

INEC Opens Campaign Window for 2027 Elections

MATTHEW OKAGHA

BENIN CITY

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has officially opened the campaign window for the 2027 Presidential and National Assembly elections, setting the stage for intensified political activities across the country.

Under the approved timetable, political parties and candidates contesting the Presidential and National Assembly elections are permitted to commence public campaigns from Wednesday, August 19, 2026, ahead of the elections scheduled for Saturday, January 16, 2027.

The campaign window will remain open until Friday, January 15, 2027, when all campaign activities must cease, in accordance with the requirement that campaigns end 24 hours before polling day.

The development marks the formal beginning of the major phase of the 2027 electoral contest, with political parties expected to move from internal preparations and consultations to full-scale engagement with voters.

Campaign activities are expected to include rallies, media advertisements, town-hall meetings, consultations, grassroots mobilisation and other lawful forms of voter engagement. INEC's timetable also provides a separate campaign period for the Governorship and State Houses of Assembly elections.

Campaigns for the state-level elections are scheduled to begin on Wednesday, September 9, 2026, and will end on Friday, February 5, 2027, 24 hours before the Governorship and State Assembly elections scheduled for Saturday, February 6, 2027.

The commission's timetable is based on the provisions of the Electoral Act 2026, which regulates the period within which political parties and candidates may publicly campaign.

Under the new framework, political campaigns are permitted to commence only within the period prescribed by law, while all campaign activities must end 24 hours before polling day.

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#200

Edo Govt Launches ₦40million Grant for Youth Ventures

BENIN CITY

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

The Edo State Government has unveiled a ₦40 million grant pool to support 10 outstanding youth-led ventures as part of its efforts to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and job creation among young people in the state.

The initiative was unveiled on Tuesday, August 18, 2026, at the opening of the two-day Edo

Youth Impact Forum 2.0 in Benin City.

The forum, themed "Ideas, Capital, Impact," brought together government officials, entrepreneurs, investors, development partners and young people from across the state.

Speaking at the event, the Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, who represented Governor Monday Okpebholo, urged participants to take advantage of the opportunities being provided by the government.

Sharing his personal journey from engineering and business into public service, Idahosa said he served as the youngest Commissioner for Investment, Trade and Industry and Public-Private Partnership in Edo State before becoming the youngest member of the House of Representatives from the state.

"I share this for every young person here to understand that your present circumstances do not determine or define your possibilities," he said.

Explaining the theme of the forum, the Deputy Governor said an idea was the starting point, capital provided the opportunity to develop it, while impact was measured by the ability of the resulting venture to improve lives, create jobs and generate prosperity.

"An idea is where it begins. Capital gives an idea a chance, while impact is what happens when ideas become something that improves lives, creates job opportunities and generates prosperity," he said.

Idahosa urged participants who were not selected for the grant not to be discouraged, citing Nigerian entrepreneurs such as Jim Ovia and Tony Elumelu, who, he noted, started small before building major institutions.

The Commissioner for Youth Affairs, Hon. Charity Amayenvbo, said the forum was designed to move youth development beyond ceremonial engagements and create practical opportunities for young people.

"We are gathered to create connections between talent and opportunity, between ideas and capital, and between ambition and mentorship," she said.

According to him, the responsibility of government was to ensure that the talents of young people were "properly identified, developed, financed, connected, and transformed into economic value."

He noted that although Edo youths were known for creativity and enterprise, they required knowledge, discipline, mentorship and access to capital to build sustainable businesses.

"True empowerment is not

CONTINUES ON PG 4



SITE INSPECTION:

The Special Adviser on Projects Implementation and Monitoring Department (PIMD), Mrs Phoebe Williams-Bello (middle) and officials of the departments during the department's quarterly site inspection on Wednesday in Benin.

IBP Summit 2026 to put Nigeria's budget under scrutiny

ABUJA

The International Budget Partnership (IBP), Nigeria, is set to scrutinise Nigeria's budget implementation, focusing on whether approved funds translate into services for citizens.

The Country Director, IBP, Nigeria, Olayinka Babalola, stated this at a news conference on Wednesday in Abuja ahead of the organisation's PULSE Summit 2026 scheduled to hold on Sept. 3.

Olayinka said the PULSE Summit with the theme, "From Approved Budgets to the Last Mile: Examining Budget Implementation in Nigeria" would connect budget data with citizens' experiences.

She said PULSE, meaning Public Finance: Unlocking Last

Mile Services, would examine the gap between budget allocations and the services ultimately delivered to Nigerians.

"Every year, the conversation around Nigeria's budget is loud and familiar. We discuss its size, allocations for health and education, and revenue projections.

"But what citizens experience every day is the last mile: whether medicines are available, teachers are in classrooms, and water flows from their taps," she said.

According to her, the last mile is where Nigeria's budget system often breaks down, preventing public funds from reaching the people they were intended to serve.

Babalola said the summit would particularly focus on

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NEWS

ICPC tracks 14 projects worth ₦431.8m in Sokoto

SOKOTO

The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) on Wednesday tracked 14 projects valued at approximately ₦431.8 million across Sokoto state.

The reports indicate that the investigative effort falls under the ICPC Phase 8B tracking exercise.

The Team Lead, Assistant Chief Superintendent, Dickson Domfa-Napcwat, said the projects spanned various sectors, including health, education, agriculture, electrification and special intervention.

Domfa-Napcwat listed the projects to include the supply and installation of medical equipment for the dental department, and the supply and installation of medical equipment for the radiology and cardiac centre.

He said others include the provision of school writing materials to selected schools, the construction and installation of solar streetlights, and the rehabilitation of a burnt hostel with the supply of beds.

According to him, other projects comprised the completion and furnishing of a re-

habilitated hostel, the purchase and supply of quality seeds for farmers, and cash grants to health entrepreneurs and agri-entrepreneurs of medical and health associations.

He disclosed that the projects inspected were sited in Illela/Gwadabawa Federal Constituency, Bodinga/Dange-Shuni/Tureta Federal Constituency, Wurno/Rabah Federal Constituency, Sokoto North/South Federal Constituency, Kware/Wamakko Federal Constituency and Sabon Birni LGA.

He added that the 14 projects were awarded under the Federal Government's 2023 intervention programmes and were expected to have been fully executed.

"These projects were awarded at an approximate cost of ₦431.8 million and are expected to be fully executed.

"We are to monitor and assess project performance, value of work done, contractor identification, payment details, and project status," he said.

Domfa-Napcwat further said that part of the team's goal was to determine the value and impact of the projects on the communities they were meant to serve.

Umahi warns road contractors against abandoning project sites

AKURE

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, has directed contractors handling Federal Government road projects to remain fully active on their sites, warning against project abandonment.

The Controller of Works in Ondo State, Olajide Hussein, made the disclosure in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Wednesday in Akure.

Hussein said the minister gave the directive during a recent meeting that "no contractor handling federal road project should leave the site."

He explained that the order of the minister was with no exception to any of the contractors.

Speaking on the Akure-Ado road project, Hussein assured motorists and residents that construction on an outstanding section of the road would resume soon.

The controller also said that the Federal Government had also reviewed the construction method for the remaining section of the project, with concrete to be used instead of asphalt.

"The Honourable Minister of Works has directed that no contractor should leave their project sites. The Akure to Ado-Ekiti contractors are no exception and we expect them to return to the site immediately.

"You know the Federal Government has re-awarded the other section to be on concrete instead of asphalt for the first section. So any moment now, the contractor will resume work on site," he said.

According to him, the con-

tractor has about 12 months to complete the second carriage-way once work resumes.

He said with the minister's directive, all contractors were expected to return to site and accelerate work on the outstanding carriage-way, while the revised concrete construction method is expected to facilitate completion of the project.

NAN reports that the project was flagged off in May 2023 with the Federal Executive Council approving the re-award of the project 50-kilometre dualisation project.

The Akure-Ondo State boundary section was awarded to Samchase Nigeria Ltd. and Horizon Construction Company Ltd. with a 24-month completion period.

Kopek Construction Ltd. received the Ekiti boundary-Ado-Ekiti section with a 30-month completion timeline.

Hussein said that the timeline for the completion of the second carriage-way project at a very fast pace should be about 12 months.

Tinubu addresses world leaders at UN General Assembly September 23

NEW YORK

President Bola Tinubu will join world leaders to address the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 81) General Debate on Wednesday, Sept. 23, in New York.

Tinubu is scheduled as the 10th speaker during the morning session on day two of the high-level General Debate holding from Sept. 22 to Sept. 28 at the UN headquarters.

A provisional list of speakers obtained by the Correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), shows Tinubu will deliver his statement during the morning session.

The Nigerian leader will speak around 11:30am and noon New York time (4:30pm Nigerian time).

He will join a line-up of 193 world leaders, including over 150 heads of state and government, and more than 40 others including vice presidents, deputy prime ministers, ministers and other senior government officials.

As tradition dictates, Brazil's President Luiz da Silva will open the debate on Sept. 22, followed by U.S. President Donald Trump as the host country President.

The theme for UNGA 81, to be presided over by Khalilur Rahman of Bangladesh, is "Restoring trust, managing transformation: A United Nations

that delivers for all."

The week-long high-level debate will be a busy outing for Tinubu, who is expected to participate in several high-level meetings, side events and major summits on climate action, sea-level rise and pandemic preparedness.

The Nigerian leader will have a high-level meeting with outgoing UN Secretary-General António Guterres, whose two-term tenure ends on Dec. 31, 2026.

Tinubu is also expected to meet with the outgoing UN Deputy Secretary-General, Nigeria's Amina Mohammed, who holds the most senior role by an African and has been in the saddle since 2017.

Sources at the UN told NAN,

however, that speaking slots were still subject to adjustments depending on attendance.

Nigeria has historically enjoyed goodwill that ensures prominent positioning on the first or the second day.

Tinubu attended the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in 2023 in person while Vice-President Kashim Shettima represented him at the 79th and 80th sessions in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Shettima, who delivered Nigeria's national statement, unusually retained Nigeria's day-one speaking slots, credited to diplomatic manoeuvring by the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the UN.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

From left: Executive Chairman, Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), Dr Zacch Adedeji; Minister of State for Budget and Economic Planning, Dr Doris Uzoka-Anite; Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Sen. Abubakar Bagudu; Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Taiwo Oyedele, during a news conference on Nigeria's Reform Scorecard the benefits, costs and harms prevented organized by the Federal Ministry of Finance in Abuja on Wednesday.

Women make up nearly 70% of global health workforce, study reveals

ABUJA

Women now make up nearly 70 per cent of health workers worldwide but remain concentrated in lower-paid professions with fewer leadership opportunities, according to a new Global Burden of Disease study.

The study estimated that 34.4 million additional doctors, nurses, midwives, dentists and pharmacists would be needed

to achieve moderate universal health coverage, with the largest shortages in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Published on The Lancet medical journal website on Tuesday, the study was conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), an independent population health research organisation.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that IHME is based at the University of Wash-

ington School of Medicine and works with collaborators worldwide to develop timely, relevant and scientifically valid evidence on global health.

Based on Global Burden of Disease 2023 estimates, the study published the first global, sex-disaggregated estimates of 20 health worker cadres across 204 countries and territories from 1990 to 2023.

The cadres include doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, dentists and community health workers, with the study providing the first global estimates of community health workers.

The study found that women's dominance in the workforce had not translated into equal economic or professional advancement, as they remained concentrated in lower-paid occupations.

"The global health workforce nearly tripled between 1990 and 2023, yet major shortages remain," the report stated.

The study noted that women also had fewer opportunities to progress into leadership positions

in spite their substantial contribution to healthcare delivery.

The findings were particularly significant for sub-Saharan Africa identified among the regions facing the largest health workforce shortages globally.

The shortage, the report noted, was threatening efforts to expand healthcare access and achieve universal health coverage, particularly in countries with inadequate numbers and uneven distribution of trained professionals.

The study therefore called for stronger workforce planning, education, recruitment and retention, alongside investments that address gender inequalities within the sector.

It recommended gender-responsive policies, including leadership development, workplace protections, paid parental leave and flexible work arrangements, to support women throughout their health careers.

According to the study, closing global workforce gaps will require sustained investment in health worker education, recruitment, retention and supportive working conditions.

South African envoy dismisses reports of visa restrictions on Nigerians

LAGOS

The South African Consulate in Lagos has dismissed reports that the mission has stopped issuing visas to Nigerians on the basis of anti-migrants protests in South Africa.

Prof. Bobby Moroe, Consul General of South Africa, made this known on the sidelines of a round-table organised by the Ni-

gerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) with the theme, "South Africa's Xenophobia in Comparative Perspective".

Moroe said applicants who met the requirements for visas to visit his country would never be denied.

"Visas continue to be issued in spite of the ongoing protests and Nigerians are still visiting the country for tourism and other legitimate purposes.

"We wish to make it clear again that Nigerians under these circumstances faced today will never be discriminated against.

"No basis will justify why your visa is rejected except that you, for one reason or another may not have qualified with the requirements of the visa," he said.

Moroe also announced the recent introduction of South Africa's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), a digital system designed to simplify

The Nigerian **OBSERVER**

That The People May Know

INVITATION TO PLACE GOODWILL MESSAGES

FOR HIS EXCELLENCY

SEN. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO @56

The Nigerian Observer will publish a **Special Birthday Edition** on **Saturday August 29, 2026** to celebrate the **56th Birthday** of His Excellency, **Senator Monday Okpebholo**, Governor of Edo State.

We invite MDAs, Corporate Organizations, and Individuals to place goodwill/ congratulatory messages.

ADVERT RATES

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*Let's celebrate a leader committed
to the progress of Edo State.*

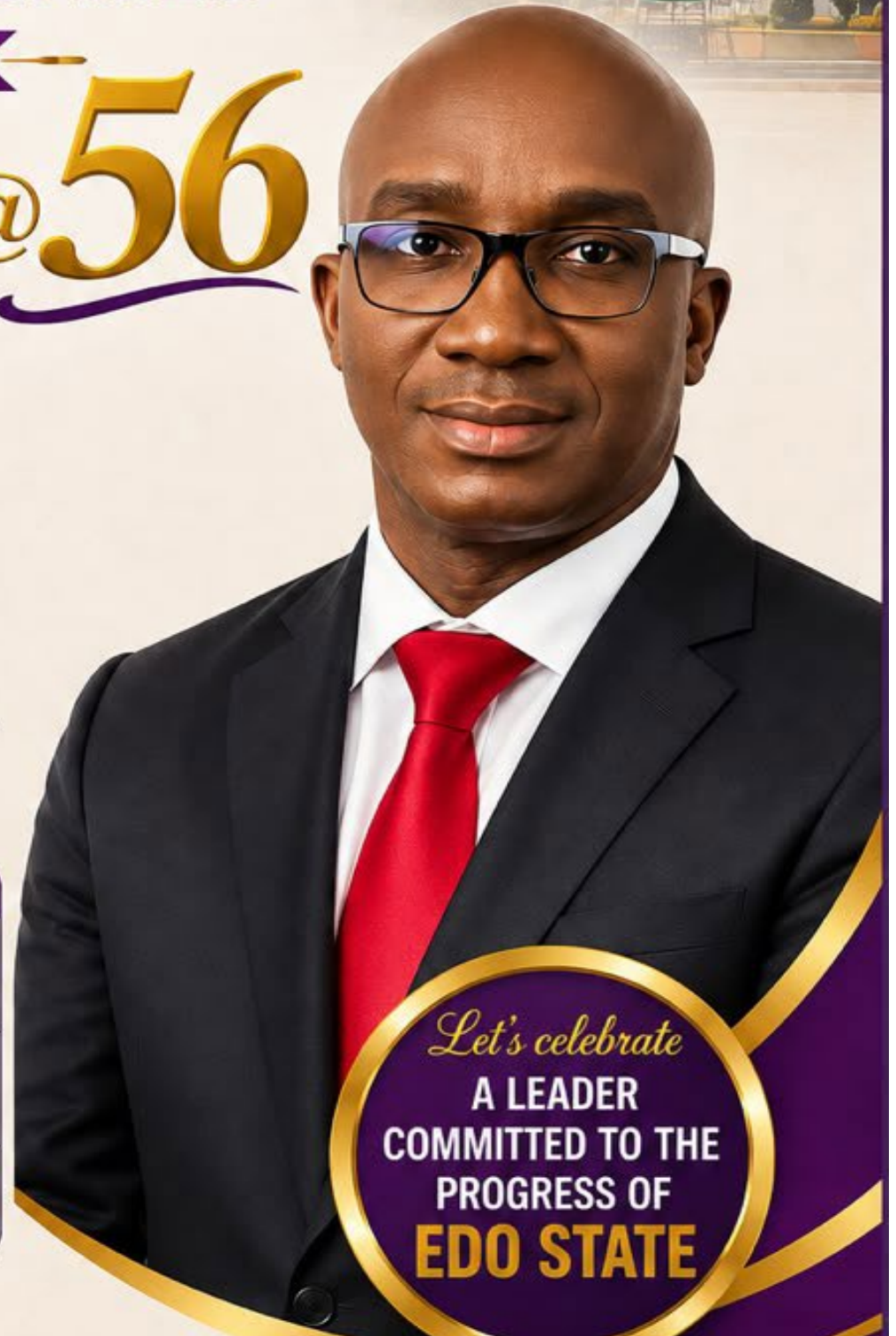


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Let's celebrate
**A LEADER
COMMITTED TO THE
PROGRESS OF
EDO STATE**

NEWS

Edo Govt Launches ₦40m...

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starter packs. It is creating the capacity for someone to continuously create value," she said.

Amayaenvbo described the N40 million grant as "a vote of confidence in the capacity of Edo youth," stressing that its true value would be determined by what beneficiaries were able to build with the funds.

"The real value of the grant is not to be measured by the amount received today, but by what the money helps you to build tomorrow," she said, urging beneficiaries to extend opportunities to others when their businesses became successful.

The Commissioner also noted that government alone could not achieve sustainable youth empowerment, calling for stronger collaboration with

the private sector, financial institutions, technology companies and educational institutions.

Dignitaries at the event included the Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady of Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani; members of the State Executive Council; Permanent Secretaries; and representatives of the Office of the Chief of Staff.

The forum featured panel discussions, mentorship sessions and networking opportunities designed to equip participants with practical knowledge in technology, agriculture, creative arts, finance and entrepreneurship.

A major highlight of the event was the unveiling of the N40 million grant pool for 10 youth-led ventures under seed, growth and skills categories.



PARTICIPANTS:

Permanent Secretary, Kaduna State Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Linda Yakubu (M), with Horticulture Association Official's, Secondary Schools Students and participants, during the launching of 5000 trees for Economic and non-Economic seedlings in Kaduna on Wednesday.

IBP Summit 2026 to put Nigeria's...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

marginalised groups, including women and girls, while identifying points where the budget implementation process fails.

"When we disaggregate the process, we can identify where it is breaking. Once we know where it is breaking, it becomes easier to fix," she said.

She said the summit would not be a one-off event, noting that its outcomes and commitments would directly inform the organisation's agenda for the following year.

Onyekachi Chukwu, Strategy and Policy Lead, IBP Nigeria, said budget implementation challenges could arise from poor planning, delayed releases, procurement delays, weak oversight or several factors combined.

"The problem is not always that there is no budget. If we do not know where the problem occurred, we cannot find the

right solution," Chukwu said.

He said PULSE would bring together three critical elements: fiscal evidence, citizen and frontline experiences, and trackable commitments to address identified implementation bottlenecks.

According to him, fiscal evidence would examine what was budgeted, what was released and what was actually spent by government.

He said citizen and frontline experiences would determine whether services promised through the budget were available where they were most needed.

Chukwu said stakeholders would identify bottlenecks, determine who could address them and agree on realistic changes that could improve service delivery.

Chika Okoh, Senior Programme Coordinator, IBP Nigeria, said IBP data had already identified budget releases as a major gap within Nigeria's budget implementation chain.

INEC Opens Campaign Window...

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Political parties, candidates and their supporters are consequently expected to comply strictly with the approved dates. Any attempt to commence public campaigning outside the prescribed period could attract sanctions in accordance with the law.

The revised timetable replaces the earlier election schedule proposed by INEC and provides political parties with a clearly defined framework for preparing their campaigns and mobilising voters.

The commencement of the campaign season is expected to significantly raise the level of political activity nationwide, as parties begin to present their candidates and programmes to the electorate.

The 2027 contest is expected to generate intense competition among political parties seeking control of the Presidency, National Assembly, state governments and state legislatures.

Beyond rallies and political advertisements, candidates are expected to use the campaign period to present their positions on issues of direct concern to Nigerians, including insecurity, unemployment, education, healthcare, infrastructure, economic development and the rising cost of living.

The opening of the campaign window, however, also places a greater responsibility on political parties and their supporters to ensure that the electoral process remains peaceful.

INEC and other stakeholders have consistently emphasised the need for political actors to respect the rules governing the electoral process and avoid conduct capable of undermining peaceful participation.

Political parties are therefore expected to conduct their campaigns responsibly, while security agencies, civil society organisations, traditional institutions and other stakeholders are expected to contribute to a peaceful campaign environment.

PIMD commends Okpebholo over ongoing road projects in Edo

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

The Special Adviser on Projects Implementation and Monitoring Department (PIMD), Mrs Phoebe Williams-Bello, has thanked Gov. Monday Okpebholo of Edo for embarking on various road projects across the state.

Williams-Bello made the remarks during the department's quarterly site inspection on Wednesday in Benin.

According to her, we are not yet two years in office, and the governor has embarked on massive and brave road construction projects in the state, and we are happy about it.

"Presently, we are in the rainy season, and Edo has a lot of rainy weather, if not more than the dry season, and contractors are still on sites. Why? Because the governor is funding the projects.

"For now, we are advising our contractors to do more concrete works due to the wet weather. They are trying, and we urge them to keep doing quality work," she said.

She explained that in areas where the contractors were yet to arrive at pavement level, they were urged to embark on palliative work to enable road users to have some relief.

She, however, expressed satisfaction with the quality and pace of work on all the projects visited during her inspection tour.

On his part, Mr Shola Adegboye, the Technical Officer in charge of the Adesuwa Flyover, revealed that they were taking advantage of the rainy season to focus on the concrete works of the ongoing bridge construction.

Adegboye said the work was

beginning to take shape, as they were close to 60 per cent completion.

According to him, presently, we are working on the pile cap, and also on the retaining walls, the piers, and we are taking advantage of the rainy season to focus on the concrete works.

"So that by the time the dry season sets in, our concrete is already up, and then we can do our filling and the project begins to take shape. Presently, we are within the time limit," he said.

Speaking on the level of work on the Adesuwa Flyover Bridge, Mr Theophilous Obasuyi, an engineer from the state Ministry of Works, said

they had completed 50 per cent of the work.

Obasuyi said that, with the pace of work, they were within the agreed time frame for completing the project.

Another engineer handling the Uhie 4.7-kilometre road construction work, Mr Mohamed Fathy, assured that the road would be delivered within the stipulated time.

Among the projects visited were the Adesuwa Flyover, rehabilitation work on the Benin-Sapele Road, Benin-Sapele Water Storm Project, Evbukhu and Old Road construction, Ramat Park Flyover, Oghoghe Road construction, among others.

Tinubu presides over FEC as council mourns former ministers

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu on Wednesday presided over a meeting of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) at the State House, Abuja.

The meeting was preceded by a minute of silence in honour of two former ministers who recently passed away, Alhaji Abubakar Alhaji, former Minister of Finance, and Prof. Turner Isoun, former Minister of Science and Technology.

Alhaji served as Minister of Finance from 1990 to 1991 under the military administration of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida while Isoun served as Minister of Science and Technology from 2000 to 2007 under former President Olusegun Obasanjo.

The FEC meeting began with the national anthem after Tinubu arrived at the Council Chamber at 2:30 p.m. to chair the session.

The meeting was attended

by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. George Akume, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Dr Didi Watson-Jack; and National Security Adviser (NSA), Malam Nuhu Ribadu.

Others included Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabiamila; ministers, presidential aides and heads of government agencies.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that last FEC meeting was held on June 29.

ICPC begins tracking of ₦1bn FG projects in Osun

OSUN

Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) says it has commenced the tracking of more than N1 billion worth of Federal Government-funded projects in Osun.

The ICPC tracking team lead, Mrs. Mary Oke, disclosed this on Wednesday in Osogbo.

Oke said the exercise was aimed at ensuring that government-funded projects provided value for money and were executed according to specifications. She said the tracking exercise

would cover the three senatorial districts of the state — Osun Central, Osun East and Osun West.

According to her, the projects being tracked include road construction, solar-powered street lights, skill acquisition and empowerment programmes.

She added that the commission would also track grants provided to vulnerable people, widows, persons with disabilities and the elderly, as well as the construction of community halls and renovation of community libraries, among others.

Oke said the exercise was part of the commission's mandate to promote accountability and transparency in the implementation of public projects.

"The ICPC is in another phase of its constituency project tracking exercise in the state.

"The exercise, which includes assessing the status of various constituency projects, is also to ensure that public resources are judiciously utilised to deliver quality infrastructure and services to citizens.

"Relevant stakeholders, including community members and civil society organisations,

should support the tracking exercise by providing the commission with relevant information that can aid in achieving its objectives," she said.

Oke urged communities to protect completed projects from vandalism, saying the government had done its part and it was the responsibility of citizens to remain vigilant and protect public facilities.

She added that the tracking exercise was also aimed at ensuring value for money, accountability and transparency in the implementation of public projects.

NEWS**WAEC Sensation: Edo Deputy Governor rewards student with ₦1m for straight A's****BENIN CITY**

Edo State Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has rewarded academic excellence with a ₦1 million cash gift to Delight Amayaevbo, an Edo student who recorded straight A's in the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). The outstanding academic performance attracted the attention of the deputy governor, who described Delight's

achievement as a testament to hard work, discipline and determination.

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr Friday Aghedo, the deputy governor commended the student for making his family and Edo State proud, stressing the need to encourage and celebrate academic excellence among young people.

He said the gesture was intended not only to reward Delight's exceptional performance

but also to inspire other Edo youths to take their education seriously and strive for excellence.

Idahosa urged students across the state to remain focused on their studies, noting that academic excellence could open doors to greater opportunities and contribute to the development of the state.

Delight's father, Hon. Charity Amayaevbo, expressed deep appreciation to the deputy governor for the gesture, describing it as a significant

encouragement to his son and the entire family.

He thanked Idahosa for recognizing his son's achievement and prayed that the gesture would inspire more young people to pursue academic excellence.

The recognition, according to the deputy governor's office, underscores the commitment of the Governor Monday Okpebholo-led administration to youth development, education and the promotion of excellence among Edo youths.

**WAEC SENSATION:**

Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa (left) presenting cash gift to Delight Amayaevbo (right).

AAU Alumni Election: Members demand cancellation, others call for dialogue**EKPOMA**

JUDE EHEBHA

The August 14, 2026 election of officers of the Ambrose Alli University Alumni Association (AAUAA), Home Branch, has been thrown into controversy following allegations of irregularities, intimidation and subversion of the democratic process by some members of the association.

A group known as the Concerned Financial Members and Stakeholders, in a statement signed by Comrade Austine Onobhayedo and six others and made available to journalists, called for the cancellation of the election and demanded urgent intervention by the Worldwide President (WWP) and the National Executive Council (NEC).

The group gave the WWP and NEC a seven-day ultimatum to address what it described as anomalies surrounding the conduct of the election. According to the aggrieved members, failure to address their grievances would compel them to withdraw their subscriptions, form a parallel association, establish an official social media platform and seek legal redress to challenge the validity of the election.

They alleged that the Electoral Committee (ELECO) was appointed unilaterally by the outgoing chairman, Prof. Austin Aghemelo, while accusing the committee of compromising the neutrality of the electoral process.

The group also alleged arbitrary changes to the election schedule and a controversial change of venue, claiming that the election was moved to the private residence of a member who was also a candidate in the election.

They further alleged that

more than 140 financial members were disenfranchised through intimidation, an allegedly fabricated voters' list and flawed computation of results.

The group also raised concerns over restrictions on the association's WhatsApp platform, alleging that only administrators were permitted to make posts.

Among its demands, the group called for the nullification of the August 14 election, reconstitution of the Electoral Committee, non-recognition of the purportedly elected officers and a comprehensive audit of

the association's financial dealings over the past five years.

The group alleged that the NEC observer, in collaboration with the ELECO, produced an unverified list containing only 49 "selected" voters, purportedly compiled from attendance records between 2023 and 2026.

It claimed that the list disregarded the association's constitutional provision which, according to the group, confers voting rights on financial members, a provision it said was applied during the election that produced the Aghemelo-led executive.

ICPC begins tracking of ₦1bn FG projects in Osun**OSOGBO**

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"The ICPC is in another phase of its constituency project tracking exercise in the state.

"The exercise, which includes assessing the status of various constituency projects, is also to ensure that public resources are judiciously utilised to deliver quality infrastructure and services to citizens.

"Relevant stakeholders, including community members and civil society organisations, should support the tracking exercise by providing the commission with relevant information that can aid in achieving its objectives," she said.

FG reaffirms commitment to military veterans' welfare, pension concerns**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has reaffirmed its commitment to addressing the welfare, remuneration and pension concerns of military veterans in the country.

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa, gave the assurance on Wednesday in Abuja, during a courtesy visit by the representatives of military veterans to the ministry.

A statement by the Special Adviser to the minister, Leah Katung-Babatunde, said that Musa was represented by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mr Richard Pheelangwah.

He emphasised that the welfare of veterans remained a priority of government, while acknowledging the immense sacrifices and distinguished service of Nigeria's military veterans.

He assured that concerns relating to wage and pension adjustments were receiving urgent attention.

According to him, relevant military, pension and financial authorities are being engaged to achieve a fair, sustainable and implementable resolution that will ensure that veterans are not

unfairly disadvantaged.

The minister appealed for calm, patience and constructive engagement, noting that sustained dialogue remained the most effective means of resolving outstanding concerns.

He said this was necessary to preserve the dignity, honour and mutual respect befitting those who have served the nation.

Musa further explained that any adjustment to veterans' entitlements must be properly computed, adequately funded and implemented in accordance with extant approvals, regulations and due process.

According to him, this is to guarantee sustainability and avoid unintended disparities.

He assured the veterans that the ministry would sustain engagement with their representatives and provide appropriate updates as progress was made.

The minister reiterated that the federal government deeply valued the patriotism, courage and sacrifices of Nigeria's military veterans.

He said the government remained committed to ensuring that their service to the nation was recognised not only in words, but through sustained attention to their welfare and legitimate entitlements.

Imafidon hails Washington Osifo on appointment as commissioner**EHOR**

The Acting Chairman of Uhumwode Local Government Council, Hon. Austin Rotimi Imafidon has congratulated Washington Osa Osifo, PhD, on his successful swearing-in as the Commissioner for Education, Edo State.

The council boss, in a statement on Wednesday, described the appointment as a well-deserved recognition of his wealth of experience, intellectual capacity, dedication, and commitment to public service.

"The people of Uhumwode are proud of this significant achievement and firmly believe that you will bring your wealth of knowledge and experience to bear in advancing the education sector of our dear state.

"As Chairman of Uhumwode Local Government Council, I am confident that your tenure will be marked by visionary leadership, innovative reforms, improved educational standards, and meaningful opportunities for our students, teachers, and educational institutions", Imafidon explained.



WASHINGTON OSA OSIFO AND HON. AUSTIN ROTIMI IMAFIDON

MAN seeks stronger partnership with kaduna govt to revive industrial sector

KADUNA

The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) has called for stronger collaboration with Kaduna State Government to address challenges affecting the manufacturing sector.

The association made the

call on Wednesday when its delegation, led by its Vice President, North West, Engr. Iliyasu Sale, paid a courtesy visit to Kaduna Deputy Governor, Dr Hadiza Balarabe.

Sale said the delegation was in Kaduna to appreciate the administration's interventions and support for manufactur-

ers.

He also said the visit provided an opportunity for MAN to present challenges affecting manufacturers and seek government intervention.

Sale said MAN, established in 1971, represented more than 2,500 manufacturing companies across 10 sectoral groups and over 72 manufacturing subsectors.

He said the association promoted and protected manufacturers' interests through advocacy, research and constructive engagement with the government.

Sale commended the Kadu-

na Government for rehabilitating the Kakuri Industrial Area, which he said was approximately 99 per cent completed.

The MAN vice president said Kaduna had significant potential to become a leading manufacturing and investment destination with continued government support.

In his remarks, MAN Director General, Mr Segun Kadiri, said stronger public private partnerships were needed to create an environment conducive to industrial growth.

Kadiri said Kaduna had demonstrated commitment

to such partnerships and remained an important manufacturing destination in Northern Nigeria.

He urged the government to address the high cost and limited access to finance, saying high interest rates were undermining manufacturers' competitiveness.

According to him, borrowing at interest rates between 30 and 35 per cent makes it difficult for manufacturers to compete with imported products.

He also identified high electricity costs, unstable power supply, multiple taxation and regulatory burdens as major

challenges facing manufacturers.

Kadiri called for better coordination between state agencies and local governments to streamline tax collection and reduce the burden on businesses.

He urged the government to patronise locally manufactured goods, saying the practice would support industries, create jobs and strengthen the domestic economy.

The MAN director general also called for proper implementation of the tax reforms and urged the government to address concerns over their application.

Zenith Bank targets non-oil export boom with 10th trade seminar

LAGOS

Zenith Bank Plc will on August 25 host the 10th edition of its International Trade Seminar, focusing on strategies to unlock Nigeria's non-oil export potential and accelerate economic growth.

This was according to a statement by the bank on Wednesday in Lagos.

The bank said the seminar with the theme "Unlocking Value and Harnessing Growth in Non-oil Export", will bring together policymakers, regulators, exporters, manufacturers, investors and other stakeholders.

The bank said the virtual event would examine ways to move Nigeria beyond raw commodity exports by developing competitive value chains, expanding market access and improving trade infrastructure and financing.

It said the discussions would also focus on how businesses could leverage the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to access regional markets and deepen intra African trade.

The seminar will feature the Secretary General of the AfCFTA Secretariat, Mr Wamkele Mene and Chief Executive Officer of Plot Enterprise Ghana Ltd., Mrs Patricia Poku Diaby.

Other speakers include the immediate past President of the African Export Import Bank (Afreximbank), Prof. Benedict Oramah and Mr Abba Bello, Managing Director of the Nigerian Export Import Bank (NEXIM Bank).

Also to speak are: Mr Adewale Adeniyi, Comptroller General of the Nigeria Customs Service; and Ms Aderinola Shonekan, Director, Trade and Exchange Department, Central Bank of Nigeria. The event will also feature representatives of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) and leading private sector companies.

Zenith Bank said the discussions would provide practical perspectives on export financing, customs and port efficiency, regulation, market access and the competitiveness of Nigerian businesses.

The bank said AfCFTA would be a major focus, given its potential to connect Nigerian businesses to a continental market of more than one billion people.

According to the bank, Nigerian enterprises must strengthen their value chains and competitiveness to fully benefit from the opportunities created by regional integration.

Ogun declares Thursday public holiday for Isele Day

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun Government has declared Thursday as a work-free day to commemorate the 2026 Isele Day celebration to celebrate African traditional religion.

Mr Kayode Akinmade, Special Adviser to the Governor on Information and Strategy, disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday in Abeokuta.

Akinmade said that the observance of the Isele day underscored the administration's commitment to preserving and promoting Yoruba culture, heritage and traditional values.

He recalled that August 20 was formally declared a public holiday in the state in 2023, following a resolution of the Ogun House of Assembly and approval by Gov. Dapo Abiodun.

"Isele Day provides an opportunity for adherents of Yoruba traditional religion to honour their ancestors, observe traditional rites and promote their spiritual and cultural values.

"The celebration will also promote community among practitioners and enable the wider society to appreciate and respect the rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba people," he said.

Akinmade said that the administration recognises the role of culture and traditional institutions in preserving the state's identity and strengthening social cohesion.

He urged residents to celebrate the day peacefully and responsibly while respecting the beliefs, rights and practices of others.



29TH AND 30TH CONVOCATION:

A cross-sections of the Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) graduates, during the 29th and 30th Convocation of Lagos State University (LASU) in Lagos on Wednesday

2027: Group to train 300,000 youths on electoral integrity, vigilance

ABUJA

The Nigeria Youths in Politics (NiYP) says it has developed a nationwide framework to engage over 300,000 young Nigerians to foster a culture of electoral vigilance to safeguard the integrity of 2027 general elections.

The Chief Executive Officer of NiYP, a political pressure group, Blessing Oyefeso, disclosed this in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja.

Oyefeso explained that the initiative, tagged Youth Electoral Guards Observer (YEGO), was developed by NiYP in collaboration with key partner organisations.

According to him, the coalition includes the Youth-Action for Electoral Accountability and Partnership Alliance (YEAPA), the Nigeria Youth Policy Devel-

opment Advocacy (NYPDA), and other strategic partners.

He stated that through the YEGO project, 50,000 young Nigerians would be directly recruited, trained and deployed as electoral master trainers and frontline civic actors across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

tal Territory (FCT).

"Beyond this core network, YEGO is projected to engage more than three million young Nigerians across more than 170,000 polling units," Oyefeso said.

He added that beneficiaries of the programme would be trained to promote peaceful and lawful electoral participa-

tion within their communities; resist and discourage electoral violence, intimidation and other harmful practices.

Oyefeso said that the beneficiaries would also observe and document electoral incidents through the YEGO platform; report credible incidents electoral malpractices to the authorised channels.

OAUSTECH VC hails Aiyedatiwa for increasing state-owned tertiary institutions' subventions by 60%

Okitipupa (Ondo) Prof. Temi Ogunorisa, Vice-Chancellor, Olusegun Agagu University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa (OAUSTECH), has lauded Gov. Lucky Aiyedatiwa for approving a 60 per cent increase in monthly subvention for state-owned tertiary institutions.

Aiyedatiwa, on Monday, also approved the immediate

implementation of the agreement reached between the Federal Government and university unions in the affected state-owned institutions.

Ogunorisa in a statement signed by Mr Paul Adeagbo, Director of Information, Protocol and Public Relations on Wednesday in Okitipupa, described the governor's approvals as timely and unprecedented.

According to him, the increased subvention will greatly enhance the university's capacity to deliver quality teaching, research and improved welfare for staff and students.

"The approval of the Federal Government unions agreements has averted potential industrial actions and restored stability across all Ondo State-owned tertiary institutions.

NEWS**2027: Group to train 300,000 youths on electoral integrity, vigilance****ABUJA**

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Oyefeso said that the beneficiaries would also observe and document electoral incidents through the YEGO platform; re-

port credible incidents electoral malpractices to the authorised channels.

"The beneficiaries will also be trained to follow the counting, collation and other stages of the electoral process; support community-level early-warning and violence-prevention mechanisms.

"To share relevant information responsibly with appropriate electoral and security institutions, subject to applicable laws and protocols and to remain engaged in post-election accountability and democratic participation," he said.

Oyefeso noted that lessons gathered from observing previous off-cycle elections, such as the Osun governorship election, provided valuable practical insights that helped refine and prepare the YEGO framework for nationwide deployment.

He stressed that the objective of YEGO was not to create parallel security structures or replace state institutions.

Rather, he said that it sought to establish a responsible, citizen-led support architecture to strengthen communication, vigilance and incident reporting in collaboration with established electoral and security agencies within applicable laws and protocols.

"The scale of Nigeria's electoral landscape demands a coordinat-

ed approach to forestall potential large-scale electoral violence.

"With more than 170,000 polling units nationwide, protecting the integrity of elections cannot be left exclusively to institutions operating strictly on the election days," Oyefeso stated.

He added that moving from passive voting to organised civic responsibility would help safeguard the country's democratic process before, during, and after the ballot.

Oyefeso called on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, civil society organisations, development partners, traditional institutions and the general public to collaborate with the group to transform Nigeria's electoral trajectory for the greater good.

**FACILITY TOUR:**

Special Assistant to the Governor Enugu State on Research and Documentation, Mr Josh Ejeh (L); Permanent Secretary, Enugu State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Mr Anyaora Okereke (2nd R); Project Manager, Chinese Construction Company, Mr Ronald Uno (R) and members of Correspondent's Chapel, Nigeria Union of Journalists, Enugu State Council, during a Facility Tour of Enugu State Livestock/Cattle Ranch in Amankanu Community of Nkanu East LGA of Enugu State on Wednesday.

Nigeria secondary schools Principals hold 68th annual national congress**KADUNA**

Nigerian secondary school principals have converged in Kaduna for their 68th Annual National Congress focusing on technology.

The congress under the auspices of All Nigeria Confederation of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS), has the theme "Leading the Digital Leap, Redefining Quality Education Through Technology-Driven Assessment and School Management."

Speaking at the opening of the congress on Wednesday in Kaduna, Mr Jonathan Danbaki, President of the Kaduna State branch of ANCOPSS, said the theme was timely and

relevant to the demands of 21st-century education.

Danbaki said rapid technological advancement required the education sector to continuously evolve to remain effective, competitive and globally relevant.

He said principals and school managers had a collective responsibility to embrace digital transformation, strengthen administration and improve assessment systems.

According to him, the congress provides an opportunity for participants to exchange ideas, share experiences and develop sustainable strategies for advancing education in Nigeria.

Danbaki expressed appreci-

ation to the Kaduna State Government and the ANCOPSS National Executive Council for supporting the hosting of the national congress.

He also commended Governor Uba Sani for his commitment to education, innovation and human capital development in the state.

He highlighted the administration's interventions, including payment of the N72,000 minimum wage, extension of teachers' service years and construction and renovation of schools.

Dr Robert Okorie, National President of ANCOPSS, said the confederation had remained an important stakeholder in education policy for-

mulation and implementation since its establishment in 1957.

Okorie said ANCOPSS had continued to strengthen the capacity of principals through regular professional training programmes locally and internationally.

He called for increased government support for principals to participate in international conferences and other capacity-building programmes.

The national president also said the confederation organised annual quiz and essay competitions for secondary schools across the country.

to address challenges facing secondary education and improve learning outcomes nationwide.

Imo West Senatorial District dispute: Okorocho sues INEC, others**ABUJA**

Sen. Rochas Okorocho has sued the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for publishing the name of Gov. Hope Uzodinma of Imo as the candidate for Imo West Senatorial District election scheduled for 2027.

Okorocho, in the suit filed by his lawyer, O.J. Aboje, joined Uzodinma and the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The originating summons, filed on August 13, is marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/1854/2026.

The applicant, who is also a two-term governor of Imo, posed five questions for determination.

He wants the court to determine whether INEC was not bound by the reports of its officers who monitored the APC primaries duly conducted on May 18 for the nomination of its candidate for the Imo West Senatorial District for 2027 general election in which he emerged the winner.

He also wants the court to determine that having regard to the provisions of Section 183 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), the publication of Uzodinma's name by INEC

on Aug. 1 as winner of APC primary for the Imo West Senatorial District in the 2027 poll was not wrongful.

Okorocho, therefore, sought 10 reliefs should his questions be answered in his favour.

He urged the court to declare that it was unconstitutional for INEC to publish, as done by it on Aug. 18, Uzodinma's name as APC's candidate when it was not him that emerged as the winner of the primary election conducted on May 18 May.

He sought an order setting aside or voiding the publication made by INEC on Aug. 1 which declared Uzodinma as the person that won the highest votes in the APC's primary election held on May 18 to contest as the preferred candidate for Imo West Senatorial District come 2027.

Okorocho prayed the court for an order directing INEC to recognise and publish his name as the duly nominated candidate of APC to contest the poll.

He also sought an order prohibiting Uzodinma whether by himself or through the APC or anyone, howsoever named, from parading himself as the nominated candidate of the party to contest the election.

Woman prays court for order permitting her to visit her children**KADUNA**

A mother of four, Hajara Tijjani, has prayed a Shari'a Court in Magaji Gari, Kaduna to grant her an order allowing her four children to visit her during holidays.

Tijjani told the court that since her divorce from Muhammad Jami'u, in August 2025, she has not seen or heard from her four children.

"Since my husband removed my girls from the school they attended, I have not seen them.

"I also approached some elders in my former husband's family to intervene in the matter.

"I want the court to order the defendant to allow my children visit me during holidays," she said.

On his part, the Defence Counsel, Usman Ndaliman said his client did not deny his former wife access to their children.

"Since they divorced in August 2025, she never made attempts to visit the children.

"My client got a new job in Kogi and had to relocate with the children," he said.

He said that his client gave his former wife permission to visit the children.

The Judge, Malam Mu'awiyah Shehu, adjourned the case until Sept. 10, for ruling.

BPP D-G receives Blueprint's 2025 public procurement reformer award**ABUJA**

The Director-General, Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), Dr Adebawale Adedokun, has received the 2025 Public Procurement Reformer Award from Blueprint Newspaper.

The award is in recognition of his contributions to institutional transformation and reforms in public procurement.

This is contained in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja, by the Assistant Chief Information Officer, BPP, Ngozi An-

yaalezu.

Anyaelezu said the award was presented at the 8th edition of the Blueprint Newspaper Public Lecture, Impact Series and Awards held in Abuja with the theme "Security Challenges and Integrity of Nigeria's 2027 Election".

She said the event brought together government officials, political leaders, traditional rulers, media practitioners and other stakeholders.

According to Anyaelezu, Blueprint Newspaper said the award recognised Adedokun's

leadership and commitment to transparency, accountability and improved service delivery.

"The paper also recognised his efforts in reshaping Nigeria's public procurement system in line with the Renewed Hope Transformative Agenda."

She quoted Adedokun as appreciating President Bola Tinubu for his commitment to national transformation and ensuring that the right things were done in the interest of Nigerians.

He dedicated the award to Nigerians committed to the progress of the country, future

generations and the staff of the BPP for their dedication to safeguarding public funds.

The Managing Director of Blueprint Newspaper, Mr Salisu Umar, said the newspaper's annual event began in 2018 as a platform to discuss issues of national interest and recognise Nigerians who had demonstrated exemplary leadership and transformational impact.

Umar said the theme of the 2026 edition was chosen against the backdrop of prevailing security challenges in the country.

NEWS

FOREIGN

Sacked Ukrainian defence minister calls for presidential election

Ukraine's popular ex-defence minister Mykhailo Fedorov has called for wartime elections, in what is widely seen as the biggest challenge to Volodymyr Zelensky's presidency since Russia's full-scale invasion four and a half years ago.

"Democracy cannot be held hostage by Russia," said Fedorov, 35, in a video posted to YouTube on Tuesday, adding that Ukraine is fighting "precisely because we want to remain a free European state".

Since the war broke out in 2022 Ukraine has been under martial law, meaning elections are suspended.

Fedorov, who did not mention Zelensky by name in the video, was unexpectedly fired from his role as defence minister last month, just six months after his appointment.

Zelensky is yet to respond to the video from Fedorov, whose dismissal sparked protests across the country. However, a source in the presidential office told the BBC it was "highly bizarre to plan elections amidst missiles and drones. This demonstrates a complete lack of realism".

In a separate development, Ukraine's two anti-corruption agencies said they were conducting a special operation targeting current and former MPs as well as an unnamed official in the presidential office.

Hours later, Zelensky's office said its deputy head Iryna Mudra had been dismissed, amid local media reports of a raid on her premises.

There was no immediate comment from Mudra, although MP Vadym Stolar, whose home was searched as part of the operation, said

he was co-operating with anti-corruption officials.

In his video, Fedorov complained that corruption was depriving the military of weapons and equipment and making it harder for Kyiv to win the war. He spoke of Ukraine facing a "systemic crisis of governance" and being "scared of change".

About 100 protesters gathered outside the Ukrainian parliament on Wednesday morning, chanting "bring back Fedorov as minister of defence" and "we are fed up, we want dialogue".

Fedorov is a charismatic politician, and during his tenure as defence minister, he was credited with energising the ministry, heading a drive against corruption, challenging outdated military structures and transforming the battlefield with new technology.

His dismissal in mid-July is believed to have resulted from tensions between him and army commander-in-chief, Oleksandr Syrskyi.

Within days Syrskyi was also replaced, as mounting protests calling for Fedorov's reinstatement piled pressure on the Ukrainian president.

The ousted minister was offered other posts in the government, including deputy prime minister for military innovation, but he made clear he would only return as defence minister.

Shortly before the video was posted late on Tuesday, Zelensky said he had asked parliament to confirm acting defence minister Yevhenii Khmara in the post. MPs overwhelmingly backed Khmara's role early on Wednesday afternoon, after he told them he would do everything to defend Ukraine and force Russia into a "just peace".

South Korea shortens war games with US, citing Washington request

South Korea's annual joint military drills with the US will be cut short by six days at the request of Washington, its defence ministry has announced.

Seoul said that the "period and scale" of the 2026 Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise had been adjusted due to a "proposal of the US side".

The drill will now conclude on 21 August, rather than 27 August as planned.

It comes after Donald Trump announced plans to curtail exercises with South Korea, citing his "very good" relationship with North Korea's Kim Jong Un. He also accused Seoul of refusing to take part in action against Iran.

South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun told a parliamentary hearing that neither South Korean nor US officials had been aware in advance about Trump's plans.

The combined field training exercise component of the drills would also be "partially reduced in scale", Seoul said, noting that the "specific details" of that reduction are still under discussion.

The unprecedented curtailing shakes South Korea's confidence in America's commitment to come to its aid, under a defence pact that is the foundation of their relationship.

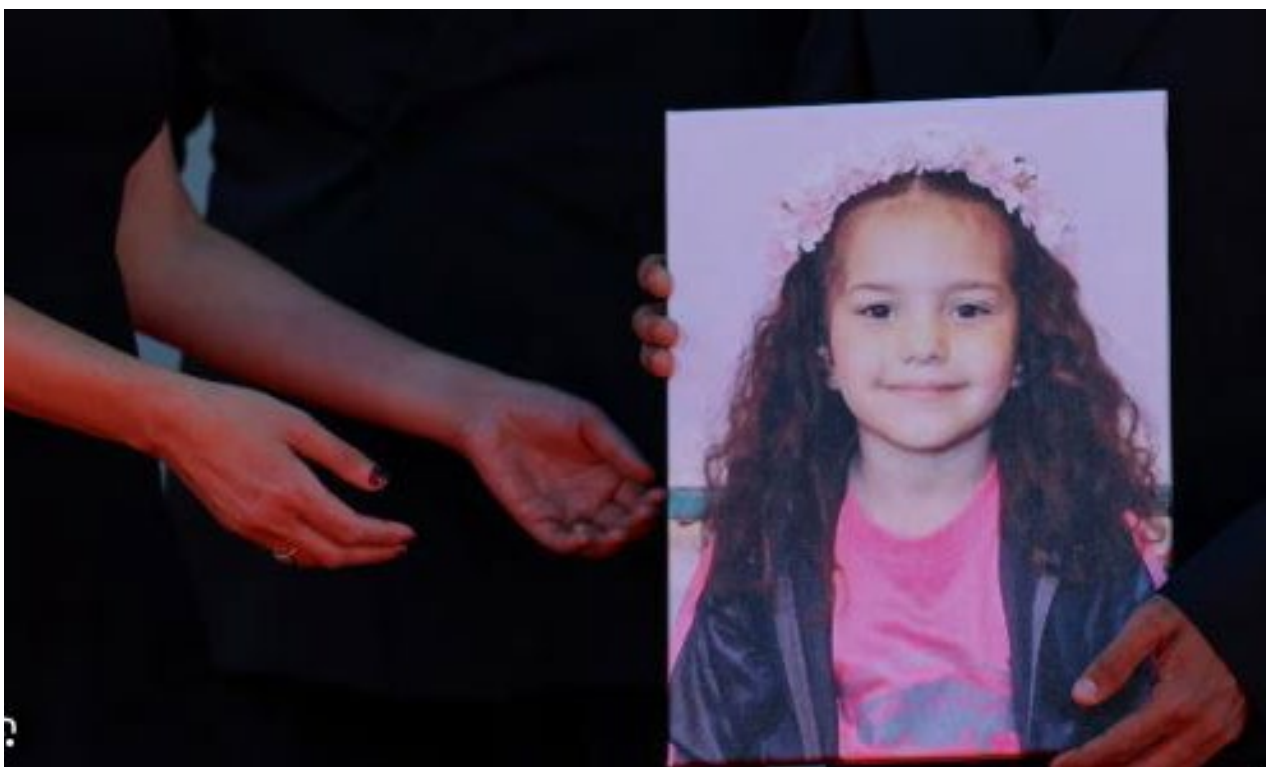
It also sends a similar signal to other US allies in the region like Japan and Taiwan.

Wednesday's announcement comes after US officials told the Wall Street Journal that Trump is pushing his aides for a meeting with Kim Jong Un.

Pyongyang has not officially commented but the North Korean leader's sister Kim Yo-Jong said on Wednesday, "There is nothing I know about the news from Washington that there was communication between the leaders of DPRK and the US".

She also added that the reduction of the drill was not "something that merits comment".

"Just because the scale or the length is reduced, [this] does not mean that the hostile and aggressive essence of the drill changes," she was quoted as saying in state



6-YEAR-OLD PALESTINIAN GIRL:

A picture of Hind Rajab is held on the red carpet during arrivals for the screening of *The Voice of Hind Rajab* at the Venice Film Festival.

Israel confirms it opened fire on vehicle carrying five-year-old Hind Rajab in Gaza

The Israeli military has confirmed for the first time that it opened fire on a vehicle carrying five-year-old Hind Rajab and six members of her family in Gaza City during the war in Gaza.

The Palestinian child initially survived the attack in January 2024 that killed several family members, but her body was recovered days later along with her relatives.

After the attack, Hind managed to answer a telephone call from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, which lasted hours. An ambulance it sent to reach her - in a move co-ordinated with the Israeli army - was then shelled, killing two paramedics.

In a statement, the Israel De-

fense Forces (IDF) said that following a review it would be opening a criminal investigation.

"Due to alleged failures in the coordination of the movement of the Palestine Red Crescent ambulance, it has been decided to initiate a criminal investigation of the incident by Military Police Criminal Investigation Division", it said. The IDF initially stated that none of its troops were in the area at the time of Hind's killing. However, that suggestion was soon questioned.

The IDF later said it had "conducted raids on terror targets" with forces operating in neighbourhoods in Gaza City, including Tel al-Hawa, where Hind was located.

Hind's killing was internationally condemned after a desperate recording of her speaking to paramedics was broadcast around the world.

She and her family were trying to flee the Israeli invasion of their neighbourhood in Gaza City, when their vehicle came under Israeli fire.

Hind's pleas for someone to rescue her ended when the phone line was cut amid the sound of more gunfire.

The story was made into an Oscar-nominated film called *The Voice of Hind Rajab*.

The UN cited her case in a commission of inquiry, accusing Israel of war crimes, which it denies.

Aside from the criminal investi-

gation into Hind and her family, the IDF also said it would investigate the killing of 15 Palestinians, including medics and a UN worker near Rafah in southern Gaza last year.

In three other cases, involving the killing of seven World Central Kitchen employees in Deir al-Balah two years ago, and four employees of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), who were killed in two incidents, the IDF said it had not found grounds for criminal investigations.

The IDF is under pressure to show it investigates itself to try to stave off international legal action, most notably from the International Criminal Court.

It aims to counter accusations that it has committed war crimes and that there is impunity for its forces.

Mushroom murderer trial undermined by 'catastrophic' hotel mix-up, appeal court told

Lawyers for Australian mushroom murderer Erin Patterson say her conviction was undermined by a "catastrophic" hotel mix-up that led to the jury staying at the same hotel as prosecutors and a key witness.

Patterson is serving a life sentence after killing three of her relatives and trying to kill another by serving them a beef Wellington containing death cap mushrooms at her Victoria home in 2023.

Her lawyers also argued some evidence in the trial was too speculative, while evidence crucial to their own case was wrongfully excluded.

At the same hearing, Victoria's Director of Public Prosecutions is appealing against the sentence, arguing a 33-year parole period is "manifestly inadequate".

Patterson's victims include her in-laws Don and Gail Patterson, both 70, and Gail's sister Heather Wilkinson, 66.

Patterson, 51, did not attend the Court of Appeal in Melbourne in person, opting to watch via video link from prison.

Also not present was Patter-

son's estranged husband Simon Patterson, who was meant to attend the deadly lunch but cancelled at the last minute, in part due to his belief that his wife had been trying to poison him for years.

Heather Wilkinson's husband Ian, the only surviving guest of the lunch, was in court.

During Wednesday's hearing, the appeal judges heard that while deliberating their verdict, jurors stayed in the same hotel as members of the prosecution team, a key police witness, and journalists.

Patterson's barrister Richard Edney said this "catastrophic" situation had "undermined the integrity of the verdicts and requires the quashing of the convictions".

He said a retrial was required "so that justice can not only be done but be seen to be done".

Director of Public Prosecutions Brendan Kissane accepted it was regrettable but "happened, as far as we can tell... by accident".

"The issue is whether there was communication between this jury and any other person," he said.

"The evidence as it stands

points towards there being no communication. Once the court accepts that, there's no irregularity in this situation, let alone a fundamental irregularity that goes to the root of the trial."

Patterson's lawyers have also argued a prosecution theory about how the death cap mushrooms were located and foraged should not have been allowed to be put to the jury.

During the trial, prosecutors suggested Patterson went looking for death caps after two sightings near her hometown were reported on the citizen scientist site iNaturalist.

Jurors heard her phone connected to cell towers in both of those areas.

But at Wednesday's appeal, one of her lawyers, Veronika Drago, accused prosecutors of "turning nothing into something".

Erin Patterson is currently serving a life sentence for killing three relatives

The mobile phone evidence only "possibly" showed where Patterson had been, Drago said, while there was no evidence that

Patterson had ever accessed or seen the iNaturalist posts.

"Speculation was invited by the prosecution," she said, adding that any value the evidence had "was outweighed by its unfair prejudice".

But crown prosecutor Jeremy McWilliams defended the use of a mobile phone tower expert, arguing the jury could use his evidence to decide whether Patterson had an opportunity to source death cap mushrooms, in the way it was alleged.

In other strands of the appeal it was argued that Facebook messages which Patterson sent months before the lunch - in which she was damning of her estranged husband Simon and his parents Don and Gail Patterson - were irrelevant and should not have been allowed.

Patterson's team said the chief prosecutor Dr Nanette Rogers had been protracted and aggressive in a cross-examination "doused with impermissible conduct".

They also claimed the closing address made by the prosecutors during last year's trial was "problematic" identifying 35 complaints.

FOREIGN

NEWS

**HELICOPTER CRASH:**

Rescue officials at the crash site in Samburu County, Kenya.

Gold mine hit by deadly landslide in CAR near border with Cameroon

Rescue efforts are ongoing at the mining site where a slope appeared to collapse.

A landslide at a gold mining area in Zamboï in western Central African Republic (CAR), near the border with Cameroon, has killed more than 100 people, an official has told the BBC.

Videos shared online appear to show a slope collapsing on to a crowd of people at the site as others ran to safety.

Adamou Abdon, the mayor of Garoua-Boulai, a Cameroonian border town, told the BBC it happened on Tuesday afternoon.

Rescue efforts are under way amid fears the death toll could rise.

It is not immediately clear what triggered the landslide at the mine. Abdon said that so far "107 lifeless bodies [had been] removed from the rubble".

A miner at the site, Cedric Mbango, told the AFP news agency: "The ground completely collapsed and buried people."

"As I speak to you, other people are still buried."

At least three of the victims are Cameroonian, the governor of Cameroon's East Region has told state media.

Grégoire Mvongo said their bodies were being repatriated home for burial, while measures were being taken to cater for those who had sustained injuries in Zamboï.

According to AFP, survivors were being taken to hospital in Baboua, a town in CAR about 50km (31 miles) from the mining site.

Local media in the CAR say the authorities have opened an investigation into what may have caused the landslide.

AFP quotes a statement from the public prosecutor in Baboua

as saying it is thought "the collapse of several underground tunnels in which miners were operating" was to blame.

Artisanal mining, a labour-intensive method of extracting minerals, is the main source of income for many households in the region.

Working conditions are poor, with miners often exposed to health and environmental risks.

Mine collapses and landslides are not uncommon as pits are usually left unsealed and torrential rains weaken the soil.

Ecuador intelligence chief and five Americans killed in Kenya helicopter crash

Ecuador's intelligence chief and his wife were killed in a helicopter crash in Kenya on Wednesday.

Five Americans were also killed in the crash, a US State Department spokesperson has confirmed.

Michele Sensi-Contugi and his wife Stephany Hollihan were among the seven people killed when the accident happened in Samburu county at approximately 09:13 local time (06:13 GMT).

The Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) said the helicopter was on a scenic flight from a wildlife conservancy in Loisaba to Ewaso Nyiro, a river that flows along several national reserves.

"The National Government expresses its most heartfelt condolences over the sensitive passing of Michele Sensi-Contugi and his wife Stephany Hollihan," Ecuador's presidential office said in a statement on X.

Former President of Ecuador Guillermo Lasso paid tribute to the pair on social media, saying: "My solidarity and closeness to their family members, friends, and colleagues in these moments of profound grief."

"May God grant them consolation and strength, and may the victims rest in peace."

Sensi-Contugi, 44, was named director general of the strategic intelligence center of Ecuador in 2024.

The identities of the five Americans have not yet been confirmed.

The State Department said: "We extend our deepest condolences to the families and loved ones on their loss."

An image shared online shows smoke at the crash site at Mount Ololokwe.

The Kenya Red Cross has told the BBC that the area is not yet accessible, but drones are being used to assess the scene.

The KCAA said the accident involved a Eurocopter EC130 B4 and it was co-ordinating operations.

The transport ministry and Air Accident Investigations Department would lead "investigations into the circumstances surrounding the accident", it added.

Samburu county is a popular tourist destination with many private wildlife conservancies and is renowned for its stunning scenery.

Helicopter crashes are not uncommon in Kenya.

In February, a helicopter crash in the Rift Valley county of Nandi and killed six people, including a member of parliament.

Two detained after French influencer's scorched body found

Two men have been detained after a young woman's burned body was found in a vineyard in southern France, the local prosecutor has said.

In a statement on Wednesday, Nîmes prosecutor Cécile Gensac confirmed the body found in the Saint-Gilles vineyard belonged to social media influencer Sonia Bellina.

The 29-year-old had a following of around 260,000 on TikTok and was visiting her family in the area a month before her 30th birthday.

The two men were taken into police custody on Wednesday due to "evidence suggesting their direct or indirect involvement in the incident", the prosecutor said.

Police opened a murder investigation after a farmer found a body lying between rows of vines in the village near Nîmes on 12 August, but authorities did not confirm Bellina's identity for several days.

The prosecutor's initial assessment was that the body belonged to a young woman, but more tests were needed to confirm who it was.

In their latest update on Wednesday, Gensac said authorities could now confirm Bellina's identity after various investigations and DNA analysis.

She acknowledged that Bellina's name had been "widely circulated over the past 48 hours".

Prior to Gensac's update, the family's lawyer told French media that relatives were sure the body was Bellina's.

Mourad Battikh told broadcaster RTL the 29-year-old's body had been "abandoned" and "almost thrown away like garbage" in what he described as "a murder of rare savagery".

In the days since the scorched body was found, the identity and the circumstances of the death had sparked online speculation and rumours.

A woman who described herself as the influencer's sister - but did not share her name - said she was convinced the body found in the Saint-Gilles vineyard was her sister's before it was confirmed.

In an interview with the Midi Libre newspaper, she shared her family's ordeal and the harassment she says they have faced. According to her, some people have said Bellina "deserved what happened to her".

The family's lawyer has been firm in regards to online comments, saying he would "let nothing slide". Anything published would be subject to scrutiny and reported if necessary, Battikh said.

"The family is going through an extremely violent ordeal," he said in a press release, adding: "They request respect for their privacy and their grief and will not be making any further statements".

Israel opens up tenders for controversial West Bank settlement project

Israel has opened up tenders for the construction of some 1,200 settlement homes in a strategically important part of the occupied West Bank, as the government seeks to end any chance of a Palestinian state.

Plans to build on the so-called E1 area - east of Jerusalem - have long been internationally condemned.

The development would in effect divide the West Bank in two and isolate East Jerusalem.

The deadline for bids is days before Israel's October's general election, making it much harder for any future government to overturn any tenders issued.

Settlements are illegal under international law.

Israel has built about 160 settlements housing 700,000 Jews since it occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem - land Palestinians want, along with Gaza, for a hoped-for future state - during the 1967 Middle East war. An estimated 3.3 million Palestinians live alongside them.

Despite the fierce interna-

tional opposition, successive Israeli governments have allowed settlements to grow.

However, expansion has risen sharply since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power in late 2022 at the head of a right-wing, pro-settler coalition, as well as the start of the Gaza war, triggered by Hamas's 7 October 2023 attack on Israel.

Under international pressure, Israel held off for decades on plans to build in E1.

Many of its allies and Palestinians argued these would deal a major blow to hopes of a two-state solution, effectively bisecting the West Bank.

But the current Israeli government gave the go-ahead for E1 construction a year ago, expressly to "erase" the idea of a Palestinian state.

Despite an Israeli court challenge to the plans by Bedouin Palestinians living in the area and Israeli peace groups, the housing ministry has now issued a tender for 1,234 of the 3,401 housing units approved by the Israeli government last

August.

It covers about 12 sq km (4.6 sq miles) between East Jerusalem and the settlement of Maale Adumim.

At the time of their unveiling, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who is ultranationalist and settler, said the idea of a Palestinian state was "being erased".

The deadline for bids is 19 October, just days before Israel's general election on 27 October. That should enable the government to sign deals with contractors that it would be much harder for a future government to cancel.

Israel captured the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East War. It annexed East Jerusalem in 1980, in a move not recognised by the vast majority of the international community.

Opponents of the E1 project have warned that it would effectively block the establishment of a Palestinian state because it would cut off the north of the West Bank from the

south, and prevent the development in the centre of a contiguous Palestinian urban area connecting Ramallah, East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Peace Now, an Israeli anti-settlement watchdog that has challenged the plans in court, said: "The government is trying to sign contracts with contractors before the elections so that it will be much harder for the next government to cancel the construction."

It said even the partial implementation of the construction plans would "fundamentally" alter "the geographic and strategic character of the area by severing the northern West Bank from the south and isolating East Jerusalem".

"Building in E1 will ruin the possibility of reaching an end to the conflict and a peace arrangement based on two states," it said.

Jamal Juma, a Palestinian activist for the Stop the Wall campaign, who lives in Jerusalem, said the project would have a devastating impact on Palestinians.

NEWSEXTRA

Osifo demands workers' protection amid oil, gas divestment

ABUJA

The President of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), Mr Festus Osifo, has demanded stronger protection for workers affected by acquisitions and divestments in Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

Osifo made the demand at the ongoing fifth edition of the

PENGASSAN Energy and Labour Summit (PELS) 2026 in Abuja, stressing that workers must remain central to industry stability.

The three-day summit, with the theme, "Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks as a Catalyst for Stability and Growth in Nigeria's Oil and Gas Industry," will end on Aug. 21.

He said changes in ownership of oil and gas assets should not

lead to arbitrary job losses or undermine workers' pensions, collective bargaining agreements and established rights.

"Licences and assets may change hands, but workers are not commodities to be discarded at will," Osifo said.

He said worker protection must form part of the regulatory architecture guiding the industry, particularly as major acquisitions, divestments and

restructuring continued.

Osifo also expressed concern over the abuse of expatriate quotas, saying foreign personnel should only be employed where genuine skills gaps existed.

"Nigeria welcomes foreign expertise where genuine skill gaps exist. However, expatriate quota must never become a mechanism for replacing qualified Nigerians where local capacity exists," he said.

He urged regulators to ensure that expatriate employment approvals were properly justified, monitored and linked to measurable knowledge transfer and succession plans.

According to him, every expatriate engagement should ultimately leave behind greater Nigerian capacity through deliberate skills development and understudy arrangements.

"We cannot enforce local content in procurement while neglecting local content in employment and human capital development," he said.

Osifo called for stronger enforcement of the Nigerian Content Framework to ensure qualified Nigerians received

opportunities to develop and occupy positions within the oil and gas industry.

He said employers and regulators should work with labour unions to ensure that local content policies translated into meaningful employment and skills development.

The PENGASSAN president also called for consistent enforcement of health, safety and environmental standards across the industry.

"Good regulations on paper cannot transform an industry without enforcement. The life of a Nigerian worker must never become the price we pay for increased production," he said.

**LAUNCHING OF 5000 TREES:**

Permanent Secretary, Kaduna State Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Linda Yakubu (L), presenting a tree to the representative of the Community Action for Sustainable and Resilience Habitat Initiative (CASH-R), Hadiza Badamasi during the launching of 5000 trees for Economic and non-Economic seedlings in Kaduna on Wednesday.

Delta Govt. trains 1,000 youths in agribusiness

ASABA

The Delta Government has commenced agribusiness training programme for no fewer than 1,000 youths across the state.

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mr Val Arenyeka, disclosed this at a three-day training programme in Ughelli on Wednesday.

Arenyeka described agriculture as a major avenue for wealth creation, employment and sustainable economic development.

He said that the training was designed to move youths beyond subsistence farming to commercially viable agriculture.

"The essence is to enable our youths to get involved in enterprises that can create jobs and stimulate local economies," he said.

According to him, the initiative will also attract private investment and increase the state's contribution to Nigeria's food security and foreign exchange earnings.

The commissioner urged youths to take advantage of opportunities in agriculture, saying that farming is no longer a mere subsistence activity.

"Agriculture remains one of the biggest employers of labour, it has the capacity to produce some of the wealthiest individuals in the world," he said.

Arenyeka said that Gov. Sheriff Oborevwori's administration was committed to strengthening the state's economy through strategic investment in agriculture and youth empowerment.

"We want to move young people from dependence on government employment to self-reliant entrepreneurs and employers of labour," he said.

The commissioner further said that Delta was naturally endowed with fertile land and favourable climatic conditions suitable for crop production.

He urged participants to exploit the state's comparative advantages and cultivate various crops with minimal dependence on artificial inputs.

Arenyeka said the first phase of the training focussed on four agricultural value chains such as cocoa, coffee, cotton and ginger.

He said that the commodities offered significant opportunities for value addition, investment, income generation and export.

"About 1,000 youths will benefit from the programme, which is currently in the first phase. The programme will subsequently be expanded to accommodate more young people," he said.

The commissioner commended Oborevwori for his commitment to youth empowerment, particularly efforts to increase young people's participation in agriculture and agribusiness.

BON commends INEC for credible Osun Governorship Election

ABUJA

CAROLINE AMEH

The Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON) has commended the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), led by Prof. Joash Akin Amupitan, for what it described as the transparent, free, fair and credible conduct of the Osun State governorship election.

BON, in a statement signed by its Executive Secretary, Dr. Yemisi Bamgbose, in Abuja, said the election represented a major test of INEC's preparedness and capacity to deliver credible elections in Nigeria.

According to the organisation, the outcome of the Osun governorship poll could provide a model for subsequent elections if the commission sustains and improves on the standards demonstrated during the exercise.

"The Osun State Governorship election was the real litmus test for INEC. The outcome, if improved upon, could serve as a model for subsequent elections in the country," BON stated.

The broadcasting body praised INEC for deploying the necessary personnel, logistics and mechanisms required to facilitate a credible electoral process, noting that the commission deserved commendation for its efforts.

BON also commended the security agencies for their role in maintaining peace and order throughout the election.

It said the adequate deployment of security personnel helped to minimise tension, violence and other forms of criminality that could have undermined the electoral process.

However, BON stressed that the credibility of future elections would depend not only on conducting peaceful polls but also on ensuring accountability for electoral violations.

The organisation therefore called on INEC and other relevant authorities to ensure that individuals found to have committed electoral offences during

the Osun election are prosecuted in accordance with the law.

It maintained that strict enforcement of electoral laws and prosecution of offenders would serve as a deterrent to would-be perpetrators and strengthen public confidence in Nigeria's electoral system.

BON urged INEC and other stakeholders to sustain the gains recorded in Osun State and build on them ahead of subsequent elections, particularly the 2027 general elections.

The organisation reiterated its commitment to supporting efforts aimed at strengthening Nigeria's democratic institutions and promoting credible, peaceful and transparent elections.

2 jailed 7 years each for belonging to secret cult in Ogun

ABEOKUTA

A Special Anti-Cultism Court in Abeokuta on Wednesday, sentenced two men to seven years imprisonment each, for conspiracy and belonging to cultism group.

The convicts, Moruf Okusanya, 40, and Babatunde Gafar, 33, were convicted on a four-count charge bordering on conspiracy and belonging to an unlawful society.

The Magistrate, Mr O.L. Oke while delivering judgment, held that the prosecution had proved its case beyond reasonable doubt that the defendants are guilty as charged.

Oke said the evidence presented by the prosecution was tenable, and therefore sentenced Okusanya and Gafar to seven years each without an option of fine.

Earlier, the Prosecutor,

ASP Olaide Rawlings, told the court that the defendants committed the offences on Oct. 23, 2023 at Ikenne Town Hall Area in Ikenne.

Rawlings said the defendants conspired among themselves with others now at large to belong to an unlawful society.

According to her, Okusanya and others now at large conspired to belong to the Eiye Confraternity cult group while Gafar belonged to the Alora Confraternity cult group.

She further told the court that both defendants and others at large engaged in a fierce cult rivalry fight during an event held at the Ikenne town hall.

"There was an event, Miss Ereke, which was holding at the town hall in Ikenne. A rivalry fight erupted between the groups at the event, which led to fear among residents and disturbed the peace of the community.

NDDC begins negotiations to improve staff welfare

PORT HARCOURT

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has inaugurated a committee to review the conditions of service for its employees.

The review is aimed at improving staff welfare and enhancing efficient service delivery in the Niger Delta region.

The Executive Director, Finance and Administration, Mr Boma Iyaye, inaugurated the committee at the commission's headquarters in Port Harcourt on Wednesday.

Iyaye congratulated members of the committee on their selection by NDDC management and NDDC Staff Union.

He said that clear conditions of service were essential to ensuring a structured and harmonious work environment.

"Without a contract, organisations cannot function effectively. If there are no conditions of service, people will not be guided properly," he

said.

Iyaye urged members to review the existing clauses in the conditions of service, and correct identified errors and omissions.

He advised the committee to prioritise the commission's interests above individual interests.

The NDDC official said that the exercise sought to balance staff welfare with organisational objectives through effective negotiation.

"We urge the committee not to rush the process, you have to study relevant provisions of the conditions and benchmark them against those of other government agencies," he said.

The executive director further urged the committee to consider prevailing government regulations and practices, noting that the NDDC did not operate in isolation.

Iyaye reminded the committee that staff welfare must be balanced with the commission's mandate to promote sustainable development in the Niger Delta.

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

2026 WAFU-B play-off: Edo Queens leave Benin for Burkina Faso ● *as Enabulele charges team to soar*

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Nigeria Women Football League, NWFL champions, Edo Queens FC, yesterday (August 19, 2022) left Benin City for Burkina Faso as the executive chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele charged the team to fight for glory and bring honour to the state again.



EDO QUEENS IN TRAINING

The Edo State Sports Commission boss gave the charge while addressing the players and officials of the team at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin shortly before their departure.

He told the team to always remember that they are on a mission to represent Edo State and Nigeria in the CAF Champions League preliminary tournament in Burkina Faso.

"As you leave for the WA-

FU-B continental football tournament in Burkina Faso, remember you are not only going there to represent Edo State, you are also representing the country as a whole. Be a good ambassador and do your very best as champions of Nigeria to deliver. Give us adequate representation and conquer West Africa again like you did in 2024 and even go beyond fourth place finish in the champions league proper.

"Edo State government is fully behind you and Nigeria is also behind you. We are coming to support you when the tournament begins in few days from now. We have confidence in your ability to deliver, so go there and make us proud again.

Edo Queens emerged 2024 Champions of the West Africa Football Union (WAFU-B), after winning the NWFL title for the first time and went further to finish in

4th position on the continent after impressive outings in Code D'voire and Morocco.

The team left Benin today with 21 players and 10 officials, including the head coach of Bendel Insurance FC Kennedy Bob-oye who is in the team to render technical support as the head coach of Edo Queens Moses Aduku is on national duty with the Falcons of Nigeria who are also preparing for FIFA under 20 women world cup in Poland.

The Nigeria Women league champions will be doing the football battle with seven other West African countries' representatives in Burkina Faso at the WAFU-B play-offs which is scheduled to begin on August 23 and end on September 5th, 2026.

The winner of the West Africa playoffs war in Burkina Faso picks the ticket to the Women's Champions League proper, holding in South Africa later this year.

Bayern's Musiala suffers another collapse in three days

Bayern Munich midfielder Jamal Musiala was taken off the pitch after collapsing in a pre-season friendly on Tuesday, three days after a similar incident in Munich.

The 23-year-old fell to the turf just minutes after coming on late into the match at second-division Heidenheim.

Musiala appeared dazed as he received medical treatment and was helped off the pitch.

After the match, Bayern sporting director Max Eberl said Musiala would make a comment on the situation soon.

"Jamal will speak about this in the near future. We knew

about it, and we are aware of the situation," Eberl said.

"Jamal will speak out. He's in the dressing room, getting changed and taking a shower."

On Saturday, the Germany international fell to the pitch against RB Leipzig and required medical attention in hot conditions in the Bavarian capital, with temperatures well over 30C.

Musiala missed the first six months of last season due to a broken ankle sustained at the Club World Cup, but he returned in the second half of the campaign and played for Germany at the 2026 World Cup.



JAMAL MUSIALA

Mourinho dismisses Rodri interest as Real Madrid boss explains midfield decision

MUYIDEEN FUNMILAYO

Real Madrid manager Jose Mourinho has reportedly played down suggestions that the Spanish club could make a move for Manchester City midfielder Rodri, but however maintained that the World Cup-winning star is not a priority for his team.

The speculation surrounding Rodri has attracted considerable attention, with the midfielder widely regarded as one of the finest players in world football. His ability to control possession, break up opposition attacks and dictate the tempo of matches has made him an important figure for both club and country.

However, Mourinho is understood to believe that Real Madrid already have sufficient quality and depth in midfield and do not necessarily need to pursue the Spanish international.

The Portuguese manager's position comes amid growing discussions about Real Madrid's plans for the future. The club has continued to build a squad featuring several highly rated midfielders, giving Mourinho different options in the centre of the pitch.

Rodri's reputation has also made him one of the most sought-after midfielders in Europe. Since establishing himself as a key player at Manchester City, he has played an influential role in the club's success and has earned recognition for his tactical intelligence, passing ability and defensive contribution.

Despite the admiration surrounding the player, Mourin-

ho's reported stance suggests that Real Madrid may prefer to focus their resources on other areas of the squad rather than making a major investment in another central midfielder.

The manager's comments are likely to fuel further debate among Real Madrid supporters, particularly those who believe Rodri's experience and tactical qualities could strengthen the team's midfield.



JOSE MOURINHO AND RODRI

Motsepe celebrates Cameroon's historic WAFCON success, commends Malawi

Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Dr Patrice Motsepe has congratulated the Indomitable Lionesses of Cameroon, the Cameroon Football Federation (FECAFOOT), its president Samuel Eto'o and the people of Cameroon following their historic triumph at the TotalEnergies CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) Morocco 2026.

Cameroon were crowned African champions for the first

time after defeating Malawi 3-0 in Sunday's final at the Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat.

The victory brought the curtain down on an exciting tournament that further underlined the rapid growth, competitiveness and increasing quality of women's football across Africa.

Cameroon's triumph also earned the Indomitable Lionesses a record USD 2 million prize, reflecting CAF's increased investment in the

women's game under Motsepe's leadership.

The WAFCON winners' prize has risen by more than 900 per cent since 2018, when the champions received USD 200,000.

In a congratulatory letter to FECAFOOT president Samuel Eto'o, Motsepe praised the leadership and motivation that contributed to Cameroon's historic achievement.

"Congratulations on the historic and exciting victory of the Indomitable Lionesses and for becoming Champions of the TotalEnergies CAF Women's Africa Cup of Nations Morocco 2026," Motsepe wrote.

He added: "Your excellent leadership and motivation of the Indomitable Lionesses contributed significantly to their victory and success. I wish you and the Indomitable Lionesses everything of the best for the FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027.



DR PATRICE MOTSEPE CELEBRATE WITH CAMEROON TEAM

CAVB 2026: Nigeria fall to Algeria in beach volleyball opener

Nigeria's men's beach volleyball team lost 2-0 to Algeria in the opening day of the 2026 CAVB Beach Volleyball Continental Cup in Alexandria, Egypt, on Tuesday.

The Nigerian pair were defeated in both sets by their Algerian counterparts, losing 21-14 and 21-14.

The Algerians exerted control in the first set as the Nigerian pair struggled for consistency, Algeria eventually won 21-14.

The second set provided similar scoreline as the Algerians maintained control to hand Nigeria an opening day humbling defeat.

The loss put Nigeria in a

difficult place as they approach the remaining matches, hoping to secure direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic games.

The ongoing Championship of African Volleyball features 46 teams from 28 African countries in both the women and men categories.

The winners of the men's and women's categories will secure direct qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

The champions of both the men's and women's categories will earn direct qualification to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.



NIGERIA BEACH VOLLEYBALL AND ALGERIA

SPORTS



Edo Youth Tennis Championship ends on high in Benin as Sports Commission boss hails Organisers 82.ng

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

As the Edo Youth Tennis Championship climaxed in style at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, the Executive chairman, Edo State Sports Commission Hon Amadin Desmond Enabulele has commended the organisers and sponsors of the under 13 and U-16 event 82.ng for their support towards the development of young tennis athletes in the state.

The Edo State sports commission boss gave the commendation through the Executive Director representing Edo North in the board of the state Sports Commission Hon Frank Ilaboya who represented him during the closing ceremony at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin.



Edo sports commission chairman (center) with organisers of the Edo Youth Tennis Championship in Benin

um in Benin.

Enabulele assured the 82.ng and other sponsors of sporting events in the state of an enabling environment and support.

"Let me thank the organisers and sponsors 82.ng for the support they have given us, coming around to support towards development of our young athletes."

"This is the kind of support we need this time. It is a noble thing for one to give back to his community. Who knows tomorrow? Some of the kids here now could become Nigeria and world champions in the nearest future. We call on well meaning private individuals and cooperate organizations in the state to emulate the CEO of 82.ng Mr.

Victor Ezewoko Ugwuala". In the finals of the events, Ohimai Prosper and Bugor Emmanuel Gold were among the gold winners in the female and male categories.

Ohimai Prosper and Bugor Emmanuel Gold were among the gold winners in the female and male categories. Speaking during the closing ceremony at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Mr. Victor Ezewoko Ugwuala, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of 82.ng Ltd, said the championship reflects the company's vision of creating opportunities that transform lives.

"It is a privilege for me to bring my company 82.ng here to give back to my community.

I started playing tennis at a tender age right here at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium and I am happy to give back to where I started from and we are going to make a yearly affairs. We need to encourage our young athletes with regular competitions to keep them busy positively." He said.

The sponsor also promised to extend the same opportunity to Squash, noting that he had planned to start with Squash but later changed his mind to begin with tennis.

Also speaking, Eddy Ohwofasa, Business Development Consultant, 82.ng Ltd, and Project Consultant for the 82.ng Edo Youth Tennis Championship 2026, said the tournament is intended to become a flagship annual event.

NWFL Nationwide 2026: Lakeside Queens FC edge Bayelsa Princesses 3-0 in Aba

Lakeside Queens FC of Ogun spanked Bayelsa Princesses 3-0 at the ongoing Nationwide Nigeria Women Football League promotion play-off at the Enyimba FC Stadium, Aba on Monday.

Lakeside Queens opened the scoring through Farida Olawuni in the 27th minute, from a well-taken free kick outside the 18-yard box.

Olawuni made it 2-0 for the Ogun Queens in the 44th minute to ensure her team entered the interval with a win.

The goals continued to come after the interval, this time through Chioma Dickson, who put the ball back into the net after the opposition goalkeeper parried it to her side.

The Ogun Queens stood their ground and took home the three points, in spite of the late surge from Bayelsa Princesses.

In his post-match interview, Coach Oyededi Hammed of Lakeside Queens said he was satisfied with the players' performance.

"Though we did not meet up with our expectations because we planned to win the match with 10 goals to nothing, we could only manage three goals.

"As it stands now, I am happy we kept a clean sheet in the match and we are going to continue to put touches on our lapses and come back stronger.

"My team did well because they are young players from Senior Secondary School two and three, and I like their passion for the game and encouragement in the field of play," Hammed said.

Meanwhile, other matches of the day produced scintillating results as Kwara United Queens played out a goalless draw in their match with Spanky Blazers FA.



LAKESIDE QUEENS FC VS BAYELSA PRINCESSES

Tragedy in Abuja: Young Referee dies after collapsing during fitness test

A young Nigerian football referee, Awang Solomon Maram, has reportedly died after collapsing during a fitness test at the Moshod Abiola National Stadium in Abuja on Tuesday, BSNSports.com.ng reports.

Solomon, who was said to have been among a group of promising young referees being groomed for future international appointments, reportedly became unwell during the exercise before he later passed away.

His death has thrown the refereeing community into mourning, with the African Referees University describing him as a young and promising official and expressing shock over his sudden passing.

According to the institution, Maram joined the African Referees University about a year ago and had shown considerable promise as he pursued a career in football officiating.

The tragedy is particularly poignant as Maram reportedly got married only three weeks ago. He and his wife had yet to have children before his untimely death.

In a statement mourning his passing, the African Referees University described Maram as a valued member of its community and extended condolences to his family, friends and fellow referees.



LATE AWANG SOLOMON MARAM

NBA Yenagoa maintain perfect start at NBA AGC football tournament

NBA Yenagoa Football Club has continued its impressive run at the ongoing Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Annual General Conference (AGC) Football Tournament in Port Harcourt, recording three victories from three matches to announce itself as a strong contender for the championship.

The Yenagoa-based team on Wednesday secured a convincing 2-0 victory over NBA Yola, following earlier wins against NBA Effurun and NBA Onitsha. The team had defeated NBA Effurun 2-0 before edging NBA Onitsha 1-0, maintaining a perfect record without conceding a goal in all

three matches.

Kenji Okilo has been instrumental to the team's remarkable start, scoring five goals in three games. His outstanding form has provided a major attacking boost for NBA Yenagoa as the side continues its pursuit of the tournament trophy.

Reacting to the team's impressive performance, Lugard Tare-Otu, Esq., immediate past Vice Chairman of the NBA Yenagoa Branch, congratulated the players and officials for their commitment, discipline and determination. He urged the team to remain focused and maintain its winning mentality as the competition progresses.



NBA YENAGOA FOOTBALL CLUB