

'Drill or drop': FG to return 13 oil blocks to bid basket

ABUJA

The Federal Government says 13 oil and gas blocks in the ongoing 2025 Licensing Round will be returned to the bid basket, while successful bidders must commence development promptly or forfeit the assets under its "drill or drop" policy.

Mrs Onitsemeyiwa Eyesan, Commission Chief Executive (CCE), Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja at the Commercial Bid Conference for the Nigeria 2025 Licensing Round.

Eyesan said the 2025 Licensing Round attracted nearly 300 expressions of interest, with 286 companies applying for prequalification.

According to her, 196 companies were prequalified, while 143 firms eventually submitted 200

technical and commercial bids covering 37 oil and gas assets.

"Thirteen blocks have been withdrawn from the current exercise and will be returned to the bid basket for future licensing rounds," she said.

The commission chief executive said the commercial bid opening would determine the successful bidders, stressing that assets would be awarded to credible operators with the

technical and financial capacity to develop them rather than those offering the highest bids.

She said successful bidders must satisfy all post-award conditions within 90 days, warning that failure to do so would invalidate the award.

Eyesan added that undeveloped assets would be withdrawn in line with the commission's "drill or drop" policy.

She also disclosed that President Bola Tinubu had approved the commencement of the 2026 Licensing Round and encouraged unsuccessful bidders to participate in the next exercise.

According to her, the licensing round is part of the Federal Government's efforts to expand investment opportunities and deepen Nigeria's integration into the global energy market through a transparent and competitive process.

The 50 oil and gas blocks were offered in the 2025 Licensing Round across different terrains.

The assets comprise 16 Niger Delta onshore blocks, 18 Niger Delta shallow water blocks, one Niger Delta deep offshore block, three Benin Basin onshore blocks, four Anambra Basin onshore blocks, four Chad Basin onshore blocks and four Benue Trough onshore blocks.

CONTINUES ON PG 4

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That The People May Know

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Reps invite Minister, NSA over fake agency investigation

ABUJA

House of Representatives Ad-hoc committee investigating the circumstances surrounding 'Presidential Foreign Investment Promotion Council (PFIPC)' on Tuesday invited the Foreign Affairs Minister and the Na-

tional Security Adviser (NSA) for clarifications on the existence of the fake Agency.

The Chairman of the Ad-hoc Committee, Rep. Yusuf Gagdi handed down the invitations during an investigative session on the matter at the National Assembly, Abuja.

Gagdi who interrogated the

existence of the fake Agency, said that its diplomatic engagement with some embassies was embarrassment to Nigeria.

He expressed dismay over the inability of the foreign Affairs Ministry to effectively detect the existence of the fake Agency.

"The Minister of Foreign Affairs is hereby invited to appear

on Thursday, July 23.

"The National Security Adviser is also invited to appear before this committee to explain why it did not go further in inquiries after receiving letter from the Foreign Affairs Ministry labeling the agency fake," he said.

Responding, the Permanent

Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador, Dunoma Ahmed acknowledged receipt of letters from the fake Agency for engagement with diplomats.

Ahmed explained that upon reception of the letters, the Ministry carried out inquiries into its originality and discovered that the agency was fake.

According to him, we, therefore, wrote to the Office of the National Security Adviser informing them that the agency was fake.

Adeyemi Matthew, the impostor Director General of

PFIPC has been arrested and detained in Osun.

His arrest followed a warrant issued on by the Federal High Court, Abuja, after he failed to appear at a hearing to face charges of forgery and impersonation before the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

The reports on the fake agency have been trending in media since President Bola Tinubu ordered a corruption investigation into the fake agency.



THE PROGRAMME:

From left: Chairman, House Ad-hoc Committee to Investigate the Unestablished Presidential Foreign Investment Promotion Council (PFIPC) in the Federal Budget Framework, Rep. Yusuf Gagdi; members of the committee, Rep. Aminu Balele, and Rep. Abubakar Fulata, during the committee's investigative hearing with heads of MDAs, at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Tuesday.

Edo Assembly Passes Revenue Harmonization Bill

RAYMOND OSEGBE

BENIN CITY

Edo State House of Assembly, yesterday, unanimously passed the State Revenue Harmonization Bill after a third reading towards aggregating revenue collection in the state to a Single Treasury Account (TSA) to enhance transparency and accountability.

Following the passage of the 'game changer' bill after a careful consideration by House Committee of the whole, the Speaker of the House, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, directed

that clean copies of the passed bills be sent to the State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, for his assent.

Also during yesterday Plenary, the Speaker frowned at the irregular payments of local security personnel across the state and directed all chairmen of local councils furnish the House with the payments schedule of the personnel.

He warned that the directive should be effected on or before Friday, July 24, 2026, through Hon. Addeh Isibor, Chairman, House Committee on Local Government.

ICPC handover forfeited 27.9 hectare of \$65m housing project to FMBN

—Pg 2

Minister celebrates NBA's first elected female president

—Pg 3

Trump slaps 50% tariffs on Canada and Carney vows to 'intensify' trade talks

—Pg 8

Ekiti FA declares support for Gusau's second-term bid as NFF president

—Pg 11

NEWS



A cross section of the choristers at the two-day event.



Pastor Courage Walter Aburime, Special Adviser, Women-In- Christ (left) and Dr. Antonia Chime of Assembly of God (Oyaikhilome Temple) during the programme.



DELIVERING A MESSAGE:

Apostle Dr. Sule Faraday Azekhuman, Special Adviser to the Governor of Edo State on Religious Affairs and the Chaplain of Edo State House Chapel delivering a message at the programme.

Okpebholo, an epitome of love, says Azekhuman

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Special Adviser to the Governor of Edo State on Religious Affairs, Apostle Sule Faraday Azekhuman, has described Gov. Monday Okpebholo, as “an epitome of love,” whose compassion and people-oriented governance are evident in ongoing developmental projects across the state.

Azekhuman made the assertion during a message during a programme tagged: “The Power of Love and Godly Relationship as of Old,” held at the Festival Hall of Government House, following a night vigil on Sunday at the Chapel, July 19, 2026.

The Special Adviser, who doubles as Chaplain of the Government House Chapel, said genuine love and godly re-

lationships remain critical pillars for building communities and national development.

While calling on believers to emulate Christ's example in their homes and public life, he urged Christians to return to biblical standards of love, unity and righteousness for stronger families and society.

Appreciating individuals and groups that contributed to the success of the programme

that drew worshippers, government officials, clergy and guests across the state, he commended Pastor Courage Walter-Aburime, Special Adviser to the Governor on Women - In - Christ, for her support and active role.

The event ended with prayers for peace, unity and progress in Edo State, with participants charged to practice love in daily living.

ICPC handover forfeited 27.9 hectare of \$65m housing project to FMBN

ABUJA

The Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offence commission has handed over 27.92 hectares of forfeited land linked to a diverted 65 million dollars housing project to the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN).

The Chairman of the ICPC, Dr Musa Aliyu, SAN, said this

while handing over the land located on Kubuwa-Dei-Dei Expressway Abuja, to the Managing Director of the FMBN, Mr Shehu Osidi on Tuesday in Abuja.

The ICPC boss said that the parcel of land was meant for the construction of 962 housing units in Kaba District, Abuja.

Aliyu said that the handover followed a final forfeiture order

granted by the Federal High Court, Abuja, on Dec. 11, 2025

According to him, the event marked an important step in the recovery and return of public assets in Nigeria.

“The two plots of land, known as the site of the proposed Goodluck Jonathan Estate, comprises Plot No. 5 measuring 122,015.80 square metres and Plot No. 4

measuring 157,198.30 square metres in Cadastral Zone D12.”

Aliyu also explained that the project was originally conceived in 2012 by FMBN at a cost of 65 million dollars and awarded to Good Earth Power Nigeria Limited in partnership with an American firm.

“ECO Bank Plc provided the loan of 65 million dollars in August 2012. The bank provided a partial guarantee for the loan, with an 18-month tenor, to build 962 houses on land covering roughly 27.92 hectares.

Higher Education in Africa: Mastercard Foundation inaugurates \$500m prize

The Mastercard Foundation has inaugurated the Africa Higher Education for Transformation (AHEFT) Prize, backed by a 500 million U.S. dollar, to strengthen higher education institutions across Africa and expand opportunities for young people.

The foundation disclosed this in a statement made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Abuja.

It said that the AHEFT Prize, which would run for the next decade, is the first annual award of its kind dedicated to recognising African higher education institutions.

The institutions affected are those driving sustained, institution-wide transformation while improving education, research, innovation and employment outcomes.

The foundation identified the inaugural recipients of the prize to include Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia; the International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE), Burkina Faso; Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana; Muni University, Uganda; and the University of Rwanda.

It said each institution would receive three million U.S. dollars to scale initiatives aimed at expanding access to quality education and improving opportunities for young Africans.

It added that the prize would recognise institutions making transformational impact in areas such as teaching and learning, research and innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Others are transitions to employment, climate and environment, agriculture and agri-food systems, health, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, digital technology and artificial intelligence.

According to the foundation, at least 150 higher education institutions across Africa are expected to benefit from the initiative over the next decade.

Commenting on the initiative, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mastercard Foundation, Ms Sewit Ahderom, said the prize was designed to strengthen African universities as drivers of innovation and economic opportunity.

“For 20 years, we have seen African institutions rethink what higher education can deliver.

“The AHEFT Prize turns that proof into momentum.

“We are backing homegrown excellence with a decade-long commitment so that universities across the continent become engines of opportunity for millions of young people,” she said.

Also speaking, the Executive Director, Higher Education Initiatives at the Mastercard Foundation, Dr John Nkengasong, said African universities should be repositioned as catalysts for human capital development and economic transformation.

Nkengasong said higher education institutions must go beyond teaching to become direct pathways to employment, entrepreneurship and inclusive growth for young people across the continent.

He noted that the inaugural laureates would be formally honoured at the Higher Education Transformation Convening scheduled for Sept. 22 in Accra, Ghana.

He said that the foundation awards would form part of its Young Africa Works strategy, which aims to enable 30 million young people, particularly women, access dignified and fulfilling work by 2030.

NEWS**2027: Edo APC Women leaders pledge support for Tinubu****ABUJA**

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has reaffirmed the unwavering commitment of Governor Monday Okpebholo to the ideals and vision of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI) of the First Lady of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, noting that the people have continued to benefit from these transformative programmes.

Mrs. Anani made the remarks while receiving the Edo

State APC Women Leaders, led by the State Woman Leader, Lady Betty Benson Okoebor, during a courtesy visit to her office at Government House, Benin City.

She noted that the Edo APC Woman Leader, the three Senatorial Women Leaders, and the 18 Local Government Area Woman Leaders had unanimously declared their unwavering support for the re-election of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2027.

According to her, the women leaders also pledged to embark on extensive grassroots mobilisation across Edo State in

support of the All Progressives Congress (APC), expressing confidence in delivering overwhelming votes for President Tinubu and all APC candidates in the 2027 general elections.

The First Lady stressed the importance of mentoring young women in politics, urging female leaders to intentionally nurture and prepare the next generation of women for leadership.

"Mentoring women in politics is essential. We must deliberately mobilise and mentor younger girls so they can grow into capable leaders. We should all ask ourselves how many

young women we supported during the APC Primaries" she said.

She advocated for stronger legal backing for the 35 per cent affirmative action for women, noting that its implementation should be supported by legislation and policy to guarantee greater representation of qualified, educated, and competent women in governance and decision making positions.

She commended the unity and cooperation among the APC women leaders across the state and encourage them to sustain the spirit of harmony and teamwork.

The All Progressive Congress APC Woman Leader, Edo State, Lady Betty Benson Okoebor, reaffirmed the readiness of APC women across the three Senatorial Districts to intensify grassroots mobilisation in support of the party and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Lady Okoebor noted that women's inclusion in governance remains essential, calling for greater opportunities for competent and qualified women to serve in strategic positions at the local government level as Secretaries and Special Advisers. to Local Govern-

ments Council.

She maintained that empowering women with leadership responsibilities would strengthen governance, enhance service delivery, and promote inclusive development across Edo State.

Other dignitaries present at the meeting included the APC State Deputy Woman Leader, Hajia Aminatu Mohammed Jamiu; Edo North Senatorial Woman Leader, Dame Stella Aghombo; Edo Central Senatorial Woman Leader, Ogente Maria; and Edo South Senatorial Woman Leader, Lady (Mrs.) Innah V. Ibie amongst others.

**COURTESY VISIT:**

2027: The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, receiving Edo APC Women Leaders led by Lady Betty Benson Okoebor, on a courtesy visit in Government House, Benin City.

Youths urged to shun drug abuse, crime, embrace positive values**BENIN CITY**

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

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

House, Benin City.

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

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

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

and a brighter future," she said.

The First Lady also highlighted the importance of environmental sanitation, calling for continuous advocacy to instill a culture of cleanliness among school children and communities across the state.

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

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

humanitarian interventions, describing them as impactful and inspiring.

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

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

Edo First Lady calls for collective action against insecurity, commends CJTF**BENIN CITY**

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has emphasized that security is a collective responsibility, calling on all citizens to play active roles in safeguarding lives and property across the state.

She made the remarks while receiving members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Edo State Command, during a courtesy visit at Government House, Benin City.

She commended the dedication and sacrifices of the CJTF in supporting security operations across the 18 Local Government Areas of the state, describing their commitment as invaluable despite the challenges they face.

According to her, the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, through the SHINE Agenda, has continued to prioritize the safety of residents by introducing initiatives, including a whistleblower system, to strengthen intelligence gathering and aid the tracking of kidnappers and other criminal elements.

"I sincerely appreciate all that you do across the 18 Local Government Areas. It is not an easy task, and your commitment to the security of our communities is commendable," she said.

Earlier, the State Commander of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Edo State Command, Mr. Ehiaghe Akhere Best, said the organization voluntarily supports security operations in several communities across the state in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies.

He appealed to Edo State Government for greater support to enable the CJTF carry out its responsibilities more effectively.

"We operate in many communities on a voluntary basis and work closely with the Nigeria Police and other security agencies. We are committed to serving the people and ensuring the safety of our communities," he said.

Mr. Best noted that the group currently lacks essential operational equipment, including vehicles and communication tools, stressing that members often patrol forests and remote areas without arms or adequate logistics.



Anani Lady Betty Benson Okoebor (left) and First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo.

Okpebholo Anani intensifies campaign against obstetric fistula**BENIN CITY**

The Coordinator Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has reaffirmed her commitment to promoting the health and well-being of women, describing women's health as a priority under the SHINE Agenda of Governor Monday Okpebholo.

Mrs. Anani made the commitment during a courtesy visit by the management of the National Obstetric Fistula Centre at Government House, Benin City.

She noted that while early marriage is often associated with obstetric fistula, it is not the only cause of the condition, stressing that several other medical factors can also

lead to its occurrence.

"The health of every woman is very important to me. Women are wonderfully made and deserve access to quality healthcare and the right information that will help them live healthy and productive lives," she said.

The First Lady called for intensified public enlightenment on obstetric fistula, urging rel-

evant stakeholders to collaborate in creating awareness and driving sustained advocacy across the state.

The Medical Director, National Obstetric Fistula Centre, Prof. Ileogben Sunday-Adeoye explained that obstetric fistula is a childbirth-related injury that can result from prolonged obstructed labour or, in some cases, complications arising

from surgical procedures such as caesarean sections. The condition often causes uncontrollable leakage of urine and faeces, leaving affected women with serious medical and social challenges.

The Medical Director disclosed that the Federal Government, through the Renewed Hope health intervention of President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu, provides free treatment, transportation and other support services for women living with obstetric fistula.

He appealed to the Office of the First Lady to champion a statewide awareness campaign to ensure that women across every community in Edo State are aware that treatment is available at no cost.

Edo Govt launches UK diaspora town hall tour

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has intensified efforts to strengthen ties with Edo citizens living abroad by dispatching a high-powered delegation to the United Kingdom for a series of strategic engagements with members of the Edo diaspora ahead of Governor Monday Okpebholo's official visit to London.

The government's Senior Special Assistant on Diaspora Matters, Hon. Osarodion Osagie, disclosed this during a briefing with *The Nigerian Observer* at his liaison office in Benin City.

Osagie said the delegation would be led by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Diaspora Affairs, Mr. Goddy Francis Okoyo, alongside the Director-General of the Edo State Diaspora Agency (ESDA), Dr. Loretta Oduware Ogboro-Okor and the Office of the Senior Special Assistant on Diaspora Matters, on a four-city town hall engagement across Scotland and England.

According to him, the tour will commence on Sunday, July 26, 2026, with a meeting at Leithland Neighbourhood Centre, 25 Kempsthorpe Road, Glasgow G53 5SR, Scotland, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The delegation will continue the engagement on Monday, July 27, at the Ukrainian Cultural Center, 31 Smedley Lane, Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester M8 8XB, from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., before moving to Boars Head Buffet, 340 Aldridge Road, Birmingham B44 8BH, on Tuesday, July 28, from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The tour will culminate with a London town hall meeting on Wednesday, July 29, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (UK time) at DEVIEW (formerly Options Cuisine), 720 Old Kent Road, London, SE15 1NG.

He explained that the engagements, themed "Let's Connect. Let's Unite. Let's Build a Great-

er Edo, Together," are designed to provide Edo indigenes and friends of the state in the United Kingdom with an opportunity to engage directly with the Governor's diaspora team, share ideas, discuss issues affecting the community and contribute to the development of Edo State ahead of the Governor's visit.

Osagie noted that the meetings would also foster unity among Edo people in the diaspora while setting the stage for Governor Okpebholo's participation in the UK Executive Forum on Friday, July 31, 2026.

"This engagement reflects Governor Monday Okpebholo's commitment to maintaining close contact with Edo people wherever they reside. Rather than waiting until the end of his administration, he is reaching out to our people in the diaspora early to listen to their ideas, strengthen partnerships and encourage their participation in the development of the state. It is a proactive approach that demonstrates responsive and inclusive leadership," he said.

Speaking further, Osagie said the Governor's UK visit would feature the UK Executive Forum, themed "Edo SHINE 2026: Shining Beyond Borders," organised by the London Professional Training Centre (LPTC) with the support of the Edo State Government, EDODISPOA, EDIDAN and Heartbeat of the Diaspora.

He said the forum would serve as a strategic platform for dialogue, networking, investment promotion and direct engagement between Governor Okpebholo and members of the Edo diaspora community.

According to him, the event will hold on Friday, July 31, 2026, at Oasis Banqueting, 6-8 Thames Road, Barking, London IG11 0HZ, beginning at 5:00 p.m. (UK time). The programme will feature an interactive session with Governor Monday Okpebholo,

● Ahead London executive forum

presentations on investment and business opportunities in Edo State, networking with professionals and investors, a questions-and-answers session with open dialogue, as well as presentations on the administration's SHINE Agenda, gov-

ernment policies and ongoing development initiatives.

Osagie further revealed that the diaspora engagement initiative would not be limited to the United Kingdom, adding that the government plans to extend similar programmes

across Europe, Asia and the Americas to deepen collaboration with Edo citizens overseas.

"Our vision is to build a vibrant global Edo network that will contribute meaningfully to the state's economic growth and development. We are

working on several initiatives that will attract investments, strengthen partnerships and harness the expertise of Edo professionals across the world in support of Governor Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda," he added.



RENEWED HOPE INITIATIVE:

Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Imaan Suleiman-Ibrahim (6th R); Director General, Maryam Babangida National Centre for Women Development (MBNCWD), Dr Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi (6th L); with the Management and staffs of the MBNCWD during the Minister's Renewed Hope Initiative tour to the Centre and the unveiling of the beautiful one of the centre Abuja on Tuesday.

Kuku to IUO Law Graduates: Let justice, constitution be your first loyalty

EDWARD OSEGHE

OKADA

Distinguished lawyer, public affairs analyst, former legislator and peace and conflict resolution expert, Hon. Kingsley Kuku, Esq., has urged graduating students of the Oba Erediauwa College of Law, Igbinedion University, Okada (IUO), to place justice and the Constitution above every other consideration as they begin their legal careers.

Kuku gave the charge while delivering the valedictory lecture at the College of Law's Valedic-

tory Service on Saturday, where he spoke on the theme, "The Nigerian State Under Siege: Sovereignty, Constitutionalism and the Imperative of National Renewal."

He warned that although Nigeria faces significant constitutional and governance challenges, the nation's future can still be secured through justice, unity and adherence to the rule of law.

"The Nigerian State may indeed be under siege, but no siege is permanent where a people remain united by justice, sustained by hope and governed by the rule of law.

"Let us therefore recommit

ourselves to building a Republic in which the Constitution is not merely our supreme law, but our shared national covenant; where Sovereignty is exercised with responsibility; where power is restrained by law; and where every Nigerian, regardless of circumstances, can confidently say that the State exists to protect, not to oppress," he said.

Kuku maintained that the present generation must move beyond identifying the nation's problems to rebuilding its democratic foundations.

"If that is accomplished, history will record that present

generation did more than diagnose Nigeria's challenges.

"It will record that we strengthened the foundations of the Nigerian Republic. That, in my respectful view, is the task before us. That is the Republic we must build," he emphasised.

According to him, the strength of the Nigerian Republic ultimately depends on the commitment of its citizens to uphold constitutional values.

"The future of the Nigerian Republic will depend less upon the words contained in its Constitution than upon willingness of Nigerians to live by them.

FG to return 13 oil blocks...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

NAN also reports that by the close of bid submission, 143 companies had submitted 200 technical and commercial bids for 37 of the offered assets.

Speaking, Dr Amba Egba, Deputy Director, Leases Administration, Exploration and Acreage Management at NUPRC, said the technical and commercial evaluation process had been fully automated to ensure transparency, fairness and efficiency.

Egba said bidders would be assessed on their proposed field development plans and other technical parameters.

He said the commercial evaluation allocated 20 points to the signature bonus, with bids

ranging from three million dollars to seven million dollars.

The 2025 Licensing Round was announced on Nov. 11, 2025, in line with the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), 2021.

The bid portal was inaugurated on Dec. 1, 2025, while a pre-bid conference was held on Jan. 14, 2026, at Eko Hotels and Suites, Lagos.

Registration and submission for prequalification closed on Feb. 27, 2026, while the prequalification exercise was concluded on March 16, 2026.

Out of the 286 companies that applied for prequalification, 196 were cleared to participate in the technical and commercial bid stage, with 143 firms eventually submitting 200 bids for the commercial bid conference.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **ABERE GRACE OSHEMANIME**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS AMINU GRACE OSHEMANIME**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take notes.

BOX FOR SALE

Edo Specialist Hospital marks 7th anniversary with free eye care

BENIN CITY

EDWARD OSEGHE

Edo Specialist Hospital (ESH) has marked its seventh anniversary with the launch of a free eye care programme, reaffirming its commitment to expanding access to quality healthcare while celebrating another major milestone with the presentation of its West African College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (WACOG) Accreditation Certificate.

The commemorative event attracted top government officials, healthcare administrators and stakeholders from across the state, underscoring the hospital's growing role in advancing healthcare delivery in Edo State.

The State Coordinator of the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), Edo State, Dr. Theodore Ehannire, joined the Chief Medical Director of Edo Specialist Hospital, Associate

Professor Enibokun Njoku; the Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee (CMAC), Dr. Victor Ohenhen; the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr. Iyamu; and the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Edo State Government, Dr. Alile, who represented the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis

Idahosa, at the flag-off of the free eye care service.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Ehannire commended Edo Specialist Hospital for sustaining high standards of healthcare delivery over the past seven years, describing the institution as a critical partner in the drive towards Universal

Health Coverage (UHC).

He said the hospital's decision to commemorate its anniversary with a free eye care outreach reflects a patient-centred approach to healthcare and aligns with the NHIA's vision of ensuring equitable access to quality and affordable health services for all Nigerians.

FG records over \$24bn investment, \$6bn to boost non-oil export – Minister

LAMAI CASSIUS

ABUJA

The Federal Government says implementation of the Renewed Hope Agenda has attracted more than 24.1 billion dollars in capital importation and generated more than 6.1 billion dollars in non-oil exports.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, disclosed this in a statement issued on Tuesday in Abuja by the ministry's Head of Press and Public Relations, Mrs Augustina Obilor-Duru.

The minister said that government had supported more than 115,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as part of the efforts to build one trillion dollars economy.

The minister was represented by the Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Dr. Chris Isokpunwu, at the technical session of the 17th National Council on Industry, Trade and Investment in Enugu.

Oduwole described the session as the engine room of the council's decision-making process.

The 2026 council meeting had the theme: "Enhancing

Competitiveness in Industry, Trade and Investment for Inclusive Growth and Global Market Integration."

The meeting brought together government officials, state representatives and key stakeholders to assess progress and chart the next phase of Nigeria's industrial, trade and investment agenda.

The minister said the deliberations would focus on policy memoranda, implementation challenges and practical recommendations to strengthen the sector.

NEWS

Minister celebrates NBA's first elected female president

ABUJA

The Minister of Women Affairs, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, has congratulated Mrs Oyinkansola Badejo-Okusanya (SAN) on becoming the first directly elected female President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

In a statement on Tuesday, Sulaiman-Ibrahim said the election marked a landmark in Nigeria's legal profession and democratic development.

She said Badejo-Okusanya's emergence through a direct mandate of NBA members reflected competence, integrity, excellence and visionary leadership.

According to the minister, the election demonstrates Nigeria's progress towards a more inclusive society where merit, talent and capacity determine leadership.

Sulaiman-Ibrahim noted that Dame Priscilla Kuye became the NBA's first female president in 1991 through constitutional succession, while Badejo-Okusanya is the first woman directly elected by members.

She said the achievement aligned with President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which seeks to expand opportunities, strengthen inclusion and ensure every Nigerian

contributes meaningfully to national development.

The minister said women now head key justice institutions, including the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Nigerian Law School, Solicitor-General's Office and the NBA.

According to her, the devel-

opment represents significant progress for women's participation in leadership and the justice sector.

She said women's leadership strengthens institutions, enhances accountability, deepens democracy and advances access to justice for all Nigerians.

Sulaiman-Ibrahim added

that Badejo-Okusanya's election reinforced ongoing advocacy for greater female representation in governance, including support for the proposed Special Seats for Women Bill.

She expressed confidence that the new NBA president would uphold the rule of law, defend constitutional democ-

racy, promote justice and protect the rights of vulnerable groups.

The minister congratulated Badejo-Okusanya and expressed optimism that her tenure would promote inclusive leadership, institutional excellence and lasting progress in the legal profession.

Ogun to establish safety commission, strengthen industrial safety

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun Government has said it will strengthen industrial safety by transforming the State Safety Office into a Safety Commission to improve compliance and regulatory oversight.

The Commissioner for Environment, Mr Ola Oresanya, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abeokuta at a one-day training for Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) personnel in industrial facilities in the state.

The programme was themed: "Industrial Resilience and Safety Governance: Building a Culture of Compliance, Prevention and Sustainable Growth".

Oresanya said the proposed commission would enhance policy implementation, technical oversight, enforcement, stakeholder collaboration and adoption of global best practices in occupational safety and environmental protection.

Represented by the Per-

manent Secretary, Dr Kafayat Lawal, the commissioner said government inspections and safety audits revealed that many industries had documented safety policies but failed to implement them effectively.

According to him, safety should become an organisational culture driven by proactive leadership, continuous risk assessment, competent personnel and measurable performance rather than periodic inspections.

"As part of this strategic vision, government is advancing the transformation of the existing safety office into a fully empowered Ogun State Safety Commission.

"This institutional reform reflects our commitment to creating a modern, responsive and professional safety regulatory system capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly sophisticated industrial economy.

Stakeholders debunk reports of market demolition in Ebonyi community

EBONYI

Edda (Ebonyi) Stakeholders of Owutu community in Edda Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi, have debunked reports that the chairman of the council, Chief Chima Ekumankama intended to demolish their community market.

The stakeholders comprising the traditional leadership, development unions, the market traders associations among others, said in a press conference on Tuesday, in Edda that the report of the purported demolition was false.

The Traditional Ruler of the community, H.R.H Ama Uzor, said the report came from individuals, who had no locus to speak on behalf of the community and do not have its interest in mind.

"The council chairman's decision to construct a modern regional market at Ekenta-Ite is a visionary and developmental initiative intended to stimulate economic growth.

"The decision is also intended to expand commercial opportu-

nities, attract investment, create employment and position Edda as a major commercial hub within Ebonyi and beyond.

"The intention is to relocate the market to the new regional market presently under construction by the council," he said.

He said the council has consistently explained that following the relocation of trading activities to the new market, structures and facilities at the existing market shall be preserved.

"The structures and facilities shall be converted to use for mutual benefit to the community and entire Edda people.

"This presents an opportunity rather than a threat to our community, thereby making reports of the purported demolition false, misleading, speculative and without facts.

"We are deeply concerned that a few individuals acting without due consultation, choose to organise a press briefing capable of creating unnecessary anxiety and misleading the people," he said.

**MEMBERS OF NUMTEN:**

From left: Deputy Secretary National Union of Market Traders Employers of Nigeria (NUMTEN), Comrade Ezennia Okoli; Chairman NUMTEN, Comrade Pat Eneh; Legal Adviser Enugu State Agency for Universal Health Coverage (ESA-UHC), Ms Millicent Chidi; Chief Executive Officer ESA-UHC, Dr. Edith Okolo and Head of Operations Health Services ESA-UHC, Ms Nkechi Ugwu, during the signing of memorandum of understanding between NUMTEN and ESA-UHC on Insured Healthcare Services to members of NUMTEN in Enugu on Tuesday

Reconstruction of Jattu Market excites traders, residents, as Gov. Okpebholo gets commendations

JOS

LAMAI CASSIUS

Traders and residents of Jattu, Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State have expressed joy over the massive construction work ongoing at the popular Jattu Market.

The massive engineering work on site the people said was indicative of a determination on the part of the state government to deliver an ultra-modern architectural masterpiece to replace the old structures.

The excited traders commended the administration of

Senator Monday Okpebholo in the State, for the attention it has paid to reconstruction of the market also known as Omogbai Market.

Regarded as the biggest market in Edo North and one of the largest in Edo State, the market before now had structures that had outlived their usefulness, thus necessitating the intervention by the state government.

As part of the administration's market remodelization programme, Governor Monday Okpebholo awarded the reconstruction of the market to provide suitable and conducive businesses environment for traders and buyers in that part

of the state.

Speaking with the Nigerian Observer, the project engineer, Engr. Godwin Okwonkwo said the project is at its first floor adding that they were working day and night to deliver the project as scheduled.

According to him, "we are modernizing it by putting new infrastructures in the place of the former ones. What we have here is a mighty and gigantic project being done by the state government which has so many modern facilities and that is why it is called a modern market", he emphasized.

Engr. Okwonkwo disclosed that the market would be delivered with up to date mod-

ern market facilities such as administrative office, a modern abattoir, parking space, over 2,000 open and locked up stores, a police post, conveniences and other facilities.

He however commended the state governor for the initiative and the host community for giving them all the needed assistance towards completing the project in good time.

Some of the traders who spoke also expressed happiness over the construction, stating that it would Provide a more conducive business climate besides beautifying the architectural landscape of the area.

They commended the state governor for the reconstruction which they said will also boost its status as an international market.

Civil servants decry delayed budget release, shortfalls

ABUJA

Some civil servants in Abuja have urged on the Federal Government to release budgetary allocations to its Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in order to improve service delivery.

They said lack of funds was hampering their determination to deliver on the Renewed Hope Agenda of the President Bola Tinubu as well as their overall mandates.

Many MDAs have been unable to fully implement approved projects and programmes because as funds were either delayed or not released.

The funding shortfall has affected both capital and recur-

rent expenditure, slowing the delivery of public services.

A study of statistics made available by the Budget Office of the Federation's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and Fiscal Strategy Paper 2025 showed that MDAs' capital expenditure votes were persistently underfunded.

According to the report which covered 2023, 2024, and the January-July period of 2025 left a cumulative gap of N15.21tn over the three-year period.

Some civil servants who spoke with NAN on Tuesday expressed concern over the financial challenges confronting Federal Government institutions.

Mr Thomas Ugwu, a Director in the Finance Department

in one of the MDAs said inadequate funding had adversely affected operations and service delivery.

According to him, office equipment, including staff buses, frequently break down, while the offices lack the funds to repair them.

Also, Mrs Rukayat Olaiya, a senior civil servant in procurement unit, said funding for capital projects had remained particularly poor.

Mr Kelechi Akwa, another civil servant, said releases for recurrent expenditure had also come under pressure.

Akwa said the situation had forced many agencies to operate mainly on limited overhead allocations.

He further said that monthly cash-backed releases for capital projects were frequently delayed.

Akwa said numerous infrastructure and development projects had stalled, while contractors continued to await payment for completed and ongoing jobs.

The funding challenges recently prompted local contractors to stage a protest over unpaid obligations.

Contractors, under the umbrella of the All Indigenous Contractors Association of Nigeria (AICAN), recently decried the growing impact of delayed budget implementation on businesses and employment.

DSS to appeal life sentences on 2 Ansaru top terror commanders

ABUJA

The Department of State Services (DSS) will appeal Monday's life sentences for two top commanders of the Ansaru Terror organisation by a Federal High Court, Abuja.

Justice Emeka Nwite had, shortly after the two notorious terrorists pleaded guilty to the 32-count terrorism charge, sentenced them to life imprisonment.

The judge gave the verdict after the convicts and their lawyer begged the court to temper justice with mercy.

The convicts are Mahmud Usman, a.k.a Abu Bara'a/Abbas/Mukhtar, the self-styled Emir of Ansaru; and Abubakar Abba, a.k.a Mahmud al-Nigeri/Malam Mamuda, who is the deputy and chief of staff to Bara'a.

Reacting, a top official of the service told newsmen that they

considered the life sentence as too light a punishment for the crimes allegedly committed by the Ansaru commanders.

The official said the service found it curious that, both convicts were on the verge of pleading guilty to the charges, but changed their minds shortly after some persons believed to be members of the same organisation kidnapped pupils and teachers in Oriire LGA in

Oyo State.

"For the nearly 60 days the kidnappers held on to the pupils and teachers of Oriire, the Ansaru commanders in our custody changed.

"One of the top conditions the abductors gave was the unconditional release of these same Ansaru commanders in exchange for the Oriire kidnap victims," he said.

According to him, from 'not

guilty plea,' the two men at the penultimate court session, said they were undecided on what plea to take.

"Justice Nwite even had to hand them an ultimatum to make up their minds on or before Monday's sitting.

"After the Oriire rescue, they came to court to plead guilty to all the charges," he added.

The official said, "allowing the two terror commanders walk away with life sentences

will not serve the cause of justice for the two Oriire teachers beheaded by their abductors.

"The reason the terrorists beheaded the two Oriire teachers was to put pressure on government to release these two Ansaru commanders.

"It, therefore, wouldn't be fair to see two men beheaded and their families are made to live with the losses without adequately bringing the culprits to book," he said.



RENEWED HOPE INITIATIVE:

Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Imaan Suleiman-Ibrahim (L); and the Director General, Maryam Babangida National Centre for Women Development (MBNCWD), Dr Adedayo Benjamins-Laniyi (2nd L); during the Minister's Renewed Hope Initiative tour to the centre and the unveiling of the beautiful one of the Centre Abuja on Tuesday.

NAHCON Award: Edo Govt thanks well-wishers, reaffirms commitment to excellence

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has expressed profound appreciation to individuals and organizations who congratulated the Board following its receipt of the Award of Excellence from the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON).

In a statement issued by the Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar, the Board thanked well-wishers for their prayers, goodwill

messages, phone calls and words of encouragement after the national recognition.

According to the statement, the award is a reflection of the collective efforts and commitment of the entire Hajj team rather than the achievement of any individual.

The Board also acknowledged the support of the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, the Edo State Government, as well as the co-operation of pilgrims and other stakeholders, describing their contributions as instrumental

to the Board's success.

The Executive Secretary reaffirmed the Board's commitment to improving the standard of Hajj administration in Edo State and ensuring the delivery of more efficient and quality services to intending pilgrims.

He prayed for Almighty Allah (SWT) to reward everyone who celebrated the Board's achievement, bless them and their families, and grant continued success in serving humanity and promoting the cause of Islam.

The statement further re-

mindful interested Muslims across Edo State that registration for the 2027 Hajj pilgrimage is ongoing and will officially close on September 26, 2026. It urged intending pilgrims to complete their registration before the deadline to enable the Board conclude the necessary arrangements in line with NAHCON's timetable.

The Award of Excellence was presented to the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) in recognition of the Board's outstanding performance in Hajj administration.

₦75,000 cash transfer 'll boost my corn business, says Edo beneficiary

BENIN CITY

Mrs Egbame Igbino, one of the beneficiaries of the National Cash Transfer programme in Edo says the ₦75,000 stipend received, will help expand her corn business and improve her livelihood.

Igbino stated this on Monday in Benin while speaking with journalists, shortly after activating her cash transfer debit card in Oredo Local Government Area of the state.

The single mother of two described the intervention as life-changing.

She said she planned to use

₦60,000 to buy four bags of corn at ₦15,000 each, while the remaining balance would go toward other business expenses.

According to her, each bag is expected to yield about ₦10,000 in profit, a return she believes will help grow her business alongside the capital she already has.

"I appreciate the government for this better thing wey dem do. E go help my corn business grow well," she said in pidgin English.

The Household Empowerment Programme in Oredo local government area, makes it the seventh and last council area in Edo South senatorial district to benefit.

The programme is implemented by the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, the Edo Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, and the Edo Social Cash Transfer Unit (SCTU).

Speaking at the event held at Uropkhota Hall in Oredo, Dr Bisi Idaomi, Edo Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, commended the residents for embracing the programme.

She said Gov. Monday Okpebholo would have attended the event but was unavoidably absent due to other official engagements.

Idaomi also conveyed the governor's goodwill and disclosed that the state government was plan-

ning another empowerment programme, tagged "Apkako," to hold between October and November.

Gabriel Iduseri, Chairman of Oredo local government area commended the federal and state governments for the initiative, describing it as a timely intervention for vulnerable residents.

"The people are happy. They've not witnessed this kind of support before. The ₦75,000 cash empowerment will make a real difference for those, who put it to good use," he said.

NAN reports that 770 vulnerable households in Oredo received debit cards, as part of the ongoing distribution of 15,000 debit cards to eligible beneficiaries across the state.

Tomato farmers seek stronger government role in market stabilisation

ABUJA

The Tomato and Orchard Producers Association of Nigeria (TOPAN) has urged the Federal Government to play a more active role in food production, storage and market stabilisation to curb rising tomato prices.

The National President of TOPAN, Mr Oyeleke Bolajo, made the call in an interview with newsmen on Monday in Abuja.

Bolajo said government interventions, including the distribution of fertilisers and improved seeds, had supported farmers but more coordinated efforts were needed to meet the country's growing food demand.

He attributed persistent supply challenges to inadequate agricultural data, saying poor planning and weak distribution of farming inputs had limited productivity.

According to him, Nigeria's growing population and increasing number of farmers require a reliable agricultural database to guide production and policy decisions.

Bolajo urged the government to work more closely with the private sector in agricultural production and commodity management.

He also called on the government to purchase food commodities directly from farmers, store them and release them into the market during periods of low supply to stabilise prices.

According to him, such an arrangement would help cushion seasonal shortages, especially of tomatoes during the rainy season, while complementing private-sector efforts.

Bolajo also advocated stronger collaboration among government, private sector operators, farmers' associations and cooperatives to improve food security.

Also speaking, TOPAN's Director of Logistics, Mr Adeniyi Adebayo, called for increased grants and incentives for smallholder tomato farmers.

Adebayo said greater government support would boost production, improve supply and contribute to stabilising tomato prices nationwide.

Association urges Nigerians to embrace preventive healthcare

ABUJA

The Medical and Dental Consultants' Association of Nigeria (MDCAN), Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Jabi, Abuja, has advocated greater investment in preventive healthcare to reduce the burden of non-communicable and other preventable diseases.

The Medical Director of FMC Jabi, Prof. Saad Ahmed, made the call during a medical outreach organised by the hospital's MDCAN chapter for residents of the Idu and Karimo communities as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Represented by the Deputy Head of Clinical Services, Dr Ben Achusi, Ahmed said the communities were selected because many patients with preventable health conditions were referred to the hospital from the areas.

He identified hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, stroke and kidney failure as common but largely preventable conditions requiring sustained public awareness.

According to him, many patients present at the hospital only after their conditions have

become severe, underscoring the need for regular health screening and education.

"We are not here only to give drugs or check blood pressure. We are also here to educate people and promote healthy lifestyles.

"Taking healthcare services to communities is important because it helps to detect illnesses early and prevent complications.

"We frequently receive severe cases from these communities, including stroke, uncontrolled hypertension and diabetes, which could have been prevented or managed earlier," he said.

Ahmed added that the outreach would be sustained and extended to other communities as part of the hospital's preventive healthcare efforts.

The Chairman of FMC Jabi MDCAN, Dr Nasiru Abdullahi, said the outreach covered screening and treatment for malaria, hypertension, diabetes, typhoid, upper respiratory tract infections, peptic ulcer disease and hepatitis B.

He added that beneficiaries also received eye and dental examinations, antenatal services, ultrasound scans, medical counselling and other healthcare services.

NEWS

JUDICIARY

Court adjourns suit seeking to void Kingibe's FCT senatorial candidacy

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday adjourned a suit seeking to void the emergence of Sen. Ireti Kingibe as the candidate of the FCT Senatorial District on the platform of African Democratic Party (ADC), until Oct. 14.

Justice Salim Ibrahim adjourned the case following unanimous agreement of lawyers to the parties.

Earlier when the case was called,

Marshal Abubakar, who appeared for Kingibe, informed the court that he appeared in protest because the plaintiff had failed to serve them with the court processes.

Responding, Moses Awuru, who represented the plaintiff (Mubarak Tijani), said he got to know that the bailiff had not served the court processes on Kingibe on Monday.

When the judge asked if the bailiff was mobilised for the service, he responded in the affirmative.

He said he also had discus-

sion with Abubakar earlier and that he (Abubakar) assured him that he would receive the service of the court documents.

But Abubakar told the court that he heard about the case coming up on social media and he applied for the documents.

On his part, Oladipupo Oladele, counsel for ADC, told the court that he had been served and had since responded to the processes.

He said he filed a preliminary objection and a counter

affidavit to challenge the suit.

Justice Ibrahim, who ordered Awuru to ensure the service of the processes on Abubakar, adjourned the matter until Oct. 14 for definite hearing.

The judge also ordered that hearing notices should be issued and served on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) that was not represented in the proceedings.

The plaintiff, Tijani, had prayed the court to nullify the purported result of the FCT

Senatorial primary election that produced Kingibe as candidate of the ADC for the 2027 poll.

Tijani, an aggrieved aspirant, in a suit filed by his lawyer, Kolawole Olowookere, SAN, also urged the court to restrain ADC from forwarding Kingibe's name as party's candidate to INEC.

The aspirant further sought an order, restraining INEC from accepting, recognising and publishing Kingibe's name as ADC candidate, arising from the purported primary election of May 21.

The plaintiff stated that the primary poll allegedly held on May 21 was not in compliance with the

Electoral Act, 2026 and the ADC's Constitution and Guidelines for the Conduct of Primary Elections for the Nomination of Candidates for the 2027 General Elections.

He, therefore, urged the court to declare the poll unconstitutional, unlawful, invalid, null and void.

He sought an order directing the party to conduct a fresh, transparent and lawful primary election for the FCT Senatorial District in strict compliance with the Electoral Act, party's constitution and all applicable guidelines under INEC's supervision.



COURTESY VISIT:

Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani receiving members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) on a courtesy visit at Government House, Benin City.

Zamfara North: Court adjourns Shinkafi's suit against APC, INEC, other

GUSAU

Justice Hassan Dikko of the Federal High Court, Gusau Division on Tuesday, adjourned Dr Abdullahi Shinkafi's suit against the All Progressives Congress (APC), the Independent National Electoral (INEC) and Sen. Sahabi Ya'u to July 28 for final written addresses.

Dikko's adjournment followed resolutions and rulings on affidavits, counter affidavits

and preliminary objections filed by both the plaintiff and respondents in the suit.

Shinkafi had filed the suit contesting the validity of the outcome of the APC May 19 Senatorial primary elections for the Zamfara North Senatorial District.

The outcome produced the third respondent, Sen. Sahabi Ya'u, an incumbent Senator as the party's candidate for 2027 general elections.

Shinkafi, who was an aspirant in the May 19 APC Prima-

ries filed the suit alleging that the process was marred by irregularities and did not follow INEC guidelines and the electoral Act 2022 as amended.

Bello Galadi counsel to the plaintiff alleged his client was not satisfied with the process as it did not follow the stipulated APC guidelines, alleging that the primary election results were written by the handlers of the exercise.

According to Shinkafi's Counsel, the case was filed on June 9 challenging the outcome

of the APC primary election that produced Senator Sahabi Ya'u (APC Zamfara) as Senatorial Candidate for Zamfara North for the 2027 general elections.

Speaking to journalists shortly after the proceeding, Galadi, said the court granted three applications seeking extension of time to file the plaintiff's replies to processes filed by INEC and Sen. Sahabi Ya'u Kaura, including responses to a preliminary objection raised by the third defendant.

Woman drags stepchildren to court over inheritance

KADUNA

A mother, Tawakaltu Shekoni, on Tuesday dragged her stepchildren, Shehu Abdulsalam, Abubakar Abdulsalam, Abdulsalam Abdulsalam and Lawal Abdulsalam, to a Shari'a court sitting in Kaduna, over late husband's inheritance.

The complainant through her lawyer, Muhammad Uthman said the deceased, Muhammad Abdulsalam died on Dec. 20, 2025, after a short ailment leaving behind a wife and six children.

He mentioned that the four children who were the eldest had refused to give Shekoni and her six year old daughter their share of inheritance.

Uthman explained that the

defendants had sold and shared most of the deceased property and were currently living in one of the deceased houses located at Kabalan Doki, Kaduna.

He prayed the court to intervene and share the inheritance accordingly.

The defendants who spoke through their counsel, I.O Usman had earlier denied knowing Shekoni saying all her claims were false.

The court had ordered the complainant on the last adjourned date to present her witnesses with regards to her marriage to the deceased.

Shekoni presented the siblings of the deceased, Yusuf Abdulsalam and Kudirat Abdulsalam as witnesses.

Man begs Shari'a court to assist him marry off 27-yr-old daughter

KADUNA

A father of 11, Lawal Hamisu on Tuesday prayed the Shari'a court II sitting at Magajin Gari, Kaduna to compel his daughter, Fatima Lawal to get a suitor and marry.

The complainant, who spoke through his counsel, H.B Debo, said his daughter was 27 years old and had completed her Higher National Diploma (HND), adding that she entertained different admirers but failed to bring one serious suitor.

"She should get a suitor, pres-

ent him in court and the court should marry her off since her mother has poisoned their minds against me", he said.

On her part, the defendant said she has no serious suitor, adding that none of her admirers proposed marriage.

The Judge, Malam Yakubu Abdullahi said the case was a sensitive one since it involved a parent and his child, adding that he would discuss one on one with each party to understand them and advise further.

He adjourned the case to August 3 for ruling.

Alleged land fraud: Judge orders EFCC to produce estate agent in court

ABUJA

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik of a Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday ordered the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to produce an Abuja-based estate agent, Mrs Rebecca Omokamo, in court over her failure to appear for trial.

Justice Abdulmalik gave the order after the EFCC Counsel, Benedict Ubi, made an application to the effect.

The judge then adjourned the matter until July 23 for continuation of trial.

Omokamo is being prosecuted over alleged land fraud,

forgery and money laundering. Omokamo is facing trial alongside Homadil Realty Limited, Idakwogi Richard John and Rychado Homes Limited.

Earlier, the prosecution informed the court that the first defendant (Omokamo) was in "self-imposed house arrest sequel to the order of the court for an interim forfeiture of a disputed land."

Ubi said Omokamo had been obstructing officers of the EFCC from carrying out the order of the court.

He accused Omokamo of breaching the terms of the administrative bail by traveling repeatedly out of jurisdiction.

But Omokamo's counsel, Christopher Oshomeghie, SAN, told the court that the commission's officers had laid siege at the residence of his client for about 23 days.

He said in view of this, Omokamo had remained indoors for all that period as "she fears for her life."

The senior lawyer informed the court that it was due to the reason the defendant was not in court.

He also said that the defendant had been indisposed as a result of the development.

Responding, Ubi disagreed with Oshomeghie's submis-

sion.

The prosecutor clarified that Omokamo had the keys to the building and that she willingly locked herself in her apartment and not the EFCC officers on enforcement duty.

Justice Abdulmalik consequently ordered the anti-graft agency to produce the 1st defendant in court after her counsel confirmed that she had the keys to the apartment and that her absence could not have been attributed to the EFCC.

Meanwhile, Justice Abdulmalik also heard the civil suit instituted by the EFCC against Omokamo.

Court adjourns Benue APC candidates' suit until Aug. 27

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja on Tuesday fixed August 27 for hearing in the suit filed by aggrieved members of the Benue chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC). They are challenging their alleged substitution as validly nominated candidates for the 2027 general election.

Justice Inyang Ekwo adjourned the matter at the instance of counsel to the plaintiffs, Mr Mohammed Ndarani-Mohammed, SAN,

who sought time to respond to a preliminary objection filed by the APC challenging the court's jurisdiction to hear the suit.

Justice Ekwo directed counsel to file and exchange their processes before the next adjourned date.

The judge warned that absence of any counsel resulting in a delay of the proceedings would attract sanctions.

Mr Matthew Burkaa, SAN, appeared for the APC, while the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), was represented by Mr Oluwale Olukunle.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Lebanese army says troops deploying in 'pilot zone' after Israeli withdrawal

Lebanon's army says its troops have begun deploying to a "pilot zone" in the south of the country following the withdrawal of Israeli forces under a US-brokered agreement reached last month.

A statement from the army command said units had entered the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh in Nabatieh district on Tuesday morning.

On Monday night, Israel's military confirmed the start of the pilot zone plan, which should see Israeli troops pulling out of a small part of the territory occupied during their conflict with Hezbollah as well as the disarmament of the Iran-backed group.

It comes ahead of a meeting in Washington between US President Donald Trump and his Lebanese counterpart, Joseph Aoun.

Aoun is expected to urge Trump to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from the rest of southern Lebanon and to provide support to the Lebanese army to take full control of areas where Hezbollah holds sway.

The US state department announced on Monday afternoon that "pilot zone operations" had begun in Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh and two other Lebanese villages, Froun and Srifa, in line with the Trilateral Framework agreement between Israel, Leb-

anon and the US.

It said the "milestone" was the direct result of discussions last week between Israeli and Lebanese representatives in Rome.

Later on Monday, an Israeli military official confirmed that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) would "adjust its force posture in one of the pilot areas" to allow the Lebanese army to carry out its mission, while also "safeguarding the security of IDF soldiers and preserving its right to self-defence and to remove threats".

"The objective of the pilot and the agreement is the disarmament of the Hezbollah terrorist organisation and the removal of its illegal weapons," the official said.

They also reiterated that the IDF would remain in the "security zone" - the 10km (six-mile) deep strip of occupied Lebanese territory running along the border - for "as long as necessary" to defend northern Israeli communities.

On Tuesday, the Lebanese army's command said its units had begun deploying to Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh "based on ongoing communications with the Military Co-ordination Group for Lebanon", referring to the trilateral body created to support implementation of the framework.



TROOP DEPLOYED:

Lebanon's troop deploying to a "pilot zone" in the south of the country after the withdrawal of Israeli forces under the US-brokered agreement.

Trump slaps 50% tariffs on Canada and Carney vows to 'intensify' trade talks

US President Donald Trump has imposed a 50% tariff on a wide range of goods imported from Canada, in retaliation for what he called "unequal treatment" of US cars, dairy and alcohol.

Everyday consumer items like wine and hockey sticks and industrial goods such as cement are among the goods targeted. However, several key exports will be spared, such as energy, potash, critical minerals and fish.

Prime Minister Mark Carney responded by saying Canada stood ready to "intensify" trade talks with the US in the coming weeks.

The White House said the duties would take effect in 30 days. It marks a major escalation in trade tensions between the North American neighbours.

Trade tensions have been simmering since Trump re-

turned to office in January 2025 and unleashed a wide-ranging global programme of tariffs, sometimes to pursue objectives not directly linked to trade.

Tariffs are taxes on imported goods that are paid to the government by companies bringing in the foreign products.

The US Supreme Court ruled earlier this year that many of Trump's tariffs imposed globally under emergency powers were illegally enacted.

But Trump has recently sought other legal avenues through which to enact his agenda, and his latest action on Monday night uses a different, obscure law that is untested in court.

Canada, which is one of the US's closest trading partners, was one of the few countries to retaliate last year against Trump's tariffs.

It placed a 25% levy of its

own on about C\$30bn (£16bn; \$21.7bn) worth of US goods being brought into Canada. Carney later dropped some of them.

A White House fact sheet published on Monday discussing the new tariffs said they applied regardless of whether the product was included under the existing free trade agreement between Canada, the US and Mexico, known as the USMCA.

The new tariffs add to trade barriers already in place between the two nations.

The US has been maintaining active tariffs ranging from 15% to 50% on Canadian steel, aluminium and copper. It also charges a 35% tariff on Canadian softwood lumber, alongside a 25% tax on non-US parts in cars.

Meanwhile Canada has its own 25% counter-tariff on selected imports of American

steel, aluminium and vehicles.

Monday's announcement also comes in the wake of President Trump's threat to impose tariffs over Canadian wildfire smoke drifting into US cities, though this issue has not been officially mentioned as the justification for the move.

Canadian wildfires rage as Trump warns Carney again over 'poisoning' US air

Criticism of Trump's action has started to arrive from the Canadian side.

"This is the latest in a series of unilateral US trade actions that began with the US imposing a series of tariffs in direct violation of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement," Carney said in a statement on X.

Carney also cited "threats to Canadian sovereignty", possibly in reference to Trump's repeated calls to make America's northern neighbour the 51st US state.

Row escalates in Ukraine over army chief's future

As discussions continue to resolve the crisis caused by President Zelensky's decision last week to part ways with Ukraine's popular Defence Minister, Mykhailo Fedorov, those organising daily protests in support of the minister have issued a threat.

"If, by Friday July 24th [commander-in-chief Oleksandr] Syrskyi has not been dismissed and Federov has not been nominated for the post of Minister of Defence," army veteran Dmytro Koziatynsky wrote on social media, "we will begin an open-ended nationwide protest."

No protests are currently scheduled before then. Ukraine is waiting, anxiously, for a resolution.

Over the weekend, the news was full of reports of meetings and discussions, as Zelensky consulted ministers and generals.

Amid a welter of rumours, the General Staff was forced to deny reports that Gen Syrskyi was about to be - or even had already been - sacked. Another report suggested that Fedorov had refused an offer to return to a different position in government.

Kyrylo Budanov, head of the president's office, urged Ukrainians to remain calm.

"The situation surrounding the latest internal changes has

caused strong emotions," he wrote on Tuesday.

With the noisy calls of angry protesters echoing around the tight confines of Ivana Franka Square, within earshot of the presidential palace, Budanov said the government was taking note.

"I understand people who express their position.....The position of society has been heard."

With large numbers of demonstrators directing their anger towards Gen. Syrskyi - seen by many as representing outdated Soviet-era military doctrines, Budanov, a former head of military intelligence, warned people "not to hate anyone".

"The enemy is closely monitoring our every internal dispute and is waiting for us to start fighting among ourselves," he wrote.

"The work is underway. There will be results."

On Monday, the beleaguered but usually silent 60-year-old Gen Syrskyi hit back against his critics, publishing a long defence of his record and urging readers not to focus on his widely-reported rivalry with 35-year-old Mykhailo Fedorov.

Despite Zelensky's claim last week that the two men could not even bear to sit in the same room, Syrskyi said it had been a surprise to learn that he had a conflict with the minister.

US launches fresh strikes on Iran, as Trump warns of retaliation for deaths of soldiers

The US military says it launched another round of strikes against Iran to "further degrade" its capabilities to attack ships in the Strait of Hormuz.

The 10th consecutive night of strikes took place after US President Donald Trump vowed to punish Iran for the deaths of US soldiers.

In response, Iran said it struck two oil tankers in the waterway, as well as US military assets in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, state news agency IRNA reported.

President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran was now fighting a "full-scale war" with the US. Trump earlier said Iran had been hit "very hard" the previous night "in honour" of three US soldiers killed recently - two in Jordan and one in Iraq.

US Central Command (Cent-

com) said its latest strikes had hit Iranian "military command centres, maritime capabilities, missile and drone launch sites, and air defence systems".

Explosions were reported near the north-western city of Tabriz, where state media said one person was killed and several wounded, as well as the Gulf ports of Bandar Mahshahr and Bandar Imam Khomeini and the south-eastern ports of Chabahar and Konarak.

Centcom also insisted that commercial vessels were continuing to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran meanwhile said its forces struck two oil tankers as they attempted to transit through what it called the strait's "unsafe and hazardous southern

route" and rescue teams were picking up their crews, according to state media.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations agency (UKMTO) said a tanker in the Strait of Hormuz had reported being struck by an unknown projectile, forcing its crew to abandon the vessel and board a lifeboat.

It was not clear whether the tanker reported by UKMTO was among those cited by Iran.

Six fuel tankers and cargo ships crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Monday, according to preliminary data from maritime intelligence firm Kpler. Two of these vessels had previously been sanctioned by the US for links with Iran.

This is down from eight vessels crossing on 19 July, the data

shows. All but one of the crossings made on 20 July were via the northern route near Iran.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) also claimed to have targeted a data centre belonging to the US company Amazon in Bahrain, according to state media on Tuesday.

The IRGC "attacked and destroyed the central data infrastructure of the American company Amazon in Bahrain with several cruise missiles," state news agency IRNA reported.

Jordan said on Tuesday that it had intercepted five drones after saying it had shot down three missiles late on Monday. Bahrain said drones launched by Iran had targeted its air navigation systems - but traffic remained unaffected. Kuwait's armed forces also said they had intercepted Iranian drones.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

Shock and anger after top Ghanaian politician sentenced to 20 years for illegal mining

Ghana's main opposition party has reacted with anger after one of its most influential leaders was sentenced to 20 years in jail, with hard labour, for illegal mining offences.

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) alleged that the landmark judgement against Ber-

nard Antwi Boasiako, the party's chairman for the Ashanti region, was politically motivated.

Popularly known as "Chairman Wontumi", Boasiako is the first senior politician in Ghana to be convicted of illegal mining since the government began a crackdown on

the practice in 2017.

As well as receiving a jail sentence, Boasiako, who had denied the charges, was ordered to pay more than \$10,000 (£7,450) in fines.

He looked visibly shocked when the judge handed down the sentence in a court in the capital, Accra, on Monday.

The NPP politician was found guilty of "assigning mineral rights without approval" and "facilitating an unlicensed mining operation" through his company, Akonta Mining.

Ghana is Africa's leading gold producer, but a large portion of the country's waters and environment have been polluted by illegal mining, known as locally as "galamsey".

Over the years, governments

have attempted to tackle the problem, even deploying the military, to little effect.

"We are poisoning ourselves": Ghana gold rush sparks environmental disaster

The deadly dig for Ghana's gold

Following Boasiako's conviction, NPP general secretary Justin Kodua Frimpong told reporters: "The fight against illegal mining cannot become credible only when it targets political opponents in respect of whom evidence of wrongdoing does not exist."

He alleged that the judge had ignored "clear evidence" that would have exonerated Boasiako.

Prosecutors say the NPP politician had allowed two individuals, Henry Okum and

Michael Gyedu Ayisi, to undertake mining activities on the Akonta Mining's concession without approval from the minister of lands and natural resources.

Environmental campaigners welcomed Monday's conviction, saying it will serve as a deterrent to other politicians and businessmen financing the activities of illegal miners.

"It sends a strong signal that accountability is indispensable if Ghana is to protect its forests, rivers and other natural resources," Adib Saani, executive director of the Jatikay Centre for Human Security and Peace Building, said.

However, Frimpong said the NPP's lawyers had started the process of challenging Boasiako's conviction.



INDIAN COCKROACH PROTEST:
Dozens of protesters were injured on Monday

India's 'cockroach' protest continues a day after police crackdown

Thousands have gathered again in the Indian capital Delhi a day after a police crackdown on supporters of India's Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a youth-led movement seeking education reforms and resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Tens of thousands of young men and women had turned up for Monday's protest and tried to march on parliament, defying a police ban.

Central Delhi witnessed overwhelming violence, with at least 60 protesters wounded when police used batons and tear gas on them. Policemen also tore down the stage and makeshift tents at the main protest venue.

Police said 118 of their personnel were also injured and 70 protesters have been detained.

Police and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government have not commented on the use of sticks and tear gas against protesters. Opposition parties have condemned the violence.

Leader of the opposition Rahul Gandhi said the students' demands were "legitimate" and described Modi "as the most anti-youth prime minister India has ever had".

On Tuesday, he led members of his Congress party, in-

cluding many MPs, in a march to Modi's house "to demand answers from him for the brutalities against young students yesterday".

"The government doesn't want to take any accountability or want to have a debate on it in parliament. PM and HM [Home Minister Amit Shah who controls police] must resign for destroying the future of India's youth," he posted on X.

The CJP is a satirical political movement inspired by remarks made earlier this year by India's chief justice, who used the word "cockroach" to describe unemployed young people turning to journalism and activism. After the comments sparked outrage, he said he had been referring only to those with "fake and bogus degrees".

Monday's huge turnout showed that the CJP, though not a registered political party, has evolved into a movement capable of drawing tens of thousands onto the streets.

Protesters, who have been camped for the past month at Jantar Mantar, a 300-year-old observatory in Delhi which is often the site of protests, gained global attention after activist and educationist Sonam Wangchuk joined them on 28 June and began an indefinite hunger strike in support of their demands.

At least 27 dead and 83 missing after passenger ferry capsizes off Guyana

At least 27 people have drowned after a passenger ferry capsized off the coast of Guyana on Saturday night local time.

Sixty-nine people aboard the MV Barima had been rescued, Prime Minister Mark Phillips told reporters on Monday, adding 83 more remained missing.

Divers continue to search the site where the vessel capsized and people who believe their loved ones may have been on board the stricken vessel have been asked to contact the authorities.

"Our focus again is on finding people," said Phillips. "We still have hope."

An investigation into the tragedy had been launched, he said earlier.

"Let me be absolutely clear: where negligence, misconduct or criminal wrongdoing is established, those responsible will face the full force of the law," he said.

Guyana's Public Works Minister, Juan Edghill, expressed his anger at a news conference on Sunday, accusing those who operated the ferry of trying to "cheat the system".

The official registry had listed 133 as being on board the ferry, but Phillips said on Mon-

day he was now "confident" there were 179 people.

Edghill also said the ferry's captain and at least one crew member had tested positive for cannabis.

"We have zero tolerance for members of the crew drinking or smoking while at work. And for us to have positive tests from the captain... this is serious," the minister said.

He added the captain and several of his crew had been taken into police custody.

Search teams located some of the life crafts, but some survivors reported clinging on to boxes.

The ferry, MV Barima, departed from the capital, Georgetown, on Saturday af-

ternoon local time, headed for Port Kaituma, in the north of the country.

The 40m-long (131ft) vessel was built in 1939, according to a listing on VesselFinder.

A survivor, Elena Moon-sammy, told local news site Kiskadee Watch that the ferry had tilted after being hit by a large wave, with water quickly rushing in.

It started to take on water within seconds, she said.

A distress call was received at 23:01 (03:01 GMT Sunday), triggering a search operation involving government teams and privately owned boats.

Moonsammy said she had survived by clinging to a box

floating amidst the debris.

She had tried to hold on to the hand of her two-year-old child but they had been separated.

Moonsammy said she had managed to save a woman, whom she urged to also hold on to the floating box.

At least 15 children were among those rescued. Small private boats were key in pulling at least 17 survivors from the sea.

The French army sent 12 divers, two doctors and a mechanic from nearby French Guiana to aid the search-and-rescue operation.

Guyana's Health Minister, Dr Frank Anthony, said three of the survivors remained in hospital with minor injuries but the others had already been discharged.

Yemen's Houthis announce 'maritime embargo' on Saudi Arabia

Yemen's Houthis have announced a "maritime embargo" against Saudi Arabia.

The Iran-backed group's military spokesman said it would begin immediately and was in retaliation for a Saudi blockade of ports and airports in Houthi-controlled north-western Yemen.

He gave few details about the embargo, but a Houthi media official said they were closing the Bab al-Mandab Strait - the Red Sea's southern

gateway - to Saudi vessels.

In response, Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry condemned the allegation, vowing that the country "will take all necessary measures to protect its ships in accordance with international law".

The Red Sea has become crucial for oil shipments from Saudi Arabia during the US-Israeli war with Iran, which has led to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf.

It comes a week after the

most significant escalation in the largely dormant conflict between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia since an informal truce took effect in 2022.

The Houthis said they had launched missiles at Abha airport in south-western Saudi Arabia in response to air strikes on Sanaa's airport that they blamed on the kingdom.

The strikes were claimed by the Saudi-backed Yemeni government, which said it had

wanted to prevent an Iranian plane from landing in the capital without authorisation.

Yemen has been devastated by a civil war that began in 2014, when the Houthis ousted the government from Sanaa. The conflict escalated in 2015, after the Saudi-led coalition of Arab states intervened in an attempt to restore the government's rule.

The fighting has reportedly left more than 150,000 people dead and triggered one of the

world's worst humanitarian crises, with more than 22 million people in need of some form of aid, according to the UN.

On Monday, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said Saudi Arabia had imposed an "unjust and oppressive siege on our dear people for nearly 12 years, plundering our resources and imposing a comprehensive blockade on our ports and airports by land, sea, and air".

NEWS EXTRA

Edo Assembly adopts motion to curb Insecurity

RAYMOND OSOGBE

The Edo State House of Assembly (EDHA) has adopted a motion of urgent public importance calling for a crackdown on scavenging activities across the state, directing security agencies to remove scavengers from the

streets over allegations of their involvement in criminal activities.

The motion, moved by the Majority Leader, Hon. Jonathan Ibhama, during plenary in Benin City, was prompted by growing concerns over the activities of scavengers, whom he accused of vandalising pub-

lic infrastructure and private property.

Hon. Ibhama told the House that the increasing activities of scavengers had become a serious security concern, alleging they were responsible for the theft of metal objects and other valuable materials. He cited his personal experi-

ence, claiming that iron materials belonging to him were allegedly stolen by scavengers.

The lawmaker maintained that the continued destruction of public utilities and private property by scavengers had become unbearable and urged his colleagues to take decisive legislative action to address the situation.

Seconding the motion, Hon. Sunday Aghedo, representing Ovia South-West Constituency, called for the enactment of legislation that would halt the alleged criminal activities associated with scavenging in the state.

Also contributing to the debate, Hon. Maria Oligbi-Edeko, representing Esan North-East II Constituency, stressed that security agencies had a constitutional responsibility to protect lives and property and should intensify efforts to curb the alleged criminal activities linked to scavengers.

In his remarks, the Speaker

of the House, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, expressed concern over the reported activities of scavengers, alleging that some of them serve as informants for criminal elements while engaging in the vandalism and theft of roofing sheets, aluminium products and other valuables.

Following deliberations, the House unanimously adopted the motion and directed security agencies in Edo State to take immediate steps to halt scavenging activities and rid the state's streets of scavengers in the interest of public safety and security.



VALEDICTORY SERVICE:

A cross section of graduating students of Oba Erediauwa College of Law, Igbinedion University Okada (IUO), Edo State, recently.

Benin residents applaud law amkers' resolution against rampaging scavengers

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

Residents of Benin City have commended the Edo State House of Assembly for its resolution calling on security agencies to intensify efforts to curb the activities of scavengers, popularly known as "iron condemn," whose operations have allegedly resulted in the vandalism of private homes, government facilities and public infrastructure across the state.

The resolution, passed during plenary under the leadership of the Speaker, Right Honourable Blessing Agbebaku, urged relevant security agencies to strengthen surveillance and enforcement measures to stem the growing menace. The lawmakers expressed concern over the increasing cases of

theft and destruction allegedly perpetrated by scavengers operating under the guise of collecting scrap metals.

Reacting to the development, a resident of Uselu, Mr. Osagie Eweka, who claimed to have lost electrical cables and burglary proof materials to suspected scavengers, described the Assembly's action as timely. "These people have become a nightmare. They remove electrical cables, iron protectors and even break into abandoned buildings to cart away metal materials. We are happy the lawmakers have spoken, but we expect security agencies to do the needful," he said.

Similarly, Mrs. Florence Omoregie, a trader in the New Benin area, recounted how metal drainage covers close to her shop were removed by suspected scavengers, posing

danger to motorists and pedestrians. "We have witnessed several accidents because the covers were stolen. I commend the Assembly for intervening. The government should ensure those behind these criminal acts are arrested and prosecuted," she stated.

Another resident, Mr. Emmanuel Igbinovia of Ikpoba Hill, who said his residential fence was vandalized by suspected scrap metal collectors, urged the state government to introduce stricter regulations for the scrap business. "There should be proper registration and monitoring of those in the trade. Genuine dealers should not be allowed to serve as a cover for criminals," he added.

Some community leaders also called for closer collaboration between security agencies, local vigilante groups and residents to

identify and apprehend offenders. They noted that the activities of the scavengers had not only threatened public safety but also imposed financial burdens on individuals and government through the destruction of valuable infrastructure.

Residents further appealed to security agencies to act promptly on the Assembly's resolution by increasing patrols, conducting intelligence-driven operations and dismantling illegal scrap collection networks. They expressed optimism that decisive action would restore public confidence and protect critical infrastructure from further vandalism.

The Assembly's resolution is expected to reinforce ongoing efforts to safeguard lives and property across Edo State as stakeholders continue to advocate stronger measures against criminal elements exploiting the scavenging business to perpetrate acts of vandalism and theft.

How Edo lawmakers moved to introduced Single Treasury Account (TSA)

BENIN CITY

RAYMOND OSOGBE

The Edo State Government has taken a significant step toward strengthening transparency, accountability and efficiency in public finance management with the introduction of a bill to establish a unified revenue collection system for the state.

The proposed legislation, presented during Monday's plenary session of the Edo State House of Assembly in Benin City, seeks to establish the Edo State Revenue Harmonization Account, a single treasury account through which all internally generated revenues (IGR) of the state will be collected, managed and accounted for.

If passed into law, the bill will repeal existing laws that permit ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs) and parastatals to operate separate revenue accounts, thereby centralising government revenue management under one platform.

Leading the debate on the executive bill, the Majority Leader of the House, Hon. Jonathan Ibhama, said the legislation was designed to promote transparency and prudent financial management in line with the reform agenda of Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration.

"The bill seeks to establish a single Treasury Account for Edo State. This will ensure that all government revenues are

centrally collected and properly managed for the mutual benefit of all citizens," Ibhama said.

He urged lawmakers to give the bill expeditious consideration, stressing that its passage would enhance accountability, improve cash management and strengthen public confidence in government finances.

The motion for the debate was seconded by the Minority Leader, Hon. Charity Iguodala Aiguoarueghian, after which the Speaker referred the bill to the Committee of the Whole for further legislative action.

Also during the plenary, lawmakers considered another executive bill seeking to provide for the imposition, collection and administration of a Social and Economic Development Levy, alongside other related matters.

The bill was subsequently referred to the House Committees on Finance and Judiciary for further scrutiny.

The Assembly also received requests from Governor Monday Okpebholo for the confirmation of nominees into key state commissions.

Among the nominees are Aghedo Oscar, nominated as a member of the Edo State Local Government Commission to replace Emmanuel Iyase; Alhaji Shittu Shaibu, Abdusarak Abubakar and other nominees for appointment into the Edo State Electricity Regulatory Commission; and Professor David Osarunmwense Osifo, nominated as a member of the Edo State Judicial Service Commission.

Lawmakers further received an executive bill seeking to repeal the Edo State Traditional Medicine Board Law of 1996 and replace it with the Edo State Traditional Medicine Board Law, 2026, as part of efforts to modernize the legal framework governing traditional medicine practice in the state.

Earlier in the sitting, the Speaker of the House, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku, congratulated the Majority Leader, Hon. Jonathan Ibhama, on the occasion of his 60th birthday, describing his contributions to the legislature as commendable.

VC denies role in Michael Okpara varsity recruitment, payroll dispute

UMUDIKE

The Management of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) has clarified that the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ursula Akanwa, had no involvement in the institution's last recruitment exercise.

Addressing journalists on the Tuesday, Head of Public Relations and Protocol, Mr Anyaso Anyaso, said the employ-

ment process and capturing of staff for payroll were concluded before Akanwa assumed office on March 1, 2026.

"The vice-chancellor has no hand in the last recruitment. The process was concluded before she came on board.

"Any enquiries should be channelled to those who handled the exercise," Anyaso said.

He explained that the Federal Government had approved a waiver for the recruitment of

426 staff, a figure also adopted by the Governing Council.

He said, however, that appointment letters were issued to 618 persons.

According to him, 553 of them were captured on the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) but only the approved 426 were uploaded.

"The vice-chancellor does not have access to the GIFMIS platform to remove or change

any name uploaded," he added.

Anyaso urged the public and stakeholders to disregard claims by "mischief makers" and rely only on official university channels for accurate information.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the clarification follows an appeal by about 127 disengaged staff of MOUUAU who alleged unlawful sack after working for five months without salaries.

The affected workers are

calling on the Federal Government, National Assembly, Nigeria Labour Congress, Academic Staff Union of Universities and human rights bodies to investigate the matter.

They said they accepted the appointments in good faith, abandoned stable jobs, relocated with their families, and served diligently, adding that even a recent staff appraisal commended their performance.

Sports

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

Ekiti FA declares support for Gusau's second-term bid as NFF president

The Ekiti State Football Association, under the leadership of its Chairman, Aare Oluwale Oloworemo, has officially declared its unwavering support for the re-election of the President of the Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau,

sau, ahead of the Federation's elective congress scheduled for September 2026.

The endorsement was unanimously reached during a stakeholders' meeting of the Association, where members commended the leadership style and achievements of the

incumbent NFF President since assuming office.

Aare Oloworemo described Gusau as a visionary football administrator whose reforms have continued to reposition Nigerian football and align it with global best practices.

The remarkable progress recorded across various sectors of the game including domestic league administration, refereeing, coaching education, youth development and football governance demonstrates the NFF President's commitment to the growth of football in the country.

Aare Oloworemo noted that under Gusau's leadership, Nigerian football has witnessed significant improvements, with deliberate efforts geared towards strengthening competitions, enhancing capacity development for referees and coaches and creating a more sustainable football ecosystem.

"The progress made under

Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau's administration is evident for everyone to see. His passion, commitment and vision for Nigerian football deserve continuity. We believe he has laid a solid foundation and should be given another term to consolidate on these achievements," Oloworemo said.

The Ekiti FA Chairman further reaffirmed that the Association stands firmly behind Gusau's re-election bid, expressing confidence that another four-year tenure would bring greater development and more positive transformations to Nigerian football.

The Association also called on football stakeholders across the country to support the continuity of the current administration, stressing that sustained leadership is essential for achieving long-term growth and maintaining the upward trajectory of football development in Nigeria.



IBRAHIM MUSA GUSAU

Drake loses \$1.5 Million bet as Spain defeat Argentina to win 2026 FIFA World Cup

Canadian rapper and Grammy Award-winning artist Drake has suffered another high-profile betting loss after Spain defeated Argentina 1-0 in the final of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, costing the music star a wager worth \$1.5 million.

The internationally acclaimed entertainer, whose real name is Aubrey Drake Graham, placed the multimillion-dollar bet on defending champions Argentina before the highly anticipated final. The wager was made through the online betting platform Stake, with Drake backing Lionel Messi and his teammates to successfully defend the World Cup title.

According to details of the bet, a victory for Argentina would have earned the rapper a payout of more than \$5.1 million, generating a profit of several million dollars. However, Spain's determined performance denied Argentina the opportunity to retain the trophy, leaving Drake's prediction unsuccessful and resulting in the loss of his entire stake.

The World Cup final remained evenly contested for much of the match before Spain eventually broke the deadlock during extra time. The decisive goal secured a historic victory for the European side, earning Spain its second FIFA World Cup title and ending Argentina's hopes of becoming the first nation in decades to successfully defend the prestigious trophy.

Following the result, social media platforms were once again

flooded with reactions linking the outcome to the widely discussed phenomenon popularly known as the "Drake Curse."

The phrase has become a recurring topic among sports fans over the years, referring to the belief that athletes and teams publicly supported by Drake often go on to lose important matches or competitions. Although the theory is widely regarded as an internet meme rather than a factual trend, it continues to gain attention whenever one of the rapper's high-profile sports predictions proves incorrect.



DRAKE

Anthony Taylor retires from football refereeing after 16 years at top level

Anthony Taylor, has officially announced his retirement from professional refereeing with immediate effect, bringing the curtain down on a distinguished career

that spanned more than two decades, including 16 years officiating at the highest level of the game.

Taylor also enjoyed an illustrious 14-year stint on the

FIFA international referees' list, where he took charge of some of the biggest fixtures in world football.

History final assignment came on the grandest stage, officiating Spain's 1-0 victory over Portugal in the final of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, ending his career on a historic note.

Widely respected for his composure, authority, and consistency under pressure, Taylor became a familiar figure in the English Premier League, UEFA competitions, and major international tournaments.

Throughout his career, he handled countless high-profile encounters with confidence and professionalism.



ANTHONY TAYLOR

WAFU B U20 Tourney: Flying Eagles settle down in Yamoussoukro

Nigeria's U20 boys, Flying Eagles, have now settled down in the city of Yamoussoukro in Cote d'Ivoire ahead of their participation in this year's WAFU B U20 Championship kicking off this weekend.

The Cup-holders flew into Abidjan, the Ivorian capital, on Monday before proceeding to Yamoussoukro by road. The contingent is lodged at the Trio Corridor Hotel, and the team's first match of the tournament

is against Ghana's Black Satellites at the Lycée Scientifique on Monday afternoon.

Incidentally, the Black Satellites were the Flying Eagles' victims in the final of the last edition of the competition, in Lome, with the seven-time African champions running away 2-1 winners.

On Thursday next week, Abdu Maikaba's charges will go up against the Sparrow Hawks of Togo, before they take on Burkina's Faso's Young Stallions on Sunday, 2nd August.



FLYING EAGLES TEAM

Enugu FA chairman hails Spain's resilience in World Cup triumph

The Chairman of the Enugu State Football Association, Tony Ugwu, says Spain's victory over Argentina in the 2026 FIFA World Cup final was a reward for the team's resilience and coordination.

Ugwu, a former Chairman of Nsukka Local Government Council, said this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Monday in Nsukka while reacting to Spain's triumph in the final played at the New York/New Jersey Stadium.

He said both finalists displayed quality football, with the match extending into extra time after ending level in regulation time before Ferran Torres scored the decisive goal in the 106th minute.

"Everybody who watched the final knows that Argentina

and Spain gave a good account of themselves, but Spain was more resilient and coordinated to lift the coveted trophy.

"The victory sparked massive celebrations among Spanish supporters at the New York/New Jersey Stadium because of the tension and excitement the match generated," he said.

Ugwu also commended the performance of the African teams at the tournament, particularly Morocco, which reached the quarter-finals.

He, however, expressed regret that the Super Eagles failed to qualify for the tournament.

The FA chairman urged the Federal Government and other stakeholders to begin preparations early and provide the necessary support to ensure Nigeria qualifies for the next FIFA World Cup.



SPAIN CELEBRATE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP WIN

SPORTS



Bayelsa United launches talent hunt through preseason tourney

The interim Board of Bayelsa United FC has launched a one-week preseason football tournament aimed at discovering young talents for integration into the club.

The tournament, organised in collaboration with the Bayelsa Governor's Football Tournament popularly known

as the Prosperity Cup, will feature 14 teams.

A statement jointly signed by the club's Chairman, Peter Singabele, and Prosperity Cup Director-General, Ono Akpe, who is also a board member, said the competition would provide platform for grassroots talent discovery.



BAYELSA UNITED

"The idea of the tournament is to spot outstanding talents that will be infused into Bayelsa United because we want to see our team return to the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) immediately.

"We believe that the surest way to get talents is at the grassroots through platforms like this," the statement said.

The statement disclosed that participating teams would include Prosperity Cup quarter finalists, Yenagoa-based clubs and three teams from outside Bayelsa, namely Erema Jackson of Port Harcourt, Excellent FC of Ughelli and 36 Lions of Sapele from Delta

It listed the Yenagoa-based teams as Prosperity Cup finalists, Akinima/Biogbo; Mountain of the Lord Deliverance Ministry (MLDM FC); Krosaders FC; Brazil FC and Mountain of Fire Miracle Min-

istry (MFM FC).

Others are Bayelsa United Feeders, Federal University Kings (FUO Kings), Otuoke Grassroots FC, NDU Oilers, Orange Boys and Bayelsa Starlets Academy.

According to the statement, the tournament aligns with the vision of Gov. Douye Diri to identify and develop home-grown talents capable of representing Bayelsa United at the highest level.

It added that "this is an initiative from the new board in line with the governor's vision to discover home-grown talents for Bayelsa United that will feature in the NNL league."

The statement said the one-week tournament would run from Wednesday, July 22, to July 29, with matches commencing daily by 10 a.m. at the Samson Siasia Stadium, Yenagoa.



LIONEL MESSI

AIPS named Messi most outstanding player of FIFA World Cup 2026

Lionel Messi has been crowned the AIPS Outstanding Player of the FIFA World Cup 2026 in a worldwide poll conducted by the International Sports Press Association, in which 472 journalists from 121 countries participated.

The Argentine amassed 1179 points to finish ahead of Kylian Mbappe of France (717 points) and Jude Bellingham of England (470 points).

THE FINAL After 104 matches sprinkled with unforgettable surprises, the FIFA World Cup 2026 came to a thrilling conclusion on Sunday (July 19) with the corona-

tion of Spain as world champions following their 1-0 victory over Argentina. But beyond the scoreline the final match represented a generational shift, with Lionel Messi symbolically passing the baton to Lamine Yamal, the five-month old baby he bathed in 2007.

The 39-year-old Messi arrived at the 2026 World Cup as one of three players making history by competing in their sixth tournament and though he came up one win short of a second consecutive World Cup title, he had already enchanted the world with his exceptionally ageless skills en route to the final.

Criminalise match fixing, Gara Gombe tells stakeholders

Former Gombe FA Chairman, Alhaji Ahmed Shuaibu Gara Gombe has urged football stakeholders and administrators in the country to criminalise match-fixing as a way of saving the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL).

Gara-Gombe, who spoke while briefing newsmen over the weekend in Abuja, advocated the criminalization of match-fixers in the nation's football eco-system and that the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and other stakeholders must join forces together to stop the hydra-headed problems bedeviling the nation's football.

"Football manipulation should be treated as serious offence like it's done in other clime. We should enact the necessary laws and enforce it adequately"

The fiery football critics insisted that the proposed N2 billion naira prize for league champions was attractive but sustainable football development required stronger foundations.

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

"You can offer N10 billion to the league champions, but if the fundamentals are not in place, the league will continue to struggle. A proper football league is not about prize money.

He identified eight key areas needed for a successful league,

including sound capital base, good governance and commercial viability are key component for a sustainable league.

"Others are modern infrastructure, competent administrators, player welfare, fan engagement and professional refereeing," he said.

On infrastructure, Gara-Gombe lamented that the county is does not have the necessary infrastructure with only Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, Uyo meeting CAF and FIFA requirement in the country.



GARA GOMBE

NPFL to organize workshop for league clubs' media directors, marketing heads in Enugu

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Nigeria Premier Football League, NPFL, is set to host a mandatory workshop for Media Direc-

tors and Marketing Coordinators of all the twenty Clubs in the nation's premier League.

The workshop, according to the organisers, is on commercial and media innovation for

the 2026/2027 League Season, aimed at enhancing the visibility and market value of the league

In NPFL correspondence sent to the clubs, the NPFL noted that the workshop is part of the league's commitment to repositioning the league as a commercially viable, professionally managed and globally competitive football league.

Representatives of the Clubs are expected to arrive in Enugu on Tuesday, July 28th, 2026, while the Seminar begins on Wednesday 29th July, at the Ozom Hotel, Independence Layout, Enugu.

The NPFL further stated that attendance by the aforementioned Clubs' officials is mandatory as failure to comply would attract severe fines on the defaulting Club.



George Ilenikhena chooses Nigeria over France after talks with Eric Chelle

Nigerian-born forward George Ilenikhena has reportedly decided to represent the Super Eagles at international level ahead of France.

According to multiple reports, the highly-rated striker reached the decision after holding discussions with Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle, who is believed to have outlined his plans for the young attacker within the national team setup.

Ilenikhena, who is eligible to play for both Nigeria and

France, has long been regarded as one of the brightest young talents in European football.

His reported commitment to Nigeria is expected to be a major boost for the Super Eagles as the team continues to build for future international competitions.

While an official announcement is yet to be made by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) or the player, the reports suggest that Ilenikhena has opted to pledge his international future to Nigeria.