

CBN revokes operating licenses of 46 MFBs

● Cites failure to meet regulatory requirements

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has revoked the operating licenses of 46 Microfinance Banks (MfBs) with effect from July 1.

This is contained in a statement issued by Mrs Hakama Sidi-Ali, the Acting Director, Corporate Communications Department of the apex bank on Wednesday in Abuja.

Sidi-Ali said that the action was in accordance with CBN's powers under sections 12 and 13 of the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act (BOFIA), 2020.

She said that the revocation was approved by the Governor

of the CBN, Mr Olayemi Cardoso, following the banks' failure to meet the regulatory requirements for continued operation as licensed financial institutions.

"The revocation of the licenses is part of CBN's ongoing efforts to safeguard the

stability of the financial sector, protect depositors, and ensure that licensed institutions comply with current laws and regulatory requirements.

"The CBN remains committed to promoting a safe, sound and resilient financial system.

"It will continue to take appropriate supervisory and regulatory actions, where necessary, to maintain public confidence in the Nigerian financial system," she said.

Meanwhile, according to the revocation order, the action became necessary because of circumstances like insufficient as-

sets to meet liabilities, closure of operations without the CBN approval, and inactivity and cessation of financial intermediation.

Others are failure to commence operations within 12 months of licence approval, and failure to maintain minimum capital funds unimpaired by losses.

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#200

Return of Benin Bronzes, Okpebholo says artefacts belong to Oba's Palace

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has described the return of the Benin Bronzes as a historic milestone for the Benin Kingdom, insisting that the artefacts belong to the Oba of Benin's Palace and should not be politicised.

Governor Okpebholo stated

this on Wednesday when he received the Director-General of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Olugbile Holloway, alongside the Consul General of Switzerland in Lagos, Conny Camenzind; Director of the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich, Professor Dr Alice Hertzog; Curator

at the museum, Dr Alex Malafakis; and other members of the delegation at the Government House in Benin City.

The governor commended the Swiss government and other stakeholders involved in the restitution process, describing the return of the artefacts as a significant moment in the history of the Benin Kingdom.

He said: "First of all, let me thank you for this moment because this is a defining history in our land. To me, there is no point in playing politics with what belongs to the palace.

"We have culture here. I believe in our culture. Those bronzes are not just bronze; they are symbolic and spiritual to our kingdom. Wherever they

are, they will all find their way back to Nigeria to Edo State."

Governor Okpebholo stressed that the Benin Bronzes represent the cultural heritage of the Benin people and should remain under the custody of the traditional institution.

"There is no point playing politics with them. They all belong to the Oba's Palace. We have only one Oba Palace in Edo State," he said.

Reflecting on the history behind the removal of the artefacts, the governor said the British expedition to Benin was driven by the global recognition of the

greatness of the Benin Empire.

"The British that came here came for a reason. They heard something about the Benin Empire. That is why they came here. They found these things very interesting and took them out of this country to theirs.

"So now, I am happy that the Swiss Government has decided to say, 'Yes, let's return these back to the owners.' I want to thank your government for taking this initiative in bringing these bronzes back to our palace."

He added that the gesture,

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RESITUTION PROCESS:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, (right); Director-General, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Olugbile Holloway, (left); Consul-General of Switzerland in Lagos, Conny Camenzind (2nd right), and Director of Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich, Professor Dr. Alice Hertzog (2nd Left), during the visit of the delegation to government house in Benin City on Wednesday.

NGX opens July in the red as profit-taking wipes N2.39tn off market value

ESE AMADASUN

BENIN CITY

Nigeria's equities market opened trading for July on a bearish note, with investors losing N2.39 trillion as fresh profit-taking in medium and large-cap stocks dragged key market indicators lower on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX).

At the close of trading on Wednesday, the NGX All-Share Index (ASI), fell by 3,729.11 basis points, or 1.63 per cent, to close at 225,690.07 points, down

from 229,419.18 points recorded on June 30. Market capitalisation also declined by 1.63 per cent to N144.82 trillion from N147.22 trillion, effectively wiping out the modest rebound recorded in the previous session.

The latest decline means the market has now opened the second half of 2026 on a weak footing, with the year-to-date return easing further to 45.03 per cent.

Analysts attributed the downturn to renewed profit-taking pressure across major

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NEWS

'We're in FCT to work, not occupy space' — Tinubu

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu says his administration is not in the presidency to occupy space but to work for the citizens and residents of the country as evident in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Tinubu made the remarks on Wednesday, while inaugurating the newly constructed Akinwumi Ajibola Street, covering Important Local Streets (ILS) 16, 18, and 19, in Gaduwa District, Abuja.

The president, who was represented by the Senate President, Sen. Godswill Akpabio said: "We are here to open a road, but more importantly, we are here to restore access.

"Under the Renewed Hope Agenda, we said clearly: we did not come to occupy space. We came to work. Today, that promise is visible on these streets.

"In this government, we measure ourselves by finished work. This street is finished work."

Tinubu noted that for years, families in Gaduwa built homes in good faith, yet they had no motorable road to reach those homes.

"When the rains came, the place became impassable. That is not how a capital city treats its citizens," he said.

He said that his administration has no excuse for "no money. We pay on time, and we demand performance on time.

"The asphalt you see, the

drainage that will carry water away, and the streetlights that will make nights safer are proof that we meant what we said."

He said that the completed project would improve urban mobility, raise property values, reduce vehicle damage and travel time and return dignity to residents who should never have been forced to choose between owning a home and reaching it.

He commended FCT Minister, Mr Nyesom Wike for changing the culture of project delivery and ending the era of mobilisation without movement in the FCT.

He equally praised Wike for taking development from the city centre into the districts and the satellite towns and street by street, "so that no resident is left behind.

"That is leadership. You inspect, you correct, you finish. Wike, you have my confidence, you have my commendation, and the FCT has your results. Well done to you and to your team."

He urged residents of the area to protect the infrastructure, adding that a street built by the government and maintained by its community becomes permanent.

"That is the partnership I am asking for. Every district deserves access, every citizen deserves to feel the impact of governance where they live. Together, we can make it happen," he said.

In his remarks, Wike said the

event was the 16th out of the 31-day projects' inauguration to celebrate Tinubu's third year in office.

He said that so far, every district in the FCT had been impacted with one project or the other saying, "we have taken development to Jahi, Gwarimpa, Katampe, Guzape, Kwali

and now Gaduwa."

The minister cautioned the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) against naming roads constructed by the Federal Government without due approval.

"If the Federal Government constructs the roads, permission must be obtained before naming

them. Do not wait for us to build roads before putting names on them or using them to generate revenue," he warned.

On her part, FCT Minister of State, Dr Mariya Mahmoud, said that the project reflected the administration's commitment to people-oriented

infrastructure that improves mobility, enhances economic activities and raises the living standards of residents.

Mahmoud reiterated the FCT Administration's commitment to sustain the pace of infrastructure development across the territory.



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo (3rd left) cutting the 69th birthday cake with the celebrant, former Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Pius Odubu (3rd right) his wife, Endurance, the state Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, (2nd Left), Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Rt Hon Blessing Agbebaku, and Edo State All Progressives Congress (APC) Chairman, Emperor Jarret Tenebe (right) in Benin City.

Kwara LG poll: Court reserves judgment in PDP suit against INEC, others

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja has reserved judgment in the suit filed by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) against Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and others over dispute with respect to conduct of local government elections in Kwara State.

Justice Peter Lifu, on Wednesday, held that a new date would be communicated to parties in the suit. Justice Lifu had, on Sept. 17, 2024, set aside the interim order restraining the Kwara government from conducting the local government elections scheduled for Sept. 21, 2024.

The judge, in a ruling, vacated the order on the grounds that it had expired by the provisions of the law, having lasted for more than 14 days.

He agreed with the submissions of Johnson Usman, SAN, counsel to the Kwara State Independent Electoral Commission (KWSIEC), and the Kwara Attorney-General (AG), Senior Sulyman, SAN.

He said it was on record that the same ex-parte order had been pending since July 29,

2024.

The judge, in another ruling also dismissed the contempt charge filed by the PDP to commit the Chairman of KWSIEC, Baba Okanla, to prison on allegations of violations of valid court order.

The judge dismissed the application on the ground that the contempt of court charge was not served on the contemnor as required by law.

Justice Lifu, who upheld the arguments of Usman and Sulyman, said since a contempt charge is a criminal charge, it ought to have been served personally on the KWSIEC chairman and not through any other party or person.

He said that the failure of the PDP's lawyer, Ademola Abimbola, to serve the contempt charge on Okanla was a fundamental breach of Section 36 of the 1999 Constitution which denied the contemnor a fair hearing.

The judge had, on 29 July, 2024, granted the PDP's ex-parte motion to stop INEC from releasing the national voters' register to KWSIEC for the Sept. 21, 2024 local government elections in the state, pending the hearing and determination of the substantive suit.

Okpebholo applauds Igbinedion's contributions to Edo's business environment

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has congratulated renowned businessman and former Chairman of Ovia North East Local Government Council, Chief Bright Igbinedion, on the occasion of his birthday, describing him as an accomplished entrepreneur and public servant whose contributions continue to impact the socio-economic development of Edo State.

In a goodwill message, Governor Okpebholo commended

Chief Igbinedion for his enduring commitment to the growth of the state's economy through strategic private investments that have created jobs, stimulated commerce and strengthened confidence in Edo's investment climate.

The governor also acknowledged Chief Igbinedion's record of public service during his tenure as Chairman of Ovia North East Local Government Council, noting that his dedication to grassroots development and community advancement remains worthy of commendation.

Governor Okpebholo said

Chief Igbinedion represents the caliber of indigenous entrepreneurs whose investments and business acumen complement the government's efforts to build a resilient economy driven by private sector participation.

"Chief Bright Igbinedion has distinguished himself as a successful businessman and former local government chairman whose contributions to Edo State extend beyond enterprise to public service. Through his investments and entrepreneurial vision, he has helped expand economic opportunities, create

employment, and reinforce confidence in Edo as a viable destination for investment.

"As an administration committed to economic transformation, we celebrate sons and daughters of Edo who continue to invest in our people and our economy. Chief Bright Igbinedion's commitment to enterprise and development is worthy of recognition and emulation."

Governor Okpebholo prayed that Almighty God would grant Chief Igbinedion many more years of good health, wisdom, and greater accomplishments as he continues to contribute to the growth and prosperity of Edo State and Nigeria.

Makinde sacks Women Affairs' Commissioner, Assembly confirms commissioner-nominee

IBADAN

Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, has sacked the state Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Inclusion, Mrs Toyin Balogun.

This is contained in a statement issued on Wednesday in Ibadan by the Special Adviser to the Governor, Dr Suleimon Olanrewaju.

According to the statement, the Commissioner for Trade, Industry, Investment and Cooperative, Alhaja Fausat Sanni has been redeployed to replace Balogun at the Women Affairs'

Ministry, with immediate effect.

Makinde thanked Balogun for her contributions to the development of the state and wished her success in her future endeavour.

Sanni had earlier served as the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Inclusion from 2019 to 2023, and Ministry of Special Duties, before being recently redeployed to Trade, Industry, Investment and Cooperative.

Meanwhile, the Oyo State House of Assembly has confirmed the appointment of Dr

Ladipo Taiwo as Commissioner-designate following the approval of his nomination during Wednesday's plenary.

The confirmation came after the presentation and consideration of the report of the House Committee on Special Duties, chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Mr Abiodun Fadeyi.

Fadeyi recommended the nominee for confirmation after the committee's screening exercise.

The House subsequently adopted the committee's recommendations and unanimously approved the nom-

ination of Taiwo to serve as Commissioner in the Oyo State Executive Council.

Gov. Seyi Makinde had, in a letter dated June 30, 2026, forwarded the name of Dr Ladipo Taiwo to the House for screening and confirmation in accordance with Section 192 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

The governor, in the correspondence addressed to the Speaker, requested the lawmakers to give the nomination the "usual kind and expeditious consideration."

Alleged coup: DSS arraigns 5 for allegedly concealing ex-Gov. Timipre Sylva's whereabouts

ABUJA

The Department of State Services (DSS) on Wednesday arraigned five men for alleged conspiracy and failure to disclose the whereabouts of former Gov. Timipre Sylva of Bayelsa.

The five suspects: Reuben Ayuba, Musa Mohammed, Friday Paul, Paganenghiga Anagaha and Ayebaife Suobite, were arraigned before Justice Peter Lifu of the Federal High Court (FHC) on a two-count charge.

Sylva, who is at large, and six others are currently facing a trial in a sister court presided

over by Justice Joyce Abdulmalik over alleged plan to topple President Bola Tinubu's government.

He was alleged to have a financial link to the six suspected coup plotters presently on trial.

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

The Federal Government filed a 13-count charge, marked: FHC/ABJ/

CR/206/2026, against the defendants.

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

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

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

Justice Lifu thereafter ad-

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

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

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

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

The offence is contrary to

Section 519 of the Criminal Code Act LEN, 2004.

In count two, they were alleged to have conspired to commit a felony by concealing

the whereabouts Sylva, who is a fugitive of the law.

The offence is contrary to Section 516 of the Criminal Code Act LFN, 2004.

Oyebanji pledges commitment to 30-year-devt plan

ABUJA

Ekiti Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, says his administration will remain committed to the state's 30-year development plan, assuring residents that ongoing growth and governance reforms will be sustained.

Oyebanji said this on Wednesday while speaking with State House Correspondents after a thank-you visit to President Bola Tinubu at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, following his re-election as governor of the state.

"I have my job cut out for me. We have a 30-year development plan that we are following diligently. Our budgets and manifesto are built around that plan, so we are not changing course," he said.

The governor attributed his re-election to divine grace and President Tinubu's support, saying both factors enabled his administration to fulfil promises made to the people of Ekiti State.

"It is not about doing any-

thing differently. It is about the grace of God and the support of the President that enabled us to deliver on our promises to our people," he said.

Oyebanji said the political season had ended and pledged to work with all stakeholders, including opponents, to strengthen governance and accelerate development across the state in coming years.

"Politics has ended. We must return to governance. I have reached out to my opponents because I need their wisdom, suggestions and advice to continue delivering for our people," he said.

Expressing confidence in Tinubu's prospects ahead of the 2027 presidential election, Oyebanji said support for the president continued to grow in Ekiti and would translate into stronger electoral outcomes.

"Our support has continued to grow from 187,000 votes in 2022 to 210,000 and now more than 318,000. Our target in 2027 is between 600,000 and 700,000 votes, and it is achievable."

**EDO TOURISM:**

The overall winner in the Summit, Exhibition and Fashion Show 2026 organized by Edo State Tourism Agency, Dannis Odion Artistry (in white attire) and other winners displaying their cash prizes after the event in Benin City on Tuesday.

JAMB advocates AI for inclusive higher education access

ABUJA

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has reaffirmed its commitment to expanding access to higher education for persons with disabilities through innovation, collaboration and the deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The Registrar of JAMB, Prof. Is-haq Oloyede, stated this on Wednesday in Abuja at the National Engagement on Inclusive Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence organised by the JAMB Equal Opportunity Group (JEOG).

The programme, themed "Bridging Equality Gaps: Artificial Intelligence and Inclusive Higher Education in Nigeria," brought together stakeholders to explore how AI could improve access to higher education for persons with disabilities.

Oloyede said JAMB established JEOG about 10 years

ago as one of several specialised committees created to strengthen the board's operations and provide dedicated support for candidates with special needs.

According to him, the engagement provides an opportunity to assess the achievements of the past decade and chart a new course for advancing inclusive higher education in Nigeria.

"10 years ago, we decided to look for people who are competent beyond doubt to handle each of our major tasks.

"This engagement is to review what we have done, identify what more can be done and ensure that we move to the next stage," he said.

Also speaking, the Chairman of JEOG, Prof. Peter Okebukola, said the group had, over the past decade, supported more than 4,200 candidates with disabilities to sit the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME).

Okebukola said beneficiaries received free transportation, accommodation, assistive devices and other support services designed to ensure they competed on an equal footing with other candidates.

"Under the directive of Oloyede, JEOG has had the privilege of enabling well over 4,200 candidates with special needs to sit the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination under conditions appropriate to their circumstances.

"For every candidate JEOG serves, several thousands of naira was invested by Oloyede to provide free transportation, free hotel accommodation and other necessary support," he said.

Okebukola described Artificial Intelligence as the next frontier in advancing inclusive higher education, saying its deliberate application could remove long-standing barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

"For us in JEOG, Artificial Intelligence does not benefit

persons with disabilities by accident.

"It benefits them only when its design is deliberate and when technology developers work closely with special education professionals," he said.

He added that AI would increasingly support activities across the education value chain, from admission processes to learning support and campus accessibility.

Also, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Prof. Abdullahi Ribadu, represented by the Director of Research, Innovation and Information Technology, Dr Lawal Faruk, said AI was transforming education globally.

"We must prepare graduates for an AI-driven world while ensuring that no learner is left behind.

"For many students with disabilities, AI has the potential to remove barriers and open new opportunities," he said.

'The New Frontier' will reposition Edo as tourism destination, says Okpebholo-Anani

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady of Edo State Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani has disclosed that the 2026 Summit, exhibition and fashion show organized by Edo State Tourism Agency is a platform to reposition Edo as a tourism destination.

Anani made the disclosure while delivering a goodwill message at the maiden edition of the 2026 Summit, exhibition and fashion show with the theme "Edo tourism, the new frontier" held at the Sir Victor Uwaifo creative hub along Airport road in Benin City.

Anani represented by the wife of the Secretary to Edo State Government Nimata Umar Ikhilor commend the Edo State tourism agency for the initiative and efforts to bring together government, investors, development partners, creatives, entrepreneur and tourism Stakeholders to chat a new bold future for tourism in Edo State.

She noted that the summit is more than an event but a statement of purpose which reflects the determination to reposition Edo as one of Nigeria's foremost tourism destinations.

"This summit stands as a platform to showcase Edo State rich cultural heritage, tourism assets, attract domestic and international investment, strengthen partnership, promote an emerging creative Industry, empower our young people, advance sustainable development and increase tourism traffic into the State.

"Tourism is one of the strongest vehicles for job creation, attracts investment, stimulates enterprise, supports hospitality, promotes art and culture, grows the economy and the creative economy, empowers women and projects a positive image of Edo State and Nigeria to the rest of the world.

"Edo is blessed with tourism assets capable of attracting visitors across Nigeria and around the world. This submit encourages dialogue, investment, partnership and the exhibition showcases the richness of our heritage enterprise and tourism potentials", she concluded.

The Director General DG Edo State Tourism Agency Lady Vivian Elabor said the event marks a decisive moment in our collective journey to reposition Edo State as a leading destination for tourism, arts, culture, fashion and the creative economy in Nigeria and across Africa.

NEWS

You're replicating faithfulness to God in leadership, friendship, Odubu tells Okpebholo

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Wednesday earned

glowing commendation for his humility, reliability and strong faithfulness from former Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Pius Odubu, who described him as

a dependable leader and loyal friend whose virtues would continue to elevate him to greater heights.

Odubu gave the commendation during his birthday thanksgiving service held at his residence in Benin City, where Governor Okpebholo joined family members, political associates and other dignitaries in celebrating with him.

The thanksgiving service was presided over by Rev. Fr.

Andrew Ihonda Ovielonba of St. Andrew Catholic Church, Aruogba Community.

Speaking during the ceremony, the former deputy governor expressed deep appreciation to Governor Okpebholo for honouring him with his presence and paid glowing tribute to the governor's character.

"I say you are the epitome of humility, humble, reliable, and dependable friend. I don't know how best I will describe

you. Since I've come to know you, you have proven to me to be faithful to God and faithful to friends. It is a virtue that will take you higher than where you are today," Odubu said.

Governor Okpebholo attended the thanksgiving alongside the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; the Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku; members of the Edo State House of Assembly; the Chairman of

the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo State, Jarrett Tenbebe, who led other party leaders; former deputy governors; former lawmakers; and other prominent personalities.

Governor Okpebholo's presence underscored the cordial relationship between him and the leaders of Edo State as guests joined Odubu and his family in offering gratitude to God for another year of life and service.

Return of Benin Bronzes, Okpebholo...

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though significant, would attract greater goodwill and blessings.

"It might look small to you, but the blessings ahead are huge," the governor said.

Earlier, the NCMM Director-General, Olugbile Holloway, said the visit was to strengthen collaboration with the Edo State Government and mark another step in the international restitution of Benin artefacts.

"As you are aware, with the topic of restitution and the return of the Benin Bronzes, Benin is ground zero when it comes to that aspect, and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments is at the forefront of the battle for restitution," Holloway said.

He added that the commission was working with the Palace and His Royal Majesty, the Oba of Benin, to ensure that more artefacts taken abroad are returned.

"We are working with the palace and His Royal Majesty to ensure that as many of these bronzes that found their way into foreign museums begin to come home," he said.

Holloway disclosed that the delegation would proceed to the Oba's Palace to symbolical-

ly present some of the returned artefacts to the Oba of Benin for ceremonial blessings.

He said all the artefacts returned by Switzerland had arrived in Nigeria and were currently in Lagos.

Speaking on behalf of the Swiss Government, Consul General Conny Camenzind described the restitution as a major milestone in the relationship between Switzerland and Nigeria.

She expressed pride in Switzerland's role in the process, noting that the collaboration with the NCMM and the museums involved had been successful.

Camenzind said the restitution represented the beginning of a long-term partnership, adding that she expected the relationship between both countries to continue to grow.

Those present at the meeting included the Edo State Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhlor, Esq.; Head of Service, Anthony Okungbowa, Esq.; Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua; Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Musa Yakubu, JP; and other senior government officials.

NGX opens July in the red as profit...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

sectors of the market, especially in oil and gas, industrial goods and banking stocks.

The Oil and Gas Index led sectoral losses with a 4.41 per cent decline, followed by the Industrial Goods Index which shed 3.65 per cent. The Banking Index lost 1.49 per cent, while the Consumer Goods Index fell 0.93 per cent. Only the Insurance Index posted a positive outing, rising by 0.42 per cent.

Among the major stocks that weighed on the market were Aradel Holdings, which fell by the maximum 10.00 per cent; NASCON, down 9.98 per cent; Dangote Cement, which shed 7.48 per cent; Transcorp, down 6.99 per cent; Zenith Bank, which declined 4.50 per cent; and FCMB Group, down 4.35 per cent.

On the broader losers' chart, Neimeth, McNichols and Aradel all closed with 10.00 per cent losses each, while International Breweries, Livestock Feeds, Universal Insurance and Champion Breweries also recorded notable price declines.

Trading activity was mixed, with market turnover weakening significantly despite relatively strong volume. Investors exchanged 488.11 million

shares valued at N13.96 billion in 46,929 deals. However, compared with the previous trading day, total volume dropped by 49.50 per cent, while value traded fell sharply by 65.09 per cent.

Sterling Financial Holdings led the activity chart by volume with 124.61 million shares, followed by UPDC with 40.09 million shares, Access Holdings with 36.84 million shares, Honeywell Flour with 33.77 million shares, and United Capital with 28.35 million shares.

By value, Zenith Bank topped the chart with transactions worth N2.13 billion, followed by Aradel Holdings at N2.07 billion, MTN Nigeria at N1.61 billion, Sterling Financial Holdings at N980.63 million and Dangote Cement at N876.01 million.

Despite the broad weakness, a few counters posted gains. Austin Laz led the advancers with a 10.00 per cent gain, while Guinea Insurance rose 9.89 per cent, Abbey Mortgage Bank gained 9.66 per cent, Daar Communications appreciated 9.60 per cent and Regency Assurance advanced 9.52 per cent.

Market breadth remained negative as losers outnumbered gainers, underlining the cautious sentiment among investors at the start of the new month.



TOURISM SUMMIT:

Director-General, Edo State Tourism Agency, Lady Vivian Elabor, delivering her keynote address on day two of the 2026 Summit, Exhibition and Fashion show in Benin City.

Inclusive cabinet: Edo Assembly confirms non-indigene as commissioner

BENIN CITY

The Edo House of Assembly, on Wednesday, confirmed Mr Anayochukwu Oli, a non-indigene, as a commissioner-nominee of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

The confirmation followed a motion moved by the Majority Leader, Mr Jonathan Ibhama, during plenary in

Benin.

The Speaker, Blessing Agbebaku, commended the governor for nominating a non-indigene into his cabinet, noting that competence should take precedence over origin.

"What matters is quality and efficiency, not where one comes from. From what we have heard from the nominee and his credentials, we are op-

timistic that he will work with the governor to develop Edo State," he said.

Other lawmakers, in their separate contributions, also praised the governor for prioritising service delivery above ethnic considerations.

Igbo leaders in the state, who attended the session in solidarity with the nominee, described him as a versatile and goal-oriented individual.

The News Agency of Nigeria

(NAN) reports that Oli is a businessman and community leader from Aninri Local Government Area of Enugu State.

He is an established entrepreneur and has built a reputation as a community advocate within Edo's Igbo community, supporting grassroots development initiatives and programmes aimed at improving livelihoods and expanding economic opportunities.

DHQ introduces toll-free 193 line for security information

ABUJA

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has introduced a toll-free emergency line, 193, to encourage Nigerians to provide timely and credible information to support ongoing military operations nationwide.

The Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Michael Onoja, announced the initiative while briefing newsmen on the operations of the Armed Force on Wednesday

in Abuja.

Onoja urged members of the public to continue providing timely and accurate information through the nearest military formation or the newly introduced toll-free line 193.

He assured Nigerians that all information received through the hotline would be treated with the highest level of confidentiality to protect informants.

Onoja emphasised that national security remained a shared responsibility, urging

citizens to continue supporting the Armed Forces through vigilance and credible intelligence.

He conveyed the commendation of the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, to troops for their gallantry and discipline across various theatres of operation.

According to him, Oluyede also appreciated civilian communities, the Civilian Joint Task Force, local vigilante groups and other security agencies for their cooperation

and intelligence support to military operations.

Onoja reaffirmed the commitment of the armed forces to sustain and intensify operations against terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other security threats until all operational theatres are stabilised.

According to him, the military remains determined to create conditions that will enable displaced persons to return home safely and allow all Nigerians to live in freedom, safety and dignity.

Schools shutdown threatens pupils' future in Oyo, experts warn

IBADAN

Some education experts have warned that the prolonged closure of public schools in Oyo State could worsen learning inequality, expose children to criminal activities and undermine the state's future.

In separate interviews with newsmen in Ibadan, on Wednesday, the educationists said urgent steps need to be taken to restore safe learning in the state.

The experts further called on government to strengthen security around schools while exploring alternative learning arrangements to minimise disruptions.

Prof. Adams Onuka, an education evaluation expert at the University of Ibadan, said that the indefinite closure had left many pupils out of the current school calendar.

He said that children of low-income families, who could only afford to put their wards in

public schools, were the ones most adversely affected in their learning by the strike.

According to him, without access to education, when their counterparts in private schools have continued their academic activities, this has already signalled inequality.

Onuka said that prolonged idleness among children could also increase their vulnerability to crime while making it more difficult for them to recover lost learning time.

"The unfortunate thing is that most of those affected are children of the poor because those with average earnings often have their children in private schools.

"They are losing ground academically and that can result in setbacks for each of them.

"If children of the poor are denied education, they could become a problem for society in the future," he said.

Onuka said that although online learning could serve as

a temporary alternative, many public school pupils lacked smartphones, internet access and funds to purchase data, making such an arrangement impracticable.

He suggested that government could establish community learning centres equipped with electronic learning facilities, but acknowledged that funding constraints might limit such intervention.

The don also stressed that while there was a strong desire to see schools reopened, government must first address

teachers' and students' security concerns by providing adequate protection in schools.

Also, Prof. Soji Adejumo of the University of Ibadan, sympathised with the plight of pupils and their families.

He noted that the teachers' decision to stay away from classrooms was understandable in view of the prevailing security concerns.

He however said that private schools could not be blamed for remaining open because they depended on tuition fees to pay staff and sustain operations.



CLOSING 5TH AFNIS 2026:

From left: Executive Director, Steron Mining Company (SMC), Mr Haroun Omar; Director-General, Nigeria Mining Cadastre Office (NMCO), Mr Obadiah Nkom; Managing Director of SMC, Mr Abubakar Omar and the Manager BD International Consulting, Dr Bouna Diop, during the closing of the 5th African Natural Resources and Energy Submit (AFNIS) 2026, at the State House Conference Centre, Presidential Villa in Abuja.

Experts warn Nigerians against Ebola misinformation

LAGOS

Public health experts have warned Nigerians against spreading misinformation about the Ebola Virus Disease, saying false claims could fuel panic and undermine disease control efforts.

The experts gave the warning during the monthly X-Space webinar organised by Orodata Science.

The webinar was titled: "Tracking Outbreak: How Data and Facts Keep Us Safe from Ebola Rumours."

A health educator, Mr Ayomide Alebiowu, described misinformation as one of the

greatest public health threats during disease outbreaks because it fuels fear, panic and dangerous behaviour.

He urged Nigerians to verify every health-related message before sharing it and report false information to the appropriate authorities.

"Before you forward a message, verify its authenticity from the right sources and report any misinformation.

"People should always share information that has an identifiable source," he said.

Alebiowu advised the public to treat anonymous messages beginning with phrases such as "a doctor said" or "my friend

working in a hospital said" with suspicion.

"If a message has no identifiable source, that is a red flag.

"When a message says 'share to save lives,' stop first and verify it.

"Never circulate information simply because someone forwarded it," he said.

According to him, misinformation often spreads faster than verified information, making it capable of causing widespread panic during disease outbreaks.

Alebiowu said Ebola is a severe viral disease with six known strains, noting that the strain currently circulating in the Democratic Republic of

Congo differs from the Zaire strain responsible for Nigeria's 2014 outbreak.

He said there was currently no cure for the circulating strain, while research on vaccines for other variants was ongoing.

The health educator said Ebola's early symptoms, including fever, headache, sore throat, muscle and joint pain, and body weakness, closely resemble those of malaria and typhoid fever, making early diagnosis difficult.

"Immediately you notice the first signs, go and get checked.

"Do not assume it is malaria and begin self-medication," he advised.

Anambra CP tasks officers on professionalism

AWKA

The Commissioner of Police (CP), Anambra Command, Mr Ikioye Orutugu, has urged police personnel to maintain professionalism in the discharge of their duties.

According to him, this is in line with the directive of the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Mr Tunji Disu.

Orutugu made the call at the security conference organised by the command in Awka.

The conference had in attendance eight Area Commanders and 56 Divisional Police Officers in the state.

He said that the measure was the only way the police could earn the trust and confidence of the public.

"I wish to use this medium to re-echo the IGP's directives against any form of indiscipline, corruption, extortion, abuse of office or any conduct capable of bringing the force

into disrepute.

"Officers must remain courteous, professional and respectful in dealing with members of the public.

"The confidence of our people is one of our greatest operational assets and we must continue to earn and sustain it," Orutugu said.

The CP however observed that against all odds, the Command has continued to be above board in tackling insecurity.

According to him, I am pleased to note that despite the prevailing security challenges, this Command has continued to record remarkable operational successes.

"The successes recorded have inspired greater commitment in response to the expectations of the IGP, the government of Anambra and indeed the people to continue to be safe and grow," he said.

Orutugu said that the police uniform was a symbol of honour, sacrifice and public trust, hence the need for the officers to apply professionalism in the discharge of duty.

Federal bottlenecks delaying C'River grand littoral rail project —Commissioner

CALABAR

The Cross River Commissioner for Transportation, Mr Ekpenyong Cobham, has said that completion of the Grand Littoral Rail Project was being hampered by what he called Federal bottlenecks.

Cobham, in an interview with newsmen on Wednesday in Calabar, highlighted the ministry's achievements and ongoing transportation reforms.

"This delay is unrelated to the state. It is stalled by federal bottlenecks.

"We are hopeful that the outstanding approvals will soon be secured for construction to commence," he said.

On assumption of office Governor Bassey Otu noted his administration's desire to construct a rail system that would connect the South to Northern Cross River, a busy agricultural route.

The commissioner said that the State Executive Council has approved the operational vehicle for the rail infrastructure,

paving the way for implementation.

Cobham said the ministry inherited weak administrative structures in August 2023, operating initially with only two staff members.

He said the ministry strengthened its workforce and tackled immediate transport challenges alongside developing long-term strategies for sustainable transportation.

The commissioner said: "government introduced state transport colours, security numbers and a reliable database to improve commuter safety and curb criminal activities.

"Six dilapidated bus stops were rehabilitated while consultants conducted a comprehensive transportation pre-feasibility study to guide sector reforms."

Cobham said investors had shown interest through the Public-Private Partnerships to develop intercity shuttle services, trailer parks and other transport infrastructure.

Party deregistration rulings endangering Nigeria's multiparty democracy —IPAC

ABUJA

The Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC) has expressed concern over recurring court judgments ordering political parties' deregistration, warning that it threatens Nigeria's constitutional democracy.

The National Publicity Secretary of the council, Mr Martins Egbeola, said on Wednesday in Abuja that the developments constituted a disturbing trend.

Egbeola said that the judicial pronouncements, if unchecked, could weaken the country's multi-party political system and undermine citizens' constitutional rights to political participation and association.

He noted that the earlier judgments directing five political parties' deregistration, alongside the recent ruling against the National Democratic Congress (NDC), raised serious concerns about Nigeria's democratic direction.

According to the IPAC spokesman, regardless of legal arguments, the cumulative effect of such judgments can undermine political pluralism, shrink democratic space, and weaken constitutional guarantees protecting citizens' political freedoms.

He said that the developments suggested a dangerous pattern aimed at eroding Nigeria's multi-party democracy through judicial means, cautioning against manipulation of state institutions for political

interests.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the possibility that anti-democratic forces are working behind the scenes to manipulate state institutions for narrow political interests," Egbeola said.

Egbeola therefore urged the National Judicial Council (NJC) to ensure that judges uphold judicial independence, impartiality and constitutional fidelity, preserve public confidence and ensure democratic governance in the judiciary.

NEWS**Stakeholders express mixed reactions to JSS-SSS disarticulation policy****ABUJA**

Education stakeholders have expressed mixed reactions to the Federal Government's proposal to phase out the separation between Junior Secondary School (JSS) and Senior Secondary School (SSS).

The stakeholders who spoke in separate interviews with our correspondent on Wednesday in Abuja, said the success of the reform would depend largely on effective implementation and addressing the root causes of school dropout.

The federal government recently announced plans to scrap the JSS-SSS transition policy, describing it as a failed reform that had contributed to millions of students dropping out before completing secondary education.

Reacting to the development, education analyst, Mr Nathaniel Adamu, said the proposal could improve learners' progression if properly implemented.

According to him, many students drop out after completing JSS due to financial constraints, poor access to schools and weak transition mechanisms.

"If the policy removes unnecessary barriers and ensures that learners progress seamlessly to senior secondary school, it could help improve

retention," he said.

Adamu, however, stressed that the reform must be backed by adequate funding, improved infrastructure, recruitment of more teachers and extensive stakeholder consultations.

He urged the federal government to work closely with state governments, school administrators and parents to ensure effective implementation of the policy.

"It is easy to make such a policy, but implementing it in schools across the country will require close monitoring," he said.

Also speaking, the proprietress of Triumph Academy, Suleja, Mrs Maryam Abubakar, said the transition from JSS to SSS was not the major reason many children dropped out of school.

According to her, poverty, rising school costs, insecurity and inability of many parents to pay school fees, remain the biggest factors, responsible for children leaving school before completing their secondary education.

"I don't think removing the transition between JSS and SSS will automatically reduce the number of out-of-school children.

"Many students who stopped after JSS did so because their parents could not afford to keep them in school.

"Unless those economic challenges are addressed, changing the structure alone may not pro-

duce the desired result," she said. Abubakar also expressed concern over overcrowded classrooms and inadequate teaching personnel in many public schools.

"Many schools, especially government owned, are overcrowded. Students barely have seats to listen to lessons properly.

"I think that should be addressed first," she said.

She urged the federal gov-

ernment to prioritise increased funding for education, improve learning facilities, recruit more teachers and expand support for indigent students before embarking on major structural reforms.

On his part, Prof. Boniface Odeh the National President, National Parents Teachers Association of Nigeria (NAPTAN), said the association welcomed the proposal announced by the Minister of

Education.

Odeh described it as a reform capable of addressing longstanding challenges in the education sector.

He said the proposal would restructure the nation's education system from the current 6-3-3-4 model to a 6-6-4 structure.

Odeh said the proposed six-year uninterrupted secondary education would help reduce the high rate of student drop-

outs that usually occur after Junior Secondary School (JSS) three.

According to him, many students are unable to continue to Senior Secondary School due to placement challenges, transition costs and limited admission spaces.

He said that eliminating the transition between junior and senior secondary education would keep more children in school until completion.



INDUSTRIAL TOUR:

Cross-section of members of Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE) Ibeju Lekki Branch after the industrial tour of African Foundries Ltd, in Lagos.

Alia condemns attack on Benue community, orders security reinforcement**MAKURDI**

Governor Hyacinth Alia has condemned the attack on Saai Community in Mbajir Ward of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of the state.

Alia, in a statement issued on Wednesday by his Chief Press Secretary, Tersoo Kula, said the attack occurred in the early hours of July 1 and left scores of people dead, while many others sustained varying degrees of injuries.

Alia described the incident as a "senseless assault on innocent residents.

"This attack is an ugly, cowardly and unacceptable act of violence, particularly coming at a crucial time when our hard-working farmers who have returned to their ancestral lands are cultivating their farms.

"These enemies of progress have chosen to disrupt the peace and food security of our state by targeting the moment when crops are developing and the hope for a bountiful harvest is high," he said.

The governor expressed condolences to families of those killed and wished those receiving medical treatment a speedy recovery.

"My heart goes out to those who lost their loved ones as

well as other victims currently receiving medical attention; we pray for their swift and total recovery.

"I stand in solidarity with the entire Saai community during this period of immense grief.

"I urge the people of Katsina-Ala and Benue State in general not to be discouraged because this administration remains unwavering in its commitment to protecting your lives and your livelihoods.

"We will not allow the forces of darkness to drive you away from your lands or dampen your spirits. We are building a Benue where peace and justice prevail, and this setback will only strengthen our resolve," he assured.

Alia further assured residents of Katsina-Ala and the state at large that his administration remained committed to protecting lives and property.

He urged the people not to be discouraged or abandon their communities, stressing that the government would not allow criminal elements to force residents off their ancestral lands.

The governor directed security agencies to immediately deploy additional personnel to Saai and neighbouring communities to prevent further attacks.

FAR-LeaF, partners train 100 farmers, processors on climate-resilient tomato production**ZARIA (KADUNA)**

No fewer than 100 tomato farmers, processors, marketers, and other value-chain actors from the North-West have received training on climate-smart agriculture.

The training aims to improve production, reduce post-harvest losses, and strengthen resilience to climate change.

Speaking at the opening in Zaria on Wednesday, the workshop convener, Dr. Olojede-Latifat Abdulrahman, said the initiative was designed to address the growing threats climate change poses to tomato

production and the livelihoods of thousands who depend on the crop.

Abdulrahman described tomatoes as one of Nigeria's most important food crops, providing food, income, and employment.

She, however, lamented the increasing impact of erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, pests, diseases, and severe post-harvest losses across producing communities in the region.

Abdulrahman said strengthening the capacity of farmers and other value-chain actors

was essential to improving productivity, reducing waste, and creating employment opportunities.

She added that this would also ensure a sustainable supply of quality tomatoes across the country.

According to her, the workshop is part of a research project titled, "Climate Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity of Tomato Value Chain Actors."

"The project examines the impact of climate change on stakeholders and identifies practical adaptation measures

for building resilience," the convener said.

She said findings from the research would support evidence-based policymaking, strengthen agricultural extension services, and guide future interventions to help farmers, processors, marketers, and transporters adapt to changing climatic conditions.

Abdulrahman said participants would receive improved tomato seeds and plastic crates to facilitate the adoption of climate-smart production practices.

NDLEA takes custody of seized 6,778.5 kgs of Canadian Loud in Lagos**ABUJA**

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has taken custody of a staggering 6,778.5 Kilo Grammes of Canadian Loud, a strain of cannabis, recently intercepted in Lagos.

This is contained in a statement by the Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA, Mr Femi Babafemi on Wednesday in Abuja.

Speaking during the formal handing and taking over ceremony in Lagos, the NDLEA Chairman, retired, Brig.-Gen. Buba Marwa described the sei-

zure as a landmark moment in the history of inter-agency synergy in Nigeria.

Marwa was represented by the Agency's Director of Seaport Operations, Assistant Commander General of Narcotics (ACGN) Ibinabo Archie-Abia.

He said that the interception came during a joint examination of two containers by NDLEA operatives, men of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and other security agencies at the Apapa seaport.

"Through two major seizures recorded on June 15 and 16, we sent a clear and unequivocal message that we are more determined

than ever, especially to dismantle organised criminal syndicates and drug trafficking networks operating within and beyond our borders," Marwa said.

The NDLEA chairman said that the historic seizures were the culmination of painstaking months of intelligence-led operation spearheaded by the NDLEA Special Investigation Unit and the NDLEA Marine Intelligence Unit.

He said that the agency was working in close synchronisation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Nigeria Customs Service.

He said that to evade law

enforcement, the international drug syndicates utilised highly complex maritime routes.

He added that the NDLEA surveillance officers were however able to track the shipments across multiple continents before their successful interception.

According to him, It bears stating clearly how these consignments moved. The first container, CAAU 7569127, departed Toronto on April 16.

"In an apparent attempt to evade detection, it was moved by rail to Montreal before being loaded onto the vessel Ghallow Express.

Court grants Diezani's plea to present evidence of UK court judgment acquitting her

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Wednesday granted an application filed by former Minister of Petroleum, Diezani Alison-Madueke, to present evidence of her acquittal by the Southwark Crown Court, London in UK.

Justice Inyang Ekwo granted the motion on notice moved by Diezani's lawyer, Godwin Iyinbor, which was not challenged by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)'s counsel, Mofesomo Oyetibo, SAN.

The UK court had, on June 17, discharged and acquitted the embattled ex-minister in

respect of criminal allegations of bribery brought against her.

Diezani had, in a suit filed before Justice Ekwo, sought to reclaim her forfeited assets.

In the amended originating motion marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/21/2023, she sued the EFCC as sole respondent.

When the case was called on Wednesday, Iyinbor and Oyetibo regularised their processes filed.

Iyinbor, therefore, sought the leave of the court to move a motion on notice which was filed on June 25.

He said the motion sought the permission to file a further/ supplementary affidavit for the purpose of bringing fresh and

material development with respect to Diezani's acquittal by the UK court.

He said the application also sought an order to deem the affidavit as being properly filed.

Oyetibo acknowledged being served with the application.

The EFCC's lawyer said the motion was intended to waste the judicial time of the court.

"They just want to bring to your lordship's attention that the applicant has been exonerated in UK," Oyetibo said.

But Justice Ekwo asked if he planned to oppose it or not and the lawyer said they were not objecting the application.

The judge consequently

granted the motion as prayed and adjourned the matter until October 6 for hearing.

The judge held that on the next adjourned date, the preliminary objection and the substantive suit shall be taken together.

The 10-ground argument filed by Prof. Mike Ozekhome, Diezani said she commenced the suit challenging, among other things, the public notice issued by the EFCC for the public auction/sale of properties and/or personal effects affecting her proprietary rights.

"A major plank of the applicant's case before this honourable court is that the respondent had sought to visit the applicant with grave proprietary consequences without conviction, without fair hearing, and with-

out strict compliance with the relevant statutory provisions regulating forfeiture, management and disposal of properties.

The lawyer said Diezani filed her amended originating motion Feb. 19, 2025, pursuant to the leave of the court granted on Feb. 17, 2025.

"After the filing of the applicant's processes and while this suit was still pending before this honourable court, a subsequent and material event occurred, to wit: the applicant was acquitted by the Southwark Crown Court, London, United Kingdom, on

17th June, 2026, of criminal allegations of bribery brought against her, a proceeding of obvious material relevance to the allegations repeatedly referenced in relation to the applicant.

"The said subsequent development is material and relevant to the applicant's case, particularly as it relates to the issues of absence of conviction, fair hearing, due process, propriety of irreversible proprietary deprivation, and the need for strict compliance with statutory safeguards before disposal of properties affecting the applicant's proprietary rights."

Election timetable dispute: Court reserves judgment in INEC's appeals

ABUJA

The Court of Appeal in Abuja has reserved judgment in two separate appeals over dispute surrounding the timetable for the conduct of the 2027 elections released by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

A three-member justices of the appellate court, in a judgment delivered by Justice Adebukola Bankole on Wednesday, held that judgments would be reserved in the appeals.

According to her, the date of the judgement will be communicated to parties in the appeal.

Two political parties, Youth Party of Nigeria (YPN) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), had approached two Federal High Courts in Abuja, to nullify the timetable released for the 2027 elections by INEC.

While Justice Mohammed Umar of the Federal High Court granted the reliefs sought in the suit by YPN and nullified the election guidelines by INEC, Justice James Omotosho, in the suit filed by SDP, granted some reliefs in favour of the party and some others in favour of the electoral umpire.

Not satisfied by the two

judgements, INEC approached the Court of Appeal to set aside the judgment of Justice Umar and part of the judgment of Justice Omotosho which limited INEC's power regarding the conduct of elections.

During the hearing of the appeals, Dr Alex Izinyon, SAN, led two other SANs, from INEC to argued the appeals.

Izinyon, in his submission before the appellate court contended that INEC had the power as provided by the law under the provisions of the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act to issue guidelines for the elections.

"The constitution, specifically, empowered INEC to organise, supervise and undertake elections and other political activities as provided and that the timetable provided is in consonance with the power donated by the 1999 Constitution and the enabling act for INEC to do what it did in issuing elections timetables.

"The trial court erred in law because it failed to interpret, using the Supreme Court authorities and Court of Appeal decisions on the power already donated by the 1999 Constitution to INEC to arrange for elections including pre-election matters."



SOCIAL COHESION DIALOGUE 2026:

Vice Chairman, Board of Trustee, African Polling Institute (API), Dr Olusoji Adeniyi (L), presenting an award to the Father of the Day, Ogoga of Ikere-Ekiti/Chairman, Ekiti State Council of Traditional Rulers, His Royal Majesty Oba Samuel Adejimi Adu Alagbado, during the National Social Cohesion Dialogue 2026 and unveiling of the API 2026 Nigeria Social Cohesion Survey Report in Abuja. With them are Executive Director of API, Prof. Bell Ihua (2nd, R) and the representative of the Ford Foundation, Ms Onyinye Oyemobi.

Court sentences driver to death by hanging for killing octogenarian, wife

ABUJA

A Federal Capital Territory (FCT) High Court in Jabi, on Wednesday sentenced Jonathan Markus to death by hanging for killing his 82-year-old boss, Ezekiel Adebola and 67-year-old wife, Abiodun.

Delivering judgment, Justice Idris Mohammed held that based on the evidence before the court,

Markus committed the crime, adding that the testimony of the witnesses gave clear circumstances that led to the deaths.

Mohammed added that the video evidence played in the open court where Markus admitted he caused the death of the deceaseds, proved he did it.

"The prosecution counsel, Adama Musa has proven his case with circumstantial evi-

dence and i invoke the provisions of section 221 of the Penal Code and sentence Markus to death by hanging," he said.

Earlier the prosecution counsel said that Markus while armed with a jack knife, broke into the residence of the deceaseds at No. 46 Moses Adasu Close, Apo Legislative Quarters, Abuja and slit their throats with the knife which led to their death on April 1, 2024.

The offence, he said contravened the provisions of sections

220 (a), (b) of the Penal Code and punishable under 221.

The deceased's son, Seun Ezekiel called his father on the phone severally to no avail, got worried and called the Chief Security of the estate to go check on his parents.

Ezekiel authorised the security to break the door and check what was wrong and they did same and reported back to him that they found the lifeless bodies of his parents in the pool of their blood with slit throats.

2 men in court over alleged possession of motorcycle, breach of peace

ADO-EKITI

Two men, Jesutuase Ayoola (22) and Isiaka Abdulmaleek (21), were on Wednesday, arraigned before an Ado-Ekiti Magistrates' Court over an alleged possession of motorcycle and breach of peace.

The defendants, of unknown, addresses are facing a charge of possession of motor-

cycle and breach of peace.

They pleaded not guilty to the charge preferred against them.

The Prosecutor, Insp. Aina Ayodeji, told the the court that the defendants committed the offences on June 26 at about 12:30 p.m at Isato Area in Ado-Ekiti.

He alleged that the defendant, Ayoola, had in his possession, one dismantled mo-

torcycle which was reasonably suspected to be stolen.

Ayodeji also alleged that the defendants conducted themselves in a manner likely to cause the breach of peace.

He said that the offences contravened the provisions of Section 345 and 181(d) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021.

The prosecutor asked the court for an adjournment to

enable him to study the case file and present his witnesses.

Counsel to the defendants, Mr Hassan Salawu, urged the court to grant them bail, with a promise that they would not jump bail.

The Magistrate, Mr Olatomiwa Daramola, granted bail to the defendants in the sum of N50,000 with one surety each in like sum.

pretext of procuring traveling documents of United States of America for him and two members of his family.

"The defendant converted the money to personal use instead of fulfilling the agreement between them," he said.

The prosecutor said that offence contravened Section 419 of the Criminal Code, Laws of Ogun, 2006.

The Magistrate, Mrs O.O.Fadairo, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N500,000 with two sureties in like sum.

She said that the sureties must reside within the court's jurisdiction and be gainfully employed with evidence of tax payment to Ogun government.

She adjourned the case until July 18, for further hearing.

NEWS

Foreign

Three-year-old rescued and taken to hospital six days after Venezuela quake

A three-year-old boy has been pulled alive from the rubble six days after the devastating earthquakes in Venezuela, a Jordanian rescue team has said.

The child, named as Klieber Morán, was pulled from wreckage in La Guaira state, interim President Delcy Rodríguez said. Rodríguez described the child's rescue as a "source of hope for our people".

It comes as UN warned that tens of thousands of people were urgently in need of food and shelter.

The death toll from last week's quakes - with magnitudes of 7.2 and 7.5 - has risen to 1,943 with more than 10,000 people injured and tens of thousands more unaccounted for.

The massive tremors probably damaged or destroyed 58,870 buildings, according to

an initial assessment of satellite data from Nasa.

The Jordanian civil defence said Klieber had been given first aid treatment, taken to a hospital and his vital signs were good. He was being treated in the capital Caracas, Venezuelan Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez said.

The rescue comes well after the initial three-day period immediately after the quake during which experts say people trapped under debris have the best chance of being found alive.

La Guaira is one of the hardest hit areas, with many local people trying to carry out rescue efforts themselves.

The UN's refugee agency said on Tuesday that food shortages were widespread, basic services had broken down and communications had been largely severed in La Guaira.

"Community tensions are

rising as access to assistance remains constrained," the UNHCR said in a statement on its website.

Daniela Armas, an 18-year-old vendor in La Guaira who was injured falling from a motorbike when the quakes struck, told AFP that some supplies were being distributed "but sometimes people nearly kill each other for food... it's like a cockfight."

The UNHCR said that it needed an initial \$15m to "scale up protection, core relief items, and temporary shelter support for 30,000 earthquake-affected people over six months".

Meanwhile the World Health Organization (WHO) said health services were under "extreme pressure."

"There's an increased risk now of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases" such as measles and diphtheria due to low vaccination coverage,

WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier said.

The quakes damaged or destroyed 58,870 buildings, Nasa said.

Jorge Rodríguez said Klieber's rescue showed there was still hope of continuing to find people alive and that domestic and international teams were still searching through rubble. Shelters were already open in La Guaira and other states, he added.

International rescue teams from the US, Mexico and dozens of other countries searched for survivors with trained dogs and heavy equipment.

Some international aid is arriving in the country. A UN spokesperson said a 47-tonne shipment of humanitarian supplies arrived on Tuesday including emergency health kits for urgent medical care, supplies for safe births, newborn care and disease prevention.

Afghan Taliban launch strikes on border with Pakistan as tensions escalate

Afghanistan's Taliban regime said they have carried out strikes on targets along the border with Pakistan, injuring several people in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province.

Pakistan's military said it had shot down four rudimentary drones and warned any further provocation "would receive a befitting response". The BBC has been unable to independently confirm the attack.

The strikes come after Pakistan launched its own air strikes on Afghanistan on Sunday, killing 28 civilians, according to the UN.

Tensions have reignited in the region after months of relative calm. The two countries had agreed to a ceasefire in October following weeks of deadly clashes.

Pakistan has long accused Afghanistan of harbouring terrorists who carry out attacks on its soil, a claim the Taliban government rejects.

Kabul in turn has accused Islamabad of carrying out unprovoked attacks which kill civilians. Pakistan says it only targets militants.

Afghanistan said Pakistan's attack on Sunday hit civilian

homes and put the civilian death toll at 36, with more than 160 injured.

It described the attack as a "cowardly act" and an "atrocious".

Pakistan said it had carried out a ground operation along the border and air strikes targeting militant hideouts in Afghanistan's Paktia, Paktika and Kunar provinces.

The country's information minister, Attaullah Tarar, said 29 militants had been killed in an operation responding to "recent terrorist attacks against innocent people".

The BBC has not independently confirmed figures from either side.

Intermittent border clashes and air strikes in the area have killed dozens of people in recent months, according to officials in both countries.

In February, clashes between the two countries left dozens of people dead. In March, a Pakistani strike on a drug rehabilitation centre in Kabul killed hundreds.

Earlier in June, Pakistan launched deadly air strikes that killed 26 militants. Afghanistan's Taliban government said 13 people, mostly children, were also killed in the strikes.



VENEZUELA QUAKE:

The quakes damaged or destroyed 58,870 buildings, Nasa said.

A plane crashed into a tower in Beijing but China is not saying what happened

It has been four days since a small plane slammed into Beijing's tallest skyscraper, killing the pilot - the only person on board - and wounding 13 others, but it's still unclear why, and how, that happened.

A 60-word report detailing the basic facts in state-owned Beijing Daily is the only official statement China has published so far on the crash, which happened just a few kilometres from Zhongnanhai, the Communist Party's headquarters.

Friday's collision left holes on the side of the 109-storey CITIC Tower, which have since been boarded up. Dramatic footage of the incident has been scrubbed off the internet. At least three aviation firms tell the BBC they've been told to suspend light aircraft operations but declined to elaborate,

saying they had been instructed not to discuss it.

Amid the information vacuum, speculation is mounting as to how the aircraft managed to penetrate a city which has some of the world's strictest airspace controls.

China is no stranger to censorship. Criticism of the party, the country's leaders or the government is rare, and any discussions that seem critical, have political implications or touch upon sensitive issues quickly disappear.

But this time it has gone well beyond the obvious targets. Photographs and memes of the skyscraper, which are unrelated to Friday's incident, have also been removed from Chinese social media platforms.

Shaped like a Chinese wine vessel, the building is a local

crowd-puller. Many see it as a lucky charm and young people wishing for good fortune, from exam results to jobs, either stop by or share photos of it online, along with a quick prayer.

The censorship machinery kicked in so quickly and thoroughly this time possibly because Beijing's leadership is "still not exactly sure what happened", says Manya Koetsse, who runs the Eye on Digital China newsletter.

"This is a highly unusual incident," she says, adding that it calls into question government competence and threatens "important party narratives".

Even those aviation firms that confirmed to the BBC that authorities have grounded light aircraft operations since the incident did not wish to say more.

"We were told to not speak

about it. Please ask others," said a lady at a flight training institute in Beijing.

Another firm in Chengdu declined to specify which authority the instruction came from, and promptly ended the call.

Beijing enforces a permanent no-fly zone of roughly 100 sq km (39 sq miles) over its political core covering Tiananmen Square and Zhongnanhai, the heavily guarded compound where the country's top leaders live and work.

Describing the incident as a "massive security breach", China analyst Bill Bishop wrote on X: "Not many more seconds of flying and [the crash] could have been at Zhongnanhai... [That would have been] an earthquake in Beijing's security system."

Fire at Antwerp apartment block kills at least six

At least six people have died and several others have been injured in a fire that broke out in a 10-storey block of flats in Antwerp, Belgian police say.

Thick smoke was seen billowing from the eighth floor of the building in the Linkeroever district, after the fire broke out just before 10:00 (08:00 GMT) on Wednesday.

Dramatic video showed a man clambering from his balcony through a neighbour's window to escape the black smoke.

Police say more than 200 people live in the block and the fire department has evacuated 80 flats in the building.

They say the fire was caused by a technical problem on the ground floor.

"It has claimed a heavy toll here at Linkeroever," police spokeswoman Kim Bastiaens told Belgian public TV, adding that a number of people had suffered from serious and mi-

nor injuries.

Resident Geert Dewulf told VRT how thick smoke had stopped him getting out of his flat: "We barricaded ourselves into our flat and waited on the balcony. The fire brigade came to rescue us from the balcony 10 minutes or so later with their ladder."

Smoke was seen billowing from the top three floors of the 10-storey block

Firefighters said they were going from flat to flat to search for possible victims, explaining that the smoke had spread quickly through the building, making it harder to evacuate people.

Another man said his parents-in-law, one of them ex-mayor of Antwerp Bob Cools, had been successfully evacuated from the building and taken to hospital.

"We tried our utmost to save the cat but unfortunately in the end we were unable to," he said.



Fire at Antwerp apartment block

Dangerous heatwave to hit US ahead of holiday weekend

A prolonged and dangerous heatwave will intensify across a swathe of the US this week, ushering in scorching daytime heat, high humidity and stifling overnight temperatures, forecasters predict.

Some 120 million people nationwide are under an extreme heat warning as of Tuesday, as Americans head into the Fourth of July holiday weekend, the National Weather Service (NWS) said.

To the north, much of Canada began experiencing its own heatwave on Tuesday, with temperatures up to 37C (99F) expected in Ontario.

It comes after Europe's unprecedented early summer heatwave scorched several countries over recent days, with temperature records broken across the continent.

The heatwave is forecast to hit a large area of the country, from the US east coast to central areas of the country. Starting on Thursday, about 250 million people will be exposed to some dangerous level of heat, according to weather forecasters.

The extreme temperatures caused by a heat dome, will peak in the Midwest and Mississippi Valley by Thursday, the NWS predicted.

It will shift east into the Ohio Valley and East Coast on Thursday and into the holiday weekend, according to the weather service.

Temperatures ranging from 95F-105F combined with high humidity will bring the heat in-

dex to 100F-115F.

Daily temperature records are expected to be broken on Thursday and Friday, with some monthly and all-time records possible.

Officials are warning people living in the affected areas to limit time outdoors, stay hydrated and ensure access to air conditioning or cooling centres.

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani activated a heat emergency plan with hundreds of cooling centres set to open across the city on Wednesday.

Detroit, Michigan, where temperatures could reach 100F, opened a dozen recreation centres with air conditioning for residents to cool down.

With the intense weather, some World Cup matches could have heat indexes exceeding the threshold where global players' union Fifpro considers conditions to be too unsafe for play.

The hottest weather will be in Texas, which will mostly hit fans travelling to and from the air-conditioned stadiums in Houston and Arlington.

This may also be the case for the England v DR Congo match on Wednesday in Atlanta, Georgia.

Philadelphia, meanwhile, is moving parts of its Fifa World Cup Fan Festival into cooled tents on Thursday and Friday.

Extreme heat in the US could make World Cup matches 'unsafe' this week

Farming worries after India records driest June in over a decade

India has recorded its driest June in 12 years, and the fifth-driest since nationwide rainfall records began in 1901, according to the country's weather department.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also forecast below-normal rainfall for July, raising concerns over the progress of crop sowing this year.

Government data shows the area planted with summer crops until the end of June is down by nearly 23% from the corresponding period in 2025, with rice sowing falling by a quarter.

Millions of farmers rely on seasonal monsoon rains to sow their crops and a shortfall or delay significantly affects their output.

Data released by the federal agriculture ministry showed farmers had sown summer crops across 18.27 million hectares till 30 June, down from 23.65 million hectares during the same period last year.

India's main summer crops include rice, pulses, coarse cereals, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane and jute. These crops depend heavily on the southwest monsoon, which normally provides about 70% of India's

annual rainfall.

The rainy season usually reaches the southern state of Kerala around 1 June before moving northwards across the country.

This year, the onset was delayed by three days and the monsoon's advance slowed for around two weeks across parts of western India, delaying field preparation and planting in several agricultural regions.

Rice planting has slowed more sharply. Farmers have planted the crop on 2.58 million hectares so far this season, compared with 3.44 million hectares a year earlier - a fall of about 25%.

Nearly half of the country's net sown farmland has no assured irrigation and depends largely on rainfall, making the timing and spread of the monsoon critical for millions of farmers.

Experts say poor monsoon rains will also reduce domestic oilseed production, increasing the country's reliance on imported edible oils.

To be sure, the eventual impact on harvests remains uncertain. The monsoon season continues until September, leaving time for rainfall to recover and farmers to make up some of the delayed sowing.



SUDANESE COMMITTED CRIMES:

More than 6,000 people were killed in el-Fasher last year, the UN says

Sudan's RSF committed crimes against humanity in el-Fasher, Amnesty says

Sudanese paramilitaries committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing during their campaign to seize the city of el-Fasher last year, a rights group report says.

The siege and takeover of the city in the western region of Darfur marked one of the bloodiest episodes in Sudan's civil war between the Sudan's army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

"The RSF's crimes included murder, forcible transfer, imprisonment, torture, rape, sexual slavery, other forms of sexual violence, enslavement, extermination and persecution," said an Amnesty investigation released on Wednesday.

The RSF has not commented on the Amnesty report but has denied previous such accusations.

Sudan remains locked in a three-year power struggle between the regular army and the RSF paramilitaries. The ongoing civil war has killed hundreds of thousands of people, and forced more than 14 million people from their homes.

Widespread sexual violence against men, women and children is being used as a weapon

of war, the UN says.

Both the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) have been accused of war crimes, which they deny.

After being forced out of the capital, Khartoum, in March last year, the RSF shifted its focus to consolidating its control of the western Darfur region by capturing el-Fasher, and extending its reach into the Kordofan states in the south of the country.

'Our job is only killing' - how Sudan's brutal militia carried out a massacre

Amnesty believes RSF fighters committed grave human rights violations in and around el-Fasher during its 18-month siege of the city.

"Children were not collateral damage of this violence - often, they were deliberately targeted and have suffered immensely. They have been killed, injured, raped, abducted, and forcibly recruited on a massive scale," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general.

In its report that details dozens of accounts of more than 200 survivors, Amnesty said evidence gathered "may be rel-

evant to the crime of genocide".

"They tied me up and beat me with sticks and the back of an AK-47. Then one of them approached on a camel and... just shot me in the leg," said a 17-year-old who was attacked in Abu Zerega, a town south of el-Fasher.

The teenage boy, who now uses crutches to walk, said eight of his cousins, including four boys aged between 11 and 17, were killed in the same attack.

Amnesty researchers, who reviewed 89 open-source videos and carried out extensive analysis of satellite imagery from North Darfur, say many victims were targeted and killed because of their ethnic identity.

Arab fighters from the RSF went after members of local non-Arab communities, according to the rights group, often using ethnic slurs translated as "slave" or "servant".

Arab militias associated with the RSF have a long history of violence against black African groups in Darfur.

In the case of el-Fasher, the armed groups defending the city came predominantly from the Zaghawa ethnic group, and RSF fighters targeted Zaghawa

civilians as well as the fighters, says Amnesty.

Witnesses also spoke about mass killings, sexual violence, and the deliberate targeting of children.

Callamard, the Amnesty secretary general, said the "world was warned of the horrors that civilians in el-Fasher confronted as the RSF laid siege to the city".

"It is a stain on the conscience of humanity," added Callamard, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Sudan, and for the urgent deployment of an international force to protect civilians.

Amnesty says it has identified RSF commanders responsible for violations of international law and is stressing the need for accountability.

The RSF leadership has acknowledged some violations occurred and said it was investigating them, but insists the scale of the atrocities is being exaggerated.

The report adds to mounting evidence of atrocities in el-Fasher, which the UN said early last year bore the "hallmarks of genocide."

Zelensky in Dublin as Ireland begins EU presidency term

An event marking the start of Ireland's presidency of the Council of the EU has taken place in Dublin.

The event was attended by Taoiseach (Irish PM) Micheál Martin, as well as Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The presidency, which will last until December 2026, means that Ireland will guide negotiations and broker agreement between member states.

It will be the eighth time Ireland has taken on the role since they joined the EEC in 1973. Ireland last held the role in 2013.

PA Media A large crowd seated in an urban area. In

front of the crowd there is an Irish flag and an EU flag. Many of the crowd are wearing suits. The sky is overcast, and the area is surrounded by red brick buildings. PA Media

The presidency was previously held by Cyprus.

Martin began the event by welcoming European Council President António Costa and Ukraine's president Vladimir Zelensky.

He added that Ireland's "emergence as a modern open economy and society is deeply intertwined" with its membership of the EU.

Martin said Ireland has "always been a deeply European

country", and described the country as a "beacon of hope for the transformative potential of the European appeal".

He added that Ireland will "stand unswervingly by the people of Ukraine".

Martin said Ireland is "determined to ensure Ukraine get the peace and justice they deserve".

The event opened with a flag-raising ceremony while the Irish national anthem and the European anthem were performed.

Zelensky thanked Ireland for its "attention to Ukraine" and congratulated the country on its presidency, which he described as a "great responsibility".

He added that Ireland had stood by Ukraine from the "very beginning" of Russia's invasion.

"We must protect lives and our values from Russia's anti-European aggression, and when we face many other challenges, both in international affairs and at the national level," Zelensky said.

"The EU has an opportunity and responsibility to be a force that brings more stability."

European Council President António Costa said that Ireland has "consistently been at the forefront" of the effort to uphold the "principles at the core of international rules-based order".



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Edo Govt takes football devt campaign to church as CFL organisers seek Sports Commission's collaboration

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

Edo State government has thrown its weight behind the proposed Christian Football League in Edo State as part of its determination and youth empowerment drive.

The Special Adviser to Governor Monday Okpebholo on Youth Mobilisation and Strategy Hon Christopher Udobor Iyase made it known when he led the Christian Football League organizing body on a meeting with the Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin.

Hon Udobor who told the Sports Commission chairman that the purpose of their visit was to intimate him with the plan to organize Christian Football League in the state beginning from July 25, 2026 revealed that government wants to take

advantage of the youth population in the Church to spread empowerment packages. The Youth Mobilisation S.A said he has taken interest in the proposed Christian Football League in the state because he sees it as a platform to create opportunity for some young persons.

"I have been following the Christian Football body for some time now and we have taken interest in it because my principal is a believer and we believe that almost all the youth in the state go to church. The population of youth in the Church is huge and as we have rolled out our youth empowerment programme, involving skill acquisition, I think supporting Christian Football League will give us the opportunity to extend our empowerment to more people through this channel.

The population of youth in the Church is huge and as we have rolled out our youth empowerment programme, involving skill acquisition, I think supporting Christian Football League will give us the opportunity to extend our empowerment to more people through this channel.



Executive chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele with the SA to Governor Monday Okpebholo on Youth Mobilisation and Strategy Hon Christopher Udobor Iyase

Nilayo Sports Management Ltd. announces date for 2nd Enugu City International Marathon

Nilayo Sports Management Limited, Nigeria's leading sports marketing and event management company, has announced that the 2nd edition of the Enugu City International Marathon will be held on Saturday, August 29, 2026.

Following the successful inaugural edition, the marathon returns with renewed ambition to further establish Enugu State as a destination for international road racing, sports tourism, and athletic excellence.

The 2026 edition will be staged under the theme, "Tomorrow Runs Here," reflecting the event's commitment to youth empowerment, talent discovery, sustainable sports development, and the promotion of Enugu as a growing hub for global sporting events and economic activity.

The Enugu City International Marathon is designed to identify and develop indigenous long-distance running talent while attracting elite athletes from across Nigeria, Africa, and the international athletics community. The race route has been carefully designed to showcase Enugu's cultural heritage, modern infrastructure, and unique landscape, providing participants and spectators with a world-class race experience.

Commenting on the announcement, the Managing Director of Nilayo Sports Management Limited, Mrs Yetunde Olopade said:

"The Enugu City International Marathon is more than an elite road race; it is a strategic platform for talent development, economic

growth, and destination branding. Under this year's theme, 'Tomorrow Runs Here,' we are creating opportunities for future champions while demonstrating the transformative impact of sports as a driver of social and economic development.

"As the technical consultants for the event, we are working closely with the Enugu State Government, the event owner, under the leadership of the Honourable Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Hon. Lloyd Ekwereamadu, to deliver a seamless, secure, and internationally compliant marathon.



ENUGU CITY INTERNATIONAL MARATHON

NSC charges newly inaugurated para Sports Federation boards on performance, accountability

Shehu Dikko, Chairman of the the National Sports Commission (NSC) has charged the newly elected members of boards of 10 National Para Sports Federations to demonstrate leadership driven by action, accountability, and results over the next four years.

Dikko stated this at the inauguration of members of the boards at the Moshood Abiola National Stadium, yesterday in Abuja.

Dikko urged the new executives to justify the confidence reposed in them by focusing on purposeful leadership and tangible impact

"My job is basically to support

and endorse the newly elected leadership, while that sports development must go beyond words and be anchored on passion, dedication, and measurable results," he said.

He charged the federations to ensure accountability in their respective federations, noting that leaders must not only ask for support; they must also show what they are bringing to the table.

Dikko also called for unity and inclusiveness in sports administration, adding that nobody should be excluded as everyone has a role to play.

Also speaking, NSC Director-General Bukola Olopade, charged the newly inaugurated boards to uphold integrity, innovation, and commitment in advancing para sports in Nigeria.



SHEHU DIKKO,



BETHEL KALU

Enyimba FC appoints Bethel Kalu as media officer

Enyimba International Football Club of Aba has appointed sports journalist and the secretary of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) Abia chapter, Bethel Kalu as its new Media Officer.

The appointment was confirmed by the club management under the leadership of FIFA Ambassador and former Super Eagles striker, Nwankwo Kanu on Tuesday as part of the ongoing reform in the club.

David Orji served the club as the Media Officer in 2025/2026 season.

Orji managed the club public relations, press releases

and official club communication for the Aba - based people's Elephant.

The reform is aimed at repositioning the nine-time Nigeria Premier Football league (NPFL) champions ahead of the new season.

Kalu is widely regarded within the Nigeria sports community as a seasoned journalist with extensive experience covering Enyimba and Nigeria football.

Over the years, he has built a reputation for his commitment to sports journalism and advocacy for improved access and welfare of journalist covering the NPFL.

Zubair urges fellow coaches to build better relationship with media

The Technical Adviser, Telecom FC of Egypt, Coach Aliyu Zubair, has urged Nigerian coaches to utilise good media relations as an essential part of modern coaching.

Zubair gave the advice while speaking at an Advancement Seminar for Coaches organised by the Kwara chapter of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN).

The former El-Kanemi Warriors' gaffer who was one of the facilitators, said media plays a vital role in promoting coaches and their teams by creating brand awareness, disseminating accurate information and documenting their achievements.

He, however, urged coaches to always prepare themselves psychologically before responding to questions from journalists.

"Journalists ask the questions that football fans want answered, and coaches should not take such questions personally.

"The media represents coaches by informing the public about what they do. Rather than seeing journalists as opponents, coaches should see them as partners," he said.

He advised coaches to build strong synergy with their players and maintain emotional discipline, particularly after matches.



ALIYU ZUBAIR



2026 World Cup: France overpower Sweden 3-0 as Mbappe shines with brace

France delivered a commanding display on Tuesday, defeating Sweden 3-0 in their 2026 FIFA World Cup Round of 32 clash.

The victory secured France's place in the Round of 16 after a dominant performance from

Didier Deschamps' side.

Les Bleus controlled possession from the opening whistle, forcing Sweden into a defensive approach throughout the contest.

France moved the ball quickly and created several chances but struggled to find

the breakthrough early

Their persistence finally paid off in the 45th minute through captain Kylian Mbappe's clinical finish.

Mbappe converted Ousmane Dembele's pass, giving France a deserved lead before the interval.

The goal reflected France's first-half superiority and boosted their confidence heading into the second period.

France resumed after the break with greater intensity and continued dictating the match tempo.

Their pressure produced another goal in the 53rd minute when Bradley Barcola doubled their advantage.

Michael Olise supplied an

excellent assist, allowing Barcola to calmly beat the Swedish goalkeeper.

Sweden tried to respond by pushing forward, but France's disciplined defence remained difficult to penetrate.

The French backline stayed organised, while their forwards continued threatening whenever they launched attacks.

Mbappe completed the victory in the 74th minute with his second goal of the match.

Olise again created the opportunity, delivering another superb assist for the French captain's composed finish.

The brace confirmed Mbappe's influence as he led France's attack with pace and precision.



KINGSLEY JAMES AWODI

New dawn as Awodi emerges Para Powerlifting Federation President

Philanthropist Kingsley James Awodi has been elected the new President of the Para Powerlifting Federation, ushering in what stakeholders say will be a transformative period for the sport in Nigeria.

The election was conducted at the VIP Lounge of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium in Abuja, with delegates from across the country in attendance.

Awodi, who has been a consistent supporter of para-athletes over the years, was returned unopposed after securing all 12 votes from the congress. His nomination was described by delegates as a reflection of the trust and confidence reposed in him, given his track record of financial, physical, and moral support to the national team.

The young and eloquent entrepreneur has been closely linked with the growth of para powerlifting in recent years. Beyond sponsorship, he has been present at training camps, national trials, and international competitions, where he provided direct encouragement to athletes. That visibility and commitment ultimately positioned him as the natural choice to lead the federation.

He will now steer the affairs of the federation for the next four years. He will be deputised by Mr. Patrick Akukeke, M.O.N, who was also elected unopposed as Vice President.

The new executive is expected to be inaugurated later today.

Speaking after his election, Awodi thanked the leadership of the NSC and promised a leadership style built on inclusion, innovation, and accountability.

"I want to appreciate the leadership of the NSC under the leadership of Mallam Shehu Dikko and Hon. Bukola Olopade for giving us enabling environment to thrive.

"We are coming on board to carry everybody along," he told reporters. "Para powerlifting has given Nigeria so much glory on the world stage, and it is time we build a system that sustains that success. We will bring innovation to the federation and move beyond the old ways of doing things."

A key part of his agenda, Awodi said, will be a deliberate focus on youth development and athlete welfare. He noted that many of Nigeria's medal-winning para powerlifters are now aging out of competition, and the federation must act quickly to bridge the gap.

"We are going to encourage young and upcoming athletes so we can gradually replace the aging athletes with fresh talent," he added. "We will create more grassroots programmes, training centres, and competitions that will give young lifters a clear pathway to the national team."

2026 World Cup: Norway edge Ivory Coast 2-1

Norway defeated Ivory Coast 2-1 in their FIFA World Cup Round of 32 clash, booking a place in the last 16.

Both teams showed attacking intent in a closely contested knockout encounter.

Norway started strongly and took the lead in the 39th minute through Antonio Nusa's composed finish.

Nusa converted after receiving a precise pass from captain Martin Odegaard, giving Norway the advantage before half-time.

Ivory Coast responded after the break and increased pressure as they searched for an equaliser.

Their efforts succeeded in the 74th minute when Amad Diallo levelled the score after Nicolas Pepe's assist.

Diallo's goal revived Ivorian hopes as the Elephants pushed forward looking for a comeback victory.

Norway regained control late on and found the winner through Erling Haaland in the 86th minute.

Haaland finished clinically after Patrick Berg's pass to restore Norway's lead and settle the match.

Ivory Coast continued attacking but Norway defended firmly to secure progression into the next round.

Norway captain, Martin Odegaard, praised the team's determination, saying, "We stayed focused and fought until the final whistle."

The victory highlighted Norway's ability to handle pressure, while Ivory Coast exited after a spirited performance.



ERLING HAALAND CELEBRATE WITH TEAM MATE

2026 World Cup: Kane's late brace fires England into last round of 16

England defeated DR Congo 2-1 in an entertaining Round of 32 clash at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, as cap-

tain Harry Kane struck twice late on to complete a dramatic comeback and send the Three Lions into the Round of 16.

The DR Congo made a dream start to the contest, stunning England with an early breakthrough in the seventh minute.

Brian Cipenga found the back of the net after being set up by Chancel Mbemba, giving the African side an unexpected lead and putting immediate pressure on the Three Lions.

England struggled to respond for much of the match as DR Congo defended with determination and discipline, frustrating their opponents with organised defending and quick counter-attacks.



HARRY KANE WITH JUDE BELLINGHAM

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to Officially Send off Team Nigeria to 2026 Commonwealth Games today

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will, on Today, send off Team Nigeria, ahead of the contingent's departure to the United Kingdom for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

The send-off event, which will take place at the Presidential Villa, is part of the Presi-

dent's show of support for the Nigerian contingent before they depart the shores of the nation to begin the final phase of preparations before the Games.

President Tinubu is expected to charge the athletes and officials to compete with honour and resilience for which

Nigerians are renowned.

Nigeria is looking to build on its impressive outing at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, where the country emerged as the highest-ranked African nation on the medals table after winning 35 medals comprising 12 gold, 9 silver and 14 bronze.

Team Nigeria has been in camp in Abuja, where athletes have been undergoing intensive training in preparation for the Games. The contingent is scheduled to depart Nigeria on Friday for Aberdeen, Scotland, to undertake a three-week training camp before proceeding to Glasgow, the host city of

the Games.

Nigeria will compete in 10 sports at the Commonwealth Games, with a contingent of 74 athletes expected to represent the country.

The 2026 Commonwealth Games will take place from July 23 to August 2, bringing together athletes from across

the Commonwealth to compete for honours in various sporting events.

President Tinubu has previously expressed confidence in Nigeria's ability to excel on the international stage and has constantly assured athletes of the Federal Government's support at all times