

Okpebholo assures Edo residents of safety, improved living conditions

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has assured residents of the state of his administration's continued commitment to protecting lives and property while improving their living conditions.

The governor gave the assurance in his Independence Day message to the people of Edo as Nigeria marks its 66th anniversary of independence from British colonial rule, attained on October 1, 1960.

Okpebholo said security remained the foremost responsibility of government, stressing that farming, trade, investment

and other economic activities could only thrive in an atmosphere of peace and stability.

"We have worked hard to make Edo safer. We are rebuilding our roads, upgrading our schools and hospitals, and creating opportunities for our teeming youths."

"The safety of every Edo citizen, in the city and in the

village, remains my first duty," he said.

The governor pledged that his administration would continue to collaborate with security agencies, traditional rulers and community leaders to secure the state. He described the community leaders as critical.

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GOV. OKPEBHOLO

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That The People May Know

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#200

Nigeria @66: Era of prosperity begins now — Tinubu

BENEDICT OKATE

ABUJA

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has declared that Nigeria has moved beyond the difficult phase of his administration's economic reforms and entered what he described as an "age of prosperity," promising Nigerians lower living costs, more jobs, industrial expansion and wider economic opportunities.

Tinubu made the declaration

yesterday in his Independence Day address to the nation as Nigeria marked its 66th anniversary of independence, saying his administration had spent the past three years confronting what he described as longstanding distortions and weaknesses in the economy.

According to the President, "The emergency treatment is over. The foundation has been repaired. The central economic task before us has changed."

He said the focus of government had now shifted from correcting economic distortions to ensuring that the benefits of growth were broadly shared.

"Now, our purpose is simple: shared and widespread prosperity," he declared.

The President acknowledged that the economic reforms introduced since he

assumed office in 2023 had imposed hardship on Nigerians, but maintained that the measures were necessary to address deeper structural problems that had accumulated over decades.

Using a medical analogy, Tinubu likened Nigeria's pre-reform economy to a patient suffering from cancer who had to choose between

painful treatment and temporary relief.

"For too long, Nigeria's leaders chose morphine while praying for a miracle that never came," he said, stressing that his administration had instead chosen to confront the underlying problems.

"Our reforms did not create the weaknesses in our economy. They confronted them," he

declared.

Tinubu also defended the removal of fuel subsidy, warning against a return to what he described as the country's former "addictive subsidies."

He said the reforms were beginning to yield results, citing economic growth of more than four per cent in 2026, declining inflation from its peak, stronger foreign reserves, greater stability in the foreign exchange market and increased non-oil export earnings.

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Edo holds Independence Day prayer, praise session

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

The Special Adviser to the Edo State Governor on Religious Matters and Chaplain, Government House Chapel, Apostle Dr. Faraday Sule Azekhuman, has challenged religious leaders to preach the gospel of truth to their congregations as a means of transforming lives and promoting peace in society.

Apostle Faraday made the call during an Independence Day prayer and praise programme organised at the Government House Chapel, Benin City, with the theme: "Total Peace in Edo State and Nigeria."

He observed that kidnappers, armed robbers, bandits and other criminal elements

attend churches, mosques and traditional religious gatherings, stressing that messages of truth and righteousness could touch their hearts and turn them away from criminal activities.

The clergyman said religious leaders should therefore make truth a central part of their preaching, noting that the failure to confront falsehood and wrongdoing could contribute to the challenges confronting the society.

"We blame our leaders for the challenges the nation is facing when we fail to preach the truth. There are so many lies and deceit. We should speak the truth all the time and, as Christians, we should stand by the truth."

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ANNIVERSARY:
President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

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ical partners because of their closeness to the people and knowledge of the local terrain.

He warned criminal elements against attempting to disrupt the peace in the state, declaring: "Edo State is not a safe place for criminals."

Beyond security, Okpebholo said his administration was implementing programmes in healthcare, infrastructure, agriculture and education under its SHINE Agenda.

He cited the reopening of several hospitals across the state which, according to him, had remained closed for years, with some shut for nearly two decades.

The governor also disclosed that more than 600,000 residents had been enrolled in the

Edo State Health Insurance Scheme (EDOHIC), while salaries were being paid regularly.

He further noted that Edo remained one of the few states implementing the N75,000 minimum wage.

While acknowledging that "there is still much to do," Okpebholo said the achievements recorded so far constituted a foundation upon which his administration would continue to build.

He commended Edo residents for their patience and support, assuring them that his government would continue to listen to their concerns and respond to their needs.

"Government exists to serve you, and I will keep listening, even when the feedback is uncomfortable," he said.

Nigeria @66: Era of prosperity...

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According to him, Nigeria recorded more than \$6 billion in non-oil export revenue in 2025, which he described as the highest ever recorded by the country.

"These are not idle claims. International observers, journalists, NGOs and multilateral institutions can see the change," Tinubu said.

The President said the next phase of his administration would focus principally on reducing the cost of living by lowering the cost of production and transportation.

He promised greater investment in mechanised agriculture, irrigation, seeds, fertiliser, storage and transportation, alongside the completion of roads, railways and ports linking farms and factories to markets.

"Our priority is to bring down the cost of living," he said.

Tinubu argued that lowering production and distribu-

tion costs would ultimately translate into cheaper goods and services for consumers.

He said government would also make productivity, jobs, enterprise and industrial growth central to its policies.

"I want to see more Nigerians making things. I want to see more Nigerian farms feeding our cities and supplying our factories. I want to see Nigerian businesses selling Nigerian goods to the whole world," he said.

The President acknowledged that millions of Nigerians were still struggling with food, school fees, medical expenses and transportation costs.

He attributed the difficulties largely to decades of low productivity, inadequate infrastructure, limited opportunities and institutional weaknesses, rather than solely to the reforms undertaken during the past three years.

"We cannot erase in four years what accumulated over generations. But we can change its course," Tinubu said.

Edo holds Independence Day...

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"We should preach the truth because in our congregations we have all manner of people, including kidnappers and other criminal elements. Our words have the power to transform lives," he said.

Apostle Faraday also called on religious leaders to speak truth to power and encourage their followers to pursue peace, righteousness and responsible citizenship.

He commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for what he described as the peace being experienced in Edo State under his administration, urging citizens to continue to collaborate with and support the government.

According to him, the Independence Day programme was organised to celebrate Nigeria's 66th Independence Anniversary and pray for peace in the country, particularly as the

nation approaches the 2027 general elections.

Also speaking, Rev. Fr. Daniel Osayomire Iyangbe urged Nigerians to remain hopeful and endure the current economic and social challenges confronting the country.

He called on citizens to work harder and cooperate with the government and security agencies in the fight against criminality.

"Good governance is a product of synergy where citizens and the authority work together to get a better result," he said.

The guest speaker, Pastor Emmanuel Ibiwoye, said God had preserved Nigeria despite the challenges confronting the nation, expressing optimism that the country would continue to enjoy peace.

Speaking from Isaiah 9:6 and John 14:27, Pastor Ibiwoye prayed for divine peace upon Nigeria, particularly as the country approaches the 2027 general elections.

Edo revenue chief bags ICAN Award

BENIN CITY

The Executive Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service (EIRS), Mr. John Odior, has received an award of recognition from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), Benin and District Society, for his visionary leadership, tax administration reforms and commitment to fiscal responsibility in Edo State.

The award was presented to Odior on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, by the 34th Chairman of the Society, Dr. (Mrs.) Ijeoma Emuze, FCA, during a courtesy visit by the newly elected executive members of the Society to the EIRS Corpo-

rate Head Office in Benin City.

Emuze said the recognition was in appreciation of Odior's leadership qualities, reforms in tax administration and contributions to the development of the accounting profession in the state.

She said the visit was also aimed at introducing the newly elected and inaugurated executive members of the Society to the EIRS chairman.

"We are here to appreciate you for your support and active participation in the activities of the Institute, and to present the newly elected and inaugurated executives of the Society," she said.

She also informed the EIRS management of the 13th

edition of the Elder Sunday Nosakhare Memorial Lecture scheduled for October 1, 2026.

Responding, Odior expressed appreciation to the ICAN Benin and District Society for the recognition, describing the Institute as Nigeria's foremost professional accounting body because of its strategic role and commitment to professionalism.

He disclosed that the EIRS had, under his leadership, strengthened and professionalised its workforce, noting that the number of chartered accountants in the Service had increased from fewer than 20 to almost 40.

Odior urged the newly elected executives of the Society to

demonstrate greater patriotism by upholding the ideals of statehood and promoting responsible citizenship.

He specifically charged ICAN to encourage taxable individuals and corporate organisations to fulfil their civic obligations by paying their taxes within approved time-lines.

The EIRS boss further urged the Institute to join the campaign for greater taxpayer awareness and sensitisation, particularly at the sub-national level, stressing that improved understanding of tax obligations was critical to strengthening internally generated revenue and sustainable development.



INSPECTION:

Former President Goodluck Jonathan (3rd left) at the Azikel Refinery in Yenagoa

Former president Jonathan commends progress on Azikel refinery

PHILIP JEREMIAH EKE

YENAGOA

Nigeria's former President, Goodluck Jonathan, has commended progress on the construction of the Azikel Refinery in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, describing the project as a potential hub of industrialisation in the Niger Delta.

In a statement published on his official Facebook page, the former president commended the scale, vision and strategic importance of the refinery, describing it as a "hub of the new industrialisation" of the Niger Delta and Nigeria's South-south region.

"I was pleased to visit the Azikel Refinery in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, and to see firsthand the progress being made on this important project," Mr Jonathan said.

He said the refinery, which is designed to produce a full range of refined petroleum products, including petrol,

would contribute to Nigeria's efforts to expand domestic refining capacity, strengthen energy security, promote industrial development and diversify the economy.

Mr Jonathan also commended the President of Azikel Group, Eruani Azibapu, for his vision, resilience and investment in the project, as well as his efforts to promote private sector-led industrialisation in the Niger Delta.

In August, Mr Eruani had explained that the refinery, originally licensed in 2015, had undergone extensive value engineering and redesign, resulting in an increase in processing capacity to 25,000 barrels per day and raising of total investment to about \$1 billion.

The Azikel Refinery was licensed by former President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 and has now gone through several enhanced value engineering and redesign to a 25,000 barrels per day capacity.

It is now valued as a \$1 billion investment. The facility is a full slate hydro-skimming refinery capable of producing Premium Motor Spirit, diesel, aviation fuel, kerosene, and liquefied petroleum gas, with plans to expand capacity to 125,000 barrels per day in the future.

The refinery was conceived as a strategic industrial project aimed at transforming Bayelsa State into a major industrial hub while creating employment opportunities and stimulating economic growth across the Niger Delta and Nigeria.

Following his visit to the refinery, Mr Jonathan said projects such as the Azikel Refinery and the Dangote Refinery were important steps towards greater local content, self-reliance and energy security in Nigeria.

According to him, investments of such magnitude demonstrate the potential of the Niger Delta to evolve beyond its traditional role as a crude oil-producing region into a major centre for refining, manufacturing, value ad-

dition, employment generation and industrial development.

The former president also acknowledged the contributions of the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC) and the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) to the development of the refinery.

He commended AFC President Samaila Zubairu and the corporation's board, as well as Afreximbank President George Elombi and the bank's board, for their financial and institutional support for the project.

Mr Jonathan said the Azikel Group's commitment to developing industrial infrastructure in the Niger Delta would help add value to Nigeria's natural resources, create sustainable employment and contribute to the country's economic transformation.

He added that such investments could also support broader industrial development across Africa by strengthening local production capacity and creating opportunities for economic growth.

Nigeria @ 66: Edo Deputy Gov, Speaker, EIRS boss salute Nigerians, urge peace, unity

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

Edo State Deputy Governor, Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. (Prince) Yekini Idaiye; and Chairman of the Edo State Internal Revenue Service

(EIRS), Mr. John Osirenimhe Odior, have felicitated with Nigerians on the occasion of the country's 66th Independence Anniversary, urging citizens to remain patriotic and committed to peace, unity and national development.

In separate Independence Day messages, the Edo leaders acknowledged the challenges

confronting the nation but expressed confidence in Nigeria's resilience and capacity to overcome its difficulties and realise its enormous potential.

Idahosa, in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Friday Aghedo, urged Nigerians to renew their faith in the country and commit themselves to building a stronger,

united and prosperous nation.

He described October 1 as a reminder of the courage and sacrifices of the generation that secured Nigeria's independence in 1960, noting that the country had demonstrated remarkable resilience despite the challenges it had faced over the years.

According to him, Nigeria's greatest strength remains its people and diversity, stressing the need for citizens to recommit themselves to the ideals of

unity, peace, justice, democracy and shared prosperity.

"Nigeria is a nation of great promise. We may have faced challenges along the way, but our story is not one of failure; it is one of resilience, courage, and an unbroken determination to build a better country," he said.

The Deputy Governor stressed that nation-building could not be left to government alone, noting that patriotism, sacrifice, creativity and commitment were required from every Nigerian.

Idahosa commended President

Bola Tinubu for efforts to reposition the economy and strengthen the foundation for sustainable development, assuring that sub-national governments would continue to support the national development agenda.

He also reaffirmed the commitment of the Governor Monday Okpebholo-led administration to improving the lives of Edo residents through investments in security, infrastructure, healthcare, education, agriculture and human capital development.



INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY:

Apostle Faraday Sule speaking during the Independence Day prayer and praise session at Government House, Benin City.

Atshelege reaffirms faith in democracy

BENEDICT OKATE

OLOGBO

The Iyatsere of Warri Kingdom and Chief Executive Officer of Ologbo Hospital Limited, High Chief Johnson Atshelege, has commended the resilience of Nigerians, particularly youths and women, while reaffirming his faith in democracy and national unity.

In his Independence Day message, Atshelege congratulated Nigerians at home and abroad, describing the nation's journey

since independence as a reflection of the courage, resilience and determination of its people.

He said that despite the country's economic and social challenges, Nigerians had continued to work, innovate, establish businesses and contribute to national development.

According to him, Independence Day should go beyond celebration and serve as a reminder of the collective responsibility to build a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Nigeria.

"Independence Day is not merely a celebration of our history; it is a reminder of the enormous responsibility we all share in building the Nigeria we desire."

The Ologbo Hospital boss particularly commended Nigerian youths for their creativity, enterprise and determination, noting their growing contributions to technology, agriculture, entertainment, sports, entrepreneurship, education, healthcare and the creative industry.

He urged government and other stakeholders to invest more in education, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, stressing that youth empowerment was critical to Nigeria's future.

The Iyatsere of Warri Kingdom also urged private-sector leaders and successful Nigerians to complement government efforts through investments in healthcare, education, human capital development, job creation and community development.

He expressed optimism that Nigeria could overcome its challenges if citizens and leaders remained committed to peace, justice, hard work and responsible leadership.

On democracy, High Chief Atshelege reaffirmed his belief in the democratic process as an important pathway for national development and urged Nigerians to protect democratic institutions, respect the rule of law and participate peacefully in the political process.

Don't pull down Okpebholo, Oba Ewuare II, Prophetess Edoriawhe warns

MATTHEW OKAGHA

BENIN CITY

The General Overseer of God's Gift Church of Jesus Christ, Prophetess Patience Azeta Edoriawhe, JP, has cautioned individuals and groups against any attempt to undermine or pull down the Governor of Edo State, Senator Monday Okpebholo, and the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II.

The Prophetess, who renewed her support for the Governor and the Benin monarch, described the two institutions as critical pillars of peace, stability, unity and progress in Edo State.

She said while Governor Okpebholo occupies a constitutionally established political office, the Oba of Benin represents a revered traditional institution deeply rooted in the history, culture and identity of the Edo people.

According to her, both institutions are ordained to contribute to the peace, order and development of society and should therefore not be subjected to unnecessary attacks, ridicule or campaigns capable

of creating division among the people.

Prophetess Edoriawhe warned that attempts to pull down constituted authorities or traditional institutions for political, personal or sectional interests could have far-reaching consequences for the peace and stability of the state.

She urged those who may have disagreements with the Governor or the traditional institution to pursue dialogue, constructive criticism and lawful means of expressing their concerns rather than resorting to destructive campaigns.

The clergywoman appealed to political leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, traditional stakeholders and the general public to place the collective interest of Edo State above personal ambitions and political differences.

She maintained that no individual or group could build a prosperous society by constantly attacking its institutions of leadership.

She said: "We must learn to respect constituted authority. The Governor has been entrusted with the responsibility of administering the state, while the Oba occupies a

sacred traditional institution that has preserved our identity and heritage for generations.

"We may disagree with leaders on certain issues, but disagreement should never become an excuse to destroy the institutions they represent."

Prophetess Edoriawhe particularly urged the people of Edo State to give Governor Okpebholo the necessary support, prayers and constructive advice to enable his administration deliver on its responsibilities to the people.

She also called for continued respect for Oba Ewuare II, describing the Benin throne as an institution whose relevance goes beyond the personality of the occupant.

According to her, the Oba remains an important symbol of the history, culture, unity and dignity of the Benin people, stressing that the traditional institution must be protected from political manipulation and needless controversy.

The General Overseer further charged religious and traditional leaders to continue to preach peace, tolerance and unity, particularly in a period when political differences can easily generate unnecessary tension in society.

She expressed optimism that Edo State would contin-

ue to witness greater peace and development if its people closed ranks and supported institutions working for the common good.

Prophetess Edoriawhe reaffirmed her commitment to peace, good governance and the progress of Edo State, while praying for divine wisdom, strength and guidance for Governor Okpebholo and Oba Ewuare II in the dis-

charge of their respective responsibilities.

She urged Edo people to reject bitterness and divisive tendencies, declaring that the future of the state should not be sacrificed on the altar of political rivalry, personal interest or institutional antagonism.

"Let us protect our peace, respect our institutions and work together for the Edo State we desire," she said.



PROPHETESS PATIENCE AZETA EDORIAWHE JP



in Loving MEMORY

The families of **ISIDAHOMEN** and **MOMODU** of Irrua,
Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State.

*Announces the death of their Son, Husband, Father, Grandfather and Uncle
who passed away peacefully on August 29th, 2026, at the age of 84.*

Prince Engr. John Ijjezele ISIDAHOMEN

Prince Engr. JOHN IJIEZELE ISIDAHOMEN spent a dedicated 50-year career as an Engineer and later in the capacity of Permanent Secretary leading to his retirement. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, cousin and devout Christian.

BURIAL ARRANGEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

- **Tuesday October 13 @4:30pm** – Vigil Mass at St Gabriel Catholic Church, Sapele Road, Benin City.
- **Thursday October 15 @ 5pm** – Vigil Mass at Annunciation Catholic Church, No. 11, Eson Street, Eguare - Irrua, Esan Central LGA, Edo State.
- **Friday October 16 @ 11am** – Funeral Mass at Annunciation Catholic Church, No. 11, Eson Street, Eguare - Irrua, Esan Central LGA, Edo State. Interment follows at his residence #3 Uwenujie Quarters, Eguare - Irrua, Esan Central LGA, Edo State.
- **Saturday October 17 @12 noon** Reception at Uwenujie Primary School, Eguare - Irrua, Esan Central LGA, Edo State.
- **Sunday October 18 @ 9:30am**
Thanksgiving Mass at Annunciation Catholic Church, No. 11, Eson Street, Eguare - Irrua, Esan Central LGA, Edo State.

HE IS SURVIVED BY:

Mrs. Agnes Isidahomen
Mrs. Regina Isidahomen
Oseyi Isidahomen
Imonitie Isidahomen
Ehimen Isidahomen
Ayemere Isidahomen
Aituaje Odey
Iyamabho Isidahomen
Amen Omoike
Osemenkhian Isidahomen
Isedua Ebodaghe
Edenogie Isidahomen
And many grandchildren, in laws, brothers, sisters and cousins.

Signed:
Engr. IMONITIE ISIDAHOMEN
For the family



Erosion Threat: Sadoh commends Edo Ecological Fund Committee for timely intervention

LAMAI CASSIUS

AUCHI

The Executive Chairman of Etsako Central Local Government, Hon. Dame Vera Sadoh, has commended the Edo State Ecological Fund and Management Committee for its prompt intervention in erosion-devastated communities in the council area.

Hon. Sadoh gave the commendation when members of the committee, led by its Chairman, Amb. Terry Igiebor, inspected flood and gully erosion sites in Etsako Central.

Represented by the Vice Chairman, Hon. Agboire Robinson, the Chairman said tackling the persistent ecological challenges would significantly improve safety and living conditions for residents of affected

communities.

She expressed appreciation to the State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for constituting the committee, and to the Edo Ecological Fund (EDOECOFUND) for prioritizing the needs of Etsako Central.

Speaking after the inspection, Amb. Igiebor said the visit was for an on-the-spot assessment of the critical environmental risks posed by gully erosion to lives and property.

Led by technical engineers, the committee inspected erosion sites in Anegbette, Ogbona

and Iraokhor communities to ascertain the extent of damage.

In Anegbette, the team also assessed the river axis where flooding has submerged a primary school road, cutting off access to the grammar school and the road linking Etsako Central to neighbouring local

governments including Uromi and Ubiaja in Esan North-East.

Amb. Igiebor assured residents that the State Government is taking decisive steps to address ecological challenges across Edo State and that intervention would follow the assessment.

Independence: Demand more from elected leaders, Saraki urges youths

ABUJA

Former Senate President, Bukola Saraki, has urged Nigerian youths to demand greater accountability, opportunities and better governance from elected leaders as the country marks its 66th Independence anniversary.

Saraki, in an Independence Day message issued on Thursday, said young Nigerians who had grown up under democracy had every right to expect more from the country and its leaders, particularly in areas affecting their education, employment, security and future.

Reflecting on Nigeria's political history, the former Kwara State governor said the significance of democracy was more readily appreciated by Nigerians who experienced military rule and witnessed the country's return to civilian government in 1999.

"For those of us who lived through military rule, our return to democracy in 1999 meant a great deal. Simply being able to choose our leaders felt like a victory. Because it was," Saraki said.

He, however, noted that the expectations of younger Nigerians were shaped by a different experience, as many of them had never experienced military rule or the political uncertainty that preceded the return to democracy.

Saraki said the younger generation was therefore entitled to ask whether the democratic system was delivering tangible improvements in their everyday lives.

"But imagine saying this to a young Nigerian today, one navigating university, national service, or years of looking for a job. They understand that democracy matters.

"They would just like to know when this democracy that we celebrate will begin to make a difference in their own lives," he stated.

The former Senate President listed some of the questions confronting young Nigerians, including whether they would complete their education on time, secure employment, live safely and build fulfilling lives without being compelled to leave the country.

"Can I finish school on time? Will I find work? Can I travel safely? Do I really have to leave

my country to have a chance at the life that I want?" he quoted young Nigerians as asking.

According to Saraki, such concerns should not be interpreted as evidence that young Nigerians have lost faith in Nigeria, arguing that demanding better living conditions could itself be an expression of patriotism.

He said young Nigerians were increasingly aware of the country's potential and the talent available across different sectors, but questioned why many of them continued to struggle to secure opportunities that would enable them to thrive.



66th Independence Anniversary celebration in Abuja.

Worker dies as Anambra demolition goes wrong

ANAMBRA

A 25-year-old worker, Bakeru Iwal, has died after a section of an old building he was helping to demolish collapsed on him in Otolu-Nnewi, Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

The incident reportedly occurred on Tuesday when the building, which was being demolished, suddenly caved in, trapping Iwal under the debris.

Eyewitnesses and residents near the scene said the de-

ceased was one of the workers involved in the demolition when the section of the structure collapsed.

Confirming the incident, the spokesperson for the Anambra State Police Command, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, said operatives attached to the Otolu Divisional Headquarters responded promptly to the scene and commenced preliminary investigations.

Ikenga said the area was cordoned off and the scene documented, while the deceased's body was evacuated to the

mortuary pending autopsy and other necessary examinations.

He said, "The Anambra State Police Command has commenced an investigation into an incident involving the demolition of an old building at Otolu-Nnewi, Nnewi North Local Government Area, where one person reportedly died following the collapse of part of the structure.

"Upon receiving the report, police operatives attached to the Otolu Divisional Headquarters promptly responded to the scene, cordoned off the

area and commenced preliminary investigations.

"The scene was also documented, while the deceased, later identified as Bakeru Iwal, a 25-year-old male, was evacuated to the mortuary for preservation, pending autopsy and other necessary examinations.

"Preliminary information indicates that the building was being demolished when a section of the structure suddenly collapsed, trapping one of the workers."

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, Anambra State

Command, CP Nnanna Ama, directed that the investigation be conducted professionally and thoroughly to establish the circumstances surrounding the incident and determine whether any person bears responsibility.

The CP ordered that appropriate action be taken based on the outcome of the investigation.

"The command urges members of the public to remain calm and allow the investigation to proceed, while further updates will be provided as necessary," the statement added.

2027: Kano gov urges citizens to shun acts capable of breaching peace

KANO

The Kano State Governor, Abba Kabir Yusuf, has appealed to the people of the state to shun acts capable of breaching the existing peace and stability of the state as the 2027 general elections draws nearer.

Yusuf made the appeal in his address on the occasion of the 66th National Independence Anniversary held at the Sani Abacha Indoor Stadium on Thursday.

He also called on the residents of the state to continue to embrace peace, unity, and mutual respect for the economic growth and development of the state.

He said, "As the 2027 General Election is fast approaching, I also appeal to you all to continue to uphold peace, unity, and mutual respect. Let us

shun violence and

anything that may threaten the peace and stability of our dear state".

The governor further urged citizens of the state and Nigerians at large to continue to pray for a peaceful, free, fair, and credible election in the country.

"I must also seize this opportunity to appreciate all our security agencies for their tireless efforts in maintaining peace and protecting the lives and property of our people at all times. I urge our people to reject violence, division, intolerance and criminality, and to embrace peace, lawful enterprise and responsible citizenship," he said.

He said his administration remained committed to consolidate the gains so far made in education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, water

supply, security and human capital development.

"Our administration remain committed to consolidating the gains we have made in education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, water supply, security and human capital development.

"We shall continue to work with the Federal Government, Local Governments, traditional and religious institutions, the private sector and development partners in the service of our people," he said.

"As we mark this 66th Independence Anniversary, let us renew our faith in Nigeria, uphold peace and unity, and contribute our share towards building a stronger, more prosperous and peaceful nation.

The governor reaffirmed the commitment of his administration to strengthen

collaboration with all security agencies operating in the State, while providing additional logistics and operational support to security formations, particularly the Military, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, DSS in vulnerable and frontline communities.

"We have also sustained grassroots security coordination and increased attention to local government

areas including Tsanyawa, Ghari, Gwarzo, Shanono, Bagwai, Rogo, Kiru/Bebeji, Karaye, Tudun Wada/Doguwa and other communities facing security challenges, with the objective of protecting lives, restoring confidence and enabling residents to return to their farms and normal economic activities.

He noted that the state gov-

ernment has also taken decisive steps to confront the growing challenge of drug abuse and illicit trafficking adding that the decision to establish the Kano State Multi-Agency Task Force on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and issued an Executive

Order to strengthen the fight against illicit substances, thug-gery and related criminal activities is yielding good results.

He said the state government has also provided provided start-up capital, livestock, skills and other forms of support to thousands of beneficiaries across the state as part of effort to support vulnerable families.

He appreciated the Federal Government's support for critical infrastructure, security and other development initiatives in the state.

NEWS

2027: Rivers is nobody's private estate – ADC gov candidate

PORT HARCOURT

Governorship candidate of the African Democratic Congress in Rivers State, Dr Gabriel Pidomson, has said Rivers people will reject any attempt to impose a governor on them in the 2027 election.

Pidomson criticised the 'Rainbow Coalition', a political group in the state initiated by the Minister of the Feder-

al Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, saying it cannot dissuade electorate from choosing who they want.

Pidomson, who spoke to newsmen in Port Harcourt on Thursday about his campaign preparations, said the election would not be a contest between individuals or political blocs but a referendum by Rivers people on who should govern the state going forward.

He declared, "The 2027 elec-

tion is not just between Pidomson and the others. It is going to be Rivers people versus others."

Taking a direct swipe at the political camp associated with Wike, Pidomson said the state was not the property of any individual or political group.

"Rivers State is nobody's private estate. It is our common patrimony," he declared.

Dr Pidomson also dismissed claims that the Rainbow Coalition has a growing influence,

boasting that the ADC would "eclipse their rainbow" in the governorship contest.

"On the so-called Rainbow Coalition, well, they have the right to boast everywhere. I can assure you that the real people are not with them. And we shall eclipse their rainbow next year," he said.

The state ADC governorship candidate alleged that Rivers' people were "morally angry" over what he described as the domination of the state by one political

figure, insisting that the electorate was ready for a change.

He challenged Wike's political camp to project what the former governor had attracted to Rivers since becoming minister of the FCT.

"As a minister of the FCT, tell me one project that Nyesom Wike has brought to the state," Pidomson asked, even as he said the appointments influenced by Wike have largely benefited his political associates only.

Pidomson said his campaign had already undertaken consultations across the state and engaged different ethnic and stakeholder groups, claiming that the consultations had revealed a strong desire for a government that would be "responsive and responsible."

He disclosed that his 10-point policy agenda was designed around the welfare of Rivers people, insisting: "They cannot rig us out."

Pidomson also warned against electoral manipulation, declaring that the ADC would deploy agents across polling units to monitor the voting and collation processes.

"Our agents will be on red alert to monitor the units across the state," Dr Pidomson stated.

He urged voters to remain at their polling units after casting their ballots until results were announced after the elections, saying, "With that it will be impossible for them to rig us out."

Pidomson further urged Rivers voters not to be intimidated by any political group, insisting that the 2027 election would mark a departure from what he described as the imposition of candidates against the wishes of the electorate.

"The votes of the people will count. The vote will be protected. No amount of rigging will prevail in the state," the ADC governorship candidate said.



INTERCESSORY:

Members of the Christ Apostolic Church Theatre of Deliverance and Healing Arena, Isheri Oshun, during their Annual Independence Day Intercessory Prayer Session at Isheri Oshun Bus stop in Lagos on Thursday

Mohbad: IGP approves family's petition for fresh probe

ABUJA

The Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, has approved a petition by the family of the late singer, Ilerioluwa Oladimeji Aloba, popularly known as Mohbad, seeking a fresh and comprehensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death.

The family disclosed this through its lawyer, Oladayo Ogungbe, in a statement dated

September 29, 2026, clarifying that the police re-investigation was ongoing despite the recent dismissal of a suit by the Federal High Court, Abuja.

Ogungbe, in the statement, said the Aloba family submitted the petition to the IGP on April 14, 2026, and that it was received at the Force Headquarters, Abuja, on May 7.

According to the statement, the petition raised concerns about inconsistencies in the previous investigative process

and called for a comprehensive forensic reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding Mohbad's death.

The lawyers said the petition was subsequently approved by the IGP and forwarded to the Lagos State Police Command for immediate action.

The family was later informed that the petition had been assigned to officers of the Special Enquiry Bureau for further investigation, according to the statement.

"The family's representative has since been invited and has engaged with the new team of investigators assigned to the matter."

"The family has continued to follow up with the investigators and remained engaged with the new investigative process," the lawyer disclosed.

The clarification followed the dismissal, on September 25, 2026, of Suit No. FHC/ABJ/CS/363/2026 by the Federal High Court, Abuja.

Three vigilantes feared killed in Kebbi-Niger border attack

KEBBI

Three vigilantes from Shanga Local Government Area of Kebbi State have reportedly been killed by suspected bandits while returning from Agwara in Niger State.

The victims were identified by local sources as Abubakar Mai Nera, the vigilante commander in Saminaka, Tanko Sarki and Amadu Saminaka.

The three men were said to be from Saminaka and Bakinturu communities in Shanga LGA.

According to the sources, the vigilantes were attacked around Kasabo, Binuwa and Mago communities, across the River Kwara, along the Kebbi-Niger border.

A local source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, alleged that the attackers set the victims ablaze after killing them.

"The three vigilantes were attacked while returning from

Agwara in Niger State. They were ambushed around Kasabo, Binuwa and Mago, across the River Kwara.

"Their attackers reportedly set them ablaze after the attack. As we speak, their bodies have not been recovered," the source said.

Another resident said search teams and members of the affected communities were still making efforts to locate the bodies.

"The incident happened on Friday, and the search is still ongoing. We are hoping that the bodies will be found so that the families can give them a proper burial," he said.

The incident has heightened concern among residents of communities along the Kebbi-Niger border, where attacks by armed groups have continued to pose security challenges.

When contacted, the Kebbi State Police Command said it was unaware of the incident.

Teacher bags life jail for defiling eight-year-old pupil

LAGOS

The Lagos State High Court sitting in Ikeja has sentenced a former teacher, Nwatu Isaac, to life imprisonment for defiling an eight-year-old pupil in the toilet of El-Bossaa Nursery and Primary School, Epe.

Justice Rahman Oshodi, in a judgment delivered on Tuesday, found Isaac guilty of defiling the girl on March 10, 2022, holding that the prosecution had proved the offence beyond reasonable doubt.

The court also ordered that Isaac's name be entered in the Sex Offenders Register in accordance with Sections 33 and 38 of the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency Law 2021. Isaac was prosecuted under Section 137 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015,

which prescribes life imprisonment for anyone who has unlawful sexual intercourse with a child.

The judge held that the prosecution established the two essential ingredients of the offence: that the victim was a child and that the convict had sexual intercourse with her.

Justice Oshodi rejected Isaac's denial that he went beyond the school gate on the day of the incident.

The convict had claimed that he went to the school to pick up pupils he conveyed on his motorcycle but remained at the gate.

The judge, however, held that Isaac's own evidence placed him at the school at the material time, while the victim identified him as the person who took her into the toilet.

The court also rejected his defence of alibi, noting that

Isaac did not claim to have been somewhere else when the offence occurred.

"On the convict's own admission, he was not at a considerable distance from the scene. He was at its gate," the judge held.

"The prosecutrix's evidence places him inside the premises. The defence of alibi therefore does not avail him."

Justice Oshodi found the testimony of the victim, who was nine when she testified, credible and consistent.

He said the girl gave a "clear, detailed and coherent account" of how Isaac, whom she knew as "Master Isaac", took her into the school toilet and sexually assaulted her.

The judge noted that the victim identified Isaac in court and that her account remained consistent despite lengthy cross-examination.

FG builds new control centre to strengthen power grid

OSOGBO

The Federal Government has commenced the construction of a new National Control Centre for the Nigerian Independent System Operator in Osogbo, Osun State, to replace a 64-year-old facility and strengthen the monitoring, management and security of Nigeria's electricity grid.

The groundbreaking ceremony was performed on Wednesday by Vice-President Kashim Shettima, represented by his Special Adviser on Legal and Compliance Matters, Alhaji Bashir Maidugu, with the Minister of Power, Joseph Tegbe, in attendance.

According to a statement issued by the minister's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Adeola Labzy, the project is part of the government's efforts to address weaknesses in electricity supply and improve the reliability of the national grid.

The statement read, "The Federal Government has begun construction of a new ultra-modern National Control Centre for the Nigerian Independent System Operator in Osogbo, Osun State, replacing a 64-year-old facility that no longer meets the demands of running Nigeria's grid."

Speaking through his representative, Shettima said reliable electricity was central to President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, stressing that power supply remained critical to economic growth, industrial productivity and social development.

He said electricity enabled manufacturers to plan production, small businesses to operate confidently and hospitals and schools to function effectively, while creating jobs and expanding economic opportunities.

The Vice-President described the National Control

Centre as a critical component of grid reliability, saying Nigeria needed modern infrastructure to manage its increasingly interconnected electricity system.

He said the country could not continue to operate a modern grid with outdated equipment and systems.

Shettima said the new ultra-modern control centre, when completed and operational, would enable Nigeria to maintain the security of its domestic grid while participating effectively in an interconnected regional system.

Describing the project as featuring modern SCADA systems, large-format control displays, communications infrastructure, data systems and enhanced security arrangements, Shettima said it would strengthen the technological foundation upon which the country's system operations capability would continue to develop.

NEWS

NLC demands new minimum wage, lower petrol prices

ABUJA

The Nigeria Labour Congress has demanded an immediate nationwide wage award and the commencement of negotiations for a new national minimum wage, including a reduction in the price of petrol, warning that rising living costs have eroded workers' purchasing power.

The NLC made the demands in an Independence Day statement signed by its President, Joe Ajaero, titled, "Our Hope Depends on the Choices We Make and the Actions We Take."

The union said the demands had become necessary as workers and other Nigerians continued to grapple with rising transportation, food, rent, and education costs.

It particularly linked the worsening cost-of-living crisis to the increase in petrol prices following the removal of the subsidy in 2023.

"Petrol now sells at N1,430 per litre or higher in major cities and far more in remote areas. The surge in transportation costs drives up the prices of food, school fees, rent, and nearly every necessity of life, while nominal wages remain stagnant," the NLC said.

The union argued that the Federal Government should urgently address the transmis-

sion of fuel costs to transportation and other areas of the economy. "Without cutting this chain, any effort to ease the suffering of the people is futile," it said.

The NLC also demanded the immediate implementation of a nationwide wage award covering workers in the federal, state and local governments, describing the measure as an emergency response to declining real incomes rather than a form of charity.

"A wage award is not charity. It is an emergency intervention

against the collapse of real income," the union said.

The demand comes against the backdrop of the October 2023 agreement between the Federal Government and organised labour following the removal of the petrol subsidy. The agreement provided for a N35,000 monthly wage award for federal workers and called for consideration of similar relief for state and local government workers.

The NLC further accused the government of failing to fully implement tax relief measures

contained in the October 2023 Memorandum of Understanding with labour. It called on the government to deliver the tax relief agreed during the dialogue and expedite negotiations for a new national minimum wage.

"The current N70,000 minimum wage was already destroyed by inflation before it was implemented," the union said, demanding the immediate constitution of a tripartite committee to formulate and legislate a new wage standard for 2027 before the end of the year.

Oborevwo orders Julius Berger to fix collapsed East-West road section

DELTA

Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwo, has ordered Julius Berger Nigeria Plc to commence immediate remedial work on the collapsed section of the East-West Road at Agbarho in Ughelli North Local Government Area.

The intervention is aimed at easing the hardship faced by motorists, residents and businesses following the failure of the Federal Government-owned road after heavy rainfall triggered erosion at the affected section.

The state Commissioner for Works (Rural Roads) and Public Information, Charles Aniagwu, disclosed this in a statement issued in Asaba on Thursday.

Aniagwu said the governor was concerned about the impact of the road failure on road users and had directed Julius Berger to intervene despite the road being under the Federal Government.

He said, "Although the East-West Road is a Federal Government-owned infrastructure, the governor is concerned about the hardship being experienced by Deltans and other Nigerians using the corridor.

"Consequently, he has direct-

ed Julius Berger to immediately intervene and undertake remedial works on the failed portion of the road."

The commissioner said the intervention reflected the administration's approach of responding to urgent infrastructure challenges based on the needs of residents.

"For us, governance should be driven by the needs of the people and not by bureaucratic boundaries," Aniagwu stated.

He described the East-West Road as a major economic corridor in the Niger Delta, linking communities and supporting the movement of people, agricultural produce, goods and services.

Aniagwu said the disruption could affect commuters, transport operators, traders and businesses operating along the route.

He assured road users that the remedial work would help improve traffic movement and reduce the hardship caused by the collapsed section.

The commissioner added that the state government would continue to work with relevant Federal Government agencies and private-sector partners to address infrastructure challenges affecting residents and economic activities.

Obasa rallies voters for APC, urges support for Tinubu, Hamzat

LAGOS

The Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly and All Progressives Congress House of Representatives candidate for Agege Federal Constituency, Mudashiru Obasa, has urged residents of the constituency to mobilise support for the party ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Obasa made the call while leading an APC mega rally at Amoo Field, Orile Agege, to officially flag off the party's campaign in the constituency on Wednesday.

In a statement made available by the DG campaign for both Agege and Orile-Agege, Pastor Johnson Babatunde on Thursday, addressing party supporters, the speaker urged them to take the campaign to households, markets, artisan groups, places of worship and community associations, saying the party should convert its

numerical strength in Agege into increased electoral support.

"Let us join hands and make sure we deliver. It is not just about victory; we must surpass our previous votes. Sound it loud to everybody – all trade associations, artisans, tribes, religious and traditional leaders. We have the numbers, and we will pour it into the APC," Obasa said.

He urged supporters to vote for President Bola Tinubu, the APC governorship candidate in Lagos State, Dr Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, Senator Idiat Oluranti Adebule, representing Lagos West, and himself as the party's House of Representatives candidate for Agege Federal Constituency.

The rally was attended by traditional and religious leaders, APC leaders and supporters, representatives of trade associations and artisan groups, as well as leaders of non-Yoruba communities.



66TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION:

Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State, parading at the 66th Independence Day Celebration in Lagos on Thursday.

Ogun 2027: Yayi, Abiodun boast of landmark victory

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun State chapter of the All Progressives Congress has held an interfaith prayer session ahead of the 2027 general elections, with the party's governorship candidate, Senator Solomon Adeola, expressing confidence that the party would emerge victorious.

Adeola, who spoke at the gathering on Wednesday, said he believed God would grant the APC victory and clear the way for his emergence as the seventh Executive Governor of Ogun State.

He said, "That same God that will give us victory on January 16 will also support me to become

the seventh Executive Governor of Ogun State."

The APC governorship candidate further expressed optimism that the party would secure victory without a major contest.

He said, "That same God that will give us victory on January 16 will also support me to become the seventeenth Executive Governor of Ogun State.

"God will give us victory and clear our path without a fight because there will be nobody contesting against us. God has started that already. On February 6, 2027, there will be nobody, because they are all partyless.

"They are running helter-skelter to perfect their short-

comings, but God has spoken that He's going to give us victory without a fight."

Also speaking, the state Governor, Dapo Abiodun, said the prayer session provided an opportunity for APC members to seek God's guidance and commit their political journey towards 2027 into His hands.

Abiodun said the gathering was meant to put God first through prayers, songs and thanksgiving, expressing confidence that the prayers would yield positive results.

Reflecting on his political journey, the governor recalled the challenges surrounding the 2019 governorship election, say-

ing his emergence as governor was a testimony to God's intervention.

He noted that the political circumstances at the time were difficult, but maintained that the same God who helped him navigate the challenges remained capable of guiding the state through another transition.

"We have gathered here to seek the Almighty's face and commit our journey of 2027 into His hands.

"Today, we have come here to put God first, to pray, dance and sing. I am very confident, without a doubt, that our hearts' desires shall be granted by the men of God who have prayed for us.

Dangote blames marketers, IOCs for Lamu refinery protests

Nigerian billionaire and President of the Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, has blamed local marketers and international oil companies for fuelling protests over land earmarked for his proposed \$16bn oil refinery in Lamu, Kenya.

Dangote and the President of Kenya, William Ruto, performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the refinery in Lamu on Wednesday. This comes even as a court halted construction activities due to a land dispute.

Dangote made the allegation while speaking to the BBC's Focus on Africa programme, amid protests by some residents over

compensation for land acquired for the refinery project.

The refinery is expected to have a processing capacity of 700,000 barrels per day when completed in 2030. Dangote disputed claims that the company had taken more land than it required, saying it only used the portion allocated to it by the Kenyan Government.

"They said some people are demonstrating; demonstrating about what? Have you ever seen people demonstrating against themselves in terms of development?" he asked.

Africa's richest man dismissed the protests as "games played by local marketers and internation-

al players", insisting the refinery would go ahead and would be ready by 2030 as planned.

The groundbreaking was also attended by the leaders of Uganda, Ethiopia, Togo and Benin. Dangote has offered regional governments a combined 30 per cent stake in the refinery, according to Reuters.

The billionaire insisted that the protests would not stop the refinery project, which he described as his largest proposed investment outside Nigeria.

The project is expected to become the largest refinery in East Africa and Kenya's biggest infrastructure project since independence, surpassing the \$5.1bn

Standard Gauge Railway.

Dangote said the refinery would demonstrate that the success recorded with his 700,000bpd refinery in Nigeria could be replicated elsewhere on the continent.

"Lekki proved that it can be done, Lamu must prove that it can be repeated," he said.

However, the Save Lamu campaign group has raised concerns about the environmental impact of the project on the local community. The co-founder of the group, Walid Ali, told the BBC that residents wanted to see the findings of the environmental impact assessment and the proposed mitigation measures.

NEWS

\$100,000 Nigeria Prize for Literature shortlist sends poets' book demand soaring

Demand for books by the three poets short-listed for the \$100,000 2026 NLNG Nigeria Prize for Literature has surged since the announcement.

Nigeria news updates
The poets told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that the recognition has expanded readership while placing poetry and its questions about Nigeria, identity, faith and society before a wider audience, one voice before another.

The poets are: Tares Oburumu, author of Flora's Love Colony; James Eze, author of Unbind Me Now and Ogaga Ifowodo, author of Why Does God Need a Gun?

The three books emerged from an initial longlist of 11 entries in the 2026 poetry category.

Eze said the increased attention demonstrated the wider impact of the prize on Nigerian literature and how it was already taking his work beyond Nigeria.

He cited a PhD student from Makerere University, Uganda, who contacted him after seeing his television appearance and

asked where she could get his collection.

NAN E-Mail service
"The themes in the book align with her research topic on the upheavals and political displacement across Africa," he said.

Eze said the shortlist had also brought literature into wider public attention, including among people who were not ordinarily interested in books.

"You find interest in the liter-

ary culture shooting skywards.

"So, a lot of people are paying attention to literature now. Many people are reading," he said.

He said the recognition had brought goodwill messages and changed how people viewed him, although he did not write 'Unbind Me Now' to win the prize.

"If there were no rewards, I would still write because for me it is not really about writing for any prize.

CHANGE OF SURNAME

I, formerly known, called and addressed as **NNWANERI-HEME CHIDINMA MARVELOUS** now wish to be known, called and addressed as **IHEME CHIDINMA MARVELOUS**, UBA Bank, and all concerned authorities should please take note.

CORRECTION/REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **OSAGHAE OSAWONAMEN DEBORAH**, and not **OSAGHALE DEBORAH OSAWONAMEN**. Henceforth, wish to be known and addressed as **OSAGHAE OSAWONAMEN DEBORAH**. Surname: **OSAGHAE**. First name: **OSAWONAMEN**, and middle name: **DEBORAH**. All former documents remain valid. General public should take note.

ADDITION OF MIDDLE NAME

The general public is hereby Notified that: **ELEDUH BRIDGET**, and **ELEDUH BRIDGET IMARENAKHUE**, is one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **ELEDUH BRIDGET IMARENAKHUE**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notify that **AMAGA UCHECHI** and **AMAGA UCHECHI ALOBU** are one and the same person. now i wish to be known and addressed as **MONDAY UCHECHI FAVOUR**. all former documents remain valid. general public should take notes.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. JACKSON FAITH**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. FAITH OHANMU**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **OTEN - OBASUYI ITOHAN TESSY**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **OKUNDONOR ITOHAN TESSY**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **UDUCHUKWU AMARACHI MERCY**, and **OKECHUKWU GIFT ONYINYECHUKWU**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **OKECHUKWU GIFT ONYINYECHUKWU**. All former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. ONYINYECHI ABEL NWANI**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. ONYINYECHI IFEANACHO LUKE ABEL**. all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. RITA OMOSUKPON OSADARE**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. RITA OMOSUKPON OSASERI**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DOB

The general public is hereby notified that **AIGBOGHO AIFUWA**, and **CEDRIC**, are one and the same person. henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **AIGBOGHO CEDRIC AIFUWA**. And also my correct date of birth is 10th day of OCTOBER 1994 and not 7th day of AUGUST 1992 as wrongly capture on my (B.V.N) all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. RITA OMOSUKPON OSADARE**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. RITA OMOSUKPON OSASERI**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CAVEAT EMPTOR
BUYER BEWARE

This is to notify the general public that all lands comprised in Eko Community, Ugha in Uhumwode Local Government Area of Edo State are not for sale by anybody whatsoever without the written consent and or authorization of the Odionwere and his elders in council. Further take notice that all lands purportedly sold or purchased without the consent and or written authorization of the Odionwere are all null, void and of no effect whatsoever. Also take henceforth, notice that anybody whatsoever that purchases any plot(s) of land from Eko Community Ugha does so at his or her OWN RISK. The general public, Edo State Geographic information service should note.

FOR ENQUIRY CONTACT:
Victor Ose Ogbomon Esq. (J P.)
Solicitor to Odionwere and Elders of Eko Community Ugha.
TEL: 07034469000. E.MAIL: victorogbomon@gmail.com and or victorogbomon@nigerianbar.ng

PUBLIC NOTICE

MISSING MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

The general public is hereby notified that I, **OSASERI RITA OMOSUKPON** is the rightful owner of a MISSING MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE. That the said certificate was issued 13th December in the year 2008 at central Baptist church, Ring Road, Benin city. That the said marriage certificate was discovered missing sometime in the month of JULY 2023 in Benin City Edo state, Nigeria. That all effort made to trace it has proved abortive. Hence, this publication for record purposes, concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

Signed: **OSASERI RITA O.**

PUBLIC NOTICE

HOLY CITY CHAPEL GLORIOUS GLOBAL ASSEMBLY MINISTRY

The General Public is hereby notified that the above-named Church has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for registration under Part F of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020.

THE TRUSTEES ARE:
OKWOMA ELVIS (Chairman)
EMAVWOSE ANNA (Secretary)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:
To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. To propagate Christian faith, love, and unity among members. To engage in community welfare and charitable activities.

Any objection to this registration should be forwarded to the Registrar-General, Corporate Affairs Commission, Plot 420, Tigris Crescent, Off Aguiyi Ironsi Street, Maitama, Abuja, within 28 days of this publication.

OKWOMA ELVIS (chairman)
EMAVWOSE ANNA (Secretary)

ISIEDUN COMMUNITY

UPPER BENIN-EKEHUA ROAD
OVIA NORTH EAST L.G.A EDO STATE

DATE: 29/9/20

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT: VERIFICATION EXERCISE.

This is to inform the General Public particularly land owners and property developers that the Elders council of Isiedun Community has approved Verification Exercise from 5th October 2026 to 5th January 2027 at the Community Town Hall on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10am – 4pm each day. The purpose of the verification exercise is to ascertain true ownership of land and property in the community. The exercise will be fair and transparent as it will avoid any clash of ownership claims that may lead to chaos and ill-feelings in the community.

Concerned persons are strictly advised to present the original documents and photocopies of their property to the verification committee within the stipulated period as failure to do so will lead to outright forfeiture of such property.


Pa Osawenwenze Imasuen
(Odionwere)


Frank Aibueku
(General Secretary)


Mr. Sunday Omorodion
(Okaighele)

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
EDO STATE OF NIGERIA
PROBATE REGISTRY
BENIN CITY

WHEREAS the person whose name is set out in the first column hereunder died intestate on the date and at the place stated in the column; AND WHEREAS the persons whose names, addresses and claimed relationship to the deceased are set in the second column hereunder have applied to the Probate Registrar, High Court of Justice, Edo State of Nigeria for a grant of Letters of Administration of the real and personal property of the deceased.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Letters of Administration will be granted to such persons unless a NOTICE to prohibit the grant is filed in this Registry within Twenty One (21) days from the date of the publication of this notice.

1. MR. EGHOSA UHUNMWANGHO, late of Ohovbe, Ikpoba Okha L.G.A., who died on the 27th day of December, 2024 in U.S.A.

PED/757/2025
Mrs. Linda Omon Uhumwango, Mr. Samuel Noruwa Uhumwango and Mr. Richard Osarenoma Osarenmwinda of No 82, Boundary Road, GRA, Benin City, widow, son and family friend respectively of the deceased.

DATED THIS 30TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2026.


B. O. OSAWARU ESQ.
Probate Registrar

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
EDO STATE OF NIGERIA
PROBATE REGISTRY
BENIN CITY

WHEREAS the person whose name is set out in the first column hereunder died intestate on the date and at the place stated in the column; AND WHEREAS the persons whose names, addresses and claimed relationship to the deceased are set in the second column hereunder have applied to the Probate Registrar, High Court of Justice, Edo State of Nigeria for a grant of Letters of Administration of the real and personal property of the deceased.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Letters of Administration will be granted to such persons unless a NOTICE to prohibit the grant is filed in this Registry within Twenty One (21) days from the date of the publication of this notice.

1. MR. EMMANUEL EHIEMUA (A.K.A) EMMANUEL OIGIANGBE EHIEMUA, Late of Ekpoma, Esan West L.G.A., who died on the 22nd day of September, 2023 in Lagos.

PED/501/2026
Mrs. Aiyomorhuo Ehimua and Louis Ojomoh Esq of No 6, Ovie Whiskey Road, Off Ekehuan Road, widow and family friend respectively of the deceased.

DATED THIS 28TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2026.


B. O. OSAWARU ESQ.
Probate Registrar

Friday Sermon

Let our Islamic Scholars maintain dignity and good reputation! (2)

MUHAMMAD YUSUF BABANGIDA

Dear brothers and sisters! Indeed, Allah has perfected our religion for us, clarified it in the greatest manner, and took a covenant from the people of knowledge to convey it to the people and not to conceal it. He warned against following desires and made it clear, exalted is He, that the wrongdoers will not avail the servant in the slightest, and that Allah is the supporter of His pious servants.

HE, EXALTED IS HE, SAID:

"Then We put you, [O Muhammad], on an ordained way concerning the matter of religion; so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know. Indeed, they will not avail you against Allah at all. And indeed, the wrongdoers are allies of one another; but Allah is the protector of the righteous." [Surah Al-Jathiya: 18-19]

Therefore, part of what the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) took upon his companions at the time of allegiance, as Ubadah Bin As-Samit, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

"And to speak the truth wherever we are, not fearing the blame of the blamers." [Reported by Bukhari and Muslim]

Truly, the Rabbani Islamic scholars, the Godly Islamic scholars, the scholars of Allah, are the rightful heirs of the Prophets, fulfilling the saying of Allah, the Almighty:

"Those who deliver the messages of Allah and fear Him and do not fear anyone but Allah. And sufficient is Allah as Accountant." [Surah Al-Ahzab: 39]

They are the ones from whom Muslim believers must ask and whose statements they must adhere to, known for their correct knowledge, piety, and integrity. Unlike the corrupt Islamic scholars who have sold their hereafter for their worldly life, you see them changing colours every day, dining at every table, supporting the oppressors in their oppression, participating in their corruption, bringing forth odd opinions, attending gatherings of falsehood and vice without condemning them, merciful to the enemies of Allah and harsh towards the people of Islam, such individuals wallahi, cannot be trusted with the religion of Allah.

Respected brothers and sisters! Maintaining the dignity and reputation of Islamic scholars requires both respectful conduct from the Ummah and a commitment to unity, wisdom, and independence from the Islamic scholars themselves.

Islamic tradition holds that Islamic scholars carry forward the mission of teaching religious knowledge and guidance. They act as trusted authorities who clarify the Qur'an and Sunnah for Muslim believers.

Muslim believers should address and interact with Islamic scholars with deep respect, avoiding harsh or de-



meaning public criticism. Recognising the rank of knowledgeable individuals protects the Ummah from division and arrogance.

Islamic preachers and clerics should focus on fostering harmony and bridging gaps between different groups rather than engaging in public disputes over unnecessary issues.

Islamic scholars protect their reputation and moral authority by avoiding partisan political sponsorships that can divide the public, but they can clarify for the Ummah the stand of any politician!

Finally, dear brothers and sisters! There is no doubt that the Islamic scholars have a great status in Islam. Islam considers the Islamic scholars as the inheritors of the Prophets since they carry the religion to the laypeople. Allah Almighty assigns the Muslim scholars as witnesses to the truth and associates their testimony with that of Allah and that of His Angels.

If criticising and attacking Islamic scholars is intended to slander them and find faults with them, then such criticism is not allowed in Islam, because the Muslim is forbidden to harm his fellow Muslim, let alone Islamic scholars who must be given due respect.

IMAM IBN ASAKIR SAYS:

"The honour of the Islamic scholars is sacred and it is the norm of Allah to take revenge on those who slander

them. Whoever gives full reign to his tongue to insult the Islamic scholars and expose their faults, Allah will cause his heart to die within his body."

However, if you criticise an Islamic scholar in order to clarify something that he has made a mistake about and you do this in a respectful manner, then this is acceptable in Islam, or even recommended, in some cases. The Muslim believer is required to share whatever he knows about Islam with others. If the Muslim believer hears a Muslim scholar make a mistake, then he should clarify this mistake in a respectful and wise manner and, more

importantly, substantiate his clarification with textual evidence from Islamic tradition.

Our righteous predecessors (Salafus Salih) used to write responses (Rudud) to one another; however, they would be committed to ethical standards in their writings. Similarly, part of Hadith criticism (a discipline of Islamic knowledge) is concerned with scrutinising Prophetic statements and verifying the reliability of Hadith narrators.

Ya Allah, rectify for us our religion which is the safeguard of our affairs, and rectify for us our worldly life in which is our livelihood, and rectify for

us our hereafter in which is our return.

Ya Allah, do not make our calamity in our religion, and do not make the world our biggest concern or the limit of our knowledge.

Ya Allah, guide us to the Straight Path, and keep us away from the path of those who have incurred Your wrath and those who have gone astray, those who have changed, altered, and distorted the religion.

Ya Allah, prepare for this Ummah a matter of righteousness, in which the people of truth and faith are honoured, and the people of falsehood and disbelief are abased, and in which good is commanded, and the reprehensible is forbidden, O Hearer of supplication!

Ya Allah, support Your servants who strive in Your way, and destroy the murderous criminals, and save with Your mercy Your weak servants.

Ya Allah, grant us security in our lands, rectify our leaders and those in charge of our affairs, and place our governance in the hands of those who fear You, abide by Your will, and follow Your approval, ameen!

All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds. May the peace, blessings and salutations of Allah be upon our noble Messenger, Muhammad, and upon his family, his Companions and his true followers.

• Muhammad Yusuf Babangida 4 Brigade Chief Imam GRA Barracks Benin City Edo state.



Ya Allah, prepare for this Ummah a matter of righteousness, in which the people of truth and faith are honoured, and the people of falsehood and disbelief are abased, and in which good is commanded, and the reprehensible is forbidden, O Hearer of supplication!

NEWS

NNPC Ltd. posts ₦7.2trn profit amid revenue decline

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. (NNPC Ltd.) recorded ₦7.2 trillion Profit After Tax (PAT) in 2025, a 33 per cent increase from ₦5.4 trillion.

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from ₦5.4 trillion.

Nigeria news updates

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja at a media briefing after the company's AGM and second Earnings Call.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that revenue declined to ₦34.5 trillion from ₦45.1 trillion in 2024.

Ojulari attributed the 24 per cent revenue decline to

lower crude oil prices and reduced product volumes following market deregulation.

He said earnings per share rose to ₦35.90 from ₦27.07, while return on equity improved by 200 basis points to 16 per cent.

The company's declared dividend increased by 35 per cent to ₦5.8 trillion, while taxes, royalties and other government remittances rose 39 per cent to ₦22.3 trillion.

"Stronger earnings in spite of this pressure demonstrate the resilience of NNPC Limited's operations," Ojulari said.

He said profit grew because NNPC had improved its operations and maintained discipline across its businesses.

Ojulari said crude oil and condensate production reached a five-year peak of 1.77 million barrels per day.

He added that gas supply

reached a three-year high of 7.2 billion standard cubic feet per day.

"Stronger performance gives NNPC Limited more capacity to invest, contribute to public revenue and strengthen Nigeria's energy security," he said.

On infrastructure, Ojulari said the mainline of the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano gas pipeline had been completed.

He said work was ongoing on tie-ins to delivery points, beginning with Abuja, followed by Ajaokuta and Kaduna.

According to him, the next milestone is to commence gas flow through the pipeline to industries and power plants.

Ojulari said the company completed the Obiafu-Obrikom-Oben (OB3) gas pipeline in 2026 after several years of challenges.

On the refineries, he said prospective partners under NNPC's technical equity partnership model had conducted a three-month onsite review.

He said more than 34 engineers participated in the review, adding that NNPC was now concluding the report.

Ojulari said the company was targeting self-sustaining and profitable refineries, with a pathway expected to be defined soon.



NNPC STATION:

Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. (NNPC) fuel station.

No date yet for IPO, listing decision rests with stakeholders – NNPC

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) says it has no fixed date for its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO), emphasising that the ultimate decision rests with its shareholders.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) says it has no fixed date for its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO), emphasising that the ultimate decision rests with its shareholders.

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, NNPC Ltd., said this on Tuesday in Abuja at a news conference on the company's 2025 Audited Financial Statements, after its Annual General Meeting.

Economy/Business news

Ojulari said the company was focused on achieving readiness for the proposed IPO, while consultants and other relevant parties were assessing its preparedness and outstanding actions.

"We don't have a date, but we are working hard to make sure we are ready as soon as we can."

"The decision to take IPO is not ours. It's the shareholders that will take ultimately that decision on behalf of the country."

"But just also bear in mind

that we cannot just determine a date for IPO on our own. It is the consultants and the parties that assess and evaluate that will give us a sense of readiness overall when they finish," he said.

He said the timing would be determined by the outcome of the readiness assessment, prevailing market conditions and other strategic considerations.

According to him, NNPC's

responsibility as management and board is to ensure that all requirements and evidence needed to make the company ready for listing are in place.

He said transparency, clear accountability and sustainable performance were critical requirements for achieving such readiness.

"Therefore, we need to set our bar where it belongs. To do that, we have to make sure there is transparency, clear ac-

countability and sustainable performance," Ojulari said.

He said that management could only prepare the company for listing, while the decision to proceed would ultimately be taken by the shareholders on behalf of the country.

Ojulari said the company would communicate the IPO date once the relevant assessments had been completed and the necessary advice received.

NNPC sustains crude supply to Dangote, improves pipeline availability – Ojulari

ABUJA

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.), says the company is sustaining crude oil supply to Dangote Refinery under the approved naira-for-crude arrangement.

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.), says the company is sustaining crude oil supply to Dangote Refinery under the approved naira-for-crude arrangement.

Nigeria news updates

Ojulari said this on Tuesday in Abuja at a press briefing on the company's 2025 Audited

Financial Statements, after its Annual General Meeting.

He said NNPC was supplying a specified number of crude cargoes to Dangote Refinery in Naira, while additional crude volumes were supplied in dollars.

He said that the dollar-denominated transactions were necessary because most of NNPC's financial obligations, including payments to drilling contractors, project contractors and operators, were in dollars.

"Most of our commitments are in dollars, so there is no point receiving Naira and then going to buy dollars to meet those obligations."

"We have a commitment for supplying crude in Naira for a specific number of cargoes, typically. But also, the extra

crude that are available, we only supply in dollar," he said.

Ojulari said the company would continue to honour the Federal Government-approved Naira-for-crude arrangement while supplying additional available crude volumes in dollars.

On crude theft and pipeline security, he said the combination of community-based surveillance, intervention and security agencies had significantly improved the availability of major crude oil pipelines.

He said pipeline availability, particularly on major export routes, had improved substantially from levels recorded in early 2024, when some facilities operated at less than 10 per cent of producers' reported output.

Dangote sponsors Abuja trade fair, features refinery IPO

ABUJA

Dangote Industries Limited (DIL), one of the sponsors of the 21st Abuja International Trade Fair, will spotlight the ongoing Initial Public Offering (IPO) of the Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals (DPRP) during the company's Special Day.

The Dangote Special Day, scheduled for Friday, will feature a high-level fireside and business interactive session bringing together representatives of Dangote Group, government, the organised private sector and business leaders to examine the transformative role of the Dangote Refinery in Nigeria's economic development.

According to the company, the interactive session will provide prospective investors, entrepreneurs, business oper-

ators and other participants with an opportunity to engage directly with representatives of Dangote Group and gain a better understanding of the refinery's ongoing IPO and its broader economic significance.

The session, themed "Dangote Refinery, Vision 2030, ACCI and the Economy," will examine the refinery's contribution to Nigeria's energy security, industrialisation, trade, employment generation, taxation and economic growth.

Particular attention will be paid to how increased domestic refining capacity can reduce Nigeria's dependence on imported petroleum products, conserve foreign exchange, strengthen local value chains and create new opportunities for businesses across the petroleum, petrochemical, logistics, manufacturing and services sectors.

Organisation to build 100 CNG sites to address refuelling shortage

ABUJA

A group, Ardova Plc-Diadem Energy consortium is set to expand gas infrastructure, targeting 100 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) refuelling sites nationwide, to address refuelling shortage and more access to customers.

The Chairman of Diadem Group, Dr George Eluwa and Chairman Ardova Plc, Dr Abdul-Wasiu Sowami, jointly made the announcement in a statement made available to newsmen on Wednesday in Abuja.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the move is following the consortium agreement to acquire Powergas, one of Africa's largest compressed natural gas producers and virtual pipeline distributors from Africa Infrastructure Fund I ("AIF I").

According to the statement, Ardova Plc of the consortium, a Nigerian integrated energy and infrastructure company, will deploy CNG infrastructure across its retail network.

It said the organisation is

targeting 100 CNG refuelling sites nationwide within 24 months, expanding access to gas for commercial fleets and motorists while supporting Nigeria's drive to increase domestic gas utilisation.

"The Ardova-Diadem consortium intends to expand Powergas' compression capacity across viable gas-producing corridors."

"Creating firm offtake for associated and non-associated gas, supporting flare reduction and unlocking further investment across the gas value chain," it stated.

The statement said the acquisition, expected to be completed by the end of 2026, would combine Powergas' gas sourcing relationships, compression infrastructure and industrial customer base with Diadem's virtual pipeline logistics.

It said the deal would also leverage Ardova's nationwide retail, logistics and distribution network to achieve the target, with plans to extend the platform into the wider West African market over time.

BookWorld

Journalist chronicles Oshiomhole's impactful governance in Edo

Commentators have agreed that the eight years tenure of comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole in the governance of Edo State represents a golden moment in the life of the State.

A book that attempts to document this era titled "Oshiomhole In The Headlines: Chronicles Of Impactful Governance in Edo state" authored by veteran journalist, Jacobson Nasamu, is soon to be in book shelves and libraries across the country.

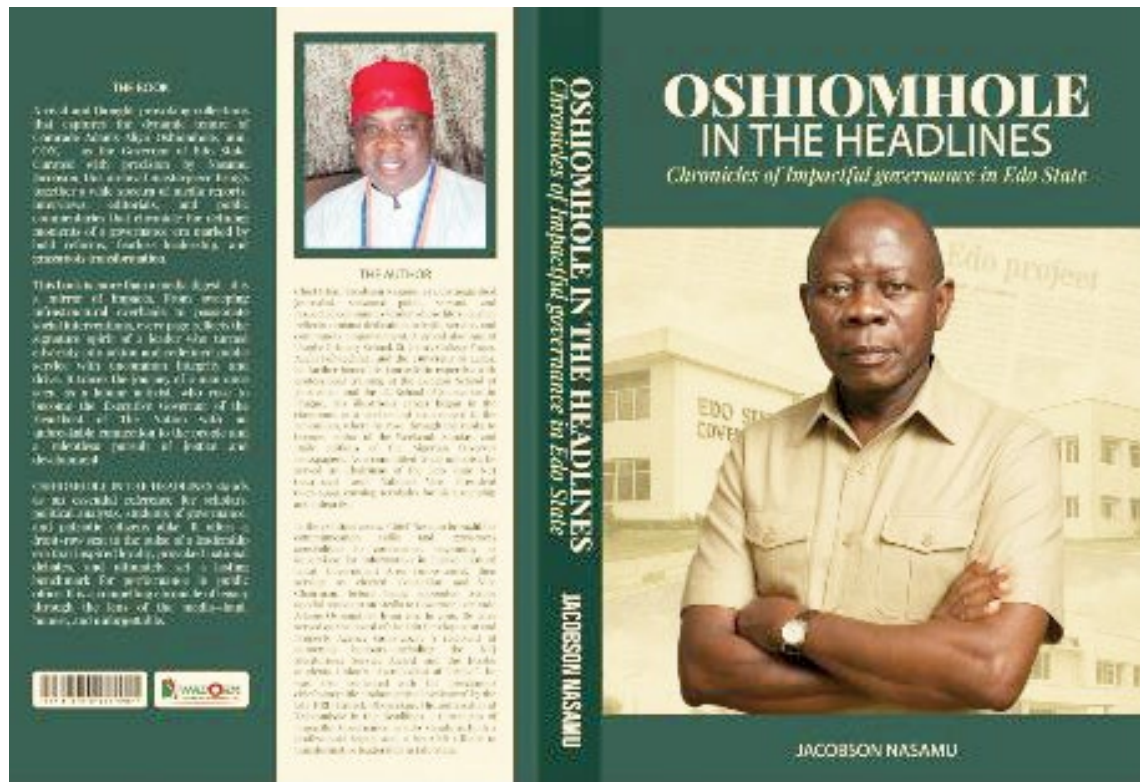
Below is author's synopsis of the book.

Before he became "The Comrade Governor," he was a fire brand labour activist facing down the establishment. Before Edo State became the "Heartbeat of the Nation," it was a state waiting for someone bold enough to rebuild it from the ground up. "Oshiomhole in the Headlines" is the electrifying, page-by-page account of how one man became the other, and how a movement became a legacy.

Curated with meticulous precision by veteran journalist Jacobson Nasamu, the 468 work is no ordinary book, it is an archival masterpiece.

Pulled straight from the front lines of the press - media reports, hard-hitting interviews, fiery editorials, and public commentaries, it reconstructs, headline by headline, the defining moments of Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshiomhole's tenure as Governor of Edo State.

Sweeping infrastructural over-



hauls. Passionate social interventions. Fearless, uncompromising leadership. Every page pulses with the signature spirit of a man who turned adversity into opportunity, and mirrored the true essence of public service.

This is the story of a labour warrior who rose to occupy the highest office

in the state, never losing his unbreakable bond with the people, never abandoning his relentless pursuit of justice and development. It's loud. It's honest. It's unforgettable.

And it captures a leadership era that inspired fierce loyalty, provoked national debate, and set a benchmark

for performance in public office that Edo State, and Nigeria, still measure governance outcomes against.

Whether you're a scholar, a political analyst, a student of governance, or simply a patriotic citizen hungry for the real story behind the headlines, this book puts you in the front

row of history as it happened, through the unfiltered lens of the media.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chief (Hon.) Jacobson Nasamu is a distinguished journalist, seasoned public servant, and respected community leader whose life has been devoted to truth, service, and community empowerment.

A proud alumnus of Usagbe Primary School, St. John's College Fugar, Auchu Polytechnic and the London School of Journalism, he sharpened his craft further at the University of Lagos and the IOJ School of Journalism in Prague.

From the classroom to the newsroom, he rose to the editorship of the Weekend, Sunday, and Daily editions of The Nigerian Observer at different times. He also served as Chairman of the Edo State NUJ and National Vice President (B Zone) of the NUJ.

His journey into governance took him from Supervisor for Information in Etsako Central Local Government to Vice Chairman of the Council. He was, thereafter appointed Senior Special Assistant on Media to Governor Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, 2011-2016.

Honoured with titles including "Asemhokhai of Etsako" and "Imhonihi of Avhianwu," Chief Nasamu's authorship of Oshiomhole in the Headlines stands as both a professional legacy and a heartfelt tribute to transformative leadership in Edo State.

FEATURE

Nigeria @66: A nation still evolving

MATTHEW OKAGHA

Sixty-six years after gaining independence from British colonial rule, Nigeria remains a nation in transition — evolving through political, economic, social and technological changes while confronting challenges that have continued to test the resilience of its citizens.

As the country marks its 66th Independence Anniversary on Thursday, October 1, 2026, Nigerians across different walks of life are reflecting on the nation's journey, the progress made since 1960 and the work that remains to be done to build the Nigeria of their dreams.

From the optimism that accompanied independence to decades of military rule, democratic transitions, economic reforms, technological advancement and growing global influence, Nigeria's national story has been one of remarkable achievements intertwined with difficult setbacks.

At independence, expectations were high that the new nation would rapidly harness its vast human and natural resources to become one of Africa's leading economies.

Sixty-six years later, Nigeria has indeed recorded significant milestones in education, telecommunications, banking, infrastructure, en-

tertainment, sports, entrepreneurship and democratic governance.

The emergence of a vibrant technology and creative ecosystem has particularly changed the way the world views Nigeria. Nigerian music, film, fashion, literature, cuisine and digital innovation have earned growing international recognition, while young Nigerians continue to make their mark across the globe.

Yet, beneath these achievements lies a complex national reality.

Insecurity, unemployment, poverty, inflation, inadequate infrastructure, electricity challenges, corruption and concerns over the quality of governance remain major issues confronting millions of Nigerians.

For many households, the rising cost of food, transportation, housing, healthcare and education has made everyday life increasingly difficult.

The challenge of translating Nigeria's enormous natural resources into broad-based prosperity has also remained a central issue six decades after independence.

Despite being one of the world's major oil-producing countries, Nigeria has continued to grapple with energy shortages and economic vulnerability, prompting successive governments to pursue diversification and reforms.

The democratic experience has equally evolved. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has sus-

tained uninterrupted democratic governance, making the current Fourth Republic the longest continuous period of civilian rule in the country's history.

However, concerns over electoral credibility, political accountability, effective representation and citizens' participation continue to shape national conversations.

For many Nigerians, therefore, independence is not merely about the absence of colonial rule. It is also about the freedom to live in security, find meaningful employment, access quality healthcare and education, enjoy justice and participate fully in the affairs of the nation.

The expectations are particularly strong among the youth, who constitute a significant proportion of Nigeria's population.

Young Nigerians are demanding greater opportunities, better leadership, stronger institutions and an economy capable of rewarding hard work and innovation.

At the same time, millions continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, creating businesses, supporting families, contributing to their communities and finding innovative ways to survive despite economic pressures.

Nigeria's diversity remains another defining feature of the national journey.

With more than 250 ethnic groups and hundreds of languages, the coun-

try possesses enormous cultural richness. But managing this diversity and transforming it into a source of national strength rather than division remains an enduring responsibility.

As Nigeria enters another year of independence, the question is no longer simply whether the country has made progress.

The bigger question is whether that progress is translating into better lives for the majority of citizens.

For many Nigerians, the answer is still a work in progress.

The Nigeria of 1960 is not the Nigeria of 2026. The country has changed profoundly, expanded economically and socially, and produced generations of citizens whose achievements have placed Nigeria prominently on the global stage.

But the journey towards a more prosperous, secure, just and united nation remains unfinished.

At 66, Nigeria is therefore neither a failed dream nor a finished project.

It is a nation still evolving — carrying the weight of its past, confronting the realities of its present and holding on to the hope of a better future.

• Matthew Okagha is a Benin-based journalist and media consultant.



GOVERNANCE**FROM REFORM TO PROSPERITY****Independence Day address to the nation by his Excellency,
President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, 1st October 2026**

PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU, GCFR

Sixty-six years ago today, our flag was raised, for the first time, over a free and sovereign nation. Since then, we have journeyed together as one nation, bound by our collective trust in the great promise of Nigeria: that a country of our size, our bountiful resources, our cultural diversity and, above all, our extraordinary people can build a giant in Africa; that in this blessed and fertile land we can build a united, strong and prosperous nation; a land of regional authority and global consequence.

Our journey has not always been easy. In truth, it has generally been too hard for too many. We have known moments of great hope and periods of profound disappointment. We have endured war, military rule, economic crises, insecurity and political upheaval. Yet through it all, Nigeria, with the indomitable spirit of its people, has endured.

It has endured through the efforts of the farmer who rises before dawn to work his land. The trader who opens her shop each morning, hopeful for a productive day. The teacher who believes in the children entrusted to her care and the young entrepreneur who refuses to surrender ambition to circumstance. We are grateful for the men and women of our Armed Forces and security services who place themselves in harm's way so that the rest of

us may live in peace.

Through every difficulty, generations of Nigerians have continued to believe in one thing: that this country of ours will be better.

This faith, which sustains us all, is the inheritance of independence. Our founding fathers did not struggle merely for a flag, an anthem or a place among the nations of the world. Independence carried a larger promise: that Nigerians would have the freedom to shape their own destiny and build a nation capable of providing opportunity, dignity and a better life for its people. Sixty-six years later, Almighty God has made it our responsibility to deliver that promise.

Today, as we celebrate our independence, we must speak honestly about the journey so far, the choices we made, and the country we are determined to build from here.

For too long, the promise of Nigeria was undermined by choices that postponed difficult decisions and allowed deep economic distortions to grow.

By 2023, poverty was rising, and hope was nearly gone. The country's situation was darker than ever. We had no choice but to act.

allowing people to acquire vehicles, solar systems, digital devices and other essential assets without first having to accumulate years of savings.

That is why, working with our states

and local governments, we will continue to strengthen primary health-care, basic education, and the essential public services poorer Nigerians depend on most. Since 2023, we have paid salaries and pensions on time and in full. We have reformed the national pension programme to benefit retirees and the vulnerable.

These programmes are not substitutes for prosperity. They are a bridge to aid our nation's citizens on their path towards it. Our objective is not to manage poverty more efficiently.

We will defeat it.

It will take time. It will require discipline. It will require sustained growth year after year and the creation of millions of productive opportunities across our country.

But for the first time in decades, we

embark on this task from a position of strength, with an economy whose fundamental direction has been corrected. We confronted the difficult choices we faced and have laid the foundations for lasting prosperity. Rather than fail the promise of a better future for our children, the time has come for us to build that future.

The age of reform has done its work. Now begins the age of prosperity. An age in which the promise of this great nation must finally become the lived experience of Nigerians from all walks of life.

We have travelled through difficult years together. We have made hard decisions together. And now, still together, we must build the country those decisions have made possible.

I believe deeply in what lies ahead.

I believe in the millions of ordinary men and women whose work, courage and determination have always been the true strength of our country. The road ahead will still demand much from us. But we now travel it with firm footing, a clear direction, and renewed hope in our collective future.

Nigeria has corrected its course. We have passed through our own Red Sea. This is not the time to look back. Let us go forward together, with faith in ourselves, faith in our country, and faith that the sacrifices we have made will yield their reward.

The Promised Land before us is a Nigeria of abundance and opportunity; a nation where prosperity is broadly shared, where every child can dream beyond the circumstances of his birth, and where our country's immense promise is finally reflected in the lives of our people.

Our destination is in sight. Our foundations are strong. Our direction is clear. So let us go forward. No looking back.

Happy Independence Day, my fellow Nigerians. God bless you all, and God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

• **Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.**



Nigeria has corrected its course. We have passed through our own Red Sea. This is not the time to look back. Let us go forward together, with faith in ourselves, faith in our country, and faith that the sacrifices we have made will yield their reward.



INSIDE EDO STATE



THE AUSTIN IMAFIDON ADMINISTRATION IN UHUNMWODE LGA

One year of purposeful leadership, quality service delivery (2)

A committee was inaugurated to conduct feasibility studies and produce designs for a modern market suitable for the environment.

The administration proposed a public-private partnership model for the development and management of the market, signalling an attempt to mobilise private capital for local economic infrastructure rather than depending exclusively on public funds.

STAFF WELFARE

Council workers also featured prominently in the administration's programmes.

Among measures attributed to the administration were payment of salaries before the 25th of the month, attention to outstanding salary-related obligations and arrears, promotion of junior staff, distribution of rice and other welfare support during designated periods, improvement of the Council's physical working environment and subsidised transportation for workers.

A notable welfare measure was the support for the NULGE staff bus scheme, under which the cost borne by staff was reduced from N2,000 to N500.

The administration presented these interventions as part of a strategy to improve staff morale and productivity.

AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Recognising Uhummwode's agricultural potential, the administration incorporated agriculture and locally produced commodities into its development agenda.

The Harvest of Hope initiative deliberately emphasised locally sourced products as part of efforts to ensure that social interventions could generate economic benefits for local producers and traders.

The broader objective has been to encourage agricultural production, local patronage and economic self-reliance.

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Sports was also used as an instrument for youth engagement and community interaction.

The administration organised the ISIWINA Gold Cup, providing opportunities for young people to participate in competitive sporting activities while encouraging talent discovery, community interaction and constructive youth engagement.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS AND HEAVY-DUTY EQUIPMENT

The administration's capacity for road and environmental interventions was strengthened by heavy-duty equipment made available to the Local Government, including a grader, payload and tipper.

These assets have supported road grading, evacuation, rehabilitation and other public works undertaken within the Local Government Area.

THE 2026 BUDGET AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The administration presented the 2026 fiscal framework under the theme:

"Budget of Liberation: A New Dawn for Uhummwode Local Government Area."

The budget was put at approximately ₦516 billion, comprising recurrent and capital components.

A significant policy initiative incorporated into the administration's development thinking was the proposed Uhummwode Integrated Investment Board, intended to promote investment and public-private partnerships.

The 2026 Appropriation Bill passed through the Legislative Arm and was subsequently presented for assent, strengthening the institutional framework for implementing the Council's programmes.

TRANSITION FROM ACTING CHAIRMAN



DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS TO OVER 87 PRIMARY SCHOOL THROUGH THE HEAD TEACHERS

TO EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

The conclusion of the acting tenure marked a major institutional transition.

Appointments, committees, boards and task forces constituted during the acting period were dissolved as part of the administrative transition into the substantive tenure.

Following his assumption of office as Executive Chairman, Imafidon began constituting a new administrative team and setting priorities for the next phase of the Council.

The transition provides an opportunity to consolidate projects initiated during the acting period while developing new programmes under a full electoral mandate.

PROJECTS AND INTERVENTIONS AT A GLANCE

Within the first year, the administration's reported projects, programmes and interventions include: Comprehensive renovation of Uhummwode Local Government Council Secretariat.

Renovation and furnishing of the Legislative Arm complex.

Provision and improvement of alternative electricity supply at the Secretariat.

Borehole and water infrastructure at the Council.

Sanitation and soak-away facilities.

Solar-powered infrastructure.

Grading and rehabilitation of Idunmwowina Road.

Rehabilitation of Eyan Pipeline Road.

Intervention on Urhokhuosa-Nibiwe Road.

Rehabilitation of Eagle Road.

Intervention on Jehovah Road, Ikhueni.

Rehabilitation of Pipeline-Eyan/Idibo Road.

Palliative rehabilitation at Morgan Junction Bypass.

Gully-erosion control measures at Morgan Junction.

Palliative intervention at Idokpa Bypass.

Distribution of educational/library materials to 87 primary schools.

Proposed six-classroom intervention at Azagba.

Support and intervention concerning Ehor Technical College.

Computer and printing skills programme for Uhummwode youths.

Technical/vocational empowerment for young women.

ISIWINA Harvest of Hope social-support programme.

Support for free eye-care services.

Support for immunisation and disease-prevention programmes.

Healthcare partnerships and community medical outreaches.

Support for the rehabilitation of Ugomoson Primary Health Centre.

Electricity transformer/pole interventions at Ugbeze.

Electricity intervention at Orior-Ozolua.

Security-support vehicle for the police in Ehor.

Screening and strengthening of local vigilante structures.

Regular Local Government security meetings.

Emergency intervention regarding reported threats to schools.

Peace-building intervention in the Ahor crisis.

Intervention in the Ahor/Uselu N'Ahor boundary dispute.

Intervention in the Eko-Ugha/Ugha community dispute.

Monthly environmental sanitation exercises.

Refuse evacuation at Ehor Market and other locations.

Desilting and drainage clearing.

Vegetation clearing along the Idokpa Bypass.

ISIWINA Greener Uhummwode initiative.

Planned planting of 10,000 trees and ornamental plants.

Beautification programme for major entrances and exits into Uhummwode.

Establishment of a committee for the rebuilding of Ogheghe Market.

Proposed modernisation of Ogheghe Market through public-private partnership.

Staff transport subsidy.

Salary and staff-welfare interventions.

Attention to promotion of junior staff.

Periodic distribution of welfare packages to Council workers.

Agricultural and local-produce promotion through social intervention programmes.

ISIWINA Gold Cup and sports development.

Deployment of grader, payload and tipper for public works.

Introduction of an investment-oriented development framework through the proposed Uhummwode Integrated Investment Board.

Passage and implementation framework for the 2026 Appropriation Bill.

A NEW PHASE OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The transition from Acting Chairman to Executive Chairman means that the first year can

be viewed in two phases: a foundation-building period under the acting administration and a consolidation phase following the commencement of the substantive administration.

The acting period concentrated heavily on restoring the Council's administrative infrastructure, responding to deteriorated roads, staff welfare, security, sanitation, education, social welfare and community engagement.

The substantive phase has begun with efforts to consolidate those interventions while expanding attention to environmental renewal, market development, youth empowerment and institutional strengthening.

Public reporting has also documented partnerships associated with the administration. The Lady Mechanic Initiative, for example, reported its collaboration with Uhummwode Local Government on the Harvest of Hope programme and technical training for young women. Healthcare partnerships have similarly supported the rehabilitation of primary healthcare infrastructure and medical outreach programmes.

CONCLUSION

One year after Hon. Austin Rotimi Imafidon first assumed responsibility for the administration of Uhummwode Local Government Council, the period provides a broad record of interventions cutting across infrastructure, roads, education, healthcare, security, staff welfare, social protection, youth development, environmental management, electricity, sports, conflict resolution and institutional reforms.

The administration moved from an acting arrangement into a substantive elected administration, giving it the opportunity to consolidate ongoing programmes and undertake longer-term projects.

The challenge for the years ahead will be to complete ongoing and proposed projects, maintain already rehabilitated infrastructure, expand development to more communities, deepen transparency and accountability, and ensure that programmes produce measurable improvements in the lives of residents.

For Uhummwode, the first year of the Imafidon administration has therefore established a development agenda whose ultimate legacy will be determined by the sustainability, reach and long-term impact of the projects and policies initiated during this period.

OGIEHOR EHS TORNADO
Chief Press Secretary, Uhummwode
Local Government Council

NEWS

FOREIGN

Too early to say if Iran involved in Dubai-Tel Aviv flight attack, Israeli PM says

It is too early to say if Iran had any involvement in an attack by a pilot who stabbed another pilot and tried to take over a flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv, Israel's

prime minister has said.

The Flydubai plane plunged more than 17,000ft (5,200m) two hours into its journey on Wednesday, before passengers and crew overpowered the at-

tacker and retook control to land safely.

The stabbed pilot, Indian national Captain Smit Machchhar, is in hospital in a stable condition, and has been hailed a "true hero" by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

One passenger, Yaniv Hayun, described how he put the attacker, who was trying to disable the plane, in a chokehold before other passengers helped pin him down.

The alleged attacker, who was arrested in Saudi Arabia,

is expected to be transferred to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where the plane took off from, Netanyahu told Fox News.

Asked whether there was any indication as of now of Iran's involvement, he replied: "It's too early to say". He added that the pilot was "now being

investigated in Saudi Arabia".

The UAE's chief prosecutor said on Thursday an investigation had been launched into the incident, including if there was any link to "terrorist" activity.

Meanwhile, he and India's leader Narendra Modi called stabbed pilot Machchhar a



Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister.

President Trump says Israeli plumber 'levelled out the plane before it crashed'

President Trump says Israeli plumber 'levelled out the plane before it crashed'

One passenger, Hayun, described how he and others on the flight had restrained the attacker.

"The pilot who was stabbed was simply very close to the door, so it was hard for us to open it," Hayun said in a video posted on social media by the prime minister's office, but before the stabbed pilot collapsed, he was able to open the door.

Yaniv said he put the attack-

er, who was trying to disable the plane, in a chokehold before other passengers helped pin him down.

He added that he "pulled the controls" of the plane and after it levelled out, another pilot took over control.

Airline Flydubai confirmed two on-duty crew travelling on the flight landed the plane.

Zvika Meness, another passenger, told Israeli public broadcaster Kan News that he and other passengers tied the attacker up "with his own zip ties and with the multimedia headphones".

He said: "There are children and families here who have been through a very severe, highly traumatic event."

The passengers, who were almost all Israeli, were taken to Tel Aviv on another flight later on Wednesday.

They were greeted at the airport by crowds of onlookers playing music, singing, dancing and waving Israeli flags.

A number of people were "very emotional and crying as they came off the plane," a paramedic from Israel's ambulance service told the BBC.

Reuters A woman smiles and embraces a person draped in an Israeli flag as passengers

who were on the FlyDubai aircraft bound for Israel from the United Arab Emirates are greeted by their friends and family, as they arrive at the Ben Gurion International Airport. Reuters

Flydubai said "an altercation occurred in the flight deck" and the flight was "successfully secured by on-duty Flydubai crew travelling on the flight, who diverted and landed the aircraft safely at Tabuk airport".

All of the airline's flights to and from Israel will be suspended during the investigation, a spokesperson said in a statement.

US death row inmate survives execution attempt after two lethal injections

Tennessee death row inmate Christa Pike has been taken to hospital after an attempt to execute her by two lethal injections failed, her lawyer says.

Her legal team filed an emergency motion to halt the convicted murderer's execution as it was happening, saying: "Ms Pike has lost consciousness and still has a heartbeat and is audibly snoring."

One of her attorneys told the BBC that Pike, 50, was now "being provided life-saving measures" in hospital after two syringes of pentobarbital had been administered.

Pike was sentenced to death in 1996 for the murder of 19-year-old Colleen Slemmer. Her execution was the subject of a last-minute legal battle.

This culminated in the US Supreme Court allowing the lethal injections to go ahead.

Pike was 18 when she and her then-boyfriend, Tadaryl Shipp, beat, tortured and killed 19-year-old Slem-

mer, whom they had met at a job training camp for troubled teens.

Slemmer's mother May Martinez was among those who wanted the execution to take place. Speaking to NBC News after Wednesday evening's events, she said: "It was a mess."

The attempted execution took place at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution in Nashville at about 20:00 local time (01:00 GMT on Thursday).

Pike was given two doses of the chemical pentobarbital, and the curtain in the witness room was closed twice, the AP news agency reported.

Media were at some point asked to leave, the news agency said.

AP added that Tennessee's execution protocol calls for a secondary set of drug syringes in case the person being put to death does not die after the first set. But it does not spell out what happens if the subject is alive after the second set.

Russian dissident Garry Kasparov says US warned him of danger to his life

An exiled Russian opposition figure living in the US says he was warned by American and Lithuanian security services that his life was in danger.

Former chess world champion Garry Kasparov said he was one of two dissidents told to take precautions, which he had done.

His comments come after the US Justice Department unsealed an indictment earlier this month charging five people who allegedly work for a network linked to the Kremlin with plotting attacks and murders in countries including the US, focusing on Russian dissidents and defectors.

Kasparov wrote in his publication *The Next Move* that he had not been told explicitly that he and fellow Free Russia Forum co-founder Ivan Tyutrin were considered targets, but said both had been warned about their safety.

Spanish newspaper *El Mundo* reported that it had obtained information that Kasparov, along with another

Russian opposition figure, Ilya Ponomarev, had been warned about the plot over the summer by US authorities.

Citing sources close to Kasparov, the paper said he had been placed under enhanced protection over the summer for the first time since he moved to the US.

Kasparov wrote separately: "I will not stop and I will not hide, even if I thought it was possible to do so."

"My family and I will not truly be safe as long as [Russian President Vladimir] Putin is in power in Russia - a circumstance shared by millions."

Kasparov retired from competitive chess in 2005 to pursue a career in politics, founding movements that openly opposed Putin before fleeing Russia in 2013.

He has not returned since. Russia classed him as a foreign agent following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and subsequently added him to a list of terrorists and extremists in 2024 - both categorisations he rejects.

Japan raises permanent residency fee by 20 times

Japan has raised fees for foreigners seeking permanent residency in the country by 20 times to 200,000 yen (\$1,270; £955).

Those seeking permanent residency must now also meet new income, pension and Japanese-language requirements.

Long lines formed outside immigration offices earlier this week as applicants sought to beat the fee hikes, with Tokyo's main immigration bureau reporting wait times of over seven hours.

The fee increases are part of a series of changes to Japan's immigration policy under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, which aim to manage its rapidly growing foreign population.

In July, Japan implemented a five-fold increase in visa fees for all foreigners - its first visa fee hike in 50 years. Authorities said this was meant to "reflect inflation and exchange rate fluctuations".

Although immigration remains politically sensitive and restrictive in Japan, the nation's ageing population is increasingly relying on foreign workers to plug a labour shortage.

Japan's foreign resident population surpassed 4.12 million at the end of 2025, marking a record 9.5% increase from the previous year. This however has led to growing anxieties over immigration and social change.

Takaichi has made managing immigration one of her key priorities since she took office

in October last year.

In an X post days before the residency permit hikes set in, Takaichi wrote that her government recognises that "some members of the public may feel a sense of concern or unfairness" as Japan's foreign resident population grows.

"To address these concerns, [the government] is working to ensure that its policies toward foreign nationals are orderly, and that both Japanese citizens and foreign residents can live safely and securely," she wrote.

Before the hikes, it would cost non-permanent residents in Japan 6,000 yen each time they applied to change their residency status or extend their period of stay.

From 1 October, the fee var-

ies according to the duration of stay sought - from 10,000 yen for three months or less, to 75,000 yen for five years or more.

Applicants who face financial hardship or are designated as refugees would be granted discounts.

Aspiring permanent residents must now also earn a stable income at or above the Japanese average. Latest data released in July puts average household income at 5.75 million yen as of 2024.

Micaiah Stevens, who has been living and working in Tokyo for 10 years, was not able to compile the necessary documentation to submit his application for permanent residency before the price hike.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Zimbabwe tycoon Wicknell Chivayo and wife killed in helicopter crash

Prominent Zimbabwean businessman Wicknell Chivayo and his wife have been killed in a helicopter crash that left six people dead, his family have confirmed.

The helicopter came down in the Marondera rural area, about 70km (43 miles) east of the capital, Harare, on Wednesday evening. Police said all six people on board died.

Family spokesperson Herbert Chivayo confirmed the deaths of the 43-year-old businessman and his wife Lucy Muteke to state broadcaster ZBC, saying the family was devastated by the tragedy.

Chivayo was known for his lavish lifestyle, close ties to some African presidents and lucrative government contracts that had repeatedly attracted scrutiny.

He had denied allegations of wrongdoing linked to his business dealings.

Police spokesperson Commissioner Paul Nyathi said the aircraft crashed at about 17:00 local time (15:00 GMT) and had six occupants, but authorities did not immediately identify all those on board. Two of the six were pilots, according to government officials.

ZBC reported that the group was travelling from Gandami in Chikomba, where Chivayo and his wife were building a rural home, when the helicopter crashed at Kudenga Farm about 40 minutes after take-off.

"We are at a loss for words after the tragic news," the family spokesperson, told the ZBC.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known, and police said investigations were under way. Emergency services were sent to the scene on Wednesday evening.

Earlier, government spokesman Nick Mangwana confirmed the crash, saying the helicopter was carrying "a prominent businessman, three other passengers and two pilots".

"Current information indicates that there were no survivors in this crash," Mangwana posted on X. On Thursday,

aviation officials led by Transport Minister Felix Mhona arrived at the crash site, where investigators recovered the aircraft's intact black box as

they began investigating.

"Preliminary findings show that fuel spilled on impact, followed by a fire that burnt the grass at the crash site," said

George Mashababe, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe.

"The cause of the crash is yet to be ascertained."

Despite serving several years in prison after being convicted of fraud in 2004,

Chivayo went on to build a successful business career, mostly through government contracts.

He was the managing director of Intratrek Zimbabwe and had built a high public profile through his philan-

thropy and displays of wealth on social media.

Among his best-known business ventures was a \$172m (£128m) solar power project in Gwanda awarded to Intratrek by the state-owned Zimbabwe Power Company. The project became the subject of years of legal disputes.

He also came under scrutiny over the procurement of materials for Zimbabwe's disputed 2023 elections. Zimbabwe's anti-corruption commission investigated allegations surrounding contracts awarded to South African company Ren-Form but closed the inquiry in 2025, saying it had found no evidence linking Chivayo or the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to wrongdoing.

Widely known as "Sir Wicknell", Chivayo frequently used the title publicly and on social media, although he was never given a British knighthood.

He was also known for giving away luxury cars and large sums of money to musicians, religious leaders and other public figures, often publicising the gifts on social media.



Ethiopia Capital City

Russia targets busy bridge in central Kyiv in broad daylight

Two Russian drones have hit one of Kyiv's main bridges, bringing public transport in the Ukrainian capital to a halt and signalling a new stage in Moscow's attacks.

The Pivdennyi or Southern bridge came under fire as a metro train was travelling across. Passengers described how dust from a blast wave entered their carriage through the ventilation system.

The Pivdennyi bridge is one of the main arteries across the Dnipro river dividing western and eastern Kyiv.

Kyiv's bridges had not been hit before Thursday's strikes - and despite a dramatic explosion close to a main support section, city authorities said preliminary checks "did not find any critical damage to the structure".

For the people of Kyiv, the drone strikes were another powerful reminder that Russia has their city firmly in its sights and is doing everything it can to disrupt life in the capital.

Kyiv had just suffered its first co-ordinated attacks on the city's energy grid since the end of last winter, and commentators believe Russia has stepped up its campaign seeing that Ukraine is suffering from a shortage of air defences.

Strikes on Wednesday also heralded a return to power cuts in the capital. Although Kyiv authorities have spent months constructing smaller-scale power plants to counter Russia's anticipated winter campaign, Prime Minister Serhii Korotshuk said a com-

bined strike on such a scale had not taken place since the end of spring.

The first big attack on the capital on Thursday came when a Russian drone slammed into the third floor of a school at about 09:00 local time (10:00 GMT).

Although more than 100 students had been at the school at the time, they had all reached a shelter when the drone hit. One of the school's walls partially collapsed.

"[The shelter's] structure is strong, so none of the chil-

dren were hurt, neither were any staff," said head teacher Valentyna Chorna. "They just kept on with their lessons."

Russia denies targeting civilians, but Chorna said that to destroy her nation "they need to destroy children". President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia had to be held fully accountable.

Part of a wall and a staircase were destroyed in the Russian attack.

Later in the morning, two drones hit the Pivdennyi bridge, one hitting the base of

a central stanchion.

Ukrainian 5 Kanal TV reporter Mariana Mykytenko described how one of the passengers on her metro train shouted the word "Shahed", referring to Russia's Iranian-designed drones, before the blast sent dust pouring into their carriage.

No-one in her compartment was hurt, she said, and "the train took people to Vydubychi station on the right bank, then it didn't go any further". The right bank is on the west side of the Dnipro river.

Explosions heard in Ethiopia's capital after drone flights banned

Explosions were heard overnight in Ethiopia's capital, some in the area of the military headquarters in the west and another in the south of the city, residents and diplomatic sources say.

The blasts came hours af-

ter drone flights were banned over Addis Ababa and a week after fighting erupted in the north between the army and a newly launched alliance of armed groups including forces from the Tigray region.

A source linked to the op-

position fighters told the Reuters news agency they were behind what they said were drone strikes.

"It was very loud. It was strong enough to set off car alarms," a resident in a southern area of the city, near the base of the secret service, told BBC Amharic.

He estimated that he heard the explosion in the Gotera neighbourhood some time around 00:30 local time (21:30 GMT).

Another resident told the BBC that he and his friends were playing games when they heard an explosion.

He lives in the western suburb of Torhayloch, a neighbourhood close to the military headquarters.

There were no official reports confirming the cause of the explosions, the exact locations affected or whether there were any casualties or damage.

The office of Ethiopia's

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the defence ministry as well as the federal and Addis Ababa police have not responded to BBC requests for comment.

Meanwhile, Ethiopia's foreign ministry has said it is closing its embassy in neighbouring Eritrea and expelling 10 Eritrean diplomats "for involvement in activities that pose a direct threat to Ethiopia's national security".

Earlier, in a BBC interview, Eritrea's government denied that it was backing the new rebel alliance.

Clashes broke out last week after months of tension between the government and the party that controls Tigray, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

They both accuse each other of violating a 2022 peace deal that ended a brutal two-year civil war, which according to an Africa Union mediator is estimated to have cost 600,000 lives.

Flydubai passenger describes how he hugged his children as plane nosedived during attack

A man has described how he hugged and reassured his two young children as their plane suddenly descended after one pilot stabbed the other in an attempt to seize control of the flight.

A Flydubai plane plunged more than 17,000ft (5,200m) in less than two minutes around two hours into its journey from Dubai to Tel

Aviv on Wednesday, before passengers and crew overpowered him and retook control to land safely.

Adam Polovincik told BBC Newshour that he hugged his six-year-old son and three-year-old daughter "really hard" and tried to stay calm for them as the attack unfolded.

He praised the pilot who was stabbed and passengers who fought off and subdued

the attacker, saying they were "true heroes".

The stabbed pilot is in a stable condition in hospital, while the alleged attacker has been arrested.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said it was too early to say whether Iran was involved in the attack, but that the alleged attacker had undergone "Islamic radical indoctrination".

Polovincik, who was sitting in aisle 13, was flying home with his wife and children after an "amazing" holiday in Singapore and Thailand.

He said there had been a "huge degree of panic" on the plane as there was a "very, very, very sharp decrease in height".

He thought at first that this was simply because of an air pocket, but "it took a lot of time, almost a minute".

Opinion

Why APC members in Edo are now evangelists for Tinubu's re-election



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

The campaign to return President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to the Presidential Villa in 2027 has assumed a near frenzy dimension in Edo State, with members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) being mobilised to take the President's message to the grassroots. The mobilisation gathered momentum with the inauguration of the Edo State APC Campaign Council by Governor Monday Okpebholo, who is leading the party's grassroots campaign structure ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The inauguration marked the beginning of an intensive political mobilisation expected to reach the 18 local government areas, wards and polling units across the state.

The APC campaign structure has been described by its Director-General, Senator Matthew Urhoghide, as a "Special Purpose Vehicle" designed to prosecute the party's electoral campaign.

Its central assignment is clear: to take the APC message to the people and mobilise support for President Tinubu and other party candidates at the grassroots.

The party leadership has also made it clear that this campaign will not be conducted in the traditional manner.

APC members have been urged to become what party leaders have described as "evangelists" — taking the message of the administration beyond card-carrying members of the party and explaining to ordinary Nigerians what President Tinubu has achieved since assuming office.

That explains the emphasis on the wards and polling units. Governor Okpebholo and other party leaders have already commenced grassroots mobilisation, with the governor personally moving through communities to strengthen the party's structures ahead of 2027.

Reports from the leadership of the party indicate that the APC intends to take the contest directly to the people.

At the inauguration of the campaign council, APC leaders, including Senator Adams Oshiomhole, former Deputy Governor Pius Odubu and other senior party figures, urged members to close ranks and put internal disagreements behind them.

Senator Urhoghide has consequently placed considerable emphasis on grassroots engagement, declaring that the campaign must reach the "nooks and crannies" of Edo State.

The governor has similarly directed the campaign council to take the party's message to every ward and polling units.

Why the language of evangelism?

The answer lies in the nature of the 2027 contest. The APC appears determined not merely to mobilise its existing membership but to persuade voters outside the party to support its candidates.

They are being asked to explain, defend and sell the administration's record of achievements to the electorate.

It is a strategy that places considerable responsibility on the party members.

Those who have followed the political development in Edo State in recent months will recognise the significance of this approach.

This is where the Tinubu factor becomes im-

portant and the

Supporters of the President argue that he inherited an economy facing serious structural problems and that some of the decisions taken by his administration — particularly the removal of petrol subsidy and the reform of the foreign-exchange regime — were politically difficult but necessary.

They point to increased Federation Account allocations as one of the consequences of the reforms. FAAC distributions have indeed risen substantially, with the July 2026 allocation reaching a record N3.007 trillion, according to reports based on FAAC figures.

The administration has also introduced programmes which include the student loan scheme, consumer credit initiatives, infrastructure financing and efforts to expand investment in solid minerals and compressed natural gas.

The APC is clearly determined to make the President's reform agenda one of the central arguments of its 2027 campaign.

For Edo, the argument has acquired an additional dimension.

The state government has continued to showcase major infrastructure projects, including the Ramat Park and Adesuwa Junction flyovers and several road interventions across the state.

The Ramat Park flyover which has been completed for instance, has been presented by the Okpebholo administration as part of its urban renewal and traffic-management programme.

Governor Okpebholo has also linked some of the resources available for development in Edo to the Federal Government.

The projects have consequently become part of the political conversation surrounding the 2027 election.

For the APC, the argument is straightforward: the Federal Government and the Edo State Government are working within the same political family, and the electorate should therefore assess

what the partnership has delivered.

The APC's political calculation also rests on its assessment of the opposition.

Supporters of President Tinubu argue that the opposition remains divided and has yet to present a sufficiently coherent alternative programme capable of matching the APC's nationwide political structure.

There is no doubt that the 2027 contest will ultimately be determined by the candidates, campaigns, party structures, voter preferences and the conduct of the election.

For now, what is undeniable is that the APC is building its machinery early.

The President's supporters believe the reforms of the past three years, combined with the party's political structure and the resources of incumbency give the administration a strong platform from which to seek another mandate.

In Edo, the APC leadership has already declared that the real battle will be fought at the polling-unit level.

That is why candidates and party leaders have been urged to remain close to their constituencies and engage directly with voters.

This is why the party is asking its members to become political evangelists.

The 2027 election will therefore not be won merely from party secretariats or campaign rallies in Benin City. The decisive political conversation will take place in communities, wards and polling units across Edo.

For the APC, that conversation has already begun.

And as Governor Okpebholo leads the charge, party members are being asked to do more than carry the broom.

They are being asked to preach the message behind it and vote President Tinubu back to office to consolidate what he has started.

• Eubaldus Enahoro was former Editor of the Nigerian Observer Newspaper.

How Festus Ehimuan is transforming ECTS

BENEDICT OKATE

The Edo City Transport Service (ECTS) has undergone a series of operational, fleet and administrative reforms under its Managing Director, Barrister Festus Ehimuan, as the state-owned transport company seeks to improve service delivery and strengthen its financial sustainability.

The reforms, implemented under the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, include the refurbishment of 35 Daewoo buses, acquisition of additional vehicles, improvement of workshop facilities, staff promotions and regularisation, as well as the expansion of the Agency's operations beyond Benin City.

Established in 1993 under the Edo Municipal Transport Service Law to provide subsidised transportation for residents, the organisation was subsequently renamed Edo City Transport Service during the administration of former Governor Lucky Igbinedion.

Over the years, ECTS has faced challenges ranging from inadequate funding and fleet depletion to rising maintenance and operational costs. When Ehimuan assumed office, the company reportedly had only 12 operational Daewoo buses, with a substantial number grounded by maintenance problems.

A major challenge was the availability of spare parts for the Daewoo buses acquired by the previous administration. The scarcity of the required parts in Nigeria reportedly made repairs increasingly difficult and contributed to the prolonged grounding of some vehicles. The management subsequently embarked on a refurbishment programme that saw

35 Daewoo buses restored to operational condition.

The intervention increased the number of operational buses from 12 to 47, significantly expanding the Agency's capacity to serve commuters within Benin City and its environs.

Beyond the rehabilitation of existing buses, the management also explored alternative financing options to expand the Agency's fleet. ECTS obtained a N294,226,069 loan facility from Keystone Bank, which was used to procure Toyota Hiace buses for operations.

According to the management, the vehicles have been deployed on routes outside Edo State to generate additional income for the Agency, with the proceeds also supporting repayment of the bank facility. The strategy forms part of efforts to improve the commercial viability of ECTS while maintaining its mandate of providing affordable public transportation.

The management has also focused on strengthening the Agency's maintenance capacity. An injector servicing and repair machine was procured for the ECTS workshop, with the aim of improving the maintenance of diesel-powered vehicles and reducing dependence on external mechanics.

The intervention is expected to shorten the period vehicles remain off the road and improve the efficiency of the Agency's workshop operations.

In addition, eight Toyota Hiace buses that had broken down were reportedly overhauled, bringing the number of operational Hiace buses to 18 for intercity services.

The reforms have also extended to staff welfare. The management promoted 64 employees whose promotions had reportedly been outstanding

for more than five years. Similarly, 239 contract workers were converted to permanent employees, a move intended to address longstanding employment concerns and improve staff morale.

ECTS has also undertaken infrastructure upgrades at some of its facilities. The loading bay at the Agency's headquarters at Ramat Park was renovated, with a VIP waiting area created as part of the improvement. At the King Square Terminal, canopies and seating facilities were provided to improve the waiting environment for passengers.

The Agency also established an outstation office in Ekpoma, expanding its operational presence to the university town and surrounding communities.

In a bid to diversify its revenue sources, ECTS has introduced a courier service and acquired motorcycles to support the new operation. The initiative is expected to enable the Agency to utilise some of its existing logistics capacity while creating an additional source of income.

The move comes as transport operators across the country contend with rising fuel, maintenance and other operational costs.

Despite the increase in the cost of diesel, ECTS continues to operate buses within the Benin City metropolis at fares ranging from N200 to N300, depending on distance. The relatively low fares remain significant for commuters who rely on public transportation, particularly amid rising household expenses and increasing transportation costs.

However, maintaining affordable fares while operating diesel-powered buses presents a financial challenge for the Agency.

Another major development expected to shape

the future of ECTS is the planned deployment of 50 LNG-powered buses by the Edo State Government. Although the buses are yet to be delivered to the Agency, their expected arrival has raised expectations about the future of public transportation in the state.

The introduction of LNG-powered buses could reduce ECTS's dependence on diesel and potentially lower fuel and operating costs, while also increasing the number of vehicles available to commuters.

For the Agency, the new buses could complement the refurbished fleet and recently acquired vehicles, providing additional capacity for urban and intercity operations.

The reforms at ECTS come against the backdrop of the broader challenges confronting publicly owned transport companies, including high operating costs, vehicle maintenance, funding constraints and the need to balance affordability with commercial sustainability.

In the period under review, the Agency has undertaken fleet rehabilitation, expanded its vehicle base, upgraded maintenance facilities, addressed staff-related issues, renovated passenger facilities and introduced a new courier business.

The planned deployment of 50 LNG buses could further expand the Agency's capacity if successfully implemented.

For a transport company established more than three decades ago to provide affordable mobility for Edo residents, the ongoing reforms by the Managing Director, Barrister Festus Ehimuan, represent efforts to reposition ECTS around three competing demands: affordability for commuters, operational efficiency and financial sustainability.

FEATURE

Making of a new chapter in Nigeria army history

DR. PATRICK AKHERE EBOJELE

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo has made the operationalisation of the Nigerian Army's 83 Division in Benin a personal mission. Not in the ceremonial way, but in his dogged, infrastructure-heavy style that leaves no room for excuses but action. For him it is not just about hosting the new Division. It's about positioning Edo State as the strategic security backbone of the South-South geopolitical zone as envisaged by the President and Commander in chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu.

And the governor is passionate about this. At the heart of his five-pillar SHINE agenda sits Security—the first pillar by design, not accident—the foundation upon which everything else in his administration rests. Healthcare cannot thrive in insecurity. Infrastructure cannot be built where criminality reigns. Natural resources cannot be explored or exploited either. Agriculture cannot flourish where farmers fear for their lives. Education cannot progress where communities are under siege.

The South-South region faces a unique security burden. Oil theft is an industry. Illegal refining has poisoned waterways and destroyed livelihoods. Maritime piracy makes creek transportation a gamble with lives. Communal clashes over water and land compete for military attention. These aren't abstract policy problems—they are the daily realities that constrain development and prosperity in the region.

The new 83 Division of the Nigerian Army represents Governor Okpebholo's wager that federal security architecture can be mobilized to address regional security failures. It's not a substitute for state-level efforts—his government continues local policing and community engagement. But a full-strength military division with specialized focus on oil and gas infrastructure protection, maritime security, and organized crime disruption offers what local forces cannot: surveillance capacity, rapid response capability, and inter-state coordination. These gaps have cost the region billions in stolen crude and incalculable lives lost to preventable violence.

As it were, the 83 Division is one of four new Nigerian Army divisions approved by President Bola Tinubu, alongside the 5 Division in Makurdi, 9 Division in Ilorin and 10 Division in Jalingo. The newly established 83 Division, with Headquarters in Benin City, will cover Edo, Delta and Bayelsa States when activated. But what makes this division special—and why the governor is pushing so hard—goes beyond administrative reorganisation.

The new Division when fully operational will have the operational mandate of safeguarding critical oil and gas infrastructure, neutralizing crude oil theft and illegal refining networks, and maintaining internal security across the riverine and forest terrains of the region.

And so begin the journey to Teboga in Ikpoba-Okha local government area of the State. A journey that is less like a pilgrimage to a military installation and more like watching a vision take concrete form. What was once neglected and forgotten, bushy, and an abandoned land in a matter of weeks is now cleared and ordered—a testament



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLU

to how quickly things can move when a governor decides they matter.

During his inspection visit recently, the governor moved through the facility like a man ticking off a mental checklist. The site clearance? Done. The fencing? Next. Temporary accommodation? Ready. He wasn't speaking in vague promises or diplomatic language. He was speaking in timelines and deliverables, the vocabulary of someone who understands that military hardware sits idle without infrastructure to house it.

"Last time we came here about two weeks ago, this place was very bushy, but today you can see everywhere is cleared and the next thing now is fencing," Okpebholo said during the inspection. "We are set for the 83 Division here in Edo State, by the grace of God. Everything needed to complete this place for the military to inhabit here is ready and we are set."

That's not boasting—though in Nigerian politics, the line between confidence and boasting blurs easily. It's the voice of a governor who has already moved the needle. Environmental sanitation, rehabilitation of existing structures and other preparatory works were already underway, while contractors had promised to deploy additional bulldozers to accelerate construction.

What's striking about Governor Okpebholo's approach is that he isn't treating the 83 Division as a federal project that happens to be in Edo State. He's treating it as a state project. He's fighting for it. He's clearing obstacles. He's ensuring that when the general officers and their personnel arrive,

they find not just barracks, but a state that has invested in welcoming them. That matters more than government press releases typically let on.

The governor's reasoning about location reveals something else entirely. Edo, he argued, sits at the geographic heart of a region that needs military attention. The establishment of the new Divisions will significantly improve command and control, decentralise operational decision-making, strengthen border security, enhance the protection of critical national infrastructure, improve counter-insur-

gency and internal security operations, and ensure faster military response to emerging threats nationwide.

"Edo is a central point. We have work to do in the South-South. That is why we were called Mid-West and the headquarters of Mid-West was in Benin, and we are still in Benin today," Governor Okpebholo said. "So, putting a division here, in the wisdom of Mr President, is a great thing for the South-South. We are happy because Mr President thought rightly for this to be in Edo."

This is a statement that sits comfortably in Nigeria's political tradition—acknowledge the president's wisdom while subtly reminding everyone of your state's historical importance. But there's genuine gratification underneath. The 83 Division choosing Benin isn't accidental. It's recognition. And Governor Okpebholo intends to honour that recognition through action.

The Governor has expressed confidence that the facility would be ready within the next weeks, adding that alternative temporary office spaces were available if required for the division's immediate take-off. That kind of flexibility—having backup plans—speaks to someone who has thought through the logistics. Not every governor in Nigeria operates this way. Many would have made the announcement and disappeared. Okpebholo is staying on the ground, inspecting sites, holding contractors accountable.

The military side is equally committed. Brigadier General Ahmed Balogun, Commander of 4 Brigade, Nigerian Army, said the inspection was a follow-up to assess progress. "The work is progressing steadily and we are optimistic that the operationalisation

of the division will commence in the nearest future as pronounced, while other amenities and facilities are being incorporated," Balogun said.

At the community level, the excitement is real. When land transforms from a hideout for criminals into a space where military infrastructure rises, people notice. The security implications alone justify the investment. One community leader, His Royal Highness Dogwo Bako, didn't mince words. "The governor has cleared the area, and it was previously a hideout for criminals. The transformation has given us confidence."

That's the dividend of infrastructure development that spreadsheets miss. A community that feels safer. A region that feels less abandoned by the federal government. A state that is actively building, not just complaining about neglect.

The 83 Division operationalisation timeline runs through December 2026. That's less than three months away. For a major military infrastructure project in Nigeria, that's an aggressive schedule. Governor Okpebholo is set to hit the target in a manner that shows how serious his government is about supporting federal security operations in Edo State.

For now, the bulldozers are moving. The land is clearing. And in Benin, a new chapter in the state's military history is being written—one cleared acre at a time.

• Dr. Ebojele has his PhD in Public Administration and is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.

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The governor has cleared the area, and it was previously a hideout for criminals. The transformation has given us confidence.

Reclaiming the beauty, dignity of King's Square

MATTHEW OKAGHA

The approaching 10th coronation anniversary of the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku'Akpolokpolo Oba Ewuare II, provides Edo State with an important opportunity to reflect not only on its rich history and cultural heritage, but also on the physical environment around some of the most important symbols of that heritage.

At the heart of Benin City stands the ancient institution of the Benin Monarchy, whose palace occupies a position of enormous historical, cultural and spiritual significance to the people of Edo State and the wider world.

Just a short distance from the Palace is King's Square, one of the most recognisable landmarks in the city centre and an important part of the historical landscape of the ancient Benin Kingdom.

It is therefore difficult to reconcile the magnificence, dignity and global cultural importance of the Benin Palace with the present state of the surroundings.

King's Square, rather than projecting the beauty and dignity expected of a major cultural centre, has in recent years increasingly become a picture of disorder, congestion and neglect.

The situation is particularly troubling because of the activities of commercial vehicle operators, roadside traders, street urchins and other elements whose activities have combined to create an environment that is often chaotic, unsightly and, in some instances, intimidating.

This is not merely an issue of aesthetics.

It is an issue of dignity, security, tourism, culture and the image of Edo State.

For a city that proudly presents itself as the home of one of Africa's most celebrated ancient civilisations, the immediate environment around the Palace of the Oba of Benin should be treated as a cultural precinct requiring special attention.

The King's Square area ought to be one of the cleanest, safest and most attractive parts of Benin City. Instead, visitors approaching the Palace can be confronted by traffic congestion, indiscriminate trading, litter, touting and activities that diminish the grandeur of the environment.

This situation deserves urgent intervention, particularly as the State prepares to mark the 10th anniversary of the coronation of Oba Ewuare II.

The anniversary is more than a royal celebration. It is an opportunity to showcase Edo's history, culture, traditional institutions, arts and hospitality to visitors from across Nigeria and the world.

It would therefore be unfortunate if guests arriving in Benin City to participate in or witness the anniversary celebrations are greeted by a city centre that does not reflect the pride and dignity of the Benin Kingdom.

The recent intervention by the



IMAGES FROM KING'S SQUARE, BENIN CITY.

PHOTOS: IYALEKHUE O. GRACE AND ODINMA AMARACHI

Edo State Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, Hon. Chris Okaeben, who called on security agencies to restore sanity to the city centre, is commendable.

However, given the seriousness of the situation, the call needs to go beyond a general appeal.

There must be a clearly defined and coordinated operation involving the relevant security and enforcement agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, the Edo State Security Network, traffic management authorities, the local government authorities and other agencies responsible for environmental sanitation and urban control.

There should also be a clearly announced timeline for action.

The people of Edo State do not need another open-ended promise to "restore sanity". They need to see a practical plan, a commencement date and measurable results.

The authorities should identify the immediate problems around King's Square, map out the areas affected by illegal trading and indiscriminate parking, remove obstructions, regulate commercial vehicle operations and establish a permanent enforcement mechanism to prevent the area from returning to its present condition.

At the same time, enforcement must be humane and orderly. Traders and commercial transport oper-

ators whose livelihoods are affected should, where appropriate, be provided with clearly designated and properly regulated alternative locations.

But alternative arrangements must not become an excuse for indefinite inaction.

The transformation of King's Square should go beyond clearing traders and vehicles from the streets.

The entire precinct should be re-designed and beautified as a major cultural gateway to the historic heart of Benin City.

It should have proper landscaping, functional street lighting, pedestrian-friendly walkways, adequate drainage, appropriate signage, controlled parking and regular environmental sanitation.

Where appropriate, the area could also incorporate carefully designed cultural installations that tell the story of the Benin Kingdom and its remarkable contributions to African civilisation.

A clean and beautifully landscaped King's Square could become more than a transit point. It could become a destination.

Visitors could be welcomed into an environment that immediately communicates the history, sophistication and cultural confidence of the Benin people.

This is particularly important at a time when Edo State is seeking

to expand its tourism and creative economy.

A thriving cultural tourism industry cannot exist in isolation from the quality of the physical environment.

The Palace, King's Square, Oba's Market, the National Museum and other historic sites should be seen as components of a broader cultural heritage corridor requiring coordinated planning, investment and protection.

The 10th coronation anniversary of Oba Ewuare II provides a natural deadline for the authorities to begin and substantially complete the transformation of King's Square and its immediate surroundings.

There is still an opportunity to make a statement.

Imagine visitors arriving in the ancient city and finding King's Square clean, orderly, beautifully illuminated and properly landscaped, with traffic under control and the cultural significance of the area clearly communicated.

That would be a fitting tribute to the Benin Monarchy.

It would also be a statement about the direction in which Edo State is moving.

The responsibility, however, should not rest with government alone.

Traditional institutions, community leaders, traders' associations, transport unions, security agencies,

residents and businesses operating within the area all have roles to play.

The Benin Palace is not merely a building. It represents centuries of history, tradition and identity.

King's Square, sitting within its immediate environment, should therefore not be allowed to become a symbol of urban disorder.

There is an urgent need to reclaim King's Square—not simply from traders, motorists and street urchins, but from the culture of neglect that has gradually diminished one of Benin City's most important public spaces.

The task is achievable.

What is required is political will, inter-agency coordination, sustained enforcement and a clear vision of what the city centre should represent.

The approaching coronation anniversary offers the perfect occasion to begin that process.

Edo State should seize the opportunity to restore the beauty, dignity and historical character of King's Square.

When the world looks towards the Palace of the Oba of Benin, it should see not only the splendour of a revered traditional institution, but also a city and a people who understand the value of their history and are determined to preserve it.

King's Square deserves nothing less.

NEWSEXTRA**Jonathan: 2027 election will test our democratic maturity****ABUJA**

Former President Goodluck Jonathan has said the 2027 general election will test Nigeria's democratic maturity, urging Nigerians to prioritise peace, unity and justice.

Jonathan stated this in his Independence Day message to Nigerians on Thursday as the

country marked its 66th anniversary of independence.

The former President urged Nigerians to remain patriotic and committed to the country's unity as preparations for the next electoral season gather momentum.

He said, "In a few months, we will enter another electoral season, a period that will test

our democratic maturity. I urge all Nigerians to remain patriotic and prioritise actions that safeguard peace, unity, and justice."

Jonathan said Nigeria had faced numerous challenges since gaining independence but had continued to overcome them through the resilience of its people.

He urged Nigerians to remain hopeful and united while work-

ing towards a better future.

"Today, our nation marks another significant milestone in its journey of nationhood. Sixty-six years ago, we secured our independence and took our destiny into our own hands.

"Through the years, Nigeria has faced numerous challenges, but through our collective resilience, we have always

emerged triumphant.

"As we reflect on this journey, let us remain steadfast in faith and hope, and continue to work in unity," he said.

Jonathan said the country had immense opportunities ahead if its diversity and abundant natural and human resources were harnessed for sustainable development.

He particularly urged young Nigerians to remain hopeful and courageous in working towards a country that would provide a prosperous future for generations to come.

"The years ahead hold immense possibilities, provided we harness our diversity and our abundant natural and human resources to drive sustainable development.



Fun seekers celebrating the Nigerian 66th Independence Anniversary at the City gate in Abuja on Thursday.

2027: Obi vows not to spend vacation abroad when elected**ABUJA**

The presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress, Peter Obi, has vowed not to spend his holidays outside Nigeria if elected President in the 2027 general elections.

Obi made the pledge in his Independence Day address delivered in Abuja on Thursday, saying he would use his four-year tenure to travel across the country, interact with Nigerians and better understand their challenges.

He said, "As I have always done, I will lead by example. In four years as President of this great nation, I will not spend my holidays outside Nigeria. My holidays will be spent in Zamfara State; Borno State; Kwara State; Ebonyi

State; Edo State; Ekiti State and other Nigerian States.

"I want to continue to see Nigeria. I want to know Nigeria. I want to spend time with Nigerians, listen to them, understand their challenges and celebrate their resilience."

The former Anambra governor also promised that his administration would make governance measurable and accountable, with emphasis on the welfare and productivity of Nigerians.

"As President of Nigeria, I will make governance measurable, accountable and centred on the welfare and productivity of our people. Within the first year, Nigerians will begin to see the tangible impact of purposeful and effective leadership," he said.

The former Anambra State governor pledged to tackle insecurity, saying farmers would be able to return to their farms while children would return to school and businesses would operate without fear.

He said, "We will confront insecurity decisively so that our farmers can return to their farms, our children can return to school, businesses can operate freely, and families can live without fear.

"No Nigerian should be forced to live in an IDP camp because his or her government has failed to provide security."

Obi, who said Independence anniversaries should provide opportunities for national reflection, criticised the APC-led administration, arguing that the country had continued to face serious challenges despite the promises made in 2023.

Nigeria facing institutional adolescence at 66, says cleric**IBADAN**

As Nigeria marks its 66th Independence Anniversary, the Founder and Spiritual Master of the Caring and Sharing Sufi Centre (Muslims in Light Organization), Dr Rasheed Akinbile, has urged Nigerians and their leaders to engage in deep national reflection, de-

claring that "the oil childhood is over" and the country can no longer wait for "one wonder to save it."

Akinbile made the call in an Independence Anniversary statement issued in Ibadan on Thursday, where he challenged Nigerians to reflect on the country's journey since independence and the kind of nation they want to build.

He noted that Nigeria's population had quadrupled since 1960, saying the country must now "sit quietly with itself and ask what is real" as it seeks to determine the collective character it wants to develop.

According to him, the country is also experiencing a major generational transition, with members of the founding generation gradually passing

away while those who inherited power have grown old.

He said the critical question for the present generation should no longer be, "What did our fathers build?" but rather, "What have we, their children, kept?"

Akinbile warned that countries often encounter serious institutional challenges between 60 and 70 years after independence, when institutions are expected to survive "without emotional memory of independence."

He described Nigeria at 66 as being in an "institutional adolescence," arguing that although the country has foundational structures in place,

its national character is still being shaped.

The cleric identified three major tests facing Nigeria: the peaceful transfer of political power, feeding the population while retaining young talent, and building a common national identity.

On political transition, he said Nigeria must develop a system where "the loser goes home and lives well," stressing the importance of peaceful political competition and stability.

He also called for greater attention to food security and the retention of young Nigerians, particularly talented youths who may otherwise seek opportunities abroad.

Kano arrests 380, secures 230 convictions in two-month drug crackdown**KANO**

The Kano State Government has arrested more than 380 suspects and secured over 230 convictions in the first two months of its intensified crackdown on drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Governor Abba Yusuf disclosed this on Thursday while delivering his address at the 66th Independence Anniversary celebration held at the Sani Abacha Indoor Stadium, Kano.

"We have arrested more than 380 suspects and secured over 230 convictions in the first two months of the state's intensified campaign against drug abuse and illicit trafficking," Yusuf said.

He said the state government established the Kano State Multi-Agency Task Force on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in July 2026 and issued an Executive Order to strengthen the fight against illicit substances,

thuggery and related criminal activities.

The figures are consistent with those earlier disclosed by the chairman of the task force, Muhuyi Gado, who said in September that the committee had arrested more than 380 suspects and secured over 230 convictions since its inauguration on July 22.

"The Task Force has also dismantled drug joints and criminal hideouts across the state since its establishment," the governor said.

The governor described the fight against drug abuse and criminality as a shared responsibility involving the government, security agencies, traditional institutions, religious leaders, communities, parents and citizens.

He appealed to young people to reject drugs, violence and criminality, urging them to embrace education, agriculture, technology, enterprise, voca-

tional training and the creative industries.

"Drug abuse and criminality are not the responsibility of government alone. It requires the collective efforts of security agencies, traditional institutions, religious leaders, communities, parents and all citizens," Yusuf said.

He said his administration would continue to support security agencies, strengthen community-based intelligence and address the social challenges contributing to crime and insecurity.

The governor urged residents to provide credible information to security agencies to assist in preventing and tackling criminal activities across the state.

Yusuf reaffirmed the government's commitment to creating a safer environment where young people could pursue lawful enterprise and contribute meaningfully to the development of Kano State.

FG plans support for Aba textile cluster, agriculture**ABUJA**

The Federal Government is exploring ways to support businesses in Abia State, particularly those in the textile and garment cluster in Aba and the agricultural sector.

The Special Adviser to the President on Industry, Trade and Investment, John Uwajimogu, disclosed this in Aba during a visit to the state Governor, Alex Otti, in his office.

Uwajimogu said the delegation was in the state to deepen engagement with the Abia State Government and explore areas of collaboration that could

attract Federal Government projects and investment opportunities.

He said the Federal Government had taken note of Aba's strong industrial capacity, particularly in textiles and garments, and was exploring ways to support businesses in the sector by addressing major constraints affecting their operations.

"One of the biggest things that we see coming out of Abia State is the strong industrial capacity in Aba, particularly in the textile and garments sector.

"We have been thinking of how, from the federal level, we can support the businesses

that are working in that sector and have come up with ideas on how we can address some of the biggest binding constraints that they often face, one being infrastructure and the other one being finance.

"We are also coming to discuss what we can bring to the table and help resolve and address those binding constraints," Uwajimogu stated.

He added that the Federal Government was interested in bringing its projects and programmes to Abia, noting that the visit was part of efforts to identify areas where both tiers of government could work together to promote economic development.

COLUMN

When religious doctrines change, who pays the price?

There is an issue that bothers me deeply. It is not the soaring price of petrol. It is not kidnapping-for-ransom and banditry, which have remained stubbornly unabated. Neither is it Nigeria's seemingly intractable economic quagmire, with millions of citizens struggling to survive from one month to another. Of course, these are all realities of life in my beloved country, Nigeria — realities to which, sadly, I have since become acclimatised and acculturated.

I am indeed perturbed by the inconsistencies, restrictions and sometimes extraordinary control exercised by the leaders of some Christian denominations over the lives of their followers.

Religion is supposed to provide moral direction, spiritual comfort and hope. Yet, when religious policies are presented to believers as unquestionable divine commands, only for those policies to be substantially altered years later, uncomfortable questions inevitably arise. What happens when yesterday's absolute prohibition becomes today's permissible practice? Who accepts responsibility for the consequences suffered by those who obeyed yesterday's rule?

The recent development involving Jehovah's Witnesses has brought this question into sharp focus.

On September 18, 2026, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses announced that the acceptance of red blood cells, white blood cells, plasma or platelets from donated blood would henceforth be a matter of individual conscience. Each Witness may decide whether to accept those components during medical or surgical treatment. The organisation also says members may decide whether to donate blood for the purpose of providing components or fractions to another person.

There is, however, an important qualification. Jehovah's Witnesses have not abandoned their prohibition of whole-blood transfusion. Their official position remains that whole blood should not be transfused. What has changed is that the four principal components of blood are now matters for personal conscience. The organisation says the change follows further consideration of biblical principles and recognition that Scripture does not specifically address these medical decisions.

That is a major development after decades of adhering to a doctrine that has distinguished Jehovah's Witnesses from many other Christian communities. The organisation has historically interpreted the biblical command to "abstain from blood" as applying not merely to eating blood but also to transfusion.

One can understand why a religious organisation might revise its interpretation. Human understanding develops. Medical science advances. Circumstances change. Religious scholars may discover that an earlier interpretation was too broad. There is nothing inherently wrong with reconsidering a doctrine.

The troubling issue is what happens to the people who were required to obey the earlier interpretation as though it were an immutable command from God.

Imagine a believer lying in a hospital bed, bleeding heavily, while doctors recommend blood. Imagine the family



standing helplessly beside the patient because accepting blood was believed to constitute disobedience to God. Imagine that patient dying with the conviction that refusing the transfusion was the price of faithfulness. Years later, the same religious authority says that accepting some major blood components is now a matter of individual conscience.

The question is painful: what change?

Did God change His mind, or did the human interpretation of God's will change?

I am not suggesting that every Jehovah's Witness who rejected blood died, nor am I attributing particular deaths to the organisation without evidence. The point is more fundamental. Where a religious authority possesses enormous influence over medical decisions, its leaders must recognise that an interpretation can have consequences far beyond theology.

This brings me to Nigeria, where religious authority is exceptionally powerful.

Consider the Deeper Christian Life Ministry. There was a time when television and other modern technologies were viewed with deep suspicion within the ministry. Television was regarded as a channel through which worldly and morally objectionable influences could enter the home. Members were warned about its contents, and the medium was commonly associated with harmful influences.

Yet the position changed.

In 2022, Pastor William Kumuyi publicly explained why Deeper Life had embraced television, radio, social media and other technologies for spreading the Gospel. He acknowledged that the church had previously rejected such technologies but later recognised that they could be used for evangelism. He even recounted how the church had once regarded radio and television as problematic before eventually embracing them.

This development does not make the earlier concern about immoral tel-

evision content necessarily irrational. Television can indeed transmit harmful material. The point is that a technological instrument itself was once treated with extraordinary suspicion but later became useful for preaching the Gospel.

That should teach religious leaders an important lesson: distinguish between an object and the way an object is used.

The same principle applies to many other matters.

A scholarly study of the Christ Apostolic Church found that the denomination initially held to divine healing without the use of drugs, while its contemporary understanding became more accommodating of orthodox medicine. The study described this as a significant change in the church's understanding and practice of divine healing.

Again, the lesson is not that religious doctrines must never change. They can change. Indeed, genuine intellectual and theological development sometimes requires change.

The problem begins when human interpretation is elevated to the status of an unquestionable divine command and ordinary believers are frightened into obedience.

In some religious communities, questions about medical treatment, contraception, dress, marriage, education, entertainment and relationships have attracted strong prescriptions. Some prescriptions may be harmless. Others may have serious consequences, depending on the circumstances.

The most dangerous situation occurs when a doctrine interferes with a person's access to appropriate medical care.

A pastor can change a sermon. A denomination can amend its constitution. A church can issue a new circular. A theological position can be revised. But a life lost cannot be restored by a subsequent policy document.

This is why religious leaders should be particularly careful when issuing absolute prohibitions concerning

blood, surgery, medication, childbirth or other medical interventions.

The ordinary believer often does not possess the theological training to distinguish between what Scripture expressly commands and what a religious authority has inferred from Scripture. When the leader speaks with certainty, the follower may hear the voice of God.

That creates a serious moral responsibility.

There is an enormous difference between saying, "This is our interpretation of Scripture," and saying, "God has commanded this." The first leaves room for reflection, discussion and future reconsideration. The second can close the door to questioning.

Religious institutions therefore need greater humility.

Where science provides new evidence, religious leaders should examine it. Where medical circumstances change, they should reconsider policies. Where biblical interpretation is uncertain, they should admit the uncertainty. And where a matter is properly one of individual conscience, believers should be trusted to make informed decisions.

The Jehovah's Witnesses announcement is instructive in this regard. The organisation itself now says that, because the Bible does not specifically comment on the medical use of these four blood components, each Christian must make a personal decision. It also says congregations should not interfere in that decision and that individual Christians should not judge one another.

That raises an obvious question: could greater room for individual conscience have been granted earlier?

Perhaps religious organisations should think carefully before making highly specific rules that Scripture itself does not explicitly state.

This is not an argument against Christianity. It is an argument for responsible religious leadership.

Christianity teaches the sanctity of human life. Therefore, Christian leadership should be extremely cautious about policies that could place that life at risk.

Church leaders have immense influence in Nigeria. Their pronouncements can determine what people eat, wear, watch, study, marry, accept med-

ically and even how they raise their children. Such influence demands accountability.

A believer should be able to ask: Is this a biblical command, a denominational doctrine, a pastoral recommendation, a cultural tradition or an individual interpretation?

These categories should never be deliberately blurred.

Nor should questioning a doctrine automatically be treated as rebellion against God. Mature faith should be capable of examination. If a doctrine is sound, its biblical foundation should withstand sincere questioning.

The recent blood-policy adjustment by Jehovah's Witnesses should therefore provoke sober reflection across the Christian world. It demonstrates that even doctrines regarded for decades as settled can be reconsidered.

And if doctrines can change, leaders should be honest about their human role in interpreting Scripture.

There is also a wider lesson for the Nigerian church. Transparency should accompany authority. Where leaders once insisted that a practice was spiritually dangerous, they should explain openly why the position has changed, what evidence informed the revision and whether earlier interpretations were mistaken. Such candour would not weaken faith; it could strengthen public confidence by showing that religious leadership is capable of humility, learning and accountability today.

For those who suffered under previous restrictions, however, the change may raise difficult emotions. A family that lost a loved one after a decision based on an earlier doctrine may understandably ask whether that decision would have been different under today's policy. Such questions deserve compassion, not dismissal.

The answer cannot simply be that doctrine has changed. Human beings are not theological experiments.

The central issue, therefore, is not whether churches are permitted to change their policies. They are. The issue is whether leaders should impose interpretations with such absolute authority that followers may risk their health, liberty or lives — only for the same leadership to reconsider the rule later.

Faith should guide conscience, not extinguish it.

Religious leaders should teach believers what they believe, explain why they believe it and allow room for conscientious decisions where Scripture and circumstances permit. They should also be humble enough to acknowledge that interpretation is a human activity.

Nigeria needs churches that strengthen responsible faith rather than cultivate unquestioning dependence on clerical authority.

When a doctrine changes, the leadership can publish a new position. When a policy is reversed, a new announcement can be made.

But when a life has been lost, there is no revised edition.

That, for me, is the real lesson behind the latest Jehovah's Witnesses development.

• Dr. Odaro is a columnist and lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria.



Religious leaders should teach believers what they believe, explain why they believe it and allow room for conscientious decisions where Scripture and circumstances permit. They should also be humble enough to acknowledge that interpretation is a human activity.



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LONG MAY HE REIGN

INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

Nigeria @ 66: Insecurity, economy and expectations of citizens

IYALEKHUE O. GRACE

As the nation marks its 66th Independence Anniversary today, citizens across the country are looking beyond the ceremonies, reflecting on the nation's journey since independence and demanding greater security, economic relief and improved living conditions.

The anniversary offers an opportunity to assess Nigeria's progress since gaining independence in 1960, as well as the challenges that continue to constrain national development.

Among the major concerns confronting Nigerians are insecurity, unemployment, poverty, inadequate infrastructure and the rising pres-

sure on household incomes.

The Federal Government has maintained that the country is gradually moving from a period of economic reforms and stabilisation into an era of growth and shared prosperity.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said recent economic indicators, including real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 4.43 per cent in the second quarter of 2026, indicated improving economic activity.

However, for millions of Nigerians, the major test remains whether the reported economic gains will translate into better living conditions.

Citizens are particularly looking forward to more jobs, improved wag-

es and purchasing power, affordable food and essential services, better access to education and credit, and expanded opportunities for young people.

Security also remains a major national concern. Although the Federal Government has reported progress in the fight against insecurity and improved access to some areas previously affected by violence, security challenges persist in parts of the country.

Nigerians expect government at all levels to intensify efforts to protect lives and property, secure communities and farmlands, and create an environment where citizens can pursue their livelihoods without fear.

Beyond the economy and security,

citizens are also demanding stronger institutions, improved infrastructure, efficient public services and greater accountability in governance.

The Federal Government has said its Renewed Hope National Development Plan 2026–2030 is designed to promote productivity, economic diversification, human capital development and national resilience.

The theme of this year's anniversary, "From Reforms to Stability: Consolidating Nigeria's Renewed Hope for Shared Prosperity," reflects the administration's stated commitment to consolidating its ongoing reforms and ensuring that their benefits reach a wider segment of the population.

The Federal Government has announced a low-key celebration, with

a public lecture scheduled for September 30 and President Bola Tinubu's nationwide Independence Day broadcast on October 1.

As Nigeria enters another year of nationhood, the overriding expectation of citizens is that the gains of economic reforms and national development should be felt in their daily lives.

For Nigerians, therefore, the 66th Independence Anniversary is not merely a celebration of freedom from colonial rule. It is also a moment for sober reflection on the nation's achievements, the challenges that remain and the urgent responsibility of government and citizens to build a safer, more prosperous and more united Nigeria.



Nigeria @ 66: Hope for a better tomorrow

SUCCESS EDENAMUIKI, EGHAREVBA ANGEL AND OKUNBOR DELIGHT

As Nigeria celebrates its 66th Independence Anniversary today, October 1, 2026, the occasion offers citizens an opportunity to reflect on the country's journey, its achievements, challenges and hopes for a better future.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is blessed with abundant natural and human resources, including oil, gas and other mineral deposits. It is also one of the continent's largest economies.

For many young Nigerians, growing up in the country has been a mixture of pleasant memories and difficult experiences. While sectors such as entertainment have continued to project Nigeria positively across the globe, serious challenges remain.

Nollywood and Afrobeats, for instance, have become global cultural brands, creating employment opportunities and giving millions of Nigerians, particularly young

people, a sense of pride.

However, insecurity, kidnapping, banditry, unemployment, rising cost of living and other economic difficulties continue to weigh heavily on families across the country.

A Young Nigerian's Story

For 21-year-old Okunbor Delight Esosa of Benin City, the challenges confronting Nigeria are not merely statistics. They are part of her personal experience.

Esosa recalled that her first 18 years were relatively comfortable, describing her childhood as a period when life was manageable.

According to her, former President Goodluck Jonathan was the first president she clearly remembered, adding that she lived with her mother, attended a good school and enjoyed a relatively stable family life.

She, however, said the last four years had been particularly difficult.

"I lost my mom in this era because of lack of proper feeding and no money for good health care," she

said.

Esosa explained that the death of her mother and the family's worsening financial situation had affected her education and that of her siblings.

"My parents can no longer sponsor me. An organisation is now helping me to stay in school. My siblings have dropped out of school. I am the only one still in school," she said.

She lamented the increasing number of children dropping out of school and taking to street trading, as well as the growing cases of kidnapping, killings, drug abuse, human trafficking, fraud, robbery and prostitution.

She also identified poor roads, rising food prices, high fuel costs and inadequate electricity supply as some of the challenges confronting ordinary Nigerians.

Concerns Over Security and Policing

Esosa expressed particular concern about the experiences of citizens at security checkpoints, espe-

cially commuters and commercial drivers.

"We used to say, 'Police is your friend,' but now police collect our money," she said, alleging that commercial drivers were sometimes required to make payments at checkpoints before being allowed to continue their journeys.

She also complained of what she described as harassment and arbitrary arrests, calling for greater accountability and professionalism in policing.

Hope Amid the Challenges

Despite the difficulties, Esosa said Nigeria's Independence Anniversary should not be reduced to a period of lamentation.

"This is not a time to complain, this is not a day to mourn, this is not a day to cry, but this is a day to celebrate freedom and peace," she said.

She expressed hope that Nigeria would overcome its current challenges and become a country where citizens can live safely, pursue their dreams and enjoy the benefits of

their homeland.

"Despite the insecurity, bandits and kidnapping, I hope Nigeria keeps getting better every day. I hope Nigeria becomes a place of our dreams, a true motherland," she said.

She concluded with a message of faith and collective responsibility: "Nigeria is not well now, but I believe we can put our heads together. I pray God will do wonders for this country."

As Nigeria clocks 66, the story of young Nigerians like Esosa reflects both the pain and resilience of a nation still evolving. The challenges are enormous, but so are the country's resources, talents and possibilities.

The 66th Independence Anniversary therefore comes not only as a celebration of freedom, but also as a reminder of the collective responsibility to build a safer, fairer and more prosperous Nigeria for present and future generations.

Happy 66th Independence Anniversary to all Nigerians.

Sports

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

Super Eagles: No 2027 AFCON with these complacencies and poor attitude

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Another non-qualification for major tournament now looms over Nigeria's football. The Super Eagles 3-0 defeat to Guinea-Bissau in Bissau was not merely a bad result; it was a warning about the complacency that has followed the Super Eagles for too long. Guinea-Bissau scored through Franculino Dju, Mama Baldé and Álvaro Djaló to hand Eric Chelle his first defeat in the ongoing 2027 Afcon qualifiers as Nigeria coach, leaving the Super Eagles on three points after two matches while Guinea-Bissau moved to six. After missing the 2026 World Cup, Nigeria cannot afford another major tournament failure.

The most troubling part is that this was not an opponent Nigeria suddenly discovered on the fixture list. The 2027 AFCON qualifying draw was conducted in Cairo on May 19, 2026, placing Nigeria in Group L alongside Madagascar, Tanzania and Guinea-Bissau. The dates, opponents and venues were known months in advance. So when the explanation after the defeat becomes the poor pitch, bad weather or lack of aggression, the obvious question is: what exactly was the technical department doing between May and September?

Respect your opponent — that should have been Lesson One. You do not stroll onto any African pitch believing that your badge, European-based players or FIFA ranking will win the match for you easily.

Guinea-Bissau are not a footballing giant, but they have repeatedly demonstrated that they can hurt Nigeria. They defeated the Super Eagles 1-0 in Abuja in the 2023 AFCON qualifiers before Nigeria won the return leg in Bissau. The same lesson was available three years ago, yet apparently nobody revisited the file.

The Maggi effect is simple: two or three quality ingredients can change the entire soup. If a supposedly smaller African nation has players competing abroad, you must identify where the danger lies. Guinea-Bissau had enough foreign-based quality to punish Nigeria, and their recent AFCON history should have demanded respect. They qualified for four successive tournaments from 2017 through 2023 before missing Morocco 2025. A serious technical department should know the club backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses and tendencies of the opposition before the team leaves Nigeria which brings us to the team analyst. What was the opposition analysis? Did anyone sit down with Chelle and identify the individual threats? Did anyone analyse how Guinea-Bissau wanted to attack the Nigerian full-backs? Did anyone study the conditions in Bissau and prepare the players for them? When the opposition scores three times, it is difficult to avoid questions about preparation. The pitch did not suddenly become bad on September 29; it was part of the environment in which the match



SUPER EAGLES OF NIGERIA

was always going to be played.

Then comes the tactical problem: a diamond without genuine wingers can become suicide. The 4-4-2 diamond requires enormous work from the full-backs because they provide the width. It also requires midfielders who can cover huge areas and strikers who complement each other. Nigeria did not consistently get those ingredients right. The full-backs failed to provide sufficient width going forward and, more importantly, were repeatedly exposed defensively.

Bruno Onyemaechi and Bright Osayi-Samuel had a difficult evening. The argument is not that two players alone caused a 3-0 defeat, because football does not work that way. But the defensive structure repeatedly failed to close down the supply into dangerous areas. At this level, hesitation is punished. If the system depends on the full-backs to defend and attack, they cannot disappear from either responsibility.

The Ola Aina question also deserves attention. After suffering a serious injury on a difficult surface previously, one can understand why a player might be cautious about such conditions. But that raises another question for the coaching staff: if one full-back is unavailable or unsuitable for the conditions, why was there no properly prepared alternative? Abdullahi Bewene and other emerging options were available around the wider squad. Selection should be based on current suitability, not simply reputation.

The midfield was another major concern. Nigeria's defensive midfield protection disappeared for long stretches. There were not enough tactical fouls to stop transitions, not enough pressure on the ball and not enough protection in front of the centre-backs. Wilfred Ndidi has given

Nigeria years of outstanding service, but service cannot become an automatic passport to selection. Even with Frank Onyeka available, the balance was not right. Ndidi has also become more adventurous in his football, which means the team must compensate when he moves forward.

Then there is the decision to start two No. 9s with broadly similar profiles. Akor Adams and Taiwo Awoniyi can both operate as physical, penalty-box strikers, but putting them together without genuine wingers or consistent service can leave both isolated. The 1990s Super Eagles could make a two-striker system work because players such as Finidi George and Emmanuel Amunike provided width, penetration and quality deliveries. It was better to have started Onyedika in the Midfield ahead of one of the strikers so the team was more compact. Without that supply, two strikers can simply become two passengers waiting for a ball that never arrives.

And this is where the argument that Nigeria simply needed Victor Osimhen misses the point. This defeat was not about Osimhen; it was about poor collective selection, preparation and execution. Guinea-Bissau had already beaten Nigeria in the 2023 AFCON qualifiers, even though the Super Eagles had Osimhen available in that campaign they would have triumphed still. The answer cannot always be to wait for one superstar to rescue the system. Nigeria has enough talent to beat Guinea-Bissau without building the entire team around one player.

Ademola Lookman is another difficult conversation. He has been magnificent for Nigeria at AFCON finals, including successive Team of the Tournament selections, but his qualifying performances have not consistently matched that level. In the absence of Osimhen, the expectation

on Lookman becomes even greater. Perhaps he needs a break from these qualifiers and a different role. He could be used as an impact substitute until he rediscovers his rhythm. Nigeria does not lack talent on the wings.

The goalkeeper position should also be open to competition. If Maduka Okoye and other European-based goalkeepers are invited during the same international window, there must be genuine competition for the shirt. Stanley Nwabali has earned his place through his performances, but national-team selection cannot operate on sentiment. The message to every goalkeeper should be simple: perform and compete, and the shirt is yours.

The same principle should apply to defenders and midfielders. Chibuike Nwaiwu and Benjamin Fredrick were among the younger options available, and away qualifiers are precisely the occasions when hungry players can be tested. Sometimes the player desperate to establish himself will run through mud for the badge while an established player is playing within himself. Reputation should open the door; performance should determine who walks through it.

What makes the complaints about the weather and pitch even more difficult to accept is that Guinea-Bissau's players were playing on exactly the same surface. And many of their players were not playing African club football either. The modern football careers represented in that squad stretched across European environments, including clubs such as Everton, Sampdoria, Trabzonspor and Red Star Belgrade. The conditions were difficult for everyone. The difference was how each side adapted to them.

What were the friendlies for? Nigeria had the Unity Cup and other international windows in which several

players performed impressively. Those matches were supposed to provide the technical staff with information about the depth of the squad. If some of those players could not even receive meaningful opportunities when the team travelled to Bissau, then the purpose of those friendly matches becomes questionable. The Russia friendly on October 6 now provides another opportunity to correct that. The NFF has already named a squad containing several fresh faces, including Samuel James, Victory Akpe, Kenneth Igboke, Chibuzo Nwoko and others.

Lookman may need that same reset. If Nigeria eventually qualifies for the tournament proper, he should remain part of the conversation because his AFCON pedigree is undeniable. But qualification football demands current form, not memories. The coach must be brave enough to tell established stars that nobody owns a starting shirt. That is how a competitive national team is built.

There is also a bigger institutional question: who is actually in charge of Nigerian football? The relationship between the Nigeria Football Federation and the National Sports Commission has generated confusion about authority, oversight and direction. Nigerian football needs stability, clear lines of responsibility and a technical structure that allows the coach and his staff to work professionally. Whatever the administrative arrangements are, the public should not have to wonder who is making the major football decisions.

Eric Chelle is not the Messiah some people have made him out to be. He is a descent football coach who can make good decisions and bad decisions. His reported salary and the circumstances surrounding his appointment can be debated without insulting journalists who ask legitimate questions. The honeymoon is over. The coach now has to prove himself on the pitch. Every national-team coach eventually reaches the point where results, preparation and selection become the only arguments that matter.

The calculator is already out again. With Guinea-Bissau on six points and Nigeria on three after the opening two matches, the Super Eagles have made the road to AFCON unnecessarily difficult. And because Tanzania are co-hosts, only the highest-placed non-host in Group L can qualify, making every remaining match enormously important. The Russia friendly must therefore become more than another exhibition: it should be an audition for the future. Give the young legs minutes. Test new combinations. Build competition. Find players hungry enough to fight for the shirt. Nigeria has already missed enough World Cups in recent time. Failing to qualify for AFCON as well would be unacceptable — and it should force a serious examination of the coach, the technical department, the football administration and the entire process that produced this latest complacency.

SPORTS



23rd NSF: LOC constitutes sub-committees for Coal City Games

The Local organizing committee (LOC) of the 23rd National Sports Festival tagged Enugu Coal City Games has constituted the various Sub-Committees that will be responsible for organization of the Games, in their various capacity.

According to the Chairman of the LOC, Hon. Lloyd Ike Ekweremadu and the Secretary General, Olumide Bamiduro; the constitution of the Sub-committees is the right step in the right direction, that will bring about the best organization of the sports fiesta in the history of the National Sports Festival.

The statement read that members have been carefully selected based on their expertise

and their wealth of experience, that is considered valuable and relevant to the successful organization of the Games.

Below are members of the Local Organizing Committee and the various Sub-Committees.

LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Hon. Lloyd Ike Ekweremadu Jr - (Chairman)
2. Mary Onyali- (Member)
3. Akuchukwu Aghazu- (Member)
4. Victor Okorie- (Member)
5. Blessing Chisalam Ekwe- (Member)
6. Davidson Owumi- (Member)
7. Tony Ugwu- (Member)
8. Jonathan Nnaji- (Member)
9. Boniface Onovo - (Member)

10. Ephraim Ochonma - (Member)
11. Obiora Obasi - (Member)
12. Henry Chinedu Okorie - (Member)
13. Bamiduro Olumide (Secretary General)

PROPOSED SUB-COMMITTEES A.GAMES VILLAGE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Hon. Lloyd Ike Ekweremadu - Chairman
2. Bamiduro Olumide - Secretary
3. Davidson Owumi
4. Dr. Ademola Are
5. Onovo Boniface
6. Miriam Aniekwe
7. Obiora Obasi

ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Henry Okorie -Deputy Chairman
2. Obiora Obasi - Chairman
3. Eugenia Udeh (DFA Ministry of Youth & Sports) - Member.
4. Gbenga Omoyemi - member
5. Obinna Chukwu - Secretary

CATERING SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Hon. Lloyd Ike Ekweremadu - Chairman
2. Bamiduro Olumide - Deputy Chairman
3. Nancy Nwoha - Secretary
4. Nkiru Uduaga - Asst Secretary
5. Babatunde Adeolu - Member
6. Miriam Aniekwe - Member

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION SUB-COMMITTEE

1. Hon Commissioner of In-

- formation - Chairman
2. Gideon Iwueke (SWAN Chairman) - Deputy Chairman
3. Uche Anichukwu (SSA Media to the Governor) - Secretary
4. Hon. Dan Nwomeh - Member
5. Foster Ejikeme Chime - Member
6. Dan Onwuegbuna - Member
7. Frankie Omokhua - Member
8. Osondu Ngwude - Member
9. Nneka Anibueze - Member
10. Ndubueze Chidoka (RadioNigeria) - Member
11. Felicia Nwokorie - Member
12. Solomon Unya - Member
13. Brian Okechukwu (MYS Media Officer) - Member

PROTOCOL SUB-COMMITTEE

1. Chief of Protocol, Government House - Chairman
2. Princess Ugwu Obiajulu (VC, House Committee Youth

Sports and Security - Deputy Chairman

3. SSA Protocol to the Governor - Secretary
4. Peter Oramalu - Member
5. Nancy Nwoha - Member
6. Obiora Obasi - Member
7. Segun Ojo - Member
8. Banji Adepoju - Member

CEREMONIAL SUB-COMMITTEE

1. Akuchukwu Aghazu - Chairman
2. Hon. Ricky Agu (Chairman, Enugu Air) - Deputy Chairman
3. Director of Organizing, Ministry of Youth and Sports - Secretary
4. Bamiduro Olumide - Member
5. Edward Adebisi - Member
6. Jane Owoh - Member
7. Robinson Okosun (Sports Coordination Expert) - Member



EDO QUEENS IN TRAINING

CAF must not punish Edo Queens for error committed by match referee, NFF insists

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has filed a strong appeal, telling the Confederation of African Football (CAF) that Edo Queens of Benin City must not be punished for an offence committed by the referee of their match with Ampem Darkoa Ladies of Ghana.

NFF raised the arguments in their petition to the continent's football governing body, after it cancelled the match's result and ordered it to be completed properly.

The NFF's appeal comes after CAF overturned the 4-1 victory achieved by Edo Queens via penalties in the final of the West African Football Union (WAFU)-B Women's Champions League

qualifiers, following a protest by the Ghanaians.

CAF initially recognised the result after Edo Queens were presented with the trophy in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, as WAFU-B champions, but Ampem Darkoa insisted that the competition regulations require the match to proceed into extra time before penalties.

The CAF Committee upheld Ampem Darkoa's protest, determining that proceeding directly to penalties after regulation time was inconsistent with Article 72.4 of the competition regulations, which requires two 15-minute halves of extra time in a drawn final.

However, the NFF has now sent a formal petition to the CAF Appeals Committee to reverse that verdict, arguing

that neither Edo Queens nor Ampem Darkoa was responsible for the failure to play extra time before the penalty shoot-out.

The appeal, which was submitted by NFF's acting general secretary, Dr Emmanuel Ikpe, further pointed out that Edo Queens did not request, cause or contribute to the referee skipping extra time, but they simply followed the directives of the appointed match officials.

The NFF's appeal revealed: "Edo Queens neither elected nor requested that extra time be dispensed with. The fact that Edo Queens ultimately won the shoot-out cannot retrospectively convert its compliance with the referee's instruction into responsibility for the regulatory breach.

Pandemonium in Ogun State as thousands rush kit pick-up for October 3rd marathon

Countdown is on for the 2026 Abeokuta 10KM Marathon, and tension is already peaking in Ogun State as kit collection officially kicks off three days out from the grand showdown scheduled for Saturday, October 3.

Organizers Nilayo Sports Management Limited have set the stage for an explosive, all-Nigerian battle by making this fifth edition 100 per cent indigenous, placing an exclusive focus on local athletes for the uncompromised elite prize purse.

With foreign runners sidelined from the podium payouts, over 3,000 registered domestic athletes have invaded the Ogun State capital to claim their race packs and stake their claim for ultimate glory.

The decision to spotlight home-grown talent has ignited fierce rivalries among Nigeria's elite long-distance stars. The 10-kilometer route will flag off at 7:00 AM from Macjob Grammar School in

Onikolobo and wind through historic city landmarks before finishing at the MKO Abiola Sports Arena in Kuto.

Race officials have confirmed that all logistics, route security, and medical teams are fully activated to manage the crowds. With thousands of local runners ready to hit the pavement on October 3, the stage is set for an unprecedented domestic clash where only the fastest Nigerian will wear the crown.

Aruna Quadri faces rising Chinese defender Li Tianyang in WTT China smash qualifiers

Nigeria's table tennis star Aruna Quadri has been handed an intriguing challenge in the qualification draw of the 2026 WTT China Smash, with the experienced Nigerian set to face rising Chinese defender Li Tianyang.

The matchup brings together two contrasting styles and stages of development, with Aruna's extensive experience against defensive players set to be tested by a young Chinese opponent enjoying a strong run of form.

Aruna has built an impressive record against defenders throughout his career, winning 11 of his 12 meetings against players with a defensive style.

Among those he has defeated are established defenders such as Wang Yang, Ruwen Filus and Ma Te, giving the Nigerian considerable experience when it comes to dealing with

the patience, variation and tactical demands associated with defensive play.

However, Li Tianyang enters the contest with significant momentum of his own.

The Chinese defender recently produced an impressive run at the WTT Star Contender Astana, reaching the semi-finals

after recording notable victories over Chen Junsong, Darko Jorgic and Flavien Coton.

His performances in Astana underlined his ability to compete against high-level opposition and marked him out as a player capable of causing problems for more established names on the international circuit.



ARUNA QUADRI AND WANG YANG