

Okpebholo's pension directive historic, says Edo NLC

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Council of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for directing the immediate exclusion of workers in the state Civil and

Public Service employed before January 2017 from the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).

The NLC described the directive as a historic development that would bring relief to thousands of affected workers and pensioners who had long

agitated for a return to the Defined Benefit Scheme (DBS).

In a statement signed by its Acting Secretary, Comrade Ire-otoi Kingsley, the labour union said the development was the outcome of sustained struggle, advocacy and persistent engagement by organised labour.

According to the NLC, workers employed before January 2017 who were subsequently enrolled in the CPS would now return to the DBS, while affected retirees would enjoy the appropriate pension status applicable to their colleagues under the Nigeria Un-

ion of Pensioners (NUP).

"This development is the product of the sustained struggle, advocacy and persistent engagement which has finally yielded a historic achievement for affected Edo workers and pensioners employed before January 2017 who were subse-

quently placed under the CPS and are now to return to the DBS, while affected retirees are to enjoy the appropriate pension status applicable to their colleagues under the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP),"

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

f t i g NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1,345

MONDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2026.

#200

Tajudeen dissolves all House of Reps ad hoc committees

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

ABUJA

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, has dissolved all ad hoc committees of the lower chamber.

The dissolution was conveyed in a directive issued on Saturday, August 29, by the Clerk of the House, Sidi Ibrahim, and addressed to chairpersons and members of the

● Clerk orders chairmen to submit reports as 2-week grace period ends

affected committees

"I am directed by the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Abbas Tajudeen, Ph.D., GCON, to inform all Honourable Members that all Ad Hoc Committees of the House stand dissolved with immediate effect," the directive stated.

Mr. Ibrahim said the action followed earlier announce-

ments urging ad hoc committees to conclude their assignments and submit their reports.

According to him, two ad hoc committees had requested an extension, which was granted a two-week grace period. He noted that the two-week extension has now elapsed.

"For the avoidance of doubt, honourable members are re-

mindful that ad hoc committees are temporary committees of the house established for specific and time-bound mandates," the clerk said.

"They are not intended to subsist indefinitely beyond the purpose and period for which they were constituted."

Citing Order 18, rule 11, paragraph 5, of the Standing Orders of the House of Rep-

resentatives which provides for 'limitations as to time of reports', Ibrahim said committees are required to submit their reports within the time allotted.

"Having exceeded the time allotted, the continued existence of the ad hoc committees is no longer tenable," he added.

The clerk said with effect from Friday, August 28, 2026,

all ad hoc committees of the house stand dissolved, and activities being carried out in the name of such committees shall cease forthwith.

He directed chairmen of the affected committees to forward all outstanding reports, working documents, records, and other materials relating to their assignments to the office of the clerk for safekeeping.



SUNDAY SERVICE IN WINNERS CHAPEL:

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (3rd left) and other worshippers during Sunday Service in Living Faith Church, Sapele Road, Benin City, led by Pastor Emmanuel Ebiye (right).

Okpebholo pledges 5-minute security response across Edo

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has announced plans to establish a security response system capable of responding to threats anywhere in the state within five minutes, in a major move aimed at strengthening security and protecting lives and property.

The governor, who disclosed this yesterday during a Sunday service at Living Faith Church, popularly known as Winners Chapel, along Sapele Road, Benin City, said his administration was putting necessary measures in place to ensure that security agencies could respond swiftly to emergencies.

Okpebholo said dedicated emergency telephone num-

bers would soon be released to members of the public, urging residents to use the channels to promptly alert security agencies whenever they were confronted with threats or emergencies.

He assured Edo residents that the security situation in the state would significantly improve within the next one month.

"We will continue to work for Edo people. In terms of security, Edo will be safer in the next one month. We will be able to respond to security threats in any part of the state," the governor said.

The governor said his administration was determined to leave Edo safer than it met it, stressing that kidnapping,

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

Priest commends Okpebholo over road, transformer

—Pg 2

Ossiommo shutdown: Edo Govt seeks power restoration, protection of investment

—Pg 4

US envoys arrive in Ukraine for talks after meeting Putin in Russia

—Pg 8

Edo Queens beat Ampem Darkoa Ladies to emerge 2026 WAFU-B Champions

—Pg 13

NEWS

Okpebholo's pension directive historic...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Kingsley said.

The labour council expressed appreciation to the Edo State Government for responding positively to the longstanding demand of workers and pensioners.

It reaffirmed its commitment to defending the rights, welfare and legitimate interests of workers and pensioners in the state, while maintaining constructive engagement with the government on issues affecting their wellbeing.

The NLC also commended Governor Okpebholo for his interventions in addressing pension-related challenges confronting workers who re-

tired before 2017.

The state government has, in recent months, released billions of naira towards the payment of long-outstanding gratuities and pension arrears owed to retirees.

In addition, the governor constituted a high-powered committee to review complaints and concerns surrounding the broader implementation of the Contributory Pension Scheme in the state.

The labour leadership said it would continue to collaborate with the government to resolve other lingering workers' welfare issues, including concerns arising from the rising cost of living.

Okpebholo pledges 5-minute...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

armed robbery and other forms of criminality would remain major targets of the government's security strategy.

The proposed five-minute response time, if successfully implemented, could represent a significant shift in the state's approach to emergency security intervention, particularly in a state where rapid response is critical to preventing kidnappings, robberies and other violent crimes.

Okpebholo also reiterated his administration's commitment to creating an environment where residents could live, work and conduct their businesses without fear.

He thanked the leadership and members of Winners Chapel for their prayers and support for his administration, adding that he was pleased to be a member of the church.

The pastor of the church, Emmanuel Ebiye, commended the governor for what he described as his developmental agenda and efforts to transform the state.

Ebiye also expressed appreciation to the governor for donating food items, including rice and cooking oil, to churches for distribution to their members.

"We appreciate your transformation, development and growth experience across all sectors in the state. I pray for

grace to be with you. Thank you for all you are doing for Edo people," the pastor said.

The governor and his entourage later visited Rock of Ages Christian Assembly International, also along Sapele Road, where the General Overseer, Pastor Charles Osazuwa, expressed optimism that the 2027 general elections would be peaceful and that Nigeria would remain united.

Osazuwa urged Nigerians not to be distracted by what he described as prophecies of doom concerning the country, insisting that elections would come and go without threatening the continuity and unity of Nigeria.

The cleric also called on Christians to acquire skills and engage in productive activities that would enable them contribute to the nation's economic development.

He urged governments at all levels to invest more in human capital development, recalling that scholarships he received during the administrations of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and former Bendel State Governor, Ambrose Alli, had played an important role in his education.

Speaking on infrastructure, Governor Okpebholo disclosed that the procurement process for the construction of roads across the state was almost completed, with work expected to commence soon.

Gov. Okpebholo approves appointment of two special advisers

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the appointment of

Chief Emmanuel Iyase as Special Adviser to the Governor on Traditional Matters (Edo South) and Agbogun Emmanuel Sunday, Special Adviser to the Governor on Civil Society Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations

This was disclosed by Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq. Secretary to the State Government in a statement issued in Benin city.

According to the statement, the newly appointed officials are expected to bring their wealth of experience, expertise and commitment to bear in the discharge of their respective responsibilities and in furtherance of the administration's developmental agenda.

The appointments take immediate effect.

Priest commends Okpebholo over road, transformer

BENIN CITY

The Parish Administrator of St. James the Greater Catholic Church, Ogbeson, Benin City, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Oyanofoh, has commended Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, for his interventions in the community's electricity and road infrastructure.

The priest said the governor's intervention had brought relief to residents and worshippers who had endured poor electricity supply and the deplorable condition of the road leading to the church.

Fr. Oyanofoh spoke on Saturday during the dedication

of the church building by the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, Most Rev. Donatus Ogun, O.S.A., Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Uromi.

He recalled that the church appealed to Governor Okpebholo during its December 2025 harvest celebration to address the electricity and road challenges confronting the community.

According to him, the governor responded by providing a transformer, which was delivered on December 23, 2025, and subsequently commenced

work on Electrics Road leading to the church.

The priest also praised the governor's ongoing road projects and flyovers across Benin City, saying they had eased traffic and improved access to communities.

He noted that the poor state of the road had previously discouraged some visitors from accessing the church, adding that the situation had changed significantly with the completion of the flyover and ongoing road projects.

"We thank him immensely for what is happening on our roads, the flyovers and the first flyover in our state. Another flyover is also coming up on Sapele Road and we are grate-

ful to him," he said.

Fr. Oyanofoh further commended the governor for paying the hospital bill of a child who underwent surgery.

In his remarks, Most Rev. Ogun prayed for God's protection and guidance for Governor Okpebholo.

Responding, Governor Okpebholo assured residents that his administration would sustain work on the ongoing road projects in Ogbeson.

He said the people would witness more progress on the projects before the end of the year.

"By the grace of God, between now and December, you will see work going on," the governor said.



PRAYER FOR HIS EXCELLECY:

Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (right) being blessed by the Apostolic Administrator of the Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, Most Rev. Donatus Ogun (middle) during the dedication of the church building of St. James the Greater Catholic Church, Ogbeson, Benin City, yesterday.

Edo Govt shuts Jess hospital over 10-year unregistered operation

BENIN CITY

RICHARD EWEKA

The Edo State Healthcare Regulation and Monitoring Agency (EDOHERMA) has ordered the immediate closure of Jess Royal Hospital in Benin after discovering that the facility had operated for more than 10 years without statutory registration.

The agency said the hospital was neither registered with the Edo State Ministry of Health nor currently registered with EDOHERMA.

The discovery was made during a monitoring exercise at an orphanage located in the same building as the hospital.

EDOHERMA Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Adesuwah Urhoghede-Edigin, said she engaged the hospital owner during the visit and was informed that the facility was not registered with the state gov-

ernment.

The owner reportedly told the agency that he was a member of the Association of Nigerian Private Medical Practitioners (ANPMP).

Urhoghede-Edigin clarified that ANPMP membership does not amount to statutory registration and does not authorise anyone to operate a healthcare facility in Edo State.

She subsequently directed the agency's Medical Services Department to conduct a comprehensive inspection of the hospital.

The follow-up inspection, led by the Director of Medical Services, Dr. Peter Egbuomwan, identified several deficiencies in the facility.

The operator told the inspection team that health challenges had prevented him from completing the registration process.

EDOHERMA, however, said the facility was expected to meet all statutory requirements for continued operation since it

had remained in service.

The agency said the inspection also revealed poor infection prevention and control practices, cobwebs on ceilings and walls, rusted and deteriorated ward equipment, badly damaged mattresses and a lack of evidence of routine fumigation or pest control.

The hospital was also found to have no valid and serviceable fire extinguisher, emergency preparedness plan or established referral system.

EDOHERMA said the deficiencies raised serious concerns about patient safety and the facility's ability to respond appropriately to emergencies.

The agency consequently directed the hospital to stop all medical operations immediately.

It gave the facility two weeks to begin the official EDOHERMA registration process and correct the identified infrastructural, environmental, equipment and health-standard deficiencies.

The agency said it would conduct a follow-up inspection

to determine the level of compliance.

It added that Jess Royal Hospital would not be allowed to resume healthcare operations until it satisfactorily met the applicable regulatory requirements.

Urhoghede-Edigin said patient safety remained the agency's overriding priority, stressing that no healthcare facility would be allowed to compromise established health, sanitary and operational standards in the state.

EDOHERMA also reminded owners and operators of private hospitals and clinics in Edo that ANPMP membership does not constitute government approval or authorisation to operate.

The agency said statutory registration with EDOHERMA was mandatory to ensure that healthcare services were provided in appropriate environments, within approved scopes of practice and by suitably qualified personnel.

NEWS

Igbinedion University honours Esama at 92, holds special senate sitting

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

As part of activities marking the 92nd birthday anniversary of the Esama of Benin Kingdom, Sir Chief Dr Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion, Igbine-

dion University, Okada, has held a special Senate Sitting in honour of its founder and Chancellor.

The ceremony brought together members of the university community, including the Deputy Chancellor and heir apparent, Sir Chief Dr Lucky

Nosakhare Igbinedion, as well as friends and associates of the Igbinedion family, to celebrate a man whose influence, according to speakers at the event, transcends business and philanthropy to encompass education, community development and humanitar-

ian service.

The Special Senate Sitting was steeped in honour and reflection on the remarkable life and achievements of the celebrant, whose establishment of Igbinedion University remains one of his most enduring contributions to education

in Nigeria.

In his address, the Vice-Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Okada, Prof. Lawrence Ezemonye, paid an evocative tribute to the Esama, highlighting milestones of a life defined by courage, enterprise, service and an unwavering commitment to humanity.

Prof. Ezemonye's tribute offered a vivid portrait of the celebrant as a man whose accomplishments, he said, had left indelible footprints in the sands of time.

Also speaking, the Dean, School of Basic Medical Sciences, Prof. Uche Osimeon-Eboziegbe, described the Esama as "an enigma, a colossus and a father to all."

She further described his philanthropy as extraordinary, recalling several acts of generosity which, she said, demonstrated his deep connection with the people around him.

Among the examples she cited was an occasion when the Esama reportedly paid the electricity bill for residents of Okada, a gesture she described as emblematic of his uncommon generosity and concern for the welfare of the community.

The tributes continued with Prof. Ikedimma Onyeakagbu of the College of Law and Prof. Stephen Ughulu of the College of Business and Management Studies joining other members of the university commu-

nity in celebrating the life and legacy of the renowned businessman and educationist.

A special tribute by Prof. Dennis Teghtegh added another personal dimension to the celebration, as speakers reflected on their individual encounters with the Esama and the impact of his life on the university community and society at large.

The presentation of gifts and birthday cards by various departments and individuals provided another opportunity to highlight the lives touched, institutions built and opportunities created by the celebrant over the decades.

The special Senate Sitting was therefore not merely a birthday celebration, but also a moment for the university community to acknowledge a legacy that continues to shape lives and inspire generations.

From the lecture halls of Igbinedion University to the wider community, the story of Chief Gabriel Igbinedion has remained closely associated with institution-building, generosity and a firm belief in the transformative power of education.

At 92, the Esama of Benin Kingdom continues to attract tributes from individuals and institutions who acknowledge his contributions to education, entrepreneurship, philanthropy and community development.

**CONTRACT SIGNING:**

From left: The Director Technical Services, Lagos Water Regulatory Commission, Mr Idowu Olowu; Country Director WaterAid Nigeria, Ms Evelyn Mere; Managing Director, Lagos Water Corporation, Mr Mukhtar Tijani; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Bayroyal International Limited, Mr Owoye Peter and the Executive Director Operations, Lagos Water Corporation, Mrs Helen Taiwo, during the contract signing of the Ojokoro Waterworks Rehabilitation, in Lagos on Friday.

CSOs, labour groups call for security overhaul, improved wages at Gani Fawehinmi memorial

LAGOS

FUNMILAYO MUYIDEEN

Civil society Organisations (CSOs), labour groups and other stakeholders have called for urgent reforms in Nigeria's security system and improved wages for workers as the country continues to grapple with economic hardship and insecurity.

The call was made during a

memorial event organised to honour the late human rights lawyer and activist, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, renowned for his advocacy for justice, democracy and the rights of ordinary Nigerians.

Speakers at the event stressed the need for government to strengthen security institutions and adopt measures capable of protecting lives and property across the country.

They also urged authorities to ensure that workers receive

wages that reflect current economic realities, arguing that the rising cost of food, housing, transportation and other basic necessities has made it increasingly difficult for many Nigerians to meet their daily needs.

The participants said the principles championed by Fawehinmi, including accountability, good governance, social justice and respect for human rights, remain relevant to Nigeria's development.

They urged government at all levels to translate policies into concrete actions that would improve the living conditions of citizens and strengthen public confidence in democratic institutions.

The stakeholders further called on Nigerians to remain committed to defending democratic values and holding public officials accountable, noting that sustainable development could only be achieved through responsible leadership and active citizen participation.

Cleric calls for rail, water transport expansion to ease pressure on Nigerian roads

LAGOS

FUNMILAYO MUYIDEEN

A cleric has urged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration to prioritise the rehabilitation and expansion of Nigeria's railway and inland waterway systems as part of efforts to reduce pressure on the nation's roads.

The cleric said greater investment in alternative transportation networks would help improve the movement of people and goods while reducing the heavy dependence on roads for long-distance transportation.

According to the cleric, the poor condition of many roads

across the country has continued to affect businesses, increase transportation costs and contribute to accidents and delays.

He called on the Federal Government to review existing railway infrastructure and develop the country's waterways to provide safer and more efficient alternatives for commuters and businesses.

The cleric also urged the government to ensure proper maintenance of transport infrastructure and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to prevent public projects from deteriorating shortly after completion.

He noted that an effective multimodal transportation system would support economic growth, create employment opportunities

and reduce the burden placed on Nigeria's road network.

He appealed to relevant government agencies to work to-

gether in developing a sustainable transport system that would benefit Nigerians and contribute to national development.

Delta State Scout Council holds 2026 AGM in Asaba, reaffirms commitment to youth devt

ASABA

The Scout Association of Nigeria, Delta State Scout Council, held its Annual General Meeting on Friday, September 4th, 2026 at Labour House, Asaba.

The event drew top government officials, security chiefs, and Scout leaders from across the 25 Local Government Areas of the state.

The AGM served as a plat-

form to review the activities of the council over the last 10 years to deliberate on challenges, and elect new officers to pilot the affairs of the council for the next term.

In his welcome address, the Chairman of the AGM Planning Committee, Scouter Albert Imuero, appreciated delegates for their turnout and commitment to the Scout movement.

Delivering the keynote address, the President of the State Council and Chief Judge of Del-

ta State, Hon. Justice T. O. Diali, represented by the Deputy President of the Scout Association, Sir Edwin Ogidi-Gbegbaje, charged Scouters to continue mentoring youths in discipline, integrity, and service to the nation.

Earlier in his address, the State Scout Commissioner, Scouter Ekrogavwe Festus Kevwe, gave a detailed report of the council's activities in the past year, highlighting achievements in training, community service, and membership drive across the three Senatorial Districts.

The meeting also featured goodwill messages from the representative of the Commissioner for Youth Development, who commended the Scouts for complementing government efforts in youth empowerment; the Commissioner of Police, Delta State Command, who lauded the role of Scouts in promoting peace, security awareness, and moral values among young people and the Chief Commissioner of The Scout Association of Nigeria, Alh. Umar Mohammed.

Nigeria's external reserves hit \$54bn, highest in 18 years

DIVINE JOHN OSHONE

Nigeria's external reserves have risen to \$54.08 billion, their highest level in nearly 18 years, according to the latest data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

The reserves reached the new level on September 3, 2026, rising from \$53.99 billion recorded a day earlier.

The latest figure represents a significant increase from the \$52.66 billion recorded on August 19.

CBN data also showed that Nigeria began 2026 with about \$45.56 billion in external reserves, meaning the country has added more than \$8 billion so far this year.

The current reserve level is also above the CBN's earlier

projection of \$51.04 billion for the end of 2026.

Nigeria last recorded reserves around the \$54 billion level in December 2008, when the figure stood at about \$54.21 billion.

The rise provides the country with a stronger external financial buffer and could support efforts to maintain stability in the foreign exchange market.

The development comes as the naira has also recorded improved performance in the official foreign exchange market.

With reserves now at an 18-year high, attention will focus on whether the upward trend can be sustained in the coming months.

Ossiamo shutdown: Edo Govt seeks power restoration, protection of investment

DIVINE JOHN OSHONE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has expressed concern over the shutdown of Ossiamo Power Company, saying the development has affected electricity supply to businesses, communities and government facilities.

Commissioner for Power, Paul Usenbo, said Ossiamo previously supplied electricity to residents, businesses, industries and several govern-

ment establishments across the state.

He said the shutdown forced the state government to reconnect some of its facilities to the Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC).

Usenbo disclosed that Ossiamo had been generating about 11 megawatts before the shutdown, adding that the loss of the power supply had affected businesses, hospitals, artisans and households.

He said the government wants the dispute surround-

ing the company resolved, its investment protected and electricity restored to consumers in accordance with the law.

The commissioner acknowledged the frustration among residents, saying Edo people

needed reliable electricity and not explanations.

However, he clarified that the state government does not own or operate Ossiamo Power Company and cannot take over its private facilities

or impose a settlement on the parties involved.

Usenbo said the government would continue to facilitate dialogue, provide regulatory support and work with relevant authorities to protect critical

electricity infrastructure.

He added that the government would continue to encourage multiple sources of electricity generation as part of efforts to improve power supply across Edo State.

First Niger Bridge to close for two weeks as FG begins emergency repairs

BENEDICT OKATE

ONITSHA

The Federal Government has announced the temporary closure of the First Niger Bridge in Onitsha, Anambra State, for two weeks to enable emergency repairs on the critical infrastructure.

The bridge will be completely closed to motorists from Monday, September 7, to September 21, 2026, as the Federal Ministry of Works moves to address the deteriorating condition of the structure and damage caused by vandalism.

The decision followed an inspection of the bridge by the Minister of Works, David Umahi, who raised concerns over the condition of some critical components of the bridge.

According to the ministry, scavengers had vandalized portions of the bridge by removing nuts, bolts and iron rods. It added that sections of the expansion-joint steelworks, as well as stanchion and steel-truss components, had also been damaged.

The ministry said the affected contractor handling the relevant section of the Onitsha-Enugu Dual Carriageway, SKECC, had been directed to immediately commence the emergency intervention.

The repair programme will involve the removal of the deteriorated asphalt surface and the laying of approximately 40 millimetres of fresh asphalt wearing course, alongside other

maintenance and safety works.

Beyond the immediate rehabilitation, the Federal Government is also planning to strengthen security on the bridge through the installation of solar-powered streetlights and closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras.

The measures, according to the government, are intended to improve visibility and security while enabling authorities to monitor and deter further acts of vandalism.

The ministry said the closure was necessary to ensure that the emergency repairs were carried out safely and efficiently, given the strategic importance of the bridge to transportation and economic activities in the South-East and beyond.

Motorists have consequently been advised to make use of the Second Niger Bridge, with traffic directed through Obosi towards Asaba, Delta State, and other destinations beyond.

The government urged road users to cooperate with traffic management authorities during the two-week closure and make alternative travel arrangements to minimize delays and inconvenience.

The temporary closure is expected to affect vehicular movement around the Onitsha axis, one of the busiest transportation and commercial corridors in the region, but officials said the intervention was necessary to preserve the integrity and safety of the bridge.



COURTESY VISIT:

L-R: Registrar JAMB, Prof. Segun Aina and INEC Chairman Prof. Joash Amupitan during the JAMB management's courtesy visit to INEC headquarters in Abuja.

PHOTO: OMOYE AMINU

INEC sets September 12 deadline to unveil final 2027 presidential, NASS candidates list

ABUJA

ODINI AMAKA VIVIAN

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is set to publish the final list of candidates for the January 16, 2027 presidential and National Assembly elections on Saturday, September 12, 2026, as preparations for the elections gather momentum.

The commission is currently fine-tuning the list ahead of the statutory deadline, with the publication expected to provide clarity on the candidates cleared to contest the presidential, senatorial and House of Representatives elections.

Checks revealed that officials of the commission are currently concluding the process ahead of the publication. INEC had earlier released a provisional list containing 19 presidential can-

didates, alongside their running mates and other required particulars, while provisional lists for candidates contesting the Senate and House of Representatives were also published.

The commission's action is in accordance with Section 32(1) of the 2026 Electoral Act, which requires the final list of candidates to be published at least 60 days before an election.

The presidential and National Assembly elections are scheduled to take place on the same day, with political parties expected to conclude all outstanding nomination and substitution processes before the final list is released. The deadline for the substitution of candidates for the presidential and National Assembly elections was August 22, 2026, while political parties were given until August 29 to submit their nomination forms, Form

EC 13A-E. The publication of candidates' Form EC9 is also a statutory requirement under Section 29(3) of the Electoral Act 2026, which requires INEC to display the personal particulars of candidates after receiving their nomination forms.

Major political parties are expected to have a strong presence on the ballot as preparations intensify ahead of the elections. The All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and African Democratic Congress (ADC) are expected to field candidates across the 469 National Assembly seats, comprising 109 Senate seats and 360 House of Representatives seats.

The Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), meanwhile, is expected to contest all 109 senatorial seats and 219 House of Representatives seats, setting the stage for a highly competitive legislative contest.

A recent report says the final list is expected to come against the backdrop of ongoing legal disputes involving some aspirants who are challenging decisions by their political parties to substitute them despite claims that they won their respective primaries.

One of the notable cases involves former Benue State Governor and Senator representing Benue North East, Gabriel Suswam, who instituted a suit against Senator Emmanuel Udende, the APC and INEC over party's primary election for the Benue North East Senatorial District.

Suswam is challenging the APC's decision to replace him with Udende after he emerged from the primary conducted on May 18, 2026. The Federal High Court 6 in Abuja, presided over by Justice Inyang Ekwo, has reserved judgment in the matter for October 12, 2026.

Tinubu's reforms begin to steady Nigeria's economy, says Presidency

ABUJA

ODINI AMAKA VIVIAN

The Federal Government has said the economic reforms introduced by President Bola Tinubu's administration are gradually stabilising Nigeria's economy and improving the operating environment for businesses across the country.

The Presidency said the reforms, which include changes to the foreign exchange market, pe-

troleum sector, monetary policy and fiscal management, have begun to produce measurable improvements in corporate performance and investor confidence.

The government maintained that the policies were designed to address longstanding structural challenges and create a more predictable environment for businesses and investors.

Presidential Spokesperson Bayo Onanuga said the reforms were already having a positive impact on several companies listed

on the Nigerian Exchange, particularly businesses with significant foreign-exchange exposure.

According to him, the unification of the foreign exchange market has improved price discovery and enabled companies with dollar-denominated revenues to better reflect the value of their earnings.

The Presidency said the development had contributed to stronger performances by some major companies and demonstrated the growing effects of

the administration's economic reform agenda.

The government also pointed to developments in the oil and gas industry as evidence of the impact of the reforms. It highlighted major upstream transactions, including the acquisition of Shell Petroleum Development Company assets by the Renaissance Africa Energy consortium and Seplat Energy's acquisition of Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited assets.

According to the Presidency,

such transactions are expected to increase production capacity, expand reserves and improve the long-term growth prospects of the affected companies, while also reducing regulatory uncertainty and encouraging greater indigenous participation in the petroleum sector.

The Presidency further said the administration's decision to allow naira payments for crude oil had supported the development of Nigeria's domestic refining capacity. The policy, ac-

cording to the government, has contributed to the emergence of the Dangote Refinery as a major player in the country's petroleum industry, with the facility increasingly supplying refined products to the domestic and international markets.

The government argued that strengthening local refining would reduce dependence on imported petroleum products, conserve foreign exchange and create additional opportunities across the oil and gas value chain.

NEWS

Edo Muslims pledge to help mobilise support for President Tinubu's re-election

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY

The Muslim community in Edo State is to support Governor Monday Okpebholo's efforts to mobilise support for the re-election of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, with the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, assuring the Governor of the community's

support.

Uduimoh made the pledge at the inauguration of the 26-member Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, the Edo State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board, the Edo State Consumer Protection Committee, and the Edo State Rural Access Roads Agency (RARA) by Governor Okpebholo in Benin City.

He said the pledge was part of the Muslim community's way of showing appreciation to

the Governor for what he described as unprecedented attention to the welfare and interests of Muslims in the state.

"It is a privilege and honour to stand before you, Your Excellency, to thank you for the Amana, the trust you have placed on us to serve in this capacity. We say thank you. On behalf of the Muslim Ummah, we say thank you," he said.

According to him, the Muslim community had "never had it so good" under previous

administrations, particularly in terms of appointments and government support.

Uduimoh, who said he had spent about 25 years in the Hajj management industry, noted that significant improvements had been recorded in the welfare of Edo pilgrims since the inception of the Okpebholo administration.

"Before now, I have spent 25 years in the Hajj management industry. We have never had it so good," he said.

He recalled that previously, Edo pilgrims were transported from Benin City to Saudi Arabia, but on their return, Lagos was their final destination, leaving them to make their way back to Edo.

He said the situation had changed under Governor Okpebholo, noting that the state now provides transportation for pilgrims from Lagos back to Edo and, as experienced during the 2026 Hajj, to their respective senatorial districts.

The Chairman also commended the Governor for ensuring that Edo pilgrims were served local meals in the Holy Land, including Eba, Amala and Egusi, describing the initiative as unprecedented.

"Under your administration, Edo contingents are now being fed with our local food in the Holy Land. Food like Eba, Amala, Egusi and the likes, which has never happened before," he said.

He added that pilgrims were now accommodated in better facilities, saying those who participated in the 2026 Hajj could testify to the improvements.

Uduimoh said the developments had imposed a responsibility on the Muslim community to express its gratitude to the Governor.

"So when development speaks, gratitude is next. So it's our responsibility to tell you thank you. We will pay you back," he said.

He explained that one of the ways the Muslim community intended to reciprocate the Governor's support was by contributing to his effort to achieve the 2.5 million votes he promised to mobilise for President Tinubu.

"And this is the time to pay you back. Because we have the number. We will pay back for you to achieve your 2.5 million votes which you promised Mr President. We will mobilise for you. We have the numbers," he said.

**INAUGURAL MEETING:**

Members of the Edo Muslims Pilgrims Welfare Board shortly after their inaugural meeting presided over by the chairman Malam Musa Mohammed Uduimoh in Benin City.

Edo Govt Seeks partnership to improve care for persons with disabilities

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has intensified efforts to strengthen partnerships with relevant organisations to improve healthcare, rehabilitation and overall welfare of persons living with disabilities across the state.

The Special Adviser to Governor Monday Okpebholo on Disability Matters, Comrade Yunusa Abdul Salam Adepoju, made this known during his maiden official assignment after resuming office, when he visited the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Centre in Benin City.

Adepoju, who was accompanied by the Chairman of the Joint National Association of Persons Living with Disabilities (JONAPWD), Edo State Chapter, Comrade Ann Ojugo, said the visit was aimed at engaging the management of the centre and exploring areas of collaboration that would improve the wellbeing of persons living with disabilities.

"This is my first assignment, visiting the people living with disabilities in this centre. It is just to discuss collaboration with the management and assure the people living with dis-

abilities that the government of Senator Monday Okpebholo is a government of inclusiveness.

"He is willing to listen and to carry everybody along, including those living with disabilities. He is not ready to discriminate against anybody. This is why I am here," he said.

During the visit, a team of dentists under the Divine Mercy Orphanage Dental Outreach was also at the centre, providing

free dental care and oral health services to residents, including persons living with disabilities.

The Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Divine Mercy Orphanage Dental Outreach, Dr. Ewere Otiri, a Consultant Family Dentist, said the organisation works to provide free oral healthcare to children in orphanages and persons living with disabilities. She was accompanied by the organisation's Director of Operations, Dr. Emajemite Erix.

Otiri said the initiative was established to bring oral healthcare closer to vulnerable members of society, particularly children in orphanages and persons living with disabilities, while also creating awareness about the importance of dental health.

Commenting on the visit by the Special Adviser, she described it as timely, noting that government involvement would help broaden awareness and access to dental care and education.

Motorists decry Anambra agency harassment, N300,000 fines on road

ONITSHA

Motorists plying the ever-busy Onitsha-Owerri Road in Anambra State have decried incessant harassment and imposition of "unjustifiable" fines by officials of the Anambra State Road Traffic Management Agency, especially at the bad portions of the road near the People's Club Bus Stop.

Some of the motorists, who spoke to our correspondent in separate interviews at the weekend, alleged that ARTMA officials were using the deplorable condition of the road to extort various amounts of money, ranging from N150,000 to N300,000, from

private motorists, taxi and commercial bus drivers plying the highway to the popular Upper Iweka end of the road.

The drivers lamented that the deep and dangerous potholes on the road, particularly near the People's Club Bus Stop, were forcing them to drive in the opposite lane, thereby subjecting them to heavy fines and alleged extortion by traffic officials, a situation they described as a "double tragedy".

Our correspondent, who was at the scene, observed that motorists travelling from the Obosi end of the Onitsha-Owerri Road towards Upper Iweka diverted near the People's Club, where they connected to the opposite lane in order to

continue their journey.

It was also observed that many drivers heading towards Upper Iweka had to divert to the opposite lane when they reached the People's Club axis to avoid the deep potholes, which had made driving almost impossible along that stretch.

Most of the drivers who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of being identified by the officers said the traffic officials always hid at a corner of the road near the bad portions on a daily basis, especially during peak hours, where they waited for drivers plying "one way" and demanded various amounts of money. In some cases, they allegedly impounded vehicles when drivers failed to pay.

Fugar sub-clan head cautions youths against cultism, drug abuse at Esi-festival

LAMAI CASSIUS

FUGAR

The Okpe-Ukpi of Ivhi-arua Sub-Clan in Fugar, Etsako Central Local Government Area, HRH Jerome Omokhaye Itepu, has advised youths to shun cultism, illicit drugs, and other vices capable of destroying their future.

HRH Itepu gave the advice at Ivhiokpo Quarter's Square during the Esi (New Yam) Festival, noting that many youths have ruined their lives as a result of these vices.

He also called on the people to live in peace, unity, and to respect the culture and traditions of the land. He urged youths in particular to avoid cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, and to have respect for their elders.

The Okpe-Ukpi highlighted the significance of the Esi Festival, saying it is a way of thanking God for a bountiful harvest

after the planting season.

He explained that the festival also signifies the beginning of the generally accepted consumption of new yams in the community.

He said the occasion provides an opportunity for elders and the people to offer prayers to ancestors for the protection and guidance of their children and the entire community.

He reiterated his commitment to ensuring that during his reign as Okpe-Ukpi, the community would witness more peace, unity, and development.

The Okpe-Ukpi also thanked everyone who contributed to the success of this year's Esi Festival celebration, expressing optimism that next year's edition would be better.

Speaking at the event, HRH Best Imoudu Igbanoi, the Okpe-Ukpi of Iviunone Sub-Clan and Special Guest at the event, said the Esi Festival is an annual event celebrated by the people of Fugar Clan.

Solar power reduces universities' energy costs – FG

ABUJA

Nigeria's Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, has said the deployment of off-grid solar solutions across educational institutions is helping to improve learning conditions.

The off-grid solutions are being rolled out under the Energising Education Programme, executed by the Rural Electrification Agency.

Speaking during a recent interview on the Afropolitan Podcast, Alausa said unus-

tainable utility expenditures and persistent national grid failures had historically undermined academic stability, crippled scientific research and lowered the overall standard of campus living. He explained that delivering a dependable learning environment required taking universities off conventional transmission lines entirely.

According to the minister, transitioning tertiary institutions to dedicated solar mini-grids would protect lecture halls and student accommodations from recurring power outages.

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission and the Nigeria Police Force have vowed to take action against politicians issuing threats against opponents as activities intensify ahead of the 2027 general elections.

INEC and the police spoke with newsmen while responding to enquiries on public concerns about rising inflammatory rhetoric by political actors across the country.

The commission said the Electoral Act empowers it to take action against indicted political parties and their candidates, while the police insisted that incitement is a criminal

Threats, intimidation: INEC, police vow crackdown on politicians

offence and anybody found culpable would be arrested and prosecuted.

The Executive Secretary of Yiaga Africa, Samson Itodo, and human rights lawyer, Jiti Ogunye, among others, also called on law enforcement agencies to move beyond invitations and warnings and prosecute politicians whose statements violated the law.

Findings by Sunday PUNCH showed that political threats had

continued to feature prominently in mobilisation campaigns, with several politicians making statements that critics described as threatening, provocative or capable of inciting violence.

It would be recalled that one of the early statements that drew attention came from Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, who, on April 25, warned opposition politicians against being coerced into joining the ruling party.

He spoke at the All Oppo-

sition Political Party Leaders meeting in Ibadan, where he warned those pushing politicians to defect to remember the violence associated with the political crisis of the First Republic.

Makinde said those acting "as if there's no tomorrow" should remember that "Operation Wetie started from here. This is the same Wild Wild West."

"Operation Wetie" refers to the political violence that engulfed Nigeria's Western Region

in the 1960s, with Ibadan becoming a major centre of the unrest.

The expression, derived from the Yoruba phrase for "wet him" or "soak it," became associated with attacks in which political opponents, their homes and vehicles were doused with petrol and set ablaze.

Days later, on May 2, a former Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the New Nigeria Peoples Party, Buba Galadima, made another controversial statement while speaking at a stakeholders' meeting organised by the Obi-Kwankwaso Movement in Abuja.

He urged Nigerians to go to polling units with "bottles and jerry cans of kerosene" during the 2027 elections.

Galadima said, "And during the elections, whether I am alive or dead, go to the polling centres with your bottles and jerrycans of kerosene. Either they do what is right, or we all die there. So, there will be no beneficiary."

On August 3, Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, declared that the people of the state would not allow the August 15 governorship election to be rigged.

"Remember what happened in 1983. It started in Yorubaland

when they cheated Bola Ige and Ajasin. Osun will not agree. We want a free and fair election," he said.

The senator representing Osun East Senatorial District, Francis Fadahunsi, was also seen in a viral video issuing death threats to members of the Accord Party in the Ilesa area of Osun State.

In the Federal Capital Territory, the Chairman of Kuje Area Council, Samuel Shekwo, reportedly threatened that anyone who was not a supporter of the All Progressives Congress should leave the council area.

Similarly, the Borno State Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Sainna Buba, threatened that those who refused to support the APC in the 2027 elections would be flogged.

In Ebonyi State, the newly sworn-in Chairman of Ohaukwu Local Government Area, Eze Ituma, warned opposition parties and their supporters against conducting political activities in the council ahead of the 2027 elections.

He said individuals whose political activities conflicted with his interests could be declared persona non grata.

**AUGUST MEETING:**

Wife of Ebonyi State Governor, Mrs Mary Maudline Uzoamaka Nwifuru, middle, to her immediate right is the Deputy Governor of Ebonyi State, Princess Onyemaechi Obila and members of Ebonyi women groups during this year's August meeting in Abakaliki.

August Meeting: women charged not to leave child's upbringing in hands of society alone

MAXWELL OKECHUKWU

ABAKALIKI

The wife of Ebonyi State Governor, Mrs Mary Maudline Uzoamaka Ogbonna Nwifuru has charged women not to leave the upbringing of children only in the hands of schools, religious institutions, communities and the society.

The governor's wife gave the charge during the 2026 August Meeting held at the Pa- Ngele Oruta township Stadium in Abakaliki the state Capital.

She advised them to always show concern about where their children are at any given point in time so that the children would grow up being responsible adults who would in turn take good care of their own children.

Mrs. Nwifuru reminded the women of their responsibility as nation builders to draw their strength from the theme of this year's meeting: "The power of Resilient Woman in Nation Building".

She explained that the women's commitment to nation building should not come at the expense of their roles and responsibility in the lives of their children, rather it should benefit them by arriving to contributing meaningfully to

the development of their children, communities and the society at large.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development Ebonyi State, Barr. Mrs. Felicia Nwankpuma in her key address assured of her ministry's collaboration with the office of the First Lady of the state in the advancement of the welfare, Empowerment and the development of vulnerable groups across the 13 Local government areas of Ebonyi State.

She also charged the women to continue working together with the ministry as moth-

ers, sisters, and community to create stronger families while equally supporting the present administration.

The Chairman of the occasion, Engr. David Umahi, Minister for works expressed Joy over the high sense of responsibility of the average Ebonyi woman given their resilience and records of achievements in their different endeavours.

Represented by Chief Austin Nweze Umahi, the minister commended the women for the near perfect organization of this year's August Meeting in collaboration with the Min-

istry of Women Affairs and the office of the First Lady, and urged them to continue strive towards building stable homes which form the integral part of any stable society.

He also commended the women for their unalloyed support for the government of Ebonyi State under the leadership of Governor Nwifuru and sued for its sustenance.

He equally charged the men folks to emulate the women in their resilience to move the state forward, assuring that the men version of the August meeting would soon commence in Ebonyi State.

Three siblings found dead on father's farm in Ondo

AKURE

Residents of Oke Ogba, Akure, the Ondo State capital, have been thrown into mourning following the tragic death of three children of one of the residents, Mr Samuel Jonah, on Saturday.

The lifeless bodies of the deceased were said to have been found on their father's farm near a stream in the community.

The deceased were identified as Joshua Jonah, 11; his twin brother, Jacob Jonah, 11; and their five-year-old sister, Blessing Jonah.

According to a source, the children went to the farm with

their father on Friday but later left the farm for home while their father was still working on the farm.

After some hours, when their father got home and did not see the children, the family began searching for them.

The lifeless bodies of the children were later found on the farm on Saturday near a stream.

The cause of their deaths had yet to be unravelled as of the time of filing this report.

Confirming the incident, the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Abayomi Jimoh, said the command had commenced an investigation into the incident.

The PPRO said, "The Ondo

State Police Command confirms the tragic loss of three siblings at a farm located around the Owena Army Barracks, Akure, on 4th September 2026.

"The victims, identified as Joshua Jonah, 11 years; Jacob Jonah, 11 years, (twins) and Blessing Jonah, five years, reportedly accompanied their father, Samuel Jonah, to the farm.

"They later left the farm for home, but were discovered missing when their father returned home. A search was subsequently conducted and on 5th September 2026, the bodies of the three children were discovered around the bank of a small river within the farm."

Probe N78.8bn cash transfer funds, SERAP urges Tinubu

ABUJA

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project has urged President Bola Tinubu to direct relevant agencies to account for more than N78.8bn in public funds it said were "diverted, unaccounted for or irregularly spent" under the Federal Government's cash transfer programme.

SERAP also urged Tinubu to direct the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction and the National Cash Transfer Office to "publish the full records and audit trail of the N33.751 billion 2023 cash transfers, including the name of the beneficiaries, payments, verification, authorisations and reconciliation, and to explain the failure to provide REMITA records to the Auditor-General."

It urged him to direct both MDAs "to account for the N36.744 billion payments made without prepayment audit, the N4.616 billion in unsupported expenditures, the N350.182 million enrolment payments, the N89.511 million store purchases and the N17.422 million diesel advances."

The organisation also urged the president "to direct appropriate anticorruption agencies to promptly and thoroughly investigate the N76.24 billion in questionable and unaccounted-for expenditures at NCTO and N2.55 billion at the National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office."

SERAP made the demand in a letter dated September 5, 2026, and signed by its Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare, according to a statement issued by the organisation on Sunday.

The organisation said the allegations were documented in the 2024 Annual Report of the Auditor-General of the Federation, published on August 7, 2026.

President Bola Tinubu. Photo credit: File

It said the report covered various periods between January and December 2023, ending on December 31, 2024.

"SERAP is particularly concerned about the Auditor-General's finding that the NCTO made N33.751 billion in cash transfers to 3,295,207 households and beneficiaries in 35 states in 2023 without evidence confirming receipt of the money by the beneficiaries.

"The Auditor-General found that the NCTO failed to provide REMITA statements needed to authenticate the payments and establish whether the beneficiaries were genuine and eligible. The audit report also raised concerns about incomplete beneficiary information and frustration of the audit process," the statement read.

It added, "The Federal Government must reconcile the payments against the National Social Register and National Beneficiary Register and independently verify the identity and eligibility of beneficiaries, including identifying any duplicate, fictitious, deceased, ineligible or otherwise irregular beneficiaries."

NEWS

Political shake-up as Kwankwaso loyalists join APC in Kano

By OJO HAPPY, MIRACLE
OFUWENGBE, AYENOMOH
WINNER

KANO

A major political realignment took place in Kano on Saturday as prominent loyalists of former Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso and other political figures defected to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), drawing a mammoth crowd to the event.

The defectors were received during the inauguration of the Tinubu Support Groups (TSG) 2.0 State Chapters and a grand reception held in Kano. The gathering attracted APC leaders, government officials, political stakeholders and thousands of supporters from across the state.

Among those who formally joined the APC were Senator Rufai Sani-Hanga, representing Kano Central Senatorial District, and former Governor Kabiru Ibrahim-Gaya. Other defectors included Ali

Datti-Yako, former NDC State Deputy Chairman, and former Speaker of the Kano State House of Assembly, Isyaku Ali-Danja.

The list of defectors also included former NNPP state chairmen Mas'ud Eljibrin-Doguwa and Abdullahi Zubairu-Abiya, as well as Senator Baraka Sani, Senator Abdumajid Dauda-Dandawaki and Badaru Umar, a former Chairman of Ungogo Local Government Council.

Receiving the defectors, APC National Chairman, Professor Nantawe Yilwatda, alongside Kano State Governor Abba Kabir-Yusuf, former Governor Abdullahi Umar-Ganduje and Senator Barau Jibril, welcomed the new members into the party.

Governor Yusuf described the development as a significant boost to the APC in Kano, urging the defectors to work with existing party members to strengthen unity and promote peace and stability within the party.

Speaking on behalf of the

defectors, Sani-Hanga pledged their loyalty to the APC and expressed readiness to work with the governor and other party leaders to strengthen the

party and secure victory in the 2027 general elections.

The event also featured the inauguration of the Tinubu

Support Groups 2.0, which is expected to mobilise support for President Bola Tinubu ahead of the 2027 elections. The large turnout and

high-profile defections have further heightened political activity in Kano as parties position themselves ahead of the forthcoming elections.



From left: Chairman of NUJ Oyo State Council, Akeem Abas; Ex ECOWAS Focal Point International Advisory board on Arms, Mr Oluwafisan Bankale; guest lecturer, Prof. Gbola Olayiwola; during the 2026 Lecture and Donation to Veteran Journalists in Ibadan organised by Carnival Radio on Thursday.

Contractors demand payment as FG's unpaid debts threaten projects

ABUJA

Contractors handling government projects have appealed to the Federal Government to settle outstanding debts owed to them, warning that prolonged delays in payment could affect the execution and completion of ongoing projects across the country.

The contractors said the accumulation of unpaid certificates and contractual obligations had placed significant financial pressure on businesses, making it increasingly difficult for them to sustain operations and meet project deadlines.

They urged the Federal Government to prioritise the clearance of verified debts, noting that timely payment would help contractors access funds, pay workers, procure materials and continue work on government projects.

The contractors also stressed that settling outstanding obligations would boost confidence in the construction sector and prevent further delays in the delivery of critical infrastructure.

They called on relevant government agencies to expedite the verification and payment process, particularly for contractors with legitimate and documented claims.

The appeal comes amid

concerns over the rising cost of construction materials, labour and other operational expenses, which have increased the financial burden on contractors.

The contractors maintained that prompt settlement of government debts would not only protect businesses but also support job creation and ensure that Nigerians benefit from completed public infrastructure.

Investors strive as equities gain N3.72trn

By IGUNBOR GODWIN,
VIVIAN AMAKA,
OGBUNKWU EVELYN

LAGOS

Investors on the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) stepped up their activities in the week ended September 4, 2026, as renewed demand

for equities pushed the market higher and increased its capitalisation by about N3.72 trillion.

The performance reflected stronger investor confidence and growing appetite for selected stocks.

The NGX All-Share In-

dex, which tracks the general movement of listed equities, gained 2.36 per cent during the week to close at 246,992.44 points. Consequently, total market capitalisation rose to about N159.54 trillion, indicating a significant increase in the combined value of companies quoted on the exchange.

The rally was driven mainly by increased buying interest in key sectors, particularly Oil and Gas, Consumer Goods and Insurance. Investors continued to seek opportunities in companies with the potential for stronger earnings and capital appreciation, despite the broader economic pressures affecting businesses and households.

Trading figures further showed the strength of activity on the exchange, as investors transacted 4.36 billion shares worth N210.63 billion in 223,718 deals during the review period. The heavy volume of transactions demonstrated increased participation and showed that investors were actively repositioning their portfolios.

The Oil and Gas sector emerged as the strongest performer, gaining 9.10 per cent, supported by buying interest in stocks including OANDO, SEPLAT and ARADEL. The sector's performance reflected contin-

ued investor attention to energy companies and their potential to benefit from developments in the oil and gas industry.

The Consumer Goods sector also recorded a strong performance, advancing 4.47 per cent, while the Insurance sector gained 3.85 per cent. Stocks such as CHAMPION, Nigerian Breweries, MCNICHOLS, ROYALEX, WAPIC and SUNUASSUR contributed to the positive movement, showing that investor interest extended beyond the energy sector.

Overall, four of the five tracked sectors closed higher, with Industrial Goods emerging as the only declining sector. The broad-based gains suggest that investors were not merely chasing one group of stocks but were selectively taking positions across companies they considered capable of delivering attractive returns.

With the market gaining N3.72 trillion in value and investors exchanging 4.36 billion shares in one week, attention is now shifting to whether the momentum can continue. The coming sessions will show whether the latest buying interest marks the beginning of a sustained bullish run or a temporary surge as investors reassess opportunities on the NGX.

Academics back Oborevori, seeks continuity in Delta

By Ajuwa Victor

ASABA

The Coalition of Academics has endorsed the re-election bid of Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori, describing the administration's performance in the last three years as a reflection of what it termed a new approach to governance in the state.

The coalition made its position during a courtesy visit to the Chief Strategist to the Governor, Dr. Festus Okubor, in Asaba, where it presented its vision, mission and programmes ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Coordinator of the coalition, Prof. Lawrence Omo-Aghoja, said the group, comprising academics and professionals within and outside Nigeria, was established to provide intellectual support

for the administration and undertake objective assessments of its policies and programmes. According to him, the coalition intends to deploy research, public advocacy, workshops, media engagements and other platforms to examine and communicate the administration's achievements.

Omo-Aghoja said members of the coalition in the diaspora had also expressed interest in joining the initiative, following what they described as the emerging governance model in Delta.

He said the group would focus on identifying indicators of good governance, providing evidence-based recommendations on public policies and mobilising intellectual and professional support for the administration's 2027 campaign.

The coordinator said the coalition would also collaborate with relevant government institutions and stakeholders

to provide what he described as "robust intellectual embellishment" to the administration's policy agenda.

He commended Oborevori for his commitment to the MORE Agenda, arguing that the administration had translated a number of its policy commitments into programmes and projects across the state.

Omo-Aghoja also pointed to the governor's experience at the grassroots, local government, legislature and executive levels, saying the exposure had given him a broader understanding of the needs of the people.

He argued that the current political and developmental trajectory in Delta should be sustained, stressing that continuity would enable the administration to consolidate projects and policies already initiated.

The coalition subsequently declared its support for Oborevori's re-election, with Omo-Aghoja stating: "In 2027, it is Sheriff or nobody."

FOREIGN

NEWS

US envoys arrive in Ukraine for talks after meeting Putin in Russia

Two US envoys are hoping for "equally productive meetings" in Ukraine after holding talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on ending the war, US officials say. Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner arrived in Kyiv on Sunday, having "discussed substantive plans for next steps" with Putin on Saturday, according to the White House.

It is not yet clear exactly what they are, but an announcement is expected in the coming weeks, as efforts to end the war in Ukraine gather pace.

This is the first trip by US President Donald Trump's top negotiators to Ukraine's capital. Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky have agreed to halt strikes on each other's capitals for three days.

As Witkoff and Kushner were negotiating at the Kremlin, Zelensky said he and his team were "ready for the conversation", and that they were "interested in bringing the end of the war closer".

Posting on social media, he said, peace and security guarantees were needed, and it was "im-

portant to work in a coordinated, substantive, and realistic manner".

Overnight, Russian and Ukrainian forces continued to exchange strikes, with Ukraine confirming they struck an oil refinery, an airfield, and two air defence systems.

The country's defence ministry said they targeted the Ryazan oil refinery, which supplies the Russian army, and an airfield in Rostov-on-Don.

Earlier, Ukraine's Air Force reported that Russia attacked Ukraine with 108 long-range drones and small cruise missiles.

The country's air defences downed 82 drones and six missiles, but 11 locations were hit, with debris falling at a further seven sites.

Saturday's talks in Moscow lasted three hours and were held behind closed doors in Putin's official residence in the heart of the Russian capital, according to Russian state media.

Details are still emerging, but both sides have given broadly positive remarks without going into specifics.

Putin adviser Yuri Ushakov described the talks as "constructive, extremely frank".

"The talks were not limited to an exchange of views on resolving the Ukrainian crisis - economic issues and potential major, mutually beneficial Russian-American projects were discussed in considerable detail," he said.

Ushakov also said "note was made of the Russian army's tangible advances in the combat zone" and that there was acknowledgement that talks needed to address "the root causes of the conflict".

Despite an escalation of Russian missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian cities including

Kyiv, Russian ground forces have made very slow advances for most of the conflict, incurring enormous casualties. Russia still controls about one-fifth of Ukrainian territory - areas that it seized back in 2022.

The talks come after Russia and Ukraine have intensified aerial attacks in recent months.

Ukraine says it has struggled to repel ballistic missile attacks due to a lack of interceptor missiles, while Kyiv has focused its strikes on Russian economic infrastructure targets, notably oil installations.



MEETING PUTIN:

Witkoff and Kushner met with Zelensky after travelling by train from Poland

Volcano eruption leaves 150,000 passengers stranded in Indonesia

More than 150,000 passengers have been left stranded after a volcanic eruption forced Indonesian authorities to temporarily suspend operations at eight airports.

Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport was the first to be closed on Sunday morning after ash from Anak Krakatau was detected in airspace near the airport.

Transport minister Dudy Purwagandhi said so far 712 flights have been affected and asked airlines to consider diverting some flights to other airports.

The volcano had started erupting late on Friday night, generating continuous seismic activity, lava fountains, and booming sounds across surrounding regions. Two more eruptions happened early on Sunday, authorities said.

The transport ministry said the pause in operations mainly affected flights to and from Singapore, also other international routes including Doha, Sydney and Kuala Lumpur.

Purwagandhi said the decision to temporarily close more airports was made after tests found that volcanic ash had spread towards West Java.

He urged airlines to speed up processes for refunding tickets for passengers who have been affected by flight cancellations, and for airlines to provide timely information to those with upcoming flights to avoid overcrowding at airports.

According to Indonesia's meteorological agency BMKG, ash reached as far as 20,000ft (6,000m) on Java on east of the volcano, and 50,000ft (15,000m) west of the volcano on the Sumatra side.

Flights to and from Singapore - as well as Doha, Sydney, and Kuala Lumpur - have been disrupted.

Authorities have confirmed

there is no tsunami warning linked to the recent activity of the volcano, which is in the Sunda Strait between the islands of Java and Sumatra.

The health minister has urged residents in affected areas to stay indoors and wear face masks to protect against respiratory, eye, and skin risks.

According to local newspaper Kompas, several schools cancelled activities on Saturday after students and residents reported eye irritations from the ash, while some fishermen had cancelled fishing trips at sea similarly reporting sore eyes.

One resident, Aldi Candra Prayogi, told the outlet that he felt since Friday evening and it felt like "small grains of sand

had gotten into my eyes", and that he needs to use eye drops to ease the irritation.

The dust is so thick that he has to sweep the front yard of his house every five minutes, he also said.

Anak Krakatau, which means Child of Krakatoa, has been sporadically active since it emerged from the sea at the beginning of last century in the caldera formed after the 1883 eruption of Mount Krakatoa.

The volcano - also known as Anak Krakatoa - collapsed in December 2018, triggering a huge tsunami which killed over 400 people, and displaced and injured thousands more on the nearby coastlines of Sumatra and Java.

Masked anti-immigration protesters disrupt UK's Dover port

Dozens of masked anti-immigration protesters blocked roads leading to Britain's busiest ferry port on Saturday, clogging traffic and disrupting travellers and cargo vehicles heading for France.

The UK government condemned the action, saying it went beyond peaceful protest.

The Port of Dover said Sat-

urday morning that all traffic in and out was "stopped due to an ongoing public order incident," and police said they were "engaging with the protesters."

Video posted on social media showed several dozen men in black, their faces covered, standing across a major road near the port. One clip showed demonstrators linking arms across a main road and shout-

ing "stop the boats."

Chris Vinson, a Conservative Party local councillor, said the protest appeared to be "illegal migration-related."

"I'm not aware that there's been any violence, although clearly, having the path of your vehicle blocked by men wearing black paramilitary gear and balaclavas is extremely intimidating," he said.

US and Iran trade retaliatory attacks on ships as conflict flares

The US and Iran traded retaliatory attacks on ships on Saturday, in the latest round of strikes since fighting flared up a week ago following a month of relative calm.

The US military said it had "permanently disabled" two Iran-linked oil tankers, including one near Kharg Island, and "completely destroyed" a third in the Gulf of Oman.

Iran's state media confirmed the strikes and said Tehran had attacked three US-affiliated vessels in response, as well as three oil tankers travelling through the Strait of Hormuz along an "unauthorised" route.

The BBC has approached US Central Command (Centcom) for comment about Iran's latest claims to have targeted US ships.

The strikes come a day after President Donald Trump dismissed the conflict as "small potatoes", with little apparent progress towards ending the six-month war. He has not commented on Saturday's attacks.

The news of Iran's latest retaliation came hours after Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth wrote on social media: "It's simple: if Iran shoots at US ships, we will destroy (and sink) their oil tankers."

According to US Central Command (Centcom), two US warships had been targeted by Iran before the American attack on three Iran-linked oil tankers.

Centcom said it "successfully evaded" the multiple attacks from the IRGC earlier in the day, which were targeting a US aircraft carrier and guided-missile destroyer. No American troops were harmed, it said.

Centcom, which oversees US military operations in the Middle East, claimed that the three Iranian oil tankers it hit were "part of a multi-billion-dollar shadow network that funds the IRGC and its regional proxies".

Iranian state media outlet Irib reported that there were no casualties in Saturday's attack from the US on the tanker near Kharg Island.

Kharg Island hosts Iran's main terminal to export oil. Some 90% of the country's crude oil comes through the island, transported through pipes from the mainland.

The crews aboard the two attacked tankers in the Gulf of Oman were taken to shore in lifeboats, Irib reported. One of those tankers was empty and the other was carrying a load of oil, it added.

At least two dead in blast at Bolivia military barracks

At least two people have been killed after an explosion at a military barracks in Bolivia - but authorities fear the toll could be higher.

Bolivian Defence Minister Ernesto Justiniano said at least 81 people had been injured when "pyrotechnic material" detonated at the barracks, where an artillery regiment was stationed, about 14:30 local time (18:30 GMT) on Friday. Fourteen others remain missing.

Health official Rita Nebraska told local television between 10 and 15 people were believed to have died in the incident in Viacha, about 30km (19 miles) from La Paz, according to Reuters.

Police said dozens of homes had been damaged by the blast and that emergency workers were searching the rubble.

Nebraska said there was a risk of a further explosion and

urged people to stay at least 150m from the military base.

Base commander Colonel Antonio Amaru told reporters on Saturday that a sergeant and 13 conscripted soldiers aged between 18 and 19-years-old were among the missing.

Bolivia's President Rodrigo Paz expressed his "deepest solidarity" with the families of those who had died and had been injured.

He wrote on social media that a "thorough, technical and transparent investigation" would take place into what happened.

Police spokesman Roger Roca told news agency AFP that fireworks had been stored at the barracks and the cause of the blast remained under investigation.

Viacha's authorities have declared three days of mourning.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

Investigation underway into cause of deadly Kinshasa wedding fire

Authorities in DR Congo have launched an investigation into a fire at a wedding party in Kinshasa that left at least 22 people dead.

The blaze at a building in Lingwala started on Friday night and continued into early Saturday.

Narrow hallways reportedly became blocked as people tried to flee.

"We have just inspected the venue here, and it is clear that the [safety] norms are not being respected," Norbert Nzindula, Mayor of the municipality of Lingwala, told reporters on Saturday.

"Even the emergency exit:

as you can see, people had difficulty getting to safety; everyone was in a state of panic. This is regrettable, so we are going to take action, and the authorities will implement measures for other function venues within my jurisdiction and throughout the city and province of Kinshasa."

Deadly fires are common in some densely populated areas of Kinshasa, where buildings are often erected without provisions such as fire services.

The situation is worse during the dry season and several fires have already taken place this year, according to local media.



KINSHASA WEDDING FIRE:

Tablescapes are covered in ash and debris in the aftermath of a fire that broke out in a building hosting a wedding party in Lingwala, Congo, Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026.

At least 25 dead in Cape Verde bus crash, most of them children and teenagers

A bus crash in Cape Verde has killed at least 25 people, most of them children and teenagers, public radio network RCV said on Sunday.

Several others were injured in the accident on Saturday, some of them seriously, according to local authorities on Fogo Island, where the crash took place.

The bus was returning to Sao Filipe after an excursion to the Pico do Fogo volcanic crater when it veered off the road and plunged into a deep ravine. Thirty-two people were on board.

The driver was among the dead. He organised the excursion

to the unique site every year as a present for the pupils he drove to school during term time.

The wreckage came to a halt in a rocky and hard to reach valley. Emergency personnel worked through the night to rescue victims trapped inside.

Seven people were buried early on Sunday. The rest were set to be buried later in the day, according to RCV.

The president of Cape Verde, José Maria Pereira Neves, called the accident "a great catastrophe" in a statement on his Facebook page.

The president and other officials are expected to visit the island on Sunday, according to a local news agency.



CAPE VERDE BUS CRASH

TV presenter among 12 sentenced to death in Egypt drugs case

Egyptian television presenter Sarah Khalifa and 11 other people have been sentenced to death by hanging after being convicted of drugs charges.

According to state-owned al-Ahram newspaper, they were part of a criminal gang which imported ingredients used to make drugs with the intent of selling them.

They also had illegal firearms and munitions.

Khalifa, 39, is best known for her TV programme Mission Impossible which dealt with crime issues. She has denied the charges.

Nine fellow defendants have been sentenced to life imprisonment, while seven have been acquitted.

Khalifa's lawyer said she would appeal the death sentence.

The verdict was first announced last month.

However, it was only confirmed a month later after the court obtained a religious opinion from the grand mufti of Egypt - a legal requirement in death sentence cases.

During the trial, the court heard that authorities had seized more than 750kg (1,653lbs) of narcotics and the imported raw materials to

make them.

Twenty witnesses had given statements to the prosecutors, al-Ahram said, in addition to electronic evidence that included conversations and video clips.

According to the state-run Akhbar al-Youm newspaper, when asked by the judge about

her alleged role during a court appearance last September, Khalifa said she had never seen any drugs until she was photographed with them inside the anti-narcotics authority offices.

According to a 2025 Amnesty International report, there were 492 death sentences

in the course of the year, 23 of which were carried out..

The defendants were found guilty of drug trafficking and rape, "crimes that did not amount to 'intentional killing' to which the use of the death penalty must be restricted under international law and standards", the report said.

Algerian rescue workers recover body of 10-year-old boy trapped in well

Days of rescue efforts ended in tragedy on Saturday after Algerian emergency workers recovered the body of a young boy trapped in a well.

Ten-year-old Ayoub Hadaf fell into the dry well at a farm in Ghassoul, in El Bayadh province in the Algeria's northwest.

The Algerian government mobilised resources to try and rescue the boy and drilling operations continued for a fourth consecutive day.

"The rescue operation began in two ways: with the discovery of a parallel vertical shaft and through a large-scale excavation carried out by the rescue teams to reach the victim," Nassim Bernaoui, spokesper-

son for the Algerian Civil Defense, told reporters.

"The operation was a success, largely thanks to the identification of the shaft's layout and the rescue operation was subsequently able to begin to extract the victim safely. Unfortunately, he passed away. May God rest his soul."

Efforts to rescue the boy had drawn widespread attention across the country, and social

media was awash with calls to save him.

Rescuers said they struggled to reach him because he was "trapped beneath a thick layer of soil".

The 80-metre deep well was only 40 centimetres in diameter, complicating the operation.

Eyewitnesses said the well had been covered but its lining had eroded over time.



TEN-YEAR-OLD AYOUB HADAF

Kenya braces for heavy rainfall, says UN chief

El Niño is forecast to be the strongest since comparable records began four decades ago, the United Nations' climate agency warned Thursday, with the UN chief saying the world was in the "danger zone of extreme weather".

The weather phenomenon is set to become "very strong" in the months ahead and is near certain to persist through to February, the World Meteorological Or-

ganization (WMO) said.

"If this trajectory continues, it may be stronger than anything since our monitoring began," WMO chief Celeste Saulo told reporters in Geneva.

El Niño will peak towards the end of this year — though its knock-on impacts for the climate will continue well into 2027, said the WMO.

El Niño warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific

Ocean, bringing worldwide changes in winds, pressure and rainfall.

In Kenya, weather experts said the phenomenon could cause above-normal rains between October and December.

The National Disaster Operation Centre said it was preparing for a "worst-case scenario".

The body said up to 1.5 million people may be directly affected by heavy rainfall, and

500,000 people could be displaced.

Authorities are working to identify which areas and infrastructure are the most at risk, to enhance response capabilities and raise awareness among populations.

The Kenyan government is especially concerned with water supplies, electricity networks and communication systems, the Daily Nation reported.

GOVERNANCE

An award-winning streak

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

As Edo State chief executive, Governor Monday Okpebholo is succeeding in what he promised to do: deliver on governance fundamentals. As a result, since assuming office in November 2024, he has accumulated a remarkable string of accolades—each one a measure of how his administration's policy priorities are resonating beyond state lines.

In the last one year, the governor has gone from managing Edo's most pressing crises to being widely recognised as a model administrator. The awards, spanning education, digital transformation, governance and youth development, tell a story of deliberate action backed by results.

The most recent honour came in August when the Nigeria e-Government Excellence Awards 2026 named Okpebholo the e-Government Governor of the Year for Digital Transformation. The recognition reflects a broad strategic pivot toward technology in state administration. The award ceremony is scheduled for September 10 at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Lagos, where Okpebholo will join recipients including his agencies—Edo State Health Insurance Commission, EdoICTA, and the Edo Healthcare Regulation and Monitoring Agency—in formal recognition of their digital initiatives.

Edo State emerged winner in six other categories, including the Best State Business Enabling Environment Award, Best State Social Service Digitalisation Award, Public Sector CEO e-Government (State) Award, and State Digital Transformation Champion Award. The showing suggests a coherent approach to modernising government operations across multiple departments and service lines—a systemic reform.

But the e-Government award sits alongside achievements that speak to Governor Okpebholo's varied ambitions. In July, the National Association of Polytechnic Students (NAPS) recognised him at a national summit for his contribution and commitment to promoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Edo State. Receiving the award through his Chief of Staff, Yakubu Musa, the governor stated that "the recognition reflects the administration's investments in education, skills acquisition and youth development." He further dedicated the award to the people of Edo State, particularly the youth and women, who remain central to his administration's development agenda.

In March, the St. Maria Goretti Old Girls Association presented him with the OPAL Award for Excellent Performance, honouring his developmental strides and commitment to good governance. That same month, he was conferred with the 2025 New Telegraph Newspaper Best Governor of the Year Award in Education. Commenting on the OPAL recognition, Okpebholo described the honour as a collective honour for the people of Edo State and reaffirmed his commitment to sustaining policies and programmes that will continue to drive the state's growth and development.

The governor noted that the recognition by an influential alumni body such as SMAGOGA further rein-



Governor Monday Okpebholo

forces his administration's resolve to continue implementing programmes that improve infrastructure, empower citizens, and strengthen institutions across the state. He underscored that his government remains committed to delivering inclusive governance and meaningful development that will positively impact communities in every part of Edo State.

Where Governor Okpebholo's profile has truly expanded, however, is through his handling of the foundational challenges that plagued Edo

when he took office. Leadership magazine named him Governor of the Year 2026, citing his transformative leadership marked by bold reforms in education, healthcare delivery, and a decisive security crackdown, including stronger laws against cultism and kidnapping, special security squads, and the construction of more than 100 schools. The citation captures an essential truth about his administration: these awards are not ornamental. They document an executive addressing the bread-and-butter issues that

voters and observers measure governors by.

The security achievement alone required political will. When Governor Okpebholo took over in November, Benin City, Ekpoma, Auchu and surrounding communities were reeling from cult violence, kidnappings and criminal activity that had stifled both public confidence and economic activity. His response was swift and uncompromising. Within weeks, he convened security meetings and issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the Commissioner of Police to halt the bloody cult clashes. That kind of decisive action—the kind that doesn't always yield headlines but yields results—forms the foundation for everything else his administration claims to have accomplished.

The governor has been clear about his priorities. "The welfare of our citizens is a top priority for us," he declared, adding that his administration would implement programmes outlined in its five-point agenda to promote economic growth and improve the quality of life of the people. That commitment has translated into concrete measures: in February 2025, he approved promotion letters for 8,476 primary and junior secondary school teachers, and recruited or absorbed more than 6,000 teachers into the public service during his first year.

At the tertiary education level, Gov Okpebholo has made substantial financial commitments to state-owned institutions. The monthly subvention to Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, was increased from N41 million to N500 million, while Edo University, Iyamho, received an increase from N25 million to N250 million. These measures address longstanding challenges in institutional administration, academic infrastructure and student welfare, and strengthen the role of higher education in producing the skilled workforce required for Edo's future.

Infrastructure is one of the most visible features of the administration. The government has embarked on

major road projects, drainage works and flyover construction, including projects around Ramat Park and Aduwawa. Okpebholo has shown a preference for direct oversight, personally visiting project sites to assess progress and reinforce his administration's emphasis on delivery.

The awards, taken together, reveal the contours of Okpebholo's SHINE Agenda: Security, Healthcare, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and Education. The recognition from NAPS and LEADERSHIP speaks to education initiatives. The e-Government awards point toward infrastructure and systems modernisation. Each accolade marks a space where his administration has moved beyond rhetoric into demonstrable performance—whether that's the tangible construction of schools, the measurable improvement of digital governance, or the credible commitment to skills training through partnerships with national associations.

Notable is the breadth. These are not awards from sympathetic regional bodies or routine ceremonial bodies. NAPS, LEADERSHIP magazine, the Nigeria e-Government Excellence Awards, and SMAGOGA represent diverse constituencies and assessment frameworks. That Okpebholo's administration has satisfied standards across this range—from education specialists to governance reformers to digital innovation advocates—suggests something more significant than a run of good luck. It suggests an administration working to actual benchmarks rather than manufactured narratives.

The e-Government awards ceremony in Lagos next month will afford the governor another occasion to stand out. By then, observers will have had months to gauge whether the digital transformation awards reflect real systems change or promotional positioning.

Dr. Ebojele PhD in Public Administration is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo



Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) presenting Life Time Award to Governor Monday Okpebholo

FEATURE

Tackling failed portions of state, federal roads in Edo: Okpebholo's standard



Federal Roads in Edo under construction



RICHARD EWEKA

For years, residents, motorists and visitors travelling through the Edo state have experienced the challenges posed by deteriorating roads.

Some of these roads connect with neighbouring states, being Edo the 'Heart Beat of the Nation'.

It is therefore suffice to say that the failed portions of roads across the state did not begin with the administration of Gov. Monday Okpebholo.

As governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress in 2024, Okpebholo recognised the scale of the problem and made the rehabilitation of roads one of his major campaign commitments. He promised to confront the state's infrastructure deficit and improve road connectivity if elected governor.

In his inauguration speech at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium on Nov. 12, 2024, Okpebholo said: "Our policy to develop road infrastructure is targeted at constructing roads, drainages and bridges, to ease transportation for all."

It is not surprising that since he assumed office, his commitment to road infrastructure has been monumental, evident in the administration's focus on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of both state and federal roads.

His approach has been to address the practical needs of residents rather than dwelling on which level of government has responsibility for a particular road.

The administration began implementing that commitment almost immediately after taking office, with attention directed to some of the state's most difficult road corridors.

Roads, drainages and bridges have remained central to the administration's infrastructure agenda, with the broader objective of improving movement between rural and urban communities, strengthening economic activities and making it easier for residents to connect with neighbouring states.

He has towards this regard constructed and remodelled several road projects across Edo South, Edo Central and Edo North.

Some damaged sections have been rehabilitated, while others have undergone reconstruction. The interventions have improved access to communities and reduced some of the difficulties previously faced by motorists and other road users.

Notwithstanding, the administra-



Done are of the Federal Road

tion's road projects have also attracted criticism. Some critics have continued to circulate images and short videos showing failed sections of roads across the state, particularly on major federal corridors. While highlighting areas that still require attention is legitimate, such reports can create an incomplete picture when ongoing and completed interventions are left out.

A recent focus on damaged portions of the Benin-Agbor Road, for instance, has generated public debate over the condition of federal roads in the state. But the Benin-Agbor corridor is not the only major federal road in the state. I'm sure critics are aware that this administration has also intervened in other roads outside its direct statutory responsibility.

The Benin-Sapele Road provides an example.

For years, motorists using the road complained about its deplorable condition. Under the previous administration, the fact that the road is a federal road was frequently cited as a reason for the state's limited involvement.

But the Okpebholo administration has adopted a different approach, arguing that irrespective of ownership, Edo residents are the people who use the road and bear the consequences when it becomes impassable.

The Edo State Government has therefore collaborated with the feder-

al government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the rehabilitation of the road. More than 23 kilometres is being addressed with concrete pavement designed for long-term durability, with completed sections already providing relief to motorists.

For residents and businesses along the corridor, the intervention is about more than road construction. A functional road means shorter travel times, lower vehicle maintenance costs and easier movement of goods and people.

The Benin-Sapele Trunk A Road is also an important transportation corridor serving the economic interests of communities across Edo and the Niger Delta. Its rehabilitation therefore has implications beyond the immediate communities along the route.

Motorcycle riders and commercial drivers who previously spent significant amounts on repairs say the im-

proved road has reduced their maintenance burden.

A motorcycle rider popularly known as an "okada rider," Simeon Yohana, said the intervention had brought relief to riders who frequently repaired their motorcycles because of the poor condition of the road.

"I have been working here for some years now. The road was bad and we constantly repaired our bikes. But now, we don't repair our bikes as often and we are able to take more money home," he said.

A commercial driver, Michael Uweugbe, also commended the governor's intervention.

"He has done very well on this road. The improvement cannot be compared with what we had before. The road is much better now," he said.

Another road user, Osagie Isibor, recalled the difficulties motorists faced when the road was in poor condition.

According to him, the previous administration often reminded residents that the road belonged to the federal government.

"Governor Okpebholo came and, instead of making excuses, intervened. We are now enjoying the road," he said.

Isibor, however, urged the state government to extend similar intervention to the Benin-Agbor Road.

"You could hardly drive on this road when it was bad. The governor's intervention helped to solve the problem here. We are appealing to him to move to Benin-Agbor Road and do the same thing," he said.

At the Ogheghe Motor Park on the Benin-Sapele Road bypass, the improvement in the road has also been welcomed by transport operators.

The park chairman, Faith Imadonmwinyi, said businesses had improved after years of difficulties caused by the poor state of the road.

"We are happy with the outcome of the Benin-Sapele Road. It is very motorable now compared with what we had before," he said.

"About two years ago, the road was very bad and almost impossible to use. We had to pass through communities to avoid the bad sections to get to our destinations. Now the road is better, and we can drive with greater peace of mind."

Beyond the Benin-Sapele corridor, the broader road challenge in Edo remains significant. The state has a large network of roads, including federal, state and local roads, and no single administration can address every failed section at once.

Parts of the metropolitan and state road network are being handled through state interventions, while federal authorities and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) are also involved in the assessment and reconstruction of adjoining failed sections, including stretches around the Ologbo and Amukpe axes.

The road projects may not have solved every transportation challenge in Edo State, but the improvements already recorded on some major corridors demonstrate the potential impact of sustained investment in infrastructure.

The important point is that the condition of Edo's roads should be assessed on the basis of both what remains to be done and those that have already been done.

That is the standard by which the Okpebholo administration's road infrastructure programme should be judged.



"He has done very well on this road. The improvement cannot be compared with what we had before. The road is much better now."

The Nigerian OBSERVER That The People May Know					ADVERTISEMENT RATES (PRINT)					
SIZES	COLOUR		BLACK AND WHITE		BLACK AND WHITE		MULTI NATIONALS			
			PUBLIC NOTICE		PRODUCT		COLOUR		BLACK & WHITE	
	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)
FULL PAGE	417,344	448,645	369,500	397,213	325,150	349,536	565,156	607,542	443,440	476,698
13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
13 X2	206,900	222,418	133,000	142,925	103,500	111,263	221,800	238,435	147,810	158,896
QUARTER PAGE	192,150	206,561	118,250	127,119	88,690	95,342	236,500	254,238	133,000	142,975
FRONT PAGE POSITIONS					OTHER SIZES					
PRODUCTS		PUBLIC NOTICE		PUBLIC NOTICE			PRODUCTS			
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	
FP 6X2	89,800	96,535	105,450	113,359	6 X 2	60,640	65,188	49,140	52,826	
FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279	
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770	
SPECIAL POSITIONS					2 X 1	12,400	13,330	15,600	16,770	
SIZES	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	RATE	TOTAL (7.5% VAT incl)	CAC	38,000	40,850			
STRIP	118,250	127,119	147,800	158,885	LOOSE INSERTS					
STRIP INSIDE	88,600	95,245	118,250	127,119	LOOSE INSERTS: N40 PER SHEET MINIMUM ORDER: 5000 COPIES HANDLING CHARGES: N40,000 PER 1000 COPIES NEWSPAPER DIMENSION: 14.5" X 10.5"					
SPECIAL PAGES					CHANGE OF NAME					
FRONT PAGE	ADD 70% SURCHARGE									
PAGES 2 & 3	ADD 55% SURCHARGE				Type		Fridays		Other Days	
PAGES 4 & 5	ADD 40% SURCHARGE				Miss to Mrs.		5,000		7,000	
BACK PAGE	ADD 60% SURCHARGE				Reconciliation/Corrections of name		6,000		8,000	
The Nigerian OBSERVER That The People May Know 24 Airport Road, Benin City, Edo State					For advert placement contact:					
					Business Development Manager				08081986842	
					Advert Manager				08051177163	
					Commercial Service Manager				08033798009	

EFFECTIVE FROM APRIL 14, 2026

EFFECTIVE FROM APRIL 14, 2026

Sports

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

Edo Queens beat Ampem Darkoa Ladies to emerge 2026 WAFU-B Champions

● Qualify for CAF Women's Champions League

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

Edo Queens Football Club, weekend defeated Ghana's Women League



EDO QUEENS

champions Ampem Darkoa Ladies FC 4-1 in a penalty shootout to win the WAFU-B tournament for the second time.

It was a breathtaking scene in Ouagadougou on Saturday night when the Nigerian champions produced a spirited comeback twice to frustrate the Ghana's champions Ampem Darkoa Ladies who were yet to suffer any defeat at the tournament before the thrilling shoot-outs ensued.

The fiercely contested final match had ended 2-2 at regulation period of 90 minutes as goals from Doosuur Anastasia Atume (4mins); Oluebube Umejiaku (90+4mins) canceled out Beline Nyarkoh 2nd and 74th minute brace.

Edo Queens lifted the WAFU-B cup for the first time in 2024 and progressed to a 4th place finish at the CAF champi-

ons league proper in Morocco.

The Nigeria's representatives redeemed their image with the 4-1 victory over their Ghanaian counterparts Ampem Darkoa Ladies who handed them the only defeat they suffered in the WAFU-B tournament. The group B last game ended 2-1 in favour of Ampem, topping the group ahead of Edo Queens.

On the road to the finals, Edo Queens at the semi-finals stage, recorded an overwhelming 5-1 victory over the host Country's USFA just as Ampem Darkoa Ladies spanked Benin Republic's FC Dynamique 4-1 to advance to the final in the championship.

The Benin girls trashed AS Garde Nationale of Niger 7-0 in their first group match and later triumphed over ASEC Mimosas of Ivory Coast 3-1 before their 2-1 loss to Ampem Darkoa Ladies in the third match.



SUPER FALCONS

NFF sheds light on Super Falcons' journey to Los Angeles 2028 Olympics

The Nigeria Football Federation has beamed the light on the route of the senior women national team, Super Falcons, to the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, expressing confidence in the ability of the 10-time African champions to earn a back-to-back ticket to the glamorous Women's Olympic Football Tournament, after their participation at the 2024 Games in Paris.

The Super Falcons have now shifted their focus to a second-round fixture against Comoros in the African qualifying series, with both legs

of the fixture to take place at the Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne-Remo on 9th and 13th October respectively.

The Falcons are required to navigate four rounds of two-legged knockout ties to earn one of Africa's two available places at the tournament in Los Angeles in two years' time. Nigeria, one of the three highest-ranked teams in the qualifying competition, received a bye into the second round. Comoros secured their place in the second round after defeating Sudan 30-0 on aggregate.

Ebonyi 2026 inmates Sports Festival, opportunity for Talents development

MAXWELL OKECHUKWU

The Nigerian Correctional Service, Ebonyi State Command, 2026 Inmates Annual sports festival has come to close with athletes and officials satisfied with the outcomes.

Held at the state Medium Security Custodial Center, in Abakaliki, the state Capital, the games saw inmates taking parts in all activities to the admiration of guests which included the Controller of the Nigerian Correctional Service, Ebonyi state Command, Mrs. Chika Angela Igwugwu.

Mrs Igwugwu in her address appealed to well meaning individuals and corporate organizations, to support the Service's programmes aimed at reforming prison inmates through sports as part of efforts towards building a safer Society.

She thanked the Governor of Ebonyi State, Rt. Hon. Francis Ogbonna Nwifururu for his support for the state command, and wished it be sustained.

"Your supports can be a piece of sports equipment, vocational tools, educational materials, mentorship, also an opportunity for employment after the Inmate is released because what appears small to you becomes the turning point in another persons life."

She advised the Inmate not to allow the mistakes that brought them to prison to become a mark of identity nor allow it become their destiny, urging them never to stop working towards becoming the person(s) they were capable of becoming.

Mrs. Igwugwu Further said,

"prison Sentence may limit persons' movement for a period of time, but can not imprison your hope, talent, dreams and capacity for positively change change your life.

"Beyond the medals, trophies and excitement, we are celebrating hope, discipline, resilience and transformation while also providing opportunities for their reformation and rehabilitation.



GOV. NWIFURURU

FIFA U20 Women's World Cup: We will approach game against Spain like a Cup final – Aduku



NIGERIA FALCONETS TEAM IN TRAINING

Moses Aduku, Head Coach of Nigeria's U-20 Women National Team, Falconets, has declared that his team will throw everything into Monday's opening match of Group F at the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup, in which they will confront Spain at the Stadion Sosnowiec.

Nigeria, two-time runners-up of the global championship that began as an U19 tournament in Canada in 2002, go up against the Spaniards from 5pm local time (4pm Nigeria time).

"We are looking forward to the match against Spain with high expectations. We are ready and set to go. Spain is a good wide no doubt; let us not forget they are champions of the world at men's senior level. However, we will approach the game like a Cup final because we want to win. The three points will put us in good stead in our group phase campaign," Aduku said.

Spain have made remarkable progress in the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup in the past eight years. Against all odds, they went all the way to the final in France in

2018, finishing as runners-up after a 3-1 defeat by Japan. However, Spain's forward Patricia Guijarro won both the Golden Ball and the Golden Shoe. Two years later, in Costa Rica, they were champions of the world, avenging their defeat to Japan four years earlier.

Nigeria's Falconets have an almost-identical story. In 2010, the Falconets, against all odds, went all the way to the final, including enacting a famous penalty-shootout defeat of the United States of America in a dramatic semi final in Augsburg. A week later, after beating Colombia in the semi finals, the Falconets lost by two goals to hosts Germany in Bielefeld. However, it was the first time an African team would go that far in the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup.

Just as Spain's Patricia Guijarro won the Golden Ball and the Golden Shoe awards in France in 2018, despite her team failing to lift the trophy, Nigeria's Asisat Oshoala dominated the 2014 finals in Canada to the point of winning the Golden Ball and the Golden Shoe. She scored seven amazing goals.

Nigeria defeat Burkina Faso, maintain winning Run at IHF Women's Trophy

Nigeria's Senior Women's Handball team continued their impressive campaign at the inaugural IHF Women's Nations Trophy Africa Zone III with a commanding 33-25 victory over hosts Burkina Faso in Ouagadougou on Friday evening.

The Nigerian side, led by Head Coach Michael Taangahar, produced a determined performance to take a narrow 14-13 lead into the half-time break after a keenly contested opening 30 minutes.

Nigeria returned from the break with greater intensity, strengthening their grip on the

encounter and eventually finishing with an eight-goal victory at the Palais des Sports de Ouaga 2000.

Sadiya Musa led Nigeria's scoring with six goals, while Wuraola Nuhu, Kirman Haruna, Rachael Ovetuo, Daina Saaloo and Grace Ahaemefula each contributed four goals as the Nigerian attack proved too strong for the hosts.

Balikisu Muhammed was one of Nigeria's standout performers, scoring four goals and subsequently being voted the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the match.



NIGERIA'S SENIOR WOMEN'S HANDBALL TEAM

SPORTS



National intermediate Games is best way to restore Nigeria's lost glory in Sports – Quadri Aruna



QUADRI ARUNA (LEFT)

Nigeria's foremost table tennis player, Quadri Aruna has described the upcoming 1st National Intermediate Games as 'the best way to restore the country's lost glory in sports,' as he believes new talents

will be discovered during the multiple-event competition.

Sports247 reports that Aruna, who is the only African player to break into the top-10 of men's world table tennis rankings, also described the

upcoming Games as an important platform for discovering and nurturing Nigeria's next generation of talents in various sporting events.

He added that the Games, tagged Eko 2026, which are scheduled to hold from October 1st to 15th in Lagos, with more than 15,000 young athletes expected to compete in 28 sports across 10 venues, will revive focus on the grassroots for rebuilding Nigeria's fortunes in the sector.

Aruna made the declaration and expressed support for the Games during a visit along with his wife and children to Lagos State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Honourable Gbenga Omotoso, who is the chairman of Eko 2026 media and publicity sub-committee.

While reflecting on his career,

the 37-year-old table tennis star acknowledged Lagos State's contribution to his development and urged athletes taking part in Eko 2026 to see it as an opportunity not only to compete but to also learn, develop and prepare themselves for bigger challenges ahead of them.

"Sports in Nigeria has faced challenges, but this initiative is the best way to restore our lost glory. This event is for all Nigerian youths. They should embrace it, give their best and enjoy the experience."

"They must also learn as much as possible to succeed in life. They must believe in themselves. They too can rise from their towns to the world stage," said Aruna, who posited that it would also give scouts and administrators an opportunity to spot future elite sports stars



FIFA President Gianni Infantino and NSC chairman, Shehu Dikko

FIFA hit Abuja to move Nigerian football reform forward

National Sports Commission (NSC) chairman, Shehu Dikko, confirmed that FIFA officials will make on-site visit to Nigeria as part of the process of comprehensive reform of Nigerian football as directed by President Bola Tinubu.

Dikko said in a television interview that during their meeting with FIFA in Zurich, the world football governing body endorsed this reform but insisted "it must follow the prop-

er process and the rulebook".

He disclosed that the NSC are currently consulting with various stakeholders to agree on the way forward for the national sport.

A Normalisation Committee that would drive this reform could have a lifespan of between three months and a year, Shehu Dikko said.

This interim body will look at the rulebook, put things right with the structures and after which it will conduct an election.

Nigeria edges Zimbabwe to win Africa Qualifier and seal U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2027 place

Nigeria edge Zimbabwe to win Africa Qualifier and seal U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2027 place Four run final victory completes an unbeaten campaign for Nigeria in Dar es Salaam Nigeria were crowned champions of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup Africa Qualifier Division 1 after holding their nerve to defeat Zimbabwe by four runs in a dramatic final at the ESTIM Ground, TCA Cricket Arena, on Saturday.

Defending 98, Nigeria dismissed Zimbabwe for 94 with just one delivery remaining to complete a perfect tournament in which they won all five of their matches.

The victory also secured Nigeria Africa's sole qualification place at the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup 2027 in Bangladesh and Nepal, where they will join South Africa as the continent's representatives.

Uganda finished third after defeating Rwanda by seven wickets, hosts Tanzania secured fifth position with a 29 run victory over Kenya, while Namibia defeated Malawi by nine wickets to finish seventh.

Nigeria held their nerve in a tense, low scoring final to defeat Zimbabwe by four runs and complete an unbeaten run through the tournament.

Batting first at the ESTIM Ground, Nigeria were made to work for every run by a disciplined Zimbabwe attack. Captain Christabel Chukwuonye provided an important late contribution of 21 from 19 de-

liveries, while Beauty Oguai made 19 from 35 and Jessica Bieni contributed 15 from 25. Deborah Bassey added a valuable unbeaten 10 from just four balls as Nigeria closed on 98 for six from their 20 overs.

Christina Mutasa was Zimbabwe's leading bowler with two for 11 from four overs, including a maiden, while Tadiwanashe Garutsa conceded only eight runs from her four overs and claimed one wicket. Zimbabwe's pursuit began positively through Nicolette Ny-

ika, who made 18, and Christina Mutasa, who contributed 13, but Nigeria struck repeatedly to reduce them to 38 for five.



NIGERIA U19 WOMEN'S T20 WORLD CUP 2027 WINNER

WAFU-B Crown: Enabulele salutes Edo Queens, dedicates victory to Gov. Monday Okpebholo

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Executive Chairman, Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin

Desmond Enabulele has congratulated the players and officials of Edo Queens on their historic 4-1 triumph over Am- pem of Ghana to lift the 2026

WAFU-B title and subsequently qualified for the CAF champions league proper.

The Edo state Sports Commission boss described the victory as an historic achievement for Edo State and Nigeria as the state owned club just won the African regional title for the second time in the history of the tournament.

Enabulele said that he is dedicating the triumph to Governor Monday Okpebholo who gave him the opportunity to serve the state as number sports administrator in the state.

He commended the Governor for his unwavering support for sports development and his commitment to repositioning Edo State as a leading sports destination in Nigeria.

He also commended the



GOV. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

Gov. Makinde approves 32-Seater, 18-seater buses for Shooting Stars

Oyo State Governor, Engr. Seyi Makinde, has approved the immediate release of two buses; a 32-seater and an 18-seater to Shooting Stars Sports Club of Ibadan, in a move aimed at strengthening the club's operational capacity and supporting its activities.

The development was disclosed by the Oyo State Commissioner for Information, Prince Dotun Oyelade, in a statement following Shooting Stars' impressive victory over Tunisian side CS Sfaxien in the first leg of their CAF Confederation Cup preliminary-round tie at the MKO Abiola Sports Arena in Abeokuta.

According to Oyelade, the gov-

ernor's approval reflects the state government's continued commitment to supporting the Oluyole Warriors as they represent Oyo State on the continental stage.

Shooting Stars' participation in the ongoing CAF Confederation Cup marks the club's first appearance in continental football in 27 years, bringing renewed attention and excitement to the historic Ibadan side.

The commissioner said Governor Makinde had reassured the club's supporters that his administration would continue to provide the necessary backing to help Shooting Stars remain competitive in their quest for continental success.



SHOOTING STARS BUS