

Tinubu approves salary increase for armed forces personnel

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has approved salary increases of between 30 and 80 per cent for personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

The new package will benefit about 250,000 military personnel across the services.

This is contained in a statement by Presidential Spokes-

person, Mr Bayo Onanuga, on Tuesday in Abuja.

According to the Presidency, the new salary structure will take effect from Sept. 1.

Officers above the rank of colonel, including Brigadier-Generals, Major-Generals, Lieutenant-Generals and Generals, will receive a 30 per cent salary increase.

Personnel from colonel to

warrant officer will enjoy a 50 per cent increase under the new arrangement.

Those from the rank of Private to Staff Sergeant will receive an 80 per cent salary increase.

The presidency said the enhanced package would raise the annual salary bill for armed forces personnel from N660 billion to N924 billion.

Tinubu commended members of the armed forces for their sacrifices and commitment to safeguarding the nation.

"The men and women who help to keep us safe in our homes must be supported and appreciated in the course of their duties to our nation."

"Our administration will continue to prioritise troops

welfare and modernise the armed forces by providing the weapons and technological tools needed to discharge their duties.

"Our administration believes that no nation can achieve greatness without security," he said.

The president pledged his administration's commitment to the welfare of the armed

forces, adding that all hands must be on deck to defeat insecurity.

According to him, we remain resolute in mobilising all military and law enforcement assets to eliminate security threats and protect the lives and property of all Nigerians.

"I urge our servicemen to

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That The People May Know

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#200

Court dismisses NDC's bid to void sections of Electoral Act

ABUJA

The Federal High Court in Abuja, on Tuesday, dismissed a suit filed by the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), seeking an order striking down Sections 138 and 77(5) of the new Electoral Act, 2026.

Delivering judgment, Justice Mohammed Umar, held that the suit by the NDC, lacked merit.

The NDC, in the suit, argued that the two sections, recently

passed by the National Assembly and assented to by President Bola Tinubu, are inconsistent with the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

The NDC, which was registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Feb. 5, had filed the suit marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/635/2026.

The party, in the originating summons, sued the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) and Clerk of the National Assembly (NASS) as 1st and

2nd defendants.

It also joined the Senate President and Chairman of the National Assembly, Sen. Godswill Akpabio, and INEC.

Vicent Ottaokpukpu, who filed the suit on March 27, on the party's behalf, prayed the court to grant their reliefs.

Delivering the judgment, Justice Umar held that the disputed provisions of the Electoral Act complement, rather than conflict with, the 1999 Constitution.

The judge also upheld the preliminary objections challenging the competence of the suit.

He held that the plaintiff was merely inviting the court to interpret constitutional and statutory provisions.

"The plaintiff is invoking the interpretative jurisdiction of this honourable court in respect of the provisions of the Electoral Act 2026 on the one hand and the 1999 Constitution on the other hand."

He said that the mere attachment of INEC's election timetable to the originating summons did not transform the case into a pre-election matter.

"The fact that the defendant's timetable is attached cannot make the case within the contemplation of Section 285 he said.

The judge added that there was no deposition in the affidavit that raised the questions as to the election timetable.

On the objection raised by the

clerk of the National Assembly, Justice Umar held that the plaintiff failed to comply with the statutory requirement of serving a pre-action notice before commencing proceedings.

He ruled that the implication of non-service of a pre-action notice on the 2nd defendant "makes this suit incompetent against the 2nd defendant."

He subsequently struck out

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NATIONAL UNVEILING:

From left: Secretary-General, Conference of Speakers and President of African Legislatures, Dr Dapo Oyewole; Executive Secretary of the National Assembly Library Trust Fund, Rep. Henry Nwawuba and the National President, National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), Comrade Akindey Afeez, during the National Unveiling of the Lead Fellowship, organised by the Gender Mobile at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Tuesday.

Aviation unions threatens to halt airline operations

● **Decry alleged ticket levy remittance default**

LAGOS

Aviation unions on Tuesday threatened to halt the operations of some airlines following the expiration of a seven-day ultimatum over the alleged non-remittance of Ticket Sales Charges (TSC) collected on behalf of aviation agencies.

The threat was contained in a statement jointly signed by the General Secretary of the Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSS-SAN), Comrade Frances Akinjole, and the Deputy General Secretary of National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE), Comrade Odinaka Igboke.

The unions said the seven-day deadline, which expired on Aug.

3, 2026, followed an earlier 14-day ultimatum directing the affected airlines to remit the statutory charges to the appropriate government agencies.

According to the unions, the TSC is a statutory levy paid by passengers to support the operations of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency.

Others are; the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau, the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology and the Nigerian Meteorological Agency.

They alleged that in spite of repeated demands, the affected airlines had failed to remit the funds collected on behalf of the

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Customs to begin annual recruitment, releases final List of 3,852 —Pg 5

What will happen when a SpaceX rocket collides with the Moon? —Pg 8

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NEWS

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the action against the clerk of the National Assembly.

On the substantive issue, the judge rejected the NDC's argument that Section 138 of the Electoral Act was inconsistent with constitutional provisions governing qualification and disqualification for elective offices.

Justice Umar held that the constitution prescribes the qualifications and disqualifications for elective offices, while the Electoral Act merely provides the procedure and timeline for ventilating disputes arising from party primaries.

"Any aggrieved party who intends to challenge any candidate that emerged at the primary election of a political party on grounds of disqualification must do so at the pre-election level," he said.

He further held that when read together with other provisions of the Electoral Act, Section 138 was not inconsistent with the constitution.

"The provision of Section 138 of the Electoral Act 2026 complements the provision of the Constitution, but is not in conflict with it.

"The contention of the plaintiff that Section 138 is inconsistent with the constitution is of no merit," he ruled.

Justice Umar also declined to invalidate Section 77(5) of the

Electoral Act, holding that the issue had already been determined by the Court of Appeal.

According to him, the appellate court has made pronouncement on the provisions in an earlier decision, stressing that the implication was that "courts, generally, are bound by precedence."

The NDC had sought an order striking down the provisions of Section 138 for being inconsistent with the compulsory provisions of Sections 65 (2) (a), 106 (1) (c), 131 (1) (d), 177 (1) (d) and 66 (1) (i), 107 (1) (i), 137 (1) (j) and 182 (1) (j) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended).

It sought an order directing the defendants to amend and re-enact a new provision of the Electoral Act, 2026 to restore "qualification" as a ground of challenging the return of any candidate into the seats of the House of Representatives, Senate, House of Assembly, president and governor.

The party said this is in line with the provisions of Sections 65 (2) (a), 106 (1) (c), 131 (1) (d), 177 (1) (d) and 66 (1) (i), 107 (1) (i), 137 (1) (j) and 182 (1) (j) of the constitution.

The party equally sought an order striking down Section 77 (5) of the Electoral Act, 2026 for being inconsistent with the provisions of Sections 40 and 65 (2) (b), 106 (1) (d), 231 (1) (c) and 177 (1) (c) of the 1999 Constitution, among others.

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take our gesture as a sign of our deep appreciation of the services they render to our fatherland.

"Together we shall prevail over the enemies intent on

destroying the fabric of our nation."

Tinubu has consistently praised the courage and resilience of military personnel in the fight against banditry, kidnapping and terrorism across the country.

Aviation unions threatens...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

agencies.

The unions described the situation as detrimental to the effective functioning of institutions responsible for aviation regulation, air navigation, safety investigation, aviation training and meteorological services.

They further alleged that the continued withholding of the funds undermined the sustainability of the aviation sector and placed compliant operators at a disadvantage.

Consequently, the unions said they had resolved to stop the operations of the affected airlines at airports across the country without further notice.

"In safeguarding the interests of airport workers and, more importantly, the safety of the flying public.

"Our unions have decided to stop the operations of the affected airlines at our airports at any time from now, without any further notice," the statement said.

However, the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) had, on Aug. 3, rejected the allega-

tions, dismissing claims that its member airlines were deliberately withholding TSC.

In a statement issued by its spokesperson, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, the AON maintained that its member airlines were not indebted to the aviation agencies in the manner alleged by the unions.

Okonkwo said airline operators and aviation regulators maintain direct engagement channels in line with global best practices.

He added that those behind the threats had been misinformed and urged them to verify the facts with the appropriate authorities before taking any action capable of causing unnecessary hardship to the travelling public.

The AON also warned that any disruption of flight operations would adversely affect passengers and placed additional strain on the aviation industry.

"We state without ambiguity that any individual or group that disrupts airline operations or endangers the safety of the flying public based on this particular threat will be held responsible for the consequences.

Dep. Gov. receives Edo Music Elders Forum, backs plan to honour music legends

BENIN CITY

The Deputy Governor of Edo State, Hon Dennis Idahosa, has backed plans by the Edo Music Elders Forum to honour late music legends in the state.

Idahosa gave the support when he received members of the forum on a courtesy visit at the Government House, Benin.

The deputy governor said

the state government appreciated the forum's efforts to preserve the legacy of veteran musicians and promote Edo's cultural heritage.

He also promised to reach out to the management of the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub over the forum's request to use the facility for its remembrance programme on Aug. 28, subject to the venue's availability.

Idahosa further expressed

willingness to attend the event, adding that he would send a representative if official engagements prevented his attendance.

Earlier, the Chairman of the forum, Roland Igbinigie, popularly known as "Akaba Man", said the visit was to seek government support for the forum's initiative to annually honour departed music legends.

Igbinigie said the maiden edition would commemorate the late Sir Victor Uwaifo and other deceased Edo music icons, and he appealed for approval to use the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub for the event.

He said the initiative was aimed at preserving the contributions of late musicians and inspiring younger generations through the celebration of their works.



UNVEILING OF THE LEAD FELLOWSHIP:

From left: Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the President on Students' Engagement, Comrade Sunday Asefon; Executive Lead, Gender Mobile Initiative, Omowumi Ogunrotimi and the representative of the Speaker/Chairman, House Committee on Women Affairs, Rep. Kafilat Ogbara, during the National Unveiling of the Lead Fellowship, organised by the Gender Mobile at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja on Tuesday.

Idahosa applauds private sector's contributions to education

BENIN CITY

BERNADETTE IDALU

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, on Tuesday, played host to members of the Association for Formidable Educational Development (AFED), Edo State Chapter, and pledged commitment to strong collaboration between the association and the government.

The deputy governor, who

received the newly constituted AFED executives, on behalf of Governor Monday Okpebholo, appreciated the association's efforts geared towards providing quality education to students from low and middle income families.

Idahosa noted that the initiative had been contributing to the human capital development of the state and deepening the place of public/private partnerships.

While applauding the role of the association in the education sector, Idahosa expressed confi-

dence that the group had chosen the right persons to pilot its affairs.

The deputy governor thanked members of the association for the sacrifices and commitment to the collaboration with the state government in providing quality education for Edo students.

"As a government, I assure you that we will be meeting you every now and then to deliberate on how best we can do that," he assured.

He nonetheless promised to

give feedback to the Governor based on issues raised and special requests made by the association.

Earlier, the State Controller of AFED, Mr. Oladele Ogundele, said the the visit is aimed at formally introducing the leadership of the Edo State chapter of the association to the government and to strengthen the existing partnership between the association and the Edo State Government in the collective pursuit of quality, accessible and affordable education.

Enehita-Inegbenehi honoured for outstanding service

OSARUGUE OSADOLOR

BENIN CITY

The Managing Director of the Edo State Waste Management Board (EWMB), Dr. Lucky Enehita-Inegbenehi, has been honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by Stars Award International for his outstanding commitment to environmental sanitation and public service.

The award was conferred on him during a ceremony held at Bay Flowers, Benin City, with gospel artists, music producers, and notable business owners in attendance.

Receiving the award on behalf of the Managing Director, the head of commercial at the board, Mr. Martins Akhighe, described the recognition as

timely and motivating.

He said waste management is a demanding responsibility whose impact is often overlooked, adding that the award acknowledges the board's efforts and serves as an encouragement to achieve more.

He further pledged the man-

aging director commitment to the Edo State Governor's vision of making Edo the cleanest state in Nigeria.

Earlier, the Founder and President of Stars Award International, Pastor Peace Osas, said the organization recognizes gospel artists, producers, and indi-

viduals whose exceptional contributions promote excellence and positively impact society.

According to him, the awards are aimed at celebrating deserving personalities whose dedication and service continue to transform lives and communities.

Commissioner urges women to embrace free HIV prevention services

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Cyril Adams Oshiomhole, has called on market women across the state to take advantage of the government's free HIV prevention services by embracing Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to reduce the risk of HIV infection.

Speaking during a sensitisation programme held at his office in Benin City, Dr. Oshiomhole explained that PEP is an emergency HIV prevention medication administered after possible exposure to the virus.

He stressed that the treatment must commence within

72 hours of exposure to achieve maximum effectiveness.

"Anyone who has been exposed to HIV through unprotected sexual intercourse or survivors of rape should immediately visit the nearest health facility to access Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP). Starting the medication within 72 hours can prevent HIV infection and save lives," he said.

NEWS

No record lost in FMBN fire, minister assures Nigerians

ABUJA

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Muttaqha Rabe Darma, has assured Nigerians that no critical records or customer data were lost in the fire incident at the headquarters of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN) in Abuja.

Darma gave the assurance on Tuesday during an inspection of the affected section of the bank's headquarters in Abuja after being briefed by the bank's management and technical team.

He disclosed that the fire, which occurred on Saturday, was contained within a section of the second floor of the building.

He said preliminary findings indicated that the incident was most likely caused by an electrical fault.

Commending the FMBN's

successful digital transformation, the minister noted that the bank's cloud-based data backup system protected all critical records.

He added that it ensured uninterrupted access to customer information and operational documents in spite of the fire.

"I am convinced by the management that nothing is really lost, except the physical structure of the building.

"I came to the computer room and they showed me the documents were all digitised and saved on the cloud.

"So it is a matter of accessing them from the cloud and then you see them and you can reprint them if you want them in the physical form. That, I have been convinced.

"I took some of the samples of the deeds of assignments and other documentation and I asked them, give me this and

they gave me, give me that and they gave me."

Darma said the FMBN digitised their entire system so it was the paper work the fire consumed.

"So that was the sort of relief that I have," he said.

He further assured Nigerians that the bank remained fully operational.

Reaffirming the Federal Government's commitment to expanding access to affordable housing, the minister said ongoing reforms at the FMBN would strengthen mortgage delivery and support the achievement of President Bola Tinubu's housing agenda.

He assured Nigerians that the

100,000 housing units promised by the President within four years would be delivered.

Darma also disclosed that the federal government had directed the FMBN to strengthen its internal processes and institutional framework as part of ongoing policy reforms aimed at improving mortgage

accessibility and operational efficiency.

He said that, as part of the bank's ongoing policy reforms, the FMBN had been directed to review its internal arrangements and improve mortgage access, with a target of delivering about 2,000 mortgages annually.

Delta economic summit misplaced priority, says AAC chieftain

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The governorship candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC) in Delta State, Engr. Isaac Eshor, has criticized the ongoing Delta State Economic and Investment Summit 2026 in Asaba, describing it as a misplaced priority and a political spectacle that fails to address the pressing challenges confronting residents.

Eshor stated that despite Delta State's enormous financial resources and status as one of Nigeria's highest revenue-generating states, many communities continue to grapple with poor road networks, inadequate infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities.

According to him, the state received substantial budgetary allocations amounting to about 809.4 billion in 2023, 725 billion in 2024, 936 billion in 2025, and 1.729 trillion in 2026, bringing the cumulative approved budgets within the period to over 4.199 trillion.

He argued that the huge resources available to the state should have translated into visible development across communities rather than being expended on high-profile summits.

Delta State is richly blessed with enormous resources and receives substantial allocations, yet many communities remain inaccessible because of deplorable roads and poor infrastructure. Instead of investing in projects that directly impact the lives of the people, the government is engaging in expensive summits and political showmanship, Eshor said.

The AAC candidate referenced previous remarks by the Governor of Anambra State, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, who described Delta as a wealthy neighbouring state, noting that such observations should challenge Delta leaders to convert

the state's wealth into tangible development outcomes.

Questioning the rationale behind hosting a major investment summit amid infrastructure deficits, Eshor said investors would be reluctant to commit resources to communities lacking basic amenities and accessible roads.

Before attracting investors, government must first create an enabling environment that supports business growth and economic activities, he stated.

Eshor also reacted to Governor Sheriff Oborevwori's announcement of a \$100 million Viability Guarantee Fund aimed at reducing investment risks and attracting businesses, as well as plans to dedicate over 12,000 hectares of farmland for agricultural development.

While acknowledging the importance of investment promotion initiatives, he questioned why such measures were only being aggressively pursued after nearly three years in office.

For almost three years, Delta State has not witnessed a clear and aggressive investment-driven agenda. It is surprising that government is now presenting these initiatives as major breakthroughs. Deltans deserve a government that plans strategically, manages resources prudently, and delivers sustainable economic growth, he said.

The governorship hopeful further maintained that Delta State possesses enormous untapped opportunities in the maritime and blue economy sectors, lamenting that successful administrations have failed to fully harness the state's strategic coastal advantage.

Delta is blessed with vast maritime resources that can create jobs, boost revenue, and stimulate industrial growth. Unfortunately, this potential remains largely untapped," he said, while expressing satisfaction that the state government was beginning to pay attention

**PRESENTATION OF CHEQUES:**

Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF) Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack (3rd R), MD/CEO of NSITF, Mr Oluwaseun Faloye (2nd R); Permanent Secretary, Labour and Employment, Dr Kamil Ayinde (L), and others, during the Presentation of Cheques to the deserving Civil Servant under the Employee Compensation Scheme in Abuja on Tuesday

Akwa Ibom: Group urges transparent implementation of ₦31 billion economic empowerment fund

UYO

A Socio-cultural organisation, Mboho Mkpawawa Ibibio (MMI) has called for transparent implementation of Gov. Umo Eno's N31 billion economic empowerment fund.

This is contained in a statement by Mr Idongesit Ikono, the organisation's International Public Relations Officer in Uyo on Tuesday.

It would be recalled that Eno recently released N31 billion to empower youths, women, traders, farmers, transport operators and petty traders

across the state.

Ikono urged the implementation committee to be strict and committed to realising the essence of the programme.

"We expect the implementation to be guided strictly by merit, fairness and equity. It should ensure that genuine beneficiaries are identified through an open and verifiable process."

"It is our expectation that the process will be completely away from partisan politics, favouritism and undue influence," he said.

The MMI spokesman said that the allocation of N1 billion to each LGA underscored

the Eno-led government's 'unprecedented commitment' to grassroots development, social inclusion and shared prosperity.

He described the release of the fund by the governor as a practical demonstration of purposeful leadership, and commitment to the people's wellbeing.

"As an organisation, we are happy that the empowerment programme also targets skills acquisition for youths and women.

"With an estimated 165,912 beneficiaries, this intervention can deepen entrepreneurship, stimulate local enterprise, en-

hance agricultural productivity, and create sustainable employment," he said.

Ikono said that the intervention would inject fresh momentum into the state's economy, strengthen small businesses, and expand agricultural production.

He urged the beneficiaries to embrace the opportunity with a deep sense of responsibility, and not see it as an opportunity to share from public fund.

The image maker expressed the organisation's commitment to supporting policies and programmes that promote the welfare of Akwa Ibom people.

Bernue Govt inaugurates first 1,000 days Campaign materials

MAKURDI

The Benue Government has inaugurated the First 1,000 Days Campaign materials to strengthen maternal, infant and young child nutrition as part of activities marking the 2026 World Breastfeeding Week.

The campaign was inaugurated on Tuesday at the Benue State University Teaching Hospital (BSUTH), Makurdi, during the World Breastfeeding Week celebration with the theme, "Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works."

Speaking, the state Commissioner for Health and Human Services, Dr Paul Ogwu, reaffirmed the state

Governor, Hyacinth Alia's commitment to improving maternal and child health in the state.

He described the first 1,000 days – from conception to a child's second birthday – as critical to growth, brain development and lifelong productivity.

The Chief Medical Director of BSUTH, Dr Vitalis Hwande, commended the state government for investing in healthcare.

He called for sustained support for maternal and child health services, while encouraging more hospital deliveries to improve birth registration and health outcomes.

Speaking on behalf of the Commissioner for Women

Affairs and Social Welfare, the Director of Child Development, Mrs Janet Daagba, said breastfeeding remains vital to child survival, nutrition and immunity.

She urged families and communities to promote the practice beyond health facilities.

Earlier, the Head of the Department of Paediatrics, BSUTH, Dr Onyilo Ogbu, described breastfeeding as one of the best investments in a child's future and officially inaugurated the First 1,000 Days Campaign materials.

In his keynote lecture, Prof. Edwin Esegbe with the Pediatric Centre, BSUTH stressed the nutritional, emotional and developmental benefits of

breastfeeding.

He called for stronger interventions, increased funding and intensified efforts to tackle malnutrition.

Representatives of UNICEF, the Nigeria Red Cross Society, Helen Keller International, the Benue State Primary Health Care Board, the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria and other partners reaffirmed their commitment to supporting breastfeeding and child nutrition initiatives in the state.

The event featured an interactive session with mothers on exclusive breastfeeding and a call for residents to participate in a breastfeeding awareness road walk as part of the week-long celebration.

FG backs Delta's \$100 million investment support fund

EJEMOGO ANWURI

ASABA

Vice President Kashim Shettima, says the Federal Government will continue to partner and support States gearing towards economic reforms and investment promotion in line with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, describing Delta State as one of Nigeria's most promising investment destinations.

The Vice president, speaking at the Delta State Economic and Investment Summit 2026 in Asaba, on Monday, lauded Governor Sheriff Oborevwori for his courage and strategic investment agenda capable of transforming Delta State into a major hub for local and international investors.

The Economic and Investment Summit attracted top government officials, development partners, captains of

industry, and global economic leaders including Governor of Anambra State, Chukwuma Soludo; Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; NDDC Managing Director, Samuel Ogbuku; Tantita Security Services Managing Director, Keston Pong; and other stakeholders who delved into pathways for increasing investment, Industrialization and sustainable economic growth.

Shettima also noted that the Federal Government felt encouraged by the State's commitment to economic recovery and diversification, stating that Abuja is eager to assist any State actively pursuing reforms that truly align with national economic priorities.

He further praised the healthy competition among Nigerian states as visible in the quality and ambition of the investment summits convened across the federation, saying this has resulted in every state

defining its own trajectory based on its geography, people and comparative.

Additionally, the Vice President said Delta State amasses enormous economic potential through its vast oil and gas resources, solid minerals, rich agricultural land, long coastline as well as expanding industrial base.

He urged the Governor Oborevwori to sustain investments in key areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, indus-

trial development and the blue economy, describing them as the cardinal sectors responsible for creating jobs and strengthening Delta's competitiveness.

Governor Sheriff Oborevwori announced a \$100 million (about N133 billion) Investment Support Fund, which according to him is designed as a viability Gap Fund to reduce investment risks and also encourage both domestic and foreign investors to establish

businesses across the state.

Oborevwori expounded that the fund would ensure that conclusions reached during the summit are translated into lucrative projects capable of stimulating industrialization, creating gainful employment opportunities and expanding the state's economy.

Furthermore, he gave assurance to the investors of Delta's fiscal stability, revealing that irrespective of executing numerous infrastructural projects

across the state, his administration had not borrowed from commercial banks.

The Governor further revealed that the summit, themed "Unlocking Delta's Economic Potentials," was conceived following the investment missions to China, Brazil and Germany in July 2025, during which his administration engaged global investors in order to showcase the state's vast economic opportunities.

Rainbow coalition working for Rivers' interest

ABUJA

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike, said on Tuesday that the Rainbow Coalition was initiated to work for the interest of Rivers people in the 2027 elections.

Wike, who made the remarks during a media chat in Abuja, explained that the coalition brought the different political parties to work for the collective interest of the people.

The former Rivers governor explained that the coalition was deliberately designed to move beyond party affiliations by supporting candidates considered most capable of serving the state's interests.

He noted that although the All Progressives Congress (APC) is the ruling party at the national level, and in Rivers, other parties have good candidates that should be supported for the interest of the people.

"Now, what we have is a situation where the Labor Party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), APC, Action Alliance and we have candidates for House of Assembly, National Assembly from these parties.

"Candidate B appears to be more presentable. So, we'll choose Candidate B in the Social Democratic Party. Candidate A is more acceptable for this position so we will choose him and so on.

"In the National Assembly, APC cannot win all seats. PDP cannot win all seats, so we will agree together who gets what.

"If APC wins in this place, PDP wins in that place, we are all together for the interest of

our state.

"If the coalition candidate we're going to pick at the end of the day wins, he's not to be seen as APC/ he will not be seen as PDP. He's to be seen as a member of the coalition," he said.

The minister said such an arrangement would work for the benefit of all.

For the presidential seat, the minister said it would be President Bola Tinubu all the way in Rivers and urged opposition politicians to cancel Rivers from their electoral calculations.

He said that the coalition comprising members of all major political parties had resolved to work together in the interest of Rivers while backing Tinubu's re-election.

"If anybody is counting Rivers, go now and cancel it. The only person that can win in Rivers is Tinubu.

"I'm not talking because I want to talk; I'm talking as a political realist because I know my people.

"The alliance is gaining widespread acceptance across the state and all we are doing is for one purpose - to support Tinubu. It is all-inclusive and it is spreading like wildfire," he said.

The minister dismissed suggestions that the arrangement was intended to strengthen any particular political party, insisting that the overriding objective was to attract greater development to Rivers.

"For me, what matters is Rivers. If Rivers is relevant because projects are coming and people are benefiting from the government, then I am satisfied.

"It is not about personal ambition; it is about the interest of the state," he stated.



MICRO ENTERPRISE SUPPORT INITIATIVE:

From left: Former Lagos State Deputy Governor, Mrs Serah Sosan; 2027 Lagos State APC Deputy Governorship Candidate Princess Damilola Sonayon-James; Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; representative, Wife of Lagos State Governor, Mrs Modupe Badmus-Aregbe and Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs Bolaji Dada, during the 2026 First Phase Micro Enterprise Support Initiative (MESI) Programme by the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation in Lagos on Tuesday.

Corruption, Incompetence retarding Nigeria's power sector — Ex-TCN boss

ABUJA

Former Managing Director of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), Usman Mohammed, has blamed years of government incompetence and corruption for the country's persistent electricity crisis, saying successive administrations kept repeating the same mistakes instead of fixing the sector.

Mohammed made the disclosure in a recent interview on Oseni Rufai's Nevon Podcast,

where he gave a blunt assessment of why Nigerians, despite decades of reform promises, still cannot get stable power.

According to him, the power sector's troubles are largely self-inflicted. He said the Federal Government repeatedly appointed unqualified people to run the sector, while corruption further crippled efforts to turn things around.

"The problem in the power sector has not been solved because we have made mistakes

and continue to make mistakes," Mohammed said.

The former TCN chief did not spare any administration in his critique, but he singled out the government of ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo as one that genuinely tried to fix the sector.

He said Obasanjo's reform push, though well-intentioned but ultimately ran into obstacles it could not overcome.

Mohammed's comments come as Nigeria continues to struggle with chronically low power generation despite a population estimated at around

250 million as the country generates only between 3,000 and 6,000 megawatts of electricity that leaves a shortfall experts have long linked to poor infrastructure, weak investment, and mismanagement across the sector's generation, transmission and distribution chains.

His remarks add to a growing chorus of industry insiders and former officials openly criticizing the state of Nigeria's power sector, more than a decade after its privatisation was meant to usher in efficiency and stability.

Road users decry worsening Ikpoba bridge potholes

BENIN CITY

BENEDICT OKATE

Motorists, commuters and other road users have appealed to the Federal and the Edo State Governments to urgently intervene in the deteriorating condition of the Ikpoba River Bridge on Ikpoba slope in Benin City, saying that the rapidly expanding potholes on the bridge pose serious threats to lives, property and economic activities.

The concerned road users, who spoke to our correspondent described the condition of the bridge as alarming, noting that the potholes have continued to widen and remained unattended to despite the strategic impor-

● Seek urgent Government intervention

tance of the route, which serves as one of the busiest traffic corridors in the Edo State capital.

A commercial bus driver, Mr. Osaze Igbinovia, said the worsening condition of the bridge has become a nightmare for motorists.

"If immediate intervention work is not done, the bridge could become a major accident hotspot, especially during peak traffic hours when thousands of vehicles, including heavy-duty trucks, commercial buses and private cars, use the route daily," he said.

Another road user, Mrs. Grace Omoregie, lamented that the damaged portions of the bridge have increased travel time and exposed commuters to

unnecessary risks even at night.

"This bridge is too important to be neglected. It connects thousands of people to different parts of Benin City every day. Government should not wait until lives are lost before taking action."

A business owner in the vicinity, Mr. Emmanuel Edeh, noted that frequent attempts by drivers to dodge the potholes have resulted in several near-collisions.

"During rush hours, vehicles suddenly swerve to avoid the bad spots. It is becoming increasingly dangerous, particularly for smaller vehicles and motorcycles."

The respondents who ap-

pealed to the Federal Ministry of Works to promptly carry out emergency repairs before the damage worsens however expressed optimism that the listening Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo would respond swiftly to their call in view of his unique concern for the wellbeing of the people of the state.

Contacted for comments, Federal Controller For Works, Edo State, Babatunde Tajudeen said government is aware of the dangerous potholes on the Ikpoba river bridge axis of the Federal Government owned road and assured that efforts are ongoing to carry out the necessary repair works.

ADDITION/CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **IDRISU SUMAILA ALHAJI** and not **DRISU SUMAILA** as wrongly written in some of my documents. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note

REMOVAL/ CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **BADAKI BLESSING** and not **BADAKI BLESSING ESHIOTOME**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

NEWS

Customs to begin annual recruitment, releases final List of 3,852

ABUJA

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has announced an annual recruitment cycle and released the final list of 3,852 successful candidates for its 2024/2025 recruitment exercise.

The Comptroller-General (C-G) of the NCS, Bashir

Adeniyi, stated this on Tuesday at the service's headquarters in Abuja during a news conference on the release of the final list of successful candidates.

Adeniyi said the annual recruitment cycle would help the service align its manpower planning with anticipated retirements, rather than re-

sponding to staffing gaps as they arise.

He said the service would work with relevant agencies, including the Federal Character Commission, and ensure budgets reflected the plan to forestall administrative impediments that could compromise its implementation.

"Recruitment will no longer

be an occasional event undertaken every several years. It will be a standing, predictable, yearly process.

"The 2026 Recruitment Exercise will open later this year and it is my firm intention that it will be completed within a single calendar year from advertisement to final list.

"The systems, the screening

architecture and the verification processes built during this exercise now exist and they will not have to be built again," he said.

He said the annual cycle would enable the service to plan manpower needs based on known retirements, while giving unsuccessful applicants certainty about when the next recruitment opportunity would arise.

According to him, the 2024/2025 exercise received 573,680 applications for 3,852 positions, representing an overall success rate of 0.67 per cent, or about one successful candidate for every 148 applicants.

He said 1,275 candidates were selected for the Superintendent Cadre, 367 for the Inspectorate Cadre and 2,210 for the Customs Assistant Cadre.

On geographical distribution, the C-G said all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory were represented in the final list.

He said each state received 105 places, comprising 35 in

the Superintendent Cadre, 10 in the Inspectorate Cadre and 60 in the Customs Assistant Cadre, while the FCT received 72 places.

He said the Federal Character principle was applied in full, adding that no place was allocated at the discretion of any officer.

On gender, the NCS boss said women accounted for 839 of the successful candidates, representing 21.8 per cent of the intake.

He said women had constituted 21.2 per cent of total applications, adding that the service would work deliberately to attract more qualified women into enforcement roles in future recruitment exercises.

He said the median age of successful candidates was 26 years, with close to three-quarters of the candidates below 30.

The C-G said the exercise took longer than planned because of the volume of applications and the need to subject candidates to several stages of scrutiny.

**RECRUITMENT:**

The Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) Bashir Adeniyi addressing journalists on the release of the final list of successful candidates for the 2024/2025 recruitment exercise on Tuesday at the NCS Headquarters Abuja.

Aviation unions threaten to halt airline operations over alleged ticket levy remittance default

LAGOS

Aviation unions on Tuesday threatened to halt the operations of some airlines following the expiration of a seven-day ultimatum over the alleged non-remittance of Ticket Sales Charges (TSC) collected on behalf of aviation agencies.

The threat was contained in a statement jointly signed by the General Secretary of the Air Transport Services Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN), Comrade Frances Akinjole, and the Deputy General Secretary of NUATE, Comrade Odinaka Igbokwe.

NUATE is the National Union of Air Transport Employees.

The unions said the seven-day deadline, which expired on Aug. 3, followed an earlier

14-day ultimatum directing the affected airlines to remit the statutory charges to the appropriate government agencies.

According to the unions, the TSC is a statutory levy paid by passengers to support the operations of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency.

Others are; the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau, the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology and the Nigerian Meteorological Agency.

They alleged that in spite of repeated demands, the affected airlines had failed to remit the funds collected on behalf of the agencies.

The unions described the situation as detrimental to the effective functioning of institutions responsible for aviation regulation, air navigation,

safety investigation, aviation training and meteorological services.

They further alleged that the continued withholding of the funds undermined the sustainability of the aviation sector and placed compliant operators at a disadvantage.

Consequently, the unions said they had resolved to stop the operations of the affected airlines at airports across the country without further notice.

"In safeguarding the interests of airport workers and, more importantly, the safety of the flying public.

"Our unions have decided to stop the operations of the affected airlines at our airports at any time from now, without any further notice," the statement said.

However, the Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) had, on Aug. 3, rejected the allegations, dismissing claims that its mem-

ber airlines were deliberately withholding TSC.

In a statement issued by its spokesperson, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, the AON maintained that its member airlines were not indebted to the aviation agencies in the manner alleged by the unions.

Okonkwo said airline operators and aviation regulators maintain direct engagement channels in line with global best practices.

He added that those behind the threats had been misinformed and urged them to verify the facts with the appropriate authorities before taking any action capable of causing unnecessary hardship to the travelling public.

The AON also warned that any disruption of flight operations would adversely affect passengers and placed additional strain on the aviation industry.

Akwa Ibom police urge officers to uphold discipline, professionalism

UYO

The Commissioner of Police in Akwa Ibom, Baba Azare, has charged officers and personnel of the command to remain disciplined, proactive and professional in the discharge of their constitutional duties.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr Timfon John, disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday.

John said the commissioner gave the charge during the command's monthly strategic

conference held at the Police Headquarters in Uyo.

According to him, Azare urged officers to sustain synergy, strengthen intelligence gathering and improve operational effectiveness to enhance security across the state.

John said the conference also featured the decoration of newly promoted Asst. Commissioners of Police (ACPs) and a hepatitis screening exercise for officers and personnel.

"The strategic conference brought together senior officers of the command to review the

security situation across the state.

"It also assessed ongoing operational activities, and strengthened strategies aimed at enhancing intelligence-led policing, crime prevention, public safety and efficient service delivery," the PPRO said.

He said a major highlight of the programme was the decoration of recently promoted senior officers elevated from the rank of Chief Superintendent of Police to Asst. Commissioner of Police.

John said Azare urged the promoted officers to justify the confidence reposed in them

through exemplary conduct.

"The commissioner also urged the officers to uphold integrity, professionalism and unwavering commitment to the ideals and core values of the Nigeria Police Force.

"He also assured the people of Akwa Ibom of the command's continued commitment to strengthening its operational capacity.

"He committed to sustaining proactive policing strategies to safeguard lives and property across the state," the PPRO said.

BEDC staff suffers electric shock in Ekiti

BENIN CITY

The BEDC Electricity Plc has confirmed that one of its technical staff members sustained injuries following an electrical incident while carrying out maintenance work on an 11kV feeder in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti.

A statement by its Head of Branding and Corporate Communications, Mrs Evelyn Gbiwen, on Tuesday in Benin, said the incident occurred at about 6:20 p.m. on Saturday in the Ado-Poly Satellite Campus area of Ado-Ekiti.

In the statement made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Benin, she identified the injured employee as Mr Akinyemi Bamidele, a technical linesman.

According to her, Bamidele sustained burns to his arm and other parts of his body after re-

ceiving an electric shock while carrying out an operational task on the 11kV Basiri Feeder following scheduled maintenance work.

She noted that the employee was immediately taken to the Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, Ado-Ekiti, where he was receiving treatment.

She added that Bamidele was in a stable condition and responding well to medical care.

"BEDC Electricity Plc remains committed to the safety and well-being of its employees and is providing the necessary support to the injured staff member during this period," she said.

She said the company had commenced an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

According to her, appropriate measures would be taken based on the outcome of the investigation.

Man in court over alleged assault on police officer, aiding suspect's escape

IBADAN

A 33-year-old man, Tobi Oladele, was on Tuesday arraigned before Mapo Grade A Customary Court in Ibadan for allegedly assaulting a police officer and aiding the escape of suspect from custody.

Oladele is facing a four-count charge bordering on conspiracy, breach of the peace, assault and obstruction of justice.

He, however, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The President of the Court, Mrs S.M. Akintayo, granted the defendant bail in the sum of N500,000 with two reliable sureties in like sum.

Akintayo ruled that one of the sureties must be a community leader, while the other must be a relative with a valid means of identification.

She also directed that both sureties must present evidence of three

years' tax payment to the Oyo State Government.

She adjourned the case until Aug. 19, for further trial.

Earlier, the prosecuting counsel, Insp Ayodele Ayeni, told the court that the defendant allegedly committed the offences on July 10, at the Amunigun area of Ibadan, Oyo State.

Ayeni alleged that Oladele, alongside others now at large, assaulted Insp Nurudeen Olawale by raining blows on him while attempting to free a suspect in police custody.

He further alleged that the defendant chanted abusive songs to incite members of the public against the police and also hurled stones at the officer.

According to him, Oladele and his accomplices eventually enabled the suspect to escape from police custody.

Expert seeks stronger health systems to sustain HIV gains, end AIDS by 2030

ABUJA

Ms Tolulope Adenekan, Operations Officer at the INFORM Africa Research Hub, Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN), has called for stronger health systems, increased domestic financing and people-centred HIV services.

She said the measures were critical to sustaining Nigeria's HIV gains and achieving the goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

Adenekan made the call in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Abuja.

She said Nigeria had recorded significant progress towards the Joint United Na-

tions Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) 95-95-95 targets.

According to her, about 87 per cent of people living with HIV know their status, 98 per cent of those diagnosed are receiving treatment, while 95 per cent of those on treatment have achieved viral suppression.

"The progress demonstrates that investments in HIV testing and treatment are yielding results, but sustaining the gains will require addressing

the social and health system barriers that continue to prevent many people from accessing and remaining in care.

"Expanding access to antiretroviral therapy has saved millions of lives, but long-term treatment success requires more than access to medicines.

"People living with HIV need supportive health systems and person-centred care that respond to their realities," she said.

She identified stigma, discrimination, fear of disclo-

sure, poverty, transportation costs, inadequate counselling, long waiting hours at health facilities, mental health challenges and displacement caused by insecurity as some of the factors affecting treatment adherence.

She said adolescents and young people remained among the most vulnerable groups because they often struggled with accepting their diagnosis while navigating emotional, social and physical changes.

According to her, treatment fatigue, fear of peers discovering their HIV status, poor transition from paediatric to adult HIV care, school schedules, financial constraints and limited family support contribute to poor adherence among young people.

She said that creating adolescent-friendly clinics and expanding peer support initiatives, such as Operation Triple Zero (OTZ), had shown positive results in improving treatment adherence.



MEETING:

Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of Economy, Taiwo Oyedele; Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Atiku Bagudu; Gov Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State; Vice President Kashim Shettima; Deputy Chief of Staff to the President, Office of the Vice President, Sen Ibrahim Hadejia; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, Dr Deborah Odoh and Special Adviser to President on Economic Affairs, Dr Tope Fasua during a meeting of the National Economic Council at the Presidential Villa in Abuja on Tuesday.

Federal, State Governments Urged to Establish Special Grants for NSQ Graduates

LAMAI CASSIUS

AUCHI

The Rector, Auchi Polytechnic Dr Salusi Shehu Umar has urged states and Federal governments to set up special grants through the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for the National Skills Qualification (NSQ) graduates as a way of encouragement.

Dr Umar stated this at the maiden graduation and exhibition ceremony of the 6,600 NSQ graduating students of

Auchi polytechnic.

He commended the federal government's initiative of introducing the NSQ championed by the NBTE.

"It is not just to graduate 20,000 students from Public Administration, Accountancy, Computer Science or Engineering who will be going on the streets looking for jobs, but to graduate students who will be job creators and employers of labour, industrialists, and entrepreneurs"

He said Auchi Polytechnic being the first institutions in

the country to have successfully implemented and graduated 6,600 students from the different trades, said "our mission is not just to turn out students but to turn out job creators, industrialists and entrepreneurs", he added.

According to him, "what we are doing today is to display to the nation and the world at large that our mission for our students is to be double certificated, towards certification is our mission in Auchi Polytechnic and we are doing it".

On the national schools ex-

hibitions, he said Auchi Polytechnic has come out 2nd position twice adding that with the latest innovations, the Polytechnic will come out first.

"In the whole country nobody has yet manufactured a motorized planting system but Auchi Polytechnic has gone ahead to now innovate and produce motorized planting system with two-ridge system which is a very great innovation", he concluded.

Highpoints of the event was a guided tour of some of the exhibited items by the Rector and other principal officers of the Polytechnic.

LAWMA serves sealing notices on Oshodi Market over sanitation breaches

LAGOS

The Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) has served 'Intention to Seal Notices' on sections of Oshodi Market over environmental sanitation breaches.

The notices were issued on Monday by LAWMA's Project WISE team during a compliance operation across the market.

This is contained in a statement signed by Mr Mukhaila Sanusi, Director, Public Affairs, LAWMA, and made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Lagos.

The authority said the action followed persistent indiscriminate waste disposal, poor sanitation practices and non-compliance with approved waste management regulations.

The statement quoted LAWMA Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Dr Muiyiwa Gbadegesin, as saying that the exercise was part of efforts to improve compliance in markets.

Gbadegesin said affected traders and business operators had previously received environmental advocacy, compliance engagements and monitoring visits without significant improvement.

He said the notices provided another opportunity for affected premises to comply before further enforcement measures were implemented.

"The Intention to Seal Notices provide the affected traders and business operators with another opportunity to take immediate corrective action and comply with prescribed environmental sanitation requirements," he said.

Gbadegesin described indiscriminate waste disposal, poor sanitation and related environmental infractions as serious threats to public health and environmental sustainability.

He urged market associations, traders and business owners to maintain clean surroundings, patronise assigned Private Sector Participation operators and dispose of waste through approved channels.

Vet debunks rabies myths, urges vaccination

ABUJA

A veterinarian at Animal Care Services Konsult, Kaduna, Dr Agboola Lawal, says rabies is caused by a virus transmitted mainly through bites from infected animals, urging Nigerians to disregard widespread misconceptions about the disease.

Lawal said on Tuesday that the virus was present in the saliva of infected animals and entered the body through bite wounds or breaks.

He explained that although bites remained the primary mode of rabies transmission, infection could also occur when saliva from an infected animal came into contact with open wounds or mucous membranes such as the eyes, nose or mouth.

According to him, once the virus enters the body, it travels through the nerves to the brain, causing severe inflammation before spreading to salivary glands and enabling

further transmission.

The veterinarian dismissed claims that animals are born with rabies, emphasising that the disease was neither inherited nor transmitted from a pregnant animal to its offspring before birth.

"There is no animal that is born with rabies. A healthy animal cannot develop rabies on its own. It must first become infected with the rabies virus, usually through the bite of another infected animal," he said.

Lawal said the incubation period ranged from a few weeks to several months, depending on factors such as bite location, the amount of virus introduced and immune status.

He added that vaccination remained a vital preventive measure against rabies, noting that several mammalian species, including domestic and wild animals, are susceptible to infection by the virus.

"Rabies is not limited to dogs. Mammals, including cats, horses, cattle, goats, sheep, monkeys and foxes, could be infected," he said.

World Breast feeding Week: NGO calls for support system to initiate exclusive breast feeding

KADUNA

An NGO, Maternal Accountability Mechanism in Kaduna Initiative (KADMAM) has urged the state government, health institutions, and stakeholders to strengthen support systems that enable every mother to initiate breastfeeding early.

The NGO also wants the government to support mothers to exclusively breastfeed for six months, and continue breastfeeding alongside complementary feeding as recom-

mended.

Co-Chair of KADMAM, Garba Muhammad, made the call during a news conference on Tuesday in Kaduna in commemoration of the 2026 World Breastfeeding Week. The week is marked annually between August 1 and August 7.

Muhammad said breastfeeding remained one of the most effective and affordable interventions for improving maternal and child health.

He said exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months

of life provided babies with the essential nutrients and antibodies needed for healthy growth. "Breastfeeding protects babies against common childhood illnesses, enhances cognitive development, and significantly reduces infant mortality.

"Continued breastfeeding, alongside appropriate complementary feeding up to two years old and beyond, also contributes to better health outcomes for both mother and child," he said.

The co-chair said in spite

of progress recorded, many mothers still faced barriers to optimal breastfeeding.

According to him, this include inadequate family and workplace support, misinformation, limited access to skilled counselling, and socio-economic challenges.

He said addressing the barriers required sustained investments in quality maternal, newborn and child health services; stronger community engagement, and implementation of policies that protected and promoted breastfeeding.

NEWS**Senate threatens sanctions as CBN, NDDC, NUPRC shun NEITI audit probe**

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate's planned investigation into the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) audit reports covering the oil and gas sector from 2021 to 2023 suffered a setback on Monday after key government agencies failed to appear before the Senate Committee on Public Accounts.

The affected agencies are the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) were absent at the commencement of the

public hearing despite invitations from the committee.

Also absent was the management of NEITI, the agency that produced the audit reports forming the basis of the investigation.

The three-week public hearing, convened by the Senate Public Accounts Committee chaired by Senator Ibrahim Dankwabo (Gombe North), is aimed at examining findings contained in NEITI's 2021-2023 audit reports on Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

Expressing displeasure over the absence of the invited agencies, the committee directed their management teams to appear without fail on Thursday, August 6, warning that non-compliance would attract

sanctions under the provisions of the 1999 Constitution and the Senate Standing Orders.

Senator Dankwabo said the committee would not tolerate any attempt to undermine its oversight responsibilities, stressing that all affected agencies must honour the rescheduled invitation.

During deliberations, committee member Senator Babangida Hussaini (Jigawa North-West) urged the panel to invoke its constitutional powers against the defaulting agencies.

Relying on Sections 47 and 60 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), Senator Hussaini

argued that the committee derives its authority from the Constitution and Senate rules, making compliance with its summons mandatory.

He described the agencies' failure to appear as a slight on the National Assembly and the Nigerian people.

"The institutional integrity of the Senate is being undermined," Hussaini said, adding that "drastic measures need to be taken in line with our rules."

Another member of the committee, Senator Patrick Ndubueze (Imo North), opposed granting the agencies a second opportunity to appear,

insisting that their conduct warranted immediate sanctions.

According to him, none of the agencies sent a representative or communicated any reason for their absence.

"This reflects the level of commitment of government agencies in this country," Ndubueze said. "No letter was written. No excuse was offered."

No representative was sent to explain why the chief executives could not attend. To me, they don't deserve to be given any second chance."

Despite Monday's setback, the committee said it would continue with the public hear-

ing as scheduled.

Officials expected to appear in subsequent sessions include representatives of the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), and other relevant institutions.

The Senate's probe seeks to scrutinise issues raised in the NEITI audit reports with the aim of strengthening transparency, accountability, and revenue management in Nigeria's extractive sector.

Bayelsa, UNICEF inaugurate initiative to prevent malnutrition in first 1,000 days**YENAGOA**

The Bayelsa Ministry of Health, in collaboration with UNICEF and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has inaugurated a one-year project aimed at preventing malnutrition during the first 1,000 days of life.

Speaking at the inauguration in Yenagoa on Tuesday, UNICEF Chief of Field Office, Lagos, Ms Celine Lafoucriere, said the initiative targeted pregnant women and children under two years across the state.

Lafoucriere said the project sought to detect and prevent malnutrition early during the critical period from pregnancy to a child's second birthday, when physical and brain development occur most rapidly.

According to her, the intervention is designed to give every child in Bayelsa a better chance not only to survive but also to grow, learn and reach full potential.

"That is what the first 1,000

days of life protect.

"From the moment a woman becomes pregnant to her child's second birthday, a body and a brain are being built. What happens in that window cannot be undone later.

"The most recent National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2024) found that more than one in four children in Nigeria are stunted, while nearly half of pregnant women are anaemic," she said.

Lafoucriere explained that stunting occurs when children do not receive adequate nutrition early in life, affecting both physical growth and cognitive development.

She said the condition often results in poor educational outcomes and reduced economic opportunities later in life.

"That is exactly what this project, and the funding behind it, is built to change.

"These are children who will struggle more in school and may struggle later to earn a living, through no fault of their own. That is why today matters," she said.

UNFPA, Benue train midwives on reproductive health, GBV responses**MAKURDI**

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Benue Ministry of Health and Human Services have commenced a five-day training of midwives on emergency reproductive health and gender-based violence.

The training, which began in Makurdi, is designed to strengthen tutors' and frontline healthcare professionals' capacity to provide life-saving sexual and reproductive health services.

The five-day programme focuses on Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health in Emergencies and Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.

Declaring the training open, Commissioner for Health and Human Services Dr Paul Ogwuche said Gov. Hyacinth Alia was determined to strengthen the healthcare system in the state.

Ogwuche commended UN-

FPA and its partners for sponsoring the programme, adding that it is timely considering the humanitarian challenges confronting Benue.

"This training comes at a critical time humanitarian emergencies and displacement continue to challenge our healthcare system, particularly sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence."

"The knowledge and skills you acquire will enable you to respond more effectively to these challenges," he said.

Ogwuche urged participants to actively engage in sessions, share experiences and apply acquired knowledge to improve service delivery in their institutions.

Earlier, UNFPA Humanitarian Programme Specialist Dr Danladi Idrisa said the workshop aligns with the organisation's mandate to strengthen emergency sexual and reproductive health and GBV response.

**UNICEF INITIATIVE:**

Participants at the inception meeting of stakeholders in the Bayelsa, UNICEF initiative to prevent malnutrition in first 1,000 days in children held on Tuesday in yenagoa.

NGO seeks stronger collaboration to tackle opioid misuse among youths**BENIN CITY**

The Behavioural and Social Insight Initiative (BSI), an NGO, has called for stronger collaboration among government agencies, schools, faith-based organisations and development partners to address rising opioid misuse and drug abuse among young Nigerians.

Opioids are a class of powerful drugs that include prescription pain relievers, illegal drugs like heroin, and synthetic chemicals like fentanyl. They attach to specific receptors in the brain and body to block pain signals.

The organisation's Project Officer, Mr Omosigho Destiny, made the call in an interview with newsmen on the sidelines of a youth sensitisation programme on drug abuse on Tuesday in Benin.

Destiny said the programme, organised in partnership with Smile Africa, was designed to educate young people aged between 20 and 35 on the dangers of opioid misuse and other forms of substance abuse.

He said about 15 participants attended the interactive session, which featured health talks by medical professionals, lectures on drug abuse, group discussions and a solution co-creation exercise.

According to him, participants also made personal commitments to support efforts aimed at preventing substance abuse within their communities.

"Our objective is simple. We want to sensitise young people, educate them and create a platform for dialogue around drug abuse, particularly opioid misuse," he said.

Destiny explained that the organisation deliberately adopted an open and participatory approach rather than a conventional lecture format, allowing participants to identify causes of drug abuse and propose practical community-based solutions.

"We also created a community of participants so that we can continue engaging with them after the programme.

"We gave them educational materials and we intend to keep reaching out because one-day awareness is not enough," he said.

He said the initiative was inspired by the experience of an individual close to the organisation who developed opioid dependency after being prescribed pain medication for a heart-related illness.

According to him, the experience highlighted the dangers of prescription drug misuse and underscored the need for greater public awareness.

Brothers docked over alleged N45m forex trading fraud**IBADAN**

Two brothers, Oluwatobiloba Oyinloye, 27, and Michael Oyinloye, 29, on Tuesday, appeared before the Iyaganku Magistrates' Court in Ibadan, over alleged N45 million fraud.

The two brothers were charged with conspiracy, obtaining money under false pretence and stealing, to which they pleaded not guilty.

The Prosecutor, Insp.

Adeshina Folaranmi said that the defendants committed the offences in December 2025 at Dugbe area of Ibadan.

Folaranmi said that the defendants obtained the sum of N45 million from one Adebayo Ogundiran by false pretext, claiming to trade in forex.

He said that Ogundiran reported to the police that the brothers promised to use the amount allegedly obtained from him to buy foreign exchange.

According to Folaranmi, Ogundiran explained that the defendants were to trade in forex and remit the profits to him.

He said that the defendants failed to do so, but rather converted the money to their personal use.

The prosecutor said that the offences contravened provisions of Sections 516, 419 and 390(9) of the Criminal Laws of Oyo State, 2000.

The Magistrate, Mrs Olubabusayo Osho granted the

defendants bail in the sum of N10 million each and with two sureties each in like sum.

Osho set the bail conditions among which was that one of the sureties must be a blood relation to the defendants.

She said that the other surety must be a director of a reputable company within the jurisdiction of the court.

The magistrate thereafter adjourned the case until March 29, 2027, for hearing.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Guatemala volcano eruption sends lava spewing into the air

The eruption of the Fuego volcano in Guatemala has triggered the evacuation of at least two villages on its slopes.

Fuego, one of the most active volcanoes in the Western Hemisphere, started spewing lava and ash on Monday.

Pyroclastic currents - rivers of gas, volcanic ash and rock fragments - continued to flow down Fuego's south-eastern slope early on Tuesday, the government agency which monitors its activity said.

Disaster management agency Conred issued a nationwide orange alert, the second highest, and warned locals to be prepared as the eruptions could create further pyroclastic flows and billowing ash clouds.

Conred urged people to keep their windows and doors closed and lessons have been cancelled in schools close to the volcano.

Fuego is located just 16km (10 miles) west of Antigua, a city popular with tourists, who travel to the Unesco World Heritage Site to admire its colonial-era architecture.

The active stratovolcano has also become popular with hikers.

Conred warned visitors and locals alike to refrain from approaching or remaining in areas at risk, in particular on the volcano's slopes.

More than 200 people were killed when Fuego erupted in 2018, many of them caught in the fast-flowing pyroclastic flows which raced down the Las Lajas ravine.

More than 150 migrants rescued after boat catches fire in Channel

More than 150 migrants have been rescued after the boat they were using to cross the Channel caught fire on Tuesday morning, French authorities have said.

The boat was attempting to cross to the UK when its engine caught fire, according to the French maritime prefecture of the Channel and North Sea.

It said 157 people have been rescued and are being taken to port in Boulogne-sur-Mer. There are no reports of anyone having been injured or killed.

It comes just a day after Prime Minister Andy Burnham pledged his government will be "relentless" in curbing the number of people arriving in the UK on small boats.

French authorities said the boat left France on Monday night.

Overnight "five people on board the vessel required rescue... the remaining people on board refused the assistance offered by the French patrol boats", the French maritime prefecture said.

"Determined to reach the United Kingdom, migrants

crossing the Channel in small boats refused assistance offered by French emergency service, accepting it only in situations of extreme emergency," it said in a statement.

Because of the "structural fragility" of boats used to cross the Channel, it said they decided not to intervene further at that stage.

But this morning the engine caught fire and the "vessel's integrity deteriorated very rapidly".

Rescue boats went to the scene from France and the UK, including the RNLI Eastbourne lifeboat and the UK Border Force vessels BSC Contender and BSC Courageous.

Two French boats rescued 103 migrants and the British boats rescued 54.

All of them are being taken to Boulogne-sur-Mer for treatment, where they are expected to arrive there at 12:30 local time (11:30 BST) on Tuesday.

Earlier, the UK Coastguard said: "A vessel caught fire earlier this morning whilst in the French search and rescue region. UK vessels and a lifeboat are assisting."



MIGRANTS:

Border Force pictured escorting migrants to the UK after being rescued in the Channel in March

What will happen when a SpaceX rocket collides with the Moon?

The Moon has endured countless blows over millions of years. Asteroids and meteors have given the satellite its signature pock-marked surface and network of craters. More recently, it has also experienced impacts from the plucky little probes and landers that Earthbound space agencies have sent hurtling its way.

Now on Wednesday, scientists expect the Moon will experience yet another collision, this time from a drifting SpaceX rocket that has been travelling at around 2.43 kilometres per second, or about 5,400mph.

The upper stage (section) of one of SpaceX's Falcon 9 rockets will "impact" the Moon on 5 August, according to Nasa's Centre for Near-Earth Object Studies (CNEOS).

The US space agency reached the conclusion after independent astronomers, using public data, noted that a

portion of the rocket from a January 2025 launch was on an accidental collision course with the Moon.

"There is no danger to Earth," said spokesperson Jimi Russell. "Nasa will continue to track the booster for training purposes, as well as later observe the impact site for scientific purposes."

SpaceX launched this specific Falcon 9 rocket as part of a US and Japanese mission to carry a pair of lunar landers and scientific equipment to the Moon last year.

Part of the Falcon 9 is reusable and designed to return back to Earth for its next mission. But parts of the rocket are shed in space and remain there, stuck in orbit unless they eventually collide with another celestial body.

The piece in question is the upper stage of the rocket, and is about the size of a five-storey building, with a weight on Earth of at least 4,000kg (8,800 lbs).

Astronomer Bill Gray, who first discovered the trajectory, says the object will land near the Einstein Crater, which is on the part of the Moon that receives daylight and is visible from Earth. He predicts it will create a crater more than 17m (56ft) in diameter.

The impending collision - predicted to happen at about 02:35 EDT (06:35 GMT) on Wednesday - is expected to captivate astronomers, both amateur and professional.

"It's something really huge smashing into the Moon. It's not remotely dangerous, we can just watch the show," says Dr Matt Bothwell, public astronomer at the University of Cambridge.

"It's going to impact and its going to send up a huge plume of dust, maybe 50km into the air or more, and that's going to spread sideways over time," Bothwell said.

Given the Moon's lack of atmosphere and far weaker gravitational pull, the moment of impact will be "more impressive than any [similar] explosion on Earth", Bothwell said.

Nothing will slow the object down, like the atmosphere would do here on Earth - and nothing will prevent the estimated million kilograms in debris from rocketing up into space.

While the impact will not be visible from Earth with the naked eye, people with access to a sophisticated telescope may be able to see a flash radiating off the Moon's surface, Bothwell said.

More significant would be the educative potential of the impact, Bothwell noted. He said this moment would present a unique opportunity to study what happens when an object hits the Moon.

Scientists are therefore gearing up to watch the event closely.

Big telescopes in the Americas, plus Nasa's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter and South Korea's Danuri probe, will

track the flash, plume and new crater, and a citizen-science project is signing up keen amateurs to film the impact too.

By catching the dust plume in action, astronomers hope to turn this accidental crash into a useful experiment.

Watching how much material gets thrown up, how high it goes and how it falls back should sharpen their models of lunar impacts - and even give clues about what lies just beneath the surface at the impact site, where fresh subsurface material will be exposed for the first time.

Bothwell, the astronomer, also said the collision would provide a cautionary tale about the issue of ever-accumulating, human-made space clutter.

"I think more people should be more worried about space debris," Bothwell said. "Every single year we put more stuff in orbit. Sometimes the satellites just collide, and they shatter into more pieces. I think there's a worry about a runaway cascade, if we put so much stuff in orbit."

According to the European Space Agency (ESA), there are around 54,000 objects floating in space that measure larger than 10cm. In total, humans have launched about 17,000 tonnes of objects into space since the Space Age began in 1957.

Soldier kills four in gun rampage in Russian-occupied Crimea

Four people have been killed by a soldier in Russian-annexed Crimea in an apparently random gun rampage.

The Moscow-installed regional governor Mikhail Razvozhayev said the gunman opened fire on his fellow soldiers, killing one and wounding another.

He then went on to kill three civilians in the village of Khmelnytske - two men, aged 71 and 59, and a 64-year-old woman. Three other people were also injured.

The attacker has been detained and the motive behind the shooting was being investigated, Razvozhayev said.

He has not been publicly identified and local officials have not released information about which branch of the Russian armed forces he was serving with.

It was unclear whether the death toll was expected to rise. Razvozhayev said doctors were "doing everything possible to save" people injured in the attack.

He also urged people to rely

solely on official information and not to "spread unverified rumours" about the motives behind the shooting or the attacker's identity.

Russia has controlled Ukraine's Crimean peninsula since 2014.

The vast majority of the international community reject the annexation, considering it instead as occupation of Ukrainian land.

Russia maintains a large military presence there, which Ukraine has targeted with drone and missile strikes.



NEWS**FOREIGN****Deadly landslide hits Ethiopia mountain monastery during prayer service**

Eleven of the 14 people found in the debris have been buried at the monastery.

Funerals have been held for some of the 14 people killed in a landslide that hit a mountain monastery hosting an overnight prayer session in Ethiopia's northern Amhara region.

Rescue efforts for others feared trapped in the debris after a hillside above the Orthodox Church monastery collapsed in the early hours of Monday morning have now been halted.

The monastery includes a prayer chamber carved into the mountainside, where the worshippers had gathered for the special prayer service.

"The land above the cave... slid after the heavy rain that lasted throughout the night," Dagnachew Azbite, a senior local official, told the BBC.

Seven people had been found injured, five of them seriously, he said.

The prayer service being held at the Tsadqane Debre Mitmaq St Mary Monastery included a holy water cleansing ritual that is popular among Orthodox Christians seeking spiritual healing for chronic illnesses.

"Many of those who died had gathered to receive the holy water," Megabe Hadis Neka Tibeb Ababu, the diocese's general

manager, told the Associated Press news agency.

Eleven of those who died have been buried at the monastery, while the bodies of the others have been returned to their hometowns for burial, according to Megabe.

Identifying some of the victims remained a challenge, he said.

Emergency teams, security personnel, healthcare workers and nearby residents had been among those carrying out search and rescue operations at the site, the local authorities said.

Archbishop Abune Klementos, the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's North Shewa Diocese, travelled to the monastery to lead funeral prayers for those killed, pray for the injured and offer comfort to grieving families, the authorities added.

Landslides are a recurring hazard in Ethiopia during the country's main rainy season, which typically runs from June to August.

In March, more than 100 people were killed in floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains in the southern Gamo Zone area.

More than 229 people, including rescuers, were killed by a landslide in the neighbouring Geze Gofa Zone in July 2024, which was one of the country's deadliest weather-related disasters in recent years.

Ugandan Opposition Leader Kizza Besigye in intensive care, wife says

Ugandan opposition leader Kizza Besigye is in intensive care in hospital, his wife and medical sources said, as the UN blasted a wider crackdown on dissent. Besigye, 70, has been in custody and facing treason charges over an alleged plot against veteran President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986.

At a court appearance on Wednesday, Besigye rejected state-appointed lawyers. He was expressing anger at his own representatives being refused when he collapsed. His wife Winnie Byanyima, the executive director of UNAIDS, wrote on X: "He has been admitted to the ICU at Mulago Hospital (in Kampala).

"He is unconscious, unable to speak, and unresponsive even to a pain stimulus." A spokeswoman for the hospital, Gladys Baligonzi Kajura, confirmed to AFP that Besigye had been admitted. "He is at the intensive care unit. He was admitted last evening and his condition is being managed," she added, without elaborating.

A medical source said, under condition of anonymity, that Besigye was taken to hospital on Wednesday evening and said he was in a "critical condition and unresponsive". Besigye, a former personal physician to Museveni, has been in the government's crosshairs since he joined the op-

position more than 25 years ago.

He was abducted in neighbouring Kenya in 2024 and reappeared in Uganda, where he was brought before a military tribunal until the case was transferred to a civilian court. Before he collapsed, one of his defence lawyers -- the former mayor of Kampala Erias Lukwago -- was arrested while the other, former justice minister Martha Karua, was banned from entering the country.

Uganda has imposed a widening crackdown on opposition figures, lawyers and independent media in recent months. On Thursday, the Ugandan courts again refused to release Lukwago on bail. He was abducted from his home by the army then charged with failing to report treason. In early July, Lukwago likened his continued detention to "a death sentence" as he had chronic health problems affecting notably his lungs and spine. The judge at the latest bail hearing justified a refusal to free him because Lukwago did not have a certificate from his doctor stating that he cannot be treated in prison.

Besigye has been hospitalised three times since he was taken into custody. He was admitted briefly in February 2025 after a hunger strike and again earlier this year. His wife has repeatedly criticised his detention conditions, describing them as inhumane and alleging a plot to kill him.

I left my wife and twins behind - why this Nigerian man fled South Africa

Richard Itoro says returning to Nigeria and starting again was the better option.

Nigerian Richard Itoro is not sure when he will see his twin children again.

Fearing for his safety as the anti-migrant protests cranked up in South Africa this year, the 47-year-old left his family and business behind in Johannesburg and boarded one of the voluntary repatriation flights to Nigeria in June.

His is just one of many experiences that is fuelling diplomatic tension and threatening to rupture relations between South Africa and other countries on the continent.

Tens of thousands of foreigners have left the country over the past two months.

"It was painful for me to leave [the] person who's my best friend," Itoro tells the BBC, with tears welling up, as he reflects on saying goodbye to his South African wife.

Over 15 years, he had built up a car-dealership business, bought a home and created a family. That is now all gone for him.

Itoro became the target of harassment but his wife was not spared the intimidation.

He says his neighbours told her: "You're married to a Nigerian. Those of you who are married to Nigerians we are supposed to arrest you people. You guys betrayed us. Go and leave the country with your husband and don't be here."

Itoro was baffled.

"My family was just a small family, which was beautiful and peaceful. I had no issues with anybody."

The pressure became too much.

"If I go home and start all over again, it's better than being here, being harassed, being scared for my life," Itoro says.

Marches calling for undocumented migrants to leave reached a crescendo at the end of June.

But, the businessman says, the Nigerian high commission would not let his wife and children travel with him.

He describes how leaving felt like a movie where someone boards the last helicopter flight out of a besieged city.

"I wish I could have just

begged the people from the embassy and said: 'This is my wife, I can't leave her behind and my kids,' but I couldn't."

"So my car started departing and I wished I had told her not to cry."

The anti-migrant groups in South Africa said their protests were aimed at undocumented foreigners. The country's outspoken Culture Minister, Gayton McKenzie, who leads one of the parties in the coalition government, also emphasised this point.

"We say South Africa is open to our brothers on the continent but come here legitimately. Come with your papers," he told the BBC's Interview programme.

But Itoro says his legal status did not protect him from hostility as he shows the BBC a copy of the document that he says proves he had the right to stay in the country.

He was not alone, according to the Nigerian authorities.

"We have records of Nigerians who have legitimate papers to remain in South Africa, yet they have been attacked," Nigeria's Minister of

State for Foreign Affairs Sola Enikanlola said during a recent meeting with South Africa's Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola.

The temperature was raised last week following the death of a Nigerian who was killed as police were arresting him over suspected drug offences. An independent body is now investigating.

Lamola maintained that South Africa deals with those who take the law into their own hands, but added that President Cyril Ramaphosa was also "very firm on South Africa's sovereign right to enforce its immigration laws".

Ghanaian Emmanuel Asamoah was working as a hairdresser in South Africa.

Despite the diplomatic efforts, South Africa's reputation has been severely damaged.

Not least because of images and videos circulating on social media. Not all of them were what they were purported to be, but one, involving a Ghanaian, was genuine and it sparked huge concern once it started being shared in April.



MARTIAL COURT:

Ugandan opposition leader and four-time presidential candidate Kizza Besigye, stands in the dock at the Makindye Martial Court in Kampala, Uganda.

France wildfires reveal hundreds of WW2 shells in village

Wildfires in the south of France have revealed a cache of 400 historic shells and munitions in the village of Le Porge, according to local authorities.

Blasts during the fires, initially thought to be exploding gas cylinders, may have been World War Two explosives detonated by the heat, the local fire commander told local media.

More than 100 explosions were heard on the second night of the fire, Mayor Martial Zaninetti told French news outlet France Info, likening it to "the sound of war".

Demining operations have

now seen most residents return to their homes, however the mayor has said certain areas are still off-limits. More than 180 houses in the area were destroyed by the wildfire.

"There were ammunition depots buried in land within our municipality, but we didn't know it, and they exploded", Zaninetti told France Info.

He described them going "to the right, to the left" and that there was "even one that went through a house".

In a statement on Instagram on Monday, the mayor wrote that access to the ocean, a campsite, and the village of La

Jenny remained off limits.

The historic weapons were both German and French and included mortar shells and anti-tank shells, French media reported.

Their discovery comes after a forest fire ravaged the Gironde area, which has now been brought under control after burning for about 10 days.

Pictures from Le Porge on Monday showed families picking through the burned remains of their homes.

On Monday, French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu thanked firefighters for their efforts saying "France has stood

firm in the face of an unprecedented crisis".

He highlighted the battle against the fires had entered a "new phase" in the Gironde region, saying "the evacuated individuals are gradually returning to their homes".

Wildfires have raged across Europe over the two weeks, primarily in France and Spain, where more than 330,000 people were evacuated.

France was one of the worst affected regions, with an area of 42,000 hectares burnt in the south-west, making it one of the largest forest fires since World War Two.

FEATURE

Shine agenda across borders"-bringing Edos's development home through global partnership

FESTUS ALENKHE

In an era where development is borderless, governance must also be borderless. It is in this context that Governor Monday Okpebholo's "SHINE Agenda Across Borders" event in London deserves not just attention, but commendation and support.

This was not a ceremonial gathering. It was a strategic economic diplomacy mission — one that recognizes a fundamental reality: "Edo State cannot develop in isolation."

We endorse this initiative because it is timely, practical, and rooted in data.

1. THE CASE FOR GOING ABROAD: FACTS AND FIGURES

Edo State has one of Nigeria's largest diaspora populations. The UK alone hosts an estimated *250,000+ Edo people*, with heavy concentrations in London, Manchester, and Birmingham. According to the *World Bank and CBN 2023 data*, Nigeria received *\$20.1 billion in diaspora remittances*. Edo consistently ranks among the top 5 states in remittance inflow.

Yet for decades, that inflow has gone largely into consumption — school fees, rent, health and family support. Little has gone into productive investment because the bridge between policy at home and opportunity abroad was missing.

The UK also hosts thousands of Edo professionals: *NHS consultants, university lecturers, engineers, fintech experts, and lawyers*. The *NMA UK Chapter* estimates that over *2,000 doctors of Edo origin* practice in the UK. Imagine if just 10% of that expertise is channeled into telemedicine, hospital partnerships, and training in Edo.

That is the gap *SHINE Across Borders* is designed to close.

2. WHY SHINE MATTERS: BREAKING DOWN THE 5 PILLARS

The SHINE Agenda — *Security, Health, Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Education* — directly addresses Edo's binding constraints.

Security: No development thrives in an atmosphere of fear. Edo recorded improved coordination between state security outfits and federal agencies in the last quarter. By assuring the diaspora and foreign investors that Edo is safe for business, the government is removing the first barrier to investment.

Health: Edo people spend an estimated *\$1 billion annually* on medical tourism, per *NBS and private hospital data*. London has some of the world's best hospitals and a large pool of Edo medical professionals. Partnerships for equipment donation, specialist exchange, and telemedicine can bring quality care to *Specialist Hospital, Central Hospital, Stella Obasanjo Hospital in Benin city, and our 18 LGAs* without waiting decades.

Infrastructure: Edo is strategically located. We sit on the *Lagos-Benin-Benin Republic corridor* and have access to the *Benin River Port* project. The state needs *\$3.2 billion* in infrastructure deficit funding according to *AFDB estimates*. UK firms in construction, renewable energy, and digital infrastructure have both capital and technical know-how. This engagement opens that

door.+16267760622

Natural Resources: Edo is blessed beyond oil. We have *over 3 billion metric tonnes of limestone* in Okpella, *bitumen deposits* in Ologbo, and *1.2 million hectares of arable land*. Yet 80% of what we produce is exported raw. The Governor's pitch in London is simple: *Come and process in Edo. Create jobs in Edo. Export from Edo.* That is how we move from poverty to prosperity.

Education: With over *60% of Edo's population under age 35*, our youth are our future. But unemployment remains high. Through scholarships, skills transfer, and twinning programs with UK institutions, SHINE seeks to equip our youths so they can compete globally *without* having to leave permanently. That is brain gain.

3. WHY LONDON, WHY NOW

London was chosen for three reasons.

First, *concentration of influence*. UK policymakers, investors, and the Edo diaspora elite are all there.

Second, *credibility*. Presenting SHINE in a global financial capital signals seriousness.

Third, *urgency*. With the global economy shifting and Nigeria's sub-nationals now competing directly for FDI, states that wait will be left behind. Edo has chosen not to wait.

4. ADDRESSING THE SKEPTICISM

We understand the doubts. Past diaspora engagements yielded town hall photos but few factories. That is why this must be different.

For SHINE Across Borders to work, 3 things are suggested:

1. *Institutionalize it*: Create a *Diaspora Investment and Partnership Office* in the Government House with a published dashboard.

2. *Incentivize it*: Fast-track approvals, land allocation, and tax incentives for diaspora-led projects in agro-processing, health, and tech.



Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo

3. *Report on it*: Quarterly updates to Edo people on MOUs signed, funds mobilized, and projects started.

Without these, SHINE risks becoming another acronym. With them, it becomes a movement.

CONCLUSION

Governor Monday Okpebholo's London outing is a bold statement: *Edo is open, Edo is ready, and Edo is

calling her sons and daughters home to build.*

We support *SHINE Agenda Across Borders* because it shifts governance from rhetoric to relationships, from isolation to integration. It tells every Edo doctor in London, every engineer in Manchester, every business owner in Peckham: *Your state needs you, and there is now a plan for you to

come and invest.*

The task ahead is execution. But the vision is right. The timing is right. And the platform is right.

Edo can shine. Let it shine — in Benin, in Auchi, in Uromi, and yes, even across borders in London.

Edo's future will be built by all of us, together.



Senator Monday Okpebholo 3rd right, showing T-Shirt of his Shine agenda across borders": Bringing Edo's development home through global partnership

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FEATURE



Justice before Reintegration

ODINI VIVIAN AMAKA

For more than a decade, Nigeria has battled violent insecurity that has left thousands of families grieving, communities displaced, businesses destroyed, and entire regions living under constant fear. From mass abductions and deadly attacks on villages to ambushes on highways and assaults on security formations, armed groups have inflicted deep wounds on the nation. While the government has explored different strategies to reduce violence, one approach continues to divide public opinion: the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant bandits and other violent extremists.

Supporters of rehabilitation argue that it can encourage fighters to abandon violence and reduce future conflict. They point to deradicalization programmes used in different countries and maintain that not everyone who joins an armed group remains committed to violence forever. In theory, helping former fighters return to society could weaken criminal networks and create lasting peace.

Yet for many Nigerians, this argument is difficult to accept.

The question many citizens continue to ask is simple: Can there be forgiveness without justice?

Across northern Nigeria and other affected regions, countless families have buried loved ones after brutal attacks. Farmers have abandoned their farmlands because of fear. Schoolchildren have been kidnapped from classrooms. Communities have watched homes, churches, mosques, markets, and businesses destroyed. These are not statistics on paper; they are painful realities that continue to shape the lives of ordinary Nigerians.

Many victims believe that rehabilitating those responsible sends the wrong message. To them, it appears that people who once terrorized communities are being offered another opportunity while survivors are still struggling to rebuild their lives. The emotional burden of this perception cannot be ignored.

Another concern is public safety.

Nigeria's armed forces and other security agencies have sacrificed enormously in the fight against armed groups. Hundreds of soldiers, police officers, and other security personnel have lost their lives while protecting communities from attacks. Others have suffered life-changing injuries in the line of duty. These men and women swore to defend the country, often at great personal cost.

This is why many Nigerians question any proposal that could eventually place former members of violent groups in sensitive positions, especially within the nation's security institutions. If individuals once fought against the Nigerian state, citizens naturally worry about whether com-



plete trust can ever be restored. Security is built not only on weapons but also on confidence, discipline, and loyalty. Even the perception of divided loyalty can weaken public trust.

Critics also argue that rehabilitation should never come before accountability.

Every society governed by the rule of law depends on justice. Crimes such as murder, kidnapping, terrorism, and armed robbery carry serious consequences because they threaten the safety of everyone. If perpetrators of such crimes appear to receive opportunities that law-abiding citizens struggle to obtain, it may create the impression that violence carries little consequence.

Justice is not about revenge. Rather, it is about ensuring accountability, recognising victims, and reinforcing respect for the law. Families who have lost parents, children, spouses, and friends deserve to know that their pain has not been forgotten. They deserve to see that the legal system values their suffering as much as it values efforts toward reconciliation.

At the same time, this debate should be approached carefully and responsibly. It is important not to make sweeping claims about the nationality or background of every individual involved in banditry or terrorism. Nigeria's security challenges involve different armed groups with

different origins, motivations, and structures. While reports have documented cross-border movements of some criminal elements, it would be inaccurate to assume that every bandit or extremist is a foreign national. Public discussions are strongest when

they rely on verified facts rather than assumptions.

Instead of focusing primarily on rehabilitating perpetrators, many citizens believe greater attention should be given to victims. Thousands of internally displaced persons remain in camps or temporary settlements, hoping to return to normal lives. Children have missed years of education. Farmers need support to return to their fields. Widows require economic assistance. Communities need hospitals, schools, roads, and security restored.

If government resources are available, many Nigerians argue that they should first rebuild the lives of those who suffered because of violence before investing heavily in programmes for those who carried out the attacks.

There is also the issue of public confidence in government. Security policies succeed only when citizens trust them. If communities believe decisions are being made without adequate consultation or transparency, suspicion grows. Any rehabilitation programme should therefore be accompanied by clear information about how participants are selected, monitored, and evaluated. Citizens deserve assurance that public safety will never be compromised.

None of this means that peace should be abandoned. Every nation hopes to end cycles of violence, and history shows that some conflicts

have eventually been resolved through dialogue, deradicalization, and reintegration. However, lasting peace is rarely achieved by overlooking justice. Reconciliation is strongest when it acknowledges victims, holds offenders accountable under the law, and ensures that communities feel protected.

Ultimately, the debate over rehabilitation is not simply about former fighters. It is about the kind of society Nigeria wants to build. Should justice come before reintegration? How can victims find closure if they believe those responsible have escaped accountability? What message does society send to young people when those associated with violence appear to receive opportunities unavailable to many law-abiding citizens?

These are difficult questions with no easy answers.

One thing, however, remains clear: Nigerians deserve security, justice, and peace. These three goals should never compete with one another. Any policy designed to reduce insecurity must place the safety of innocent citizens first, respect the sacrifices of security personnel, and recognise the suffering of victims. Peace is essential, but peace that ignores justice risks becoming fragile. For many Nigerians, true reconciliation can only begin when accountability is seen, victims are heard, and the rule of law remains the foundation of every decision.

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If perpetrators of such crimes appear to receive opportunities that law-abiding citizens struggle to obtain, it may create the impression that violence carries little consequence.