

UNGA 81: Northwest governors unite for peace, economic resilience

RICHARD EWEKA

NEW YORK

The seven governors of Nigeria's Northwest geopolitical zone have pledged to pursue a common regional agenda for peace, resilience and economic development, with a call for stronger international partnerships

and investment to tackle the region's security and development challenges.

The governors made the commitment at a high-level event on the margins of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, convened by the Northwest Governors' Forum (NWGF) in partnership with

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The meeting focused on mobilising development finance, responsible private investment and international partnerships to implement the Northwest Peace, Security and Development Framework (2026-2030).

The seven states covered by the framework are Jigawa, Ka-

duna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara.

The high-level engagement brought together the governors, UN officials led by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, development partners, international financial institutions, private-sector leaders, philanthropies and members of the diplomatic community.

The participants agreed that sustainable peace in the region would require more than security operations, stressing the need to invest in livelihoods, jobs, essential services, human capital and economic opportunities.

The governors' commitment represents an effort to move away from fragmented, state-by-state responses towards a

coordinated regional approach to the interconnected challenges confronting the Northwest.

Home to more than 60 million people, the region remains critical to Nigeria's food systems, domestic commerce and regional trade, with major economic assets spanning agricul-

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#200

Edo govt plans massive road repairs in dry season

● **No engineer can fix roads effectively during rains — Afegbua**

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has appealed to residents and motorists to bear with the deplorable condition of some roads across the state, saying major rehabilitation and reconstruction works will be intensified during

the dry season when weather conditions are favourable.

Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, made the clarification yesterday at the monthly media briefing of the ministry in Benin City, stressing that attempting major road repairs amid heavy rainfall could result in the wastage of construction

materials and compromise the quality of the work.

According to him, "no construction engineer" would undertake effective pothole repairs and major road construction during a period of persistent rainfall, as the prevailing weather conditions make such interventions difficult to execute and sustain.

Afegbua said the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo was fully aware of the hardship being experienced by road users and was determined to address the situation comprehensively once the rains subside.

He said: "No construction engineer will attempt to fix potholes and bad roads during the rainy season. We are experienc-

ing heavy rain now."

The commissioner explained that the government was adopting a broader approach to road rehabilitation rather than undertaking temporary repairs that could quickly be washed away by rain.

He noted that the administration was particularly concerned about the durability of road projects, adding that the

objective was to deliver infrastructure capable of serving residents for many years.

Afegbua also criticised the quality of some road projects executed under the immediate past administration, arguing that the rapid deterioration of roads previously rehabilitated suggested

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Edo farmers return to farms as improved security boosts confidence across 18 LGAs

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Farmers across the 18 Local Government Areas of Edo State have begun returning to their farms following improved security in the state, with the development said to have restored confidence among farmers who had previously been unable to access their farmlands.

President of the Integrated Farmers Association of Nigeria (IFAN) and Chairman of the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Alhaji Bako Dogwo, disclosed this on Tuesday in Benin City.

Dogwo spoke when farmers under the aegis of IFAN, AFAN

and the State Federated FADAMA Farmers installed the Edo State Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr. Jarrett Tenebe, as Patron of Edo farmers.

He commended the state Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for what he described as efforts to improve security across the state, noting that the situation had encouraged farmers to return to their farms and resume agricultural activities.

"We want to commend Gov. Monday Okpebholo for improving security across the state. Farmers who could not go to their farms before are now happy because they can access their farms and continue their

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MONTHLY MEDIA BRIEFING:

L-R: Special Adviser on Health Matters, Dr. Andrew Iyamu, Executive Secretary Edo State Drugs And Health Commodities Management Agency, Kenny Okojie, Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua and the Commissioner for Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Hon. Chris Okaeben, during the monthly press briefing at Secretariat Sapele road in Benin City.

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Petrol cheaper in Nigeria than US, many African countries — Minister —Pg 10

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deficiencies in the quality of work.

He cited roads within the Government Reservation Area (GRA), Iyekogba Estate, Irihrih and Okoroma as examples of roads which, according to him, were rehabilitated under the previous administration but had subsequently developed potholes and other signs of deterioration.

"The level of road decay experienced now is that the roads then were quantity, not quality jobs," he said.

The commissioner added that the state government had undertaken an assessment of some of the affected roads and was documenting their condition in response to criticisms of the present administration over

the state of road infrastructure.

He said roads were expected to have considerable service lives when properly designed, constructed and maintained, and questioned why some roads rehabilitated only a few years ago had deteriorated significantly.

Afegbua urged Edo residents to be patient with the Okpebholo administration, assuring them that the government remained committed to restoring the state's road network.

"Edo State Government under the leadership of Senator Monday Okpebholo is very much alive to its responsibility, ensuring it contends with developmental challenges confronting the state, both emerging and inherited ones," he said.

The commissioner said road infrastructure remained one of

Nigeria @66: Benin residents react to planned low-key celebration

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

Nigerians in Benin City, the Edo State capital, have expressed mixed but largely reflective reactions to the Federal Government's decision to mark Nigeria's 66th Independence Anniversary with a low-key celebration, saying the occasion should be used to deepen national unity and address issues affecting citizens at home and abroad.

The Federal Government recently inaugurated an Inter-Ministerial Committee to coordinate activities for the

anniversary, which will be commemorated on October 1, 2026. The programme, according to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, will be low-key and will include a world press conference on September 24, Juma'at service on September 25, a church service on September 27, an Independence Day public lecture on September 30, and a nationwide broadcast by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on October 1.

Some Nigerians in Benin City, including human rights activist, Comrade John Agbonkpolo, said the decision

to keep the celebration modest should not diminish the significance of October 1, stressing that the day remains an important symbol of national identity. For the civil servant, Mr. Augustine Aghahowa, the 66th Independence Anniversary of Nigeria should also be an opportunity for Nigerians, wherever they live, to reflect on whether they feel protected and respected.

"A low-key celebration is acceptable if it gives the government more opportunity to focus on basic issues, especially improving the welfare and safety of citizens," Aghahowa emphasized.

Contributing, a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Benin, Dr. Eric Kolawole, said the 66th anniversary is an opportunity to look beyond the scale of the festivities and reflect on the country's progress, challenges and relationship with other nations, primarily with a view to enhancing the living standards of Nigerians.

"Whether the celebration is elaborate or low-key is not the most important thing. What matters is the message of the anniversary and what government and citizens can do together to build a better Nigeria," he said.

UNGA 81: Northwest governors...

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ture, livestock, industry, solid minerals, renewable energy and digital innovation.

However, the region continues to contend with insecurity, poverty, unemployment, displacement, climate-related shocks, pressure on livelihoods and limited access to essential services.

The governors said these challenges transcend state boundaries and therefore require collective solutions anchored on regional cooperation.

Adopted by the seven governors in March 2026, the Northwest Peace, Security and Development Framework provides a common strategic roadmap for addressing the underlying drivers of fragility while strengthening the foundations for inclusive and resilient economic growth.

The framework was developed with technical support from UNDP Nigeria and funding from the German Govern-

ment through the Northwest Prevention Facility Project.

Speaking at the event, Zamfara State Governor and Chairman of the Northwest Governors' Forum, Dauda Lawal, said the region could not achieve lasting prosperity through security measures alone.

"You cannot secure a region into prosperity. You have to invest in it.

"The Northwest Peace, Security and Development Framework gives the seven states a shared platform to connect peace, resilience and economic opportunity.

"This engagement at UNGA is about turning that commitment into partnerships, financing and action."

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed commended the governors for presenting a united regional position and developing a common framework for peace, security and sustainable development.



STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT:

From left: Solicitor General of the Federation and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Justice, Mrs Beatrice Jedy-Agba; Justice Suzzette Nyesom-Wike and Director of Administration of Criminal Justice and Reform Department, Mrs Leticia Ayoola-Daniels, during a Three Dimensional Stakeholders' engagement on the review and amendment of the Child Right Act (CRA) 2003 in Abuja on Tuesday.

Akoko-Edo APC Ward 7 pledges 80% votes for party

RAYMOND OSOGBE

BENIN CITY

Leaders and members of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Ward 7 in Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State, have pledged to deliver a minimum of 80 per cent votes for the party in forthcoming elections.

The pledge was made when the Ward 7 leadership paid a solidarity visit to the Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idaiye, in Benin City, to congratulate him on his emergence as Speaker and assure him of the ward's continued support.

Speaking on behalf of the delegation, Dr. Babatunde Martins said the group was mandated by the ward to felicitate with the Speaker, adding that the number of people who would have visited him would have exceeded 40,000 if all members of the ward had made the trip to Benin.

Martins described Idaiye's emergence as Speaker as a divine arrangement, assuring him that the people of Ward 7 were solidly behind him.

He said: "We are going to give you all the support you

need to work effectively. The one decision we have taken on your behalf is that we are going to give you a minimum of 80 per cent when it comes to voting. We can assure you of that."

According to him, Ward 7 had already commenced mobilisation across Akoko-Edo to ensure victory for the APC, stressing

that the ward was determined not only to deliver its constituency but also contribute significantly to the party's performance across the local government.

He described the Speaker as a son of the ward who had remained committed to his people and continued to carry everyone along, even in diffi-

cult circumstances.

Martins also urged Idaiye to sustain a strong working relationship with the Government House and the Governor in the discharge of legislative responsibilities, particularly in policy formulation and implementation aimed at advancing the development of Edo State.

Edo farmers return to farms...

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farming activities," Dogwo said.

According to him, sustained improvement in security would not only encourage farmers to cultivate their farmlands but would also contribute to increased food production and strengthen food security across Edo State.

He said the farmers' delegation was at the APC secretariat principally to confer the patronage of Edo farmers on Tenebe, urging him to use the position to strengthen communication between the farming community and the state government.

Dogwo stressed that farmers needed the support of government and other stakeholders to maximise their contribution to the state's agricultural development and food supply.

Also speaking on behalf of the State Federated FADAMA Farmers, Hon. Prince Henry Ebole, commended Governor Okpebholo's administration for its SHINE agenda and expressed the farmers' readiness

to support programmes aimed at improving agriculture and the livelihood of rural communities.

Ebole noted that agriculture remained critical to food production, employment creation and the economic empowerment of young people across the state.

He disclosed that the association currently had about 2,000 registered FADAMA farmers captured under the old FADAMA register.

"As of today, our records show that registered FADAMA farmers under the Federated Farmers Community Association are about 2,000 members.

"These are farmers captured in the old FADAMA register. We will move from ward to ward to register and sensitise farmers and increase our numbers," he said.

Ebole explained that the planned ward-to-ward mobilisation would enable the association to identify more farmers, update its records and sensitise farming communities on available opportunities and agricultural programmes.

Rising transport costs force Nigerian workers to spend nights in offices

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

The rising cost of transportation is forcing some Nigerian workers to spend nights in their offices during the working week, as the increasing cost of commuting puts additional pressure on already stretched household incomes.

Reports from Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Benin City and other major cities indicate that some civil servants and private-sector employees have resorted to sleeping in their workplaces from Monday to Friday in an effort to reduce daily

transportation expenses.

Our correspondent gathered that the affected workers reportedly arrive at their offices with small bags containing clothes, food and bedding, effectively turning their workplaces into temporary residences. They return home on Friday evenings and travel back to work on Monday mornings.

One worker, who spoke about the situation, said the cost of commuting had become difficult to sustain on his salary.

"I spend over N3,000 daily on transport. My salary cannot carry it. Sleeping in the office is not comfortable, but it is better than

spending all my pay on bus fare."

Another worker described how the practice has increasingly taken on the character of living at the workplace.

"We cook in the office, we bathe in the office. It is like we now live at work."

The development highlights the growing financial pressure facing workers as transportation costs continue to consume a significant portion of their earnings. For workers who commute long distances, daily transport expenses can amount to tens of thousands of naira each month.

NEWS

Minister pledges pedestrian bridges, better road access to tertiary institutions

ABUJA

The Minister of Works, Sen. Dave Umahi, has pledged the Federal Government's commitment to providing pedestrian bridges and improving road access to tertiary institutions across the country.

Umahi made the commitment in Abuja on Tuesday while receiving the report of the North-west leg of the Nationwide Feder-

al Roads Project Tour conducted by the National Association of Nigerian Students, NANS.

The minister said the government had taken note of students' concerns over road safety and access to their institutions, assuring that requests for pedestrian bridges would receive attention.

"The pedestrian bridge you requested is noted. We will do it," Umahi said.

He said the Federal Govern-

ment would also, where possible, incorporate access routes to tertiary institutions into future road construction projects.

"I have also taken special note of our future investment in our road construction to ensure that, where possible, we should put bridges leading to our campuses," he said.

Umahi disclosed that the government was already responding to similar requests from some tertiary institutions, including the

University of Abuja and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

"The University of Abuja requested for pedestrian bridge, we are doing that. We are doing also that of Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Awka, they also requested," he said.

The minister assured students that the ministry would continue to consider requests aimed at improving their safety and access to educational institutions.

He also said future road projects would, where possible, include spurs leading directly to tertiary institution campuses to enhance accessibility and reduce risks to students.

Umahi said the Federal Government remained committed to completing ongoing road projects across the country, urging students to obtain firsthand information on infrastructure projects rather than relying solely on reports or social media narratives.

He encouraged students to visit project sites, inspect government

projects and provide feedback on areas requiring improvement.

The minister disclosed that the main pavement of the first 105 kilometres of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway was expected to be completed by November 2026.

However, Umahi expressed concern over the destruction of infrastructure along the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, particularly around the Apapa axis, warning that vandalism could undermine the benefits of major government investments.

**CONSULTATIVE FORUM:**

From left: Authority Chief Executive, Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Malam Rabiu Umar; Executive Director, Distribution Systems, Storage and Retailing Infrastructure (DSSRI), NMDPRA, Mr Ogbugo Ukoha; Secretary and Legal Adviser of the NMDPRA, Dr Joseph Tolorunse and the Director of Public Affairs, NMDPRA, Mr. George Ene-Ita, during the stakeholders consultative forum on midstream and downstream petroleum: Prevention of Anti-Competitive Practices and Behavior Regulation 2026, at the NMDPRA's headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

FG woos investors, targets new markets for Nigeria's gas

ABUJA

The Federal Government has intensified efforts to attract investment, technology and strategic partnerships into Nigeria's gas sector while opening up new international markets for the country's gas resources.

The Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Mr. Ekperekpe Ekpo, disclosed this during high-level engagements with global energy companies, investors and government officials at Gastech 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Ekpo said the engagements focused on expanding gas pro-

duction and infrastructure, boosting Liquefied Natural Gas, LNG, capacity, promoting gas-based industrialisation and diversifying Nigeria's export markets.

In a statement made available to journalists on Monday night by his spokesperson, Mr. Louis Ibah, the minister said the engagements were aimed at translating Nigeria's 215.19 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves into economic growth, industrial development and job creation.

He said the reforms and investor-friendly policies of President Bola Tinubu's administration had strengthened investor

confidence and enhanced Nigeria's attractiveness as an energy investment destination.

According to Ekpo, NNPC Ltd. would play a leading role in driving Nigeria's bilateral energy partnerships by translating government engagements into commercially viable projects, strategic investments and sustainable development.

"Nigeria is open for business. We have put in place the right fiscal policies and operating environment, and the security of investors and their investments is guaranteed," he said.

A major outcome of the engagements was renewed momentum on the proposed

Nigeria-Libya Gas Pipeline, which could provide an additional route for transporting Nigerian gas through North Africa to European markets.

During discussions with Libya's Minister of Oil and Gas, Dr. Khalifa Abdulsadek, both sides agreed to advance the initiative towards a structured project framework.

The two countries are expected to explore the development of a Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, and establish a joint technical team, with NNPC Ltd. expected to spearhead Nigeria's participation under the bilateral cooperation framework.

2027: APC-PCC challenges Obi over Anambra debt record

LAGOS

The All Progressives Congress Presidential Campaign Council has challenged National Democratic Congress (NDC) presidential candidate Peter Obi to explain Anambra's finances and loans incurred during his tenure as governor.

The council's Spokesperson, Mr Dele Alake, made the call in a statement on Monday, following disclosures by the Anambra State Government on loans contracted during Obi's tenure.

According to the state government, Obi's administration contracted 123.77 million dollars in external loans, with eight facilities remaining when he left office on March 17, 2014.

The state said the outstanding balance of the loans stood at about 92.35 million dollars, or N127.4 billion, as of June 30, 2026, based on the official exchange rate.

"The state also revealed that, as of when Obi left office on March 17, 2014, there were eight different external borrowings for ma-

laria, erosion control, education and healthcare," the council said.

It said subsequent administrations, including the current administration of Gov. Chukwuma Soludo, had continued to service the facilities.

The council said the figures should be reconciled with Obi's previous portrayal of his administration as fiscally prudent and his claim that he left Anambra without a debt burden.

The council, however, acknowledged that borrowing was not inherently wrong if used to finance development, but questioned whether the loans delivered the claimed benefits.

It cited allegations by the state government concerning unpaid salaries and pension liabilities, including claims involving workers of the Anambra State Water Corporation.

The council also referred to a 2006 memo attributed to Obi's then Chief of Staff, Chuks Ileogunam, concerning the payment of N15 million monthly salaries to Water Corporation workers.

OPay reaches over 15,000 beneficiaries through social programmes

LAGOS

OPay says its social impact programmes have reached more than 15,000 beneficiaries through education, innovation and women's economic empowerment initiatives.

In a statement on Wednesday, the company said it is leveraging technology, resources and partnerships to support education, skills development, innovation and economic inclusion in Nigeria.

It said its OPay Scholars Programme, which includes the National Innovation Challenge, OPay Futures programme and a 10-year scholarship commitment of N1.2 billion, had reached more than 1,200 direct beneficiaries.

According to the company, the National Innovation Challenge, implemented in partnership with Google and the 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) programme, supports young Nigerians with ideas and skills to address real-world problems.

OPay also said its Play-4aChild initiative had supported more than 14,000 direct beneficiaries through educational materials and other interventions aimed at improving children's learning experiences.

Under its Women Empowerment Programme, the company said more than 100 women had received skills development, capacity building and startup support to help them build sustainable livelihoods and become more financially independent.

It said the programmes reflected its approach to corporate social responsibility, focusing on creating opportunities and supporting beneficiaries beyond one-off donations.

OPay said its initiatives demonstrates how technology-driven companies could contribute to education, youth development and economic empowerment alongside government, schools and development organisations.

JAMB opens portal for candidates to change lost phone numbers, emails

ABUJA

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has introduced a new procedure enabling candidates who have lost access to the phone numbers or email addresses linked to their profiles to update their contact details.

The board announced the development on Wednesday through a video posted on its official X handle, saying the measure was designed to as-

sist candidates who could no longer access their registered SIM cards or email accounts.

Under the new procedure, affected candidates can replace their lost SIM cards or change the email addresses linked to their JAMB profiles.

JAMB said candidates seeking to use the facility must first obtain an affidavit from a High Court in support of their request.

After obtaining the affidavit, candidates are required to log into their JAMB e-Facility

accounts and select the "Penalties" option on the dashboard.

They are then to select "SIM Swap/Email Change Penalty Payment" and make the prescribed payment through the JAMB portal.

Following payment, candidates must visit a designated JAMB PTC/PRC Centre to complete the process.

At the centre, applicants are required to provide their profile code and existing GSM number, undergo biometric verifi-

cation and upload a scanned copy of the court affidavit.

The board said the facility is strictly for candidates with genuine cases involving loss of access to their registered phone numbers or email addresses.

JAMB also warned that the service can only be used once, urging candidates to ensure that the replacement phone number or email address provided is accurate and accessible.



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NEWS**Edo police gun down suspected kidnapper, arrest fake military officer**

MIKE OSAROAGBON

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has killed a suspected kidnapper during a gun battle and arrested a man allegedly posing as a military officer as its intelligence-led operations continued to record breakthroughs across the state.

The Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem,

disclosed this in Benin City on Monday on behalf of the Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daaor, saying the Command arrested 10 suspects for various offences during the week under review.

ASP Ikoedem said the suspected kidnapper was killed on September 15 after police operatives, backed by Edo State Security Corps personnel and local hunters, responded to a distress call

from community leaders over suspected kidnappers operating along a farm road.

The suspects allegedly opened fire on sighting the security team, triggering a fierce gun battle.

She said one suspected kidnapper was killed in the ensuing encounter, while police recovered an AK-47 rifle and 10 rounds of live ammunition.

ASP Ikoedem added that the surrounding bush was still being combed for possible arrests and recovery of additional weapons.

The police spokesperson also said a 32-year-old man allegedly posing as a military officer was arrested along the Auchi-Okene Expressway on September 16, 2026.

The suspect, Mohammed

Manfred Abdulramah, from Okene, Kogi State, was arrested by personnel of 195 Battalion, Aganebode, stationed at Okpella.

He was allegedly found wearing military camouflage trousers and a camouflage vest while travelling from Warri, Delta State, to Okene.

ASP Ikoedem said police investigation established that

Abdulramah was not a military personnel and had allegedly stolen the uniform from a Navy officer based in Niger State.

She said CP Daaor reiterated the Command's commitment to intelligence-led policing and urged residents to remain vigilant and promptly provide credible information to the police for swift response.

Deputy governors' forum felicitates Akomas at 66**ABUJA**

The Forum of Former Deputy Governors of Nigeria (FFDGN) has felicitated its National Chairman, Dr Chris Akomas, on his 66th birthday, citing his contributions to public service and governance.

The Director-General of the forum, Dr Kenneth Ibe-Kalu, in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja, said Akomas had brought his experience in public administration to bear on the leadership of the forum.

Ibe-Kalu said the forum's national conferences under Akomas' leadership had provided opportunities for former deputy governors and other stakeholders to deliberate on governance and national development.

He said Akomas had consistently advocated policies aimed at improving the welfare of Nigerians, including access to food and other basic necessities.

"Dr Chris is a bold and courageous leader who pursues every cause he believes in with dedication and love for humanity," he said.

Akomas, a former Deputy Governor of Abia, also served as the Federal Commissioner

representing the state on the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC).

He chaired the commission's Indices and Disbursement Committee and previously served as Abia Commissioner for Lands and Survey.

He also held administrative positions at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, and the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).

Akomas holds a PhD in Applied Psychology from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, and a master's degree in Personnel Psychology from the University of Ibadan.

He is currently the National Chairman of the FFDGN and National Secretary of the South-East Stakeholders Forum.

The forum is a non-partisan body comprising former deputy governors from across the country's 36 states.

It serves as a platform for members to share governance experiences, promote national development and offer policy recommendations on issues affecting Nigeria's democratic governance and socio-economic development

**MEETING:**

From left: Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso; Members of the Committee, Philip Ikeazor; and Yuguda Abubakar during the 307th CBN, Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting in Abuja.

LASU don calls for stronger banking reforms, stability**LAGOS**

Professor of Finance at Lagos State University (LASU), Sikiru Ashamu, on Tuesday called for stronger banking reforms to promote financial stability and economic growth.

Ashamu made the call in his 129th inaugural lecture titled, "From Reform to Resilience: Banking Sector Transformation, Financial Stability, and Economic Growth in Nigeria."

He said the lecture was the first inaugural lecture delivered by the Department of Finance, Faculty of Management Scienc-

es, LASU.

Ashamu said Nigeria's banking sector had undergone reforms, crises, recoveries, innovations and regulatory interventions that shaped its current structure.

He said banking reforms should go beyond recapitalisation to strengthen governance, regulatory institutions, technological capacity and financial resilience.

According to him, effective reforms require policy consistency, transparency, strong corporate governance and regulatory frameworks capable of addressing emerging risks.

He said financial stability required institutions capable of withstanding shocks without disrupting economic activities, while maintaining public confidence and efficient credit allocation.

Ashamu identified high non-performing loans, exchange-rate volatility, inflation, insider abuses and weak risk management as challenges threatening banking stability.

He said digital transformation had improved financial accessibility and operational efficiency, but also created cybersecurity, digital fraud and data-protection risks.

The professor urged Nigerian banks to strengthen cybersecurity infrastructure, digital surveillance systems, fraud-detection mechanisms and customer education on digital safety.

Ashamu said banking sector transformation should translate into productive investments, employment generation, financial inclusion and greater support for small and medium enterprises.

He noted that despite increased banking assets and lending capacity, SMEs continued to face high lending rates, collateral constraints and limited access to formal credit.

Group seeks mine emergency fund to tackle collapses**NEW YORK**

The Africa Minerals Strategy Group (AMSG) has called for the establishment of a Mine Emergency and Community Recovery Fund to mitigate human and material losses from mine collapses across Africa.

AMSG Chairman, Dele Alake, made the call at the third AMSG High-Level Roundtable on Critical Minerals Development in New York, United States.

A statement on the event was made available to newsmen on Tuesday in Abuja by Alake's Special Adviser, Mr Kehinde Bamigbetan.

The event, which was held on the sidelines of the 81st United Nations General Assembly on Monday, was chaired by Vice President Kashim Shettima and attended by African ministers of mining.

Alake, who is Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals Development, also proposed an African safety facility to formalise artisanal mining and promote cooperatives across AMSG member countries.

He expressed concern over recurring tragedies involving mine collapses across Africa, citing huge losses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic.

He also referenced the recent deaths of detained suspected illegal miners in Nigeria, emphasising the need for stronger emergency response and community support mechanisms.

"Each time one of these tragedies occurs, I have had the painful responsibility, as the chairman of this group, of conveying our condolences. But condolences, however sincere, cannot be the limit of continental solidarity.

Morgan Capital urges Nigerians to diversify investments beyond real estate**ABUJA**

Morgan Capital Investment Ltd. has urged Nigerians to diversify their investments beyond real estate, noting that the Dangote Petroleum Refinery Initial Public Offering (IPO) presents an opportunity to increase participation in the capital market.

Managing Director of Morgan Capital Investment Ltd., Mr Chukwudi Nga, made the call in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Lagos.

Nga said Nigerians' strong preference for land and houses was understandable, given the tangible nature of property, which could be occupied, rented out and passed on to future generations.

He, however, cautioned against concentrating wealth in a single asset class, stressing that real estate and equities could play different roles within a diversified investment portfolio.

He said equities offered advantages such as diversification, potential dividend income

and participation in business growth without the direct maintenance responsibilities associated with physical property.

"We should stop presenting investment as a choice between property or shares.

"A properly diversified investor can own both. Real estate can provide long-term physical-asset exposure, while equities can provide liquidity, diversification, dividend income and participation in the growth of successful businesses," he said.

Nga said equities offered the advantage of divisibility, enabling investors to build portfolios gradually with relatively small amounts rather than waiting until they could afford a property.

He said investors could also spread their exposure across sectors such as banking, telecommunications, industrial goods, consumer goods and energy.

"For many investors, a sensible long-term portfolio may contain equities, fixed-income securities, real estate and cash/liquidity instruments rather than relying entirely on one asset class.

Edo govt gives intending pilgrims 48 hours to complete 2027 Hajj payment

ABDUL-KADIR ABDULLAH

BENIN CITY:

The Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has directed all intending pilgrims who have made deposits for the 2027 Hajj pilgrimage to complete their outstanding payments within 48 hours, following a fresh directive by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria

(NAHCON).

The directive was contained in a statement signed by the Executive Secretary of the Board, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkabar, following a meeting held on Monday, September 21, 2026, between the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of NAHCON, Ambassador Ismail Abba Yusuf, and Chairmen and Executive Secretaries of State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Boards across the coun-

try.

According to the statement, the NAHCON Chairman informed the meeting that there were currently no additional Hajj slots available for Nigeria or any other country, as the 50,000 slots allocated to Nigeria for the 2027 Hajj, covering state pilgrims and tour operators, had been fully exhausted.

The Board said NAHCON had also announced a new 48-hour deadline for states to

complete the required remittances, replacing the previously communicated December 2 deadline.

In view of the development, the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board urged all intending pilgrims who had already commenced payment to complete their outstanding balances within the stipulated 48-hour period.

The Board further disclosed that the issue of part-payment was no longer being consid-

ered, stressing that all registered pilgrims, including those under the Hajj Savings Scheme (HSS), are expected to complete their payments within the new deadline.

It warned that failure to complete payment within the stipulated period could lead to the withdrawal of affected Hajj slots and their reallocation to states that have completed their remittances and are seeking additional slots.

The statement explained that the strict enforcement of the new deadline followed the decision by Saudi Arabia not to allocate additional Hajj slots to Nigeria.

According to the Board, states that complete their remittances and require additional slots may therefore be considered for slots withdrawn from states that fail to meet the deadline.



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION:

The Managing Director, Edo State Public Building and Maintenance Agency Arc. Emmanuel Fashanu (middle), flanked by Management Staff of the Agency during his birthday celebration in his Office recently.

EDPUBMA staff celebrates MD

BENIN CITY

The Management and Staff of the Edo State Public Building and Maintenance Agency (ED-PUBMA) on Tuesday organized a surprise birthday celebration in honour of the Managing Director, Arc. Emmanuel Fashanu.

The surprise event held at the Agency's office in Benin City caught the celebrant unaware and was filled with excitement and cheers.

Some of the staff who used the occasion to say a word of prayer for him in attaining a new age also poured encomium on the MD for his exemplary leadership qualities.

The Managing Director was described as a kind, pragmatic and a man of understanding who is fair to staff but not compromising on standards. They further described him as a visionary leader who is not only a boss but a friend who listens. They wished him good health, peace and outstanding suc-

cess in all his doings.

The MD, who was in the company of his wife, expressed gratitude to the staff for organizing the surprise birthday celebration and for their show of love.

Highlight of the occasion was the cutting of the birthday cake and presentation of gifts to the celebrant.

Lagos seals church, hotels, businesses over environmental violations

LAGOS

The Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency has sealed 12 establishments, including a church and hotels, across parts of the state over alleged persistent violations of environmental regulations.

LASEPA disclosed this in a statement posted on its official X handle on Wednesday, saying the enforcement exercise was carried out on Tuesday.

The statement read, "LASEPA, on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, sealed twelve establishments across Ogba, Idimu-Ikoto, Ejigbo, LASU-Iba Road, Igando and Agodo-Egbe areas of Lagos State for persistent violations of environmental regulations, despite repeated warnings, abatement notices and several op-

portunities granted to facilitate compliance with the Agency's directives."

The agency said the enforcement exercise was carried out in line with directives of the Lagos State Government to ensure compliance with environmental laws and protect public health.

LASEPA said the action was also aimed at promoting a cleaner, healthier and safer environment for residents.

Among the establishments sealed was Thrillz Lounge on Odusanmi Street, Ogba, which LASEPA said was shut for noise pollution and non-compliance with its directives.

Others are "Feixiang Plastic, located along LASU-Ojo Road, Oko Filling Bus Stop, was sealed for non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Marvel Hotel & Suites, lo-

cated at Chrisbee Crescent, BRT Bus Stop, Igando, was sealed for noise pollution and non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Keviz Hotel & Suites, located on Councilor Ajayi Street, Obadore Bus Stop, LASU-Iba Road, was sealed for obstruction of duty and non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"DSN Hotel & Suites, located on Benson Onyechohen Street, O'Mark Bus Stop, LASU-Igando Road, was sealed for non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Rudaj Vegetable Oil, located on Tanimowo Street, Ologufe Bus Stop, Igando Road, was sealed for non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Celestial Church of Christ (Aduragbemi Parish), located on Adetola Buhari Street,

Okerube Bus Stop, Ikotun, was sealed for noise pollution and non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Limas, located on Aro-Oloye Street, off Abaranje Road, Abaranje, Ikotun, was sealed for non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Nico Hotel & Suites, located at Ayawo Close, NEPA Bus Stop, Egbe-Isolo Road, Ejigbo, was sealed for non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

"Kobo Night Club, located on Abanishe Street, off Hostel Road, Agodo-Egbe, was sealed for noise pollution and non-compliance with the Agency's directives.W

"Master Furniture, located on Coleman Street, Pao Bus Stop, Idimu-Ikoto Road, was sealed for non-compliance with the Agency's directives.

Over 150 undergraduate students compete in N5m quiz competition in Ebonyi

Maxwell Okechukwu

ABAKALIKI

Over one hundred and fifty undergraduate students participated in this year's five million Naira mock quiz competition, organized annually by Theo Link Impact Care Foundation for undergraduates across communities in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi state.

Secretary of the 2026 Project Planning Committee, Comrade Polycap Obinna Aliogu, while addressing newsmen shortly after the competition, revealed that the mock quiz competition had been an annual event organized by the foundation sponsored by High Chief Theophilus Ogobuchi Nwafor, also the CEO of Thermalos Homes and Properties Ltd, a real estate developer based in Abuja.

He said that participants in the mock quiz were drawn from across the Communities

in Ezza North Local government Council and from different Institutions of higher learning.

To ensure the exercise passed integrity test, he said, it was supervised by Rev. Fr. Stanley Nwaigum. Meanwhile twenty five successful candidates will receive two hundred thousand Naira each.

Comr. Polycap further explain that Chief Theophilus Nwafor as a philanthropist has empowered many youths across communities in Umu-ezeoka and beyond, stressing that he had also supported in the installation of a 500 kva transformer in the community.

Other areas of his interventions include the facilitation of the release of over eleven convicts at the Nigerian Correctional Service, Abakaliki Ebonyi state as part of efforts at decongesting the centre in addition to carrying out several empowerment programmes in different skills areas with several youths benefiting.

Akwa Ibom at 39: Eno urges unity, says state's best story ahead

UYO

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno, has said the best chapters of the state's story are still ahead as the state marks its 39th anniversary.

Eno stated this on Wednesday in a statewide broadcast to commemorate the creation of the state on September 23, 1987.

The governor said 39 years of the state's existence had been defined by faith, resilience, sacrifice, progress and God's grace.

He said, "Thirty-nine years ago, our beloved Akwa Ibom State was born. Today, we stand together at 39. Thirty-nine years of faith, resilience, sacrifice, progress and God's unfailing grace."

Eno paid tribute to the forebears and past leaders who laid the foundation of the state, as well as traditional institutions, workers, farmers, teachers,

clergy, professionals and entrepreneurs.

See more Punch stories on Google.

Reflecting on his three years in office, the governor said his administration's ARISE Agenda was designed as a covenant of service to build, empower, protect and create opportunities for the people.

"My administration has undertaken, commissioned and continued work on more than 1,500 kilometres of roads and 43 bridges, deliberately taking infrastructure to rural communities. No community is too remote to matter. No citizen is too far away to be remembered," he said.

On education, Eno said the state had sustained free and compulsory education at the primary and secondary levels, disbursed N1.69bn in bursaries, recruited 3,000 teachers and was transforming the College of Education, Afaha Nsit, into a university of education.

NEWS

ABUJA

The Obi-Kwankwaso Movement, popularly known as the OK Movement, on Wednesday, vowed not to collapse or surrender its structure to the Nigeria Democratic Congress ahead of the 2027 election.

The Director-General of the OK Movement, John Ughulu, said the movement would not allow the NDC or any other organisation to absorb its national, state, local government, and ward structures.

Ughulu was reacting to comments by the NDC National Leader, Senator Seriake Dickson, on the role of support groups in the party's 2027 campaign.

Dickson had argued that political groups should complement the political party rather

2027: OK Movement vows not to surrender structure to NDC

than compete with it or operate as parallel structures.

The senator spoke at the unveiling of former Secretary General to the Government of the Federation, Babachir Lawal, in Abuja.

The former Bayelsa governor said multiple support groups are normal in political campaigns, stressing that such groups should complement, not compete with, the political party sponsoring their candidates.

Dickson also described the OK Movement's decision to establish a presidential campaign council as "unheard of" and

"nonsensical", while stressing that the NDC would continue to work with support groups but expected them to operate within their proper role.

However, Ughulu argued that the movement was different from conventional support groups, insisting that it was an independent political organisation.

He said, "I strongly agree with the position expressed by Senator Seriake Dickson. However, there appears to be a missing link in the argument currently being advanced.

"If the Obidient Movement is regarded as a support move-

ment, and if the Obidients and Kwankwasiiya have equally been described by Idris Zekeri, while claiming to speak on behalf of Peter Obi, as a support movement, then it becomes necessary to properly define the identity and status of the Obi-Kwankwaso Movement, popularly known as the OK Movement."

"For the avoidance of doubt, the OK Movement is not a support group created as an appendage of any political party or another movement. It is independently organised, managed and structured through its own established movement

mechanisms."

Continuing, Ughulu also rejected Dickson's description of the movement's decision to establish a campaign council as "nonsensical".

According to him, the movement comprises members of different political parties who support the NDC presidential candidates, Peter Obi and Rabi Kwankwaso.

"So it is not nonsensical as claimed by Seriake Dickson; rather, the national leader of the NDC Party should come to realise that politics has long evolved from the conventional political system he is used to.

"The OK Movement comprises individuals and members from different political parties who share a common commitment to the ideals, values and political aspirations

represented by the presidential candidate, Peter Obi and his running mate, Senator Rabi Kwankwaso," he stated.

He said the movement would continue to mobilise support for the candidates while retaining its organisational independence.

The DG also vowed that the movement would retain its independence and internal administration, stressing that its political cooperation with the NDC did not amount to organisational subordination.

"The OK Movement remains an independent organisation. Its existence and internal administration are not subject to the internal management of the NDC.

"The OK Movement will not be collapsed, merged or subsumed into the NDC or any other organisation. Cooperation and political alignment do not extinguish the independent identity of the Movement," he said.



COURTESY VISIT:

Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Abbas Tajudeen (left) in a conversation with a former governor of Kano State, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau (right) during a courtesy call by the Religious Network for Peace and Development in Abuja yesterday.

Photo by Omoye Aminu

NAPTIP hunts man filmed beating toddler in viral video

ABUJA

A man has sparked widespread outrage after a video emerged online showing him repeatedly flogging a toddler across the head and body.

In the footage shared on X by @NigeriaStories on Wednesday, the shirtless man, wearing green athletic shorts, appears to flog the child repeatedly on the head with what appears to be a charger cable.

The beating knocks the child onto a tiled floor, where the toddler cries out in distress.

The man continues to flog the child, who uses her hands to cover her head from the wire while crying on the ground.

The man could be heard speaking aggressively to the child and saying, "Ori e o ma pe," a popular Yoruba expression that is slang for "knocking sense into someone."

The video has drawn strong public condemnation across social media platforms, with many Nigerians calling for the man's immediate identification and arrest.

Man filmed beating toddler in viral video. CREDIT: @NigeriaStories | X

Responding to the viral clip

on Wednesday, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons said child abuse would never be tolerated.

"We have noted the viral video and are working with relevant security agencies to identify, locate, and prosecute the perpetrator to the full extent of the law," NAPTIP said via its X handle.

The agency urged anyone with useful information to contact it via direct message, email at info@naptip.gov.ng, or the shortcode 627.

It reaffirmed its commitment to protecting children and ensuring that those responsible for such acts face justice.

The agency urged anyone with useful information to con-

Ebonyi PDP gov candidate pledges to end child hawking, house-help culture

ABAKALIKI

Peoples Democratic Party governorship candidate in Ebonyi State, Dr Ifeanyi Odii, has outlined plans to tackle the movement of children from their communities into domestic work, hawking and other forms of child labour if elected governor in 2027.

Odii spoke during an appearance on Channels Television's Sunrise Daily on Tuesday, where he presented youth empowerment, education and skills development as key components of his proposed administration.

He said poverty and unemployment were among the factors forcing families to send children away from home to work as domestic helpers or engage in street hawking.

According to him, his administration would address the problem by creating skills-acquisition centres across the state and providing young people with practical training that could lead to employment and self-employment.

"We'll be reeducating our people. The youths, some of them, we train them in skills acquisition, building skills acquisition centres." He said the centres would provide training in areas including carpentry, POP installation, tailoring, animal husbandry, fishery and other vocational skills.

He maintained that the proposed programme would cover all 13 local government areas of Ebonyi State, with each local government having facilities capable of accommodating about 3,000 people.

"That means if we do that,

we're accommodating about 39,000 Ebonyians," he said.

The PDP candidate linked the problem of child labour to the wider challenge of poverty and inadequate access to education.

He promised to make education a major priority, including scholarships and improved learning environments, saying children should be able to remain in school rather than being pushed into economic activities at an early age.

Odii said his administration would also invest in agriculture, healthcare and job creation as part of a broader strategy to reduce household poverty.

He argued that creating a productive local economy would give families greater opportunities to keep their children in school and reduce the pressure to send them away for domestic work.

Anambra flood: Pupil missing as police rescue nine

AWKA

A schoolchild is missing after a flood swept through a section of the Nibo-Isiagu Road in the Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, with the police launching a search operation for the child.

Nine persons, comprising seven schoolchildren and two adults, were rescued from the flooded route following heavy rainfall across parts of the state between Monday and Tuesday.

The incident occurred in the early hours of Tuesday when the victims, who were travelling along the route, were caught in the flood.

The spokesperson for the Anambra State Police Command, Tochukwu Ikenga, disclosed this in a statement on Tuesday, saying the rescue operation was carried out by the command's Safe School Operatives in collaboration with members of the affected community.

According to him, the operatives swiftly mobilised to the scene after receiving information about the incident and succeeded in moving seven schoolchildren and two adults

to safety.

However, Ikenga said one other child involved in the incident remained unaccounted for as of Tuesday, prompting the command to activate sustained search and rescue operations.

He said the search was being conducted in collaboration with community members and relevant stakeholders and would continue until the missing child was found.

The statement partly read, "The Anambra State Police Command, through its Safe School Operatives, in collaboration with concerned members of the community, has rescued nine persons following a flood incident along the Nibo-Isiagu Road, Awka.

"The incident occurred in the early hours of today, September 22, 2026, when some school children and adults were caught up in the flood while travelling along the affected route.

"However, one additional child involved in the incident is still unaccounted for. The command has consequently activated sustained search and rescue operations in the affected area."

Robbers kill Lagos party guest, dump body in river

LAGOS

A man identified simply as Tosin has reportedly been killed by suspected cultists after he was allegedly robbed in the Egbin area of Ijede, Ikorodu, Lagos State.

It was learnt that the incident occurred on Tuesday, September 15, after Tosin travelled from Ondo State to attend an event in the community.

According to a police source who spoke to our correspondent on Tuesday, Tosin briefly stepped out of the venue while the event was ongoing when he was allegedly accosted and attacked by some hoodlums.

The source said the assailants allegedly dispossessed him of

his gold chains, mobile phones and other personal belongings before killing him.

The victim's body was subsequently dumped at inside a river, according to the source.

"His body was discovered in a river in Agura on Thursday. It was later deposited in the morgue," the source disclosed.

Another police source said the discovery of the body prompted operatives to raid the area on Friday, leading to the arrest of some suspects.

"The arrested suspects were taken into custody for questioning. The police have commenced an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Tosin's death and the identities of those behind the alleged killing," the source said.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

US and Iran hold first talks since June after Trump's 'annihilation' threat

Top Iranian and US officials have held talks at the UN in New York on a day when the US leader said he could "annihilate" the Islamic Republic if the conflict went unresolved.

No breakthrough has been reported from the meeting mediated by Qatar and involving Iran's foreign minister and US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff - the first since a June ceasefire unravelled.

Witkoff said a round of discussions had been completed "that we hope will prove constructive and promising". Iran repeated its demand for the US to end its "acts of aggression".

The US and Israel launched air strikes on Iran on 28 February. Iran responded by attacking Israel and US bases in the Gulf and Arab Gulf allies of the US - as well as blocking the Strait of Hormuz.

Some 20% of the world's

oil and liquefied natural gas used to pass through the strait before the war and its closure has caused wild fluctuations of prices.

It has also increased pressure on Trump to find a way of ending the conflict - particularly as the US heads to Congressional elections in November.

In his address at the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, Trump began by touting his accomplishments on the economy, immigration, the border and tackling violent crime - remarks that sounded more pitched to voters the US midterms than the diplomats in the hall.

He spent much of his address justifying the war with Iran - a huge contrast with remarks earlier by UN Secretary General António Guterres, who warned global divisions were deepening and underscored the "interdependence"

of the world's peoples.

The US president argued that the conflict had prevented Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and demonstrated the value of what he described as peace through strength - ultimatums rather than deal-making or compromise.

"Will a deal be made with Iran that lets them rebuild and create a far greater country than it ever was before?" he said.

"Or do I annihilate the Islamic Republic and do it quickly, never giving them a chance to kill and destroy people and countries again? Do I drive them into hell?"

Trump said he believed an Iran deal, which has so far eluded him, would come right after November's elections.

The remarks were indicative of his foreign-policy strategy of coercive diplomacy - threatening overwhelming force while keeping negotia-

tions open.

Trump later told reporters that American officials had had a "very productive" three-hour meeting with the Iranian delegation on the sidelines of the general assembly.

Iran state TV confirmed that Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had met Witkoff.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei, quoted by state broadcaster IRNA, later said negotiations took part through a Qatari

mediator who communicated Tehran's conditions, including an end to the war on all fronts and to US "acts of aggression".

Witkoff was asked how the meetings had gone as he was leaving the UN building and he responded with a thumbs up. Witkoff later confirmed on X that the talks had been held "through the mediators, who shuttled between the two sides throughout the day".



What's at stake when Trump and Xi meet in the US?

Poland accuses Russian military helicopter of violating its airspace

Poland has said a Russian military helicopter briefly violated its airspace, forcing the Nato member to scramble fighter jets while ground forces remained on alert.

Its military said the Mi-8 aircraft had crossed from the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad on Wednesday morning, penetrating Polish airspace to a depth of about 300 metres (328 yards) and staying for 42 seconds north of Braniewo.

It said "the nature of the incident indicates that Russia is once again testing the readiness of our air defence". Moscow did not comment immediately.

Poland and other European Nato members have recently said Russia may be preparing attacks to test their commitment to supporting Ukraine - Moscow denies this.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly said Moscow does not plan to attack Nato states.

By contrast, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said this month that it was Europe that was constantly talking about preparing for war, and he warned: "If Europe attacks Russia, it will be a completely different war [from that in Ukraine], and it will be very short."

Putin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and Moscow currently controls about 20% of Ukrainian territory, including the

Crimea peninsula annexed in 2014.

In a statement, the Polish Army Operational Command said the brief incursion had happened at 11:08 (09:08 GMT), and the helicopter had been tracked by radar.

Poland's air defence units were operating around the clock ready to "ensure the safety of Polish airspace", it added.

A number of Russian drones and one unarmed Russian missile have landed in Poland since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which is not a member of Nato.

Last week, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk suggested Russia was planning drone and missile strikes against Poland and other countries on Nato's eastern flank.

"In recent weeks, the Russian hybrid threat against Europeans... has intensified," he said.

"The intent is to intimidate us and break our effort to support Ukraine. The result will be the exact opposite. We are not intimidated because we know that our security today and tomorrow is at stake in Ukraine."

French President Emmanuel Macron said shortly afterwards that his country had been targeted by Russian hybrid attacks in the past few weeks, vowing that this would not be left "without a response".

White House rolling out red carpet for historic Xi Jinping visit

US President Donald Trump will host Chinese leader Xi Jinping this week in Washington, with AI, trade and Taiwan expected to be on the agenda for the leaders of the global superpowers.

Xi will be greeted personally by Trump at Andrews Air Force Base on the eve of a White House state dinner and a military flyover.

The three-day trip marks Xi's first state visit to the US since 2015 and his third meeting with Trump in the past year.

Adding to the high-stakes state visit, a US-China trade agreement reached last year is set to expire in November.

The trade truce - reached in October 2025 as Trump and Xi met in South Korea - saw Washington suspend steep tariff increases on Chinese goods while Beijing eased back from restricting rare earth exports critical for manufacturing.

Experts said they will be watching for some sort of announcement around an extension of this agreement during the forthcoming state visit.

Xi's trip to Washington, which ends on Friday, will have plenty of pomp and pageantry, and includes lavish

dinners, private tours and performances.

He will be accompanied by First Lady Peng Liyuan who is expected to visit the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art with US First Lady Melania Trump on Thursday.

David Sacks, a fellow for Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, described the planned extravagant welcome by Trump as "really unprecedented".

"From meeting Xi Jinping at Andrews Air Force Base to having a flyover for Xi as well, this is not something afforded to any US ally," Sacks said, "much less an adversary like China. It's quite, quite stunning," he continued.

Trump is expected to address several issues as he meets Xi, particularly on tariffs and trade.

The US president has long criticised his country's trade deficit with China, which

stands at more than \$91bn (£68.2bn), according to the latest US Census Bureau data.

Also, Chinese rare earth exports to the US are down despite the agreement last October.

US and Chinese officials held trade talks on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, but failed to make meaningful progress ahead of the Xi visit, multiple sources told the BBC.

Reports of violence against women in Gaza surge, UN agency finds

There has been a sharp rise in reports of violence against women and girls in the Gaza Strip, including early and forced marriage, according to a series of recent reports from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

One report, which analyses data collected by 10 organisations, says the protracted crisis in war-torn Gaza has "created conditions in which women and girls face escalating risks of gender-based violence".

It also warns that there has been a "severe escalation" in the number of early and forced marriage incidents in

the second quarter of this year. Both are considered types of gender-based violence (GBV) by the UN.

Another report presenting testimony from 230 women in crowded displacement camps in Gaza City and Khan Younis makes for a grim read, describing the violence they have experienced or witnessed.

One displaced woman in a school-turned-shelter in Gaza highlights how rape victims are often married to their rapists to avoid shame and scandal. "When rape cases are discovered in schools, you find weddings and celebrations at the school the next day," she says.

Another woman tells how

last year, at the time of famine, "a man married off his 14-year-old daughter in exchange for two bags of flour so he and his [other] children could eat". Six women in different displacement camps shared stories of such exchanges - which would have been unthinkable before the conflict between Israel and Hamas began in 2023.

Although data collection to establish actual figures remains tricky, in the second quarter of this year, the UNFPA says the number of reported cases of early and forced marriage had increased by 123% on the first quarter. Early or child marriage involved girls aged 12 to 17.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Ethiopia and Tigray accuse each of launching offensives, fuelling fears of new war

Ethiopia's government and the party in control of the northern region of Tigray have accused each other of launching offensives, escalating fears of a return to full-scale conflict.

Getachew Reda, a cabinet minister and adviser to Ethiopia's prime minister, said Tigrayan fighters had taken control of federally administered airports in Tigray and launched offensives in neighbouring Afar and Amhara regions.

Earlier, the Tigrayan authorities said their forces had been forced to enter a "defensive war". The statement followed reports of drone strikes in Tigray.

The two-year war in Tigray ended in 2022 - but over recent months both sides have been accusing each other of violating a peace deal.

It was one of the most deadly conflicts this century - the African Union's mediator estimated some 600,000 people died as the fighting drove the region to the precipice of famine.

On Sunday, the Tigray People's

Liberation Front (TPLF), the party that runs Tigray, announced an alliance with six other armed groups in Ethiopia to remove the government in Addis Ababa.

"It is rather heartbreaking to learn that, despite efforts by many, including the international community, to avoid yet another round of war in Tigray, the TPLF leadership early this morning launched an all-out offensive against government positions in Afar and Amhara," Getachew said in a statement shared on social media.

The adviser to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed previously led Tigray's interim administration, but he fell out with the TPLF in 2025 and joined the federal government.

Following the seizure of the airports, Ethiopian Airlines has cancelled all flights to Tigray.

Residents of Tigray's main city of Mekelle told the BBC that local forces had taken over control of the city's airport from the national police early on Wednesday.

Eleven killed in mass shooting at house in South Africa

At least 11 people have been killed in a mass shooting in a residential building near the South African city of Durban.

Gunmen stormed a house in the KwaMakhutha township late on Tuesday and opened fire on 14 people. Ten were killed at the scene and four were taken to hospital, where one later died from their injuries, police said.

Police said some of the victims were on their watch in connection with illegal activities, which they could not "divulge at the moment to protect investigations which have been launched".

While the motive of the shooting has not yet been confirmed, the police said they could not rule out a "feud between rival groups".

"Information available at this stage suggests that 13 men and one woman, who is believed to be pregnant, were reportedly having a party inside a house when three men arrived and opened fire on them," the police said in a statement. The woman is among those who died.

A local TV reporter from the eNCA channel at the scene said the gunmen had set fire to a vehicle belonging to one of the victims before fleeing, with footage showing the burnt-out car.

The police say they have launched a manhunt for the suspects, who were said to be carrying pistols and rifles.

South Africa has one of the world's highest murder rates, with police data showing a murder rate equivalent to more than 60 deaths a day.

In recent weeks, the gruesome discovery of at least nine murdered women, with some of the

bodies dumped by the roadside, has heightened fears in the country.

Last year, nine people were killed in a mass shooting at a tavern in Johannesburg.

Rivalry among criminal gangs amid turf wars, drug trafficking and illegal mining is common in the country, often driving violence within communities.

In February, President Cyril Ramaphosa said organised crime was "the most immediate threat to our democracy, our society and our economic development", as he announced that he would be deploying the army to support the police.

Although South Africa has long had a high murder rate, mass shootings are a more recent problem and elicit increased feelings of unsafety, fear and shock.

The phenomenon has led to calls for the government and law enforcement authorities to do more to dismantle organised crime networks and, in some cases, "murder for hire" syndicates - believed to be among the leading instigators of the attacks.

Much has also been said about improving the economic conditions that make crime an attractive enterprise for some.

There are no easy answers for how to solve South Africa's crime problem but security experts believe that the high proliferation of illegal guns, insufficient visible policing in high crime spots, the slow pace of justice and allegations that senior politicians and police officers have links to criminal gangs all add to the pervasive sentiment that local authorities are losing the fight against crime.



Ethiopian Soldiers

South Sudan's president dissolves government ahead of country's first elections

South Sudan President Salva Kiir has dissolved the transitional government, three months before the country's first election since its independence in 2011.

The country has previously postponed elections twice and extended the transitional period several times.

Under the amended law, signed on Monday, Kiir removed the country's five vice-presidents and dissolved parliament, as well as national and state governments.

Kiir is the presidential candidate of his Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). No prominent figures have announced plans to challenge him in the December poll. The main opposition leader Riek Machar was sacked as vice-president

last year and charged with treason.

He is under house arrest.

Machar had been named vice-president as part of a 2018 peace deal to end a five-year civil war between forces loyal to the two men.

Kiir will remain in office with full constitutional powers until an elected president is sworn in. He also reappointed some ministers and governors in caretaker positions until the 22 December elections.

Ahead of Tuesday's announcement a heavy security presence was reported in the capital, Juba. Soldiers from the army and national security services blocked access to government ministries. Soldiers were also seen patrolling parts of the city.

A senior government official told the BBC that staff arriving for work were turned away and told to return the following Monday.

UN agencies in Juba also asked staff to work remotely while the situation was monitored.

Kiir last week dismissed the chairman of the national elections commission, Abednego Akok Kacuol, without giving a reason. He was replaced by the commission's secretary-general, Gabriel Bol Deng.

Akok had said in August that the commission needed \$250m (£190m) to conduct the election but had received only \$21m.

In June, the main opposition group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO), the party of Machar, warned people not to take part in poll preparations.

"Anyone coming to register voters and campaign in territories controlled by the mighty SPLM-IO, you will be a prisoner of war," Nathaniel Pierino, acting chairperson of the group, said in a post on Facebook.

The body which oversees implementation of the 2018 peace agreement, the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), said South Sudan had entered a "critical phase".

It said several key talks under the agreement remained incomplete and urged the parties to agree on a path towards credible elections and a peaceful end to the transitional period, which has lasted since independence.

The latest 24-month extension was due to end on 22 February 2027.

ICC convicts former CAR militia commander of crimes against humanity

Judges at the International Criminal Court convicted rebel commander Mahamat Said Abdel Kani on Wednesday of crimes against humanity for abusing and torturing prisoners at a detention facility in the Central African Republic.

Said, wearing blue jeans and a sweater, remained expressionless for most of the hourlong hearing in The Hague as presiding Judge Miatta Maria Samba described the inhumane conditions detainees endured at the prison in the capital, Bangui.

During the trial, witnesses described cramped cells with walls marked by "bullet holes and blood" and said they were whipped "until they soiled themselves", Samba said. Other victims testified that they were confined in a windowless room under the floorboards of Said's office.

The charges stemmed from fighting more than a decade ago between the predominant

ly Muslim Seleka rebels, who seized power from then-President François Bozizé, and a mainly Christian militia called the anti-Balaka.

In Bangui, Marius Olivier Trésor Poussinga, who was tortured at the detention centre, told The Associated Press the verdict is an "international recognition" of Said's crimes.

"Today, I can sleep easier because the court has acknowledged my suffering", Poussinga said.

The country's justice minister, Arnaud Djoudaye Abazène, welcomed the verdict. "Justice cannot be reversed in the Central African Republic", Abazène said. "No victim will be left behind, and justice will be delivered at every level", he added.

Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch, called the conviction a "significant milestone in the fight against impunity", but warned that the country still

faces serious challenges.

"The verdict is also a stark reminder of the ongoing abuses in the country, and the need for increased support for both international and domestic justice efforts to end the accountability gap that helps fuel recurring cycles of violence", he said in a statement.

A 15-year investigation

The verdict is likely the end of the road for justice at the ICC for victims in the Central African Republic.

In 2022, then-chief prosecutor Karim Khan announced he was closing the court's 15-year investigation into crimes in the country, citing limited resources. Khan was removed from his post in July over allegations of sexual misconduct.

In other cases, two senior anti-Balaka leaders were convicted in July 2025 on multiple counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Former Congolese vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba was acquitted on appeal in 2018, while charges against a former Cen-

tral African Republic government minister were dropped in 2023.

A specially created court in the Central African Republic has prosecuted other defendants. The Special Criminal Court was established to try war crimes and other human rights abuses committed during the coups and violence that the country has experienced since 2003.

Earlier this year, the court began proceedings against former President François Bozizé on charges of crimes against humanity. The trial is being held in absentia because Bozizé is living in exile in Guinea-Bissau.

Backed by the United Nations and staffed with international judges, the court issued its first verdict in 2022. It has since indicted more than 30 people, nearly all of whom are in custody.

Among them is Edmond Beina, who was also wanted by the ICC for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Petrol cheaper in Nigeria than US, many African countries — Minister

LAGOS

The Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri, has said the average price of petrol in Nigeria remains lower than in the United States and some African countries despite the removal of subsidy.

Lokpobiri stated this on Channels Television's Politics Today while defending the Federal Government's deregulation of the downstream petroleum sector amid concerns over high

petrol prices.

His comments came as the Dangote Petroleum Refinery and other marketers began reducing their depot prices following a decline in international crude oil prices.

It was reported on Wednesday that Dangote Refinery cut its petrol depot price from N1,350 to N1,325 per litre, while other marketers also reduced their prices in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Calabar and Warri.

Despite the reductions, pet-

rol was still selling at between N1,370 and N1,450 per litre in some locations.

Speaking on Politics Today, Lokpobiri said petrol in Nigeria was cheaper than in the United States, Cameroon, Ghana and South Africa.

See more Punch stories on Google.

"In the US, the average, you know, liter of fuel is N1,633. In Nigeria, it's on the average of

N1,430. If you go to Cameroon, it's N1,959. If you go to Ghana, it's N2,070. If you go to South Africa, it's N2,070. So Nigeria's average cost of fuel per litre is still lower than," he said.

The minister argued that Nigeria's status as an oil-producing country and the presence of the Dangote Refinery did not automatically translate to lower petrol prices.

"As at today, the records available show that USA is the highest producer of oil and gas in the world. The United States is the highest producer of oil and gas in the entire world. They also have the highest refining capacity, but the fuel price per liter is higher than that of Nigeria.

"So despite the fact that Dangote Refinery is here, that doesn't mean that the fuel price will be

lower because Dangote Refinery is available. But what is important is that the regulation has also created a new economy."

Lokpobiri said deregulation had encouraged private investment in the oil and gas sector, arguing that the Dangote Refinery would not have been able to survive if the government had continued importing petrol and selling it below the market price.

Dangote, marketers cut petrol prices as crude falls

LAGOS

The Dangote Petroleum Refinery and other petroleum marketers have reduced the prices of Premium Motor Spirit (petrol) across major depots in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Calabar and Warri, following a decline in international crude oil prices.

The reductions were recorded in the latest depot price report published by Petroleumprice.ng, with the biggest adjustments seen in Lagos, where several operators cut their petrol prices by between N20 and N24 per litre.

The reductions came as Brent crude traded below \$100 per barrel, while the United States benchmark, West Texas Intermediate, also declined to \$91.17 per barrel.

In Lagos, the Dangote Refinery reduced its PMS price from N1,350 to N1,325 per litre, representing a N25 reduction. Ascon, Integrated, Pinnacle and Sahara also cut their prices by N24, with their products now selling between N1,326 and N1,327 per litre.

MRS reduced its petrol price by N20 to N1,332 per litre, while Wosbab recorded a current price of N1,330.

The latest reductions followed a mixed movement in the international crude market.

According to Oilprice.com, Brent crude fell to \$99.77 per bar-

rel, while WTI dropped by \$1.20, or 1.30 per cent, to \$91.17 per barrel. Recall that Brent hit \$109 last week.

However, Murban crude moved in the opposite direction, gaining \$4.18, or 3.80 per cent, to \$114.20 per barrel.

The movement in crude prices is significant for Nigeria's downstream petroleum market because international oil prices influence the cost of imported refined products and the pricing of locally refined petroleum products.

The softer Brent and WTI prices provided room for downward adjustments in depot prices.

The decline in petrol prices was also recorded outside Lagos. In Port Harcourt, Masters reduced its PMS price by N2 to N1,328 per litre, while Stockgap recorded a N7 reduction to N1,323. Bulk Strategic and Sigmund listed petrol at N1,328, while Matrix retained its price at N1,330.

In Calabar, Mainland recorded the lowest petrol price among the locations covered, reducing its rate by N7 to N1,320 per litre.

Alkanes cut its price by N2 to N1,325, while Matrix maintained N1,330. Sobaz, however, increased its price marginally by N1 to N1,328. In Warri, mixed movements were also recorded, although most of the changes were downward.

NSCDC arrests truck driver, two others for vandalising NNPC pipeline in Abuja

ABUJA

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Federal Capital Territory Command, has arrested three suspects in connection with the vandalism of an NNPC petroleum pipeline in Dafa, Kwali Area Council, Abuja.

Addressing journalists at the Kwali Divisional Office on Wednesday, the NSCDC FCT Commandant, Olusola Odumosu, said the arrests followed days of intelligence-led surveillance by the Command's tactical team.

"The credible actionable intelligence received regarding vandalism activities along the pipeline Right of Way in the area led to a prolonged surveillance by our tactical team in Kwali Division," Odumosu said.

He said the pipeline, which supplies crude oil and petroleum products to the Kaduna Refinery and NNPC depots nationwide, had already been cut before operatives arrived at the scene.

"Acting on credible intelligence by the vigilante group, who are actively collaborating with the NSCDC Kwali divisional office, our operatives intensified surveillance, monitoring and patrol of the location, but upon sighting our men, the suspected vandals fled from the scene of the crime and abandoned the already severed petroleum pipelines," he said.

According to the commandant, the suspects returned to the scene days later in an attempt to retrieve the abandoned pipe sections.



COURTESY VISIT:

Speaker of the House of Representatives Hon. Abbas Tajudeen (middle) flanked by a former governor of Kano State, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau (right), and Hon. James Faleke (left) during a courtesy call by the Religious Network for Peace and Development in Abuja yesterday. Photo by Omoye Aminu

Oil prices fall after Trump hails 'good' talks with Iran

NEW YORK

Oil prices fell on Wednesday after President Donald Trump said US and Iranian representatives had met for "very good" talks at the United Nations.

International benchmark Brent crude and main US contract, West Texas Intermediate, were below the symbolic \$100 mark that has been repeatedly breached since the Middle East war began in February.

Brent hit \$98.41 and WTI lowered to \$89.23 per barrel in afternoon Asian trading.

Trump told reporters the three-hour meeting was "very good," "very productive," and "they have another one scheduled in the very near future."

The US leader's statements came just hours after he delivered a bellicose address to the UN, saying he faced a "big decision" on whether to make a deal with Iran or "annihilate the Islamic Republic and do it quickly."

Nearly seven months after US-Israeli strikes triggered war, the foes are at an impasse, with Iran keeping the Strait of Hormuz closed and the United

States enforcing a counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

Conflict between Saudi-backed government forces and the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen has enveloped the kingdom, squeezing energy exports from the Red Sea.

"The three-hour US-Iran meeting matters because it shifts the market from pure escalation pricing toward a genuine diplomatic process, even if a final deal still looks distant," said Stephen Innes at Quintex Intel.

Trump has pledged that oil would come down "as soon as" the United States wins the war.

The dip in oil prices came as the world's biggest crude exporter, Saudi Arabia, reportedly rebooted operations along its East-West Pipeline—a crucial oil export route shut down by drone attacks.

The kingdom is aiming to resume exports later this week, Bloomberg quoted a source as saying.

But while Saudi oil giant Aramco reportedly told Asian refiners they could soon pick up crude from the Red Sea port of Yanbu, the firm told their European counterparts they will not be allocated oil in October, Bloomberg said.

PETROAN orders nationwide meter checks after NMDPRA under-dispensing warning

LAGOS

The Petroleum Products Retail Outlets Association of Nigeria has asked its members across the country to inspect their dispensing meters.

This instruction came following a warning by the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority over alleged under-dispensing of petroleum products.

The association's National President, Billy Gillis-Harry, disclosed this on Wednesday

while speaking on Channels Television's The Morning Brief programme.

According to him, PETROAN convened an emergency meeting of its National Executive Council on Tuesday after the regulator raised concerns about the accuracy of fuel dispensing at retail outlets.

He said the meeting lasted until about 10 pm, after which members were directed to check their equipment.

"PETRON circulated a message around the country, calling our members to check their

meters as quickly as possible," Gillis-Harry said.

The PETROAN president said some members had already commenced checks, noting that prolonged use could affect the performance of dispensing equipment and lead to either short-measuring or dispensing more fuel than customers paid for.

"Equipment can be faulty over time because of usage," he said, recalling that he had previously lost money in his own retail business because a faulty meter was dispensing more fuel

than customers paid for.

Gillis-Harry also assured motorists that members of the association remained committed to ensuring that the quantity paid for by customers was accurately dispensed.

"But I can tell you that PETRON members will, at all times, insist on making sure that they sell their products one litre for one litre," he said.

He advised motorists to monitor the quantity shown on the dispensing meter whenever they buy fuel and request receipts after making purchases.



INSIDE EDO STATE



THE AUSTIN IMAFIDON ADMINISTRATION IN UHUNMWODE LGA

One year of purposeful leadership, quality service delivery

OGIEHOR EHS TORNADO
Chief Press Secretary, Uhumwode
Local Government Council

From Acting Chairman to Executive Chairman: A Chronicle of Projects, Policies and Grassroots Development

One year ago, Hon. Austin Rotimi Imafidon, popularly known as ISIWINA, assumed the responsibility of leading Uhumwode Local Government Council, first in an acting capacity and subsequently as the substantive Executive Chairman.

The period from September 2025 to September 2026 represents a significant chapter in the administration of Uhumwode Local Government Area, with interventions spanning infrastructure, roads, education, healthcare, security, staff welfare, youth and women empowerment, environmental sanitation, community conflict resolution, agriculture, sports and institutional development.

The administration's approach has centred on bringing government closer to the people and responding directly to identified grassroots needs. Following the conclusion of his acting tenure in August 2026, Imafidon transitioned into office as the Executive Chairman of Uhumwode Local Government Council, opening a new phase of the administration.



HON. AUSTIN ROTIMI IMAFIDON

RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT

One of the most visible projects undertaken during the acting period was the extensive renovation and transformation of the Uhumwode Local Government Council Secretariat.

The intervention covered major sections of the administrative complex and was designed to create a more functional working environment for Council employees and members of the public. Related interventions included renovation and furnishing of the Legislative Arm building, provision and improvement of alternative power supply, provision of water through a borehole, construction and rehabilitation of sanitation and soak-away facilities, installation and deployment of solar-powered facilities, as well as general improvement of the working environment within the Council premises. The Secretariat project became one of the administration's most prominent physical interventions during its first year.

ROAD REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY ACCESS

Road infrastructure received significant attention under the administration, particularly through grading, sand-filling and palliative interventions on difficult sections of roads.

Among the roads and communities that received attention were Idunmwowina Road, Eyean Pipeline Road, Urhokhuosa-Nibiwe Road, Eagle Road, Jehovah Road in Ikhueni, Pipeline-Eyean/Idibo Road, as well as roads in Egbede Ward, Isi-North Ward, Isi-South Ward, Ugieghudu community and environs in Uhi Ward.

MORGAN JUNCTION BYPASS INTERVENTION

The administration also intervened on the severely deteriorated section of the bypass at Morgan Junction, an important route used by residents, motorists, commercial vehicles and trucks servicing nearby borrow pits.

The Council deployed heavy-duty equipment and construction materials for palliative rehabilitation. Particular attention was given to the deep gully erosion threatening the road. Measures included drainage work, removal of accumulated erosion materials, filling of damaged sections with hardcore and strengthening of the road surface.

IDOKPA BYPASS

Following the Morgan Junction intervention, equipment was moved to the failed section of the Idokpa Bypass along the Benin-Auchi corridor. The intervention was aimed at restoring vehicular movement and reducing the difficulties experienced by motorists and residents using the route. These interventions were particularly significant because some of the affected roads extend beyond the conventional responsibility of the Local Government. The administration maintained that where a failed road posed an immediate danger or hardship to people within Uhumwode, the Council had a responsibility to provide reasonable emergency relief while awaiting more permanent intervention from the appropriate tier of government.

EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Education formed another component of the administration's first-year programme.

One of its major interventions was the distribution of library and educational materials to 87 primary schools across Uhumwode Local Government Area, intended to improve access to learning materials and promote a reading culture among pupils. The administration also pledged intervention in a six-classroom block at Azagba, reflecting its commitment to improving learning infrastructure.

At Ehor Technical College, attention was drawn to needs including electricity, environmental clearing and security. Beyond conventional classroom interventions, the Council promoted skills-development programmes designed to provide young people with practical economic opportunities.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SKILLS ACQUISITION

The administration initiated and supported vocational and technical empowerment programmes for Uhumwode youths.

One prominent intervention involved young people undergoing computer and printing training, with support for transportation and feeding. The programme was designed to move beneficiaries beyond dependence on scarce white-collar employment by equipping them with marketable skills capable of supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Another major human-capacity intervention involved young women receiving technical skills training through collaboration with the Lady Mechanic Initiative.

The initiative formed part of a broader strategy of connecting social intervention with sustainable empowerment rather than limiting assistance to temporary relief.

ISIWINA HARVEST OF HOPE

The Isiwina Harvest of Hope (IHH) emerged during the first year as a major social-support initiative associated with the Chairman.

The programme was designed to provide food assistance and other support to vulnerable residents, particularly senior citizens, widows, widowers and persons living with disabilities. Beginning at Eyean and designed to rotate through different parts of Uhumwode, the programme incorporated beneficiary assessment and profiling to identify people requiring assistance.

Beyond food distribution, issues raised by vulnerable residents during the programme were documented for possible intervention.

The programme also promoted locally produced commodities, thereby linking humanitarian assistance with encouragement of the local economy.

HEALTHCARE INTERVENTIONS

Healthcare received attention through Council activities and partnerships with governmental, non-governmental and diaspora organisations. The administration supported immunisation and public-health programmes, including the measles-rubella campaign and malaria-awareness activities.

Free eye-care interventions were also facilitated for residents, providing services including eye examinations, glaucoma screening, prescription glasses, medication, counselling and referrals or surgeries where required.

Another important development was the rehabilitation of the Ugomoson Primary Health Centre through a partnership involving diaspora organisations and relevant government institutions.

The Council's participation reflected an approach that sought to attract external partnerships and resources to improve grassroots healthcare.

ELECTRICITY AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The administration facilitated interventions involving transformers, electricity infrastructure and poles in communities including Ugbeze in Isi-North and Orior-Ozolua Community.

The objective was to improve electricity access and encourage economic and social activities within beneficiary communities.

The administration also adopted partnership as an instrument for attracting infrastructure to communities, including collaboration with organisations involved in water and community-development projects.

SECURITY AND PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES

Security remained an important component of the Council's activities.

The administration maintained engagements with security agencies, traditional institutions, community leaders and local security structures. Among its interventions was the provision of a Hilux vehicle to the Divisional Police Officer in Ehor, intended to strengthen operational mobility and response.

The Council also participated in the screening of approximately 1,000 vigilante personnel as part of efforts to improve community-level security structures.

Regular security meetings were held to assess developments across the Local Government Area.

When information concerning a possible threat to schools emerged in June 2026, the administration convened an emergency security meeting and co-ordinated responses with relevant stakeholders.

PEACE BUILDING AND COMMUNITY CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Rather than allowing communal disagreements to escalate into violence, the administration utilised dialogue and its conflict-resolution mechanisms in addressing disputes.

In the Ahor community crisis, the Council intervened and supported security measures, including the establishment of a temporary special police presence.

The Council also intervened in the Ahor/Use-lu N'Ahor boundary dispute, emphasising adherence to existing resolutions and recognised dispute-settlement mechanisms.

Similarly, in the Eko-Ugha/Ugha community dispute, the Council's Boundary Conflict Resolution Committee held engagements with the affected parties and encouraged them to avoid unilateral actions capable of worsening tensions. These interventions reflected the administration's position that sustainable grassroots development requires peace, security and respect for lawful dispute-resolution processes.

ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION AND BEAUTIFICATION

Environmental sanitation was pursued through regular monthly exercises.

The Council undertook refuse evacuation, clearing of public spaces, desilting of drainage channels and removal of vegetation obstructing important locations.

At Ehor Market and surrounding areas, accumulated waste was evacuated, while drains were cleared to improve the movement of storm water.

The Idokpa Bypass and other areas also received Isiwina vegetation-clearing attention. The administration subsequently expanded its environmental vision through the ISIWINA Greener Uhumwode initiative, conceived around tree planting, ornamental plants, grass planting and beautification of major entrances, exits, bypasses and strategic public spaces across the Local Government Area.

The initiative envisages the planting of 10,000 trees and ornamental plants, alongside measures to improve the appearance and environmental sustainability of Uhumwode.

MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

In its transition into substantive executive leadership, the administration began laying the groundwork for another major intervention — the rebuilding and modernisation of Ogheghe Market.

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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		
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SPORTS



NPFL27: Oweiyalefa header secures Bendel Insurance victory over Ikorodu City

Bendel Insurance FC defeated Ikorodu City FC 2-1 at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium on Wednesday to claim all three points in their Matchday 5 of the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL27) fixture.

The Benin Arsenal controlled the first half but we're unable to convert their chances, with Jonathan James Mariga, Alex Oweiyalefa and Chinedu Nwosu all going close to breaking the deadlock.

Coach Kennedy Boboye made two changes at the interval, introducing Emmanuel Dung and Gabriel Ugochukwu. The substitutions immediately added impetus to Insurance's attack.

Emmanuel Dung's pace from the left flank unsettled the Ikorodu City defence, and he was brought down inside the penalty area in the 48th minute. Nwosu converted the resulting spot-kick two minutes later to give Insurance the lead.

Nwosu then missed the chance to double the advantage in the 65th minute after Fatai Abdullahi played him through on goal.

Ikorodu City however levelled up the scoreline in the 80th minute when captain Farouk Salami rounded goalkeeper Amas Obasogie before finishing into an open net.

Insurance FC responded in the 84th minute when Oweiyalefa rose highest to head home Terdoo Shimangade's cross and restore the hosts' lead.

Coach Kennedy Boboye who was unsatisfied with effected more changes as Wisdom Udom replaced Chinedu Nwosu in the 86th minute as Insurance managed the closing stages effectively to secure the 2-1 victory.

The result moves Bendel Insurance up to fourth place on the NPFL table with 9 points after five matches.

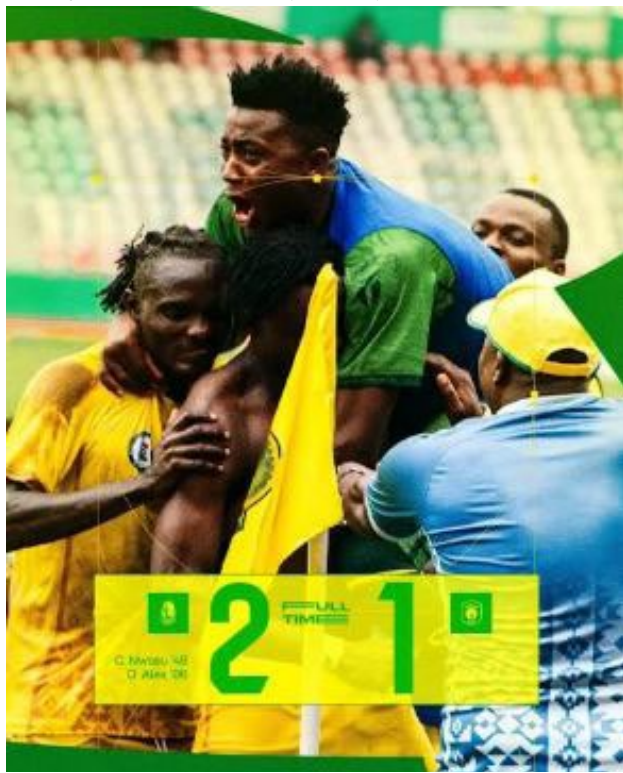
The Benin Arsenal will return to action on Sunday when they travel to face Abia Warriors at the Aba Township Stadium in a Matchday 6 fixture.

In a postmatch interview, Coach Kennedy Boboye said that the victory was important than anything else. He however appealed to fans to be patient, saying that the team is yet to click. He said that his technical

crew is not resting on their oars in blending the team into a finished product Edo people will be proud of.

On the other, Coach Bright Ozebagbe of Ikorodu City

said that his boys played good football but lamented that they made a costly mistake that cost them. "Insurance FC is a big team. Playing against them is always difficult." He said.



Flamingos top WAFU B Cup

The Flamingos of Nigeria are top of the standings in the WAFU B U17 Girls Cup in Cote d'Ivoire.

This followed their 2-0 win over hard-fighting Burkina Faso Monday courtesy of two late strikes.

They have a perfect record of three wins in as many matches

to have nine points and an impressive goals' difference of +9.

Hosts Cote d'Ivoire are second on the table with six points, while Ghana also have the same points but inferior goals' difference.

Niger are bottom of the standings having yet to record a point.

Morocco defeat Nigeria 3-2, advance to semis

Nigeria's hopes of reaching the semi-finals of the 2026 African Men's Nations Volleyball Championship came to an end after Morocco edged the West Africans 3-2 in a fiercely contested quarter-final in Tunis, Tunisia, on Monday.

The match produced a dramatic five-set battle, with neither side able to establish sustained control as the contest swung back and forth before Morocco prevailed in the deciding set.

Nigeria made a strong start, claiming the opening set 25-20 to take an early advantage. Morocco responded emphatically in the second set, winning 25-15 to level the match.

The North Africans then moved ahead after taking the third set 25-20, leaving Nigeria facing elimination with their backs against the wall.

Nigeria refused to surrender, however, producing a spirited response in the fourth set. The

West Africans held their nerve in a tense finish to win 26-24 and force a deciding fifth set.

The final set remained closely contested, but Morocco held their composure in the crucial moments to secure a 15-12 victory and book their place in the semi-finals.

Morocco's victory came after they had earlier secured their quarter-final place with a 3-0 victory over the Democratic Republic of Congo in the Round of 16, winning 25-20, 25-21 and 29-27.

Nigeria, meanwhile, had entered the quarter-finals after an impressive 3-2 comeback victory over Algeria in their final group-stage match. They recovered from twice falling behind to win 23-25, 25-19, 21-25, 25-20, 15-12.

The quarter-final defeat therefore ended Nigeria's hopes of advancing to the last four, despite another determined performance in a five-set contest.

AFCON 2027 Qualifier: Madagascar secures TV rights for Super Eagles clash



SUPER EAGLES IN TRAINING

Madagascar has secured television broadcast rights for the country's 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifying campaign, including the highly anticipated clash against Nigeria's Super Eagles.

Madagascar and the Malagasy Football Federation have signed an agreement covering the broadcast of matches involving the Barea in the AFCON 2027 qualifiers.

The deal will ensure that football fans in Madagascar can follow their national team's

qualifying campaign on television, including the encounter against the Super Eagles.

Nigeria and Madagascar are set to face each other in a Group D qualifier, with the fixture scheduled for Friday, September 25, at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium in Uyo.

The agreement between Canal+ Sport Madagascar and the Malagasy Football Federation is expected to increase access to the Barea's matches as the team continues its campaign for a place at the 2027 AFCON tournament.



LUIS DE LA FUENTE

World champions Spain reward coach with new contract

Coach Luis de la Fuente has been rewarded with a new contract that will take him to 2032 after he led Spain to win the 2026 World Cup.

Luis de la Fuente, who took over as coach of the Spanish national team in the winter of 2023, also led his country to win European Championship in 2024.

The Spanish Federation announced the extended the contract with de la Fuente through Euro 2032, which will be played in Italy and Turkey.

The coach is a relatively new name at full international level as before his time with the Spanish A national team he managed several of the nation's youth teams.



NIGERIA'S FLAMINGOS

Flamingos resume training Wednesday ahead of Côte D'Ivoire semifinal clash

Nigeria's Flamingos will observe a rest day today (Tuesday) as the team steps up preparations for the next phase of the WAFU B U17 Women's tournament.

The players have been given a break from training to allow them to recover physically and mentally before resuming work tomorrow ahead of their semifinal crucial encounter with hosts Côte d'Ivoire.

The Flamingos will return to training on Wednesday, with atten-

tion now firmly focused on Thursday's fixture against Côte d'Ivoire.

The match is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. local time (7:00 p.m. Nigerian time) on Thursday, September 24, as both teams battle for a place in the next stage of the competition.

Head coach, Hakeem Busari and his technical crew are expected to use Wednesday's training session to fine-tune the team's tactical approach while assessing the players' fitness and readiness for the decisive encounter.