

# Edo Govt in talks with Chinese investors to establish drug manufacturing company

RICHARD EWEKA

## BENIN CITY

The Edo State government is currently in talks with Chinese Investors to establish a drug manufacturing firm in the State which is capable of supplying drugs to neighboring states and the African Region.

Speaking to newsmen in Benin City, pioneering Executive Secretary of Edo State Drugs and Health Commodities Management Agency (DMA) Dr. Kenny Okojie said the establishment of the firm will be a PPP arrangement.

She said the state is in talks with investors who had shown interest in establishing a manu-

facturing firm that will be producing medicines in the State, adding that the production of the drugs will not be for the consumption of the State alone but for the neighboring States and African Region.

"We are discussing a PPP arrangement where the investors will build, establish and run the company while the State pro-

vides an enabling environment and the right policies for the company to thrive in the State.

"This will give employment to the youths, train pharmacies, doctors and other health-care givers. This will be a landmark project which hopefully will come into reality next year", she concluded.

The Special Adviser on

Health Matters, Dr. Andrew Iyamu, said the Chinese Investors are willing to take charge of the warehouse at the medical store road and convert it to the manufacturing firm producing drugs.

He noted that the warehouse established by the late Samuel Ogbemudia is no longer functioning effectively but still has

good machines which were vandalized during the End-SARS period.

"The Chinese investors saw the machines and were happy and ready to take it over and ensure its effectiveness. They are ready to properly utilize it in the production of drugs and

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## Okpebholo unveils ₦100million business grant for Uwelu traders

RICHARD EWEKA

### BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged a N100 million business grant to traders at the Uwelu Spare Parts Market, Benin City, while promising the reconstruction of the Uwasota-Uwelu Road to boost commercial activities in the area.

Governor Okpebholo made the pledge on Friday when he visited the market to assess the challenges confronting traders and explore ways of strength-

### promises road reconstruction

ening their businesses.

He urged the traders to form a cooperative society, if they had none, to facilitate access to the proposed grant, assuring them of his administration's commitment to supporting small and medium-scale businesses across the state.

"When I came last time, I advised you people to form a cooperative society if you don't have any yet because a good thing is about to come your

way in this market.

"I want to give you people money to do your business before now to December 2026. I will give you N100 million to do your business," the governor said.

On the deplorable condition of the Uwasota-Uwelu Road, Governor Okpebholo promised to return to the area to monitor the contractors and ensure the commencement of reconstruction work.

He also promised government intervention in the condition of a secondary school in the area.

"I will come back after giving you people N100 million to do business to check if contractors have started work on the Uwasota-Uwelu and also the secondary school which you need us to intervene.

"I will come back for the flag-off of the road and secondary school," he said.

The governor appealed to the traders to continue supporting his administration, attributing the ongoing development projects in Edo State partly to the financial support being received from the Federal Government under President Bola Tinubu.

"Nigeria is big and the country is like a vehicle that needs a good and qualified driver and President Tinubu is the right driver to take the nation to the right destination.

"All the good things that

are happening in Edo State are possible because of the money President Tinubu is giving to us in the state," he said.

Governor Okpebholo said his administration had been able to meet its statutory obligations to teachers, civil servants and other public workers, as well as pay a 13th-month salary, with the support of the Federal Government.

Speaking at the occasion, the Deputy Chairman of the

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

## Okaeben tasks security agencies to restore order in city centre

### BENIN CITY

Edo State Commissioner for Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Hon. Chris Okaeben, has challenged security agencies in the State to urgently restore law and order around Ring Road and the King's Square ahead of the 10th coronation anniversary of the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku'Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II.

Okaeben made the call in Benin City while speaking with newsmen on the need to restore sanity to the city centre, particularly the area around

the Palace of the Oba of Benin.

He expressed concern over what he described as the indiscriminate activities of traders and commercial transport operators around the King's Square, particularly near the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) branch.

According to him, the situation requires urgent intervention by security agencies to restore order and ensure that the city centre presents a befitting image as Edo State prepares to host dignitaries and visitors from within and outside Nigeria for the anniversary celebration.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



SPARE PARTS MARKET:

Gov. Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (middle), flanked by some top government functionaries, addressing traders at the Uwelu Spare Parts Market in Benin City at the weekend.

34 years after, ex-military personnel honours fallen heroes with cenotaph —Pg 2

Account for \$6.23million election funds or face legal action, SERAP tells CBN —Pg 8

Two mass shootings in South Africa leave 27 dead —Pg 9

Gbajabiamila empowers 5,000 Surulere residents, says probe cleared him over PFIPC —Pg 4

# NEWS

## Okpebholo unveils ₦100m...

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All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo State, Sylvester Aigboboh, thanked the traders for welcoming the governor and his entourage.

Aigboboh described the Okpebholo administration as one committed to improving the welfare of Edo residents, noting that the government had embarked on road repairs and rehabilitation projects across the state.

He listed the Sapele Road reconstruction project, which he said was about 80 per cent complete, and Amofin Road, which he said was ready for commissioning.

According to him, Uteh Palace Road and Temboga Road had also been completed.

Aigboboh further disclosed that First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, was expected to visit Edo State on October 15 to inaugurate 50 compressed natural gas (CNG) buses

aimed at reducing transportation costs for residents.

The Chairman of the Uwe-lu Spare Parts Market, Osemwengie Enogumwengie, thanked the governor for visiting the market and appealed for urgent reconstruction of the road linking Uwasota and Egor.

He said the poor condition of the road had adversely affected commercial activities in the area.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Ethics and Nationality, Oli Anayo Martin, said the APC had continued to enjoy the support of traders in the market, citing the appointment of an Igbo indigene as a commissioner in the state as an indication of the administration's inclusive disposition.

"We give you our firm promises that the 2.5 million votes promised President Tinubu will be achieved here as the traders have the capacity to deliver for President Tinubu come 2027," he said.

## Edo Govt in talks with Chinese...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

medicines which will be distributed to other states.

"Under the governor Monday Okpebholo led administration, the warehouse will be revitalized and make sure the State in collaboration with the investors utilizes it to produce

drugs and medicines which will generate revenue for the State".

The mandate of the DMA is to procure and organize the distribution of essential medicines to all health facilities including private health facilities, pharmacy to do business with Edo State.

## Okaeben tasks security agencies...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

The Commissioner said: "Nigeria must not degenerate to a level where security agencies are guarded on what to do or taught how to do their jobs."

He therefore called on the media, relevant stakeholders and security agencies to collaborate in checking what he described as illegal and indiscriminate activities by drivers and traders around the King's Square.

"As we plan the celebration of the anniversary of the coronation of our Royal Father, I urge the press to join hands with the relevant security agencies to fight and checkmate the illegal activities of both drivers and traders at the King's Square in Ring Road.

"Illegal activities like trading, picking and dropping off passengers indiscriminately around the King's Square, espe-

cially close to the CBN branch, are not acceptable. These people are bold with these activities because some people may be allegedly collecting money from them," he said.

Okaeben warned that he would personally take up the challenge of clearing the Ring Road and restoring order if the security agencies failed to discharge their responsibilities.

He stressed that restoring order around the city centre had become particularly important as Edo prepares for the 10th coronation anniversary of Oba Ewuare II.

"We must revive our values as we celebrate the 10th coronation anniversary of our Oba. Visitors will come from far and near to join in the celebration, and it will not be good for the image of the State if such indiscriminate activities continue at the city centre," he said.

## Thanksgiving unlocks greater blessings than grace — Idahosa

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa, has urged Christians to cultivate a lifestyle of thanksgiving, declaring that the power of appreciating God for His blessings and faithfulness can open the door to even greater blessings.

Idahosa made the declaration on Sunday, September 27, 2026, at the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Diocese of Edo-Delta, Wesley Cathedral, Benin-Sapele Road, Benin City, where he served as Chief Harvester at the 2026 Diocesan Harvest and Lay Preachers Recognition Service.

Speaking in the spirit of the harvest, the Deputy Gov-

ernor said thanksgiving was not merely an annual religious tradition but a spiritual expression of faith, gratitude and total dependence on God.

He said: "The power of thanksgiving is greater than grace," urging Christians to continually return to God with grateful hearts for His mercy, protection, provision and faithfulness.

Idahosa, who was also honoured for his contributions to the development of the Bishop's Chapel, expressed appreciation for the recognition and joined other worshippers in songs of thanksgiving and praise.

According to him, his decision to attend the programme was informed by his deep respect for the Methodist Church and the Bishop of the Edo-Delta Diocese, Right Rev.

Dr. Nosakhare Nosayaba.

"It is always a great opportunity to be in the presence of God," he said.

The Deputy Governor pledged to fulfil his commitment towards the ongoing church project, assuring that he would support efforts aimed at ensuring its completion.

He also acknowledged the historical significance of the Methodist Church, describing it as one of the oldest Christian denominations, while expressing his respect for the leadership and ministry of Bishop Nosayaba.

The former Edo State Governor and co-harvester, Chief Lucky Nosakhare Igbinedion, represented by his son, Eghe Nosakhare (Jnr), described participation in the harvest as both a privilege and an oppor-

tunity to return thanks to God and contribute to the advancement of His kingdom.

He said supporting projects that promote the gospel and strengthen the work of the church was a noble responsibility, urging Christians to remain committed to the things of God.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the Harvest Organising Committee, Prof. Yinka Omorogbe, said proceeds from the Harvest of Gratitude would be channelled towards the completion of a new church project along the bypass.

She said the committee's goal was to ensure that the facility was completed and opened for worship, describing the project as an investment in the spiritual life of present and future generations.



HAVEST THANKSGIVING:

Edo Deputy Governor Dennis Idahosa Receives Award Plaque From the Methodist Bishop of Edo-Delta Diocese, Dr Nosakhare Nosayaba at the Wesley Cathedral in Benin City. During the Havest Thanksgiving of Methodist Church of Nigeria, Diocese of Edo-Delta held in Benin City.

## Ovia South West council boss pledges school uniforms, urges pupils to embrace discipline

BERNADETTA IDALU

IGUOBAZUWA

The Executive Chairman of Ovia South West Local Government Council, Anthony Osarobo, has pledged to provide school uniforms for 40 primary school pupils, while

urging pupils across the council to embrace discipline, hard work and kindness in the new academic session.

Osarobo made the pledge during the flag-off of the new school session, where he encouraged pupils to take their education seriously and devel-

op the values needed to become responsible members of society.

Addressing pupils, teachers, parents and guardians, the council chairman stressed that education goes beyond passing examinations, noting that it should also prepare children to become responsible, respectful and compassionate citizens.

"Set a goal. Work hard. Be disciplined. Be kind. And never give up on yourself," Osarobo told the pupils.

He urged the children to listen to their teachers, respect their parents and guardians, remain determined in the face of academic challenges, and shun bullying and discrimination.

Osarobo also encouraged pupils to support one another and help create an environment where every child feels respected, valued and included.

He commended teachers for

their dedication to educating and shaping the younger generation, urging them to remain patient, committed and diligent in the discharge of their responsibilities.

The chairman also appealed to parents and guardians to play an active role in their children's education by monitoring their academic progress, encouraging regular school attendance and maintaining close communication with teachers and school authorities.

He said the provision of uniforms for the 40 pupils was aimed at supporting the beneficiaries and encouraging greater commitment to their education.

The Ovia South West boss urged the pupils to dream big and prepare for their future, noting that education provides a strong foundation for achieving their aspirations.

## 34 years after, ex-military personnel honours fallen heroes with cenotaph

LAGOS

Thirty-four years after the tragic Nigerian Air Force C-130 crash that claimed the lives of military personnel and other passengers, the Green Heroes Foundation, an organisation founded by retired military personnel, has unveiled a memorial cenotaph at the National Military Cemetery, Abuja, in honour of the fallen heroes.

The cenotaph was unveiled on Saturday as part of activities marking the 34th anniversary of the crash, which occurred shortly after the Nigerian Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft, designated NAF 911, took off from Lagos on September 26, 1992.

The crash remains one of the most devastating tragedies in the history of the Nigerian Armed Forces, with no survivors recorded.

Chairman of the Green Heroes

Foundation, retired Maj.-Gen. Shehu Yusuf, said the decision to erect the memorial followed the discovery that there was no monument at the cemetery commemorating the victims of the tragedy.

Yusuf said the foundation decided to establish a permanent memorial to ensure that the sacrifices of the fallen personnel would remain part of the nation's collective memory.

He said: "We came to the cemetery and found that there

was nothing like a monument or anything signifying that we lost our colleagues far back in 1992.

"So, we decided to put up a structure through which the entire nation remembers that we had gallant officers who did all they could to defend this country."

Yusuf announced that the foundation would sustain the remembrance of the fallen through annual wreath-laying ceremonies at the cenotaph every September 26.

**NEWS**

# 24 years after ICJ ruling, Nigeria-Cameroon border demarcation nears completion

**ABUJA**

Nearly 24 years after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered its judgment on the Cameroon-Nigeria land and maritime boundary dispute, both countries are nearing completion of the physical demarcation of their borders.

Mr Adamu Adaji, Director-General, National Boundary Commission (NBC), disclosed this in an exclusive interview with newsmen on Sunday in Abuja.

NAN reports that the ICJ judgment, delivered on October 10, 2002, resolved the boundary dispute, awarding sovereignty over the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon and delineating the two countries' land and maritime boundary.

Adaji told NAN that the remaining demarcation was concentrated around the Adamawa sector, involving more than 260 boundary pillars.

"We are currently placing pillars to make the boundary visible in those sectors.

"As soon as that is com-

pleted, in about two or three months, we expect to finish the demarcation of the Nigeria-Cameroon international boundary.

"Hopefully, before the end of the year, we should be done with the demarcation.

"We will then move to the management aspect, which involves addressing the needs of people adversely affected by the boundary," he said.

Adaji said the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary, stretching about 2,100 kilometres, was Nigeria's longest international

land boundary and the subject of the ICJ judgment in The Hague, Netherlands.

"Nigeria shares land boundaries of about 770 kilometres with Benin, 1,500 kilometres with Niger and approximately 2,100 kilometres with Cameroon," he disclosed.

According to him, the case initially centred on Bakassi but eventually covered the entire boundary, from the Chad Basin through states bordering Cameroon to the sea.

He said implementation began in 2002 after the gov-

ernments of Nigeria and Cameroon agreed, under United Nations auspices, to implement the judgment.

The two countries subsequently established the Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission, chaired by the United Nations, to address outstanding boundary issues.

Adaji said disagreements that caused some sectors to be skipped had been resolved through interventions by the presidents of both countries.

He said the resolution allowed both countries to consider affected populations and adjust boundary lines in a spirit of give-and-take.

"For example, a boundary line should not place a settlement that is predominantly

recognised as Nigerian on the Cameroonian side while placing a settlement recognised as Cameroonian on the Nigerian side.

"The two countries therefore had to consider how the boundary line could be adjusted around those areas.

"That has now been finalised, and the points where the pillars will be placed have been marked," he said.

Adaji cited Koja as a major Nigerian settlement affected by the boundary alignment, saying the ICJ-defined boundary initially placed about 90 per cent of the community in Cameroon.

However, he said an understanding between Nigeria and Cameroon enabled the entire Koja community to remain in Nigeria, while concessions were made elsewhere.

**MEETING:**

From left: Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Amb. Jimoh Ibrahim; Vice President Kashim Shettima and Deputy Secretary General, United Nations, Ms. Amina Mohammed, during the Vice President's meeting with the United Nations Deputy Secretary General on the sidelines of the 81st UNGA in New York on Saturday.

## 2027: Wike to lead Tinubu's re-election campaign in FCT, Rivers

**ABUJA**

The Minister, Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has announced plans to inaugurate and lead the campaign machinery in Abuja and Rivers to drive the re-election bid of President Bola Tinubu.

Wike disclosed this in Abuja on Friday, after he inspected the ongoing Kuje-Gwagwalada road dualisation project.

He added that he would lead the campaign effort within the nation's capital and extend the re-election operations to his home state of Rivers.

According to him, political parties across the spectrum are organising their ranks, and supporters of the president are prepared to initiate an aggressive campaign.

"The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), I believe, is putting itself together for an aggressive campaign.

"For us who are supporting Mr President from different political platforms, we have put our machinery ready to kick-start.

"Very soon, I will inaugurate the campaign team for Tinubu in the FCT and Rivers, which I will lead.

"All elements of the APC are ready, Mr President is

ready, we are ready and you can see the enthusiasm."

Addressing critics and political opponents, Wike argued that visible development projects would serve as the main driver for electoral support in the FCT, dismissing allegations of electoral malpractice ahead of time.

"People are happy, and I don't know who will contest against the president as far as this election is concerned.

"This is governance, and this is what people expect. It will translate directly into actual votes," he said.

Wike expressed confidence that the administration's infrastructure record would secure victory across board in the FCT, including support for Sen. Philip Aduda and the two House of Representatives seats.

"It is obvious. Nobody will be able to claim rigging in FCT. The 'rigging' is the projects we are delivering, making the people happy," Wike said.

Commending the contractor and site engineers for the progress recorded so far, the minister assured stakeholders that adequate funding would be disbursed to guarantee completion of the project by December.

## Kano state ranks first in 2026 NECO

**KANO**

Kano state has ranked first in the 2026 National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO), with 74,413 candidates that obtained at least five credits, including English Language and Mathematics.

The result showed that Lagos emerged second with 72,496 candidates and Oyo came third with 55,543 candidates.

The performance marks the second consecutive year that Kano has topped the NECO national performance chart, after recording the highest number of candidates with five credits, including English and Mathematics in the 2025 examination.

Reacting to the development, Gov. Abba Yusuf, in a statement by his spokesperson, Mr Sanusi Bature, on Saturday in Kano, commended the students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders for the outstanding performance.

Yusuf said the back-to-

back performance was an indication that the state's sustained investment in education was producing measurable results.

"Kano has maintained the first position in NECO twice in a row making the state as the leading SSCE performer for the two consecutive years, (2025 and 2026) respectively,"

he said.

He assured the people of Kano that his administration would continue to prioritise education through increased funding, improved learning facilities, teacher recruitment and training, scholarships and support for indigent students.

As part of the interventions, he said, the state government

spent over N4.4 billion in 2026 to sponsor candidates for Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination, particularly indigent students.

The governor said the intervention was designed to remove financial barriers and enable students to participate in the examinations under better conditions.

## Nigeria, Germany deepen partnership to boost steel industry

**ABUJA**

The Federal Government says it is committed to strengthening industrial cooperation with Germany in steel development, technology transfer, mineral processing and equipment manufacturing.

The Minister of Steel Development, Prince Shuaibu Audu, said this on Thursday when he received a delegation of German Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), led by Dr Chux Onaa, Head of VD-MA-German OEMs, in Abuja.

According to a statement signed by Ijomah Opia, on

behalf of the Head, Press and Public Relations of the ministry, in Abuja on Friday, the visit was aimed at strengthening cooperation between Nigeria and Germany in the steel sector.

Audu said the visit was an important step toward translating previous engagements between Nigeria and Germany into concrete areas of industrial collaboration and investment.

He recalled engagements at the 9th German-African Economic Forum in Dortmund, Germany, where both countries explored cooperation in steel development, mining,

mineral processing, engineering, technology transfer and industrial investments

"The presence of the German delegation in Nigeria demonstrates the growing interest of German industries in the country's industrial sector.

"It also presents an opportunity to build sustainable partnerships that will deliver tangible benefits to both nations," he added.

The minister said Nigeria's significant mineral resources and growing market presented opportunities for German industries to invest in the country's steel and metallurgical sectors.

## Federal CEOs appoints Akume patron, pledges 10m votes for Tinubu

**ABUJA**

The Forum of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Federal Parastatals has appointed the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. George Akume, as its patron.

The forum also pledged to mobilise 10 million votes for President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election.

The decision was announced when a 20-member delegation of the forum paid a courtesy visit to Akume in Abuja.

A statement on the visit, signed by Otunba Biodun Ajiboye, Chairman of the Publicity Committee, was made

available to newsmen on Saturday in Abuja.

In the statement, Chairman of the forum, Dr Kazeem Raji, said the appointment recognised Akume's leadership, experience and contributions to coordinating government institutions.

Raji, who is also Director-General of the National Board of Technology Incubation, said the forum would support Tinubu's re-election through lawful, peaceful and issue-based engagement.

He commended Akume's institutional stewardship, wisdom, experience and commitment to coordinating government machinery.



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**NEWS**

# Ekiti steps up surveillance against Ebola, Diphtheria, sensitises residents on prevention

**ADO-EKITI**

The Ekiti State Government says it is intensifying disease surveillance and rapid response mechanisms across its 16 Local Government Areas to prevent the outbreak of diseases, including Ebola Virus Disease and Diphtheria.

The state Commissioner for Health and Human Services, Dr Oyeibanji Filani, said that “surveillance and response systems in the state have been strengthened to ensure early detection, prompt reporting and effective containment of any suspected case.”

Filani, represented by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mrs Olusola Gbeniga-Igotun, spoke in Ado Ekiti, the state capital, on Saturday, at a one-day sensitisation programme for stakeholders on Ebola and Diphtheria.

The stakeholders in attendance included community and religious leaders, market leaders, transporters’ representatives, artisans and the media.

The commissioner, who said that the government would continue to take proactive measures to prevent and control diseases in the state, lauded Governor

Biodun Oyeibanji for his “commitment to improving health-care delivery and the wellbeing of residents.”

Ekiti State Epidemiologist, Dr Bosede Alowooye, who said that the World Health Organisation had declared Ebola as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, said, “All countries need to be on alert. When we are in a state of alert, we need to carry out some activities; this sensitisation is part of it.”

Alowooye said the sensitisation programme was organised to strengthen prevention, early detection and prompt reporting of suspected cases.

“We are sensitising different stakeholders, telling them about the current update on Ebola and diphtheria, and also the preventive measures to take in the state,” she said.

The epidemiologist, who said the state public health emergency operation centre had been activated, added that it had already carried out some activities, including the sensitisation of health workers, disease surveillance structure and community informants on the signs and symptoms, and how to report any cases.

“We have also trained the Ek-

iti airport staff on how to detect passengers who might be coming down with sudden fever. We have given them thermometers and sanitisers, and other IEC materials and educational materials.

“We have trained our case management team – the doctors and nurses – who will take care of any Ebola disease patient in the state. We have trained our nurses on detection, prevention and control, and we also bought personal protective equipment like hand gloves, gowns, sanitisers, and other sample collection

materials.

“So, Ekiti is perfectly prepared for not only Ebola, but diphtheria, Lassa fever, or any other disease,” she noted.

The epidemiologist listed symptoms of Ebola to include muscle pain, headache, stomach ache, vomiting, sudden high fever, difficulty in breathing and skin rash, as she advised residents to maintain proper hand hygiene, observe personal hygiene and promptly report suspected cases to health authorities.

Alowooye also urged residents with a history of travel to

countries with reported outbreaks, including Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, to promptly report to health authorities and seek medical attention where necessary.

The General Manager, Ekiti State Health Insurance Scheme and Pillar Lead for Ebola Risk Communication, Dr Charles Doherty, said the state government was sensitising residents on the diseases, “to inform them about the causes and most especially the prevention because prevention is better than cure. We are also enlightening our people on the

various misconceptions.”

He called on residents to take necessary precautions, saying, “Any fever treated for two or three days, and there’s no result, should be reported. We also advise our people to always identify and inform the relevant government agencies as soon as possible when they discover any new thing among them.

“Also, they have to be very careful about travellers, especially international travellers who have one thing or the other to do with Uganda or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**VISIT**

From left: Managing Director, Africa Gas Tech Company, Michael Nwajueboe; Chief Commercial Officer, Energy Ventures B.V/Ltd., Yvonne Te Wierik-Chioke; Director of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Enterprises, Abdul-Kadri Ahmed; Chief Executive Officer, Energy Ventures B.V/Ltd., Herbert Okibe; and Chief Financial Officer, Energy Ventures B.V/Ltd., Govert Rietema, during a visit by the Energy Ventures delegation to the Director of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Enterprises, in Abuja.

## Nasarawa Gov inaugurates 5.2km bypass, other roads

**LAFIA**

Nasarawa State Governor, Abdullahi Sule, has inaugurated the newly completed 5.2-kilometre Akwanga-Jos bypass in the Akwanga Local Government Area of the state.

Sule also inaugurated one-kilometre roads each in Akwanga, Nasarawa-Eggon and Wamba LGAs constructed by their respective chairmen as part of activities lined up to mark the 30th anniversary of the state’s creation on October 1, 2026.

Speaking at the inauguration of the bypass in Akwanga LGA on Saturday, the governor described the 5.2km road as a strategic intervention to decongest Akwanga town and boost economic activities in the area.

He explained that the bypass had reduced travel time for those coming from Keffi or Gudi to Jos by more than 5km,

curbed incessant accidents in the town, and extended the lifespan of township roads.

“This is more than a road. It is an economic corridor. For years, our people in Akwanga have suffered traffic gridlock and accidents because all vehicles going towards Jos must pass through the heart of the town.

“Today, we have provided an alternative route that will bring relief to our people and open up new areas for development,” Sule said, as he commended the contractor for delivering the project on schedule and within specifications.

He explained that the bypass was built to the same standard as the federal highway to withstand heavy-duty vehicles, and he promised to install solar street lights on the road to ensure the safety of motorists at night. The governor assured that his administration would sustain its drive on both urban and rural roads across the 13 LGAs of the state.

## Jigawa council vaccinates 3,000 livestock against lung disease

**DUTSE**

No fewer than 3,105 domestic animals have been targeted to be vaccinated against pulmonary disease in Kaugama Local Government Area of Jigawa State to curb the spread of the deadly infection.

Speaking during the flag-off of the vaccination exercise held on Saturday in the area, the Head of Department, Agriculture and Natural Resource, Kaugama LGA, Nasir Ibrahim, said the scheme will be conducted across all affected communities in the domain.

He disclosed that the council embarked on the exercise following reported cases of

pulmonary disease among livestock in three communities in the area.

He said the affected animals are 2,045 cows and 1,060 sheep and goats in Cumbuleske, Ganuwa and Rigat Kwagga communities.

“The local government council has procured vaccines and other necessary logistics to forestall future occurrence and spread of the disease,” Ibrahim said.

He explained that the dis-

ease is often caused by bacterial pneumonia secondary to viral infections, which leads to difficulty in breathing and coughing in animals.

“Parasites such as lungworms and toxic environmental factors including herbicide toxicity can also cause severe lung damage in livestock,” he added.

According to him, the council will continue to monitor the situation and extend the vaccination to other communities if

need be.

Commenting during the exercise, the Chairman of Kautal-Hore Association in the area, Sha’ibu Adamu, commended the council’s effort, saying the LGA chairman took prompt action after receiving reports of the outbreak from herders.

“We appreciate the council chairman for his quick response to save our livestock, which is our only source of livelihood,” Adamu said.

## Soldiers kill terrorist, rescue six family members in Sokoto, Zamfara

**SOKOTO**

Troops of Operation Fansan Yamma have neutralised a suspected terrorist in Sokoto State and foiled a kidnapping attempt, rescuing six members of the same family in Zamfara State.

In Sokoto, troops of Sector 2 raided a suspected terrorist hideout around Karani village in Gudu Local Government

Area following credible intelligence on the activities of terrorists in the area.

The troops engaged the terrorists after making contact, killing one suspected terrorist while others fled into the surrounding forest.

The operation also led to the recovery of an AK-47 rifle loaded with live ammunition, an operational motorcycle, military camouflage uniforms, maintenance tools and other

logistical supplies.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the spokesman for the 8 Division, Lt. Col. Olaniyi Osoba, said the troops responded with “decisive firepower” during the encounter.

He said, “The successful operation demonstrates the resolve and capability of troops of Operation Fansan Yamma to disrupt terrorist activities and deny them freedom of action within the theatre.

## 2027: Abia stakeholders mobilise support for Otti’s re-election

**UMUAHIA**

Stakeholders of Abia North, under the aegis of the Alliance for Good Governance, have reiterated their resolve to support, protect and sustain the good governance model of Governor Alex Otti, beyond 2031 as the governor seeks re-election to office.

Presenting the communique issued at the end of the meeting at the Isieke Civic Centre, Ugwueke, in the Bende Local Government Area of the state, at the weekend, was the group’s Secretary and spokesperson, and former Vice-Chancellor of

the Abia State University, Uturu, Prof Mkpa Mkpa.

The interest of the group, he said, is to ensure the continuation of good governance in the state, noting that the state has never had it good in terms of good governance as being championed by Otti.

Mkpa said the stakeholders resolved that good governance transcends 2031, while the next generation of Abia leaders will continue to implement the templates that the Otti-led administration has initiated.

The group called for all hands to be on deck to actualise Otti’s second-term bid through voter education, especially those at the grassroots

and among the youth, not to succumb to any pressure or any inducement from the opposition.

“We are non-partisan; we are the elders of Abia North, and we are the lone voice, crying in the wilderness, calling on all and sundry not to allow this singular opportunity that this administration has prayed for over the years, which God has graciously granted us, in giving us a person like Governor Alex Otti, to slip through our fingers.

“It was also agreed that it is not enough to merely wish that Governor Alex Otti will remain in office beyond 2027. All hands must be on deck to actualise it.

**NEWS**

AYENOMOH WINNER ALUKHEI / TALBORT HOPE

**LAGOS**

Chief of Staff to the President, Mr Femi Gbajabiamila, on Saturday empowered about 5,000 residents of Surulere in Lagos with cash, vehicles and other items under his Mega Empowerment Programme.

Gbajabiamila, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, also spoke on recent allegations against him around the controversial Presidential

# Gbajabiamila empowers 5,000 Surulere residents, says probe cleared him over PFIPC

Foreign Intervention Promotion Council (PFIPC).

He said the empowerment included N1.15 billion in cash support, 279 vehicles, including mini-buses, electric cars, electric tricycles, as well as laptops and other items.

According to him, 3,905 beneficiaries received N250,000

each, while 348 others received N500,000 each.

He said 61 beneficiaries were presented with electric vehicles, 40 with mini-buses and 100 with laptops, while four Toyota Hiace 18-seater buses, two security patrol vehicles, a medical ambulance and a special T2 jeep were also part of

the package.

Speaking on the allegations, Gbajabiamila said his integrity was questioned in the past few months but investigations had cleared him.

"Lagos has also stood by me in good and difficult times. The past few months have tested me in ways I never expected.

Stories were written, strange accusations were made, lies were told and my integrity was questioned.

"Through it all, the people of Surulere and Lagos, and many well-meaning Nigerians kept me in their prayers and spoke up for me when it mattered. I will never forget that," he said.

He said the Nigeria Police, the Department of State Services (DSS) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) cleared him of any wrongdoing and that the reports were in the public do-

main.

Gbajabiamila thanked President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for insisting on due process.

"Many people wanted him to rush to judgment and give a verdict before the investigations were concluded. He refused and insisted on due process," he said.

He added that the House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee investigating the purported PFIPC found no evidence that he authorised, approved, established or participated in the activities of the organisation.

**ROAD WALK:**

National Coordinator, Rabies Elimination Program Nigeria, Dr George Uzoaga (5th, R) and other participants during the road walk for public enlightenment on rabies prevention, reporting and vaccination to commemorate World Rabies Day 2026, in Abuja.

Photos: Hogan Bassey/NAN

## DMO: Nigeria's total debt climbs to N166.79trn

AYENOMOH WINNER ALUKHEI

**ABUJA**

Nigeria's total public debt stock rose to N166.79 trillion as of June 30, 2026, from N159.35 trillion at the end of the first quarter, an increase of N7.44 trillion, according to data from the Debt Management Office (DMO).

The figures show domestic debt at N91.59 trillion, representing 54.91 per cent of total debt, while external debt accounted for the balance.

In dollar terms, the DMO put total public debt at \$120.93 billion, comprising \$54.52 billion in external debt and \$66.41 billion in domestic debt.

The external component was converted using the Central Bank of Nigeria's official exchange rate of N1,379.1842 to a dollar as of June 30.

A breakdown shows the Federal Government accounting for the bulk of obligations.

FGN external debt stood at N65.77 trillion, representing 39.44 per cent of total debt, while states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) accounted for N9.42 trillion, or 5.65 per cent, of external debt.

On the domestic side, FGN debt stood at N87.00 trillion, representing 52.16 per cent of total debt, while states and

the FCT held N4.59 trillion, or 2.75 per cent.

Altogether, the Federal Government's share came to about N152.77 trillion, while states and the FCT accounted for about N14.01 trillion.

Within the Federal Government's domestic portfolio, FGN bonds remained the largest instrument, with an outstanding value of N64.84

trillion, representing 74.53 per cent of FGN domestic debt.

This comprised N41.47 trillion in FGN Naira bonds, N22.11 trillion in securitised Ways and Means advances, and N1.27 trillion in FGN domestic US dollar bonds.

Nigerian Treasury Bills accounted for N19.48 trillion, or 22.39 per cent of FGN domestic debt.

Other instruments included FGN Sukuk at N1.19 trillion, promissory notes totalling N1.22 trillion — N206.82 billion naira-denominated and N1.01 trillion foreign-currency-denominated — FGN savings bonds at N122.45 billion, green bonds at N47.36 billion, and N100 billion under other instruments, specifically UFTF FGN securities.

## FG Moves to Raise \$1.2bn for 90,000km Fibre Network

TALBORT HOPE

**ABUJA**

The Federal Government has intensified efforts to attract about \$1.2 billion in private sector investment for the planned expansion of Nigeria's fibre optic infrastructure as the country moves closer to the physical rollout of the nationwide project.

The initiative, known as the Building Resilient Digital Infrastructure for Growth (Project BRIDGE), is designed to deploy about 90,000 kilometres of fibre infrastructure across the country and expand access to high speed broadband services.

The project is estimated to cost about \$2 billion, with the Federal Government already securing approximately \$800 million through financing commitments from international development institutions.

The secured funding comprises a \$500 million World Bank facility, \$200 million from the African Development Bank and \$100 million from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The European Union has also provided a €22 million grant in support of the project.

The remaining \$1.2 billion is expected to be mobilised from private-sector investors under the project's public-private partnership structure.

According to the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Project BRIDGE will be implemented through a special-purpose vehicle established to bring government and private investors together in financing and operating the infrastructure.

Under the proposed structure, private investors are expected to hold between 51 per cent and 75 per cent of the spe-

cial-purpose company, while the Federal Government will retain between 25 per cent and 49 per cent.

The government had earlier opened the project to private investors, inviting both local and international financial and strategic investors to participate in the financing and development of the fibre network.

The ministry said the project is expected to cover Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, with the network designed to connect more than 770 local government areas.

The planned fibre expansion is expected to strengthen the country's digital backbone and improve the availability of broadband services, particularly in areas where connectivity remains limited.

The African Development Bank said Project BRIDGE is intended to expand Nigeria's existing national fibre backbone from roughly 30,000 kilometres

## Nigeria's domestic debt service drops by 31.8% to N2.14trn in Q2

AYENOMOH WINNER ALUKHEI / OJO HAPPY

**ABUJA**

Nigeria's domestic debt-service payments fell by 31.8 per cent in the second quarter of 2026 to N2.14 trillion from N3.14 trillion in the first quarter, according to data from the Debt Management Office (DMO).

The decline reverses the sharp increase recorded at the start of the year, when Q1 payments were 37.5 per cent higher than the N2.28 trillion paid in Q4 2025.

Of the Q2 total, interest and rental payments accounted for N1.98 trillion, while principal repayments made up N164.28 billion.

Interest on Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) bonds remained the largest component, totalling N1.39 trillion for the quarter — N530.84 billion in April, N332.49 billion in May and N525.05 billion in June.

Nigerian Treasury Bills (NTBs) accounted for N488.80 billion in interest payments, comprising N180.64 billion in

April, N201 billion in May and N107.16 billion in June.

FGN Sukuk rental payments came to N92.29 billion across the quarter, while FGN Savings Bonds and the FGN Green Bond contributed N4.66 billion and N5.56 billion respectively.

Principal repayments totalling N164.28 billion for the quarter, with the bulk — N136.96 billion — settled in June, comprising N66.27 billion in naira-denominated promissory notes and N70.69 billion in foreign-currency-denominated notes.

A further N24.68 billion was repaid in April and N2.64 billion in May, with no foreign-currency promissory note principal repaid in either month.

The decline in debt-service costs came even as Nigeria's total public debt rose by 4.7 per cent to N166.79 trillion as of June 30, 2026, up from N159.35 trillion at the end of March, the DMO said.

Domestic debt stood at N91.59 trillion, representing 54.91 per cent of total public debt, while external debt was N75.20 trillion.

## PenCom operators commit N241bn to infrastructure, target N300bn — PenCom

**ABUJA**

The Director-General of the National Pension Commission (PenCom), Ms Omolola Oloworaran, says pension fund operators have committed N241 billion to infrastructure development through the industry's infrastructure consortium under a framework established in conjunction with FSD Africa.

Oloworaran, who also chairs the Pension Industry Leadership Council (PILC), disclosed this at a news conference after the council's fourth meeting in Lagos on Thursday.

She said the commitment was part of the industry's ef-

forts to mobilise long-term capital for infrastructure development in the country.

According to her, the commitment is expected to increase to nearly N300 billion as the industry gains more confidence in the initiative.

She said actual investments through the infrastructure consortium were expected to begin in the second quarter of 2027, in line with the industry's implementation timetable.

"This is the first step we are taking as an industry and this is just the beginning.

"We are committed to mobilising capital within the pension industry to deepen infrastructure development in the country," she said.

**NEWS**

# Why Edo-Kogi boundary dispute remains unresolved - Commission boss

**ABUJA**

The Director-General, National Boundary Commission, Adamu Adaji, has revealed that the boundary disputes between Edo and Kogi states remain unresolved due to vanished landmarks, competing claims

and community resistance.

Adaji stated this in an exclusive interview with the News Agency of Nigeria in Abuja on Sunday.

He said technical and administrative efforts had produced an approved boundary line, but implementation faced resistance from communities along the cor-

ridor.

Meanwhile, Adaji said the commission recorded progress on the Abia-Anambra boundary, with 15 kilometres of the 23-kilometre stretch already agreed upon.

According to Adaji, the Edo-Kogi boundary was defined under Legal Notice No. 126 of 1954, which established the boundary between the Northern and Western regions.

He said some physical features referenced in the document had disappeared over time, making it difficult for experts to accurately trace the boundary.

Adaji said technical experts had attempted to interpret the historical documents, but the disappearance of landmarks introduced subjective judgment into determining the boundary.

"This has led the parties to continue laying claims in different areas," Adaji said, recalling

efforts dating back to 2006 to establish the boundary.

He said the commission considered the claims of both states and eventually produced a line regarded as the boundary between Edo and Kogi.

Adaji said the proposed boundary was subsequently approved by the Internal Boundary Committee, paving the way for its physical demarcation. However, the NBC boss said the exercise encountered resistance when the

contractor moved to establish the approved boundary on the ground.

He said communities along the corridor objected, arguing that the proposed line did not correspond with their understanding of the boundary.

"The affected communities consequently resisted the demarcation, prompting the commission to engage stakeholders and seek broader agreement," he noted.

**PLENARY SESSION:**

Hon Obosa Jolly Ogburn (R) during his screening and consideration at Edo State House of Assembly, as a member of Oil and Gas Producing Areas Development Commission (EDSOGPADEC) at the house plenary session recently. Photo; Godwin Iseguan.

## Sowore resumes 2027 presidential campaign

**ABUJA**

The presidential candidate of the African Action Congress, Mr Omoyele Sowore, returned to Nigeria from the United States on Sunday to resume his 2027 presidential campaign.

Sowore disclosed this in a statement issued to newsmen on Sunday.

According to him, he left for the US over what he described as arrests, detention, travel restrictions and the seizure of his international passport by Nigerian security agencies.

Sowore said that while in the United States, he engaged Nigerians in the diaspora, supporters, activists and other stakeholders on the state of the country and his political agenda.

He also said he participated in a solidarity march for Palestine in New York and continued his advocacy for voting rights for Nigerians living abroad.

The AAC presidential candidate said he remained committed to the participation of Nigerians in the diaspora in the country's democratic process.

He said an AAC administra-

tion would pursue the implementation of diaspora voting if elected president in 2027.

Sowore said he was expected to arrive at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, before proceeding to Abuja.

He said he would also continue to attend court proceedings in connection with the cybercrime case instituted against him by the Department of State Services in 2025.

The candidate said his return would mark another phase of his nationwide campaign ahead of the 2027 presidential election.

"I plan to engage workers, students, youths, women, farmers, traders, professionals and communities across the country," he said.

He said the engagements would focus on the political, social and economic issues contained in the AAC's 2027 agenda.

He said the campaign would seek to mobilise Nigerians around issues including equal rights, justice, peace, security and economic development.

Sowore said the 2027 election would provide Nigerians with an opportunity to decide

## Eno pledges respect for predecessor Udom Emmanuel, past A'lbom leaders

**UYO**

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno, has declared that he will never disrespect his immediate predecessor, Udom Emmanuel or any past governor and leader in the state.

Eno stated this during the second memorial service in honour of his late wife and First Lady, Patience, which was held at All Nations Christian Ministry International, in Eket Local Government Area of the state on Saturday.

The governor noted that his upbringing is rooted in respect, and such a value will eternally remain with him.

Eno was reacting to misinterpretations trailing his response to a request by the Paramount Ruler of Onna LGA during the commissioning of a 14km road in the area.

According to him, the monarch had appealed for intervention in some moribund industries in the LG, including the syringe factory and flour mill.

Clarifying his Ibibio re-

sponse, Governor Eno said the word "Unadot" simply means "people" and is not derogatory.

He said, "Since he spoke in Ibibio, I responded in Ibibio, that if they have a problem, let them tell us through the Commissioner for Special Duties, who is an indigene there."

He stressed that his statement had nothing to do with his predecessor, noting that government has no shares in the factories and cannot jump into private businesses without invitation.

"I never, standing on this altar of God where I have preached for over 20 years, mentioned or had Udom Emmanuel in mind. It didn't even connect to him because he is not a shareholder in that business," Eno said.

"In the Efik Hymn Book, Hymn No. 246, the last stanza has 'unadod,' and if this was derogatory, I don't know how it would have found itself in the songbook. It is an Ibibio word that means 'the people.' I was simply referring to the people who own the businesses.

## Jonathan, Fubara task Rivers monarchs on selfless leadership

**OPOBO (RIVERS)**

Former President Goodluck Jonathan and Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, have charged traditional rulers in the state to provide purposeful and selfless leadership.

They also urged them to be custodians of the traditions and heritage of their various communities and kingdoms.

Jonathan and Fubara spoke at the coronation of King Charles Douglas MacPepple Jaja, Jeki VI, Amanyabo (King) of Opobo Kingdom in Rivers State on Saturday.

Jonathan, in his goodwill message, congratulated the new king, assuring him of his support and guidance.

He recalled the history of the

throne, especially its first occupant, the legendary King Jaja, noting his impact on the history of the Niger Delta region.

Jonathan stated, "We believe that your reign will bring peace to Opobo, will bring development to Opobo, will bring unity to Opobo, and you will fly this community, this kingdom, and it will bring the respect that it deserves.

"All our government and institutions, as you requested, will work with you to develop our people."

On his part, Fubara, who was represented by his deputy, Prof. Ngozi Odu, said traditions must be preserved and passed on to generations to come.

He described the coronation of King Charles Douglas MacPepple Jaja as not only historic but also a celebration of tradition and culture.

## Remain professionally ready, Naval chief urges 135 new officers

**KADUNA**

A total of 135 newly commissioned Nigerian Navy officers have been urged to remain physically fit, professionally competent and operationally ready as they begin their careers in the Armed Forces.

The Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Idi Abbas, gave the charge on Saturday at the Combined Passing Out Parade, Pipping and Commissioning Ceremony held at the Nigerian Defence Academy, Afaka, Kaduna.

The ceremony was attended

by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was represented by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, and other dignitaries.

Congratulating the newly commissioned officers, the CNS charged them to uphold the highest standards of discipline, loyalty and professional integrity in the discharge of their duties.

He stressed that their oath of allegiance must remain "the compass for their conduct and service to the nation."

Abbas reminded the officers

that their commissioning was not the end of their training but the beginning of a demanding career of leadership, responsibility and loyal service to Nigeria.

He urged them to shun misconduct and other vices capable of undermining their integrity or truncating their careers.

The CNS also charged the officers to remain physically fit, professionally competent and operationally ready to contribute meaningfully to the Nigerian Navy's responsibilities across the maritime domain and in ongoing joint operations.

He said the Navy was facing increasingly complex security

challenges, requiring officers to remain adaptable and prepared to respond effectively to emerging threats.

"As the Navy confronts increasingly complex security challenges, you must be ready at all times to lead, adapt and serve with courage, honour and unwavering commitment to duty," Abbas told the officers.

The Chief of the Naval Staff further urged the newly commissioned officers to uphold the traditions and values of the Nigerian Navy while maintaining discipline and professionalism throughout their careers.

## NEWS

# Account for \$6.23million election funds or face legal action, SERAP tells CBN

ABUJA

**A**ccount for \$6.23m election funds or face legal action, SERAP tells CBN

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project has given the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Olayemi Cardoso, and the CBN seven days to account for \$6.23m in allegedly diverted or unaccounted-for election funds and over N1.63tn in other public funds.

SERAP made the demand in a letter dated September 26, 2026, and signed by its Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare.

The organisation said the allegations were documented in Vol-

ume II of the Auditor-General of the Federation's 2023 Annual Report, published on August 7, 2026.

According to SERAP, the funds include "over N1.25 trillion in unrecovered CBN intervention loans to state governments; N116.18 billion in unrecovered loans to distressed and liquidated banks; N262.86 billion disbursed under the Anchor Borrowers' Programme; and US\$6.23 million in payments linked to an alleged fraudulent election-funding request purportedly made by former President Muhammadu Buhari."

SERAP urged Cardoso and the CBN "to account for over N1.25 trillion in intervention loans to

states, and N116.18 billion in loans to distressed and liquidated banks, and disclose the details of the beneficiaries, amounts disbursed, and any recovery measures."

It also urged the CBN governor and the bank "to account for the N262.86 billion disbursed under the Anchor Borrowers' Programme, including the names and number of beneficiaries and participating 'Anchors,' amounts disbursed, utilisation, monitoring arrangements, and any recovery measures."

On the alleged election funding, SERAP urged Cardoso and the CBN "to account for the US\$6.23 million reportedly 'spent following a purported re-

quest for election funding by former President Muhammadu Buhari,' and publish the findings of the internal investigation into the alleged fraud, including measures taken to recover the funds and establish responsibility."

In the letter, SERAP said, "The accountability of public institutions, including the CBN, is a crucial pillar of Nigeria's constitutional democracy."

It added, "The magnitude and nature of these findings require urgent, independent and transparent action, as they raise fundamental questions about the custody, expenditure, accounting, safeguarding and recovery of public resources."

## Architect launches foundation for UNICROSS, other graduates

CALABAR

**A** Cross River-born landscape architect, Precious Ovat, has unveiled Ovats Architecture Foundation to support emerging architectural talent across Africa with particular interest in Architecture graduates of the University of Cross River State and across other Nigerian universities.

Ovat disclosed this while addressing journalists in Calabar, saying the foundation was founded on July 19, 2026, adding that it coincided with the birthday of his father.

According to him, the organisation was registered in Nigeria on September 14, 2026.

He stated that as its first major programme, the foundation has commenced discussions with the University of Cross River State for the establishment of the Linus Ovat's Award for Excellence in Architecture, a flagship initiative to identify Africa's most promising emerging architectural talents and create pathways for them to access opportunities locally and internationally.

Ovat stressed that the proposed award would recognise the best graduating student in the university's Department of Architecture and was

expected to debut at the institution's forthcoming convocation this year.

He explained that the institution was chosen for the initiative because he started his tertiary education in the institution when it was known as Cross River University of Technology.

"Calabar is also my place of birth, and I believe charity begins at home. The discussions with the university have generated enthusiasm, with further details expected after arrangements are concluded."

"This institution was chosen for the initiative because I started my tertiary education in the institution when it was known as Cross River University of Technology," he emphasised.

He said the foundation's inaugural award series would be named after his father, Linus, who was an experienced Nigerian architect and Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Architects.

He further highlighted that during his father's active service, his career spanned architecture and public service, with involvement in several projects in Nigeria and senior positions in the Cross River State Government, including Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works from 2011 to 2016 and Ministry of Special Projects from 2016 to 2017.



### 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

From left: Moderator/Energy Editor, Thisday Newspaper, Emmanuel Adeh; Executive Director, Green Growth Africa, Adedoyin Adeleke; Executive Director, Green Growth Africa, Adedoyin Adeleke and the National President, Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Owners Association of Nigeria (PETROAN), Billy Gillis-Harry, during the 2026 Annual Conference of AECAF theme: Sustaining Oil and Gas Investment in Nigeria Amid Energy Transition and unveiling of AECAF Energy Watch Magazine, in Abuja.

## Dangote refinery: Northern Christian leader urges members to invest

**T**he Chairman of the Northern Christian Association, Rev. Joseph Hayab, has urged Christians in northern Nigeria to consider investing in the ongoing Dangote Petroleum Refinery Initial Public Offering, saying religious considerations should not influence investment decisions.

Hayab made the call at a media parley in Kaduna on Saturday while responding to concerns that some northern Christians might be reluctant to invest in the offer because of the religious identity of its promoter, Aliko Dangote.

"Business has no religion. What Dangote is selling is not Islam; Dangote is selling shares. Shares bring money," he said.

The NCA chairman urged Christian leaders to educate their members on investment and the importance of owning assets that could help families build wealth and provide for future generations.

"If I have my way, just as they are advertising, every Christian should have 10 shares," Hayab said.

He encouraged Christians to consider buying shares for their children and grandchildren as part of long-term financial planning.

"Buy it for your son. Buy it for your grandchildren. Buy it for the future of their education," he said.

The Dangote Petroleum Refinery public offer compris-

es 4.1 billion ordinary shares priced at N525 per share, with a minimum subscription of 10 shares valued at N5,250. The offer opened on September 14 and is scheduled to close on October 13, 2026.

Hayab said Nigerians should develop a culture of investment rather than rely solely on salaries and other sources of

earned income.

"The reason why our offering is poor in many of our churches is because we are not investing," Hayab said.

He argued that increased domestic ownership of Nigerian businesses would strengthen the economy, urging citizens to seek opportunities to acquire stakes in legitimate enterprises.

## Nigeria, UAE sign MoU against transnational drug syndicates

ABUJA

**T**he National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Drug Enforcement Authority of the United Arab Emirates to strengthen the fight against drug trafficking between the two countries.

A statement on Saturday by the Director, Media and Advocacy, Femi Babafemi, said the

agreement was signed in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on the sidelines of the ongoing 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the NDLEA Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (retd.), said the pact would deepen intelligence-sharing and joint enforcement operations along the Nigeria-UAE corridor.

"The agreement was the cul-

mination of years of engagement between the two agencies, adding that it would strengthen efforts to disrupt drug trafficking networks exploiting the strong travel and trade links between Nigeria and the UAE," he said.

The NDLEA boss said the agency intercepted about 354.7kg of illicit drugs, including cocaine, cannabis, tramadol, rohypnol, ecstasy and khat, in consignments destined for the UAE between 2021 and 2026.

## LG boss lauds Tinubu over reforms

ILORIN

**T**he Chairman of Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nuhu Podo, has lauded the reforms of the President Bola Tinubu administration, saying they have increased financial resources available to local governments for grassroots development.

Podo stated this in Ilorin while presenting his administration's two-year scorecard, where he highlighted more than 130 projects and interventions executed across the council's 11 wards.

The chairman said the removal of fuel subsidy, foreign exchange reforms and increased financial autonomy for local governments had improved the capacity of the council to execute development projects.

He said the council, with the support of the state government, had implemented projects in security, education, electricity, water supply, roads and administrative infrastructure.

On security, Podo said his administration had employed an additional 150 security personnel and distributed 50 motorcycles for community surveillance.

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He added that the council upgraded the Civil Defence Outpost in Alagbado to a full division and donated a Sienna bus to strengthen patrol operations.

According to him, the measures were aimed at improving

security and the council's response to security concerns across the local government.

In the education sector, Podo said the council had renovated classrooms and principals' offices in some schools, distributed writing materials to reduce the financial burden on parents, and constructed a multipurpose hall at Sheikh AbdulSalam Junior Secondary School.

Podo added that the council, through the Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board, facilitated the renovation of junior secondary schools in Isale Maliki, Ajibesin and other communities.

He disclosed that the council sponsored 30 students at the College of Health Sciences, Osogbo.

"We also constructed a multipurpose hall at Sheikh AbdulSalam Junior Secondary School and named it the Mutawalli of Ilorin Hall, in recognition of the importance of supporting educational development," he said.

The chairman said the council had also made interventions in the power sector, noting that he received the 2025 Nigerian Local Government Chairmen Merit Award for the distribution of 17 transformers serving communities across the local government.

On water supply, Podo said the administration had drilled new boreholes and repaired existing ones across the 11 wards to improve residents' access to potable water.

**NEWS****FOREIGN**

Gunmen torched vehicles as they fled the scene of a mass shooting at a bar near Johannesburg

## Iranian minister says only negotiation can end conflict after Trump rejects Hormuz deal

Only a "negotiated solution" can end the conflict between the US and Iran, Tehran's foreign minister has said, after President Donald Trump publicly rejected a proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump told reporters at the White House that Iran's proposal was not "acceptable" and that Tehran wanted to make a deal to open the strait to commercial shipping within seven days because "they're losing so badly".

In a post on Telegram, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi acknowledged Trump's rejection, but said Iran would wait for a "definitive" official US response.

He said the president had made contradictory statements in the past.

Araghchi said the conditions to open the strait were the same that had been included in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the US and Iran

that was signed in June.

Iran said it had raised reopening the strait and ending hostilities during negotiations on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York this past week.

The vital waterway through which around a fifth of the world's gas and oil supply usually flows has been effectively closed since the outbreak of war in February.

"I'm rejecting their deal," Trump said on Saturday, adding that the US already had "total control" of the strait, with "massive amounts of oil" passing through it, causing massive rises in global oil prices and steep fuel cost increases for consumers.

Araghchi wrote on Telegram that Trump "has made many good statements, as well as many contradictory ones, which unfortunately we hear frequently".

He continued: "We are waiting for the mediators to convey the definitive views to us, and we will

make a decision based on them."

Separately, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, who travelled to New York for the UN general assembly, told the BBC's US news partner CBS that "distrust created by this war needs to be overcome" in order for talks to be successful.

He said the Iranians were open to talks on implementing the MOU in stages in order to end the impasse, but that the "US needs to show it does not intend to overthrow our government".

Pezeshkian said Trump had "tore up" the MOU when the US resumed its bombing campaign, adding: "If we don't abide by what we have written down, can we really resolve it by dialogue?"

He was also asked about Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who was injured in the US strike which killed his father in February and has not been seen in public since. Reports have claimed he suffered serious injuries to his legs and face.

Pezeshkian said he had met the supreme leader on two occasions, telling CBS he had "no specific ongoing health issues or challenges" and had been well enough to hold seven hours of talks.

Oman, which has been acting as a mediator between the US and Iran, called for all parties to continue having open dialogue to resolve the crisis.

Oman's foreign minister, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi, told the UN General Debate that "all parties" should cooperate with Oman in efforts to safeguard navigation in the strategic waterway.

Trump's rejection of Iran's proposal was backed by US ambassador to Nato Matthew Whitaker.

Speaking to Fox News on Saturday, Whitaker said that Iran had offered "half measures" and "illusory deals to make themselves look good on the world stage".

## Two mass shootings in South Africa leave 27 dead

Twenty-seven people have been killed in two mass shootings hours apart in South Africa, the latest gun violence to hit the country.

Seventeen people were killed when eight gunmen stormed a bar close to Johannesburg on Saturday evening, with 15 more injured.

In a separate shooting in the early hours of Sunday morning, 10 people were killed outside an entertainment venue in a township near Cape Town and a further 11 were injured.

South Africa has one of the highest murder rates in the world and has struggled to contain gang-related gun violence in recent years. Police have not given a definitive motive for either of the latest attacks.

In Johannesburg, gunmen opened fire on customers outside the bar before continuing the attack inside and torching two vehicles before fleeing.

Police said thirteen men and four women were killed.

Gauteng Police Commissioner Lt Gen Tommy Mthombeni said people from Ethiopia and Lesotho were among those caught up in the shooting, but that the vast majority were South African.

He also said police believed the motive behind the shooting was robbery, as personal belongings had been taken, but that they could not rule out turf wars between illegal mining groups.

In Johannesburg, gunmen torched two vehicles after opened fire on customers at a bar.

Mining without permission in abandoned shafts or dump sites is a persistent problem in

South Africa, causing numerous deaths from unsafe conditions. Authorities say the miners are typically undocumented migrants recruited by organised crime gangs.

Earlier, deputy provincial police commissioner Maj Gen Fred Kekana said the attack may have been a retaliation for an incident last month, in which one person was killed and another wounded, according to news agency AFP.

He said at the scene that police had clear pictures and in some cases names for the suspects.

In Cape Town, five victims died at the scene and a further five people died in hospital.

No arrests had been made in either case on Sunday morning.

The two mass shootings came days after 11 people were killed in the city of Durban when gunmen stormed a house in the KwaMakhutha township.

Illegal weapons are prevalent in South Africa and gun violence has been a persistent problem for decades, with about 60 murders recorded every day in the country of 62 million. But a recent spate of mass shootings has raised fears that the problem is deepening, with violence often linked to turf wars between gangs engaged in drug trafficking and illegal mining.

In February, President Cyril Ramaphosa called organised crime "the most immediate threat to our democracy, our society and our economic development".

Earlier this year, the military was deployed alongside police in areas with the highest murder rates in an effort to reduce

## One dead as North'Eastern storm pummels New York and New Jersey

Tens of millions of people across the north-eastern US have found themselves in the path of a powerful weekend storm bringing coastal flooding, power cuts, travel chaos and cancelled stadium events.

The so-called nor'easter brought "dangerous coastal flooding and beach conditions, strong winds and heavy rainfall" to areas including New York City and Boston on Saturday, the US National Weather Service (NWS) said.

States of emergency have been declared in New York and New Jersey, both of which faced a coastal deluge in some areas. Rain and strong winds were forecast from Virginia to Maine. In Brooklyn, New York City, a man was killed by a falling tree.

The nor'easter has caused widespread power cuts. More than 160,000 households, nearly all in the north-eastern US, have lost electricity, according to tracker PowerOutage.

More than 2,400 flights were

delayed and another 1,199 grounded on Saturday, according to FlightAware.

A full moon was projected to worsen coastal flooding. Streets and homes were inundated with floodwater in the coastal New Jersey communities of Surf City and Manasquan on Saturday.

Surf City, New Jersey, was among coastal communities flooded.

NWS said in its alert: "Prepare immediately for significant inundation in low-lying areas near the shore, including roads underwater and impacts to homes and businesses."

In New York, officials are warning of wind gusts of up to 55mph (86km/h) throughout the weekend, leading to downed trees and power lines.

"Don't travel if you don't have to," NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani told residents in a video message. "Do not drive or walk through floodwater." In the Boston area, the Red Sox moved the last game in their series against the Chicago Cubs to Sunday afternoon in Florida.

## 'Scourge' of abuse must be rooted out, says Pope, during Lourdes visit

Pope Leo has called on French bishops to root out the "scourge" of sexual abuse in the Roman Catholic church, telling them to "maintain the greatest vigilance", ahead of a meeting with abuse survivors.

The Pope delivered the message to bishops during a private meeting at the Sanctuary of Our Holy Lady of Lourdes, a holy site in southern France, on the third day of his four-day official visit to France.

A 2021 inquiry found that clergy or lay members of the Church had abused about 330,000 people as children in France over 70 years.

The Pope said Mass in front of thousands of worshippers in Lourdes, before he was scheduled

to meet survivors of abuse privately later.

Before giving Mass the Pope told the bishops: "You have faced with determination the painful scourge of abuse of minors committed by members of the clergy or within an ecclesial context."

"It is important to persevere along the path you have begun, maintaining the greatest vigilance."

The gathering of senior church leaders was held behind closed doors and the remarks were later released to reporters.

The Lourdes gathering came a day after an estimated 700,000 people flocked to the Place de la Concorde in Paris to hear the pontiff speak.

Huge crowds cheered and

waved as he rode down the Champs-Élysées Avenue greeting followers from his open-topped popemobile.

On Friday, the Pope also met French President Emmanuel Macron.

During Saturday's Mass in Paris, the Pope told worshippers that Catholics should not keep their faith to themselves but "let it overflow so that those you meet may be refreshed".

The leader of the Catholic Church also addressed young people in his speech, describing them as "today's Church".

"How beautiful it is to see your enthusiasm, energy and commitment, and the joy you bring to Christian communities," he said.

The number of regular worshippers in France has fallen from 35% of the population in 1960 to less than 5% today, while the

## FOREIGN

## NEWS

# Venezuela releases dozens of political prisoners as election calls grow

Venezuelan authorities have released a slew of political prisoners, human rights groups say, days after the nation's interim leader met US President Donald Trump in New York.

Among those released in the early hours of Saturday morning was Wilder Vasquez, who was handed a five-year sentence in 2018 over claims he was plotting to kill former President Nicolás Maduro.

Opposition figures have renewed calls for free elections after

interim President Delcy Rodríguez held talks with Trump, who captured Maduro earlier this year, at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday.

Her administration previously released hundreds of prisoners as part of a reconciliation effort following Maduro's seizure.

However, these releases slowed to a trickle in April after Rodríguez said the scheme was "coming to an end".

Venezuela's government has not made any statement concern-

ing the latest releases, nor has it indicated whether they were the result of her conversation with the US president.

Gonzalo Himiob, vice-president of rights group Foro Penal, said "a significant number" of political prisoners had been released on Saturday morning from several of Venezuela's detention centres.

Foro Penal confirmed the release of Miguel Castillo Cedeño, who it said had been arbitrarily detained since June 2019.

Also released was Frank

Cabañas, who rights groups say had been held in prison for nine years after being linked to the death of a police officer. Foro Penal said he was the only suspect who remained detained, despite family members reporting that he was suffering health problems last year.

Opposition and human rights groups have said Maduro's government used the detention of political prisoners to stamp out dissent and silence critics for years.

Rodríguez has sought to frame

her interim government as more permissive of political dissent while currying favour with the US. The prisoner release scheme was a key concession by her administration to the US.

However, her decision to end the scheme attracted criticism from opposition and rights groups. Foro Penal said it was stopped with less than half of the nation's political prisoners released.

Rodríguez's government continues to deny dissidents are

jailed. It has cast the release of prisoners as a gesture of goodwill and reconciliation.

Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, a minister closely associated with Maduro's authoritarian rule, called the interim president's meeting with Trump "a great triumph of the diplomacy of peace".

But opposition voices expressed their disapproval over the meeting, viewing it as a snub of their calls – that the US has previously endorsed – for swift elections.

## Bangkok roads submerged as flood disaster declared

A flood emergency disaster has been declared across Bangkok after more than 300mm (12in) of rain fell since Thursday, leaving roads in the Thai capital submerged.

On Sunday, Bangkok's Metropolitan Authority said the rains have subsided, but canal water levels remain high. The city's governor has warned that the flooding is not yet over.

People have been urged to stay at home and those living close to the city's network of canals have been advised to move their belongings to upper floors.

Thunderstorms are common in Thailand at this time of year but extreme weather in recent days has inundated Bangkok's drainage system, causing traffic chaos on roads that are already famously congested.

Canals across the Thai capital have burst their banks, leaving roads under water.

Somkid Pheuk-ngam, a 67-year-old who lives near a canal just north of central Bangkok, told the AFP news agency: "The water keeps coming in. It's hard

to go out now. It's like at my waist level now.

"I cannot go anywhere. I have been closing my shop for two days now."

She said water levels in the city appeared to be worse than in 2011, when Bangkok was impacted by nationwide flooding.

Hundreds were killed across Thailand then in an extreme weather event that lasted for three months. So far, no casualties have been reported in Bangkok from this latest flooding.

The Thai Meteorological Service has forecast more heavy rain through the week, though the area of low pressure causing the downpours of recent days is expected to move towards central Thailand.

All 50 of Bangkok's districts were declared emergency zones.

On Saturday, Chadchart Sittipunt, the city's governor, said the east of the city had been hardest hit, AFP reported.

He continued: "The rain keeps falling and we are doing our best. We are trying to pump the water out, but the water in canals are full... The risk areas are those who live near canals. Every canal is now filled."

## Four killed in helicopter crash near Montreal

Four people have died after a helicopter crashed in a small town 50km (31 miles) from Montreal, Quebec's provincial police have told the BBC.

Emergency services were called to Sainte-Brigide-d'Iberville shortly after 14:30 local time (18:30 GMT) on Saturday afternoon, where they found the aircraft on fire and declared its occupants dead at the scene.

The victims have not yet been identified but the aircraft appeared to be a private helicopter, Sgt Audrey-Anne Bilodeau said.

An investigation into the crash is being led by the Major Crime Unit of the Sûreté

du Québec, working alongside crime scene technicians as well as investigators from the Transportation Safety Board of Canada.

The crash site is located near the Rang des Écoisais road off Highway 10, according to Bilodeau.

Police were notified of a helicopter in distress that may have crashed and caught fire in an emergency call.

An hour after the call, the fire at the site had been brought under control, though officials were still working at the crash site just before 22:00 local time.

The victims have not yet been identified and Bilodeau said this process may "take a few days."



Canals across the Thai capital have burst their banks, leaving roads under water

## British national among six dead in building explosion close to Acropolis in Athens

Six people have died, including a British national, in an explosion that destroyed a building containing a holiday rental property in the historic centre of Athens.

The blast on Friday happened in the Plaka area of the Greek capital, a neighbourhood close to tourist sites such as the Acropolis.

Four American holidaymakers were among the dead, along with a UK national and Greek national

– reportedly an elderly couple who lived in the same building.

Pictures from the scene on Saturday showed emergency service workers searching through rubble, with a gas leak the suspected cause of the blast.

All six bodies had been recovered by Saturday afternoon. Athens Mayor Haris Doukas said: "We are talking about an incredible disaster."

The tourists were confirmed to be missing when they did not ar-

rive for their flight at Athens airport later on Friday, news agency Reuters reported citing local police.

The three-storey building completely collapsed due to the force of the blast, with neighbouring buildings damaged and debris scattered across the road.

Investigators at the scene believe the blast was caused by a gas leak

Local media reported people were injured by material scattered

across nearby streets and some buildings needed to be evacuated.

Excavators and thermal imaging cameras have been used at the scene to search for survivors.

The explosion happened on a small road situated between two of Athens' most visited sites – the Acropolis and the Temple of Olympian Zeus.

A UK Foreign Office spokesperson said: "We are aware of a suspected explosion in Athens and are in touch with the local authorities."

## Nigerian foundation urges early screening in battle against childhood cancer

A Nigerian advocacy group has called for increased support for childhood cancer awareness, stressing that early detection is critical to ending the disease's toll on children.

The Okapi Cancer Foundation made the appeal during a childhood cancer awareness walk in Abuja, aimed at promoting awareness, mobilizing public participation, and raising resources for children battling cancer and their families.

Hope Tobì, a child survivor

affiliated with the foundation, described the Okapi Children Cancer Walk 2026 as a source of encouragement for young patients.

"I feel very happy joining the walk because I walked with survivors like me and supporters," Tobì said. "The walk was exciting because in every step we make, there is hope for children, informing them they are not fighting alone."

The event also served to mark the foundation's 10-year anniversary, representing a decade of ad-

vocacy for children facing what organizers described as battles they never chose.

Oluwakemi Adekanye, founder of the Okapi Cancer Foundation, expressed optimism that the government will prioritize childhood cancer in the coming year.

"I understand that children will be included in the recent cancer health fund now, and we're hoping that once that is implemented and put in place, there should be more progress and success for children with cancer," Adekanye said.

She emphasized the importance of public education in improving

outcomes for young patients.

"So it is important as adults to be aware of what childhood cancer is, common signs and symptoms to look out for in childhood cancer, and that is why we do what we do. We want people to be aware of childhood cancer and how they can effectively support a child," she added.

According to the foundation, more than 250 children living with cancer have received support, while awareness campaigns have reached thousands of students and community members across Nigeria.