

83 Nigerian returnees from South Africa to arrive in Lagos today – FG

ABUJA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs says a new batch of 83 Nigerian returnees from South Africa will arrive in the country on Wednesday.

The Ministry's Spokesman, Kimiebi Ebienfa, disclosed this in a statement issued on Tues-

day in Abuja.

According to him, the returnees were expected to depart Johannesburg at 3.35pm local time and to arrive in the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, by South African Airways at approximately 08.45p.m. same day.

"The ministry wishes to note that this latest cohort of return-

ees is facilitated through the kind intervention and sponsorship of tickets by public-spirited private individuals, whose generosity the Federal Government acknowledges with profound gratitude.

"This development follows the earlier conclusion of the government's voluntary repatriation programme, which saw nearly

1,490 Nigerian citizens repatriated from South Africa amidst rising Afrophobic attacks and anti-foreigner sentiments in the host country," he said.

Ebienfa said the Federal Government remained unwavering in its commitment to safeguarding the welfare and dignity of all Nigerians at

home, and abroad.

He said government viewed Nigerians in the diaspora not as a burden, but as critical assets for national development, and was dedicated to ensuring their protection and well-being.

The ministry's spokesman expressed its appreciation to the private individuals and

philanthropists who stepped forward to assist in such a humanitarian effort.

Their action, he said, was a sterling example of the whole of society approach and public-private collaboration championed by the government in

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#200

2027 Election: INEC projects over 100m registered voters

ABUJA

MATTHEW OKAGHA
(WITH AGENCY REPORT)

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has projected that the number of registered voters in Nigeria will surpass 100 million ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The National Commissioner and Chairman of INEC's Information and Voter Education

Committee (IVEC), Mallam Mohammed Haruna, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja at the commission's Joint Implementation Meeting of the Departments of Voter Education and Publicity (VEP) and Gender and Inclusivity (G&I) for the 2027 general elections.

Haruna said the previous voter register contained more than 93 million registered voters, adding that the figure was expected to cross the 100 million mark after the conclusion

and finalisation of the recently conducted nationwide Continuous Voter Registration (CVR).

According to him, the development would further establish Nigeria as the largest electoral democracy in Africa and place greater responsibility on INEC to ensure effective voter education and inclusive participation.

With about 151 days to the first phase of the 2027 general elections, Haruna charged information officers across the country to intensify publicity

and voter education campaigns to mobilise all eligible Nigerians to participate in the elections.

"Our job is to give the widest and most effective publicity to all five sets of elections to mobilise all Nigerians of voting age to choose their leaders," he said.

He described the task of communicating with more than 100 million voters as both simple and complex, stressing the need for INEC information officers to maintain high professional standards and acquire

adequate knowledge of relevant laws and electoral guidelines.

Haruna urged the officers to communicate in simple, clear and civil language while ensuring that they were conversant with the Constitution, electoral laws and the commission's guidelines.

He also stressed the importance of understanding other relevant legislation, including the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

The INEC commissioner said the commission must

build on the successes recorded in recent off-cycle elections, including the Osun governorship election, to deliver what he described as the freest, fairest and most credible general elections in Nigeria's history.

Also speaking, the Chief Press Secretary to the INEC Chairman, Mr Adedayo Oketola, reaffirmed the commission's commitment, under its Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, to

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INAUGURATION:

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (5th left), Washington Osifo, newly sworn-in Commissioner for Education (3rd left) and Aghedo Oscar Onaiwu, member of the Local Government Service Commission (5th right) among other top functionaries of the state government.

PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE

Okpebholo swears in Osifo as education commissioner

● Appoints Owolabi chairman, CHS governing board

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has sworn in Dr. Washington Osifo as the Commissioner for Education in the state.

Osifo, a former Commissioner for Education, had earlier resigned his appointment to pursue his political ambition. He was recently renominated by the governor and subsequently screened and cleared by the Edo State House of Assembly.

His return to the ministry followed the resignation of his predecessor, Dr. Paddy Iyamu, who also stepped down from the cabinet to pursue his ambition to represent his constituency in the House of Representatives.

Speaking at the swearing-in ceremony, Governor Okpebholo said Osifo was reappointed based on his credibility, competence and capacity to deliver on the responsibilities entrusted to him.

The governor noted that there was still much work to be done in the education sector and charged the new commissioner to focus on the comprehensive development of education at all levels in the state.

"Let me congratulate you, Honourable Commissioner. You were part of us a few months ago and now you are back as Commissioner for Education. We believe you will do well in that ministry. That was why we appointed you to take charge of the ministry.

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NEWS

Edo police arrest TikTok lover over alleged kidnapping

MIKE OSAROIGAGBON

BENIN CITY

Operatives of the Edo State Police Command have arrested a man, Chigozie Anthony, for allegedly luring a girl he met on TikTok to his residence and demanding N. 1m ransom from her parents.

Chigozie was among 15 suspected criminals paraded before journalists by the Command spokesperson, ASP Eno Ikoedem, during the maiden press briefing of the Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daaor, in Benin City, on Tuesday, August 18, 2026.

ASP Ikoedem said the girl was held at Anthony's residence while her parents were contacted and made to pay the N500,000 ransom before the suspect was arrested.

On his part, Anthony denied kidnapping the girl, claiming that she was his girlfriend and that they both planned the act.

He told journalists that the girl had asked him to hide her so that her family would pay money, as she needed the money for her nursing-related plans.

"It's a plan between me and

my girlfriend. We have been chatting for over more than a month now. So she came to my place, and told me that she wants to do business. She said after the work that she's learning now, which is nursing, she will need N800,000 and something thousand.

"She will finish her nursing training next month. She then said that I should hide her so her family would pay money. That was how I hid her and demanded for N500,000 which the parents paid," Anthony said.

However, neither the girl nor her parents were available for comment during the press briefing.

Also paraded were 26-year-old Donatus Martins and his accomplice for allegedly vandalising cables and equipment belonging to the Africa Independent Television, AIT, Benin office.

The police said that the suspects had vandalised equipment worth over N4m

00m from the premises since the station stopped operations.

Martins, however, confessed that he and his accomplice carried out three operations before they were arrested.

Man, 42, arrested over alleged defilement of 12-year-old boy

MIKE OSAROIGAGBON

BENIN CITY

A 42-year-old married man, Oji Okoro, has been arrested by operatives of the Edo State Police Command for allegedly defiling a 12-year-old boy.

Oji Okoro was among 15 suspects paraded before journalists by the Command's spokesperson, ASP Eno Ikoedem, during the maiden press briefing of the Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daaor, in Benin City on Tuesday, August 18, 2026.

The suspects were arrested for various offences, including alleged kidnapping, vandalism, staged kidnapping and unlawful possession of firearms.

Parading Okoro, the police

spokesperson said the suspect committed an unnatural offence against the boy.

"This man, Oji Okoro, committed an unnatural offence; he defiled a 12-year-old boy. He is a married man," she said.

Oji Okoro, who admitted to the offence, said the incident was his first such act, claiming that the boy reported him to his employer, leading to his arrest.

"That was the first time. The boy reported me to his oga, then the police arrested me. It was the devil," he said.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daaor, commended the operatives for their commitment and dedication to duty, assuring that under his watch, Edo State would remain a hostile territory for criminals and their collaborators.

NLC demands immediate action on health workers' pay to avert strike

ABUJA

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has urged the Federal Government to urgently resolve health workers' salary concerns to avert another industrial crisis in the nation's health sector.

NLC President, Mr Joe Ajaero, made the call in a letter dated Aug. 6 and addressed to the Minister of Labour and Employment.

The letter was made availa-

ble to newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja.

Ajaero expressed concern over delays in adjusting the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS) and resolving outstanding demands of the Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU).

He said JOHESU members had endured prolonged delays in spite of Memoranda of Understanding, terms of agreement and Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) reached with the government.

Idahosa urges Edo Youths to Harness Technology as Youth 2.0 Forum opens

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

The two-day Edo Youth 2.0 Impact Forum, organised by the Edo State Government, has opened in Benin City with the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, urging youths in the state to harness technology to develop their ideas and create sustainable opportunities.

The forum, holding at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub on Airport Road, Benin City, has as its theme: "Ideas, Capital and Impact."

Speaking in his keynote address, Idahosa recalled his humble beginnings in the private sector before venturing into public service, stressing that an individual's background should not determine his or her future.

He urged the participants to remain resilient in the face of challenges, noting that determination, innovation and the effective use of available opportunities could help them overcome obstacles and achieve their aspirations.

According to him, the state government is not only interested in encouraging young

people to generate innovative ideas but is also prepared to provide grants to some of them to scale up their initiatives.

The Deputy Governor, however, cautioned beneficiaries to use any government support judiciously and for the purposes for which it was provided.

He said: "Government is not only encouraging ideas to be generated but grants will be provided to some youths to scale up the process which must be put to judicious use."

Idahosa further encouraged the youths to take advantage of technological advancements to improve existing ideas and

transform them into viable ventures.

He said: "Use the available technology to enhance existing ideas."

In her welcome address, the Edo State Commissioner for Youth Affairs, Charity Amayavbeyo, said the theme of the forum was designed to "re-energize the dreams of Edo youths to actualisation."

Amayavbeyo noted that Edo youths had continued to demonstrate creativity, talent and great potential, but required mentorship, access to capital and empowerment opportunities to translate their



SWEARING IN:

L-R: Aghedo Oscar Onaiwu, member of the Local Government Service Commission and Washington Osifo Commissioner for education, during the swearing in ceremony in Benin City.

PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE

INEC: 1.4m Ad-Hoc Staff, 176,000 Polling Units for 2027

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) says it is preparing to deploy approximately 1.4 million ad-hoc personnel across more than 176,000 polling units nationwide for the 2027 general elections.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, SAN, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja while receiving a Pre-Election As-

essment Mission (PEAM) delegation of the International Republican Institute (IRI), led by former United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and former U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, Ambassador Dr. Jendayi Frazier.

Amupitan said the IRI mission, which is in Nigeria from August 11 to 21, came at a critical point in the country's electoral calendar, particularly following the August 15 Osun State governorship election

and the commencement of statutory campaigns and rallies for the 2027 elections on Wednesday, August 19.

He described the mission as "timely and strategic," saying its independent assessment would provide valuable insight into INEC's operational environment as the Commission moves into full-scale preparations for the national elections.

According to him, INEC has used recent off-cycle governorship elections in Ekiti

and Osun, alongside legislative by-elections, as operational stress tests for its technology, logistics and security coordination systems.

He said the performance of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), used for biometric voter verification, and the electronic transmission and public display of polling-unit results through the INEC Result Viewing (IRV) portal had demonstrated strong operational reliability.

Diri hails Akpe's performance, says Deputy has justified his appointment

PHILIP EKE

YENAGOA

Bayelsa State governor, Douye Diri, has described his deputy, Dr Peter Akpe, as the right choice for the position, saying his appointment had been justified by Akpe's performance and acceptance by the people.

Diri stated this on Sunday at a grand reception organised by the Ebdebiri community in Sagbama Local Government Area to honour Akpe.

The governor said the large turnout at the event demonstrated the deputy governor's popularity and acceptance among his people, describing the reception as a show of love, unity and solidarity.

Diri said he was convinced that he had made the right decision in selecting Akpe as his deputy, praising him for his humility, loyalty, competence and ability to identify with his roots.

"I believe I made no mistake that I zeroed in on Akpe. Today's event confirms my decision to

appoint him as my deputy. It is one thing to announce the appointment of a person, and it is another for that person to be accepted and celebrated," he said.

The governor also encouraged the Ebdebiri community to remain united and promote initiatives that would positively impact the lives of the people, while avoiding actions capable of creating division.

He said Akpe's journey from a humble background to his present position demonstrated that there was hope for people regardless of their circumstances, adding that his choice

of deputy was guided by God.

Responding, Akpe thanked Governor Diri for the confidence reposed in him and the opportunity to serve as deputy governor, saying his experience working with the governor had taught him valuable lessons in patience, accommodation and peaceful leadership.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, who chaired the event, also commended Diri for choosing Akpe, describing the deputy governor as a competent politician with extensive experience in public service.

NEWS

Igbinedion varsity, EduTech Global partner on digital education, access

ABUJA

Igbinedion University, Okada, has partnered with EduTech Global to accelerate digital learning and expand access to its academic programmes to learners across the country.

The Co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of EduTech Global, Mr Femi Shonubi, said this in a statement on Tuesday in Abuja.

Shonubi quoted the Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof. Lawrence Ezemoye, as saying the collaboration repre-

sented a significant step toward producing graduates equipped for national and global impact.

Ezemoye said the partnership would see EduTech provide digital learning infrastructure and technology support for the university's Distance Learning Centre (DLC).

According to him, it will also enable learners to access quality university education beyond the conventional cam-

pus environment.

The vice chancellor said the partnership would help the university break geographical barriers and contribute to national workforce development by making quality, industry-aligned education accessible to learners regardless of their location.

"At Igbinedion University, our mandate has always been to lead in producing gradu-

ates equipped for national and global impact.

"By expanding our digital learning infrastructure, we are not just breaking down geographical barriers.

"We are actively contributing to national workforce development by ensuring that quality, industry-aligned education is accessible to every driven learner, regardless of location."

The Director, Igbinedion University Distance Learning Centre, Prof. Gideon Bawa, said the university was motivated by the opportunity to

transform its existing manually operated processes and build a more efficient and scalable distance learning model.

Bawa said the growth recorded by institutions that had leveraged EduTech's technology and expertise was a major factor in the university's decision to engage the company.

"We are confident that this partnership will position Igbinedion University to achieve significant growth in enrolment while strengthening the quality and efficiency of our Distance Learning Centre.

**ENTREPRENEURS PROGRAMME:**

Edo State Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa with Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani, Coordinator, Office of the First Lady of Edo State, during the Edo Young Entrepreneurs programme, EYIF 2-0, themed: IDEAS CAPITAL & IMPACT, held at the Sir Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, Benin City.

PHOTO: MOSES OBOH.

Edo unveils policy to tackle digital GBV

BENIN CITY

The Edo Government has unveiled a Policy Framework on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) to strengthen prevention, reporting, protection, response and accountability against digital abuse.

The policy was unveiled on Monday during the 17th Quarterly Meeting of the Edo Gender-Based Violence Management Committee, in Benin.

The meeting was organised by the Edo Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in collaboration with the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) programme.

It brought together government officials, security agencies, the Judiciary, health workers, development partners, civil society organisations and youth representatives to review GBV interventions and emerging digital violence.

Mrs Edesili Okpebholo-Anani, Chairperson of the committee and Coordinator, Office of the Wife of the Governor, reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating a safer society free from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

Okpebholo-Anani said the state's GBV clubs in secondary schools were designed to equip young people with knowledge of their rights, healthy rela-

tionships, violence prevention, reporting mechanisms and support services.

She said educating young people early would help raise a generation that rejected violence and became advocates of positive social change.

Okpebholo-Anani said technology had transformed communication and interaction but had also created new avenues through which women, girls and vulnerable persons could experience harassment, threats, stalking, cyberbullying and other forms of abuse.

She said the TFGBV policy provided a framework for strengthening prevention, protection, reporting, referrals, survivor-centred services, re-

sponse and accountability.

Anani announced the constitution of an implementation sub-committee to coordinate implementation of the policy, monitor progress, identify gaps and report regularly to the GBV Management Committee.

She urged members to strengthen referral pathways, survivor-centred services, data systems, prevention programmes, community engagement and accountability mechanisms.

The chairperson appreciated RoLAC for its technical and strategic support, saying the partnership had contributed to strengthening policies, institutions and coordination mechanisms for addressing GBV.

Oborevwo commissions Big Heart Radio 92.1 FM

AJUWA VICTOR**ASABA**

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwo, has commissioned Big Heart Radio 92.1 FM, a pioneering media establishment owned by renowned legal practitioner and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Dr. Anthony Idigbe, marking the emergence of the first radio station owned by an Asaba indigene.

The station, strategically located in Asaba, Oshimili South Local Government Area, was unveiled during a colourful ceremony attended by traditional

rulers, government officials, media executives, professionals, business leaders, friends and associates of the Idigbe family.

Representing Governor Oborevwo at the event, the Commissioner for Special Duties (Government House), Dr. Ifeanyi Michael Osuozu, formally commissioned the station and described the investment as a major contribution to the media and socio-economic development of Delta State.

He noted that radio remains one of the most effective tools for information dissemination, public enlightenment and civic engagement, urging the management and staff of Big Heart Radio

to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accuracy and responsible journalism.

Osuozu commended Dr. Idigbe for demonstrating confidence in the state's investment climate and for choosing to invest in a project that would empower citizens through information and education.

The Asagba of Asaba, His Royal Majesty Prof. Epiphany Azingbe, SAN, described the establishment of Big Heart Radio as a landmark achievement and a significant milestone in the history of the Asaba Kingdom.

The revered monarch noted that, to the best of his knowl-

edge, it was the first time an Asaba indigene had established a major radio broadcasting station in the state capital.

He said the project aligned perfectly with his vision of repositioning Asaba and encouraging indigenes to take ownership of the city's development through strategic investments.

Today represents a new dawn for Asaba. This project demonstrates what can be achieved when our people invest in their homeland. It is not just a radio station; it is a platform that will help tell our stories, promote our culture and strengthen our identity, the Asagba stated.

TCN Unveils 100MVA Transformer, Boosts Alausa Transmission Capacity by 70MVA

CAROLINE AMEH**ABUJA**

The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) has commissioned a new 1x100MVA, 132/33kV power transformer at the Alausa Transmission Substation, significantly increasing the facility's capacity and strengthening bulk electricity supply to Lagos communities.

The project, executed by Shanghai Electric Ltd under a World Bank-funded programme, replaces the substation's existing 1x30MVA, 132/33kV transformer and increases its capacity by 70MVA.

With the upgrade, the total capacity of the Alausa Transmission Substation has risen from 135MVA to 205MVA, positioning it to accommodate rising electricity demand in Alausa and surrounding areas.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony on Tuesday, TCN Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer,

Engr. Sule Ahmed Abdulaziz, described the project as a significant milestone in the Federal Government's efforts to strengthen Nigeria's transmission infrastructure.

Abdulaziz said the transformer, upon energisation, would provide more stable and reliable electricity to at least 70,000 residents across Alausa and its environs through the Ikeja Electricity Distribution Company.

He explained that the benefits of the project would not be limited to the immediate communities, stressing that the additional capacity would also increase the volume of bulk electricity TCN could transmit to distribution load centres.

According to him, the project would contribute to improving grid stability while enabling distribution companies to receive more bulk power for onward delivery to consumers within their franchise areas.

"This achievement aligns with President Bola Ahmed

DESTMA boss orders arrest of VIO Major over alleged illegal operations on road corridors

AJUWA VICTOR**ASABA**

The Director-General of the Delta State Traffic Management Authority Destma, Hon. Dr. Benjamin Essien Okiemute, has directed the agency's provost department to arrest any VIO major found carrying out operational activities on DESTMA road corridors across Delta State.

The DG stated that VIO majors do not have the legal backing to operate on road corridors under the jurisdiction of DESTMA in the state.

Dr. Okiemute also reviewed the agency's beat leadership structure one week after the recent change of leadership and reaffirmed the various DESTMA beat leaders.

He further directed the Rescue Operational Team to be proactive in responding to

emergency calls from operational personnel. He also instructed DESTMA drivers to ensure that operational vehicles under their care are properly maintained and kept in good working condition.

The DG further announced that personnel who default in their official duties and violate established regulations would have their hazard allowance withdrawn as part of measures to enforce discipline within the agency.

Meanwhile, the Director of Operations, Engr. Francis Ede-ma, warned personnel against wearing earrings, using drugs and consuming alcohol while on duty.

He also directed officers to always answer official calls, irrespective of the person making the call, stressing the importance of effective communication in the discharge of their duties.

Experts urge FG to list State Assets to deepen Stock Market

BERNADETTE IDALU

LAGOS

Financial experts have urged the Federal Government to list major Government-Owned Enterprises (GOEs) on the Nigerian Exchange Ltd. (NGX) as part of efforts to deepen the capital market and consolidate Nigeria's position as Africa's second-largest stock market.

The experts made the call in separate interviews with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Lagos.

Dr Ayo Teriba, Chief Executive Officer of Economic Associates, said listing strategic government assets would expand market capitalisation, unlock value and attract greater domestic and foreign investment.

Teriba suggested that the Federal Government could list its stakes in the 11 electricity distribution companies, the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), the Nigerian Railway Corporation and other strategic assets on the NGX.

"We envisage the government listing its holdings in these en-

terprises to deepen the market and unlock value," he said.

According to him, countries such as China and Saudi Arabia have successfully leveraged listings of state-owned enterprises to boost market capitalisation and increase investor participation.

Teriba attributed the recent improvement in the Nigerian stock market to stronger external reserves and reforms in the foreign.

He said the liberalisation of the foreign exchange market, coupled with policies supporting Bureau de Change (BDC)

operators and International Money Transfer Operators (IMTOs), had improved foreign exchange supply and strengthened the country's reserves.

"Previously, the market was characterised by multiple exchange rates and distortions, but the willing-buyer, willing-seller framework has improved remittances, strengthened the naira and enhanced market confidence," he said.

Teriba added that sustained appreciation of the naira would encourage foreign investors to hold Nigerian assets and in-

crease their participation in the stock market.

Similarly, Mr Benjamin Akinsoto, Senior Researcher at BAA Consult, urged regulators to reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks that discourage foreign investors from participating in the Nigerian capital market.

Akinsoto noted that domestic investors currently accounted for about 80 per cent of market transactions, while foreign investors accounted for roughly 20 per cent.

"Foreign investors face chal-

lenges such as account prefunding requirements, which slow transactions and limit timely participation in the market," he said.

He stressed that removing such constraints would encourage greater foreign capital inflows and further expand the size and depth of the market.

Akinsoto recalled that Nigeria had previously been upgraded to frontier market status and called for policies that would enhance the country's attractiveness to international investors.

83 Nigerian returnees from...

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tackling challenges facing Nigerian citizens abroad.

"The ministry commends their patriotism and selflessness, which have significantly alleviated the plight of our compatriots in South Africa.

"In light of this, the ministry calls upon the organised private sector, corporate organisations, state governments, and other well-meaning Nigerians in the diaspora to emulate these worthy examples," he said.

He noted that their collective efforts would bolster national capacity to respond to consular emergencies effectively.

Ebiefra said government remained committed to deepening strategic partnerships with host nations, including South Africa, to tackle the root causes of Afrophobia.

He added that government would ensure that acts of violence and discrimination against Nigerians are prevented, would condemn them and hold perpetrators to account.

INEC projects over 100m...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

conducting credible, inclusive and transparent elections.

Oketola described the joint implementation meeting as timely, saying it would help the commission develop an actionable communication and inclusivity roadmap for the 2027 elections.

He noted that while technological infrastructure and operational logistics remained critical to electoral administration, the VEP and G&I departments constituted the human face and voice of the commission.

According to him, the departments have the responsibility of building public confidence, simplifying electoral procedures and ensuring that no eligible citizen is excluded from the electoral process.

Oketola, however, warned that the communication environment ahead of the 2027 elections would be threatened by misinformation and disinformation capable of un-

dermining voter confidence and encouraging apathy.

He said proactive, factual and continuous public engagement remained the best response to the growing challenge.

"Our messaging must move beyond traditional announcement-style publicity into aggressive, daily civic education that demystifies our technology, such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and INEC Results Viewing (IReV), and reinforces the integrity of the open secret ballot system," he said.

On gender and inclusivity, Oketola said electoral access for persons with disabilities, women, youths and elderly citizens was a constitutional right.

He listed measures such as the deployment of Braille ballot guides and magnifying glasses, priority queues for vulnerable voters and increased youth participation through the CVR as part of efforts to make the 2027 elections more accessible.

Okpebholo swears in Osifo...

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"There is a lot to be done in the educational system. We want you to please develop the educational system for Edo people. I want you to follow up and develop all aspects of education — primary, secondary and tertiary education systems in Edo State. We want to record success under your watch," the governor said.

Also sworn in at the ceremony was Mr. Aghedo Oscar Onaiwu, who took the oath of office as a member of the Edo State Local Government Service Commission.

Responding on behalf of the newly sworn-in appointees, Osifo pledged his loyalty to Governor Okpebholo and assured him of his commitment

to advancing the administration's education agenda.

"This is my second time in a space of two years being sworn in as commissioner. I was here as commissioner in 2025 and now here again in 2026.

"I do not take this for granted, Your Excellency. I will do my best as commissioner. Nobody lobbied you to appoint me as commissioner, but it was your choice.

"For me, loyalty to your ideas, objectives and noble aspirations for Edo people will also be my core objective. My loyalty is to you as governor and head of government.

"Through my job and diligence, my loyalty will be defined. We will follow your footsteps and deliver for Edo people," Osifo said.



COURTESY VISIT:

Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with the Co-leader, International Republican Institute (IRI) Pre-Election Assessment Mission, Dr Jendayi Frazier, during the latter's visit to the chairman's office at the commission headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

Erhabor family sends SOS to Delta Govt. over community flooding

SAPELE

OUR CORRESPONDENT

The Erhabor family in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State has appealed to the state government and relevant agencies to urgently intervene in the flooding that has displaced residents and caused significant damage to property in the area.

In a Save Our Soul (SOS) statement issued to newsmen, the family said the flooding had become a serious environmental challenge in the Amuk-

pe/Sajere-Ibada axis, along the Eku-Abraka Expressway, near the School of Medical Nursing Sciences, Amukpe.

The family said the persistent flooding had affected homes, roads, schools, farms and businesses, noting that several residents had been forced to leave their homes.

According to the statement, flooding in the community had resulted in the destruction of houses, roads, bridges, crops and other valuable property, while also disrupting businesses, transportation, education and other daily activities.

The family expressed concern over the health implications of the situation, warning that stagnant floodwater contaminated with sewage and refuse could increase the risk of water-borne diseases, including cholera and typhoid.

It identified blocked drainage channels and indiscriminate dumping of refuse as major contributors to the flooding.

The statement noted that the disposal of plastics, bottles and other waste materials into gutters and waterways prevented rainwater from flowing freely, thereby worsening the situation.

The family also attributed the problem to poor urban planning

and the construction of buildings on natural waterways, adding that changing weather patterns and heavier, unpredictable rainfall could further aggravate flooding in the community.

While appealing for immediate government intervention, the Erhabor family urged the relevant authorities to take urgent measures to address the blocked drainage channels and other environmental factors responsible for the recurring flooding.

It stressed that the situation required immediate attention to prevent further damage to lives and property and to restore normalcy to the affected communities.

2027 campaigns: IPAC cautions politicians, supporters against violence

LAGOS

The Chairman of the Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Lagos State, Mrs Temilola Akinade, has urged political parties and their supporters to embrace peaceful campaigns ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Akinade, in a statement on Tuesday in Lagos, cautioned against bitter and violent campaigns, urging political actors across the state to conduct themselves with discipline, maturity and respect before, during and after the elections.

The News Agency of Nige-

ria (NAN) reports that presidential campaigns begin on Wednesday, according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) 2027 elections timetable.

She called on political parties, candidates, supporters and other stakeholders to embrace sportsmanship, tolerance and peaceful coexistence as preparations and campaign activities intensify.

"As INEC lifts ban on presidential campaigns ahead of 2027, we must jettison any attempts to bring bitterness into electioneering.

"We must avoid bitter pol-

itics and campaigns this time around. No life should be lost because we want to retain or wrestle power.

"Life is sacred. Let us not because of politics throw our city into unnecessary chaos. We must avoid those things that divide us, especially in a state like Lagos," the IPAC boss said.

Akinade said the campaign preparation period provided an opportunity for political parties and stakeholders to properly organise, coordinate and present their programmes and political agendas to the electorate.

She cautioned that political activities must not become a

battlefield or an avenue for physical confrontation, provocation, insults, intimidation violence.

Akinade urged political parties and their supporters to respect one another irrespective of political affiliation and avoid provocative statements, abusive language and unnecessary confrontations.

She said such conduct could undermine the peace and stability of the electoral process.

She also called on all political parties to take responsibility for the conduct of their supporters by ensuring that campaign activities were conducted peacefully and in accordance with the law.

NEWS

Lawmaker advocates exclusive breastfeeding among mothers

UYO

Mr Moses Essien, Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Health, Nutrition and Food Security, has urged mothers and stakeholders to promote breastfeeding benefits as critical intervention for maternal and child health.

Essien made the call on Tuesday in Uyo during the 2026

Ibom Open Maternity Project organised by the CareLife Character Foundation to mark World Breastfeeding Week.

The event brought together development and healthcare partners, including Helen Keller International, GIFA and ECEWS, as collaborative agencies supporting efforts to improve maternal and child healthcare services.

The All Progressives Congress (APC) member repre-

senting Ibiono Ibom Constituency urged women to embrace exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months to promote healthy child growth.

"The wellbeing of mothers and children is a fundamental investment in our future, and should remain a priority in governance and public policy," Essien said.

He said breastfeeding provided an important foundation for healthy child development and should be actively promoted through public awareness, community engagement and appropri-

ate support for nursing mothers.

The committee chairman called for stronger collaboration among government, healthcare professionals, development partners, civil society organisations and communities to address preventable maternal and child deaths.

He said the Ibom Open Maternity Project demonstrated the impact achievable when stakeholders worked together to improve maternal and child healthcare services across the state.

Essien said the project aligned with Gov. Umo Eno's

ARISE Agenda, particularly the administration's commitment to strengthening healthcare delivery and reducing preventable maternal and child deaths.

He reaffirmed his commitment to supporting policies and legislative measures aimed at strengthening the state's healthcare system, emphasising the need for sustained partnerships beyond government.

The lawmaker commended the CareLife Character Foundation for its sustained healthcare interventions, particularly efforts to improve access to maternal and child health services for vulnerable women and children.

Dr Aniekeme George, President, CareLife Character Foundation, said the project was designed to encourage exclusive breastfeeding and promote open communication between pregnant women and healthcare workers.

George said the 2025 edition reached more than 17,000 women and children across seven Local Government Areas of the state, while the 2026 edition expanded to 20 LGAs. He said the 2026 programme targeted 12,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women and 20,000 children under five, describing the expansion as evidence of the initiative's growing impact.



8TH ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARD:

From left: Gov. Dauda Lawal of Zamfara State; National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda; Director General, National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Mrs Zubaida Umar; former Governor of Zamfara State, Sen. Abdulaziz Yari and Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris at the 8th Annual Lecture and Award of Blueprint Newspapers in Abuja.

Dabiri-Erewa tasks LASU graduates on harnessing diaspora for development

LAGOS

The Chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Mrs Abike Dabiri-Erewa, has called on Lagos State University (LASU) graduates to harness the Nigerian diaspora for national development.

Dabiri-Erewa made the call on Tuesday while delivering LASU's 29th and 30th Combined Convocation Lecture at the university's main campus, Ojo.

The lecture was entitled, "From LASU to the World: Harnessing the Nigerian Diaspora as the Seventh Region for National Development".

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that harnessing the Nigerian diaspora for national development means using the money, skills, and global experience of Nigerians living abroad to build and grow the home economy.

Dabiri-Erewa said the Nigerian diaspora, estimated at 17 million people, constituted the country's seventh region and remained a

major development resource.

According to her, Nigerians abroad are excelling in medicine, engineering, entrepreneurship and other fields, contributing significantly to global development.

She urged the graduates to see their degrees as foundations, stressing that skills, competence, character, courage and hard work would determine their success.

"Be skilled, not just certified. Let your skills be your currency. Learn digital skills, communication and other relevant skills," she said.

Dabiri-Erewa urged the grad-

uates to think globally while building locally, saying that geographical location should not limit their capacities to create values and solve problems.

She urged them to acquire additional knowledge, earn legitimately, excel wherever they would find themselves and remain connected to Nigeria.

The NIDCOM chairman advised the graduates to become ambassadors of Nigeria by correcting negative narratives through their character, conduct, competence and contributions.

Man, 54, in court over alleged stealing of 5 goats worth N300,000

IBADAN

A 54-year-old man, Nureni Rauf, was on Tuesday arraigned before an Iyaganku Chief Magistrates' Court, Ibadan, over alleged stealing of five goats valued at N300,000.

Rauf is standing trial on a five-count charge bordering on conspiracy, stealing, dangerous driving and causing bodily harm.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The prosecutor, Insp Funmilayo Ige, told the court that Rauf and others still at large committed the offences on July 24 at about 10.00 a.m. at Oloje, Irekari area, Soka, Ibadan.

Ige said Rauf allegedly stole the five goats belonging to one Alhaji Dauda Oyakojo.

The prosecutor alleged that Rauf, while driving a Toyo-

ta Corolla with registration number AKD 173 JU, drove recklessly while attempting to escape.

Ige alleged that Rauf used the vehicle to injure one Tasiu Hassan while trying to escape with the stolen goats.

She said the offences contravened Sections 390 (3), (9) and 516 of the Criminal Code Laws of Oyo State 2000.

Ige said the offences also contravened Section 3 (1) of the Reckless/Dangerous Driving Act, Cap. 142, Vol. V, and the Road Traffic Act, Cap. 148, Vol. V, Laws of Oyo State 2000.

The Chief Magistrate, Mrs Olabisi Ogunkanmi, admitted Rauf to bail in the sum of one million naira with two sureties in like sum.

Ogunkanmi ordered that one surety must own a building, while the other must be a blood relative of the defendant.

She adjourned the case until Oct. 14 for hearing.

Police arrest 2 suspected one-chance robbery syndicate members in Ogun

ABEOKUTA

The Police Command in Ogun has arrested two suspected members of a notorious "one-chance" robbery syndicate operating in Abeokuta.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday in Abeokuta.

Babaseyi said the suspects were arrested on Saturday following actionable intelligence on their activities.

He said the suspects were sighted in a taxi heading towards Ita-Oshin, Abeokuta, where they allegedly operated as commercial taxi drivers.

According to him, the suspects allegedly used commercial taxi operations as a guise to rob unsuspecting passengers of mobile phones, cash and other valuables.

He said operatives of the Violent Crime Response Unit (VCRU), acting on intelligence, chased the suspects towards Ita-Oshin and intercepted the vehicle.

Babaseyi said the operatives

arrested the two suspects during the operation.

"During interrogation and after their statements were obtained under caution, they confessed to being active members of the 'one-chance' robbery syndicate terrorising commuters in the metropolis," he said.

He said the command had intensified efforts to apprehend other fleeing members of the syndicate and establish the full extent of their activities.

He added that the police were also working to recover relevant exhibits.

The Commissioner of Police, CP Bode Ojajuni, commended the VCRU operatives for their swift response, vigilance and professionalism.

Ojajuni reiterated the command's commitment to ridding the state of criminal elements, warning that perpetrators of crime would find no haven in Ogun.

He urged residents and commuters to remain vigilant and promptly report suspicious persons or criminal activities to the police.

Osun 2026: APC diaspora chieftain calls for magnanimity, reconciliation

LAGOS

Mr Ayoola Lawal, former secretary, APC Committee of Diaspora Chairmen, has urged political leaders to embrace magnanimity and reconciliation following the Osun governorship election on Saturday.

Lawal, who is also a former APC Scandinavia chairman, made this known in a statement in Lagos on Tuesday.

The Independent National Electoral Commission had on

Saturday conducted the governorship election in Osun where the incumbent governor, Ademola Adeleke, of the Accord party was reelected with 511,067 votes.

Lawal appealed to the governor to demonstrate magnanimity in the aftermath of the election by ensuring that the families of those who lost their lives during the campaign period receive appropriate support from the state.

He said: "Magnanimity in victory was one of the greatest

tests of leadership, the winner had an opportunity to demonstrate that victory was not about revenge, humiliation or exclusion.

"It is about bringing people together and governing for everyone.

"The events surrounding the election should provide an opportunity for Osun and Nigeria to reflect seriously on the dangers of political violence.

"An election lasts for a day. Political office lasts for a period. But the consequences of

losing a loved one can last for generations."

He stressed that such assistance should be extended without regard to political affiliation.

The chieftain said: "The dead cannot participate in politics anymore. Their families should not be made to suffer because their loved ones belonged to one political party or another.

"The government has a responsibility to show compassion to every affected family."

Politicians, supporters should be peaceful, civil during campaigns —Ajose

LAGOS

Dr. Samuel Ajose, a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), has urged politicians and their supporters to maintain peace, civility and mutual respect throughout the electioneering period.

Ajose made the call on Tuesday while speaking with newsmen ahead of the commencement of official campaign activities for Presidential and National Assembly elections.

Ajose urged political actors to prioritise issue-based campaigns and avoid inflammatory statements capable of creating tension.

He said that the commencement of campaigns should provide an opportunity for political parties and their candidates to present their programmes and engage voters constructively.

He warned against resorting to personal attacks and character assassination during campaigns.

"Politicians should remember that elections are temporary, but the relationships among Nigerians and

the peace of the country are permanent," he said.

Ajose also appealed to supporters of political parties to exercise restraint and avoid actions that could provoke violence or disrupt the peaceful conduct of campaigns.

He said political differences should not be allowed to divide communities, families and friends.

"Every candidate has the right to canvass for votes within the provisions of the law," he said.

The APC chieftain further urged security agencies and relevant stakeholders to ensure a level playing field for all political parties and candidates throughout the campaign period.

"Security agencies must remain professional and impartial, while political parties and their supporters must cooperate with them to ensure that campaigns are conducted peacefully," he said.

Ajose advised candidates to focus their campaigns on issues affecting the people, including economic development, employment, infrastructure, education, health-care and security.



COURTESY VISIT:

From left: Member of G-100 Group, Rep. Sergius Ogun; Leader of the Group, Mr Salihu Lukman and the Leader of Minority Caucus, House of Representatives, Rep. Frederick Agbedi, during the visit of the group to the Minority Leader's office at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Tuesday.

Jonathan seeks urgent intervention in high-profile interference in off-cycle elections

ABUJA

Former President Goodluck Jonathan has called for an urgent national stakeholders' engagement to address the emerging trend of serving governors, senior public officials and political gladiators descending on states during off-cycle elections.

Jonathan made the call on Tuesday in a statement personally signed by him, entitled: "Osun and the need to set new boundaries for political conduct in off-cycle elections."

He warned that the practice witnessed during recent governorship elections in Osun, Ekiti and Ondo States, if left unchecked, could create an undue pressure that could threaten Nigeria's fragile democracy.

While commending Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies, political parties

and the people of Osun for the peaceful conduct of the governorship election, Jonathan stressed that political mobilisation on election day must have boundaries.

He said that the outcome of the state election demonstrated that Nigeria still possessed the capacity to conduct elections in a manner that strengthens public confidence in the country's democratic institutions.

"While we commend the electoral process itself, there are developments surrounding the election and, more importantly, an emerging trend in political conduct during off-cycle elections that raises concerns.

"The growing practice whereby serving governors, senior political office holders, party leaders and other influential government functionaries, accompanied by large number of aides and heavy

security details from outside a state, converge on states where elections are being conducted raises an issue that demands national attention.

"The conduct witnessed around the recent elections in Osun, Ekiti and Ondo states was, in my view, unusual. It is not a practice that should become normal in a democratic society," he said.

The former president recalled that, as president, similar situations arose during the 2013 Anambra and 2014 Ekiti governorship elections where senior political leaders mobilised and descended on the states.

"Upon being briefed, I ordered party leaders and senior government officials to leave the states immediately," he said.

Jonathan described the trend as unwholesome, saying if left unchecked, it could threaten Nigeria's fragile democracy and have serious long-term implications for democratic stability

"Political parties are entitled to campaigning, mobilising their supporters and deploying their legitimate party structures. That is an essential part of democracy.

"However, there is a point at which political mobilisation, particularly when it involves the overwhelming presence of serving governors, senior public officials and powerful political actors from across the country on election day, can create an atmosphere of apprehension, intimidation, bullying and undue pressure.

"We must ask ourselves whether the increasing deployment of political power and large-scale mobilisation by senior office holders on election day in states holding elections is consistent with the spirit of free, fair and peaceful democratic competition. This hardly happens in other democratic countries.

Flood: Wike orders demolition of houses built on waterways in Abuja

ABUJA

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike has directed the FCT Department of Development Control to immediately demolish all structures built on water channels and right-of-way zones across the territory.

Wike, who gave the directive while briefing newsmen after inspecting the flood-affected areas on Tuesday in the high-brow Maitama District, Abuja, declared that "no big man or senator will be spared".

Wike stated that the recent flooding in parts of the nation's capital was heavily aggravated by man-made factors, particularly illegal developments blocking natural drainage channels.

"We have gone there, and we have seen how people have blocked channels where in the master plan, that is the right-of-way where water is supposed to be channeled.

"People, by their positions, have blocked it, believing that nothing will happen. I have told people this in life, that nothing happened yesterday does not mean that something will not happen today.

"Now you have done your own by blocking the water channel, and nothing has happened. Thank God the flood has come and have drawn our

attention to the place; now something will happen. I'm going to bring those houses down.

"Any house found on the water channel will go down. From today to Saturday, let the Development Control not find any excuse —they cannot," Wike declared.

He noted that when the demolition commenced, people would complain that the timing was wrong because of campaigns for 2027 elections.

"The next thing you'll hear is 'oh, why is he doing this during election period?' 'It's politics. Let us finish the election.' All those houses will go down.

"Some of the owners of those houses are senators, some of them are big men. Heaven will not fall; rather, heaven will be at peace that the right thing has been done," he said.

The minister rejected attempts by critics to frame the administration's response as a failure of governance or a political vendetta.

He emphasised that flooding is a global issue driven by climate change that affects even developed nations like the United States, England, and Dubai.

He also identified man-made causes through illegal developments, unauthorised conversion of public green

Women's political participation key to inclusive governance — Gender advocate

ABUJA

Dr Adetoun Dally, Immediate Past President of Women Community in Africa and Founder of Children Impact and Development Initiative, has called for greater participation of women in political leadership and policymaking in Nigeria.

Dally made the call in an interview with newsmen in Abuja, saying women must be given greater opportunities to contribute to decisions affecting society.

She said the evolution of women's rights had increased women's awareness of their capacity to contribute meaningfully to national develop-

ment.

According to her, women are no longer willing to remain on the sidelines, but are seeking opportunities to add value through education, skills, entrepreneurship and leadership.

Dally said empowering women should begin with the girl-child by providing access to quality education and skills that would enable them become self-reliant and contribute to their communities.

She noted that historically, women had been denied basic rights, including the right to vote and participate equally in public affairs, adding that such limitations were no longer acceptable in the 21st century.

NDLEA intercepts 184.5kg cocaine, arrests 2 in Lagos

LAGOS

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has said it intercepted 184.5kg of cocaine from a courier company in Lagos and arrested two suspects.

NDLEA Chairman, retired Brig.-Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa, disclosed this at a news conference on Tuesday in Lagos.

According to Marwa, the seizure is the largest cocaine consignment intercepted from a courier company in the agency's history.

He said the agency recovered the consignment in collaboration with the management of the unnamed logistics company.

Marwa said one of the suspects, an employee of the courier company, was arrested at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos.

He said NDLEA operatives arrested him while he was attempting to leave the country.

Marwa said the seizure further exposed Nigeria's use as a transit hub for illicit drugs destined for foreign countries.

He warned drug barons, traffickers, financiers, distributors and dealers that the agency had intensified operations against their networks.

"Wherever you hide, whoever sponsors you and however sophisticated your network may be, the long arm of the law will reach you," Marwa said.

NEWS**EU allocates €2.3m to curb cholera outbreaks in Nigeria, others****ABUJA**

The European Commission has allocated 2.3 million Euros in emergency humanitarian funding to Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic and Chad to help contain cholera outbreaks across West and Central Africa.

The EU announces the funding in a statement signed by Mr Modestus Chukwulaka,

Press and Information Officer, EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, on Tuesday in Abuja.

According to the statement, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported more than 61,000 cholera cases in the African Region in the first five months of 2026.

It says Nigeria receives the largest share of 1.5 million euros, which is being used to increase intervention teams, provide essential cholera kits

and strengthen water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions.

The funding also supports the treatment of public water points and household water supplies, as well as epidemiological surveillance in hard-to-reach areas.

It further strengthens case management, risk communication and community sensitisation.

The statement says Came-

roon receives 100,000 euros to support outbreak containment and case management through additional humanitarian staff, essential medicines, cholera treatment units and oral rehydration points in the worst-affected villages.

The CAR receives 500,000 euros to scale up case management and vaccination, alongside water, sanitation and hygiene interventions.

It says the funds also

strengthen risk communication, surveillance and case detection, while supporting dignified and safe burials.

Chad receives 200,000 euros to help break the chain of transmission through improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as community support for surveillance and case management.

The EU Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management, Hadja Lahbib, says the funding is critical as humanitarian needs continue to rise.

"Cholera is preventable and treatable. Yet it still threatens lives when people lack something as basic as safe water

and healthcare.

"At a time when humanitarian needs are growing and resources are shrinking, Europe is not looking away.

"This emergency funding will help our partners act quickly, contain the outbreaks and protect the communities most at risk," Lahbib said.

Cholera is caused by *Vibrio Cholera* bacteria and spreads mainly through consumption of contaminated water.

In severe cases, rapid loss of body fluids can cause dehydration and shock. The disease is not common in Europe, while the risk of spread from imported cases is low.



INAUGURATION OF GAS-INSULATED SUBSTATION:

From left: Chief Representative JICA Nigeria Office, Mr Ishigame Keiji; Minister of Power, Mr Joseph Tegbe; Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Japan in Nigeria, Mr Hitoshi Kozaki; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Power, Mahmuda Mamman and Managing Director Transmission Company of Nigeria, Engr Sule Ahmed Abdulaziz; during the inauguration of Gas-Insulated Substation (GIS) power substation in Lagos on Monday.

Unhygienic conditions at Anagada slaughterhouse worry Gwagwalada residents**GWAGWALADA**

Gwagwalada residents in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), have decried the unhygienic and deplorable state of the Anagada Livestock Market.

The residents, in separate interviews with our correspondent on Wednesday, said the facility was poorly maintained and urgently needed upgrading to meet public health standards.

They described the slaugh-

terhouse section as unfit for processing meat for human consumption.

The correspondent who visited the market observed that animals were slaughtered on dirty floor littered with waste. Butchers were also seen using tyres to process animal skin which produced thick smoke that polluted the air. Slaughtered animals were washed with water from unhygienic sources.

Mrs Deborah Adiche, a trader, expressed fears that the

poor sanitary conditions in the market could expose consumers to diseases.

"The way they handle meat here is very bad. Most times you see meat meant for human consumption on a dirty floor mixed with animal waste.

"Butchers also lack knowledge of standard handling, and sometimes they use motorcycles to transport the meat," she said.

Adiche called on authorities to enforce strict hygiene

practices, sensitise butchers regularly, provide vans for meat transportation and build a standard slaughterhouse with a constant water supply.

Mr Nasiru Ibrahim, a resident, said meat for public consumption should be processed in a clean environment to safeguard public health.

Mrs Bridget Adeniji, a resident, also advocated for total rehabilitation of the facility, including adequate water supply, proper waste disposal, and modern slaughter equipment.

Niger Govt unveils N100m CEmONC equipment to cut maternal, newborn deaths**NIGER**

Bida (Niger) The Niger Government has inaugurated N100 million worth of Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (CEmONC) equipment at selected general hospitals across the state as part of efforts to reduce maternal and newborn mortality.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr. Murtala Muhammad-Bagana, disclosed this during the inauguration of the equipment at the Umaru Sanda Ndayako General Hospital, Bida, on Tuesday.

Muhammad-Bagana said the central focus of the intervention was to prevent maternal and newborn deaths by ensuring rapid and effective management of obstetric haemorrhage, pre-eclampsia, eclampsia, obstructed labour, sepsis, and emergency Caesarean Sections.

He said the Umaru Sanda Ndayako General Hospital and the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Bida, selected for the pilot upgrade, serve a combined catchment population of nearly two million people, including about 400,000 women of reproduc-

tive age.

"For us in Niger, no mother should lose her life while bringing forth new life.

"To make this standard of care a reality, these vital upgrades have been targeted at two strategic anchor facilities: the Umaru Sanda Ndayako General Hospital, Bida, and the Federal Medical Centre, Bida.

"These facilities do not operate in isolation; they serve as a critical clinical safety net for an expansive catchment area.

"Together, they anchor the health security of communities across Bida, Agaie,

Katcha, Gbako, Edati, Lavun, among others, as part of a major expansion of Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care services across the state," he said.

According to the commissioner, the medical equipment, commodities, and consumables were procured through a strategic partnership between the Niger Government and the Federal Government.

He said the investment represented a significant milestone in the state's efforts to reduce preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

Cross River to offer free hydrocele surgeries**CALABAR**

The Cross River Government, in partnership with Helen Keller International, will provide free hydrocelectomy surgeries to 100 persons affected by hydrocele, beginning August 19.

Dr Henry Ayuk, the state's Commissioner for Health, said this at a one-day morbidity management and disability prevention planning meeting for the exercise on Tuesday in Calabar.

Hydrocele is a condition in which excess fluid collects in the sac surrounding a testicle, causing the scrotum to become swollen or enlarged.

Represented by Dr Jonah Ofor, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Ayuk said the intervention targeted boys and men aged 15 years and above, as part of efforts to manage complications arising from lymphatic filariasis.

Ayuk said 50 beneficiaries would be treated at General Hospital Akamkpa, while another 50 would receive treatment at General Hospital Obubra from

Aug. 19 to Aug. 24. "Hydrocele has serious physical, psychological, social and economic consequences, but these surgeries will restore beneficiaries' dignity, confidence and ability to lead productive lives.

"I commend Helen Keller International and other development partners for supporting the state's efforts to prevent and control neglected tropical diseases," he said.

Similarly, Mr Godwin Omeji, State Coordinator, Neglected Tropical Diseases Control Programme, said hydrocele resulted from untreated lymphatic filariasis, causing abnormal scrotal swelling.

Omeji said preventive chemotherapy had been completed, while attention had shifted to managing complications among persons affected by untreated lymphatic filariasis.

He said community mobilisation had begun to identify affected persons, adding that eligible beneficiaries not accommodated would be documented for subsequent surgical sessions.

Nsukka chairman says 20 type-2 PHCs over 90% complete**ENUGU**

The Chairman of Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Mr Jude Asogwa, says 20 Type-2 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) are more than 90 per cent complete, with one already operational.

Asogwa said this at the completed and functional Nsukka PHC Centre, while interacting with journalists during a tour of projects by Governor Peter Mbah's administration.

He said Nsukka was grateful to the governor for approving an additional PHC centre mistakenly included by the contractor, besides the 20 Type-2 PHCs approved for the 20 po-

litical wards.

According to him, the facility was well equipped and staffed to address most health-care needs, while journalists on the tour had their blood pressure, blood sugar and other vital signs checked.

"The PHC is solar-powered, with a functional borehole, oxygen cylinder, drugs, laboratory, all sorts of medical equipment and consumables, maternity, wards and accommodation for doctors, nurses and other clinicians already working here.

"Other ongoing 20 Type-2 PHC projects are more than 90 per cent complete and we will soon take delivery of their equipment and consumables from the state government.

FOREIGN

NEWS



RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT:

Hakainde Hichilema was first elected in 2021 after five previously failed runs for the presidency.

Zambia's Hichilema re-elected president as main rival in hiding over alleged threats

Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema has been re-elected for a second five-year term after securing a 60% share of the vote, the electoral commission has announced.

Hichilema's win was widely expected, with his closest challenger Brian Mundubile getting 38% of the votes cast. The remaining 12 candidates trailed far behind.

The result came after a contested process, with 55-year-old Mundubile earlier claiming victory and alleging, without providing evidence, that there had been voting irregularities.

His party, the NRPUP, told the BBC that Mundubile was in a "secure location under the protection of an international human rights body due to threats made against him".

"He will communicate directly with the Zambian people and the media as soon as circumstances allow," the party said on Tuesday.

Local media reported that Mundubile and his running mate Makebi Zulu had gone into self-imposed exile at a UN agency in the capital, Lusaka, fearing arrests.

It came after some leading opposition figures were arrested in a raid on Friday when the authorities accused of plotting an insurrection. Mundubile called the claim a fabrication.

In a statement after being declared the winner, Hichilema, 64, said: "We are truly humbled by the trust you have placed in our hands."

He said the election showed that Zambia was a place of peace, law and order and a "democratic nation

that settles our differences at the ballot box, and nowhere else".

"To those citizens who preferred the ideas presented by our opponents, we hear you, and we will continue to work for you," he added.

Hundreds of Hichilema's supporters, dressed in the red colours of his United Party for National Development (UPND) flooded the streets of the capital to celebrate after the results declaration.

Zambia has a record of peaceful transfers of power. Since the return to multi-party democracy in 1991, presidential transitions have occurred through the ballot box.

It is unclear if the opposition will challenge the election result.

Mundubile had earlier alleged there had been dis-

crepancies between polling-station results and those officially announced and claimed military involvement at tallying centres.

On Monday, Mundubile described Friday's raid by armed personnel at his home in Lusaka saying they had knocked down the gate with an armoured vehicle, broke doors and windows and opened fire.

He denied allegations that high-grade military weapons were being stored at his home as well as the presence of any militia as the authorities had alleged.

"So they came in to kill us," he told the BBC on Monday.

Mulambo Haimbe, Hichilema's election agent and a senior UPND member said Mundubile's remarks regarding the incident were "not correct".

UK 'supports Ukraine 100%', Burnham says, after Russia's drone warning

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham has said the UK will continue "to support Ukraine 100%", after Moscow warned of "consequences" following confirmation that British-made drones were used in recent Ukrainian strikes in Russia.

"We are not fair-weather friends, we will be there in Ukraine's hour of need and that won't change," said Burnham.

The Russian embassy to the UK earlier accused Britain of "deliberately opting for an escalation of the Ukraine crisis", adding that "the deeper its involvement in the conflict... the higher the price it will pay".

Ukraine has stepped up attacks on Moscow and elsewhere deep inside Russia, particularly targeting oil refineries and logistics sites for its key online retailer Wildberries.

Asked about the Russian threat, the prime minister maintained the UK was "providing support so that Ukraine can defend itself and that's been the British position all the way through this conflict, by previous prime ministers - it remains the case with me".

Prime Minister Andy Burnham: "We will be there in Ukraine's hour of need"

Russia has warned the UK in the past over its role in providing Ukraine with drone technology, as well as Storm Shadow missiles. The Russian embassy said "London's actions will inevitably carry consequences for which it will

have to answer", but did not elaborate on the type of threat Moscow was considering.

The latest phase of the war has directly affected Russia's domestic fuel supplies and dented the Russian economy.

Latest strikes on Wildberries sites as shown in a map of Russia and Ukraine

The UK has been among Ukraine's biggest international supporters since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022. The Ministry of Defence said the UK was "committed to providing the equipment Ukraine needs to defend itself against [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's illegal invasion".

Russia currently controls approximately a fifth of Ukrainian territory but its forces have had very little success on the front line for months.

Nevertheless, casualties have continued to mount behind the front lines.

United Nations officials say last month's civilian death toll of 437 people in Ukraine was the highest since May 2022. In Russia, a foreign ministry spokesman told the Tass news agency on Tuesday that in the past week 69 people including three children had been killed.

In the latest Russian attacks on Ukraine, 17 people have been killed, including 10 in the village of Pechenihiy in north-eastern Ukraine early on Tuesday.

Private homes, a cafe and post office were hit, as two missiles claimed the lives of 10 villagers. Elsewhere, three Ukrainians died in Sumy, two in Zaporizhzhia and two in Kherson.

Student killed in Philippines Catholic school shooting

It is the second school shooting in the Philippines in as many months

A student at a Catholic junior high school in the southern Philippines was shot dead by a fellow student, who later took his own life, a local official said on Tuesday.

The alleged shooter managed to sneak in a .45-calibre pistol into a classroom at the school in Zamboanga City, Mayor Khymmer Adan Olosa told local radio.

The suspect fired at the teacher who was seated at the table, but missed. Afterwards, the suspect moved to another classroom and shot a student who later died, Olosa said.

Alleged livestream footage of the shooting, circulated by local media, showed what appeared to be a first-person perspective, with a gun barrel moving down a hallway, AFP News Agency reported.

The situation was under

control and there were no more active shooters, authorities said.

The incident comes two months after a high school shooting in Tacloban City in the central region left three students killed and 20 others wounded.

The suspects in that shooting were two teenage boys, one of whom was found to have regularly played an explicitly violent online game.

The sandbox game, Gorebox, has been banned in the Philippines and the Senate is investigating the effects of violent computer games on young people.

Across South East Asia, authorities are looking at restricting social media use for minors, citing possible ill effects.

Earlier this month, a Thai teenager killed eight people and himself at his school. Authorities said he consumed violent content on social media.

China censors public mourning as it holds former premier's funeral

Flags at government sites are flying at half-mast and security vehicles are parked in the heart of Beijing, as China mourns former Premier Zhu Rongji.

Zhu died of an illness last week at 97 and was cremated at a funeral in Beijing on Tuesday. The ceremony, attended by senior leaders including President Xi Jinping, was kept low-key. No footage has been released.

Zhu, who served as China's premier from 1998 to 2003, is remembered as one of the country's most important economic reformers.

While hailing the late premier as a "loyal" party mem-

ber, the Chinese state is also wary that public mourning for his era of reform can easily turn into veiled criticisms of the current government under Xi.

Xi was among the leaders who had visited Zhu in hospital or sent condolences after his death, Chinese state media reported on Tuesday. Others included incumbent premier Li Qiang and ex-president Hu Jintao.

After his death, state media described Zhu as an "outstanding member of the Chinese Communist Party" and a "time-tested and loyal Communist fighter".

He was cremated at Baba-

oshan Revolutionary Cemetery, an exclusive resting place for high-ranking officials and other prominent figures.

Meanwhile, online, posts about Zhu have been contained and censored - including an essay written by economist Zhao Jian, which remembered Zhu's era as a time when people were "properly poor" but saw a clear future ahead.

"There were no smartphones then, no short-form videos and no screens filled by the purveyors of anxiety," he wrote.

"The sky was blue, life moved slowly and people could say what they really

thought."

Zhao's comments were removed from WeChat the day after they were published.

The party has long been fearful of public reaction to deaths of senior officials and public figures.

The deaths of former premier Zhou Enlai in 1976 and former CCP general secretary Hu Yaobang in 1989 prompted widespread outpourings of grief that morphed into protests.

Zhu died just days before the Communist Party leadership gathered to commemorate the birth centenary of President Jiang Zemin, who died in 2022.

NEWS**FOREIGN****MEMORIAL SERVICE:**

A memorial service was held at a stadium in Kariba last week and a recovery operation is continuing

Brazil's President Lula hails oil discovery near Amazon River

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has hailed the discovery of oil near the mouth of the Amazon river.

Speaking after the find was announced by Brazil's state-run oil company Petrobras, he said it could be "a passport to the country's future".

His decision to allow exploratory drilling in the area known as the Brazilian Equatorial Margin was heavily criticised by environmentalists, who raised concerns that any potential oil spills could devastate its ecosystem.

Lula, who is running for another four-year term in elections scheduled for October, stressed that he was still committed to eventually phasing out fossil fuels to curb climate change.

The oil discovery was made in the sea about 175km (110 miles) off the Amazon coast but the size of the field is not yet clear.

It is also still unknown

whether extracting the oil, which is located at a depth of 2,886m (9,469ft), would be commercially viable.

Conservationists have warned that the area where the exploratory drilling is taking place is very biodiverse.

They fear that any accidents could threaten not just the nearby reefs but that currents could carry spilled oil to coastal wetlands teeming with wildlife.

Lula has in the past rejected criticism by conservationists as "meddling" and on Monday he again said that he would not accept any foreign interference.

"This means national sovereignty. Any country which has oil of this quality won't allow anyone to butt in," he said.

Petrobras started the exploratory deep-water drilling operation in the area in October 2025.

The company's chief executive Magda Chambriard said that the discovery confirmed that Petrobras's "optimism"

of finding oil in the Brazilian Equatorial Margin had been warranted.

She added that the company was committed to "ensuring the country's energy security".

President Lula has argued that oil revenues are needed to help fund Brazil's transition to non-fossil fuels.

Speaking on Monday, he insisted: "I'm not denying my commitment to the fight for a day when we no longer need fossil fuels, because Brazil will continue to be the king of biofuel innovation and will remain a major player in renewable energy."

Environmentalists were aghast when Lula announced he had given Petrobras the green light to start the exploratory drilling just weeks before the COP30 climate conference hosted by Brazil last November.

In his remarks on Monday, the president made a reference to the anger at the time,

singling out opposition in Europe in particular.

"Many people didn't want me to announce that Petrobras had won the licence because they said that the Europeans would be annoyed," he said.

"I took the decision to announce that people wanted to do exploratory drilling there before COP because the interests of our country and our company were at stake."

The prospect of oil discovery off the coast has already given a boost to the nearest town.

In Oiapoque, in Amapá state, the hope of jobs and opportunities has led to an influx of people, according to the local housing authorities.

With less than two months to go before the presidential election, Lula will be trying to attract voters hoping for economic development in this remote part of Brazil without alienating those concerned about the potential impacts on the environment.

Kariba ferry death toll rises to 93, making it Zimbabwe's deadliest transport disaster

The death toll from a ferry disaster on Zimbabwe's Lake Kariba has risen to 93, which makes it the country's deadliest transport disaster, according to the state-run Herald newspaper.

The ferry had a capacity to carry 90 passengers, but the paper estimates at least 168 people were actually on board when it was hit by a strong wave and overturned a week ago.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa declared a state of disaster following the accident and search and recovery efforts are continuing by divers.

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

The death toll rose from 44 at the time of the accident to 84 over the weekend, according to police.

Nine more bodies have since been found by divers and a police statement on Tuesday put the death toll at 93.

The bodies were now being

recovered further away from the scene of the sinking, some of them drifting towards Zambia, the Herald reports.

Provincial Affairs Minister Marian Chombo said 67 people had been rescued after the sinking.

But she added that it was proving difficult to identify some of the recovered bodies - with relatives having to rely on clothes and other items to do so.

"We are running out of time and DNA may now be needed to assist in the identification process," the minister was quoted by the Herald as saying.

The police said 83 of the victims had so far been identified, 39 of whom were children.

A vital and cheap transport link for rural communities, the ferry was carrying parents taking their children home for the school holidays and traders, the Herald said.

One survivor in her 40s told the AFP news agency that the ferry had been particularly overloaded at the time with goods - and passengers had raised concerns about the rough conditions.

Carney's final chance to convince Trump as US-Canada trade deadline looms

Intense trade talks are going down to the wire as Canada seeks to avoid a fresh round of tariffs from the Trump administration due to come into effect on Wednesday.

Canadian negotiators have been camped out in Washington for a week, trying to pin down some agreement before new 50% tariffs on some \$20bn (C\$28bn) worth of Canadian imports are imposed.

Prime Minister Mark Carney kept details of the talks close to his chest when pressed by reporters on Monday, saying that given the "very delicate and intense" negotiations, it is "not the time to negotiate in public".

He and Trump spoke by phone on Monday afternoon about the talks, his office confirmed to BBC.

While Carney told reporters that Canada was negotiating from "a position of strength", the stakes are high for the prime minister and his team to reach a deal before the Trump administration's latest financial squeeze, on about 5% of all Canadian imports, takes hold.

Despite a flurry of meetings between Canadian negotiators and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer in recent days, the two sides have yet to reach a final agreement.

"Our job is not yet done," US-Canada Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc said on Monday as he left Greer's office.

Both sides have been clear the talks have been tough.

Trump has described Canada as "nasty" on trade - a characterisation of negotiations that Carney did not entirely dispute.

He has also warned that "the time to get tougher" will be if the countries fail to reach a deal.

Even if one is reached, Carney will need to sell any concessions made to a public frustrated with - and sceptical of - the administration south of the border.

He will also need the buy-in from the provinces on any compromises.

The US has been asking for a number of concessions from Canada, including removing its remaining retaliatory tariffs on American autos and adjusting its dairy quotas.

It has also asked for the ban on US alcohol sales, imposed early last year by most Canadian provinces in retaliation for Trump's tariffs, be removed.

That concession would depend on the agreement of the provinces, which are in control of the alcohol in their respective jurisdictions.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who makes a point of being tough on the US, said last week that an agreement on booze was conditional.

Canada has been in pursuit of a deal that would see the US drop or reduce tariffs on its steel, aluminium, automobile and lumber sectors, all of which have been damaging to the country's economy.

British couple on honeymoon killed in helicopter crash on Greek island

A young British couple and their pilot were killed in a helicopter crash on the Greek island of Sifnos on Monday, Greek police have said.

They have been named as newlyweds Alexander Cromie and Marie Ebert, who were in Greece on their honeymoon.

The private Bell 206 helicopter crashed just metres from a landing pad, killing the pair and their pilot, a Greek national.

The couple are said to have taken the helicopter from the village of Markopoulo near Athens to the popular holiday island, Kathimerini reported.

Greece's aviation safety authority told the BBC it was in-

vestigating the crash and that its investigators were heading to the scene on Tuesday to gather evidence and speak to witnesses.

A Foreign Office spokesperson told the BBC: "Our thoughts are with the families during this difficult time. We are providing consular support and in contact with the Greek authorities."

The BBC has contacted Greek authorities and the aviation company for comment.

Asset management firm Blackstone, where Cromie worked, said in a statement: "We are shocked by the tragic passing of three people including our colleague Alex Cromie and his wife Marie Ebert, who were cele-

brating their honeymoon.

"Alex was beloved by everyone who knew and worked with him at Blackstone, and our thoughts and prayers are with his loved ones."

Ebert worked as a senior specialist at consultancy brand Bain & Company.

In a statement, the company said: "We are shocked to read reports of a tragic accident in Greece regarding one of our colleagues and her husband."

"Our thoughts and support are with the families involved at this very difficult time."

A senior police official told the Times that the crash came just before the helicopter's scheduled landing time of 18:15 local time (16:15 GMT).

Sifnos' Deputy Mayor, Manolis Foundoulakis, arrived at the scene shortly after the incident and told local news site Newsit there was almost "nothing left" of the aircraft.

The island's Deputy Mayor Yiannis Rafeletos told the BBC the people of Sifnos are "devastated" and "deeply shocked".

"So much happiness has turned into sorrow," he added.

He said locals saw the helicopter crash within metres of their homes and had described a "bizarre engine noise coming from the aircraft" as it was about to land.

Firefighters worked to tackle a blaze which broke out after the crash, and the flames had been extinguished by Mon-

INTERVIEW

Edo Govt winning war against crime and criminality — Prince Idaomi

RICHARD EWEKA

The Edo State Government is winning the battle against crime and criminality through a combination of proactive security measures, stronger law enforcement and sustained political commitment, according to political commentator and analyst, Prince Oluwatobi Idaomi.

Idaomi, a political analyst, activist, banker-turned-nursing practitioner and holder of multiple academic degrees, commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for what he described as a bold and determined approach to tackling insecurity across Edo State.

He said the administration's renewed focus on security has helped restore confidence among residents and created a more peaceful atmosphere for businesses and economic activities.

According to him, a secure environment is essential to attracting both local and foreign investment, while also encouraging farmers, entrepreneurs and other residents to pursue their livelihoods without fear.

Excerpts:**What informed Governor Okpebholo's bold approach to fighting criminality?**

Governor Monday Okpebholo's determination to tackle insecurity is informed by the understanding that security is the foundation of meaningful development.

No state can achieve sustainable economic growth when residents live in fear of kidnapping, cultism and other forms of criminality. The governor's approach demonstrates a willingness to confront these challenges directly and restore public confidence.

His administration has made security a priority because Edo must be safe for its people, businesses and

investors to thrive.

How would you score the Okpebholo administration in the fight against crime?

I would score the Edo State Government highly in the area of security because of the policies and measures it has introduced to tackle crime and criminality.

The government has continued to recruit and train security personnel, while recently training and employing 497 forest guards to help secure vulnerable areas and forests across the state.

The administration has also introduced measures targeting properties allegedly linked to kidnapping and cult-related activities and established a special court to facilitate the speedy prosecution of kidnappers and cultists.

These steps demonstrate the seriousness of the administration in confronting criminality. The message is clear: in Edo State, it is no longer business as usual for criminals.

Would the fight against crime encourage more investors to come to Edo?

Definitely. Sustained efforts to tackle kidnapping, cultism and other forms of criminality will make Edo State more attractive to investors.

Investors want an environment where their businesses, employees and investments are protected. Improved security will therefore boost investor confidence and create opportunities for economic expansion.

The agricultural sector will also benefit. When farmers can access their farms without fear of attacks or kidnapping, agricultural production can increase, contributing to food security and economic growth.

Are there visible changes showing that Edo State is winning the war

PRINCE OLUWATOBI IDAOMI

against insecurity?

Yes, there are visible signs of improvement.

The state has witnessed increased efforts to address cult-related violence and kidnapping, while residents are becoming more confident in going about their daily activities.

The support of traditional institutions, particularly the Oba of Benin, has also been important in complementing the government's efforts to promote peace and stability.

The cooperation among the government, security agencies, traditional institutions and communities

remains critical to consolidating the gains already recorded.

What are the positive gains so far in the fight against insecurity?

There are several potential gains from the improved security situation. A safer Edo State will encourage investment, strengthen businesses, support agriculture and create an environment where development can take place.

The administration's recent engagement with Edo indigenes and stakeholders in Edo State also reflects an effort to reassure the diaspora that

Edo State is being repositioned as a safer and more attractive destination for investment and development.

However, the gains must be sustained through continued investment in intelligence gathering, community engagement, youth empowerment, employment opportunities and professional training for security personnel.

Security remains the foundation of development. If the current momentum is sustained, the people of Edo State will be the greatest beneficiaries of a safer, more peaceful and economically vibrant state.

VOX POP

On the Rising Cases of Rape in Nigeria: Causes, Effects and the Way Forward

FIDELIA OBEHIAYE FREEMAN

I think one major reason rape cases are increasing is because many offenders believe they can get away with it. Many victims are too afraid to speak up because they fear being blamed or not believed. Although the laws against rape exist, they are not enforced properly. Parents, schools, religious bodies and communities should educate children about consent and respect from an early age. Government should ensure investigations are handled quickly and offenders are prosecuted without delay. My advice to young people is to always speak up whenever they feel unsafe and never be afraid to report abuse. I believe that ensuring offenders are punished without delay will make the biggest difference in reducing rape cases.

• MISS ESTHER, 24,
UNIVERSITY STUDENT

Poor moral values and the growing lack of respect for others have contributed to the increasing cases of rape in Nigeria. Families need to do better in raising children. The laws may be adequate, but justice often takes too long, discouraging victims from speaking out. Parents, schools and religious organisations should continue educating people about sexual violence. Government should take every reported case seriously and strengthen security. I advise young people never to keep quiet if they experience abuse but to report it immediately. Faster justice will go a long way in reducing rape cases.

• MR OSAGIE, 48, BUSINESSMAN

The lack of proper sex education and respect for personal boundaries is one of the reasons rape cases continue to rise. Laws alone are not enough unless they are properly enforced. Schools should teach students about consent and personal safety, while

parents should have honest conversations with their children. Government should provide support for victims and ensure offenders are punished. Young people must understand that 'no' means 'no'. I also believe more public education on consent and sexual violence will help reduce the problem.

• MS GRACE, 36, SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Social media has made people more aware of rape cases, but drug abuse and peer pressure have also contributed to the problem. The law should apply equally to everyone, regardless of their position. Communities should stop blaming victims and instead encourage them to report cases without fear. Security agencies should handle investigations professionally and protect victims. Young people should respect other people's boundaries and avoid pressuring anyone into

relationships. Ending victim blaming would encourage more survivors to come forward.

— MR DANIEL, 29, YOUTH LEADER

Many people no longer fear the consequences of committing crimes because they hardly see offenders being punished. The laws are good on paper, but authorities need to act more quickly. Parents should teach good values, monitor their children closely and communities should openly condemn rape instead of remaining silent. Government must investigate every reported case and ensure justice is served. I advise young people to be careful, avoid risky situations where possible and never be afraid to report abuse. If society stops protecting offenders because of money, family ties or influence, rape cases will reduce.

• MRS AMINA, 55, TRADER

Sports

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

South-South Badminton championship: Enabulele Receives Athletes

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele has restated the commitment of his commission to deliberate investment in grassroots talents development, insisting that it is the best way to stamp out age cheat in the system.

The Edo Sports Commission boss gave the assurance through the Permanent Secretary of the Commission Mrs A.P.Efe-Amenze when the commission received the state's under 13 badminton team who participated in the South-South Badminton championship which held in Asaba, Delta state between 13th and 16th of August, 2026 at the Stephen

says Edo will continue to promote, invest in developing grassroots talents

Keshi Stadium.

The Permanent Secretary who received the young athletes in behalf of the Commission chairman in her remarks said that the future is bright for Edo Sports as she welcome them back home after an impressive outing in Asaba.

"Let's welcome our children back home. They are our future; our tomorrow leaders and our tomorrow athletes. I'm so happy to receive our young team. They went to Delta state to compete and represent Edo State. They saw and conquered and came back

home as the second best team at the South south badminton championship.

"I am so excited about the impressive outing of our children. It shows that the future is bright. We are confident that the future of our state in sports is not going to be bleak because we are investigating in grassroots sports development.

"We do not believe in age cheat. We believe in talents discovery and developing same because the future of our children is important to us." She said.



The permanent Secretary Edo State Sports Commission Mrs A.P. Efe-Amenze receives Edo Badminton athletes

Aquatics Federation reschedules 'Swim to the Future' for September 5

The Nigeria Aquatics Federation (NAqF) has rescheduled its grassroots swimming initiative, "Swim to the Future," to Sept. 5, in honour of its late President, Chamberlain Dunkwu.

The second edition of the annual initiative was earlier postponed following the death of Dunkwu, who died March 7, the morning of the proposed swimming event.

The federation said the rescheduled event would pro-

vide an opportunity to honour Dunkwu's legacy while promoting grassroots participation, youth development and talent discovery in aquatics.

The initiative is designed to provide young swimmers with opportunities to develop their skills and gain competitive experience as part of efforts to create a pathway to elite competition.

Speaking on the rescheduled event, NAqF President, Lekan Fatodu, said the federation re-

mained committed to developing young talents and strengthening aquatics sports in Nigeria.

"Swim to the Future is more than a swimming event. It is an investment in the future of Nigerian aquatics," Fatodu said.

He said the federation aimed to discover young talents, provide them with the right environment to develop and create a pathway for them to become future champions.

Fatodu said holding the event in honour of Dunkwu would give

the initiative deeper significance, noting that the late president believed strongly in the potential of young Nigerians. "We cannot talk about the future of Nigerian aquatics without remembering those who dedicated themselves to building it," he said.

The federation said the Sept. 5 event would be open to children aged between five and 14 years and would bring together young swimmers, coaches, officials, schools, clubs and other stakeholders.

It said the initiative would also strengthen the foundation for producing a new generation of elite Nigerian swimmers capable of competing at national and international levels.

The federation therefore urged parents, schools, swimming clubs, coaches and other aquatics stakeholders to support and participate in the initiative.

NAqF said the event would combine the remembrance of Dunkwu with efforts to nurture young talents and advance the development of aquatics in Nigeria.



GRASSROOTS SWIMMER

2026 World Wrestling Championships: NWF sets up training camp in U.S.

The Nigerian Wrestling Federation (NWF) has announced plans to establish a training camp in Iowa State University in the U.S., in preparation for the forthcoming 2026 World Wrestling Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

A statement by the Federation on Sunday in Abuja confirmed that the President of the NWF, Bashir Adeniyi, had given the nod to establish

the camp in the U.S. ahead of the World Wrestling Championships scheduled for Oct. 24 to Nov. 1.

The camp is aimed bringing together Nigerian wrestlers based in different parts of the U.S., providing opportunity for them to train collectively ahead of the Championship.

The statement stated that Some of Nigeria's top wrestlers currently studying in

the U.S. will have the opportunity to undergo effective training at the camp, while several home-based wrestlers with valid US visas will also join the training programme.

The NWF also added that the camp will also be opened to new talents willing to join the national wrestling team.

"Nigerian-born athletes residing in the U.S. who are eligible and willing to rep-

resent Nigeria will have the opportunity to participate in the training programme, providing a platform for identifying and integrating talented wrestlers of Nigerian descent into the national team setup," the statement added.

Reacting to the development, Nigeria's Women's Wrestling coach Purity Akuh, thanked the federation for the initiative.

Utibe Arit Archibong joins El-Kanemi Warriors

El-Kanemi Warriors have strengthened their attack with the signing of experienced forward Utibe Arit Archibong ahead of the new season.

Utibe Archibong spent the second half of last season with Godswill Akpabio United FC, where he added experience and quality to the attack.

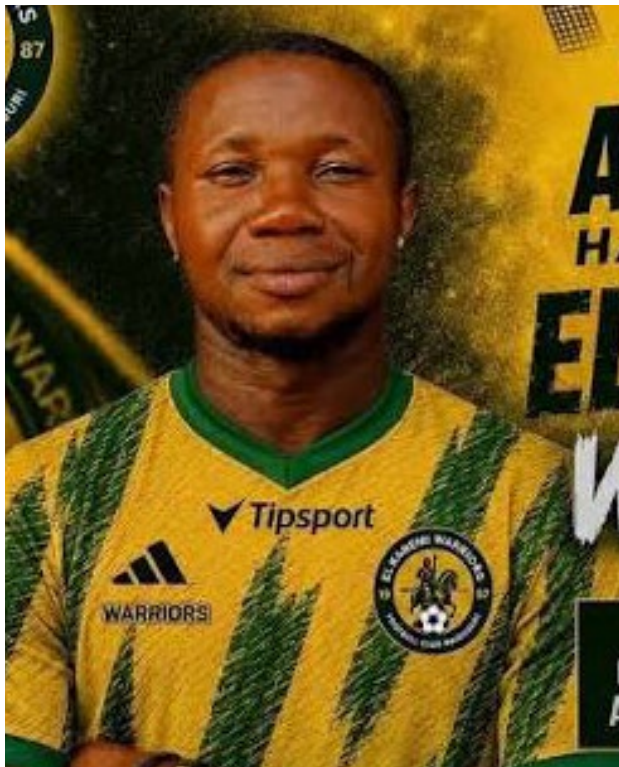
The forward has previously played for several Nigerian clubs, including Akwa United, Dakkada FC, Rovers FC, Shooting Stars, Lobi Stars and Abia Warriors.

His move to El-Kanemi Warriors also reunites him with head coach Emmanuel King, who knows the player well and is expected to make good use of his experience.

El-Kanemi Warriors are preparing for a busy campaign that includes the CAF Confederation Cup, with the club also targeting promotion back to the Nigeria Premier Football League.

The Maiduguri-based side are currently in Jos, Plateau State, for the NFF Super Six tournament, which is designed to give Nigeria's continental representatives quality preparation ahead of their CAF campaigns. The club confirmed their safe arrival in Jos, saying: "Alhamdulillah, we have successfully arrived in Jos, the Plateau State capital."

El-Kanemi Warriors added that they are now fully focused on the task ahead as preparations continue.



UTIBE ARIT ARCHIBONG

SPORTS



REPARATIONS:

Falconets Step Up Preparations with two major tests Ahead of 2026 FIFA U-20 World Cup

FCT FA Division One Super 8: My Hope FC beat Hypebuzz FA, 3-1

My Hope Football Club came from a goal down to defeat Hypebuzz Football Academy 3-1 in their Group A fixture of the ongoing 2026 FCT FA Division One League Super 8 on Monday in Abuja.

The match was played at the Area 3 Football Pitch, with Hypebuzz taking an early lead in the fourth minute after My Hope FC defender scored an own goal.

Hypebuzz continued to threaten, with Sunday Samson and Abdullahi Oyegbola coming close in the 20th minute, while Adams Suileman and Paul Junior went close for My Hope FC in the 25th minute.

In the 36th minute, Hypebuzz's Ifeanyi Bright and Habeeb Abdulsaminu also created

opportunities, but My Hope FC defence stood firm to prevent further damage.

On resumption of the second half, My Hope FC intensified their pressure and equalised in the 49th minute when Hypebuzz FA conceded an own goal to make it 1-1.

My Hope FC made a substitution in the 59th minute, with Pitam Wisdom replacing Sikuru Kazeem.

Hypebuzz came close to regaining the lead in the 63rd minute through Sunday Egbo and Oti Chidike, but their effort hit the crossbar.

My Hope FC completed the turnaround in the 79th minute when Paul Junior fired home to give his side a 2-1 lead.

Pitam Wisdom then sealed

the victory in the 83rd minute, converting a free-kick to extend My Hope FC's lead to 3-1.

Hypebuzz tried to reduce the deficit late in the game, while Adams Suileman and Kelechi Ndukwu came close to adding a fourth goal for My Hope FC

in the 87th minute, but their effort went over the bar.

Speaking after the match, Timi Ogunjimi, Head Coach, My Hope FC, attributed the victory to the determination, consistency and motivation of his players and the technical bench.



Falconets Step Up Preparations with two major tests Ahead of 2026 FIFA U-20 World Cup

Nigeria's Falconets are entering the final stretch of their preparations for the 2026 FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup with two high-profile international friendly matches against Poland and Korea Republic.

The Nigeria U-20 women's national team, led by head coach Moses Aduku, are currently training in Abuja as they fine-tune their squad ahead of the global tournament.

The Falconets are scheduled to depart Nigeria for Poland on August 24, where they will continue their preparations

with the two test matches.

The fixtures will provide Aduku with an opportunity to assess his players, strengthen tactical understanding and improve team cohesion before the World Cup.

The international friendlies are expected to serve as important indicators of Nigeria's readiness, particularly as the coaching crew works to identify the strongest combination ahead of the tournament.

Nigeria have been drawn in Group F alongside Spain, China and New Caledonia, setting up a demanding group-stage schedule.

The Falconets will begin their World Cup campaign against Spain on September 7 before taking on China three days later on September 10.

Nigeria will round off their group-stage fixtures against New Caledonia on September 13.

With the World Cup fast approaching, the encounters against Poland and Korea Republic represent the Falconets' final major opportunities to test themselves against quality opposition before the competition begins.

A strong showing in the two friendlies could provide the confidence and momentum Nigeria need as they prepare to challenge for honours on the global stage.

Gold Cup 2026: Grassrunners FC, Abakaliki FC shock Inter Lagos, Ikorodu City

● Doma United record first win

Lagos Derby rivals, Inter Lagos and Ikorodu City, were on Monday handed reality checks after losing, respectively, to Grassrunners FC and Abakaliki FC on MatchDay 4 of the ongoing Ogunjobi Gold Cup pre-season tournament at the MKO Abiola Stadium, Abeokuta.

Grassrunners FC took just 28 minutes to decide the game, with Ajibola Emmanuel finishing after a defensive slip during play. Ubi Johnson then doubled the lead with a precise shot, putting his team at the top with 10 points.

Ikorodu City paid the price for not killing the game against Abakaliki FC, despite dominating possession at 53%.

Four minutes past the half hour mark, Moses Amanekwu scored to give De Rice Boys their first goal.

De Rice Boys, holding a one-goal lead, added another in the 88th minute when a poor clearance from Ikorodu City allowed Chimaobi Metumareobi to score a half-volley from inside the box. This victory moved Abakaliki FC to second place with 9 points.

Doma United earned their first Gold Cup win as the Savannah Tigers defeated Dokkal Khairu FC 3-1. Goals from Haruna Abubakar (7th minute), Bitrius Philemon (38th minute), and Usman Nasiba (85th minute) highlighted their strong performance against the newly-promoted NNL Dokkal Khairu of Ile-Ife.

Meanwhile, the first MatchDay 4 game between Stormers SC and Sunshine Stars ended in a 1-1 draw, with all goals scored in the first half.

Action resumes on Wednesday, as Tuesday is a rest day.

Nigeria targets continental glory as beach volleyball teams leave for Egypt

Nigeria has set its sights on continental success as the country's men's and women's beach volleyball teams headed to Alexandria, Egypt, for the 2026 African Beach Volleyball Championship.

The Nigerian teams will join the continent's leading beach volleyball nations at the championship, with both sides aiming to make their presence felt in the Egyptian city.

The competition offers the Nigerian players an opportunity to measure their progress against some of Africa's best and gain crucial experience on the international stage.

With the teams now in Egypt, attention shifts to the technical and competitive demands of the championship as Nigeria looks to produce performances capable of earning continental recognition.

The participation of the two teams is also expected to contribute to the continued growth and exposure of beach volleyball in Nigeria, with the players carrying the country's hopes into the continental contest.

Nigeria will be hoping its representatives can translate their preparations into strong performances when the championship gets underway in Alexandria.



Beach Volleyball