering with the lives of people who just want to be good citizens and good people."

In one of the recent incidents, an ICE agent fatally shot a 26-year-old Colombian national during an immigration enforcement operation in Maine.

The DHS said the officer, "fearing for public safety", opened fire on the man when he attempted to flee the scene of the operation and after agents tried to stop his vehicle.

The department did not specify the threat he posed.

The shooting took place in Biddeford, Maine, about 24km (15 miles) south of Portland.

Immigration advocates have said the man was authorised to work in the US and had a social security number.

He has not yet been officially named, but local lawmakers and neighbours identified him as Joan Sebastian Guerrero.

Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition and Presente! Maine, two migrant advocacy groups, issued a joint statement calling his death "devastating, enraging, and unacceptable".



SIERRA LEONE EX-PRESIDENT:

Ernest Bai Koroma has been living in exile in Nigeria since January 2024

Sierra Leone drops treason charge against ex-president over attempted coup

Sierra Leone's government has dropped its charges, including treason, against ex-President Ernest Bai Koroma, who was arrested in connection with an attempted coup nearly three years ago.

The charges had been dropped on health grounds, Information Minister Chernor Bah said.

The 72-year-old former president has always denied involvement in the November 2023 attempted coup when gunmen broke into a military armoury and several prisons, freeing almost 2,000 inmates.

Responding to his case being dropped, Koroma noted his "enduring conviction that peace, justice and reconciliation must always triumph over adversity".

In his statement on Tuesday, Koroma also expressed gratitude towards Sierra Leo-

nean President Julius Maada Bio, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu and the West African regional bloc Ecowas for their support.

After Koroma was charged and placed under house arrest, Ecowas brokered a deal with the government of Sierra Leone, allowing the former president to go into exile in Nigeria and seek medical attention there.

The attorney general had then filed to discontinue the case against Koroma and drop the charges, Bah said.

"The former president is therefore free to return to Sierra Leone at a time of his choosing and to go about his normal business," he added.

Koroma led Sierra Leone for 11 years until 2018, when current President Bio was elected.

Eleven civilians and 24 soldiers were found guilty of involvement in the coup attempt

and received long prison terms in 2024.

Around 20 people were killed in the uprising, which came five months after a disputed election which saw President Bio narrowly re-elected

for a second term.

The results were rejected by Koroma's All People's Congress. International observers also criticised the elections, highlighting a lack of transparency in the count.

One dead and three missing after boat sinks near Alcatraz

One person has died and three others are missing after a pontoon boat capsized around 600 yards from Alcatraz Island on Tuesday.

San Francisco Fire Department received a report at 15:37 local time of a vessel in distress, department chief Dean Crispin said at a news conference.

A marine unit first on the scene witnessed a man in the water "in severe distress" and initiated CPR, Crispin said. He was declared deceased

when brought to shore.

He said 20 adults were on the three-deck pontoon boat, mostly family members, who were "engaging in some kind of memorial service".

Authorities said a search and rescue operation by the San Francisco Fire Department and the US coastguard would continue throughout the evening.

Three people on the boat were injured and transported to a local hospital, where Crispin said they were in a "stable condition".

The other 13 members on the boat returned safely to shore, and were not injured.

In an earlier news conference, the fire department chief said there were 19 people on the boat, and the report received at 15:37 reported a vessel on fire.

Later on Tuesday evening, he said witness accounts indicated there were 20 people on the boat, which was a 50ft cabin cruiser called Volare.

He said there was no evidence of a fire when the fire service arrived at the boat,

with witnesses reporting rough seas and a vessel which began to take on water and was turned over in the bay.

Longshoreman Justin Marceline, who alongside fisherman Mike Montoya helped rescue people from the vessel, according to Reuters news agency, said it was "complete chaos when we showed up".

"Every time we had to grab a person, each one of them, either they were exhausted or they were frantic and were flailing," Marceline said.

Sports

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

Eko2026 Games: Enabulele Charges Coaches, technical officials on adequate preparation, results

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

Ahead of the maiden National Intermediate Games scheduled to hold in Lagos state, the Executive chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele has charged coaches of all Sports Associa-

tions preparing for the Eko2026 Games to step up preparation of athletes and to let discipline be their watchword.

The Edo State Sports Commission boss gave the charge yesterday at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium during a technical meeting with coaches and secretaries of all the sports asso-

ciations featuring in the games. Enabulele appealed to the coaches to work in unity and cooperate as a team in order to achieve the ultimate goal of emerging champions.

He also urged the coaches and secretary of the various associations to put personal interest aside and pursue the interest of the state from the planning stage to the event proper.

"We are going into the National Intermediate Games and we should know that we are no going to Lagos as underdogs. All eyes on us because we are regional champions having won the second Niger Delta Games. So, I am happy that we have a good foundation for grassroots sports development in the country. The age bracket of 15-18 years for the games makes it not difficult for us because we have the young athletes within the bracket most of whom were part of the winning team of the Niger

Delta Games," Enabulele said.

"I want to charge our coaches particularly to be up and doing. You must all work as a team. Cooperation is important as we step up preparation. Be positive and aim high. We can do it and replicate our feat in the Niger Delta Games in Lagos. At this stage, let's be objective in our assessment and review of our performance and let's know our weaknesses and strength as we step up preparation." He stressed.

The National Intermediate Games, tagged: "Eko2026" is scheduled to hold in Lagos from October 1 -15, 2026. Athletes within the age bracket of 15-18 years are eligible to participate in the games.

Edo State Sports Commission is preparing athletes for about 33 sports at the games which includes Athletics, badminton, volleyball, football, boxing, gymnastics and others.



HON AMADIN DESMOND ENABULELE

2026 FCT FA League: Gbogboade's lone goal gives Kicker FC victory over Youthfull Ballers FA

Ibrahim Gbogboade scored the lone goal as Kicker FC defeated Youthfull Ballers FA 1-0 in the opening Group C fixture of the ongoing 2026 Federal Capital Territory Football Association (FCT FA) League yesterday in Abuja.

The match played at the Area 3 Football Pitch, saw both sides battled evenly in the first half, displaying discipline and tactical organisation, with neither team could break the deadlock in spite of creating several scoring opportunities.

On resumption of the second half, Kicker FC returned with greater attacking intent as Stephen Abah, Taofeek Sanusi and Ibrahim Zakari repeatedly tested the Youthfull Ballers defence.

In the 50th minute, Abidemi Kayode found Ibrahim Gbogboade with a precise pass, but the Youthfull Ballers defence stood firm and denied the striker.

Five minutes later, Gbogboade combined well with Kayode, who laid the ball off to Taofeek Sanusi before it was worked to Stephen Abah who crashed against the crossbar.

Youthfull Ballers responded in the 58th minute when Nathan

Frank set up Gbenga David, whose effort sailed over the crossbar.

Kicker FC continued to threaten in the 61st minute when Kayode again released a cross pass to Gbogboade, but his effort also went over the bar.

The breakthrough came in the 65th minute when Gbogboade made a determined run

into the penalty area before hitting the ball that bounced into the net to give them the 1-0 lead.

Youthfull Ballers came close to equalising in the 87th minute after the referee awarded them a penalty following a collision in the penalty area.

However, Passion Willie of Youthfull Ballers struck the

crossbar from the spot, allowing Kicker FC to hold on to victory. The game ended 1-0.

Speaking after the match, David Adediran, head coach of Youthfull Ballers FA, said although his side was disappointed with the result, they remained confident of achieving promotion.

SWAN nominates FCC boss as first national matron



The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) nominate the Executive Chairman of the Federal Character Commission (FCC).

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) has nominated the Executive Chairman of the Federal Character Commission (FCC), Mrs Hulayat Omidiran, as its first National Matron.

SWAN President, Isaiah Ben-

jamin announced the nomination when he and other members of the National Executive Committee visited Omidiran in Abuja on Tuesday.

Benjamin said that Omidiran would be formally decorated during SWAN Triennial Delegate Conference, scheduled for

August in Kaduna.

"Sports journalists from across the 36 states and the Federal capital Territory will gather in Kaduna to elect new national officers and chart a new course for the future of sports journalism in Nigeria," he said.

He explained that the nomination was in recognition of Omidiran contributions to sports development, public service and national integration.

"We are confident your acceptance will strengthen collaboration between SWAN and the FCC, while advancing our shared vision of a united, inclusive and equitable Nigeria through the transformative power of sports," he added.

Libya join race to host AFCON 2028 or 2032

Libya have officially entered the race to host either the 2028 or 2032 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), signaling the country's ambition to bring the continent's biggest football tournament back to its shores.

As part of its proposed bid, Libya plans to use eight stadiums across the country, with the 45,000-capacity Tripoli International Stadium and the 40,000-capacity Benghazi International Stadium serving as the flagship venues.

Libya previously hosted the Africa Cup of Nations in 1982, where the national team enjoyed its best-ever finish by reaching the final before losing to Ghana.

The North African nation was also awarded the hosting rights for the 2017 AFCON. However, the tournament was later relocated to Gabon because of security concerns in Libya.

If successful, Libya would stage the continental showpiece for the first time in more than four decades.



Commonwealth Games 2026: Ruth Usoro replaces injured Ese Brume

Team Nigeria's preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Games have suffered a setback following the withdrawal of long jump star Ese Brume due to injury.

Brume has been declared unfit to compete, ending her hopes of defending the women's long jump title she won at the previous Commonwealth Games.

The Nigerian athletics star claimed gold at the last edition with a Games record leap of 7.00 metres, making her one of the country's brightest medal prospects for Glasgow 2026.

In her absence, Ruth Usoro has been called up to the Team Nigeria squad.

She will partner Prestina Ochonogor in the women's long jump event as Nigeria seeks to maintain its strong tradition in the discipline.

Brume's withdrawal is a major blow to Team Nigeria, considering her experience and impressive international record.

However, the inclusion of Usoro, alongside the promising Ochonogor, gives Nigeria a competitive duo capable of challenging for honours at the Commonwealth Games.



ESE BRUME

Team Nigeria wheelchair basketball team records back-to-back wins in Commonwealth Games build-up

Team Nigeria's wheelchair basketball team continued its impressive preparations for the 2026 Commonwealth Games with two convincing victories over Grampian Flyers Wheelchair Basketball Club of

Aberdeen in a series of international friendly matches.

The Nigerian side produced a dominant display in the opening fixture, securing a comprehensive 7-2 victory over the Scottish club.

They followed up the performance with another commanding outing in the second game, defeating Grampian Flyers 5-1 to complete a clean sweep of the friendly series.

The back-to-back wins pro-

vide a significant boost for Team Nigeria as they continue to fine-tune their tactics and build confidence ahead of the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, where they will aim to make a strong impression.



2026 World Cup: We were not at our best – Mbappe

Kylian Mbappe said he and his France teammates did not perform well to progress to the 2026 FIFA World Cup Final after their 2-0 defeat against Spain on Tuesday.

France went into the game as the favorite but Didier Deschamps' men were completely outplayed by a better tactical and technical Spain.

Goals from Mikel Oyarzabal and Pedro Porro secured Spain's spot in the World Cup Final, since the last time they won the tournament in South Africa 2010.

Luis de la Fuente's men completely dominated France, restricting them to just two shots on target all game. France had scored 16 goals before the game but Spain rendered Mbappe and his co-attackers ineffective on Tuesday.

Real Madrid forward Kylian

Mbappe described the French team's performance as disappointing and not worthy of a final spot.

"We did not produce the performance we wanted, tactically, technically or in terms of our overall level," Mbappe said.

"When you fail to do what you are supposed to do in a World Cup semi-final, you do not win.

"Spain stuck to their plan and to what they believe in. There was a lack of communication in our pressing, even when we won possession back, our first passes and first touches were not worthy of a World Cup semi-final," he added.

Speaking to reporters after the game, France coach Didier Deschamps said his team lost to a better team.

"The players are devastated,



KYLIAN MPAPPE AND SPAIN PLAYERS

but we have to be clear-headed: technically, we were second best. That is on us."

Pedro Porro who scored the second goal for Spain said the victory is a dream come true for him, and added that his side did everything right against a brilliant team.

"A dream come true to be

honest. I never even imagined anything like this, not even in my wildest dreams," Porro said.

"We did everything right against a team that was having a brilliant World Cup," he added.

Spain will discover their final opponents on Wednesday when England face Argentina in Atlanta for a place in Sunday's final.

Nigeria beat Niger in volleyball qualifier opener 3-1

Nigeria's men's volleyball team defeated Niger Republic 3-1 on Tuesday in their opening match of the 2026 African Nations Cup Zone 3 Qualifiers in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

The Nigerians secured a hard-fought victory after claiming the first, third and fourth sets against a determined Niger Republic side.

Nigeria started confidently, edging the opening set 25-22 to seize an early advantage in the encounter.

Niger Republic responded

strongly in the second set, fighting back to record a narrow 25-23 victory and level the contest.

Coach Taiwo Oladipupo's side regained momentum in the third set, winning another closely contested battle 25-23 to move ahead again.

Nigeria dominated the fourth set completely, overwhelming Niger Republic 25-9 to seal an impressive opening victory.

The win gives Nigeria an encouraging start in the regional qualifiers as the team pursues qualification for the 2026 African Nations Cup.



NIGERIA VOLLEYBALL TEAM

World Cup: Spain outclass France 2-0 to reach final

Spain defeated France 2-0 on Tuesday to reach the 2026 FIFA World Cup final after a dominant semi-final display at AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas, USA.

Spain controlled possession, created better opportunities and limited France's attacking threat throughout an entertaining contest.

Both teams started brightly, with intense challenges and quick passing, as the packed stadium produced a vibrant atmosphere from the opening whistle.

France suffered an early setback when Adrien Rabiot received a yellow card in the ninth minute for a reckless tackle.

The caution forced Rabiot to play cautiously, while Spain continued pressing forward with confidence and purpose against the French defence.

Spain took the lead in the 22nd minute after winning a penalty following a foul inside the area.

Mikel Oyarzabal calmly converted from the spot, sending the goalkeeper the wrong way to give Spain a deserved 1-0 advantage.

France's problems deepened in the 30th minute when William Saliba limped off injured and was replaced by Maxence Lacroix.

Spain defender, Marc Cucurella, entered the referee's notebook a minute later after committing a foul during an increasingly physical encounter.

France resumed strongly after the interval, with coach Didier Deschamps introducing Manu

Kone for the booked Rabiot to reinforce midfield.

Deschamps made another attacking substitution in the 57th minute, replacing Bradley Barcola with Desire Doue in search of an equaliser.

Spain doubled their advantage one minute later through Pedro Porro after an excellent through ball from Dani Olmo.

Porro finished confidently beyond the goalkeeper, prompting jubilant celebrations from Spain's bench while France struggled to

recover from the setback.

Deschamps responded in the 72nd minute by introducing Rayan Cherki and Maghnes Akliouche for Michael Olise and Lucas Digne.

Spain refreshed their side with Ferran Torres replacing Oyarzabal before Mikel Merino and Pedri came on for Olmo and Fabian Ruiz.

Marcos Llorente replaced goalscorer Porro, while Nico Williams came on for Alex Baena as Spain comfortably man-

aged the closing stages.

France captain, Kylian Mbappe, received a yellow card in the 86th minute following a late challenge as frustration mounted.

Spain defended resolutely until the final whistle, frustrating France and ensuring their World Cup dream ended in the semi-finals.

"We showed character, discipline and quality when it mattered most," Spain's coach, Luis de la Fuente, reflected after sealing a deserved place in the World Cup final.

NIS, NJI sign MoU to strengthen sports administration, capacity building



HON. PHILIP SHAIBU

The National Institute for Sports (NIS) and the National Judicial Institute (NJI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening sports administration, promoting capacity building and enhancing institutional collaboration.

The agreement was signed at the conference room of the NJI in Abuja on Wednesday.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of NIS, Philip Shaibu, described the partnership as a strategic step towards deepening cooperation

between the two institutions.

Shaibu said the collaboration reflected a shared commitment to national development through sports and institutional synergy.

He stressed that government funding alone could no longer sustain sports development in the country, calling for stronger inter-agency collaboration and alternative funding sources.

Drawing from his experience as a former Deputy Governor of Edo, Shaibu said strategic partnerships had become necessary to address the financial and administrative challenges facing the sports sector.

According to him, such collaborations will also help improve the capacity of institutions and ensure Nigeria's teams remain competitive in regional and international competitions.

Super Falcons to face Ghana in WAFCON friendly

Nigeria's Super Falcons will take on Ghana's Black Queens in an international friendly on Saturday as part of their final preparations for the 14th Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in Morocco.

The tournament will run from July 19 to Aug. 8, with Nigeria seeking to defend the title they have won a record 10 times.

The Falcons opened their training camp in Casablanca on Monday ahead of their opening Group C match against Malawi in Rabat on July 28.

As of Tuesday afternoon, 10

players had arrived at the team's Marriott Hotel camp in Casablanca, while midfielder Toni Payne was expected to join the squad on Wednesday.

Head Coach Justine Madugu led the early arrivals to their first training session at the Stade El Arbi Zaouli on Tuesday.

Players already in camp include captain Rasheedat Ajibade, goalkeepers Chiamaka Nnadozie and Fatima Oloko, defenders Oluwatosin Demehin, Glory Ogbonna, Christy Ucheibe, Shukurat Oladipo and Rofiat Imuran.



SUPER FALCONS