

Okpebholo appoints Aigbe Security Adviser, nominates Ayewoh as SUBEB chairman

MATTHEW OKAGHA

The Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the appointment of Engr. Kelvin Ovanbor Aigbe as Special Adviser to the Governor on Security.

The appointment was contained in a special announce-

ment issued by the Edo State Government and signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq.

According to the statement, Aigbe is an entrepreneur with a strong commitment to excellence, humanitarian service and community development.

It added that he is actively

involved in politics and has demonstrated commitment to public service, grassroots development, as well as political and community leadership.

The government said the appointment takes immediate effect. In a related development, Governor Okpebholo has nominated Hon. Ayewoh Ambrose

Oyakhilome as Executive Chairman of the Edo State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

The nomination, according to the government, is subject to consideration and confirmation by the Edo State House of Assembly.

Oyakhilome is described as a dedicated politician and public administrator with a strong pas-

sion for effective leadership and a commitment to policies and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education and learning outcomes across the state.

Until his nomination, he served as Executive Chairman of the Edo State Rural Access Roads Agency (RARA), where he contributed to the adminis-

tration and implementation of government programmes focused on improving rural connectivity and infrastructure.

The Secretary to the State Government said the nomination would accordingly be forwarded to the Edo State House of Assembly for consideration and confirmation.

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#200

ASUU Strike: Imo, Nasarawa varsities shut down as 20 branches prepare for industrial action

BENIN CITY

OJO HAPPY AND
AYENOMOH WINNER

Academic activities have been disrupted at Imo State University (IMSU), Owerri, and Nasarawa State University, Keffi, following the commencement of indefinite strikes by their

respective branches of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The development has raised concerns among students and stakeholders over another possible disruption to Nigeria's university system.

The decision comes amid growing tension between ASUU and university authorities over the implementation of the 2025 agreement between

the Federal Government and the union. ASUU has repeatedly raised concerns over unpaid salaries and allowances, promotion arrears, and other welfare issues affecting university lecturers.

Following its National Executive Council meeting held at the University of Abuja on August 8 and 9, 2026, ASUU authorised 20 university branches

to begin the process of industrial action. The affected branches were directed to issue 14-day ultimatums to their respective authorities and commence strike action if their demands were not addressed.

Among the institutions involved are Nasarawa State University, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, University of Medical Sciences, Ondo,

Gombe State University, Plateau State University, Adekunle Ajasin University, Abia State University, Imo State University, Niger Delta University, Taraba State University, Ambrose Alli University and Kaduna State University.

However, IMSU and Nasarawa State University have already commenced indefinite strikes. At IMSU, the union

began its action on Monday, August 10, accusing the Imo State Government of failing to implement the 2025 agreement. The union alleged that some lecturers were owed several months' salaries, while promotion arrears and Earned Academic Allowance remained outstanding.

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HOMEWARD JOURNEY:

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (left) and Bishop Donatus Ogun (third left) joined by dignitaries and Catholic faithful to receive the remains of late Archbishop of Benin City, Most Reverend Augustine Obiora Akubeze, in Benin Airport.

Gov Okpebholo joins dignitaries to receive remains of Late Archbishop Akubeze

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Tuesday joined other dignitaries, including the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq., Emperor Jaret Tenebe, APC Chairman and other top government officials, to receive the remains of the late Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze, in Benin City.

The body was received by Bishop Donatus Ogun, Apostolic administrator of the Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City along side Rev Fr. Dr. Augustine Ehigie, Rev Fr. Michael Oyanofoh, Papal Knights,

Knights of St. Mulumba

The remains of the late Archbishop, who died on July 9, 2026, at the age of 69, were received amid an outpouring of grief and tributes from the Catholic faithful, government officials and other residents of the state.

Archbishop Akubeze was born on August 25, 1956, in Kaduna, Northern Nigeria. He was ordained a Catholic priest on October 3, 1987, and consecrated a bishop on February 25, 2006.

He became the pioneer Bishop of Uromi following his appointment on December 14, 2005, a position he held until 2011. On March 18, 2011, Pope Benedict XVI appointed

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Gov. Okpebholo celebrates deputy on birthday, hails his contributions to Edo Devt —Pg 2

Experts advocate stronger collaboration to boost Africa's Global Film Trade —Pg 5

Australia PM under fire for remarks on Japanese counterpart's melon gifts —Pg 8

Enabulele Congratulates Edo Squash Players Asade, Oghene for winning Gold, Bronze at Lagos tourney —13

NEWS

Airlines amass N60bn loan, amid rising operating costs

EJEMOGO REBECCA ANWURI
ABUJA

The Nigerian Airlines have amassed more than N60bn Loans from Local banks in order to finance purchasing aviation fuel amid persistently high Jet A1 (fuel) costs.

This was disclosed by Roland Iyayi, who is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON), stressed that airlines were coerced to borrow heavily to sustain their level of operations following the cost of aviation fuel which has continued to mount pressure on their revenues.

Iyayi noted that the pathetic financial burden was as a result of the government's failure to implement measures recommended by Stakeholders to curtail the high cost of aviation fuel.

In addition, he revealed that the AON had threatened to shut down operations in February due to the hike in fuel prices, prompting the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo to swiftly intervene.

"The AON had threatened to shut down because of the escalated fuel costs in February. Then Keyamo was in Riyadh.

He called to say that the AON should allow him to get back and look at all the issues so he could address them."

"He said everything would be resolved. Yes, meetings were held. The NMDPRA (Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority), the fuel marketers, AON, we all met in his office."

Iyayi, however said the meeting did not yield it anticipated result in enacting concrete measures that will help to reduce the burden on operators, stressing that a committee comprising the NMDPRA, oil marketers and the AON was subsequently constituted

"I represented AON. However, what we came up with were recommendations to the government to indicate that certain things should be done. But to date, nothing has been done," he said.

He added that Nigeria's aviation fuel prices remains significantly higher than those in other parts of the world, as he notes "There hasn't been any intervention by the government to address the issue of why it is that fuel price in Nigeria is 270 per cent of the original value. Whereas other parts of the world are recording 60-80 per cent. So Nigeria is a peculiar case. That is what

Gov. Okpebholo celebrates deputy on birthday, hails his contributions to Edo Devt

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has on behalf of the State Government congratulated his deputy, Rt Hon Dennis Idahosa, on his birthday, describing him as a trusted ally whose contributions have supported the administration's development agenda.

Governor Okpebholo who praised Idahosa for his commitment to the administration's SHINE Agenda and his role in advancing governance

across Edo State, described the deputy governor as a strategic thinker, saying his counsel, experience and work ethic had contributed to the administration's progress.

"My deputy has proven to be far more than a Deputy Governor—he is a trusted confidant, a strategic thinker, and a man of uncommon integrity," Governor Okpebholo said.

He said Rt Hon Idahosa had played important role as an assistant in strengthening the state's security architecture, supporting health and education initiatives, and coordinating inter-agency efforts on infrastruc-

ture projects across Benin City and other parts of Edo.

Governor Okpebholo also commended the deputy governor for his engagement with community leaders, stakeholders and development partners, saying such relationships were important to the state's development.

"Beyond his official responsibilities, Dennis embodies the values we seek to build—honesty, diligence, and genuine care for our people," the governor said.

According to him, the deputy governor has demonstrated political maturity and re-

mained committed to putting the interests of Edo State first.

The governor said the deputy governor's ability to listen, develop strategies and implement government policies had earned him the respect of colleagues, civil servants and residents.

"I have watched you lead with conviction and humility. You have earned the respect of colleagues, civil servants, and citizens alike through your conduct and your results," Okpebholo said.

He wished Idahosa good health, strength and many more years of productive service to Edo State.



BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY:

Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa being Congratulated by Sen. Adams Aliu Oshiomhole, Former Governor of Edo State on his 56TH Birthday Anniversary at Government House Benin City.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

Edo parents demand compliance on reusable textbooks

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

As schools prepare for the commencement of the 2026/2027 academic session, parents and guardians in Edo State have urged school administrators, particularly owners of private schools, to comply fully with the state government's policy permitting the reuse of approved textbooks by younger siblings.

Some parents who include; a widow and a mother of four, Mrs. Juliana Ekhuagere in a chat with our correspondent want school administrators particularly private school owners to ensure that their booklists and admission or resumption requirements do not undermine the policy by prescribing new editions indiscriminately or insisting that every child must purchase a separate copy of the same approved textbook. They insisted that where an older sibling's book is still in the approved edition and in good condition, the younger child should be allowed to inherit and use it without penalty.

The concern according to them is particularly significant amid rising household expenses and the increasing cost of education. They noted that parents have previously complained that textbooks incorporating workbooks and spaces for class or home exercises are

often rendered unusable after one academic session, effectively forcing families to buy another set for younger children.

According to the parents, compliance should not merely be on paper but should be reflected in the actual conduct of school managements, particularly in the preparation of annual booklists.

They further appealed to school proprietors and publishers to see the policy by Edo State government as a measure intended to make education more affordable rather than as a threat to them. "No parent should be forced to buy a new textbook simply because a younger sibling is entering the same class or using the same approved curriculum," the parents maintained.

Similarly, education stakeholders who include the; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, NAPTAN, Adeolu Ogunbanjo, have argued that separating workbooks from core textbooks would help preserve the latter for future use.

"I am fully in support of the campaign to make textbooks reusable. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should ensure that textbooks have longer lifespans, recalling that books were traditionally passed from older to younger siblings," he said.

Oshiomhole at 74 celebrates Idahosa at 46, hails him as youth role model ● Says cordial relationship with Okpebholo strengthening governance in Edo

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

Former Edo State Governor and Senator representing Edo North, Adams Oshiomhole, has congratulated the Edo State Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa, on his 46th birthday, describing him as a shining example of the ingenuity, resourcefulness and leadership potential of Nigerian youths.

Oshiomhole, in a congratulatory message issued by his Chief of Staff, Hon. Victor Oshioke, said Idahosa's record in public service demonstrates that young Nigerians can make meaningful contributions to society when given opportunities to serve.

The former governor particularly praised the cordial working relationship between Idahosa and his principal, Governor Monday Okpebholo, saying their cooper-

ation, mutual respect and shared commitment to the interests of Edo State had created a peaceful and productive environment for governance.

According to Oshiomhole, the harmonious partnership between the Governor and his deputy has contributed significantly to the stability of the administration and the development recorded across the state.

He said the growing satisfac-

tion and appreciation among Edo residents were indications that the administration's collaborative approach was yielding positive results.

Oshiomhole urged Idahosa to remain humble, respectful and patriotic as he continues to discharge his responsibilities, stressing that his age and accomplishments place him in a unique position to inspire the younger generation.

NLC demands ₦500,000 minimum wages, moves to reopen talks with FG

SULE-OSAGIE MARVELLOUS

BENIN CITY

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) is seeking a fresh review of Nigeria's minimum wage, with the union proposing that workers should earn no less than N500,000 amid mounting economic pressures.

The labour union's position was made known at a workers' summit in Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, where NLC President Joe Ajaero said the existing N70,000

wage could no longer adequately support Nigerian workers.

Represented by the union's Deputy President, Audu Amba, Ajaero said labour would soon engage the Federal Government in fresh discussions on the issue.

According to him, the rising cost of essential goods and services has made the present wage increasingly difficult for workers to live on.

The renewed demand comes about two years after Nigeria's

minimum wage was increased from N30,000 to N70,000 following negotiations involving the Federal Government, organised labour and employers.

Since then, the economic environment has remained challenging, with households facing higher expenses for food, transportation, accommodation, electricity, cooking gas, healthcare and education.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) also expressed concern over the decline in workers' purchasing power. Its President, Festus Osifo, represented by the

Secretary-General, Nuhu Toro, called for improved remuneration and greater compliance with labour regulations by employers.

Osifo's position reflects a broader concern among organised labour that the value of workers' earnings has continued to fall as the cost of basic necessities rises.

The Governor of Kebbi State, Nasir Idris, backed the call for improved workers' welfare. He said governments and other stakeholders needed to work together to ensure better remuneration for Nigerian workers.

NEWS**Delta Gov orders indefinite suspension of works commissioner****ASABA**

OGBUNKW NKEM EVELYN

The Delta State Government has directed the Commissioner for Works, Highways and Urban Roads, Hon. Reuben Ize, to proceed on indefinite leave following allegations linking him to an attack on the Senior Special Adviser to Governor Sheriff Oborevwori on Protocol, Mr. Simon Mudi, popularly known as Temple.

The directive was contained in a statement issued on Monday and signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Kingsley Emu.

According to the statement, the decision was taken to allow security agencies conduct an independent and objective investi-

gation into an incident reportedly involving the commissioner and Mudi at the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI), Effurun.

The statement said: "This administrative leave will enable security agencies to undertake an impartial probe into accusations that link the Commissioner to the reported attack on the Senior Special Adviser on Protocol, Mr. Simon Mudi, also known as Temple, at PTI, Effurun, recently."

The state government said the measure was necessary to ensure that the investigation was conducted without undue influence.

It stressed that the protection of lives, maintenance of peace and security of residents remained key priorities of the Oborevwori administration.

The government also reiterated that no public servant or government institution was

above the law.

"The Delta State Government remains dedicated to ensuring public security at all times in order to sustain peace, order and the preservation of lives," the statement said.

"This principle holds even when government agencies are involved."

The development followed reports of a confrontation between Ize and Mudi at the PTI

premises in Effurun.

Security agencies are expected to establish the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident as part of the investigation.

Ize, who represents Ughelli South in the Delta State House of Assembly, was appointed into the State Executive Council by Governor Oborevwori.

The government clarified that the administrative leave

was a procedural measure and did not amount to a declaration of guilt.

It said the decision was intended solely to facilitate the investigation.

No timeframe was given for the duration of the investigation, while the government did not state whether the commissioner would resume office after the probe.

The administration urged

members of the public and other stakeholders to shun speculation and allow the security agencies to carry out their responsibilities professionally.

Permanent secretaries in the Ministry of Works, Highways and Urban Roads have also been directed to ensure that ongoing projects and services continue without interruption during the period of the commissioner's absence.

2027: ADA urges INEC to release access code**ABUJA**

The All Democratic Alliance (ADA) has urged the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to release the access code required for the political association to upload its details ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The call was contained in a statement issued in Abuja on Tuesday by the Protem National Secretary of ADA, Mr. Aminu Ahmed.

Ahmed said ADA was among the eight political associations prequalified by INEC for registration as political parties.

He alleged that INEC's refusal to comply with a court order had stalled the uploading of the party's list of officials, office addresses and other documents required under the commission's guidelines and regulations.

According to him, compliance with the court order would enable the association to complete the registration process and obtain its certificate of registration as a political party.

The party warned that failure by INEC to comply within 48 hours could lead to contempt proceedings against the commission's Chairman, Director of the Department of Election and Party Monitoring (EPM) and other relevant officials.

Ahmed said the Federal High Court had ordered INEC to issue the access code within 72 hours

of its judgment, adding that the deadline elapsed on August 4.

He alleged that INEC had continued to disregard the order.

"ADA views this deliberate non-compliance as a direct assault on the rule of law and a calculated attempt to stall the registration of our political association into a political party and deny our teeming members and supporters the opportunity to participate in the electoral process," he said.

He added: "We hold the INEC chairman and the director, Department of EPM, personally responsible for this continuous obstruction, which is a clear case of contempt of court."

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that ADA leaders, Chief Akin Rickets and Ahmed, through their counsel, M.U. Kumalia, had sued INEC and Dr. Umar Ardo over the release of the access code to the association.

Justice Peter Lifu, in his judgment delivered on June 29, ruled that the issuance of the access code to Ardo, who was not a recognised proteem secretary of the political association, was illegal, wrongful, null and void.

The judge further ordered INEC to open its portal for one week to enable the ADA leadership upload necessary documents, including the digital register of members and other requirements for registration as a political party.

**WEDDING CEREMONY:**

Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri (second left), his daughter, Dr. Stephanie Ebidenere Diri (third right), her spouse, Ballad Tamaradoubra Agbeyei (4th right) and dignitaries at the state headquarters of the Royal House of Grace International Church in Yenagoba on Sunday.

Bayelsa Governor's daughter, spouse wed**YENAGOA****● Jonathan, Otti, Fubara, Ododo grace ceremony**

The daughter of Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri, Dr. Stephanie Ebidenere Diri, and her spouse, Ballad Tamaradoubra Agbeyei, were on Sunday joined in matrimony at the state headquarters of the Royal House of Grace International Church in Yenagoba.

The wedding attracted several prominent political and public figures, including former First Lady of Nigeria, Dame Patience Jonathan, and Governors Alex Otti of Abia State, Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State and Ahmed Ododo of Kogi State.

Also present were the first ladies of Kwara, Ogun, Delta, Nasarawa and Taraba states, as well as the wife of former Edo State Governor, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki.

The Presiding Overseer of the Royal House of Grace International Church, Apostle David Zilly-Aggrey, joined the couple in matrimony after delivering a sermon titled, "Submitting

Unto One Another in Love."

Zilly-Aggrey charged the couple to build their marriage on love, mutual submission and the fear of God.

He urged them to always recognise the place of God in their marriage, stressing that the fear of God would guide their actions and strengthen their union.

The cleric acknowledged that no marriage was perfect and advised couples to seek divine guidance whenever they encountered misunderstandings or communication gaps.

He also commended Governor Diri for choosing to have his daughter's wedding in the church, describing the decision as a great honour.

The bride's father, Governor Diri, and his wife, Dr. Gloria Diri, prayed for God's blessings, joy and continued celebration for the couple.

The couple and guests later proceeded to a reception

chaired by the Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti.

Otti, while offering his counsel to the newlyweds, said they would encounter challenges in marriage but urged them to develop mechanisms for resolving their differences without involving third parties.

He also prayed God to bless the union and provide the couple with the resources required to build and cater for their family. "I want to thank all of you who made out time to be with this family and I pray that God will remember you for good as you honour our brother. Stephanie and Ballad, I want to congratulate you and wish you well," Otti said.

He advised the couple to remain committed to resolving their differences, noting that disagreements were inevitable in marriage.

Other dignitaries at the ceremony included the wife of the governor, Justice Patience Ama-Diri; Deputy Governor Peter Akpe and

his wife, Dr. Favour Akpe; Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Senator Akon Eyakenyi; former Military Administrator of Bayelsa State, Col. Edor Obi (rtd.); and former Deputy Governor, Hon. Peremobowei Ebebi.

Also present were the Angolan Ambassador to Nigeria, Dr. José Bamóquina Zau; Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri; National Secretary of the All Progressives Congress, Senator Ajibola Basiru; and Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Dame Didi Walson-Jack, and her husband.

The ceremony also attracted several serving senators and members of the House of Representatives, including Senators Konbowei Benson, Benson Agadaga and Sunday Katung, as well as Dr. Fred Agbedi, Rodney Ambaiwei, Oforji Oboku, Dr. Mitema Obodor and Marie Ebikake.

Nigeria's Forex inflows rise 31.9% to \$4.36 billion in July**MAKURDI**

FIDELIA OBEHIAYE FREEMAN

Nigeria's foreign exchange inflows rose significantly in July 2026, reaching \$4.36 billion, according to a recent report on developments in the country's foreign exchange market.

The figure represents a 31.9

per cent increase from the previous month and marks the highest level of foreign exchange inflows recorded in five months.

The increase signals an improvement in the supply of foreign currency to the Nigerian Foreign Exchange Market (NFEM), at a time when liquidity in the forex market remains important to the stability of the naira and the wider economy.

According to the report, the rise was driven by increased foreign exchange supply from various sources, strengthening liquidity in the market during the month.

The development comes amid ongoing efforts by monetary authorities to improve the functioning of Nigeria's foreign exchange market and strengthen confidence in the naira.

Improved forex inflows are important to the Nigerian economy because increased dollar supply can help ease pressure on the foreign exchange market, support international transactions and improve access to foreign currency for businesses and other economic activities.

The latest figures also come against the backdrop of broad-

er improvements in Nigeria's foreign exchange position. The Central Bank of Nigeria had earlier reported that the country recorded \$109.9 billion in foreign exchange inflows in 2025, representing a 13.8 per cent increase from the previous year.

The July increase therefore adds to signs of stronger foreign exchange activity, although the impact of in-

creased inflows on the naira, businesses and consumers will depend on how sustained the improvement becomes.

Analysts and market participants are expected to continue monitoring forex liquidity, exchange-rate movements and the sources of foreign currency inflows as Nigeria seeks greater stability in its foreign exchange market.

Edo Dep Gov celebrates 46th birthday, says politics is not dirty

BERNADETTE IDALU

BENIN CITY

Standing against societal beliefs and declarations that politics is dirty, Hon. Dennis Idahosa on Tuesday, during a surprise birthday celebration stated that such claims were false based on the robust relationship he has with his boss, Senator Monday Okpebholo, Executive Governor of Edo State.

Idahosa said Governor Monday Okpebholo broke such barriers and stereotypical profiling by relating with him not just as a younger brother but providing a sturdy pillar of support which has enabled him to soar above expectations as a deputy governor.

"My Principal, the Executive

Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo has always treated me as a younger brother. My boss, is one of the strongest pillars that I have. Whatever I do out there, he has always given me the opportunity to shine and display my potentials for Edo people."

Addressing members of staff during the surprise birthday party organized by members of the Office of Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Idahosa affirmed that goodwill messages channelled to him by the congregation of public/civil servants, family, friends and well-wishers was appreciated.

In his cordial regard to the Permanent Secretary, Office of Edo State Deputy Governor, Mrs. Oyenwense Abieyuwa, to all members of staff of his of-

fice, Idahosa made known that he was dedicating this year's birthday to God Almighty. He affirmed that his relationship with his permanent secretary was a pointer that he was in good communication with members of staff of his office.

In hindsight, Idahosa paid tributes to his late mum, Madam Esther Imaguomwanruo Idahosa, "This my birthday is dedicated to God Almighty. Same time last year, my mum dressed gallantly to be with me in church, but, this year, she has

gone to be with her maker. I am extremely grateful to God for the life that she lived."

Edo State Head of Service (HoS) Dr. Anthony Okungbowa eulogised the Deputy Governor, acknowledging that his life is "an example in humility" just as he noted, "the kind of support you give to the Governor and everyone who works with you is phenomenal."

He stated, "The relationship Idahosa has with his permanent secretary and the staff here, is an example to all of us," even as

he went on to make prayerful supplication for Idahosa.

The Chief of Staff to Edo State Governor, Hon. Yakubu Oshiorenuwa Musa said he was inspired and marvelled by the Facebook birthday tribute of Mr. Governor to his deputy.

He eulogised Idahosa, prayed for him but cautioned him on not letting received praises from the governor and others go into his head, insisting on living a life built on humility.

Other personalities who gave goodwill messages included the

Rector of Usen Polytechnic, Dr. Nosakhare Arudoye Liberty who paid glowing tributes; Permanent Secretary Mr. Duke Ozigbo who talked about Idahosa's simplicity, while Special Adviser to the Governor, Kizito Okpebholo and the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Mr. Patrick Ebojele felicitated with the celebrant.

Former Edo State Governor and Senator representing Edo North, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole later made an appearance and identified with the celebrant.

Bishop Akubeze for burial Thursday

BENIN CITY

TALBORT HOPE

The Archbishop of Benin City, Most Rev. Augustine Obiora Akubeze, who passed away on July 9, 2026, will be buried on Thursday.

The remains of the late Archbishop which were flown into Benin City on (Tuesday) are due to be committed to mother earth today (Wednesday) in what many Catholic faithful see as an end of a glorious episcopal era.

News of his death at the age of 69 generated sadness among Catholic faithful, priests and members of the wider community, with many describing his passing as a great loss to the Church and society.

During his years of service, Archbishop Akubeze held several important positions in the Catholic Church. He also served as President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria from 2018 to 2022, where he played an active role in matters concerning the Church and the nation.

The late Archbishop was known for his humility, calm personality and concern for the welfare of the people. He was also recognised for his views on justice, peace, good governance and national development.

Since his passing, Catholic faithful have continued to offer prayers and celebrated Masses for the repose of his soul. Members of the Archdiocese of Benin City have also expressed grief over the loss of a spiritual leader they regarded as a father and mentor.

Despite the sadness caused by his death, many faithful are choosing to remember Archbishop Akubeze for the positive impact he made during his years in the service of the church and humanity. His dedication to pastoral work and his relationship with the people have remained at the core of tributes being paid to him.

As the funeral arrangements for the late Archbishop climax, his exit leaves a significant gap in the Church waiting to be filled. Most importantly, his legacy of service, humility and

ASUU Strike: IMSU, Nasarawa...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

At Nasarawa State University, Keffi, the ASUU chapter also declared an indefinite strike over outstanding financial obligations reportedly exceeding N3 billion. The union said the outstanding payments included Earned Academic Allowance, consequential adjustments arising from the implementation of the national minimum wage and the approved salary increase for university lecturers.

The strike has raised fears of disruptions to lectures, examinations, research activities and academic calendars if more university branches join the action. Students may also face

uncertainty over the continuation of academic programmes, particularly in institutions where ASUU chapters have already downed tools.

Despite the escalation, ASUU has maintained that it remains open to dialogue with the relevant authorities. The union is demanding the implementation of agreements reached with the government and improvements in lecturers' welfare. With 20 university branches now authorised to begin the process of industrial action, stakeholders are expected to intensify negotiations to prevent the dispute from developing into a wider shutdown of Nigeria's public universities.

Gov Okpebholo joins dignitaries...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

him Archbishop of Benin City, and he was installed on April 28, 2011.

Until his death, Archbishop Akubeze served as the Metropolitan Archbishop of Benin City and remained a prominent

voice in the Catholic Church in Nigeria. He served as Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) from 2012 to 2018 and President of the Conference from 2018 to 2022. He also served as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Warri.



CUTTING HIS 46TH BIRTHDAY CAKE:

Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa (centre) supported by Head Of Service Edo State, Anthony Okungbowa Esq(3rd Left) Chief Of Staff to Edo State Governor, Hon. Yakubu Musa(3rd right) the Newly sworn in Permanent Secretary, Duku Ozigbo (Left) Hon. Kizito Okpebholo(2nd Left) Associate Professor. Nosakhare Liberty Arodoye (2nd Right) Provost Edo State Polytechnic Usen with the Newly Elected Chairman of Ovia South-West LG Council, Anthony Osarobo Osaro, (Right) all joined the Deputy Governor to Cut his 56TH Birthday Anniversary Cake at Government House Benin City.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH

NEITI Report: Senate gives Seplat, Network E&P, 2 others 48 hour summons

ABUJA

CAROLINE AMEH

The Senate has given Seplat Energy, Network E&P Nigeria Limited and two other oil companies 48 hours to appear before its Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and respond to queries contained in the 2021, 2022 and 2023 audit reports of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI).

The other companies affected by the ultimatum are All Grace Energy Limited and

Aradel Energy Limited.

The committee, chaired by Senator Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo, issued the ultimatum on Tuesday following the failure of the companies to honour previous invitations to explain issues raised against them in the NEITI reports.

The Senate warned that failure to appear within the stipulated period would trigger the invocation of its constitutional legislative powers.

The committee's action followed a motion by Senator Abdul Ningi (Bauchi Central), who expressed concern over a letter

reportedly written by Network E&P Nigeria Limited stating that it was accountable to the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).

Ningi described the position as disturbing and provocative, arguing that the National Assembly has constitutional powers to summon individuals, companies and government agencies to explain issues under investigation.

"The Senate and by extension, the National Assembly, is the custodian of Nigeria law that has power to invite anybody or agency for explanations on issues raised against them," he said.

Supporting Ningi's position, Senator Shehu Kaka Lawan

(Borno Central) called for the invocation of the Senate's constitutional powers against the companies that failed to appear before the committee.

The chairman subsequently directed the Managing Director of Network E&P Nigeria Limited to appear before the committee unfailingly on Thursday or face further legislative action.

"Having failed to honour invitation of this committee two consecutive times, the Managing Director of Network E&P Nigeria Limited should appear before us unfailingly on Thursday this week or risk full invocation of legislative powers against him," the chairman said.

TUC rejects outright sale of refineries, support private sector equity

ABUJA

The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) has backed private sector equity participation in refineries, rejecting their outright sale.

The TUC President, Mr Festus Osifo, said this at a news conference in Abuja on Tuesday, while speaking on economic and labour issues affecting Nigerians.

Osifo said government should

reduce its equity to 49 per cent and allow credible private investors with technical expertise to hold the remaining 51 per cent.

"We have advocated that government should not sell the refinery outrightly. What we have advocated is for government to reduce its equity," Osifo said.

He said the proposed structure should mirror the ownership model of Nigeria LNG Ltd., where government holds 49 per cent and private investors

control 51 per cent.

According to him, the arrangement will promote commercially driven decisions and reduce political interference in the management of the refineries.

"Decision-making should not be reached emotionally or politically, but when you look at the economics and commercial considerations," he said.

Osifo said investors with proven expertise in refinery and petrochemical operations

should be prioritised to ensure efficient management and sustainable operations.

"We have said this for 25 years that this is the most veritable way to get those refineries functioning," he said.

The TUC president cautioned against repeating the experience of the power sector, where, according to him, some investors lacked the technical and financial capacity to manage acquired assets.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **AREBANMEN THEOPHILUS** now wish to be known and addressed as **IKHELOA THEOPHILUS EKATA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

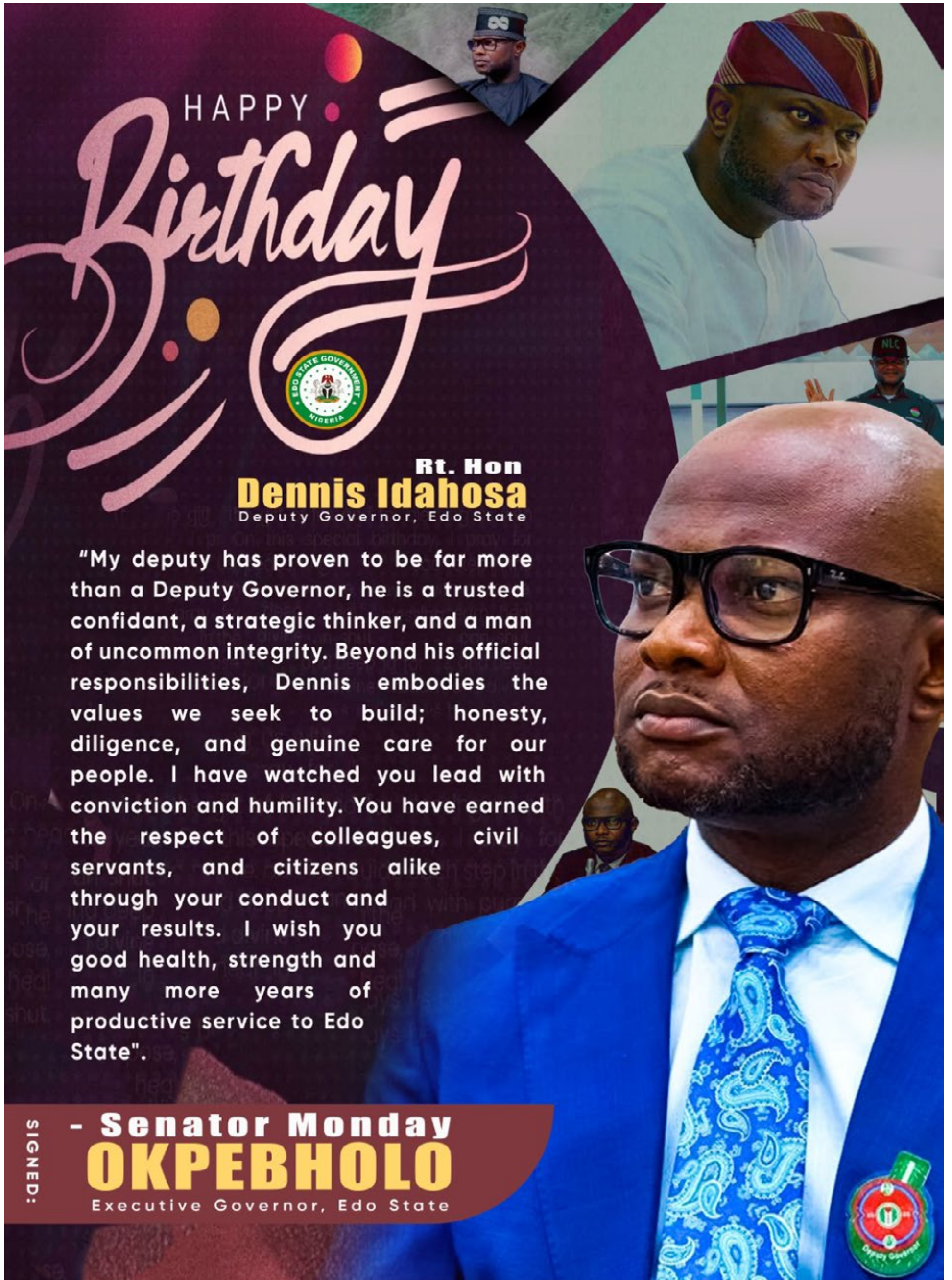
I, formerly known as **Miss JULIET SOMTOCHUKWU NDUBUISI** now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. JULIET SOMTOCHUKWU OKAFOR**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MERCY EFOSA** now wish to be known and addressed as **ODEOSA OSATOHAMWEN MERCY**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **UDOKA KINGSLEY** now wish to be known and addressed as **NWACHUKWU KINGSLEY UDOKA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.



HAPPY *Birthday*



**Rt. Hon
Dennis Idahosa**
Deputy Governor, Edo State

"My deputy has proven to be far more than a Deputy Governor, he is a trusted confidant, a strategic thinker, and a man of uncommon integrity. Beyond his official responsibilities, Dennis embodies the values we seek to build; honesty, diligence, and genuine care for our people. I have watched you lead with conviction and humility. You have earned the respect of colleagues, civil servants, and citizens alike through your conduct and your results. I wish you good health, strength and many more years of productive service to Edo State".

SIGNED:

**- Senator Monday
OKPEBHOLO**
Executive Governor, Edo State



Indigenous gas coy assures of meeting hospital oxygen demands in Enugu

ENUGU

The Chief Operating Officer (COO), Niger Gas, Enugu, Mr Amos Egesi, has assured hospitals in Enugu State that the company was ready to meet all their de-

mands for oxygen within the shortest possible time.

Egesi said this on Tuesday while conducting members of the Correspondents Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Enugu, round the facility.

The journalists were in the

facility as part of the state government's organised tour of projects being executed by Governor Peter Mbah's administration.

"Currently, we produce about 80 cylinders in a day; by the time we begin to produce

at 100 per cent full capacity, we will be producing not less than 400 cylinders every day.

"With that all the hospital oxygen demands we have in the state will be met by Niger gas," Egesi said.

The also COO said that the

company started full operations four months ago, adding that traders have started coming from as far as Onitsha to book for the company's products.

He explained that the company produced natural oxygen, medical oxygen as well as Acetelyn for welding.

He commended the state government for the vision to revive the gas company which became moribund since the eighties.

According to him, jobs are being created by the company, while the existence of the

company has given life to the immediate community.

"This area has become a beehive of activities since we began operations as people now buy landed property, build houses and live around the environment.

"Economic activities have also increased due to the company's operations."

The company is one of the projects established by the late Michael Okpara of the defunct Eastern regional government, that are currently being revived by the present administration in the state.



FERTILIZERS DISTRIBUTION:

Enthusiastic beneficiaries at the distribution venue of fertilizers provided by the senator representing Ebonyi North Senatorial District, Sen. Peter Onyekachi Nwebonyi at Iboko, headquarters of Izzi Local Government Area of the state.

Senator flags off distribution of 5,000 bags of fertilizer to farmers in Ebonyi

ABAKALIKI

MAXWELL OKECHUKWU

The Senator representing Ebonyi North Senatorial Zone, and Senate Deputy Chief Whip, Sen. Peter Onyekachi Nwebonyi, has flagged off the distribution of 5,000 bags of fertilizer to farmers across the district.

The flag off took place at Iboko, headquarters of Izzi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

Barr. Patrick Mbam, who represented Senator Nwebonyi at the occasion, while addressing the farmers said "the distribution of farm inputs to farmers across the zone has become an annual ritual because Ebonyi North is predominantly agrarian.

He stressed that the ear-

ly distribution of the inputs would not only boost agricultural productivity and guarantee food security but will create economic prosperity for the people.

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ebonyi State, Hon Mrs Nkechinyere Iyioku who was represented by a Director in the Ministry, Mrs Oby Chidinma Okoye commended Senator Nwebonyi for his visionary leadership, and charge the farmers to utilize the inputs in order to create food production in the state.

Setting the tone for the event, the Executive Chairman of Izzi Local Government Area, Barr. Stephen Nwankpa, lauded Senator Nwebonyi, describing him as a superlative performer in the 10th Senate.

He also declared open the

Senator's re-election campaign for a second term, urging the beneficiaries to make judicious use of the fertilizer and not selling it.

Also speaking, the Member representing Izzi West State Constituency, Hon. Godwin Abiri; the APC Chairmanship Candidate for Izzi Local Government Council, Hon. Mrs. Helen Aduga; the Senior Special Assistant to Sen. Nwebonyi on Community Engagement and Human Welfare, Apostle Benjamin Obeji and the Leader of Izzi Legislative Council and State Chairman of the Councilors Forum, Hon. Nwabueze Ominyi, commended Senator Nwebonyi for his continued support for farmers and his various intervention programmes across Ebonyi North.

Some of the beneficiaries,

including the traditional ruler of Ndieze Echi Autonomous Community, HRH Eze Ogbonna Eze, Mr. Ogaranya Sunday and Hon (Mrs) Ogbonna Sunday, expressed gratitude to Senator Nwebonyi for the intervention, pledging to utilize the inputs diligently to achieve bumper harvests.

The distribution of one thousand bags of fertilizer to Izzi Local Government Area was conducted in an orderly manner, with each of the fourteen electoral wards allocated 60 bags of fertilizer for onward distribution to genuine farmers across their respective wards.

The event also featured testimonies from some past beneficiaries, who recounted how previous interventions contributed to improving yields during the last farming season.

Troops neutralise terrorists, recover AK-47 in Plateau

JOS

Troops of Operation Enduring Peace (OPEP), have neutralised two suspected terrorists; with an apprehended bandit, and recovered an AK-47 rifle during an operation in Plateau.

This was contained in an operational report made available to newsmen in Abuja on Tuesday.

According to the report the incident occurred on August 10 at Nwur Village in Langtang North Local Government Area of the state.

The report said the troops had mobilised with an apprehended suspected bandit to re-

cover a rifle allegedly concealed by the suspect in the area.

It said the troops came under attack while approaching the village and responded with fire, neutralising two attackers.

"The arrested suspect accompanying the troops was also killed during the encounter, while no military personnel were injured.

"Troops subsequently exploited the area and recovered one AK-47 rifle, one magazine and two rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition.

"The troops continued operations to apprehend and neutralise other fleeing members of the suspected criminal syndicate," the report said.

NSCDC arrests suspected motorcycle thief, recovers bike, 11 number plates

KANO

The Kano State Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has arrested a 45-year-old suspected motorcycle thief and recovered 11 number plates.

The NSCDC Commandant in the state, Mohammed Hassan-Agalama, made this known in a statement on Tuesday issued by the Command's Public Relations Officer, SC Ibrahim Idris-Abdullahi.

Hassan-Agalama said the suspect was arrested at his residence in Gaida, Kumbotso Local Government Area, following credible intelligence linking him to the activities of a motorcycle theft syndicate operating in the metropolis.

He said the arrest followed the tracking of a motorcycle with registration number GRR 958 QB (Jigawa) to the suspect's residence.

"During a search of the residence, operatives recovered a motorcycle suspected to have been stolen from the premises of a hospital at Rijiyar Zaki, along Gwarzo Road, Kano" he said.

Hassan-Agalama said the operatives also recovered another stolen motorcycle, 11

registered motorcycle plate numbers, six screwdrivers, three pliers and three bunches of motorcycle keys suspected to belong to stolen motorcycles.

He added that the principal suspect, popularly known as "S-Guy", was still at large.

"The command has launched a manhunt for him and is making concerted efforts to apprehend him and bring him to justice," he said.

The Commandant commended the operatives for their vigilance and intelligence-led operation.

He assured members of the public that the command would continue to intensify efforts to dismantle criminal networks involved in motorcycle theft and other forms of criminality across the state.

He urged members of the public to remain vigilant and provide security agencies with useful information that could assist in the prevention and detection of crime.

Hassan-Agalama noted that the suspect in custody would be subjected to thorough investigation and prosecution in accordance with the law upon conclusion of the investigation.

3 dead in suspected cult clash in Osun

OSOGBO

Police Command in Osun says three persons died from suspected cult related clash in the Imo Area of Osun on Monday.

This was contained in a statement by the command Spokesperson, DSP Abiodun Ojelabi, on Tuesday.

Ojelabi said the suspected cult clash happened between members of the Aiye and Eiye

confraternities, at about 8; 00 p.m., on Monday.

"Following the incident, three persons, identified as Idowu, Yinka and Eja, all yet to be properly identified were reportedly shot dead," he said.

He said upon the receipt of the information, the Commissioner of Police (Election) in charge of the state governorship election, Samuel Etaifo, directed the deployment of operatives of the Violence

Crime Response Unit (VCRU) to the area.

He said four expended cartridges and two Android mobile phones were recovered from the scene, while preliminary investigations have commenced.

He also said that the command was working to establish the circumstances surrounding the incident and identify all persons connected with the clash.

"Etaifo has directed the

VCRU operatives and other tactical teams to intensify patrols, surveillance and intelligence-led operations within Ilesa and adjoining areas.

"The patrol is particularly around identified flashpoints to forestall any reprisal attack," he said.

He warned members of rival cult groups and other criminal elements against taking advantage of the incident to cause further violence.

NEWS**FG targets improved cancer care with 25 new linear accelerators****ABUJA**

The Federal Government has announced plans to procure 25 additional linear accelerators between 2027 and 2029 to expand cancer treatment capacity and strengthen cancer control across the country.

Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Izaq Salako, said this on Tuesday in Abuja at the National Cancer

Control Plan (NCCP) Technical Working Group and Global Advisory Council meeting.

Salako said the government was implementing a comprehensive cancer-control strategy focused on prevention, early detection, treatment, research and partnerships under the NCCP 2026–2030 framework.

“Recently, President Bola Tinubu approved that between 2027 and 2029, the country should procure an additional

25 linear accelerators. We are executing a three-year plan to achieve this,” he said.

He said that Nigeria’s cancer burden remained significant because many patients presented late for treatment, while shortages of infrastructure, skilled personnel and funding continued to hinder effective care.

According to him, the NCCP Technical Working Group was established to drive implemen-

tation of the 2026–2030 plan, while the Global Advisory Council would provide expertise and international support.

Salako said prevention remained central to the government’s strategy, noting that President Tinubu approved the inclusion of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination in Nigeria’s routine immunisation schedule.

“The President particularly continues to emphasise prior-

itising prevention. That is why one of the very first things he did was to approve that routinely, HPV vaccination should be part of our immunisation schedule,” he said.

He added that efforts were also underway to strengthen hepatitis vaccination, expand cervical cancer screening and integrate screening services into primary healthcare facilities nationwide.

“Prevention is better and

cheaper than cure,” Salako said.

The minister said that construction of six Cancer Centres of Excellence had commenced, with three already completed and work progressing on the remaining centres.

Salako also inaugurated the Blood Cancer Consortium following the donation of equipment and other resources aimed at strengthening pathology laboratories across the country.

NDLEA strengthens partnership with Edo Pharmacists**BENIN CITY**

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State Command, and the pharmaceutical community in the state have reaffirmed their commitment to a robust partnership in the fight against substance abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

This came to the fore during a courtesy visit by the leadership of the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) and the Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN) at the Command Headquarters in Benin City.

The delegation, led by the Chairman of PSN, Edo State Chapter, Dr. Chris Oisakede, included the Chairman of ACPN, Dr. Nwachukwu Memili, and other distinguished executive members.

The commander welcomed the visit as a critical step towards intensifying the War Against Drug

Abuse (WADA) campaign. “I underscored that the fight against drug abuse is a collective responsibility that no single agency can win alone. The challenges are multifaceted, ranging from the increasing cultivation of cannabis in forest areas which also contributes to environmental degradation to the exploitation of farmers by criminal networks and the alarming trend of school children being drawn into such activities” Mitchell stated.

He stressed the devastating impact of substance abuse on individuals, families, and national development. The Commander reiterated that drug abuse is a chronic relapsing brain disorder, requiring comprehensive prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation efforts.

The Chairman of PSN, Dr. Chris Oisakede, commended the Command over its achievements especially the holistic approach at ensuring supply and demand reduction through effective public enlightenment.

**INVESTORS SUMMIT:**

Property Developer, Mr Molkat Mutfwang; Vice President Africa, Business Summit (BS), Mr Innocent Obande; President of BS, Dr Haider Uzzaman; General Manager, Standard Insurance Consultants, Mr Abdulazeez Salawudeen and the Head of Strategy, Mr Abid Haider, during a news conference on the forthcoming Investors Summit Nigeria 2026, Abuja on Tuesday (11/8/26).

NEMA takes flood campaign to worship centres in Kaduna**KADUNA**

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), has organised an awareness programme across some worship centres in Kaduna state, on ways to prevent or mitigate the impact of flooding.

Halima Sulaiman, the North-West Zonal Coordinator of NEMA, disclosed this in an interview with newsmen on Tuesday in Kaduna.

Sulaiman, who described the move as part of its nationwide disaster risk reduction strategy, advised residents to heed to early warnings and take proactive measures towards protecting lives and property.

She said that the exercise aimed at increasing public awareness of flood risks and promoting preparedness ahead of the peak of the 2026 rainy season.

According to her, its officials led by Mr Ikramat Umar, Head, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Unit, sensitised worshippers on the five phases of disaster management.

“These five phases are prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery,” he said.

The zonal coordinator said worshippers were also briefed on the 2026 seasonal climate prediction by Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and the annual flood outlook of the Nigeria

Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA).

She explained that the prediction by the two agencies had indicated the likelihood of flooding in parts of Kaduna State.

“NEMA has identified indiscriminate waste disposal, blocked drainage systems, construction on natural waterways and building on flood-prone areas as major causes of flooding.

“As we all know, flooding could result in loss of lives, injuries, destruction of homes and critical infrastructure, displacement and outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

“So, we call on residents to dispose waste properly, clear drainage channels and waterways regularly, and adhere to early warning information issued by relevant authorities.

“We are also calling on residents whose buildings are on flood-prone communities to evacuate promptly when directed by emergency authorities,” she advised.

Sulaiman, who said that the agency had provided some telephones to aid prompt response to distress calls, advised residents to use them during emergencies.

She said that NEMA would continue to collaborate with religious institutions, community leaders and other stakeholders to strengthen disaster preparedness and build resilient communities.

New CP moves to enhance community policing in Anambra**AWKA**

The new Commissioner of Police (CP) in Anambra, Mr Nnanna Ama, has expressed his commitment to community policing as he hosts security stakeholders interactive sessions across the three Senatorial Districts in the state.

Ama made this known in a statement issued by the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, on Tuesday in Awka.

He said that the measure would strengthen community participation in security mat-

ters, thereby enhancing national security from the grassroots.

“In line with the vision of the Inspector-General (IG) of Police, Olatunji Disu, to deepen community-based policing and enhance strategic partnerships, the CP Anambra Command, Nnanna Oji Ama is set to host security stakeholders’ interactive sessions across the three Senatorial Districts of Anambra,” the statement said.

The CP said that the interactive sessions would bring together traditional rulers, local government chairmen, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, market leaders,

and other critical stakeholders.

He said that the stakeholders would deliberate on prevailing security concerns in the state, promote intelligence-led policing, and strengthen community participation in crime prevention and public safety.

Ama said that the engagements were scheduled as follows, Anambra South Senatorial District, August 12, Anaedo Hall, Nnewi, Anambra North Senatorial District, August 13, Umueri Civic Centre.

While the engagement in Anambra Central Senatorial District, will take place on Aug. 14 at Dora Akunyili Women

Development Centre, Awka.

The CP urged all invited stakeholders to attend and actively participate in the important engagements designed to foster stronger collaboration between the police and communities in addressing security challenges and sustaining peace across the state.

Ama assumed duty as the 36th CP in the state on Monday.

The new CP took over from Assistant-Inspector General (AIG) Ikioye Orutugu, who was recently promoted from the rank of CP to AIG and subsequently retired.

FG urges BOA to adopt innovative financing for agriculture**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has urged the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) to explore innovative financing mechanisms and blended finance arrangements to reduce risks associated with agricultural lending.

The Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari, made the call on Tuesday at a retreat for the newly inaugurated governing board of BOA in Abuja.

Kyari said the inauguration of the board marked an important step in the Federal Government’s efforts to strengthen the bank’s institutional capacity and repossession.

He urged the bank to explore guarantees, credit enhancement

schemes and other appropriate instruments to expand access to agricultural finance.

“The ultimate objective should be to build a stronger and more sustainable agricultural financing ecosystem capable of supporting farmers and agribusinesses throughout the agricultural value chain.

“We must ensure that affordable and accessible financial services reach smallholder farmers in rural communities, women engaged in agricultural production and processing and young Nigerians seeking opportunities in agribusiness.

“They should also reach cooperatives seeking to expand their operations and agricultural enterprises requiring capital for pro-

duction, processing, storage and marketing,” he said.

Kyari said the challenges confronting agricultural finance in Nigeria were significant and could not be addressed by BOA alone.

He urged the board to strengthen collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, state governments and development partners.

“Strategic partnerships will be essential for mobilising additional resources, expanding the bank’s reach and enhancing programme delivery,” he said.

Kyari said Federal Government priorities under the Renewed Hope Agenda included increasing food production, improving pro-

ductivity, strengthening agricultural value chains and reducing post-harvest losses.

He added that promoting agro-processing was also central to the agenda.

“The Bank of Agriculture must be positioned as a key financial instrument for translating these policy priorities into tangible outcomes,” he said.

In a goodwill message, the Minister of State for Agriculture, Sen. Aliyu Abdullahi, said BOA occupied a strategic position in transforming Nigeria’s agricultural sector.

“As the nation’s foremost agricultural development finance institution, the bank has a critical role to play in providing accessible and sustainable finance.

FOREIGN

NEWS



UNITED STATE PLANE:

President Trump secretly switches planes to avoid Iran threat

Australia PM under fire for remarks on Japanese counterpart's melon gifts

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is under fire for comments he made about two melons gifted to him by his Japanese counterpart Sanae Takaichi, after a former Japanese envoy called it an insult.

During an appearance on the Bush Deep podcast, Albanese gestured near his chest while referring to the crown melons, calling them "pretty strange" gifts that "ended up being quite good".

That episode, which aired in July, had already landed the PM in hot water because of "inappropriate" comments he made about popstar Kylie Minogue.

Opposition leaders are now demanding he apologise to Takaichi, but Albanese's position is that it was the host who made the joke, not him, the BBC understands.

While discussing the melons Takaichi's team had presented to Albanese during her visit to Aus-

tralia in May, the host of Bush Deep, comedian Nikki Osborne, quipped: "She brought two... She just came in looking like Pamela Anderson."

"She brought two, and they are beautiful," Albanese responded.

The exchange, which drew relatively little interest when the episode aired, has resurfaced after Tokyo's former ambassador to Canberra Shingo Yamagami labelled Albanese's comments a "sexist joke" and said they "betrayed the close bond" between Japan and Australia.

"The last thing [Takaichi] expected was to be so casually mocked by the trusted leader of Japan's special strategic partner," he wrote in an opinion piece published by The Australian on Monday.

Crown melons are the "most prized fruit" in Japan and "treasured as something special", Yamagami added, noting that

a single melon costs more than 30,000 yen (\$188).

"So, prime minister, please enjoy Japan's sweet and juicy melons without thinking about a woman's anatomy, and instead focus on what our two countries must do together," he said.

During his two-year stint in Australia, Yamagami had a notably frosty relationship with some members of Albanese's Labor Party over disagreements regarding China.

An opposition MP asked Albanese on Tuesday if he would apologise for the "foul-mouthed, classless comments about women", to which the prime minister said he "rejected the assertion of the question".

He went on: "Australia and Japan have never been closer. My government has taken our special strategic partnership to new heights."

Australia's opposition leader

Angus Taylor on Monday also criticised the gaffe as "insulting", and demanded that Albanese make a personal apology.

Several Labor ministers have jumped to Albanese's defence, saying the former envoy and the media have misinterpreted his comments.

Finance Minister Katy Gallagher said the remarks "were not intended to be interpreted the way that our political opponents and some media outlets are reporting".

Social Services Minister Tanya Plibersek called it "a completely unnecessary interpretation of what the prime minister said".

"I think people watching it for themselves can make their own minds up," Plibersek told Australia's Channel Seven.

Plibersek had earlier defended Albanese's controversial remarks about Minogue as nothing more than a sign that he was a fan.

Trump hid in catering truck in secret plane swap over Iran threat, reports say

Donald Trump secretly swapped planes as he left a Nato summit in Turkey last month, as part of an elaborate ruse in response to a possible Iranian threat, US media report.

The US president boarded Air Force One in view of television cameras before being transported to a military aircraft with the help of a catering truck, the Washington Post said. Journalists and some White House staff on board did not know he had been smuggled out.

Officials told the BBC's US partner CBS News that the US had detected a credible Iranian threat to fire a missile at the plane. The White House has not confirmed the secret switch.

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

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

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

On 8 July, footage showed him boarding the presidential jet at Ankara airport. But according to the Washington Post, he was then secretly taken to a smaller C-32A military aircraft - a modified Boeing 757 often used by the vice-president - via a catering

truck which had been elevated to plane level on the opposite side to where he had boarded.

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

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

Trump then flew to the UK en route to the US, where he re-boarded the old Air Force One and was seen descending from the aircraft after it landed at RAF Mildenhall. It is unclear how he moved from the C-32A back to the legacy jet.

He then boarded the Qatar-gifted jet to fly from the UK to the US.

The president then transferred to the new Qatari-donated Air Force One to travel back to Washington.

During that flight, Trump spoke to reporters on board where he noted the threats posed by Iran but did not mention the earlier plane swap.

Asked why reporters had been told to lower the window shades on the plane from Turkey, Trump said: "Because you're probably on a dangerous flight because of the sleazebags we have to deal with."

He said he had a "threat all the time" on his life, and that he is "number one" on Iran's "list".

Russia using North Korean missiles to strike Ukraine, Zelensky says

Ukraine and Russia have continued striking each other overnight, with Volodymyr Zelensky accusing Moscow of using North Korean missiles.

The Ukrainian president said strikes in Zaporizhzhia - which killed at least six and injured at least 19 - involved ballistic missiles from Russia's ally.

In Voronezh, in southern Russia, warehouses belonging to the online retailer, Wildberries, were hit by Ukraine. The company, known as Russia's Amazon, has been repeatedly targeted in recent weeks.

The attacks come a day after at least 13 people were killed, including one child, in Ukrainian drone strikes on the Russian republic of Tatarstan, more than 1,100 km (680 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

In a video address on Monday evening, Zelensky said "for the first time" Russia "cannot wage war without reinforcements from North Korea".

"The more North Korean strikes there are here in Ukraine, in Europe, the more their missiles and soldiers are used, the more they correct their shortcomings and blind spots", Zelensky said, adding that this poses a danger to the rest of the world.

In his address, Zelensky also hailed a successful air strike on

a Russian petrochemical plant in western Siberia on Monday as a "very significant achievement" by the Ukrainian military.

He promised "more Ukrainian deep strikes, which should demonstrate to Russia and the Russians that peace is necessary".

It is not the first time Zelensky has accused Russia of receiving military assistance from North Korea.

He warned over the weekend that as many as 50,000 North Korean soldiers were being sent to fight with Russian forces.

Zaporizhzhia Regional Governor Ivan Fedorov posted photos of vehicles and buildings on fire, saying Moscow had struck the city using missiles and guided bombs. In addition to those killed, at least 19 others were injured.

One person was injured in strikes on Kyiv, where air raid sirens sounded twice during the night. Explosions could be heard on the outskirts of the capital, triggering fires.

Fedorov said industrial facilities, infrastructure and non-residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia were hit in the Russian attack.

Ukrainian officials say Russia fired 120 drones overnight and a range of different missiles, but for the first time they have not given a number of missiles fired or intercepted.

At least 132 killed in Colombia's largest earthquake in years

At least 132 people are dead and a state of emergency has been declared after Colombia was hit by one of its largest earthquakes in years.

The death toll is likely to rise, with more feared trapped under collapsed buildings.

The magnitude 7.4 quake struck at 07:34 (12:34 GMT) at a depth of 103km (64 miles) in Chocó province, the country's geological service said. It was felt across an enormous area, stretching for hundreds of miles across western Colombia.

Many of the deaths have been concentrated in the city of Pereira, in Colombia's coffee-growing region, with surrounding cities and the Valle del Cauca region also hit hard.

The epicentre of the quake was near the village of San

José del Palmar, in Chocó province, but local mayor León Fabio Marín Moncada said that there had miraculously been no deaths or injuries - despite the roads in and out being damaged.

At least 570 people were injured in the quakes, Colombia's Association of Capital Cities wrote in a statement update on Monday.

About 55km (34 miles) from the epicentre of the earthquake, the city of Pereira saw some of the worst damage.

Videos verified by the BBC show at least one building collapsing in Plaza Bolívar, the city's main square, with scattered debris and dust across the open space where many people had gathered.

Local authorities have reported at least 67 people dead

in the city's metropolitan area, with 65 collapsed buildings. People are believed to be trapped in 15 of them.

A curfew is in place in some parts of the city until 05:00 local time on Tuesday.

Thirty-two buildings collapsed in Cali, located about 160km south of Pereira and about 200km from the epicentre.

Dan Cutler, 29, is from London but has been in Colombia for about two months as part of a big trip with his partner, and is currently in Cali.

Being woken by the earthquake, he told the BBC: "I've never experienced anything like it."

"We sprinted outside in our pyjamas. There's no major structural damage to the hotel, but there are surface cracks in the walls, and paint and plas-

ter have peeled off," he says.

There were also reports of deaths in Manizales, Quibdó, Medellín, across the Chocó and Valle del Cauca regions.

Dozens of buildings have collapsed in the city of Cali.

At least two people have died in Manizales.

Speaking to BBC World Service, Angélica Ávila said she had been staying in a hotel in Manizales.

She said as the earthquake hit, cracks appeared in the walls.

"Everyone was screaming... I saw dust coming out of the neighbouring buildings, and bricks were falling off the walls," she said.

Journalist and meteorologist Luis Felipe Molina, from Manizales, was at home when the earthquake struck - about 150km from the epicentre.

Ousted Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad sentenced to death in absentia

Syrian court has sentenced ousted dictator Bashar al-Assad to death in absentia, after convicting him of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity during the country's civil war.

It is the first conviction against Assad, who fled from Damascus to Moscow with his family after his regime was overthrown in December 2024, ending his family's five-decade grip on power.

Assad's cousin and the former head of political security in southern Syria's Deraa province, Atef Najib, was also sentenced to death.

He had been put on trial and appeared wearing a striped prison uniform inside a cage in the courtroom as the judge read out his sentence.

Deraa is widely seen as the birthplace of the uprising against Assad's rule.

In March 2011, the detention and alleged torture of a group of teenagers accused of writing anti-government graffiti sparked protests in the city, which were met with a violent crackdown by security forces.

That response helped ignite nationwide demonstrations that escalated into civil war in which hundreds of thousands of people were killed.

Syria's interim government began trying officials associated with the Assad regime, which ruled the country for more than 50 years, earlier this year.

Najib is one of the highest-ranking officials to be put on trial.

He was convicted of crimes including murder, "the intentional killing of children under 15" and "torture leading to death".

The court also sentenced six former military and security officials in absentia to death, including Bashar al-Assad's younger brother, Maher. He ran the army's elite Fourth

Division and also fled to Moscow when the regime fell.

The others convicted include former defence minister Fahd al-Frej.

Atef Najib appeared in a cage in court during his sentencing on Tuesday.

Nouha al-Masri has spent 15 years waiting for this moment.

She is not just part of the five person prosecution team, she is also a plaintiff in this case.

Masri lost her brother during the March 2011 crackdown and massacre at Al-Omari Square in Deraa.

"The verdict reflects the magnitude of the sacrifices we made, the sacrifices of the martyrs, the suffering and pain of the victims, the missing, and the detainees," she told the BBC.

"We have been waiting for 15 years to reclaim even a small part of our rights, for all those who have spilled our blood, committed crimes, violated our rights, killed, and tortured us."

For Masri, the verdict is a new chapter.

"Our demand is that this not be the end of the trials... In the new Syria, there will be no impunity from this day forward."

It remains unclear whether Syria's new authorities will be able to secure Bashar and Maher al-Assad's extraditions from Moscow.

It is not the first move against Assad by Syria's new leadership.

An arrest warrant was issued against him last December on charges of murder and torture.

He left for Russia as forces under Ahmed al-Sharaa - now Syria's president - swept to power in a rapid, 11-day campaign that brought down the Assad dynasty.

Since then, the new government has detained numerous former officials and security personnel, though most senior figures from the old regime, including Assad himself, remain out of reach

in Russia.

Attempts by Syrian opposition figures to pursue Assad through courts in Western countries during the final years of his rule did not lead to any convictions.

Assad came to power in 2000 after the death of his father. The second son of Hafez al-Assad, he was not destined to be Syria's ruler until his brother, Basil, died in a car crash in 1994.

Part of the Alawite minority, he continued to favour their dominance in many roles in the military, security and intelligence agencies.

Much of his rule was defined by the civil war.



SYRIAN DICTATOR:
Ousted Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad

A burial row over Zambia's late president has turned its election into a hot contest

A spectre is hanging over the Zambian election campaign in the shape of former President Edgar Lungu.

Despite having died more than a year ago in South Africa, his body remains unburied amid a bitter dispute between President Hakainde Hichilema and the Lungu family that has sharpened political divisions.

This has had a role in energising support for the opposition National Reconciliation Party for Unity and Prosperity (NRPUP), particularly in the northern half of the country, traditional strongholds of Lungu's Patriotic Front (PF), as people see it as offering the best chance to unseat the incumbent.

Meanwhile, it has complicated the second-term bid of Hichilema and his United Party for National Development (UPND), which draws its core support from the south, west and north-west while seeking to expand its reach nationwide.

The political battle is playing out on the streets of the capital, Lusaka.

As the afternoon heat blazes across the city, the familiar hum of commerce hanging over the busy markets is overlaid with the sound of campaign songs and jingles.

Election posters are everywhere: from lamp posts and shop fronts to massive billboards, with faces of presidential and parliamentary candidates looming over passers-by.

All this as Zambia prepares for one of its most unpredictable

elections in years.

On 13 August, more than eight million registered voters will get the chance to choose a president and a new parliament. Hichilema wants five more years after his 2021 landslide win over Lungu on a platform of change.

Yet what many expected to be a relatively straightforward contest this time has been reshaped by Lungu's death, the late surge of opposition challenger Brian Mundubile, persistent cost of living pressures and questions about electoral credibility.

This is all against the backdrop of recent constitutional reforms aimed at boosting the voice of youth and women.

Street-food vendor Theresa Zulu said that money was hard to come by.

The dominant conversation on street corners and in minibus taxis is the cost of living.

Zambia has not been spared from the worldwide pressures of high food and energy prices that followed the pandemic and subsequent geopolitical shocks.

Annual inflation has cooled to around 6.6%, its lowest in eight years, and the currency, the kwacha, has strengthened, but for many households the relief remains theoretical.

"The cost of living, I cannot say is okay," says Given Kangwa, a 27-year-old flour-mill worker standing in Lusaka City Market.

"Where I work, for example, the money we are getting paid is not enough and we cannot sustain our lives."

Kangwa explains that he was paid about 3,000 kwacha (\$157;

£117) a month, which is barely enough to cover food, rent and other expenses.

Theresa Zulu, a street-food seller, puts it more starkly. "Money has become so hard to come by. We are trying to stay strong to survive, but things have become really hard for us."

A graph headed Zambia's annual inflation rate. It shows that the rate has steadily fallen over the past year, from 15.3% in May last year to 6.8% 12 months later.

Voters, as ever, are unforgiving.

Macroeconomic gains matter less than the cost of cooking oil, for example, which has risen by more than 70% over the past five years. Zambians have also been battling with an unreliable power supply.

A severe drought in 2024-2025 slashed hydropower generation, creating power outages of up to 20 hours a day in parts of the country.

The government has since ramped up costly electricity imports and accelerated solar projects, easing the blackouts in recent months.

Yet the memory of darkened homes and food spoiling in fridges lingers.

But Hichilema defends his record, saying that when he came to office things were a mess and he has laid the foundations for success.

"We inherited a broken-down country... the economy was declining," Hichilema told the BBC in Lusaka.

When he took office in 2021, Zambia was in debt distress and had been failing to make

its payments.

The subsequent restructuring of more than \$13bn (£9.7bn) in external debt has, according to the president, produced annual savings of roughly \$1.9bn.

"That's the money we're putting in the economy... into investment expenditure such as free education."

The free education policy - covering primary and secondary levels - has brought millions of children back into classrooms.

Thousands of teachers and health workers have been hired. Constituency development funds have been sharply increased.

Copper production, the backbone of the economy, has recovered strongly, foreign reserves have climbed to record levels and investor confidence has returned.

Supporters point to tangible openings.

"I think opportunities have been increased, looking at the number of people who have been employed - it has increased amongst civil servants. And, opportunities have just increased," one young woman, who is hoping to become a teacher, said.

The unemployment rate as measured by the statistics agency has registered a slight fall from 13% to 11% over the last four years. Critics counter that the benefits have yet to reach enough families.

There are also concerns from civil society groups that despite Hichilema's promises of running a more open democracy, some opposition figures have been silenced after being convicted of hate speech.

Libyan authorities battle big blaze at major oil refinery

Libyan emergency services have been battling to contain a huge blaze at a major oil plant after it was targeted by unknown attackers.

The Zawiya refinery, west of the capital Tripoli, was hit in a drone strike on Monday evening - the third such incident in two days.

The National Oil Corporation (NOC) said a tank containing about 4.5m litres of fuel was directly hit, triggering a huge fire that caused it to collapse. It said it was considering suspending operations if the attacks continued.

There were no "serious injuries" from the fire, with most patients treated for smoke inhalation, Libya's Ambulance and Emergency Service said on Tuesday.

The Zawiya refinery is the largest operational facility in Libya, with an output of 120,000 barrels per day.

The NOC condemned sim-

ilar attacks in past days in Zawiya, including two drone strikes on a naphtha reservoir and a water desalination plant.

It called on the authorities to investigate who was behind the violence.

The attacks have highlighted continuing instability in Libya, which has been split in two since a civil war broke out after the ousting of former leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Colonel Gaddafi seized power in 1969 and ruled autocratically for four decades until he was toppled and killed in 2011 in a rebellion assisted by Western military intervention.

Since his fall, rival power centres, one based in the east backed by military commander Khalifa Haftar, and one in the west in Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, have been jostling for political and military dominance.

NEWS**Experts advocate stronger collaboration to boost Africa's Global Film Trade**

RACHEAL ESEOSE OMIJIE

BENIN CITY

Stakeholders in the film and media industry have called for stronger collaboration, government support, responsible media practices and improved international partnerships to strengthen Africa's position in the global film industry.

The call was made during a panel session themed "Bridge-

ing Culture Through the Lens: Via Film Trade" at the African Canadian International Film Festival (ACIFF).

The discussion which was moderated by Mr. Davidson Austine Omon, President of the Nigerian Filmmakers Association, Ghana, and Media Coordinator to the Nigerian High Commission in Ghana; Comrade Mallam Bako Yusuf,

filmmaker; Fred Elakhe, Head of the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) Benin Centre, Edo State; and Ambassador Patricia Orunmwense, General Manager of Speed 96.9 FM, Benin City.

Speaking on the benefits of film collaboration between Nigeria and Ghana, Omon said the African film industry should no longer be viewed through national boundaries

as there were no longer distinctions between Ghanaian, Nigerian or Cameroonian films. The focus he said, should be on building African films, with Nollywood providing leadership because of its large market.

He noted that filmmakers now consider distribution and market opportunities before production, unlike in the past when films were produced before marketers were sought.

He added that Nigeria remains Africa's biggest film market and urged stakeholders to strategically protect and maximize its advantage while encouraging meaningful collaborations.

On ways to strengthening international film trade, Omon emphasized the need for countries to respect existing treaties and clearly understand the benefits of collaborative agreements before entering into partnership deals.

Speaking from a filmmaker's perspective, Mallam Bako Yusuf urged practitioners to prioritize quality storytelling over financial gain. He recalled that pioneers in the industry were driven by the desire to preserve filmmaking and ensure its growth, adding that

today's filmmakers should also consider the interests of investors who finance productions.

Yusuf stressed that meaningful and socially beneficial content ultimately determine a film's commercial success and long-term relevance. He also appealed to governments at all levels to provide greater support for the industry, describing film production as a capital-intensive venture that requires substantial investment.

Speaking on the role of the National Film and Video Censors Board in international film trade, Fred Elakhe said the Board serves as a bridge between filmmakers and audiences by classifying films according to their suitability for different age groups.

**INVESTORS SUMMIT:**

From left: Vice President, Africa Business Summit (BS), Mr Innocent Obande; President of BS, Dr Haider Uzzaman; General Manager, Standard Insurance Consultants, Mr Abdulazeez Salawudeen and the Head of Strategy, Mr Abid Haider, during a news conference on the forthcoming Investors Summit Nigeria 2026, Abuja on Tuesday.

Birth registration first fundamental right of every child- UNICEF**LAGOS**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has described birth registration as a child's first and most fundamental right, saying it unlocks access to education, healthcare, social protection and lifelong opportunities.

UNICEF Chief of Lagos Field Office, Celine Lafoucriere, stated this on Tuesday in Lagos at a two-day media dialogue on birth registration.

The workshop, organised in collaboration with the National Population Commission (NPC), Lagos, has as its theme: "Giving Every Child a Legal Identity by Driving Birth Registration in Nigeria."

The event brought together journalists from Southwest states and Edo to strengthen media coverage of birth registration.

Lafoucriere said civil registration provided the legal identity every child needed to be recognised by the state.

"Civil registration is the child's identity, and it is the foundational right of every child.

"Without that right, nothing else can happen. A child cannot go to school without an identity," she said.

She explained that the benefits of birth registration extended far beyond the classroom.

"A registered child can access health services and, as an

adult, will be able to vote, own property and inherit wealth.

"A child cannot access the health system without an identity. And it goes on like this throughout life," she added.

The UNICEF chief noted that many parents still delayed birth registration because of weak systems that currently allowed unregistered children to access some public services.

She added that birth registration was also critical to national planning and social protection.

"We are working with the Government of Nigeria to build a credible social register that will be used to deliver benefits to vulnerable families.

"If a child doesn't have an

identity, he or she does not exist on the social register.

"Unregistered children are missing from government budgets, which affects funding for health, education and welfare programmes.

"If there are 3.5 million children who are not registered, it means that 3.5 million times whatever the budget is normally for one child is not in the government's budget," she said.

Lafoucriere called on journalists to help parents understand the benefits of birth registration and where to access the service, particularly at Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) and other community registration points equipped with the necessary devices.

Woman, 28, docked for alleged theft of mobile phone worth N1.6m**SANGO-OTA**

A 28-year-old woman, Divine Kalu, on Tuesday, appeared before an Ota Magistrates' Court in Ogun, for allegedly stealing an iPhone worth N1.6million.

Kalu, whose address was not provided, is facing a one-charge of theft.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge.

The Prosecutor, ASP E.O.Adaraloye, told the court that the defendant committed the offence on Aug.6, at about 5.00 p.m. at Tempo Paper Pulp and Packaging Plc, Ota.

Adaraloye alleged that the defendant stole an iPhone valued at N1.6 million, belonging to one Dr Seun Obasanjo.

According to the prosecutor, the offence contravened Section 390 of the Criminal Code, Laws of Ogun, 2006.

The Magistrate, Mrs O.O. Fadairo, granted bail to the defendant in the sum of N200,000 with one responsible surety in like sum.

She directed that the surety must reside within the court's jurisdiction, and be gainfully employed with evidence of tax payment to the Ogun Government.

She adjourned the case until Aug.24, for further hearing.

He explained that the programme was built on three pillars of showcase, connect and grow, which provide businesses with visibility, direct engagement with buyers and long-term opportunities for expansion.

The commissioner said the flagship exhibition, "Lagos on Display 2026", would hold from Aug. 6 to Aug. 8 at JTT Park, which would bring together 300 MSMEs from across the state to showcase innovative products and services.

Police recover vehicle, apprehend suspected cultist in Akwa Ibom**UYO**

The Police Command in Akwa Ibom says it has recovered a suspected stolen Toyota Hilux vehicle with registration number, NYA 399 AA.

The Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Timfon John, who disclosed this in a statement in Uyo, said that the vehicle was reportedly stolen on Thursday last week.

John said that while on routine patrol, operatives of the command sighted the vehicle with two men on board.

"Upon seeing the police, the suspects fled and were pursued to a non-motorable road where they abandoned the vehicle and escaped into the bush.

"The vehicle has been recovered and currently undergoing investigation. Efforts are on-

going to apprehend the fleeing suspects," she said.

John further said that in a separate operation, personnel from the command apprehended a suspected cultist along Abak Road.

She said that three live cartridges were recovered from the suspect.

The police spokesperson said that during interrogation, the suspect confessed to being a member of a cult group named Black Axe.

John said that the suspect would remain in custody while a thorough investigation would be conducted to unmask other members of group.

She reiterated the commitment of the State Commissioner of Police, Baba Azare, to sustain intelligence-led operations and other proactive policing strategies in the state.

2027 Hajj: Edo sets August 25 deadline for passport submission

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has fixed August 25, 2026, as the deadline for all registered intending pilgrims for the 2027 Hajj to submit their valid international passports.

The Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabir, announced the deadline as part of measures to ensure the timely enrolment, documentation and processing of intending pilgrims ahead of the 2027 Hajj exercise.

He warned that registered intending pilgrims who fail

to submit their international passports on or before the stipulated deadline may not be allocated Hajj seats.

According to him, the directive is necessary to enable the Board to complete the documentation and enrolment processes within the required timeframe, particularly against the anticipated closure of the Saudi Arabian Hajj registration server towards the end of August 2026.

Alhaji Eranga urged all intending pilgrims who are yet to submit their international passports to do so without further delay, stressing the

need for strict compliance with the August 25 deadline.

He further advised pilgrims to ensure that their passports are submitted to the appropriate authorities within the stipulated period to avoid any complications in the Hajj registration and allocation process.

The Executive Secretary also made it clear that the Board would not be held responsible for any consequences arising from an intending pilgrim's failure to comply with the deadline.

He therefore called on all registered intending pilgrims in Edo State to treat the direc-

tive with utmost urgency and ensure full compliance to facilitate a smooth and timely completion of the 2027 Hajj registration and documentation process. "Through strategic partnerships and impactful programmes, the summit provides a platform for young people to engage with industry experts and explore opportunities in the aviation industry," he said.

Agadibe said that the summit was an annual initiative dedicated to promoting aviation awareness, career development, innovation, and youth inclusion within Nigeria's aviation sector.

FEATURE

A CUT SHORT AT 23: The Tragic Story of a promising Law student

MUYIDEEN FUNMILAYO

The dream of becoming a lawyer is often built on years of sacrifice, sleepless nights, examinations, lectures and the determination to one day stand confidently in a courtroom. For many young Nigerians, gaining admission into the Nigerian Law School is not simply another stage of education; it is a major milestone and a symbol of hope for the future.

But behind the books, academic achievements and professional ambitions, many students quietly battle pressures that may not be visible to those around them.

The reported death of a 23-year-old Nigerian Law School student at a Lagos campus has therefore sparked sadness and renewed concerns about the emotional and psychological pressures faced by young people pursuing demanding academic careers.

A photograph circulating on social media shows the young woman dressed formally in a dark suit and white shirt, looking calm and composed. Beneath the photograph is a heartbreaking report alleging that she died after falling from a four-storey hostel building at the Lagos campus of the Nigerian Law School.

At just 23, her life was reportedly cut short at a time when she was preparing for a future that many young people dream of.

Her photograph presents an image of a young woman who appeared prepared for the professional world. The suit she wore represented more than clothing. For a law student, it can symbolise discipline, confidence, professionalism and the hope of eventually becoming a member of the legal profession.

Yet, behind every photograph is a human story—a family, friends, classmates, lecturers and dreams that cannot be captured in a single image.

A Dream That Ended Too Soon

For many Nigerian families, sending a child to study law comes with enormous expectations. The journey is often expensive and demanding, requiring years of education before the student can finally qualify to practise.

Students at the Nigerian Law School face an especially intensive academic environment. They are expected to cope with lectures, assignments, examinations, practical legal training and the pressure of meeting professional requirements.

For a 23-year-old student, such expectations can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Young people at this stage of life are often expected to succeed academically while also dealing with financial concerns, family expectations, relationships, uncertainty about the future and the ordinary struggles of growing into adulthood.

These pressures may not always be obvious.

A student may attend lectures, smile with friends, dress confidently and appear perfectly fine, while privately struggling with emotional difficulties.

That is why tragedies such as this raise an important question: How much do we really know about what the peo-



TRAGIC END:
FAITH AJOKE ALAYANDE

ple around us are going through?

The Silent Battle Among Young People

Mental and emotional struggles are not always visible.

Someone who appears happy in public may be experiencing sadness, anxiety, loneliness or hopelessness in private. Sometimes, people who are struggling do not know how to express what they are feeling. Others may fear being judged, misunderstood or labelled as weak.

In academic environments, there can also be a culture of constantly pushing oneself to achieve more.

Students are frequently told to work harder, pass their examinations, make their families proud and secure a successful future. While encouragement and ambition are important, young people also need spaces where they can admit that they are struggling without fear.

The tragedy reported at the Lagos campus is a painful reminder that academic success alone does not tell the full story of a person's wellbeing.

A student can be intelligent and hardworking and still need emotional support.

A person can be ambitious and still become overwhelmed.

A person can smile and still be hurt-



At just 23, her life was reportedly cut short at a time when she was preparing for a future that many young people dream of.

son's life has lost its value.

A Loss That Affects More Than One Person

When a young person dies, the loss does not end with the individual.

There are parents who must deal with an unimaginable pain. There are siblings who lose a brother or sister. There are friends who may struggle to understand what happened. There are classmates who suddenly realise that someone they saw every day will no longer sit beside them.

There are lecturers and schoolmates left with questions that may never have answers.

For those who knew the student, the photograph may no longer simply be an image circulating online. It may be the face of someone they spoke to, studied with, laughed with or shared plans for the future.

And for the family, the dreams attached to their daughter's education may suddenly become memories.

The Need to Pay Attention

One of the biggest lessons from tragedies involving young people is the importance of paying attention to changes in behaviour.

Sometimes, a person may withdraw from friends. They may stop participating in activities they previously enjoyed. They may become unusually quiet or constantly express feelings of hopelessness.

Not every change means that someone is experiencing a crisis, but noticeable changes should not simply be ignored.

Friends can ask questions.

Classmates can check on one another.

Lecturers and school authorities can create environments where students feel safe seeking help.

Families can listen without immediately judging or criticising.

Most importantly, young people should be reminded that asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

Beyond the phrase "23-year-old law student" may appear briefly in a headline, but it represents a whole human life.

She was more than a student.

She was someone's daughter.

Someone's friend.

Someone's classmate.

Someone who had dreams about the future.

Someone who had plans that may never be fulfilled.

The tragedy should therefore not be reduced to a photograph and a few lines of information on social media. It should encourage meaningful conversations about the wellbeing of students and the responsibilities of educational institutions to support them.

As investigations and official accounts surrounding the reported incident are awaited, it is important not to speculate about the circumstances or reasons behind her death. The focus should instead remain on the value of human life, compassion for those affected and the need to ensure that students have access to appropriate support when they are struggling.

A Future That Should Have Been

At 23, many young people are only beginning to discover what their lives might become.

There are careers to build, places to visit, friendships to strengthen and dreams to pursue.

For a law student, there may have been a courtroom waiting somewhere in the future—a first case, a first legal argument, a professional qualification and perhaps years of service to society.

Those possibilities make the reported tragedy even more painful.

It reminds society that behind every academic record is a human being, and behind every student is a life that deserves care and protection.

The Nigerian Law School, universities and other educational institutions have an important role to play in creating stronger support systems for students. Counselling services should be accessible, confidential and properly supported. Students should know where to turn when academic, financial or personal problems become overwhelming.

Friends and families also have a role to play.



Nigeria Law School Complex, Lagos.

FEATURE

Dennis Idahosa at 46: The making of a new generation leader

MATTHEW OKAGHA

At 46, the Deputy Governor of Edo State, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, stands at an important juncture in a political journey that has steadily evolved from private enterprise and public administration to the corridors of the National Assembly and, now, the highest level of governance in Edo State.

His birthday therefore offers more than an occasion for celebration. It is also an opportunity to reflect on a journey marked by ambition, resilience, public responsibility and a growing commitment to the development of his people.

Born on November 8, 1980, in Benin City, Edo State, Idahosa belongs to a generation of Nigerians whose emergence in public life has challenged the traditional perception that meaningful political leadership must necessarily come with advanced age.

His trajectory has been distinctive. Before venturing fully into partisan politics, he gained experience in the private sector, particularly in the health and allied sectors. That exposure provided him with an understanding of enterprise, administration and the practical challenges confronting individuals and institutions outside government.

His transition into public service came during the administration of former Edo State Governor, Adams Oshiomhole, when he was appointed Commissioner for Investments, Public-Private Partnerships between 2014 and 2015.

The appointment was significant. It brought him into the arena where government policy, investment, private enterprise and public interest intersect.



Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa

He later served with the National Agency of the Great Green Wall in Abuja, further broadening his exposure to national development initiatives.

But it was his entry into elective politics that brought him into wider national prominence.

In 2019, Idahosa was elected to the House of Representatives, representing Ovia Federal Constituency, and was returned to the National Assembly in 2023. His years in the House gave him the opportunity to participate in legislative processes and constituency representation while

consolidating his profile as one of the younger politicians making their mark on the national stage.

His political ascent reached another defining moment with his emergence as the Deputy Governor-elect of Edo State alongside Governor Monday Okpebholo.

The transition from the National Assembly to the Edo State Government represents not just another political milestone, but a greater responsibility to the people of the state.

As Deputy Governor, Idahosa now occupies an office that demands loyalty to the administration, accessibility to the people, political maturity and an understanding of the delicate balance between governance and the expectations of citizens.

For a state like Edo, with its rich history, cultural heritage, enormous human capital and developmental aspirations, the task before its leaders is considerable.

The people expect roads that work, institutions that deliver, opportunities for young people, security for communities, an enabling environment for businesses and a government that listens.

The office of Deputy Governor, therefore, is not merely ceremonial. It provides an important platform for supporting the Governor, strengthening government programmes and maintaining the connection between the administration and the people.

For Idahosa, his years in politics and public administration have provided considerable preparation for this responsibility.

At 46, he represents a generation that must increasingly take ownership of Nigeria's political and developmental future.

The journey ahead will undoubtedly present challenges. Leadership at this level requires patience, humility, courage and the ability to listen as much as it requires political skill.

It also demands the understanding that public office is ultimately a trust.

As he celebrates another year today, the people of Edo State will hope that the experience gathered from the private sector, the state executive council and the National Assembly will continue to shape his contributions to the administration of the state.

Beyond the political office and titles, birthdays provide moments for reflection: where one has been, where one is today and, more importantly, what one intends to leave behind.

For Hon. Dennis Idahosa, the next chapter offers an opportunity to transform political experience into enduring public value and to help build a legacy defined not simply by the offices occupied, but by the lives touched and the development achieved.

His 46th birthday is therefore a celebration of life, but also a reminder of the greater responsibilities that come with leadership.

As he adds another year, may he be endowed with greater wisdom, sound health, courage and humility to serve the people entrusted to his care.

May his years ahead be marked by fulfilment, purposeful service and enduring accomplishments.

Happy 46th Birthday, His Excellency, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, Deputy Governor of Edo State.

May the years ahead bring greater wisdom, greater service and a legacy that will endure.

Congratulations and many happy returns.

Prof Lilian Salami at 70

Professor Lilian Salami a woman of remarkable attributes and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin reaches the remarkable age of 70. A woman of great intellect - an illustrious, visionary, erudite, trailblazing, indefatigable, magnanimous, sagacious and exemplary leader - whose life at 70 reflects enduring excellence in academia, leadership, and service. Her excellent and exemplary leadership example at the University of Benin has now opened an overwhelming gateway for women leadership in Nigeria's university system.

It is with profound joy, deep admiration, and immense gratitude that I join her family, friends, colleagues, former students, and countless well-wishers around the world to celebrate her 70th birthday. This remarkable milestone is not only a celebration of a life well lived but it's also an extraordinary legacy of scholarship, visionary leadership, integrity, and selfless service to humanity.

Her tenure as the immediate past Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin will remain indelibly engraved in the history of the institution. Under her purposeful and

inspiring leadership, the University experienced one of the most remarkable periods of growth, transformation, and institutional renewal. She strengthened the academic enterprise, enhanced the University's infrastructure, promoted excellence in teaching and research, and created an environment in which innovation and creativity flourished.

Perhaps her greatest achievement..... was her unwavering commitment to preserving the true ideals of the university system. She upheld the enduring principles of universality, academic freedom, inclusiveness, equity, and social justice, ensuring that every member of the University community had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to its growth. Through her wisdom, humility, courage, and exceptional administrative acumen, she united people across disciplines and backgrounds in pursuit of a common vision of excellence.

The impact of her leadership extended far beyond physical development and the beautiful landscape you cultivated in the university. She inspired confidence, restored hope, nurtured young academics, empowered women and men, and

demonstrated that compassionate leadership and administrative excellence can coexist harmoniously. Her tenure represents one of the most significant and expansive chapters in the history of the University of Benin, and generations yet unborn will continue to benefit from the enduring foundations she laid.

As Professor Lilian Imuetiyan Salami celebrates this landmark birthday, we salute her distinguished career, her countless and unbeatable contributions to higher education in Nigeria, and her unwavering commitment to national development. Her life continues to inspire all who have had the privilege of working with her.

On behalf of all those whose lives she has touched, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to her and to her wonderful family on this joyous occasion. May this new decade of her life be blessed with excellent health, enduring peace, divine favour, abundant joy, and many more years of impactful service. May each new day bring renewed strength, fulfilment, and countless reasons to celebrate.

Join me in wishing this extraordinary woman, former Vice-Chancellor of the great University of Benin,

a role model extraordinary, and a leader of multiple values very happy 70th birthday and happier returns of the day.

May God continue to preserve her, bless her abundantly, and grant her happier, healthy, and more productive years in the service of humanity.



Prof. Lilian Imuetiyan Salami, Fomer Vice Chancellor University of Benin

Sports

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



TOUR OF SPORTS FACILITY IN ENUGU

23rd National Sports Festival: MOC, LOC Set for Facility Inspection in Enugu State

The National Sports Commission NSC and the Enugu State Government are intensifying preparations for the 23rd National Sports Festival, tagged "Coal City Games, Enugu 2026," with the Main Organising Committee MOC scheduled to undertake a comprehensive inspection of sports facilities and other critical infrastructure in Enugu.

The MOC delegation is expected to arrive in Enugu on August 25, 2026, while the inspection exercise will take place on August 26 and 27, 2026. The programme will cul-

● Logo, Mascot Unveiling Scheduled for August 28, 2026

minate in the unveiling of the official Coal City Games logo and mascot by the Local Organising Committee LOC on August 28, 2026.

The inspection is aimed at assessing the readiness of competition and training venues, accommodation facilities, transportation and logistics arrangements, supporting infrastructure, as well as other operational requirements critical to the successful hosting of the Games.

The exercise will also provide an opportunity for the

MOC and LOC to review the progress of preparations, identify areas requiring attention and agree on appropriate measures to ensure that the necessary facilities and operational structures are delivered within the required timelines.

The Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC) and Chairman of the Main Organising Committee (MOC) Hon. Bukola Olopade, will lead the NSC delegation to Enugu State for the inspection exercise. The inspection forms part of the Commission's con-

tinued engagement with the Enugu State Government to ensure that preparations for the 23rd National Sports Festival remain on course and meet the required standards for hosting Nigeria's premier multi-sport event.

The National Sports Commission remains confident that the collaborative efforts of the MOC and LOC will contribute to the successful delivery of the Festival inline with internationally accepted standards and further strengthen Nigeria's rich sporting heritage.

FIBA U18 AfroBasket: Junior D'Tigress Face Cameroon Again, Semi-Final Spot at Stake

Nigeria's Junior D'Tigress will face Cameroon for the second time in five days on Wednesday, with a place in the semi-finals of the 2026 FIBA U18 Women's AfroBasket at stake.

The Nigerian youngsters meet Cameroon in a high-stakes quarter-final at the Palais des Sports de Treichville in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, seeking revenge for their narrow 75-74 defeat in the group phase.

The quarter-final is scheduled for Wednesday, August 12, with the winner advancing to the last four and keeping alive Nigeria's hopes of a deep run in the competition.

Nigeria finished second in Group C with two victories and one defeat.

They opened their campaign with a 54-50 victory over Tunisia before suffering the agonising overtime loss to Cameroon.

They responded strongly by defeating Senegal 70-40 to secure their place in the knockout stage.

Cameroon, meanwhile, enter the quarter-final with a perfect 3-0 record.

They opened with a 61-30 demolition of Senegal before edging Nigeria and completing the group phase with another victory.

The rematch presents a major test for the Junior D'Tigress, but Nigeria can take confidence from how closely they pushed Cameroon in their first meeting.

The statistical battle also suggests a competitive contest.

Cameroon have averaged 65.7 points and 65.7 rebounds per game, compared with Nigeria's 66 points and 49 rebounds.

Nigeria, however, have the better three-point shooting percentage at 22.6 per cent against Cameroon's 16.7 per cent.

Nigeria's defensive performance will also be crucial.

Against Senegal, the Junior D'Tigress forced 34 turnovers and dominated the rebounding battle 53-45, demonstrating the intensity that could prove decisive against Cameroon.

With the group-stage defeat still fresh, Wednesday's encounter offers Nigeria an immediate opportunity to settle the score and, more importantly, move one step closer to the title.



JUNIOR D'TIGRESS

Omo-Ogiefo Handball Club seeks corporate, public support for Young Talents Hunt



OMO-OGIEFO HANDBALL YOUNG TALENTS HUNT

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Omo-Ogiefo Handball Team, Edo State's representative in the 2026 Ardova Handball Premier League, has appealed to corporate organizations, government agencies, philanthropists, and well-meaning Nigerians for urgent financial support to enable it participate effectively in the nation's highest handball competition.

The club made the appeal in a press release signed by the club's Technical Director and Secretary, Osemwengie Elvis.

The club, founded with the vision of discovering, nurturing, and empowering young athletes, has become one of Nigeria's fastest-growing grassroots handball clubs, providing opportunities for children and young people to develop

with discipline, leadership, education, and sporting excellence as their core values.

Osemwengie explained that within a short period, the club has recorded remarkable achievements, including winning promotion from the National Division One Championship to the prestigious Ardova Handball Premier League.

According to him, the club represented Edo State in the 2025 Ardova Handball Premier League, finishing as Bronze Medalists, thus establishing itself among Nigeria's top handball clubs.

He added that the club has also produced athletes who have represented Nigeria at international competitions, demonstrating that grassroots investment can produce national champions.

"Beyond competition, Omo-

Ogiefo Handball Club serves as a platform for youth development by keeping young people away from crime, drug abuse, cultism, and other social vices through structured sports programmes, mentorship, and character development," the release said.

It noted that as preparations intensify for the 2026 Ardova Handball Premier League, "the club faces significant financial challenges. Funding is urgently required to cover players' camping, feeding, transportation, accommodation, registration fees, medical support, equipment, training kits, and other logistics necessary for successful participation.

"The estimated cost of preparing and participating in the competition runs into several millions of naira, an amount that

is beyond the club's current financial capacity."

"The club is therefore inviting corporate organizations including banks, foundations, government institutions, private businesses, and individuals to partner in this noble mission.

"Every young athlete deserves an opportunity to succeed regardless of financial background.

We have proven our ability to develop champions despite limited resources. With the support of corporate organizations, government, and generous Nigerians, we can continue producing future national and international stars while positively transforming lives through sports."

Omo-Ogiefo Handball Club believes that investment in sports is an investment in youth development, peace, healthy living, and national progress.

SPORTS



Enabulele Congratulates Edo Squash players Asade, Oghene for winning Gold, Bronze at Lagos tourney



EDO SQUASH PLAYERS, SAMSON ASADE AND ESE OGHENE

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has congratulated Team Edo squash players, Samson Asade and Ese Oghene, following their impressive performances at the 20th Annual Merchants Express Global Cargo and Turkish Cargo Airlines Squash Tournament in Lagos.

Asade emerged champion in the senior category to claim the gold medal, while his Edo teammate, Oghene, secured the bronze medal at the tournament held at the Lagos Country Club, Ikeja, from August 3 to 8, 2026.

The competition, organised by the Squash Section of the Lagos Country Club, attracted some of the leading squash players in the country.

Reacting to the feat, Enabulele described the performances as a further indication of the growing strength of squash in Edo State.

Enabulele praised the athletes for their hard work, discipline and determination.

He particularly commended Asade for winning the senior category and lauded Oghene for fighting her way to a podium finish.

"On behalf of the Edo State Sports Commission, I warmly congratulate Samson Asade for his outstanding performance, winning the gold medal at the Lago tournament and Ese Oghene for his effort to make a podium finish.

"These achievements are a source of pride to Edo State and further confirm our strong base of abundant sporting talent in our state.

"I commend both athletes and their coaches for their hard work, discipline and determination. Their performances have once again demonstrated that with the right preparation, commitment and support, Edo athletes can compete favourably and excel at the highest level," Enabulele said. He also assured athletes in the state of the continued support of the Governor Monday Okpebholo-led administration in creating the enabling environment for them to develop their talents and compete favourably at national and international competitions.

Lagos is building the sporting future — SSA Adeboye

● **Commends Sanwo-Olu's infrastructure drive ahead of National Intermediate Games**

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Grassroots Sports Development, Hon. Adeyinka Anthony Adeboye, has commended the Lagos State Government for its sustained investment in sporting infrastructure as preparations gather momentum for the inaugural National Intermediate Games, scheduled to hold in Lagos in September 2026.

Hon. Adeboye joined Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu, and other officials during an inspection of sporting facilities across the state, including the ongoing rehabilitation of the Teslim Balogun Stadium, Surulere.

The inspection provided an opportunity to assess the level of work being undertaken ahead of the historic National Intermediate Games, an initiative of the National Sports Commission designed to strengthen the pathway between grassroots participation and elite-level sports.

Speaking after the inspection, Hon. Adeboye expressed satisfaction with the transformation taking place at Teslim Balogun Stadium, particularly

the completed natural grass football pitch and the ongoing work on the tartan track and other facilities.

He described the development as significant not only for the National Intermediate Games but for the long-term future of sports in Lagos and Nigeria.

"What we are seeing here is more than preparation for a competition. It is an investment in the future of Nigerian sports. When you provide young athletes with quality facilities, you give them the opportunity to discover their abilities, develop confidence and compete at a higher level."

The Presidential aide commended Governor Sanwo-Olu for sustaining attention on sports infrastructure across Lagos, noting that the rehabilitation of facilities in Surulere, Agege, Ikorodu, Epe, Badagry and other parts of the state is consistent with the broader objective of taking sports development closer to the people.

He particularly welcomed the governor's emphasis on providing young people with functional sporting facilities within their communities.

NFF apologises to President Tinubu, Nigerians over Women AFCON setback

The President of Nigeria Football Federation, Alhaji Ibrahim Musa Gusau, on behalf of the NFF Executive Committee, the Super Falcons and the entire Nigerian football family, wishes to express our deepest regrets, and sincere apologies to the Government and people of Nigeria following the Super Falcons' failure to secure a direct qualification ticket to the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup at the ongoing 14th Women's Africa Cup of Nations.

We recognise the disappointment this result has caused millions of Nigerians who passionately support and identify with the Super Falcons. The team went into the competition carrying the hopes of the nation and the enormous goodwill and support of the Federal Government, and we regret that we were unable to deliver the result expected at this stage. We wish to extend a special and heartfelt apology to His Excellency, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic, Asiawu Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for this disappointment.

Mr. President has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to Nigerian sports and,

particularly, to the development and welfare of women in sports. The football family will not forget the unprecedented recognition and rewards extended to the Super Falcons following their previous WAFCON triumph, including substantial financial rewards, national honours, houses and an extraordinary reception. His administration has also continued to support and reward excellence

across Nigerian football, including the Super Eagles. These gestures went beyond material rewards; they demonstrated the value Mr. President places on our athletes and his belief in the power of sports to unite and inspire Nigerians.

It is therefore with genuine humility and regret that we acknowledge that we have not been able to repay that confidence with the outcome expected at

this stage of the competition.

We sincerely apologise to Mr. President and deeply appreciate his continued interest, encouragement and investment in Nigerian football.

We also apologise to the National Assembly, the National Sports Commission, our sponsors, stakeholders and, most importantly, the millions of Nigerian supporters at home and around the world.

SWAN congratulates Edo Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, on his 46th Birthday

The Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Edo State chapter has congratulated the Deputy Governor of Edo State Rt Hon Dennis Idahosa on the occasion of his 46th birthday anniversary.

In a statement jointly signed by the chairman and Secretary of Edo SWAN, comrade Kehinde Osagiede and Moses Idahosa, the association celebrates the vibrant and youngest deputy governor in Nigeria, describing him as a true representative of the youth

"On behalf of the Executive and entire members of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Edo State



HON. DENNIS IDAHOSA

Chapter, we warmly felicitate with the Deputy Governor of our dear state, Edo, Rt. Hon. Dennis Osagbemorue Idahosa, on the occasion of his 46th birthday anniversary."

"Today, we celebrate not just a distinguished public servant,

but a quintessential leader, astute politician, passionate sports enthusiast; a bridge-builder whose remarkable contributions to the development of Edo State continues to attract commendation and admiration.

Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa has, over the years, distinguished himself through his exemplary leadership, humility, accessibility and unwavering commitment to the advancement of the people.

His Excellency's emergence as Deputy Governor has further demonstrated your capacity to bring experience, youthful energy, intellectual depth and a people-oriented approach to governance.