

Okpebholo pledges policies to secure better future for Edo youths

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged that his administration will continue to formulate and implement policies and programmes aimed at creating a better and more secure future for the younger

generation.

Okpebholo made the commitment in Benin City yesterday when he received a delegation from the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), led by Brig.-Gen. Abdulrahman Idris, on a courtesy visit to Government House, Benin City.

The governor thanked the

delegation for recognising Edo State's longstanding contributions to Nigeria's entertainment and creative sectors.

He also announced that the state government would sponsor some students to attend programmes at NIPSS, while promising to consider other requests made by the institute and determine appropriate

ways through which Edo could support its activities.

Earlier, Idris described Edo as the headquarters of the "Orange Economy" among the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), saying the conclusion was based on the institute's study on "Orange Economy and Sustainable Growth in Nigeria."

He said the institute initially considered Lagos as the headquarters of the Orange Economy but changed its position after observing Edo's contributions to sports, entertainment and the creative industry.

"Back at the institute, we were arguing that Lagos is the headquarters of the Orange Economy. I said no, Edo is the

headquarters of the Orange Economy; Lagos is just the route through which we channel our products to the outside world," Idris said.

He added that the delegation's three-day tour of various locations in Edo had further reinforced his position.

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#200

Okpebholo signs over 500 C-of-Os in land administration reform milestone

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has signed more than 500 Certificates of Occupancy

(C-of-Os) in a single-day exercise, marking a significant milestone in the state government's efforts to accelerate land documentation and eliminate longstanding bottlenecks in land administration.

The Managing Director of

the Edo Geographic Information Service (EdoGIS), Dr. Innocent Bello, disclosed this in Benin City yesterday during a press briefing on the activities, achievements, prospects and challenges of the agency.

Bello said the development demonstrated the administration's commitment to making land administration in Edo faster, more transparent and less stressful for residents and

investors.

He noted that effective land administration was critical to economic development, stressing that proper land documentation provides security of tenure, encourages investment and promotes orderly physical development.

According to him, EdoGIS is responsible for providing geospatial services, as well as assessing, charging and collect-

ing land-related dues and other statutory revenues.

"Obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy is critical to securing your land. Land administration should be stress-free, transparent and accessible to all," Bello said.

The EdoGIS boss identified the management of legacy land records inherited from previous administrations as one of the major challenges confronting the agency.

He said the agency's digitisation and forensic processes had

uncovered cases of incomplete documentation, fake receipts and fraudulent survey records.

"The digitisation and forensic process has helped us identify a number of issues in the records inherited from the past. We have discovered incomplete documents, fake receipts and fake survey records. These are issues that must be addressed if we are to build a reliable land administration system," he said.

Bello also expressed concern

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COURTESY VISIT:

The Team Lead of the delegation from the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) Brig.-Gen. Abdulrahman Idris presenting a plaque to the governor of Edo State senator Monday Okpebholo in Benin City during a courtesy visit.

Picketing: Unions ground Air Peace flights, passengers stranded

ABUJA

OSARUGUE OSADOLOR

Aviation unions on Tuesday grounded operations of Air Peace at major airports across the country, leaving hundreds of passengers stranded and disrupting about 70 flights over allegations that the airline was frustrating workers' unionisation efforts and failing to remit the five per cent Ticket Sales Charge (TSC).

The industrial action, led by the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE), Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN) and National Association of Aircraft Pilots

and Engineers (NAAPE), with the backing of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), affected flight operations in Lagos, Abuja and Enugu.

The unions alleged that Air Peace had failed to remit substantial sums accruing from the five per cent Ticket Sales Charge payable to the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), while also allegedly denying workers the right to organise and belong to trade unions.

A NUATE official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the total TSC debt allegedly owed by members of

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NEWS

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over land grabbing in some communities, including parts of Okoroma, stressing that government property must be protected.

He warned individuals and groups against attempting to dictate how government land should be used.

"No one has the right to dictate to government on how it should use its land. Those involved in such activities should desist from it," he warned.

The EdoGIS chief also appealed to applicants for Certificates of Occupancy to provide complete and accurate information to facilitate the processing of their applications.

He added that stronger collaboration among government agencies would be necessary to address some of the challenges confronting land administration in the state.

Bello expressed concern over the occupation of some government-owned properties by security formations, citing the former Army Barracks at Ikpo-

ba Hill as an example.

He called on relevant government agencies to collaborate with EdoGIS and other authorities to identify and recover government lands currently under unauthorised or inappropriate occupation.

"Relevant government agencies should please help recover all government land. These properties belong to the people of Edo State and should be properly documented, protected and put to appropriate use," he said.

Looking ahead, Bello said EdoGIS would strengthen its digitisation programme to improve the integrity, accessibility and efficiency of land records.

He disclosed that the agency would also intensify efforts to recover outstanding tenement rates and other revenues owed to the government.

"All efforts will be made to recover all monies, including tenement rates, due to the government. This is important not only for revenue generation but also for proper land administration," he said.

Unions ground Air Peace flights...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) stood at about N25 billion, with Air Peace accounting for approximately N15 billion.

"There's a meeting between the airline operators association. You are aware of the cause of the strike: TSC issues amounting to about N25bn. The total accrued to AON is N25bn.

"Air Peace is having the highest amount of N15bn, and secondly, they are denying airline workers of organising and to form unions, which is a fundamental right. Those are the two things that we are fighting for," the official said.

The unions had earlier threatened to picket Air Peace after issuing three warnings to airlines over the alleged non-remittance of the statutory charge.

The action resulted in the cancellation and delay of sever-

al flights, with passengers at the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Lagos, and Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, among those affected.

United Nigeria Airlines, for instance, reportedly cancelled 32 flights as a result of the disruption, saying all eight of its serviceable aircraft had been fully booked before the picketing commenced.

The action also disrupted the operations of other airlines as access to some airport facilities was reportedly blocked.

However, workers of Air Peace dissociated themselves from the industrial action, saying the picketing did not represent their position or interests.

The workers, through their spokesman, Comrade Aminu Suleiman, said they had enjoyed regular salaries, health maintenance organisation (HMO) benefits and other welfare packages since the airline



ANNIVERSARY:

The Chairman of Anniversary Oversight Committee and Ologbetsere of Warri Kingdom, Chief Oma Eyewuoma, represented by Chief Brown Mene, and other Palace Chiefs during a press conference as part of activities to mark the fifth anniversary of the coronation of the Olu of Warri on Wednesday.

Akpabio urges strategic thinking to address Nigeria's challenges

ABUJA

Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, has urged participants at an executive leadership course to use the opportunity to reflect on Nigeria's challenges.

Akpabio made the call at a four-day International Executive Leadership Course organised by the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) for its Governing Council's members in Marrakech, Morocco.

The Centre for Advanced Executive Education Programme (CAEEP) of NILDS organised the course focusing on strategic leadership and institutional readiness.

A release issued by NILDS on Wednesday in Abuja stated that Akpabio made the call in his opening remarks at the event.

He said the four-day course was well conceived and would promote strategic leadership discussions for national development.

Represented by Sen. Victor Umeh (Anambra Central), Ak-

pabio, said that the programme provided participants an opportunity to temporarily leave Abuja, concentrate, reflect, and develop strategic solutions to challenges confronting Nigeria.

"It is good that we take time away from home to concentrate, reflect and engage in strategic thinking on how to offer solutions," Akpabio said.

He noted that Nigeria, like other developing countries, faced several challenges, stressing that the country's situation was not the worst globally.

"Ours is not the worst, but every nation will continue to seek solutions to the challenges confronting its people and institutions," he added.

Akpabio said the National Assembly remained a major platform for addressing Nigeria's challenges through legislation,

programme planning, administration and other measures.

He urged the participants to use the leadership course to develop practical ideas that could contribute to resolving Nigeria's developmental challenges and strengthening national institutions.

In his welcome remarks, the Director-General of NILDS, Prof. Abubakar Sulaiman described the programme as a platform for participants to think, reflect, learn, interrogate and prepare.

41 UniPods to drive Nigeria's knowledge economy – Alausa

ABUJA

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, says the Federal Government is establishing 41 University Innovation Pods (UniPods) across tertiary institutions to transform research and innovation into jobs, investment and economic opportunities.

Alausa said this in a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Media and Communications, Mr Ikharo Attah, on Wednesday.

The minister said the initiative was part of President Bola

Tinubu's vision to use education, technology, research and innovation to transform Nigeria from a resource-based to a knowledge-based economy.

He said the UniPods were designed to ensure that research conducted in Nigerian universities moved beyond academic purposes to the development of marketable products, services and solutions.

According to him, eight UniPods have either been commissioned or are ready for commissioning, while three are already operational at the University of Lagos, Nasarawa State

University and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

Alausa listed other specialised centres to include the Blue Economy UniPod in Akwa Ibom, AgroTech UniPod at Benue State University, Resilience Tech UniPod in Borno, Gov-Tech UniPod at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and Industrial Tech UniPod in Plateau.

He said the success of the initiative would not be measured by the buildings and equipment provided but by the solutions, businesses, jobs and economic value generated from them.

Okpebholo pledges policies...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

"For the past three days, the team has taken us around different places, and we have confirmed my stand on Edo being the headquarters of the Orange Economy," he said.

According to Idris, Edo has produced several personalities who have made significant contributions to Nigeria's sports and entertainment sectors.

He recalled that in the 1980s, nine Nigerian internationals from New Nigerian Bank (NNB) and Bendel Insurance represented the country as members of the national football team.

Idris also listed former Super Eagles coaches, including Ste-

phen Keshi, Paul Bazuaye and Amodu Shuaibu, among notable personalities produced by the state.

He noted that contemporary entertainers from Edo, including internationally acclaimed music star Rema, had continued to put the state on the global map.

The NIPSS delegation leader commended the Edo State Government for initiatives aimed at strengthening the creative economy, urging other state governments to emulate the administration.

Idris said the delegation was impressed by developments witnessed across the state, particularly in the areas of security, healthcare, education and infrastructure.

Governor Okpebholo urges Edo youths to pursue legitimate paths, reject criminality

Edo State Gov. Monday Okpebholo has urged young people in the state to embrace education, skills development, and entrepreneurship while rejecting criminality, cultism, and violence.

Governor Okpebholo addressing the occasion of the International Youth Day 2026 on Tuesday, acknowledged the challenges confronting young people, including unemployment, the rising cost of education, limited access to capital and the uncertainties associated with early adulthood.

He, however, urged youths not to allow those challenges to determine their future, saying,

"Your present circumstances do not have to determine your future," Okpebholo said.

The governor said his administration was committed to creating opportunities for young people through investments in education, healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture, security, and skills development.

He urged youths to complement government efforts with determination, discipline, and a commitment to legitimate means of livelihood.

"The government can not do this alone. The future of Edo must be built with our young people, not merely for them," he said.

He warned young people against cultism, drug trafficking, cybercrime, kidnapping, and other forms of criminality, describing them as destructive paths rather than shortcuts to wealth.

"There is honor in honest work. There is dignity in learning a trade. There is power in education, and there is lasting success in integrity," he said.

The governor said his administration had continued to pursue youth engagement and employment initiatives, including the appointment of 4,800 Special Assistants, with 25 drawn from each of the state's 192 wards.

He said the initiative was designed to create opportunities for young people to participate in public service and grassroots governance.

Governor Okpebholo also said his administration was promoting youth employment through infrastructure projects, agricultural initiatives, and technology-driven ventures under its five development pillars of security, health, infrastructure, natural resources and agriculture, and education.

"You are not leaders only of tomorrow. You are stakeholders in Edo today," the governor said, urging young people to channel their creativity, talents, and energy towards the development of the state.

NEWS

INEC reprints Osun ballot papers as SDP joins governorship race

OSOGBOMATTHEW OKAGHA WITH
AGENCY REPORT

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has commenced the reproduction of ballot papers and result sheets for the Osun State governorship election following the inclusion of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, Dr. Francis Olugbenga Ajala, on the ballot.

The development brings to 15 the number of political parties contesting the gover-

norship election scheduled for Saturday, August 15, 2026.

INEC's decision followed a court order directing the commission to include Ajala and his running mate, Faseke Babajimi Oladipo, in the election.

According to the commission, the ballot papers and result sheets are being reproduced to accommodate the SDP candidates and ensure that all duly recognised contestants are reflected in the electoral materials.

INEC National Commissioner and Chairman of its Information and Voter Education Committee, Sam Olumekun, said the

commission was taking all necessary steps to ensure that the court order was fully complied with without compromising the integrity of the electoral process.

He explained that the result sheets were also being reproduced alongside the ballot papers to reflect the inclusion of the SDP candidate.

Olumekun stated that the reproduced ballot papers would arrive in Osun State on Thursday, August 13, and would be distributed the same day to the commission's local government area offices across the state in line with its standard distribution procedure

ahead of the election.

He assured political parties, candidates and the general public of INEC's commitment to conducting a free, fair and credible election.

The development comes just three days before the election, with the commission racing against time to ensure that the newly reproduced materials reach the appropriate locations before voting begins.

The August 15 poll is expected to be keenly contested, with the incumbent governor, Ademola Adeleke of the Accord Party, seeking re-election alongside candidates of the APC, ADC and other political parties.

**WORLD SANGO FESTIVAL:**

From left: Guest speaker, Prince Tunde Odunlade; Asiwaju Awo of Oyoland, Olaonipekun Onifade; Commissioner for Culture and Tourism Oyo State, Dr Wasiu Olatunbosun; Guest of Honour, Mrs Abiodun Duro-Ladipo; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Tourism Oyo State, Mr Rotimi Babalola, at the World Sango Festival and Duro Ladipo memorial symposium in Ibadan on Wednesday.

Osun 2026: YIAGA Africa urges media to educate voters on elections' innovations

OSOGBO

Civil society and election observation group, YIAGA Africa, has urged journalists to intensify voter education ahead of Saturday's Osun State governorship election, particularly on the new innovations being introduced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The Executive Director of YIAGA Africa, Mr Samson Ito, made the call yesterday in Osogbo at a workshop organised for journalists on "Election Results Management."

Ito said one of the major innovations provided for under the 2026 Electoral Act was the electronic uploading and backing up of election results from polling units to the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) through the e-EC8A platform.

According to him, the innovation enables the Presiding Officer (PO) to electronically upload to the BVAS the result recorded on the physical INEC result sheet, Form EC8A, at the polling unit.

He noted that because the procedure was new and had not previously been used in Osun State, some voters might misunderstand or raise objections to it during the election.

Ito therefore urged journalists to properly educate voters before election day to enable them understand the process and distinguish legitimate electoral procedures from

possible irregularities.

He also called on journalists and election observers to closely monitor Presiding Officers as they upload results from the physical EC8A forms to the BVAS, stressing that the electronic results must correspond with those recorded on the physical result sheets.

On voter accreditation, the YIAGA Africa executive director said the provisions of the Electoral Act required the

use of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) for accreditation.

He stressed that voters who were not duly accredited must not be allowed to vote, urging citizens and party agents to pay close attention to the accreditation process.

Ito further advised voters to inspect the BVAS before accreditation begins to ensure that the machines had not been pre-loaded with any information.

Committee applauds Oborevori over rise in youth military enlistment

ASABA

AJUWA VICTOR

The Delta State Awareness Creation Committee on Youth Enlistment into Military and Paramilitary Services has commended Governor Sheriff Oborevori for his sustained commitment to youth empowerment and human capital development.

Chairman of the committee and Commissioner for Youth Development, Mr Brave Oyinkore Enodeh, gave the commendation in Asaba while formally

assuming leadership of the committee in line with its approved structure and organogram.

Enodeh said the administration's deliberate awareness campaigns had significantly increased the participation of Delta youths in military and paramilitary recruitment exercises.

He noted that available records indicated a remarkable increase in the number of Delta youths applying for and gaining admission into the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), the Nigerian Army and other military and paramilitary services.

According to him, the develop-

ment was a reflection of the state government's sustained investment in youth development and strategic public enlightenment.

He assured the state government that, under his leadership, the committee would consolidate the gains already recorded and deploy more effective strategies to reach eligible youths across the state.

Over the past three years, the committee has intensified grassroots sensitisation, media campaigns and stakeholder engagement across Delta's 25 local government areas.

Oborevori tasks new 6 Division GOC on P proactive security in Niger Delta

ASABA

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, has charged the new General Officer Commanding (GOC), 6 Division, Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, Major General Everest Okoro, to sustain proactive security measures and strengthen collaboration with other security agencies to protect lives, property and critical economic assets across the Niger Delta.

Oborevori gave the charge when he received Okoro, who is also the Land Component Commander, Joint Task Force South-South, Operation Delta Safe, during a courtesy visit to the Government House, Asaba.

The governor congratulated the Army chief on his appointment, describing 6 Division as a strategic operational formation with a critical role in maintaining peace and security

across the Niger Delta region.

"I congratulate you on your new posting as the GOC 6 Division. This is a very strategic operational division. I pray for your guidance, wisdom and success during your time here," Oborevori said.

He assured the GOC of the continued support and cooperation of the Delta State Government, stressing that the relative peace enjoyed in the state was largely the result of sustained collaboration between the government and security agencies.

According to him, Delta's strategic position as a major oil-producing state makes its security particularly important to Nigeria's economic stability.

"Delta State is very, very key to the economy of Nigeria, and we rely on the security agencies to do their work because the peace we are enjoying today is the result of collaboration between the state and the security agencies," he said.

Oborevori donates bus to Delta NUJ, reaffirms commitment to media partnership

ASABA

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, has presented a brand-new 18-seater Toyota Hiace bus to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Delta State Council, to enhance the mobility and operational capacity of journalists across the state.

The vehicle was formally presented to the NUJ Chairman, Comrade Churchill Oyowe, on behalf of the governor by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Festus Ahon, in Asaba.

Ahon said the gesture underscored the enduring relationship between the state government and the media, noting that journalists

played a critical role in public enlightenment, accountability and the promotion of development.

Presenting the vehicle, he said the bus was provided for the use of the union and journalists across the state and would facilitate their movement while carrying out professional assignments.

He said the intervention reflected Governor Oborevori's recognition of the media as an important partner in the development process.

"On behalf of His Excellency, the Governor of Delta State, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, I have the honour of presenting this brand-new bus to the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Delta State Council, for the use of the union and journalists across the state," Ahon said.

Delta's Peace, Economic Growth Enhanced by Security Collaboration — Oborevori

ASABA

AJUWA VICTOR

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, has said sustained collaboration between the state government and security agencies has contributed significantly to the peace and economic growth being witnessed in the state.

Oborevori stated this when he received the newly appointed General Officer Commanding (GOC), 6 Division, Nigerian Army, Port Harcourt, Major General Everest Okoro, who is also the Land Component Commander, Joint Task Force South-South, Operation Delta Safe, on a courtesy visit to

Government House, Asaba.

The governor urged the new GOC to sustain proactive security measures and strengthen collaboration with other security agencies to protect lives, property and critical economic assets across the Niger Delta.

Congratulating Okoro on his appointment, Oborevori described 6 Division as a strategic operational formation with a critical role in maintaining peace and security across the region.

"I congratulate you on your new posting as the GOC 6 Division. This is a very strategic operational division. I pray for your guidance, wisdom and success during your time here," the governor said.

NEWS

Edo auto crash leaves scores with varying degrees of injuries

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

Several persons on Tuesday evening sustained varying degrees of injuries when a private car allegedly lost control and rammed into traders and pedestrians around the NNPC Benin Depot axis of the Benin-Agbor highway in Benin City, Edo State.

The exact number of casualties could not be immediately ascertained as of press time.

The crash involved a private vehicle travelling from the Ramat Park end of the road towards the Benin bypass axis.

According to eyewitnesses, the vehicle suddenly lost control before veering off its path and crashing into traders and pedestrians operating and moving along the roadside.

The impact reportedly threw

the area into confusion, as passers-by and other road users rushed to assist the victims.

An eyewitness, Mr. Chidi Nwankwo said the incident once again exposed the dangers posed by the present condition of the highway.

"This is another painful reminder of what motorists, traders and pedestrians face on this road every day. Something urgent needs to be done to make this corridor safer," the eyewitness said.

Another source said the accident should prompt renewed attention to the safety implications of the ongoing reconstruction of the Benin-Agbor-Asaba highway, particularly around busy sections where traders and pedestrians operate close to the carriageway.

The incident has also renewed calls by some road users and residents for the Benin-Asaba Expressway Concession Company (BAECC), the concessionaire han-

dling the reconstruction project, to intensify work and ensure adequate safety measures around active and vulnerable sections of the road.

Some eyewitnesses alleged that the slow pace of reconstruction had worsened conditions for

motorists, traders and pedestrians, and urged the company to live up to its contractual obligations to the Federal Government.

The concerns echo earlier complaints by motorists, traders and residents over the pace and

safety implications of construction activities along portions of the Benin-Agbor corridor.

The 125-kilometre Benin-Asaba highway project is being undertaken under the Highway Development and Management

Initiative concession arrangement, with BAECC serving as the concession company. The project was flagged off in March 2025 and is expected to improve connectivity between Edo and Delta states when completed.

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE:**

From left: Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Gov. Douye Diri of Bayelsa, during the 2026 Democracy Dialogue Day at the International Conference Centre Bauchi.

Osun Election: Police declare zero tolerance for electoral violence

MUYIDEEN FUNMILAYO

OSOGBO

The Nigeria Police Force has declared zero tolerance for electoral violence, thuggery and other forms of lawlessness ahead of the Osun State governorship election scheduled for August 15, 2026.

The warning is part of measures being adopted by security agencies to ensure that the election is conducted peacefully and that voters are able to exercise their democratic rights without fear or intimidation.

The police warned political parties, candidates, supporters and other stakeholders against actions capable of creating tension or disrupting the electoral process.

They were specifically cautioned against intimidation, vote-buying, ballot snatching and other activities capable of

undermining the credibility and peaceful conduct of the election.

To strengthen security across the state, the Nigeria Police Force has deployed about 15,000 personnel for the election.

Senior officers, including a Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Assistant Inspectors-General and Commissioners of Police, are also expected to coordinate security operations in different parts of the state.

The police stressed that anyone who violates electoral laws or attempts to cause violence would face appropriate sanctions.

The Force also assured political parties and candidates that security agencies would work to provide a level playing field and protect voters, electoral officials and other stakeholders during the exercise.

The warning comes amid heightened political activities in the state as the election draws closer.

Katsina health workers issue 21-day-ultimatum over welfare demands

FAVOUR OBADIGIE

KATSINA

Health care workers in Katsina State have issued the state government a 21-day ultimatum to address their welfare and professional demands, warning that failure to do so could lead to a statewide strike.

The Assembly of Health Care Professionals in Nigeria (AHAPN) issued the ultimatum on Tuesday, August 11, 2026, during a media briefing in Katsina.

Chairman of the Assembly, Comrade Ibrahim A. Balange, said the decision followed repeated efforts by the workers to get the government to address issues affecting health care professionals in the state.

According to him, the workers had engaged the government

on several occasions and submitted correspondences concerning their demands, but the issues remained largely unresolved.

He said the prolonged delay had begun to affect the morale, motivation and productivity of health care professionals despite their continued commitment to providing healthcare services to residents.

The workers are particularly demanding the implementation of 100 per cent Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS), in line with what is obtainable in federal health institutions.

They are also seeking implementation of the skipping of CONHESS 10, as well as a review of hazard allowance and other allowances covering call duty, shift duty, clinical and non-clinical duties, rural postings and specialist services.

Residents, leaders seek urgent intervention on Benin-Auchi Road

BENIN CITY

OLIVER IJIOGBE

Residents and community leaders living around the Benin Auchi Road Bypass have called on the Edo State Government to urgently intervene in the deplorable condition of the Benin-Auchi Road by the bye-pass, warning that the failed portion of the road is posing serious danger to motorists and other commuters.

The residents, who spoke to our correspondent, said the deteriorating condition of the road had continued to cause hardship for road users, particularly motorists, and urged the government and

other relevant stakeholders to take immediate steps to rehabilitate the affected portion.

A motorist, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the road had previously been repaired, but the intervention failed to last.

According to him, the poor durability of the repairs could be attributed to the quality of materials used in carrying out the work.

He therefore advised the government to ensure proper monitoring and supervision of any fresh rehabilitation work on the failed portion of the Benin Auchi Road Bypass, stressing that the use of quality materials and adherence to construction standards would guarantee a lasting solution.

Also speaking, a resident, who

pleaded anonymity, said trucks and tankers frequently fall at the failed portion of the Benin-Auchi Road by the bypass, particularly when negotiating the bad section.

The resident said such incidents often result in gridlock and unnecessary loss of man-hours, thereby worsening the hardship experienced by commuters using the road.

He called on the state government to urgently address the

situation before the condition of the road deteriorates further and creates more serious safety challenges for motorists and other road users.

The residents appealed to the government and relevant stakeholders to treat the rehabilitation of the road as an emergency, saying that restoring the failed portion would not only ease traffic but also reduce the risk of accidents and other avoidable incidents.

EFCC recovers ₦115billion, \$81million NDDC levies as Senate deepens NEITI audit probe

ABUJA

CAROLINE AMEH

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, has recovered more than N115 billion in statutory levies owed to the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, by defaulting oil companies, as the Senate intensifies its investigation into the findings of the 2021-2023 NEITI Oil and Gas Sector Audit.

The EFCC disclosed this on Wednesday when its representative, Mr Francis Oka-Phillips Usani, appeared before the Senate Committee on Public Accounts chaired by Senator Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo. Usani said the commission investigated 43 oil companies over unpaid three per cent statutory levies to the NDDC, with 24 companies found to have outstanding liabilities amounting to N76.883 billion and \$81.076 million, while 19 com-

panies were cleared of liability.

He said following investigations and pressure from the EFCC, some of the affected companies paid N6.709 billion and \$16.994 million directly to the NDDC. He added that the commission had so far released N73.373 billion and \$67.070 million recovered on behalf of the commission to the NDDC, while N3.510 billion and \$14.005 million remained in the EFCC recovery account.

Usani explained that the investigation focused primarily on unpaid three per cent statutory levies due to the NDDC, as identified in the NEITI audit report, while noting that the EFCC did not rule out the possibility of other unpaid statutory obligations and taxes owed to the Federal Government.

Meanwhile, the Senate committee rejected an attempt by TotalEnergies EP Nigeria Limited to defend queries contained in the audit report, citing inadequate representation.

Group endorses Eribo for Oredo Federal Constituency seat

BENIN CITY

OSAHENIRO OFUWENGBE

A socio-political group, the National Future Leaders of Nigeria (NAFULON), has endorsed Kelvin Osasu Eribo, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Lavin Group, to contest the Oredo Federal Constituency seat in the House of Representatives.

The group made its position known during a media briefing in Benin City, where it called for competent, visionary and result-oriented leadership to represent the people of Oredo Federal Constituency.

Speaking at the briefing, NAFULON Coordinator, Ehi-

kuemen Scott Osegbowa, urged Eribo to offer himself for the position, describing him as a candidate with the experience and capacity required to effectively represent the constituency.

Osegbowa cited Eribo's professional background in business development, youth empowerment and community service as some of the qualities which, according to the group, make him suitable for public service.

NAFULON also described Eribo as a UK-trained Information Technology specialist and Project Management Consultant, saying his professional experience had equipped him with skills that could be valuable in public leadership and constituency representation.

NEWS

NHRC calls for Fadahunsi's suspension, arrest over viral video

ABUJA

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), has called for the immediate suspension and arrest of Sen. Francis Fadahunsi, representing Osun East Senatorial District, for inciting violence ahead of Saturday Osun

governorship election.

The Executive Secretary of the commission, Dr Tony Ojukwu made this call in a statement issued in reaction to a viral video by Fadahunsi asking the All Progressives Congress (APC) supporters to "kill any Accord Party member they encountered anywhere ahead of Saturday election."

The commission is also directing all party chairmen to issue directives to their party members to desist from any hateful, inciting, intimidating calls to violence or provocative statements ahead of the coming election.

"Any candidates or party faithful who violate these directives should be called out for violating constitutional and electoral framework for peaceful elections and should be picked up by the law enforcement authorities for

prosecution," he said.

In the video circulated online, the person identified as Sen. Francis Fadahunsi who spoke in Yoruba language when translated said:

"From now on, whenever you see Accord members, kill them. I authorise you to kill them. They have wives and children too. This is a Federal Government election. On election day, even if they come with voter cards, we won't allow them to vote."

Ojukwu described the remarks as incitement to murder, electoral violence and voter intimidation.

He added that no well-meaning Nigerian should sit by and allow such rhetoric to be tolerated without consequences from the law enforcement authorities.

"This is not politics. This is a licence to kill. A public officer who tells citizens to murder other citizens because of party affiliation must not be allowed to remain in office for one more day.

"The Senate leadership is hereby called upon to suspend Sen. Fadahunsi immediately pending conclusive investigation by the police.

"The Police and DSS must also arrest, investigate and

prosecute him now. We cannot wait until blood is spilled in Osun before we act. Prevention is the duty of the state and the leadership of the NASS is part of the state," he said.

He said that given the gravity of the statements attributed to the Senator in the video, the matter requires urgent investigation by security agencies under due process.

He added, therefore, that the commission is calling on the authorities to immediately suspend Sen.

Fadahunsi from all Senate duties pending investigation.

Ojukwu urged the citizens of Osun to remain peaceful and to report any threats to the commission.

**TEAM BUILDING WORKSHOP:**

Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack (M); Auditor-General of the Federation, Mr Shaakaa Kanyitor-Chira (6th R); Accountant-General of the Federation, Mr Shamseldeen Babatunde-Ogunjimi (3rd R) and Federal Permanent Secretaries, during the unveiling of the Seven Federal Civil Service Reform Documents at a Team Building Workshop for Permanent Secretaries in Abuja on Wednesday.

Police summon Fadahunsi over alleged inciting remarks

OSOGBO

The Commissioner of Police for Saturday's governorship election in Osun, Mr Samuel Etaifo, has invited Sen. Francis Fadahunsi (APC-Osun East) to provide clarification on an alleged inciting statement contained in a viral video.

This was contained in a statement issued by the Police Public Relations Officer in Osun, DSP Abiodun Ojelabi, on Wednesday in Osoybo.

Fadahunsi, in the viral video, while speaking with members of his party, was allegedly heard instructing that

members of the Accord Party should not be allowed to vote in Ijesaland.

He was also allegedly heard saying that those identified as Accord Party members should be killed.

The Commissioner of Police condemned the alleged statement, saying it had generated concerns among stakeholders and members of the public.

Etaifo said that at this critical period of the electoral process, political leaders and public office holders were expected to exercise restraint.

He said political actors were expected to promote peace and refrain from making com-

ments capable of heightening tension or undermining public confidence in the electoral and security arrangements for the forthcoming election.

Etaifo reaffirmed the commitment of the Nigeria Police to neutrality, professionalism and the protection of democratic values.

He emphasised that the police would not tolerate any act, utterance or conduct capable of inciting violence, disrupting public peace or threatening the security of the state.

"Consequently, the CP has invited Sen. Francis Fadahunsi to provide clarification on the statement and to foster mutual

understanding in the interest of peace and security," Ojelabi quoted Etaifo as saying.

The Commissioner of Police, however, said the invitation should not be misconstrued as an act of intimidation, but as part of proactive measures aimed at preventing the escalation of tensions and ensuring a peaceful, free, fair and credible governorship election in the state.

Etaifo further called on all political actors, their supporters and members of the public to remain law-abiding, avoid inflammatory rhetoric and channel their grievances through lawful means.

Kaduna govt., UNICEF train LG directors on social protection financing

ZARIA (KADUNA)

The Kaduna State Government has trained Directors of Planning and Budget from all the state's 23 Local Government Areas on how to manage public funds to finance social protection programmes.

The two-day workshop was organised by the state Planning and Budget Commission (PBC) in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Kaduna Field Office.

At the opening on Wednesday in Zaria, the Permanent Secretary, PBC, Mr Mukhtar Abdullahi, recalled that UNICEF had supported a capacity-building for the 23 local government councils earlier.

He said the workshop provided leadership and policy direction for strengthening public financial management at the local government level.

"The current workshop is a follow-up, focusing on technical officers responsible for

translating policy directions into realistic budgets and effective financial management," Abdullahi said.

He urged the directors to ensure that local government priorities were properly reflected in plans and budgets.

He listed education, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and social protection among key priorities requiring adequate budgetary attention.

Earlier, the Permanent Secretary, Kaduna State Ministry of Local Government Affairs, Dr Mahmud Lawal, said the programme came at a critical time.

Lawal said local government councils were being repositioned to strengthen financial management, improve budget credibility and ensure public resources were directed toward impactful programmes.

"Directors of budget have a strategic responsibility to translate policy priorities into realistic, credible and result-oriented budgets.

Police nab Lagos pastor for allegedly defiling church member's 2 daughters

LAGOS

The Police Command in Lagos State has detained a pastor for allegedly defiling two daughters of a church member in the Isolo area of the state.

It was gathered that the suspect, who is the General Overseer and founder of the church, was apprehended following a petition dated July 28, by the father of the victims.

Following the petition, the Commissioner of Police in the state, Mr Fatai Tijani, directed the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Yaba, to conduct a thorough investigation into the case.

A police source said on Wednesday, that the case was reported through a petition dated July 28, by the victims' father, an adherent of the church, against the suspect.

The source said the suspect allegedly began having sexual intercourse with the petition-

er's eldest daughter when she was 13 years old.

"The pastor allegedly began having sexual intercourse with her at the church when she was 13 years old, and continued until she turned 16 and gained admission into the university," the source said.

The source added that the sexual escapades of the suspect was exposed after he allegedly sexually assaulted the petitioner's younger daughter, aged 14, on two occasions.

"This he allegedly did through indoctrinating the naive minor with manipulative biblical injunctions, a gimmick he used on the elder sister.

"After the assaults, the younger daughter reported the suspect to her parents.

"It was after the suspect was exposed that the eldest daughter also opened up to her parents, alleging that the pastor had been having sexual intercourse with her since she was 13 years old.

CAS urges NAF senior officers to embrace strategic leadership

ABUJA

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, has charged senior officers of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) to develop strategic leadership capacity to navigate the complex security challenges facing the country.

Aneke gave the charge on Wednesday in Abuja, at the opening of a Strategic Leadership and Management Workshop/Induction ceremony organised for senior officers in collaboration with the Institute of Strategic Management of Nigeria (ISMN).

He said the contemporary security environment was characterised by complexity, uncertainty, technological advancement and rapidly evolving threats which required military leaders to look beyond immediate operational demands.

"The contemporary security environment is characterised by complexity, uncertainty, technological advancement and rapidly evolving threats.

"These realities require military leaders to anticipate challenges, assess risks, optimise resources and make sound decisions with long-term institutional implications," he said.

The CAS said the workshop aligned with one of the key drivers of his command philosophy "Standardised Training and Mission-Focused Capability Development".

According to him, the programme is designed to expose participants to contemporary principles in strategic leadership, organisational effectiveness, policy formulation, governance, decision-making and resource management.

"We must equip our senior officers not only to manage current responsibilities, but also to anticipate and shape the future of the service," Aneke added.

Key highlight of the workshop is the expedited induction of eligible participants as "Full Members" of the Institute of Strategic Management of Nigeria, Chartered.

Chairman of ISMN, Dr Otive Igbuzor, said the induction signified commitment to professionalism, continuous learning, ethical leadership and excellence in management practice.

"The programme which will run between Wednesday (today) and Thursday, has been deliberately structured to strengthen strategic management and leadership competencies," he said.

Interfaith understanding, cooperation key to peaceful coexistence

ABUJA

Religious understanding and meaningful interaction have emerged as key steps toward building trust among people of different faiths and promoting peaceful coexistence.

The call for greater understanding and engagement

came up in interviews with our correspondent on the sidelines of a conference on inter-religious harmony in Abuja.

The event was organised by the Muslim World League (MWL) in partnership with Jama'atu Izalatil Bid'ah Wa Iqamatus Sunnah (JIBWIS) Nigeria.

Mr Isa Hussain, co-founder of Muslim Voice for Peace, an

international Da'wah organisation based in Mecca and Washington, D.C., said the major lesson from the event was the need for people to work together for the greater good.

"The number one thing I learned from today is how we can work together for the greater good. We are all human beings and the best thing to do is

to learn about other faiths,

"Many people do not know about Islam, Muslims, Christianity or other religions, and sometimes they are afraid of what they do not know.

"Get to know your neighbour and your friend.

"It is good to talk about peace and coexistence, but the most important thing is to practise what we have discussed in reality."

He urged people of different faiths to visit one another's

places of worship to gain better understanding of each other.

"I suggest everyone should know the other person's religion, go to the mosque, go to the church, bring the pastor to your mosque and bring the imam to your church.

"That way, we will all know about each other," Hussain said.

Also speaking, Hajia Saudat Abdullahi, special guest at the ceremony, said cooperation and respect for humanity were necessary to achieve peace,

irrespective of religious differences.

"We should cooperate, even in Islam, Allah said we should not separate, we should hold on to Allah and then hold on to the people around us.

"Whether you are Muslim, Christian or even pagan, humanity should have peace, we should have sympathy for human beings.

"It is very important that we should cooperate."

Abdullahi said Nigerians have no other country and should, therefore, work together to resolve the challenges confronting the nation.

"We don't have any other country than Nigeria. All this migration does not pay, we should sit down in our country, discuss and solve this together.

"So that we can have peace like in the 60s and 70s in Nigeria," she said.

Alhaji Aminuddeen Abubakar, a participant from Kogi State, identified ignorance and religious rivalry as major causes of conflict among adherents of different faiths.

"What I think is the biggest problem bedevilling us as a nation and even as a continent is ignorance.

"Ignorance on the part of Muslims and ignorance on the part of Christians who see themselves as rivals."

Abubakar said religious rivalry made people focus on the success of their own groups rather than seeking peace.



EMPOWERMENT OUTREACH:

National President, Federal Fire Service Officers' Wives Association (FOWA), Mrs Olumode Olufunke (M); with FOWA members and beneficiaries with their empowerment materials, during the Empowerment Outreach organised by FOWA at Masaka in Nasarawa State on Wednesday

Gemade lauds Tinubu's commitment to youth development

ABUJA

Former National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Barnabas Gemade, has lauded President Bola Tinubu's commitment to youth development.

Gemade, represented by Mr Frederick Ikyaan, Benue Commissioner for Land, Survey

and Solid Minerals, said this at the inauguration of Directors, Youth Parliament for Renewed Hope (YPRH) in Abuja on Wednesday.

He described Tinubu as a development-oriented leader who is passionate about addressing the concerns of the youth.

Gemade, who commended the youth parliament for taking the right step in supporting

Tinubu, urged them to build a better future for all.

He called on the youth to help restore the image and integrity of Nigeria in among the comity of nations by being good Ambassadors.

Also speaking, the Speaker of the Youth Parliament for Renewed Hope (YPRH), Mr Hussaini Alkali, affirmed his determination to advance the youth's

vision and mission.

Alkali, who lauded Tinubu's commitment to youth inclusion, urged all to work in synergy for a future where every Nigerian youth's voice would be heard.

He said that the youth parliament is driven by integrity and action to advance leadership development and national unity.

NDLEA, Kwara institutions partner against drug abuse

ILORIN

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has assured its readiness to collaborate with management of higher institutions in Kwara to prevent drug abuse among students in the state.

The Kwara Commander of NDLEA, Fatima Popoola, stated this in Ilorin on Wednesday while speaking during a sensitisation programme on drug abuse.

The event was organised by the agency in collaboration with the Kwara State University (KWASU) at Malete, Ilorin.

Popoola said that the agency was concerned about the welfare of students and would not allow illegal substance use to ruin their future.

She advised landlords and

house agents to be aware of the kind of people they rent their houses or hostels to in order to prevent illegal drug dealings.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof. Luqman Jimoh, reaffirmed the institution's zero-tolerance policy on drug abuse and other social vices.

He described drug abuse as

one of the most serious social and public health challenges confronting the country.

He said this could undermine academic performance, fuels criminality, destroy careers and deprive young people of their future.

Also speaking the youth leader in Malate community, Aremu Usman, said the com-

munity was ready to collaborate with NDLEA and KWASU to reduce the rising cases of drug trafficking and abuse in the community.

He appealed to the agency to expand its presence in the community, adding that Malete would support such move with more land to build the office accommodation.

Police confirm recovery of 9 dead bodies in Niger community

MINNA

The Police Command in Niger has confirmed the recovery of nine dead bodies on the Wawa-Lumma road in Borgu Local Government Area of Niger.

The victims were suspected to have been killed by bandits

while travelling on the road.

The Spokesperson for the Niger Police Command, SP Wasiu Abiodun, told reporters on Wednesday in Minna that a team of police and military was dispatched and evacuated the bodies after information was received on Tuesday.

He said clearance operations had been intensified with a view to securing the area from any security threat.

"Police and military tactical teams were mobilised to the scene; the bodies recovered, while clearance operation was intensified to secure the area," he said.

NGO trains 100 teenagers on technology, offers outstanding participants N2m

AKURE

A Non-Governmental Organisation, DevMe, says no fewer than 100 teenagers will be trained on leadership, innovation, technology and personal development through its Future-Proofed 2.0 bootcamp.

The NGO also said N2 million had been earmarked as the total price package for the two outstanding participants.

Temiloluwa Asagunla, DevMe Founder and Executive Director, made this known on Wednesday in Akure during a news conference ahead of the seven-day residential programme.

Asagunla, who spoke on the theme "Built to Last: Beyond the Classroom", said the bootcamp would commence from Aug. 30 to Sept. 5 in Akure.

According to her, the initiative is designed to equip young people between 13 and 19 years with the skills, mindset and exposure needed to thrive in an increasingly competitive world.

"Participants will undergo intensive training in self-mastery, leadership, emerging careers and digital literacy while engaging in practical projects,

team collaborations and problem-solving exercises.

"The programme is open to teenagers across Nigeria, with applications already coming from states including Lagos and Kaduna.

"We are not simply bringing teenagers together for lectures. We are creating an environment where they can discover, develop and deploy their potential.

"We are also creating a space where teenagers can think beyond the classroom and begin to see themselves not just as students, but as people capable of creating value," she said.

The founder called on applicants to register under the creative expression category, which catered to young writers, speakers, actors and other creatives.

She explained that the applicants could as well register under the science category, which targets young innovators and students involved in technology-related projects such as robotics.

Asagunla added that only 100 exceptional applicants would be selected for the residential camp after a rigorous screening process.

NEWS

NAPTIP, partners task journalists to lead fight against GBV

MAKURDI

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has charged journalists to take the lead in the fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and protect vulnerable persons. The agency also urged the journalists to raise awareness and promote justice for survivors.

NAPTIP's Director-General, Mrs Binta Bello, made the call in Makurdi at a two-day capacity building on Sexual and

Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Media Corps Workshop organised by NAPTIP on Wednesday.

The workshop is organised by the European Union (EU) Support to End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (ESGBV) Programme.

ESGBV is implemented by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in partnership with relevant national and state institutions in Nigeria.

Bello said the rising incidence of GBV remained a ma-

jor national concern requiring coordinated action.

She was represented by the Head of NAPTIP's Press and Public Relations Unit, Mr Vincent Adekoye.

She urged journalists to use their platforms to create awareness, promote prevention and ensure accountability, adding that NAPTIP had secured over 40 GBV-related convictions.

She said that the convictions include three life-imprisonment sentences for rape, pledging stronger part-

nerships to ensure perpetrators did not escape justice.

"SGBV Media Corps will promote professional, survivor-centred and evidence-based reporting, while shifting coverage away from sensationalism.

"The initiative will promote prevention, access to trusted information, referral pathways and positive social change through coordinated media engagement," the director-general said.

Mrs Wynifred Achu-Egbuson, International IDEA's ESGBV Civil Society and

Community Mobilisation Specialist, said the programme followed extensive federal and state consultations.

Achu-Egbuson said Oyo, Benue and Kaduna states were selected based on SGBV prevalence and opportunities for change.

She identified three intervention areas: strengthening laws and policies, improving survivor-centred services and promoting positive social norms through stronger community engagement.

She said the programme would expand Sexual Assault Referral Centres and strengthen civil society and community structures.

Achu-Egbuson stressed that laws would remain ineffective if citizens were unaware of them, making the media crucial for grassroots awareness

and behavioural change.

On his part, Director-General, Radio Benue, Mr Terseer Mzuulga, called for grassroots collaboration involving media, religious institutions and community leaders, pledging the station's support.

Mzuulga proposed interactive radio programmes, indigenous-language content and community-focused campaigns.

The participants received training on the nature and realities of GBV, its traumatic effects and the role of the media in protecting women and children.

The organisers urged members of the Media Corps to use their platforms to challenge harmful social norms, protect survivors and strengthen public demand for justice and accountability.

**BOOK READING:**

From left: Project Lead, Building Forever Friendship (BFF) Lifestyle Community, Demilade Taiwo; Convener, BFF Festival, Adetoun Jegede; Chief Executive Officer, Oak and Teak, Morenike Molehin; Chief Executive Officer, Palmers cake treat, Ibukun Akano at the reading of the book titled 'Surrounded: Together Is Better' in Lagos on Wednesday

LASU to graduate 20,604 in combined convocation ceremonies

LAGOS

The Lagos State University (LASU) said it would graduate 20,604 students at its 29th and 30th Combined Convocation Ceremonies for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 academic sessions.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Olatunji-Bello, disclosed this on Wednesday at a news conference at the university's main campus, Ojo.

Olatunji-Bello said that the convocation would be historic as it would reflect the university's commitment to academic stability, institutional resilience and continuous advancement.

She noted that the ceremonies would be her final as vice-chancellor of the institution.

"For the 2024-2025 academic session, 947 students graduated from diploma programmes," she said.

She said that 65 of the students made distinction while 521 graduated with upper credit and 354, lower credit, and seven, pass.

"A total of 7,621 students graduated from first-degree programmes during the session, including 262 first-class graduates and 106 unclassified MBBS-BDS graduates.

"The first-degree graduates comprised 3,155 second-class upper, 3,439 second-class low-

er, 622 third class and 37 pass graduates," she said.

She said that Mr Ayilara Olawale of the Department of Project Management emerged the overall best graduating student for the 2024-2025 session, with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 4.96.

"For 2025-2026, 44 students graduated from diploma programmes, comprising 33 upper-credit and 11 lower-credit graduates.

"The university recorded 8,653 first-degree graduates during the session, including 232 first-class graduates.

"The figure also comprised 3,545 second-class upper, 4,157 second-class lower, 678

third-class, and 31 pass graduates," she added.

She said that Mr Adebajo Samuel of the Department of Aerospace Engineering emerged the overall best graduating student for the 2025-2026 session, with a CGPA of 4.97.

Olatunji-Bello said that 3,383 postgraduate students would also graduate across the two academic sessions.

She said that the postgraduate graduands comprised 618 postgraduate diploma, 1,508 academic master's and 900 professional master's graduates.

"Others are 238 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) graduates and 119 professional doctoral graduates.

Scavenger docked for allegedly stealing, damaging property

ABUJA

A scavenger, Kabiru Bello was on Wednesday docked in a Life Camp Magistrate's Court, Abuja, for allegedly stealing, and damaging protective fittings and installation.

Bello, 24, who resides in Angwan-Kadanya behind Efab Estate Life Camp, Abuja was charged with criminal trespass, mischief, and theft.

He however pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecution Counsel, Judith Ayoju told the court that the complainant, Mr Omijie Elvis, of Life Camp, Abuja, reported the matter at the Life Camp Police Station on August 5.

Ayoju said that on the same date, the defendant without consent entered the complainant's compound cutting, and destroying protective fittings, as well as removing 16mm of eight cables worth N1.1 million.

She informed the court that the defendant was arrested and during investigation it was discovered that the incident had happened on three occasions.

The prosecutor said that all efforts made to recover the electrical cables prove abortive.

According to her, the offences contravene the provisions of sections 348 and 288 of the Penal Code.

The Magistrate, Hauwa Aboki adjourned the matter until Sept 15 for hearing. It said its expanded capacity would enable it to support infrastructure projects and deepen enterprise insurance coverage across sectors, including finance, energy, agriculture and technology.

Mr Gboyega Lesi, Chief Executive Officer of Leadway Assurance, said the company had spent the past several years strengthening its technical capabilities, digital infrastructure and strategic positioning.

Woman seeks divorce after 35 years of marriage over lack of love

KADUNA

A housewife, Hadiza Abdullahi, on Wednesday dragged her husband, Isa Usman, before a Shari'a Court in Magajin Gari, Kaduna, seeking divorce on grounds of lack of love.

The complainant, through her lawyer, Abubakar Suleiman, told the court that she was no longer in love with her husband and could no longer remain in the marriage.

She prayed the court to dissolve the marriage through Khul'i.

Khul'i is a form of divorce in which a woman returns the dowry paid by her husband in exchange for her freedom from the marriage.

Suleiman said his client had been married to the defendant for 35 years and that N1, 000 was paid as her dowry.

He said she was ready to re-

turn the dowry to the defendant.

However, the defendant, through his lawyer, I.T. Sanusi, said that he could not remember the exact amount he paid as the dowry but that he was certain it was more than N1, 000.

Sanusi told the court that his client was seeking payment of N300, 000.

"I pray the court to give us time to present the exact amount that was paid as the complainant's dowry and reasons why Usman should be paid N300, 000," he said.

The Judge, Malam Yakubu Abdullahi, adjourned the case until Sept. 2 for the complainant to present evidence to enable the court confirm the exact amount that was paid as her dowry. "The true outstanding balance can only be established by examining the amount actually disbursed, re-

Man, 25, arraigned over alleged theft, breach of peace

ADO-EKITI

A 25-year-old man, Ojo Samuel, was on Wednesday arraigned before an Ado-Ekiti Chief Magistrates' Court for allegedly stealing two iPhone handsets valued at N470,000.

The defendant, whose address was not given, is facing trial on a three-count charge of stealing and conduct likely to cause breach of peace.

The Prosecutor, Insp Olu-bu Apata, told the court that

the defendant committed the offences on Aug. 8 at about 4:00 p.m. at Fayose Market in Ado-Ekiti.

Apata said that the defendant stole an iPhone 11 Promax valued at N300,000, property of the complainant, Ibiyemi Goodluck.

Apata stated that the defendant also stole an iPhone XR valued at N170,000, property of one Tolu Owadasa.

He equally told the court that the defendant conducted himself in a manner likely to cause

breach of peace by constituting nuisance in a public place.

According to him, the offences contravene Sections 302 and 181(1)(d) of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State, 2021

The defendant, however, pleaded not guilty to all the charges preferred against him.

Counsel to the defendant, Mr Gbenga Ariyibi, urged the court to grant his defendant bail, with a promise that he would not jump bail.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Taiwo Ajibade, granted the

defendant bail in the sum of N50,000, with one surety with a valid means of identification and whose address must be verified.

She, thereafter, adjourned the case till Sept. 9 for hearing.

She said that the postgraduate graduands comprised 618 postgraduate diploma, 1,508 academic master's and 900 professional master's graduates.

"Others are 238 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) graduates and 119 professional doctoral graduates.

NEWS

FOREIGN

Trump confirms he switched planes after NATO summit because of possible threat

President Donald Trump has confirmed that he secretly swapped planes as he left a Nato summit in Turkey last month due to a possible threat.

"I go by Secret Service and the military. They wanted me to go in a different flight, different plane," Trump told reporters. "I just have to do what they say."

The revelation comes after reports that Trump boarded Air Force One on 8 July in view of television cameras, before hiding in a catering truck to be transported to a military aircraft.

The last-minute switch has raised questions about whether those left on the decoy plane were in danger, but Trump said on Tuesday the jet he boarded instead could have been at "greater risk... because that would be the plane, I think, that they would be more likely to go for".

Officials told the BBC's US partner, CBS News, that the US had detected a credible Iranian threat to fire a missile at the plane. The New York Times reported that US intelligence had information of a person near the Nato summit who had been seen with a shoulder-fired missile.

Journalists and some White House staff on board did not know the US president had been smuggled out as part of an elaborate ruse in response to a possible Iranian threat.

Watch: Was Donald Trump smuggled out of Air Force One in a catering truck?

Trump has previously said he was Iran's "number one target" during the summit in Ankara.

"I guess there was a threat out there," the president said during a visit aboard Air Force One to an event in Ohio on Tuesday. "I didn't really ask too much about it. I get a lot of threats."

He added: "I have a lot of threats that you don't know about."

The clandestine manoeuvre last month came a day after the US renewed military strikes on Iran following a breakdown of negotiations between Washington and Tehran to end the war.

Trump had arrived in Turkey aboard a newer Boeing 747-8 donated by Qatar, but announced that he would leave on the old Air Force One "for old time's sake".

On 8 July, footage showed him boarding the presidential jet at Ankara airport.

But according to the Washington Post, he slipped off Air Force One on to a catering truck that had been elevated to plane level on the opposite side to where he had boarded.

He was then secretly taken to a smaller C-32A military aircraft - a modified Boeing 757 often used by the vice-president.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth boarded the C-32A separately using external stairs in an effort to make the flight appear normal, according to the newspaper.

Journalists and some White House staff boarded Air Force One and were reportedly told to close their window shades. They were unaware the president was no longer on board.

A media pool producer who was on the plane said they found it unusual when they were told to keep the window shades down.

US inflation eases as food and fuel costs cool

Prices in the United State of America rose 3.4% in the year to July, slightly lower than the 3.5% in the year to June, new figures show.

Energy remained volatile as the Middle East conflict has continued. While gasoline prices were down 2.9% in July compared to June, they were up 24.6% over the year.

Month to month, inflation rose 0.1%, mainly due to an increase in housing costs, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said. Even small moves in rent can lift the overall headline figure as it makes up a large share of household spending.

Food prices rose only slightly in July and at a slower rate than in June, while energy prices fell, offering some relief for consumers.

While inflation was slightly lower in July compared to June, that means prices are rising at a slower pace, not that prices overall are falling.

Prices excluding food and energy rose 0.2% after staying flat in June, with medical care and air-

line tickets edging higher and car insurance continuing to fall.

The new Federal Reserve chair, Kevin Warsh, has said the central bank's priority is to "keep inflation moving down" while avoiding unnecessary shocks to the economy.

In a recent press briefing, Warsh said the Fed cannot use a "magic wand" to undo years of above-target inflation and must stay patient as price growth cools gradually.

One of the Fed's key jobs is to keep inflation near 2%, a level policymakers say keeps prices stable, supports steady economic growth, and helps prevent deeper downturns.

President Donald Trump has also said inflation is still too high for many families, pointing to rent and grocery bills as signs that the cost of living remains a major concern.

Financial markets reacted calmly to the latest figures, with stocks little changed as the figures were broadly in line with market expectations.



COLOMBIA QUAKE:

Rescue workers carry Daniela Largo, wrapped in a blue sheet, to an ambulance after freeing her from beneath the rubble.

Woman pulled alive from rubble 36 hours after Colombia quake

Daniela Largo was pulled from beneath a collapsed building in the city of Pereira after a 10-hour-long rescue operation.

Firefighters finally managed to reach her via a tunnel they dug below four concrete slabs under which she had been buried.

At least 188 have died in the quake, according to official figures, and hundreds remain missing.

In Pereira, a city in Colombia's coffee-growing region, 79 people are confirmed to have died, the second-highest number after Cali, where 95 are dead, according to figures by the Association of Colombian Capital Cities (Asocapitales).

Largo's mother told AFP news

agency that a local resident had heard her daughter cry out for help from beneath the rubble.

Once emergency workers had arrived at the site, they were able to locate Largo with the help of a small camera.

However, her rescue was complicated by the fact that four heavy concrete slabs were blocking the way.

Local firefighters aided by colleagues deployed from the capital, Bogotá, and the disaster response team of the national police force had to dig two tunnels to reach her.

Through one opening, dug from above, they were able to provide Largo with oxygen. But it was only through a second tunnel, dug from below, that they were able to free her.

Colombian President Abelardo de la Espriella celebrated her rescue on social media, describing it as "news which fills us with hope".

Largo's mother said that "at home, her 12-year-old son is waiting for her".

In Pereira, at least 92 buildings collapsed. Fifteen people are known to be trapped and another 37 have been reported missing, according to Asocapitales.

In Cali, Colombia's third most populous city, more than 200 people remained trapped as of 16:00 local time on Tuesday.

Brother of man trapped under rubble in Colombian quake clings on to hope

The city's mayor declared a night-time curfew and said that soldiers would be on patrol in the

worst-hit areas of Cali.

"We need to ensure that the rescue work can be carried out safely," he said, adding that there was still hope of finding more people alive and everyone would do their utmost to free those trapped.

Eighty-seven people have been rescued in the city so far.

The 7.4-magnitude quake struck at 07:34 local time (12:34 GMT) on Monday.

It had its epicentre near the village of San José del Palmar, in Chocó province, but could be felt across a vast area.

Seismometers nearest the epicentre registered shaking lasting between 90 seconds and two minutes.

There have been more than 100 aftershocks since.

Israeli settlers besiege Palestinian families in West Bank village

On Wednesday Israeli security forces were reported to have withdrawn from the Jewish settler outpost in the village of Qusra near Nablus, following clashes with a crowd of extremist settlers. About a dozen settlers are said to remain at the site.

After the Palestinian homeowners made their initial report to the Israeli army, the first soldiers who arrived at the scene were filmed praying with the settlers.

The Abu Ridi and Hassan families have been posting on social media appealing for help after their water and power supplies were cut off and their food stocks ran low.

The latest developments come as a top UN official told the Security Council in New York on Tuesday that "the West Bank is at breaking point".

All settlements are illegal under international law. Outposts are set up without official Israeli authorisation.

Palestinian security camera

footage shows settlers tearing down a wall outside the Abu Ridi family's home on Sunday evening and using the stones to block the road.

This left seven people - including two young girls - unable to leave their homes while other Palestinians could not reach them. They live in what is known as Area B, part of the West Bank under Palestinian administrative control and Israeli security control.

Posting on Facebook, Quasay Abu Ridi said the situation was critical, "especially as we are completely isolated".

He wrote: "We are living in our own home, on our own land, and we are asking for nothing more than the right to live safely and with dignity."

Aysha Hassan told Reuters the settlers had "tried to break the gate" to the house and "started throwing stones at us, cursing and insulting us".

She said her family was "dying of fear, extremely terrified".

On Monday, Israeli settlers blocked Israeli journalists from the left-leaning Haaretz newspaper from trying to reach the

Palestinian properties. The reporters said Israeli soldiers at the scene refused to help them when their car was blocked for two hours. They were told the area was a closed military zone, however the order was not enforced on the settlers.

A day later the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din urgently appealed to the head of the Israeli military's Central Command for the army to protect the besieged residents, evacuate the settlers' outpost and hold the settlers accountable.

Late on Tuesday, a Palestinian ambulance was finally allowed to reach the families, delivering food and taking one child away for medical treatment.

At about the same time, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) put out a statement condemning the establishment of the new outpost. It said that entering and seizing Palestinian homes was "illegal, reprehensible, and unacceptable activity".

When the head of its Central Command, Maj Gen Avi Bluth and other senior officers arrived at the scene early on Wednesday they are said to have met res-

idents and voiced their "grave concern".

Afterwards, Palestinian security camera video shared with the BBC showed confrontations between Israeli soldiers and border police and a large crowd of settlers. The security forces used tear gas and stun grenades.

In other footage, the Israeli forces appear to have confiscated the canopy under which the settlers were sheltering, while leaving their other equipment.

"Border Police forces evacuated the tent and are working to evacuate the civilians who were staying there. The incident is still ongoing," the IDF stated.

It said it was decided that "disciplinary action would be taken against the security personnel involved, who were documented at the site several days ago".

The Palestinian village mayor, Abdel Azim Wadi, told the BBC that local residents had seen "a clear and sustained pattern of targeting Qusra". Last month a newly completed mosque was set on fire with graffiti in Hebrew sprayed nearby.

FOREIGN

NEWS

**ZIMBABWE'S BORDER:**

Lake Kariba, which sits on Zimbabwe's border with Zambia, is one of the world's largest man-made reservoirs.

At least 44 die as ferry sinks in Zimbabwe's Lake Kariba

At least 44 people have died after a ferry sank on Lake Kariba in Zimbabwe on Tuesday, police have said.

The ferry had a capacity to carry 90 passengers and five crew members but a lake official had reported that 120 people, including 12 children, were on it.

The vessel was hit by a strong wave and overturned, police added. Footage shared online appears to show the overturned hull floating in the water.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa has declared a state of disaster, as search and rescue operations intensify. So far, 77 people have been rescued.

Lake Kariba, which straddles the border with Zambia, is one of the world's largest man-made reservoirs, supporting transport and fishing and providing vital hydroelectric power to both countries.

An eyewitness, Maxton Kanhema, told AFP news agency that the boat had travelled in bad weather and may have been hit by a wave, causing its engines to switch off.

"People were in distress... there were bodies in the water and it was a sad situation to witness. Those that could be rescued were rescued," he was quoted as saying.

Mutsa Murombedzi, a local member of parliament, posted a video on X of what she said was the boat at the start of the journey, adding that residents had been travelling across the lake to Kariba town, about five hours away.

"We have very hard questions that require honest answers. The officials must release the correct number of people who were onboard," she wrote.

The Zimbabwe Civil Protection Unit (CPU) said that registered ticket sales showed 114 adult passengers were on the vessel. An unknown number of children below ticketing age

could also have been onboard, it added.

In its latest update on X, police said that 44 bodies had now been retrieved from the lake - up from the initial 15.

Local government minister Daniel Garwe said the president had declared a state of disaster to ensure "all necessary resources are mobilised" for search and rescue operations.

This included an army boat squadron, a police sub-aqua unit and a privately owned helicopter, he said.

"The government extends its deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those who have lost their lives in this tragic incident," Garwe added in a statement.

Members of Trump's cabinet remained on decoy plane, after Trump's quiet exit

Two members of US President Donald Trump's cabinet were on a decoy plane that Trump secretly exited before boarding a different flight in Turkey last month, CBS News reports.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent remained aboard what was believed to be Air Force One and did not join the flight provided to Trump over security concerns involving Iran.

After Trump entered Air Force One on 8 July with both officials and members of the press, he hid on a catering truck to be clandestinely transported to a military plane.

The label "Air Force One" applies to any plane the president is on, but in this case the original craft kept the call signal, turning it into a decoy.

According to CBS - the BBC's US partner - Rubio and Bessent remained on board the first aircraft to maintain the line of succession in the event something happened to Trump.

In the event that the presi-

dent dies or is incapacitated, Vice-President JD Vance would take power, followed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

The Secretary of State comes next in line, followed by the treasury secretary.

Others who stayed on the initial aircraft designated as Air Force One included White

House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller and Steven Cheung, the White House's communications director.

The BBC has contacted the White House for comment.

At least 14 artisanal miners killed after illegal mine collapses

At least 14 artisanal miners died and eight were injured when the walls of an illicit mine caved in on them in South Africa, police said Tuesday.

North West provincial police commissioner Lt. Gen. Arthur Adams said a search was ongoing and it was unclear whether there were more victims, with sniffer dogs and specialized equipment deployed to look for anyone still trapped.

The cave-in happened Monday night near the city of Rustenburg, a platinum-mining hub about 130 kilometres northwest of Johannesburg.

"At that time, it was found that 14 male persons died as a result of a mine heap that caved

in," Adams said.

He said preliminary information had suggested a shaft collapsed but that it was in fact "an open excavation" at a former dumping site, where the walls of heaped earth gave way.

Most of those who died appeared to be nationals of neighbouring Lesotho, police said.

Three of the injured were released from a hospital and arrested on suspicion of illegal mining, while five others remained hospitalized under police guard.

Tens of thousands of artisanal miners work illegally in South African gold and platinum mines no longer used by compa-

nies, often without proper safety equipment and sometimes staying underground for weeks.

Known as zama zamas, loosely, "chance takers" they frequently operate in gangs linked to criminal syndicates that fight violent turf battles and are accused of terrorising communities.

South Africa's last major illegal-mining disaster came in late 2024, when more than 80 miners died during a months-long standoff at a gold mine surrounded by police.

President Cyril Ramaphosa this year deployed soldiers in a yearlong operation against organized crime, with illegal mining a key focus.

Zhu Rongji, who helped turn China into a trading giant, dies at 97

Former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji, who spearheaded China's entry into global trade and laid the foundation for its explosive growth, has died at the age of 97.

He served in the country's second-highest office from 1998-2003 and played a leading role in securing its entry into the World Trade Organization, opening Chinese factories to the international market and drawing foreign investment.

He was one of the most important economic reformers who moved local tax powers to the central government, closed or privatised failing state firms and promoted home ownership.

Many in China remember him as a tough and pragmatic leader who delivered double-digit growth and was rarely afraid to speak his mind.

In 1998, he said China was facing "many potential crises that could erupt at any time..."

"Ordinary people are discontent about us in many ways. Especially, there is corruption among officials, the gulf between rich and poor and the way some local officials act like tyrants."

He labelled rogue bankers as "half-wits" and said the dams and flood dykes lining the Yangtze River were as "flimsy and porous as tofu dregs".

Under his leadership, which

helped stabilise the economy and tackle corruption, China began transforming into a manufacturing powerhouse, leaving behind its status as a Communist outsider.

Though he faced criticism because those reforms also led to 30 million lay-offs over five years, and with huge growth came more inequality.

Chinese state media describe Zhu Rongji's life as one of "revolution, struggle and brilliance".

He was born in the central province of Hunan in 1928 and earned a degree in electrical engineering before joining the civil service.

He joined the Communist Party in 1949, but was purged twice - first after criticising Mao Zedong's economic policies as "irrational" and being labelled a "rightist", and again during the Cultural Revolution.

Zhu was brought back into the fold after Mao's death, and by 1991 had risen to the role of vice-premier in charge of China's economy.

He took the role of premier seven years later.

Zhu led China through difficult negotiations to enter the World Trade Organization in 2002.

In state media his obituary described him as an "outstanding member of the Communist Party of China and loyal Communist fighter... an outstanding leader of the Party and state".

Hichilema rallies thousands as Zambia heads to presidential vote

Tens of thousands of supporters gathered in Lusaka for President Hakainde Hichilema's final campaign rally ahead of Thursday's election, as the incumbent seeks a second term amid concerns over jobs, living costs and allegations of opposition intimidation.

Supporters of the ruling United Party for National Development, dressed in red and waving party flags, filled a former opposition stronghold south of Lusaka as Hichilema sought to energise his base.

The 64-year-old president, who took office in 2021, urged voters to back the UPND in Thursday's election.

"Have you also agreed to vote for the UPND?" Hichilema asked the crowd, telling supporters his government had expanded free education and hired nurses and teachers.

The president is seeking another five-year term in the copper-rich country of 22 million people.

Jobs and living costs dominate Employment and the rising cost of living are among the main concerns for voters.

Zambia's unemployment rate stands at nearly 10 percent, according to the national statistics agency. Hichilema has received credit for helping the country emerge from debt distress and return to economic growth, which is projected at

around five percent this year.

But critics say the recovery has yet to translate into better living conditions for many households.

At the rally, volunteer nurses and teachers called for jobs, reflecting the pressure facing young professionals entering the labour market.

Supporters praise stability

Hichilema's supporters say his government has brought greater stability after years of political tension.

Brian Mpande, a UPND supporter, said peace was the president's most important achievement.

"For the first time in my life I have experienced peace," he said, adding that he valued stability more than financial gains.

Teacher Sandra Simwale also said she expected a peaceful election, pointing to the ability of people to attend rallies and businesses to remain open without disruption.

Incumbent warns against opposition

Hichilema has sought to frame the election as a choice between his administration and a return to the insecurity he associates with the previous Patriot Front government.

He warned supporters that an opposition victory could bring back what he described as "old habits", invoking fears of violence and insecurity.

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FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
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Sports

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Squash Premier League records significant growth – *Founder*

TConnor Tuodolo, Founder of the Squash Premier League (SPL), says the competition has recorded significant growth since its inception in 2025.

He said that participation had risen from 26 athletes to 111 in the just-concluded second edition.

Tuodolo stated this while speaking with newsmen at the closing of the second edition of the SPL at Package B of the Moshood Abiola National Stadium on Tuesday in Abuja.

He also called for increased sponsorship to sustain the league and strengthen grassroots squash development in Nigeria.

According to him, the week-long competition, which began on Aug. 3, attracted 111 young athletes from squash academies across the country.

The tournament, themed "Breeding the Next Generation of Champions," featured Under-15, Under-19, senior, club members and doubles categories.

Tuodolo said the competition was preceded by a coaching and officiating clinic aimed at improving the technical capacity of coaches, referees and young athletes.

"When we started, we had only 26 athletes. The next competition attracted 45 players, followed by about 50, then 69, and now we have 111 participants.

"That shows the league is growing. We are seeing massive growth in the Squash Premier League," he said.

He said the league was established to bridge gaps in grassroots squash development by providing young players with regular competitions and structured training opportunities.

"The league initially operated across Under-11, Under-13, Under-15, Under-17 and Under-19 age grades, but some categories were merged because of low participation.

"We, the organisers, were now working toward restoring the various age categories as partic-

ipation increased," he said.

He added that staging the competition three times a year would help produce more young players.

Tuodolo cited Blessing Bassey's victory over one of the top-seeded players, Nanme Rindaps, as evidence of the impact of regular competitions on young athletes.

He said the league had also recorded increased participation from academies and athletes from Niger, Bauchi, Plateau, Edo and other states.

According to him, the SPL works directly with academies to encourage talent identification and development, while the organisers are also planning incentives for coaches.

Tuodolo said the league had introduced online coaching, officiating and players' certificate courses to improve participants' knowledge of squash rules and technical standards.

He identified inadequate funding and challenges associated with the league's digital platform as some of the major obstacles facing the initiative.

According to him, the organisers are introducing a dig-

ital officiating platform, which he described as the first of its kind in Africa, and appealed to philanthropists, sports supporters and corporate organisations to support the league.

Tuodolo listed GerritFleuren Foundation Ventures Ltd., Blue Iris Clinic, DSFP Africa and Kambai Bawa Foundation among official sponsors of the competition.

Meanwhile, Daniel Agbaje, Kevina Amako, Blessing Bassey and Ares Andong emerged champions in various categories.

Agbaje claimed the Men's Singles knockout title after Nanme Rindaps withdrew through a walkover and also won the Boys Under-19 category after defeating Rindaps 2-0 (9-11, 9-11).

Amako won the Girls' Under-19 title after defeating Joy Obanuyiwa 3-0 (11-7, 11-4, 11-9), while Bassey defeated Palang Ajot 3-1 (11-9, 8-11, 13-11, 11-7) to win the Girls' Under-15 Singles title.

Andong defeated Ayomide Adeyanju 3-2 (6-11, 15-17, 11-3, 11-8, 11-8) to claim the Boys' Under-15 Singles title, while Amako also won the Women's

Singles after defeating Obanuyiwa 3-1 (11-8, 7-11, 11-8, 11-9).

In the Men's Doubles final, Team Bravo defeated Team Gamma 2-0 (11-6, 11-2) to emerge champions.

Speaking, Coach Bernard Mkpke of Beromich Squash Sports Academy said the second edition was an improvement on the previous competition and called for greater media coverage and sponsorship.

He commended the Nigeria Squash Federation (NSF) for its coaching and officiating programmes, saying Nigeria currently has four certified World Squash Federation (WSF) coaches.

Longdi Dasbak, founder of Dasby Squash Academy and former Nigerian international squash player, said there was noticeable improvement in the quality and number of players.

She called for more sponsorship, competitions, equipment and squash courts to improve access to the sport.

Meanwhile, squash player Edna Fube, said she won a silver medal in the Girls' Under-15 category and reached the quarter-finals of the Under-19 event.



VICTOR OSIMHEN

Tottenham drops Osimhen interest after match day Brawl with teammate

Tottenham Hotspur have reportedly cooled their interest in Super Eagles striker Victor Osimhen and opened talks with AS Monaco for Nigerian-born forward Folarin Balogun.

The development comes as Spurs reassess their attacking options, with Osimhen's reported price tag and recent on-field controversy adding further uncertainty to a potential move.

Tottenham had identified Osimhen as a potential statement signing as they look to rebuild following a difficult 2025/26 campaign. The North London club finished 17th in the Premier League and only secured their top-flight status on the final day, prompting a major recruitment drive.

Spurs have already invested heavily, signing Sandro Tonali from Newcastle United, Mateus Fernandes from West Ham and Jan Paul van Hecke from Brighton, while Andrew Robertson and Marcos Senesi have arrived as free agents.

Osimhen was reportedly among the attacking targets, but Galatasaray's determination to retain their star striker and the substantial fee required to prise him away from Turkey have made the deal increasingly difficult.

The Nigerian's recent behaviour during pre-season may also have added another talking

point.

During Galatasaray's 2-1 friendly defeat to Villarreal, Osimhen became involved in an altercation with Santiago Mourino after the defender blocked his run inside the box. The striker shoved Mourino to the ground before teammates intervened.

Although Osimhen had scored in the match, the incident drew criticism and added to scrutiny surrounding the Nigerian.

Tottenham have now reportedly turned their attention to Balogun, with L'Équipe reporting that discussions with Monaco have already begun.

The 25-year-old joined Monaco from Arsenal in 2023 and has become an established Ligue 1 striker. He scored 19 goals in 45 appearances across all competitions last season and is reportedly valued at around €60 million.

Born in New York to Nigerian parents, Balogun represents the United States internationally and featured at the 2026 FIFA World Cup. His tournament included controversy after a red-card suspension was overturned ahead of the United States' Round of 16 defeat to Belgium.

For Tottenham, Balogun could provide a more financially manageable alternative to Osimhen while still offering significant Premier League experience and attacking potential.



SUPER FALCONS

Cristiano Ronaldo, Georgina Rodríguez marry in private ceremony

Portuguese football superstar Cristiano Ronaldo and his longtime partner, Georgina Rodríguez, have married in a private ceremony in Cascais, Portugal.

The couple confirmed their marriage on Tuesday through a post on Ronaldo's Instagram account, featuring a photograph showing their hands with wed-

ding rings.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner captioned the post, "C G", as the couple shared the news with their millions of followers.

The marriage comes nearly a decade after the couple began their relationship and one year after Rodríguez publicly announced their engagement in

August 2025.

The private ceremony was held in Cascais, a coastal town near Lisbon, with their five children reportedly in attendance.

Ronaldo, 41, has been recognised as the world's best player five times and currently plays for Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr, while Rodríguez is a model and businesswoman.

The announcement has attracted widespread reactions from fans and followers, with thousands of congratulatory messages posted beneath the couple's social media update.

The couple had previously kept details of their wedding plans largely private despite sustained public interest in their relationship.



RONALDO AND WIFE

SPORTS



COMMONWEALTH FENCING

Nigeria wins 6 medals at ongoing Commonwealth Fencing Championships

Nigeria has won six medals, comprising one silver and five bronze at the ongoing 2026 Commonwealth Fencing Championships.

The feat also saw Nigeria secure Africa's first-ever international medal in Wheelchair Fencing at a competition staged on the continent.

The competition is holding at the Rugby School Nigeria, Atlantic City, in Lagos.

This is the first time, an international wheelchair fencing event

will hold in Africa, with Nigeria already leading with five medals in the para-fencing events.

In the women's epee Category A, Itunu Kumuyi and Joy Iorguma won bronze medals after reaching the semi-finals before losing to their Indian opponents.

In Category B, Joyce Otun and Abiola Rahamon also won bronze medals, further highlighting Nigeria's breakthrough in para-fencing.

Chidinma Dennis completed the wheelchair fencing

medal haul with a silver medal, after losing to India's Sheranthi Thomas in the final.

Programme Director, Wheelchair Fencing in the Nigeria Fencing Federation, Tonye Sawari, described the achievement as historic.

"You cannot imagine that we started training just three months ago, yet our athletes quickly became competitive against countries with years of international experience.

"This is a remarkable beginning and we hope to build on

this success to raise the profile of wheelchair fencing in Nigeria.

"I am proud of our athletes for making their presence felt in this tournament and commend them for their spirited display," he said.

Nigeria's medal haul was further boosted by Oluwafolayemi Akinyosoye, who won a bronze medal in the men's senior sabre.

Akinyosoye, ranked as Nigeria's top competitor, progressed from Pool 2 into the knockout rounds.

Ajilore urges increased investment to boost grassroots football in FCT

Former Super Eagles player, Oluwafemi Ajilore, has called for increased investment in sporting facilities to accelerate the development of grassroots football in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Ajilore said the FCT had recorded significant improvement in football development with the emergence of more academies and clubs providing opportunities for young players.

He made the call in Abuja while speaking on the development of football in the territory.

"We have seen a lot of improvement in football generally in the FCT. We have seen many academies and clubs being engaged.

"I feel it is a great platform to take away many of our youths from criminal activities.

"Creating an enabling environ-

ment for them to compete and continue working on what they believe in, which is their dream of football is a big thing," he said.

According to him, grassroots football had also helped to bring young players, parents and football stakeholders together.

Ajilore said the just concluded soccer league in the territory which attracted football dignitaries and parents, demonstrated the growing importance of grassroots competitions.

He described football as a unifying factor and a potential career path for young people when properly developed.

The former international, however, identified inadequate sporting facilities as one of the major challenges confronting football development in the FCT.



OLUWAFEMI AJILORE

Nigeria vs South Africa: World Cup playoff preview, team news, line-ups and how to watch

Super Falcons and South Africa's Banyana Banyana will meet in Casablanca on Thursday in a crucial 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup playoff, with both sides fighting to keep their qualification hopes alive after disappointing exits from the Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON).

The two African heavyweights were eliminated at the quarter-final stage, missing out on automatic qualification for the expanded 2027 Women's World Cup in Brazil.

South Africa suffered a 2-1 defeat to hosts Morocco, while Nigeria were edged 1-0 by Cameroon. With the four WAFCON semi-finalists securing automatic World Cup qualification, the quarter-final defeats left both teams facing a longer route to Brazil.

Thursday's winner will advance to the preliminary round of the inter-confederation playoffs, where six teams will compete for the remaining World Cup places.

The preliminary stage will determine which teams progress to the final phase, where they will be joined by four sides that receive byes. The six teams in the final phase will then compete in single-elimination matches, with three ultimately earning places at the 2027 Women's World Cup.

For Nigeria and South Africa, therefore, Thursday's encounter is the first of three hurdles standing between them and qualification for the tournament in Brazil.

Neither side would have envisaged taking this route after the WAFCON quarter-finals, but victory in Casablanca will offer a vital lifeline.

The main selection question for both coaches will be how much they are prepared to alter their starting line-ups following their respective WAFCON quarter-final defeats.

Nigeria coach Justin Madugu has shown a greater willingness to make changes, while South Africa coach Desiree Ellis has generally preferred to rely on established combinations.

With World Cup qualification hanging in the balance, both managers face a difficult balancing act between making tactical adjustments and maintaining continuity.

Expected line-ups
South Africa
GK: Kaylin Swart
Defence: Antonia Maponya, Bambanani Mbane, Karabo Dhlamini, Fikile Magama
Midfield: Linda Motlhalo, Bongeka Gamede, Refiloe Jane
Attack: Hildah Magaia, Thembi Kgatana, Noxolo Cesane

Nigeria
GK: Chiamaka Nnadozie
Defence: Michelle Alozie, Osinachi Ohale, Shukurat Oladipo, Oluwatosin Demehin
Midfield: Jennifer Echegini, Deborah Abiodun, Christy Ucheibe



Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium ready before NSF –Contractor

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The SANA Group Limited says the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu, main venue for the 2026 National Sports Festival (NSF) will be ready before the event kicks off on Nov. 11.

The site manager of the company, Mr Yaser Alshamah, said this while addressing newsmen on the progress of work at the stadium yesterday in Enugu.

According to him, the company will complete its roofing work on time, adding that they were committed to delivering on schedule.

"We have three months to complete the roofing of the stadium. We have no choice. Our scope is to roof some sections of the Stadium.

"We have a work programme and schedule; by the grace of God and with the

support of everyone, we will complete the aluminium sheet roofing on time," he said.

Speaking on the stadium's design, he stressed the need for a circular structure.

"It is necessary for the stadium to be round. If it is not round, something is wrong. The front has to be round," he said.

Also speaking, the Site Agent, Mr Emezie Ikeanyionwu, said the company was currently laying the foundation columns that would support the canopy for the umbrella roofing of the stadium.

"We are working according to the timeframe and schedule.

"These are the reinforced foundation layouts that will carry the canopy of the stadium," he said.

The festival tagged "Coal City Games 2026, has been scheduled to start from Nov. 11 to Dec. 10.