

Sultan hails Oba Ewuare 11 as royal role model at 10th Coronation Durbar

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

In a resounding tribute to royal leadership, cultural heritage and the enduring institution of traditional rulership in Nigeria, the Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs,

His Eminence, Sa'ad Abubakar III, has extolled the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, describing him as a worthy role model for traditional rulers across the country.

The Sultan's glowing com-

mendation came on Saturday during a colourful and majestic royal Durbar organised as part of activities marking the 10th coronation anniversary of the revered Benin monarch, whose decade on the throne has been characterised

by renewed celebration of the kingdom's rich cultural traditions and royal heritage.

Represented by the Emir of Kagara in Niger State, Malam Ahmed Garba Gunna, the Sultan applauded Oba Ewuare II for his leadership, digni-

ty and influence, noting that the Benin monarch occupies a distinguished place among traditional rulers whose conduct and example command admiration across Nigeria.

"We are following in your footsteps while praying for

grace and courage," the Sultan declared, in a statement that underscored the deep respect the ancient Benin throne commands among traditional institutions.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



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#200

2027: Edo APC endorses Okpebholo for second term, targets 2.5m votes for Tinubu

RICHARD EWEKA

IRRUA

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo State has endorsed Governor Monday Okpebholo for a second term in office, citing development projects undertaken by his administration across the three senatorial districts of the state.

The state chairman of the party, Mr Jarrett Tenebe, announced the endorsement on Friday during the grand finale of the APC grassroots mobili-

sation tour ahead of the 2027 general elections, held in Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area.

Tenebe said the party's State Working Committee had assessed the governor's performance during visits to Edo South, Edo North and Edo Central Senatorial Districts and expressed satisfaction with the development projects observed.

According to him, the decision to endorse Okpebholo was informed by the projects executed across the state and

the support the governor enjoys among party members and supporters.

"We have been going around the three senatorial districts, starting from Edo South, Edo North, and now rounding off in Edo Central to see the development taking place.

"Considering the development going on and the massive support the governor enjoys, I do not think we can afford to wait before taking this decision," Tenebe said.

He subsequently invited

members of the State Working Committee present at the event to endorse the governor for a second term, a proposal they unanimously supported.

The APC chairman said the endorsement reflected the party leadership's confidence in Okpebholo's administration and its commitment to sustaining the development agenda of the state.

Tenebe also reaffirmed the party's determination to mobilise support for President Bola Tinubu ahead of the 2027 presidential election, ex-

pressing confidence that Edo State would deliver 2.5 million votes for the president.

Responding, Governor Okpebholo thanked Tenebe and members of the State Working Committee for the endorsement and their continued support for his administration.

The governor described the party's solidarity as important to his administration, urging members to remain united, strengthen their grassroots structures and stay focused on the party's objectives.

He also expressed confi-

dence in Tinubu's leadership, reiterating his support for the President

Okpebholo tackles BEDC strike

The governor also expressed displeasure over the strike by workers of the Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC), alleging that the disruption of electricity supply to Edo State was politically motivated.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



GRASSROOTS MOBILISATION: Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo addressing the mammoth crowd of All Progressives Congress APC members during the APC grassroots mobilisation rally held in Irrua, Esan Central Local Government Area at the weekend.

Kidnappers' death warrants: Okpebholo sets 30-day deadline

● warns traditional rulers against intervention

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has declared that he will sign the death warrants of four convicted kidnappers involved in the abduction of a woman at the Vegetable Market, Airport Road, Benin City, if they fail to appeal their sentences within 30 days.

The governor, who reiterated his administration's resolve to tackle kidnapping, cultism and other violent crimes, said the four convicts had already been sentenced to death by a Special Criminal Court in Edo State.

Speaking during a fellowship at God's People Worldwide Prayer Ministry, Okpebholo expressed the hope that the convicts would not appeal the judgment, adding that he was prepared to take the next step if the stipulated period elapsed without an appeal.

"They are already sentenced to death, and I pray they don't appeal the judgment. Even when they appeal the judgment, they are only delaying time. If within 30 days, they don't appeal, I will execute," the governor said.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

Okpebholo sets up Ebola preparedness committee, names Idahosa chairman

—Pg 2

Wellspring University's best graduating student scores 4.98 CGPA as 46 others make first class

—Pg 5

More than 1,300 arrested as clashes follow another day of mass protests across France

—Pg 8

Tinubu blames opposition for Nigeria's challenges

—Pg 11

NEWS

Okpebholo sets up Ebola preparedness committee, names Idahosa chairman

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has constituted an Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee to coordinate the state's readiness and response to any potential Ebola threat.

The committee is chaired by the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa, and comprises representatives of government ministries, security agencies, health institutions, professional bodies, traditional and religious institutions, development partners and other relevant stakeholders.

According to a statement issued by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Dr. Patrick Akhere Ebojele, the committee is expected to coordinate preventive measures and strengthen the state's capacity to respond effectively to any

Ebola-related emergency.

Membership cuts across the state ministries responsible for Health, Environment, Livestock, Local Government, Finance, and Information and Communication, as well as the Edo State House of Assembly Committee on Health, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), the Department of Port Health and the National Orientation Agency (NOA).

Security agencies represented on the committee include the Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Police Force and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

The state's major health institutions are also represented, including the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH), Edo State University

Teaching Hospital (EDSUTH), Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Uselu, Edo Specialist Hospital, Central Hospital, Benin City, and Stella Obasanjo Hospital.

Professional bodies participating in the initiative include the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM), and the Association of Private Medical Practitioners of Nigeria, Edo State chapter.

The committee also incorporates community leadership and grassroots representation through a traditional ruler, a leader of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Chief Imam and a market women's leader.

Development partners and public health agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Nigerian Red Cross Society, DataFi,

National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) and Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency, are equally represented.

The committee will operate through the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC), which has designated operational pillars covering coordination, epidemiology, surveillance, infection prevention and control, risk communication, logistics, laboratory services, case management, and safe and dignified burial.

A PHEOC Manager will oversee the centre's operations to facilitate coordination among the various response teams and participating institutions.

The state government is also expected to convene a stakeholders' meeting on Ebola emergency preparedness and response to formally commence the committee's activities.

...Edo APC endorses Okpebholo

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Okpebholo suggested that the situation was connected to the growing popularity of the APC in the state and warned against using electricity supply as a political weapon.

"I am surprised. When they started hearing about our popularity, they said they cut off electricity supply to Edo. I am going to meet that man in Abuja today. You cannot play politics with people's lives," he said.

The governor further alleged that political considerations might be influencing the situation, referencing the African Democratic Congress (ADC) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in his remarks.

"He is playing politics with us, so by the time I get to him, he will let me know how that politics will be played," Okpebholo said.

His comments came amid the industrial action by BEDC workers, which has raised concerns over electricity distribution and its implications for

residents, businesses and economic activities in the state.

APC highlights projects

Earlier, the APC vice chairman in Edo State, Mr Sylvester Aigboboh, highlighted projects and programmes undertaken by the Okpebholo administration within its first one year and 11 months in office.

Aigboboh listed road construction, the recruitment of teachers and the upgrading of health facilities among the initiatives undertaken by the state government.

The party's grassroots mobilisation tour was aimed at strengthening its structures across the three senatorial districts and rallying support for the APC ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The endorsement of Okpebholo at the Irrua rally also signalled the state party leadership's early declaration of support for his second-term ambition, even as political activities gradually gather momentum ahead of the next electoral cycle.

...Kidnappers' death warrants

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

An Edo State Special Criminal Court reportedly sentenced the four defendants to death on September 29, 2026, over the abduction of a woman at the Vegetable Market along Airport Road, Benin City.

The governor's declaration underscores his administration's tough stance on violent crime, although any execution would have to comply with applicable legal procedures and constitutional safeguards.

Recounting the circumstances surrounding the incident, Okpebholo said insecurity was among the major challenges confronting the state when he assumed office.

He disclosed that he had discussed the security situation and the condition of roads in Edo State with President Bola Tinubu during a meeting, adding that the kidnapping at the Vegetable Market prompted him to seek decisive action.

According to him, he contacted the President after the gunmen struck and was asked whether he could handle the situation. He said he assured the President that he could.

The governor further narrated that he prayed for the kidnappers to be apprehended within 24 hours before contacting the Commissioner of Police to demand their arrest.

"I told him I wanted these guys arrested because I already have an approval from God, and they were caught within that time," he said.

Okpebholo maintained that his administration remained determined to confront criminal elements and restore public confidence in security across the state.

The governor also disclosed

that before launching his campaign against kidnapping and cultism, he met prominent traditional rulers across Edo State and warned against intervening on behalf of anyone implicated in the crimes.

He said the warning was intended to ensure that influential individuals and traditional institutions did not obstruct efforts to bring suspected criminals to justice.

In recounting what he described as unusual incidents following his administration's demolition of a building allegedly associated with a cult group, Okpebholo spoke of experiences he linked to spiritual forces.

"A black bird died in my office when I demolished their building. A vulture also died in my bed while contesting for governorship," he said.

The governor's remarks came amid his administration's broader emphasis on security and its stated determination to curb criminal activities across Edo State.

Meanwhile, the founder of God's People Worldwide Prayer Ministry, Apostle Ehi-jele Umuahia, urged members of the congregation to vote for Okpebholo and his preferred candidates in the 2027 general elections.

Citing Proverbs 29:2, the cleric said praying for political leaders should be accompanied by active participation in the electoral process, urging Christians to turn out in large numbers to exercise their voting rights.

Umuahia described the governor as a humble man whose commitment to God, he said, predated his emergence as governor.



BREAST CANCER AWARENESS WALK:

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani (6th left) and the Chief Medical Director of Edo Specialist Hospital, Dr. Antonio Njoku, (on her left) in group photograph during breast cancer awareness walk in Benin City at the weekend.

...Sultan hails Oba Ewuare 11

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

The tribute added a special touch of royal distinction to the anniversary celebration, bringing into focus the bonds of mutual respect, solidarity and cultural kinship that unite Nigeria's diverse traditional institutions.

The Durbar unfolded in an atmosphere of pomp, pageantry and regal splendour, as Oba Ewuare II, resplendent in his royal regalia, led a grand horseback procession from the palace to Garrick Memorial Ground, the venue of the colourful celebration.

Mounted on horseback and accompanied by an impressive retinue, the Oba's procession offered a striking spectacle of royal majesty, drawing the admiration of participants and spectators who gathered to witness the historic occasion.

The monarch subsequently led proceedings at the royal horse race, one of the defining attractions of the Durbar, which brought together the ceremonial elegance of traditional horsemanship and the vibrant cultural expressions associated with royal celebrations.

For the people of Benin Kingdom, the occasion was more than a colourful public event. It was a vivid reaffirmation of the historical continuity of the monarchy, the dignity of the royal institution and the cultural traditions that have sustained the kingdom across generations.

Once a rare spectacle in Benin City, the Durbar has, since Oba Ewuare II ascended the throne a decade ago, become a recurring feature of the kingdom's cultural festivities, further

enriching the programme of activities associated with the monarch's reign.

Its growing prominence reflects the renewed visibility accorded traditional ceremonies and the place of cultural heritage in celebrating the identity, history and collective pride of the Benin people.

The Sultan's representative joined an array of traditional rulers and distinguished guests who converged on Benin City to honour the Oba on the landmark anniversary.

Among the royal dignitaries were the Imah IV of Somorika Kingdom, His Royal Highness, Sule Idaiye, and the Ojie of Uneme N'Ekehuan, His Royal Highness, Oba Felix Collins, both from Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State.

Their presence lent further

significance to the gathering, which served as a meeting point for royal institutions and an expression of the enduring bonds of respect and fellowship among traditional rulers.

The assembly of royal fathers from different communities also demonstrated the unifying influence of traditional institutions, whose roles in preserving cultural identity, promoting peaceful coexistence and sustaining community values remain significant in contemporary Nigerian society.

Speaking on behalf of the Benin Palace, the Secretary to the Benin Traditional Council, Frank Irabor, expressed profound appreciation to the dignitaries, traditional rulers and other guests who honoured the Oba with their presence at the celebration.

Edo First Lady advocates regular breast screening, flags off world polio day

BENIN CITY

The Coordinator Office of the First Lady Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, has urged women to prioritise regular breast screening, stressing that early detection of breast cancer significantly improves treatment outcomes and saves lives.

She gave the advice during a breast cancer awareness walk organised by the Office of the First Lady in collaboration with Edo Specialist Hospital in Benin City to promote early detection and raise public awareness about the disease.

Held under the theme: "Early Detection Saves Lives," the awareness walk commenced at Edo Specialist Hospital, pro-

ceeded through King's Square and terminated at Oba Market, covering major streets across Benin City.

Mrs. Anani emphasised the importance of early detection, regular screening, and timely medical intervention in the effective management of breast cancer.

She noted that breast cancer awareness goes beyond wearing pink, calling for deliberate action, access to accurate information and regular health checks to improve health outcomes.

The First Lady urged women to pay attention to unusual changes in their bodies and seek prompt medical attention when necessary. She also encouraged men to undergo regular prostate screening as part of efforts

to promote early detection and preventive healthcare.

The Chief Medical Director of Edo Specialist Hospital, Dr. Anthonia Njoku, urged residents to take advantage of the

ongoing free medical screening to assess their health status and identify potential health concerns early.

In a related development, Mrs. Anani flagged off activities marking World Polio Day at Ekiosa Primary Health Centre in Oredo Local Gov-

ernment Area.

She commended the Edo State Primary Healthcare Development Agency, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, frontline health workers, parents, and caregivers for their contributions to immunisation efforts

and the protection of children's health.

The health initiatives highlight the importance of preventive healthcare, public awareness and early intervention in reducing preventable illnesses and improving health outcomes across Edo State.



EARLY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:

The awareness walk proceeded from Edo Specialist Hospital through King's square and terminated at Oba Market in Benin metropolis.

Finance minister seeks support for SME to drive Nigeria's economic growth

BENIN CITY

Mr Taiwo Oyedele, Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, has reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to supporting SMEs to drive economic growth, create jobs and promote entrepreneurship.

Oyedele gave the assurance at the 4th Edition of the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) Prize for Innovation (NPI) Demo Day 2026 Presentation in Abuja on Saturday.

He was represented by Marie Ukpere, his Special Adviser on Investments.

He said small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) remained the backbone of the

Nigerian economy, sustaining millions of livelihoods, creating employment, and supporting economic activity across sectors.

The minister said Nigeria's ambition to build a trillion-dollar economy depended significantly on the ability to help small businesses grow into medium-sized businesses evolve into large, globally competitive companies.

He said the government was addressing financing and capacity constraints limiting business growth.

The minister said this was being done through initiatives such as the Development Bank of Nigeria, National Credit Guarantee Company and the Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises (iDICE) programme.

Okpebholo vows to make history, win Igueben for Tinubu in 2027

By Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has expressed determination to win Igueben Local Government Area for President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election, despite losing the area in his previous senatorial and governorship contests.

Okpebholo made the declaration on Thursday during the All Progressives Congress (APC) grassroots mobilisation tour of

Igueben and Esan West Local Government Areas of Edo State.

The governor said he was determined to reverse his electoral fortunes in Igueben and make history by securing victory for Tinubu in the area in the 2027 election.

"You know I have never won election in Igueben. I did not win Igueben while I contested for Senate, I did not win while I was contesting for governorship. I want to win it now to make history," he said.

Recalling an earlier campaign visit to the area, Okpebholo said he had promised to construct a road in the community if he secured the required percentage of

votes.

He disclosed that work had commenced on the road project, describing it as part of his administration's commitment to fulfilling promises made to the people.

"Today, work is ongoing on that road, and I want to make history by winning Igueben for President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 election," the governor said.

During his visit to Ebelle,

the governor disclosed that his administration had approved a hospital for the community, while appealing to residents to support the APC in the January 16, 2027 election.

He also urged the people to vote for the party's candidate for the Edo State House of Assembly, describing him as an experienced representative who would work closely with the state government.

...Sultan hails Oba

Continued from page 2

He also acknowledged the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Edoba Omoregie, and a team of veterinary doctors led by the Director of the UNIBEN Veterinary Clinic, Professor Paul Paul Nwiyi Okechukwu, for their professional contribution to ensuring the health and well-being of the horses and riders ahead of the event.

Their efforts, he noted, formed part of the preparations that helped facilitate the successful staging of the royal Durbar, where the horses and their riders were central to the spectacle.

Beyond its ceremonial splendour, the 10th coronation anniversary Durbar stood as a celebration of the enduring legacy of the Benin monarchy and its place in Nigeria's rich tapestry of traditional institutions.

The Sultan's tribute to Oba Ewuare II brought a further dimension to the occasion,

highlighting the importance of exemplary leadership, mutual respect and cooperation among royal institutions in a culturally diverse nation.

As the royal procession, traditional pageantry and horse race animated the celebration, the occasion offered a compelling reminder that the strength of a kingdom lies not only in the grandeur of its ceremonies, but also in the heritage it preserves, the values it upholds and the unity it inspires.

For Benin Kingdom, the anniversary was both a moment of thanksgiving for a decade of royal stewardship and an opportunity to showcase a cultural inheritance that continues to command admiration far beyond the ancient city.

The Durbar thus left an enduring impression of royal dignity, cultural pride and inter-community fellowship, befitting a landmark celebration in the reign of Oba Ewuare II.

Japan, JICA invests \$10.4m in Nigeria's innovation hub

ABUJA

Japan, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), has provided 10.4 million dollars in grant funding for the expansion of Nigeria's innovation ecosystem.

The First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu, laid the foundation stone of the Renewed Hope Startup Hub on Friday in Abuja.

The hub managed by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) is expected to support young startups towards developing their ideas.

The Director-General NITDA, Malam Kashifu Inuwa, said the facility would provide young Nigerians with access to technology, mentorship and other resources to transform

innovative ideas into marketable products and services.

Inuwa also announced plans for a 50 million-dollar seed funding initiative for startups, being developed by JICA in partnership with the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA).

He said the funding had been approved and signed off, adding that startups would begin accessing it once the arrangements were completed.

According to him, the initiatives are designed to support President Bola Tinubu's efforts to create jobs, empower young people and expand Nigeria's digital economy.

"This is a foundation where our youth will have access to technology that can help them turn ideas into solutions to our national problems. It will also provide a platform for them to take those ideas to the

global stage.

"We are working with JICA and the Japanese government to create a talent pipeline between Nigeria and Japan.

"Nigeria is blessed with a young, talented population, while Japan is facing an ageing population, so we can complement each other," he said.

Inuwa said the government had strengthened the Office for Nigerian Digital Innovation (ONDI) and the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR) to support innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Japanese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Hideo Suzuki, said Japan's support for Nigeria's startup ecosystem was built around strengthening institutions, improving access to investment and providing modern innovation facilities.

Suzuki said JICA had de-

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

Two Years
of Progress,
A Greater
Edo Ahead

SPECIAL EDITION

INVITATION TO PLACE GOODWILL MESSAGES IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

2ND Years

ANNIVERSARY OF
**GOVERNOR MONDAY
OKPEBHOLO'S
ADMINISTRATION**

EDO STATE

The Nigerian Observer invites Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), corporate organisations, financial institutions, professional bodies, traditional institutions, political and socio-cultural groups, and well-meaning individuals to place goodwill and congratulatory messages in a special anniversary edition of the newspaper.

This is an opportunity to reflect on the administration's achievements, recognise key programmes and milestones, acknowledge partners and stakeholders, and convey your best wishes for the continued development of Edo State.

*Let's celebrate the journey,
recognise the milestones
and share the goodwill!*

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The Nigerian Observer looks forward to your valued participation in this special anniversary edition as we join other stakeholders in celebrating two years of transformative governance and reaffirming our collective aspirations for a safer, healthier, more prosperous and progressive Edo State.

*Thank you for your
continued patronage
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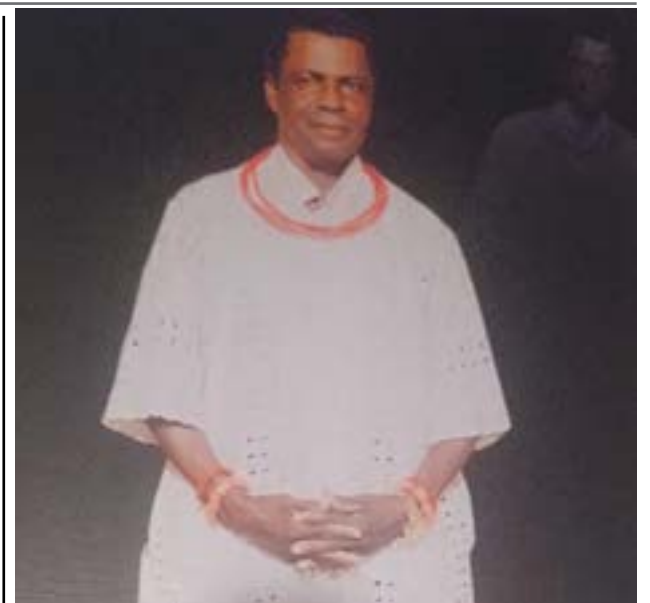
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**ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION:**

Palace chiefs led by CShief Ero, dance in celebration of the 10th coronation anniversary of His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare 11 of Benin

**INAUGURATION:**

His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku-Akpolokpolor, Oba Ewuare 11, flanked by his wives, eminent chiefs and some very prominent personalities, cuts the tape to declare open the Festival Hall in the Palace open. The grand reception of the 10th coronation anniversary of the Oba was held in the all.



Owere-Avbiogbe, Chief Uwadia Okao

Oba Ewuare 11, best thing to happen to Benin –Okao

RICHARD EGHAGHE /
OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

BENIN CITY

The Owere-Avbiogbe of Iwebo Palace Society, Chief Uwadia Okao, has described the ten-year reign of His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, as the best thing to ever happen to the Binis.

He also described the events marking the 10th coronation and birthday anniversary of the Oba as the biggest, the best and the greatest celebration in the country, which cannot be rivalled by anyone for a long time to come.

Chief Okao, who is the Head of the Palace Traditional Land

...Palace chief says 10th coronation celebration is the biggest, best and greatest in Nigeria

Demarcators, made the remarks in an exclusive interview with The Nigerian Observer on the 10th coronation anniversary and birthday celebrations of Oba Ewuare II.

"I feel very proud as a Benin chief and amazed to see the large turnout of people, the excitement and the sincere expression of love for the Oba at all the events staged so far to commemorate His Majesty's 10th coronation anniversary," he said.

"That, of course, sends a heartwarming signal to me that the Omo N'Oba is doing

well and we should all join forces with him to contribute our own quota."

"Believe me, the Oba's ten-year reign on the throne of his fathers has been of tremendous blessing to the Binis," he said.

"I am a traditional man. I do not want to start enumerating all his achievements, otherwise we will not leave this place today."

"All we need to do is to continue to pray for the Oba for long life, sound health, peace and prosperity in Edo land, and every other thing shall follow by God and our ancestors."

He ended with the royal

praise: "Oba ghatu kpere! Ise. Oba Ewuare II is the best and we want him to continue."



Urhu N'orivie Onions Edionwe Aka Aisiokwoba

A decade of peace & reform in Benin

At 10, historian Edionwe says Oba abolished CDA, cursed human trafficking and revived Benin culture

RICHARD EGHAGHE /
OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH

Ten years ago, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, received the staff of office as the 40th Oba of Benin.

He was presented with the staff at a colourful coronation ceremony at Urhokpota Hall, Benin City, by the then Governor of Edo State, Senator Adams Oshiomhole.

October 20th also marks the birthday of the monarch, renowned as Oba N'Ogidigan.

In an exclusive interview with The Nigerian Observer, renowned Benin historian and author, Urhu N'orivie Onions Edionwe, popularly known as Aisiokwoba, reviewed the Oba's ten-year reign and described it as a decade of re-

form, peace and cultural re-birth.

Edionwe, who was honoured with a royal bead by the Oba for his research and promotion of Benin history, said he witnessed the coronation from Emwinnokwa — the glorious exit of Oba Erediauwu — to the coronation proper.

"I watched His Royal Majesty go through the Edo ritualistic activities as Edaiken of Uselu to ascending the throne as Oba of Benin," he said.

Edionwe said the Oba hit the ground running with the abolition of Community Development Associations (CDAs) in Edo State.

"The CDA had become a monster to physical planning and development in communities," he said.

CONTINUES ON PG 10»

NEWS

Police arrest two robbery suspects in Bauchi

BAUCHI

The Bauchi State Police Command has arrested two suspected members of a gang accused of robbing residents and inflicting machete injuries on them in Bauchi metropolis.

The suspects, identified as Salisu Ibrahim, 19, and Shuaibu A. Ladan, 21, were arrested over alleged armed robbery and causing grievous hurt following an attack on two resi-

dents of the state capital.

The command's Police Public Relations Officer, SP Nafiu Habib, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday, saying the arrests were part of efforts to curb thuggery and other violent crimes in the state.

Habib said the victims, who reside in Unguwar Mahaukata and Unguwar Kur, reported the incident to the Violent Crimes Response Unit, Hawk Base, on October 24, 2026.

He said the victims were

attacked at about 9 pm on the same day by a gang of nine suspected thugs armed with cutlasses and sticks, who allegedly dispossessed them of their valuables.

"The two male complainants reported that a gang of about nine thugs, armed with cutlasses and sticks, attacked them and dispossessed them of their valuables," the statement read.

The stolen items included an Infinix Smart 10 valued at N120,000, a Nokia Android

phone worth N65,000, a Tecno Spark 40 valued at N95,000 and an Infinix Hot i worth N60,000.

Habib added that the assailants inflicted machete injuries on the victims' heads and hands, leaving them with varying degrees of injuries.

He said, "Sequel to the report, operatives attached to Hawk Base swung into action, traced and arrested Salisu Ibrahim, 'M', 19 years old, and Shuaibu A. Ladan, 'M', 21 years

old, both of Unguwar Hardo, Bauchi."

The police spokesman said the suspects confessed during interrogation to being members of the gang allegedly involved in the robbery.

"During interrogation, the suspects voluntarily confessed to being members of the gang that robbed the complainants," he said.

According to the statement, the police recovered one cutlass allegedly used in the robbery.

"Meanwhile, efforts have been intensified to trace and arrest the fleeing accomplices and recover the stolen phones," Habib said.

He further disclosed that the Commissioner of Police, Sani-Omolori Aliyu, had directed that the case be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Bauchi, for discreet investigation and diligent prosecution.



ENGAGEMENT MEETING:

From left: General Officer Commanding (GOC) 2 Division Nigerian Army, Maj.-Gen. Auwalu Mahmuda; Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Olufemi Oluyede; in handshakes and other officers; during an engagement meeting with veterans of the Retired Armed Forces of Nigeria in the South-West Geopolitical Zone in Ibadan on Friday.

Heat wave: Anambra first lady urges residents to take precautions

AWKA

Anambra State First Lady, Dr Nonye Soludo, has urged residents to take precautions to protect their health and prevent heat-related illnesses as the heat wave intensifies nationwide.

Soludo, founder of the non-governmental organisation Healthy Living with Nonye Soludo, also urged relevant agencies to pay special attention to the elderly, babies, and people living with hypertension, diabetes, or kidney disease, saying

they may be more vulnerable to extreme heat.

According to a report by the Climate Impact Lab, Nigeria could record an additional 31,400 heat-related deaths between September 2026 and February 2027 as an unusually strong El Niño weather pattern intensifies.

The projection places Nigeria among the countries expected to record the highest number of additional heat-related deaths globally during the six months, with nearly half of the 66,800 deaths projected

across the Sahel region expected to occur in the country.

The report, published on September 22, 2026, and titled "451,000 at Risk: Where Action Can Save Lives During the Super El Niño," estimates that 451,000 additional heat-related deaths could occur worldwide between June 2026 and February 2027, compared with a normal year.

Speaking on the development in a statement issued on Sunday, the first lady advised residents to stay hydrated, avoid prolonged exposure to direct sunlight, wear light clothing and keep their homes well ventilated.

She also urged residents to contact emergency responders when necessary, emphasising that taking precautions could save lives.

She said, "As we head deep into a period of increased heat, I encourage every family to take simple but important precautions to protect their health.

"Stay hydrated, avoid prolonged exposure to direct sunlight, wear light clothing, and keep your homes well ventilated.

"Please pay special attention to the elderly, babies, and persons living with hypertension, diabetes, or kidney disease, as they may be more vulnerable to extreme heat.

Bayelsa youths back police anti-cultism campaign

YENAGOA

Youths in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, have staged a peace walk in support of the police's campaign against cultism and youth violence, pledging to work with security agencies to promote peace and curb criminal activities in the state.

The peace walk, organised by Team Wulukpense in collaboration with the Epie/Atissa Entertainment Forum, was held on Saturday, from Opolo to the Bayelsa State Police Command Headquarters in Yenagoa.

The participants carried placards bearing messages promoting peace, non-violence and the rejection of cultism, while expressing support for the command's efforts to maintain security in the state.

Receiving the group at the command headquarters, the state Commissioner of Police, Ajao Adewale, commended the youths for supporting the fight against cultism, criminality and other forms of violence.

He described the initiative as a demonstration of civic responsibility and collective commitment to building a safer society.

He said, "I commend the organisers and participants for this deliberate decision to identify with the police in the fight against cultism, criminality and youth violence."

The CP noted that community participation remained important in tackling insecurity, particularly activities involving young people.

He added, "This initiative is a commendable demonstration of civic responsibility and a collective commitment to a safer society."

Adewale urged the organisers to sustain the campaign and extend their advocacy to other communities, particularly among young people who might be vulnerable to cult-related activities and other forms of criminality.

"I encourage you to sustain this advocacy and continue to promote responsible citizenship and lawful conduct among young people," he stated.

REMOVAL OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ERIAMIAOTOE OTANIYEN** and **ERIAMIAOTOE MATTHEW OTANIYEN** are one and the same person, Henceforth I now wish to be known and called **ERIAMIAOTOE OTANIYEN**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **CHRISTOPHER ONOME IGHOSOTU** and **CHRISTOPHER ONOME IGHOSOTU-ODEH** are one and the same person, Henceforth I now wish to be known and called **CHRISTOPHER ONOME IGHOSOTU**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

PUBLIC NOTICE

ESAN UNITY HERITAGE FORUM

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

TRUSTEES

1. Mr. Ayeni Aisuebeoise Samuel — Chairman
2. Mr. Okodu Peter — General Secretary
3. Mrs. Ebhota Urban Janet — Trustee
4. Mr. Anetor Joel Ikuenobe — Trustee
5. Mrs. Ulinfun Otibho Mabel — Trustee
6. Mrs. Abbulimen Eki Eunice — Trustee
7. Mr. Ibhan O. Kelven — Trustee
8. Mrs. Okouzi Augustina — Trustee
9. Mr. Ogunmelen Blackson Eromosele — Trustee
10. Mr. Anetor Ehimen Sylvester — Trustee
11. Mr. Onobun Earnest — Trustee

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To promote unity, mutual understanding, and cooperation among Esan people; preserve, promote, and transmit Esan cultural heritage, language, traditions, and values; encourage educational, social, and economic development; support the welfare of members and the wider Esan community; organise cultural, educational, and community-development activities; undertake charitable and humanitarian initiatives; and collaborate with government, traditional institutions, educational institutions, and other relevant organisations to advance the heritage and development of Esan people in Nigeria and the diaspora.

REGISTERED OFFICE

14B Bank Road, Eguare Irrua, Edo State.

Any objection to this application 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.

Signed: **MR. OKODU PETER**
General Secretary
Esan Unity Heritage Forum

Tinubu needs support, not criticism, to fix economy — Ex-lawmaker

OSOGBO

Former member of the Osun State House of Assembly, Olatunbosun Oyintiloye, has urged opposition figures to desist from persistent criticism of President Bola Tinubu over the country's economic challenges.

Oyintiloye, who represented Obokun State Constituency, said the President needed encouragement from Nigerians as he worked to address the economic hardship facing the country.

The All Progressives Congress chieftain stated this in a statement in Osogbo on

Sunday, arguing that Tinubu meant well for Nigerians and should not be blamed for the prevailing economic situation.

He said although the hardship had negatively affected many Nigerians, the President was working to address the country's economic challenges.

Oyintiloye cited major economic reforms introduced by Tinubu, including the removal of fuel subsidy and the floating of the naira, saying they were intended to stabilise the economy for the benefit of Nigerians.

He acknowledged that the policies had been difficult but maintained that they were nec-

essary and had begun to yield positive results.

"What the President needs at this point is our encouragement, not harsh criticism or name-calling. What he met when he assumed office was a battered economy, and since then, he has been working round the clock to address the economic crisis.

"We should all remember that he was not the architect of the current economic challenges we are facing, and he cannot solve all the problems at once," Oyintiloye said.

He urged opposition figures using the economic challenges

to campaign against Tinubu ahead of the 2027 general election to have a rethink.

He argued that, based on their records in previous political offices, none of the opposition candidates seeking to replace Tinubu had demonstrated the capacity to outperform him.

"It would, therefore, be unwise to weaponise the current economic challenges, which the President is trying to address, against his presidential ambition," he said.

Oyintiloye urged the President to do everything within his power to alleviate the suffering of Nigerians.

NEWS

Wellspring University's best graduating student scores 4.98 CGPA as 46 others make first class

BENIN CITY

Popo Atorerefa Nancy, a 2026 graduating student of Wellspring University, Benin City has emerged the institution's best graduating student with a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 4.98 on a 5.0 scale.

Nancy who graduated from the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, alongside 47 other graduands made First Class and were honoured at the University's 14th convocation ceremony held at the weekend.

She was among the 294 first-degree recipients honoured at the ceremony, which also saw the graduation of 110 postgraduate students, bringing the total number of graduands to 404.

A breakdown of the first-degree results by the Vice-Chancellor of the institution, Professor Isaac Rotimi Ajayi, showed that 145 of the graduands obtained Second Class Upper Division, 91 earned Second Class Lower Division, while 11 graduated with Third Class Honours.

The academic performance comes amid growing calls for Nigerian universities to

strengthen academic standards, promote excellence and produce graduates equipped with the knowledge and skills required to compete in an increasingly demanding global economy.

According to the Vice-Chancellor, beyond undergraduate achievements, the ceremony marked a historic chapter in the university's development with the graduation of its first doctoral degree holders, comprising 15 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and two Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) recipients.

Ajayi described the pioneer doctoral graduations as evidence of the university's growing capacity for postgraduate education and research, urging the scholars to advance knowledge, mentor younger academics and contribute to national development through their respective fields.

The Vice Chancellor disclosed that the National Universities Commission (NUC) had approved new academic programmes, including Medicine and Surgery (MBBS), Human Anatomy, Human Physiology, Community Health Science

and Health Information Management, as the institution expands its scope of professional manpower training.

In his remarks, the Chancellor of the University, Pastor Ituah Ighodalo, challenged the graduands to look beyond their certificates and embrace the responsibility of using their education to improve society.

He noted that the world they were entering was being reshaped by artificial intelligence, climate change, geopolitical shifts and economic uncertainties.

Ituah urged them to build their careers with diligence,

serve their communities with generosity and contribute to Nigeria's progress with patriotism, integrity and excellence, stressing that academic qualifications must be matched by character and a sense of responsibility.

Delivering the convocation lecture, titled "The University and the Future: Educated Minds in an Era of Disruption and Opportunity," the Director-General of the Dangerous Goods Academy, Lagos, Dr Alban Igwe called for a shift in universities academic curriculum to use same to solve practical societal problem.



MINISTERIAL LAUNCH:

Representative of the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare/Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Mrs Kachallom Daju (5th, L); Director-General, National Population Commission (NPC), Dr. Abuh Mohammed (4th, L); National Coordinator, National Malaria Elimination Programme, Dr. Nnenna Ogbulafor(R) and other dignitaries, during the ministerial launch of the 2026-2030 Nigeria Malaria Strategic Plan and 2025 Malaria Indicator Survey Report, in Abuja on Thursday.

Be committed to public service, Omoike charges new supervisors

AUCHI

LAMAI CASSIUS

The Executive Chairman of Etsako West Local Government Council, Hon. Romeo Alaoiye Omoike, has charged the newly appointed Supervisory Councillors to demonstrate commitment, discipline, accountability and dedication to public service.

The Chairman gave the charge while swearing in the five newly appointed Supervisory Councillors at the Council Secretariat in Auchi.

Hon. Omoike urged them to discharge their responsibilities diligently, in accordance with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, applicable Edo State laws and relevant local government regulations.

The council boss, who emphasised the importance of teamwork and effective governance, charged them to collaborate with elected Councillors, council officials, community leaders and other stakeholders to ensure that the dividends of democracy reach the grassroots.

According to him, no administration can succeed in isolation, noting that synergy between the executive, legislative arm and the bureaucracy is key to delivering good governance.

He expressed confidence that their contributions would strengthen the administration's efforts towards improved service delivery in their respective sectors, adding that their selection was based on merit.

Hon. Omoike also used the occasion to call for greater collaboration among community leaders, political stakeholders, security agencies and the general public in the ongoing fight against illicit drug use and trafficking.

He reaffirmed his administration's determination to rescue young people from the destructive consequences of drug abuse, stressing that the campaign was only the beginning of a sustained effort to protect the future of youths and promote a safer society throughout Etsako West.

"We cannot build a future when our youths are being destroyed by drugs. As a responsible government, we will continue to sensitise, engage and partner with relevant agencies to fight

this menace," he said.

On environmental sanitation, the Chairman warned residents against indiscriminate dumping of refuse on roads and other public spaces.

He decried the ugly trend where some residents dump refuse on major roads at night, especially along Auchi-Warrake road, Auchi-Okene road and other strategic locations, describing it as unacceptable and inimical to public health.

He called on individuals, households and community stakeholders to embrace proper

waste-disposal practices and support the administration's drive towards a cleaner and healthier environment within the local council.

He further disclosed that appropriate legislation was being considered by the council to address indiscriminate refuse dumping.

He said under the proposed measure, residents in five houses on either side of a location where refuse is dumped on the road could be held responsible and fined, subject to the provisions of the law and established enforcement procedures.

Edo to partner Botswana on agric, livestock development

ABUJA

The Edo State Government is seeking Botswana's partnership in agriculture and livestock development as part of efforts to attract foreign investment ahead of its forthcoming International Agricultural and Livestock Investment Summit.

The state government made the appeal during a meeting with the Botswana High Commissioner to Nigeria, Philada Kereng, at the country's High Commission in Abuja on Friday.

The delegation was led by the Edo State Commissioners for Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Jerry Uwangu, and Livestock Development, Mr Ohimai Ehi-jimotor.

During the meeting, the High Commissioner commended the Edo government's efforts to develop livestock production and urged the state to explore investment opportunities in agro-tourism and animal feed production.

She also pledged the support of the Botswana High Commission in "attracting investors to the proposed summit," signalling a potential avenue for cooperation between Edo State and Botswana in agricultural development.

A statement issued on Sunday by the two commissioners said the meeting "formed part of the state government's ongoing consultations with diplomatic missions to secure international participation and investment for the summit."

It added that the proposed engagement is expected "to provide a platform for investors to explore opportunities across agriculture, livestock production, animal feed manufacturing and related businesses in Edo State."

The High Commissioner's recommendations on agro-tourism and animal feed production also highlighted areas where the state could broaden its investment drive beyond conventional farming and livestock rearing.

Animal feed production, in particular, is an important component of livestock development, with access to affordable and quality feed helping to improve productivity and reduce production costs for farmers.

Agro-tourism, meanwhile, offers opportunities to combine agricultural activities with tourism, creating additional income streams and supporting rural enterprises.

The Edo delegation also included the Special Adviser on Livestock Development, Roland Igbadumhe; Senior Special Assistant on Agriculture and Food Security, Emmanuel Sule; and Director in the Ministry of Livestock Development, Lucky Adebudo.

"The state government's engagement with the Botswana High Commission reflects its effort to build international partnerships capable of attracting capital, technical expertise and commercial participation in its agricultural and livestock sectors," the statement added.

Police arrest wanted suspect over robbery, kidnapping in Anambra

AWKA

The Anambra State Police Command has arrested a 26-year-old wanted suspect, Udochukwu Okafor, popularly known as Small-Moto, during an operation in Ebenebe community, Awka North Local Government Area of the state.

The command's spokesman, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, disclosed this in a statement released on Sunday, saying operatives of the Rapid Response Squad, Awkuzu, arrested the suspect

on Saturday following an intelligence-led operation.

Ikenga said preliminary interrogation revealed that the suspect allegedly snatched a pump-action firearm from a vigilante operative in Ebenebe.

He added that Okafor had been on the command's wanted list over alleged involvement in armed robbery, kidnapping, cult-related activities and secessionist-related offences.

The statement partly read, "The operation was conducted by operatives of the Rapid Re-

sponse Squad, Awkuzu, following intelligence-led efforts to apprehend the suspect, who was reportedly on the command's wanted list over alleged involvement in armed robbery, kidnapping, cult-related activities and secessionist-related offences.

"During preliminary interrogation, the suspect allegedly admitted to snatching a pump-action firearm from a vigilante operative in Ebenebe.

"He also reportedly disclosed possession of a locally made short gun, which he and

other members of his alleged gang were said to have used in their criminal operations.

"The suspect further allegedly admitted to membership of the Supreme Vikings Confraternity, also known as 'Aro-Baggers', a group suspected of involvement in cult-related violence in Awka and its environs."

Ikenga said the command had intensified investigations to recover the firearms allegedly mentioned by the suspect and establish the full extent of his suspected involvement in criminal activities.

FOREIGN

NEWS



IN THE SOUTHERN PORT OF MARSEILLE, PROTESTERS ERECTED MAKESHIFT STREET BARRICADES AND SET THEM ALIGHT LATE ON SATURDAY

Voters in Brazil head to polls as Lula goes up against Bolsonaro's son

Polls have opened in Brazil as people choose their new president in a closely fought run-off election.

The choice is between the 80-year-old incumbent, left-winger Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is seeking a fourth non-consecutive term in office, and right-wing senator Flávio Bolsonaro, 45.

Bolsonaro is the son of former right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro, who is serving a 27-year prison sentence for plotting a coup after losing the last election in 2022.

This is Bolsonaro's election to lose after he came top in the first round of voting on 4 October, which US President Donald Trump called a "very big" victory.

Never before has a candidate who trailed after the first round managed to overturn the deficit

and win in the second round.

The younger Bolsonaro appeared at a polling station in Rio de Janeiro early on Sunday morning, telling reporters outside that "time has come for real change".

His supporters were jubilant at his final campaign rallies, confident that he would bring change to Brazil through his promised tough crackdown on organised crime, as well as tax and public spending cuts.

Bolsonaro campaigned on the eve of polls opening in Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais, which has been a must-win state for any presidential hopeful since the 1980s.

"The time is almost here," Bolsonaro told supporters in a social media video. "There are only a few hours left before we shape the future of our nation for the next 30 or 40 years."

He has also pledged to release his father, who is currently serving his sentence under house arrest due to ill health.

In Barra de Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro, where Jair Bolsonaro has a home, Bolsonaro supporters rallied in support of him dressed in the national colours.

"Brazil needs change, and Flávio is the person that represents that today, after so many years of the Left destroying the economy and the country," one told BBC News.

Another said that what she most liked about Flávio Bolsonaro was his promise to "end violence in Brazil, end terrorism, narco-trafficking, and to reduce interest rates".

Lula supporters also turned out in Rio

Since Bolsonaro's first-round victory, supporters of Lula have arranged huge rallies in support

of him to try to boost turnout after 33 million people did not cast a vote earlier this month.

On Saturday, Lula told a huge crowd on Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach that this election was a matter of "sovereignty" and people would choose between the one who kissed the Brazilian flag and the one who kissed the American flag.

Lula's administration has accused the US of interfering in Brazil's election, an allegation Washington has called "baseless".

"We're going to win the election for one simple reason: it's true that the people want change [but] they want to move forward," he said. "They don't want to go backward."

A supporter called Roberta told BBC News: "This movement is to show we have strength. We've woken up, we're coming to the street to make a difference and turn the vote around."

Musk says SpaceX restricted Ukraine's Starlink connection as service restored

Elon Musk has said his company SpaceX restricted Ukraine's Starlink internet service, after Ukrainian officials said connectivity issues appeared to have been resolved.

The tech billionaire accused Ukraine of violating its terms of service by using it for military activity - but denied being responsible for a simultaneous issue with its US-run, military-grade counterpart Starshield.

Kyiv has not officially commented on Musk's latest claim but Ukrainian presidential adviser Serhii Beskrestnov said his post was "very strange".

Musk had earlier denied deliberately throttling Ukraine's connection, which it says hampered its ability to con-

duct defensive operations for more than a week.

The issue first emerged last week during a broader row between Washington and Kyiv over Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil infrastructure.

Musk's latest comments, and the seeming restoration of the service, came after US President Donald Trump said he had told the Tesla and X owner to "put it back", having repeatedly denied instructing him to limit the service.

"Using Starlink, a civilian commercial service, for offensive drone strikes to kill people has never been allowed, nor should it be," Musk wrote on X on Saturday.

"Ukraine[s] military violated Starlink terms of service and used it for offensive drone strikes to kill people. That

loophole was closed last week."

He went on to say that SpaceX had "done more to defend Ukraine than any private company on Earth" and reiterated his stipulation that Starshield was a different system and controlled by the US government, adding: "What they decide to do is up to them."

He added in a later post: "[Starlink] can be used for infrastructure that is military, but it cannot be used for unequivocally offensive strikes that make it fair game to be struck back."

Reacting to Musk's post, Beskrestnov said that drones operating via Starlink in Ukraine had a speed restriction of 70-90km/h (43-56mph) and did not work on Russian territory.

More than 1,300 arrested as clashes follow another day of mass protests across France

More than 1,300 arrests were made as hundreds of thousands of people took part in another day of protests across France on Saturday that were followed by some clashes later in the day, officials have said.

After largely peaceful demonstrations, police fired tear gas and water cannon to disperse protesters in a number of cities including Paris, while barricades were set alight in Marseille and people ripped boards from a shop in Bordeaux.

Officials have so far managed to avoid rioting and looting on the scale seen last weekend, which resulted in some of the worst scenes of disorder in France's modern history.

The interior ministry said an estimated 410,000 people protested on Saturday, while the unions put the number at about 800,000.

Some 70,000 police officers were deployed and restrictions imposed in several cities to prevent the latest protests over the cost of living and poor school conditions from descending into the kind of chaos which saw officers outnumbered, hundreds of businesses looted and buildings

torched.

The interior ministry said 53 officers were hurt in clashes across the country on Saturday.

French President Emmanuel Macron had decreed earlier this week that only demonstrations organised by a recognised trade unions would be permitted. Hundreds of people have been jailed for vandalism, arson and looting after fast-track court hearings.

Clashes between protesters and riot police in Paris erupted at the end of a peaceful march from the city's Porte d'Italie towards Porte de Vincennes, where the police operation included an elite unit that usually deals with organised crime and counter-terrorism.

Some protesters were seen erecting makeshift barricades and pelting officers with projectiles, while police baton-charged groups of masked youths who were smashing the windows of a car dealership.

French Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez said that "several thousand radical activists gathered at the rear of the march, including around 500 individuals identified as rioters", news agency AFP reported.

Israel to close West Bank crossings on election day as crackdown escalates

All West Bank land crossings will be closed during Tuesday's election in Israel, the country's military says, and Palestinian workers will be barred from entering all settlements.

The restrictions come amid a crackdown in the occupied West Bank after Palestinian gunmen killed two Israeli soldiers in the territory.

The Israel Defense Forces announced a "ban on the entry and exit of Palestinian workers throughout Judea and Samaria and the Jordan Valley, including industrial zones, as well as the closure of all land crossings" on Tuesday.

It said most workers would also be barred from settlements from Sunday, with the exception of industrial zones and a limited number of other areas.

Before the Hamas-led October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, more than 100,000 Palestinian workers were permitted to enter Israel. Since then only a small fraction have had their permits restored.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a major operation on Friday in response to the killing of two Israeli soldiers by two Palestinian gunmen in an attack on a checkpoint. Three other Israeli soldiers were injured, and the gunmen were also killed.

The Israeli military have been demolishing homes and businesses in the city of Hebron, with hundreds of fami-

lies having been displaced.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said about 2,000 residents had been displaced by the operation, which has led to at least one whole street appearing to have been flattened, according to footage shared online.

Even before the entry and exit bans on workers were announced by the IDF on Sunday, the military had cordoned off the city, heavily restricting the movement of its 200,000 residents.

It is common for Israeli forces to demolish the homes of Palestinians who are suspected of carrying out attacks on Israelis in the West Bank - a practice Israeli rights groups have criticised as collective punishment.

Friday's shooting came during a tense time for the region, just days ahead of Israel's election taking place on Tuesday.

In an interview with Israel's i24 television channel released on Saturday, Netanyahu threatened a "very big surprise" for the Palestinian Authority (PA), which governs parts of the territory.

Hebron Mayor Youssef al-Jaabari said the operation was being "driven by the elections" and that Netanyahu and his ministers were attempting to secure the votes of the far right and the settlers.

On Saturday, thousands gathered in Tel Aviv for a large anti-government demonstration.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Obama attacks Trump as he campaigns for Democrats ahead of midterm elections

Former US President Barack Obama has attacked the Trump administration over the Iran war and high consumer prices as he hit the campaign trail for Democrats ahead of the US midterm elections.

"This election is our last best chance to at least rein in some of the foolishness of this administration," Obama told crowds in Ohio on Saturday.

Meanwhile, US President

Donald Trump touted his administration's immigration and tariff policies at a rally in Georgia, telling supporters "we're in the golden age of America".

The midterm elections on 3 November will decide which party controls Congress for the rest of Trump's term, and therefore how easy it is for the president to carry out his plans.

Early voting has already begun and Trump cast his ballot

on Saturday in Florida alongside his wife First Lady Melania Trump.

Obama targeted Trump and his cabinet members while speaking on Saturday in Ohio and Michigan, at one point mocking the president's attempt to redecorate the White House.

"After two years of chaos and cruelty and corruption and incompetence, the likes of which we have not seen in the modern era, you get a chance to say, 'enough is enough'," the former president said in Cleveland.

Obama said he sympathised with voters who rejected Democrats in 2024 over economic and inflation concerns following the Covid pandemic. But he said Trump had only himself to blame for the current state of the economy.

"If you thought everything was too expensive before 'you know who'," he said, referring

to Trump without using his name, "everything is more expensive now".

Who will win the midterms?

Trump, meanwhile, acknowledged that oil prices were "temporarily high" but said "our country is getting stronger and stronger all the time, and those pump prices are going to come down".

The Republican president has faced significant pressure to lower fuel prices, which have jumped due to the wars in Iran and Ukraine.

Talking up the economy, Trump told the crowd in Perry "we're taking in massive amounts of money through tariffs" and repeated his pledge to offer every adult American a \$5,000 (£3,700) payout if Republicans win both chambers of Congress.

He also took aim at the Democrats, telling the crowd they would "loot your wealth" and "annihilate your borders".

Using derogatory language,

he accused the Democrats of trying to open up immigration from Libya, Yemen, Haiti and Somalia - countries which he described as "terror-infested".

Describing a previous meeting with several senators, he recalled: "I said, 'Why do we always have to take people from shithouse countries? Why can't we take people from, like, well... Norway, Sweden? Why not Denmark?'"

In Ohio, the current president faced an attack from his predecessor over the war in Iran, with Obama telling Democrat supporters the conflict had given Tehran "veto power" over the Strait of Hormuz.

When asked about the war earlier in the day, Trump said: "I've done it very effectively and I may have to finish it off, or maybe they'll make a deal, but I'm not sure. Either way, we win."

He was also asked whether Melania Trump would visit Ukraine after the White House announced she

secured a ceasefire in a Russian-occupied city. "We will see," he said.

'What's with all the gold?'

At his afternoon rally, Obama also took a swipe at Trump's efforts to renovate the White House.

"What's with all the gold? He's got the White House looking like Saddam Hussein opened up a Cheesecake Factory," Obama joked.

Obama's rally in Ohio was to show support for ex-Senator Sherrod Brown, who is running to unseat incumbent Republican Senator John Husted, and Amy Acton, who is running for state governor against Republican Vivek Ramaswamy.

Obama criticised Ramaswamy for a campaign ad released last week in which Acton's estranged mother was featured calling her a liar. The ad didn't mention that the woman's husband was charged with raping Acton when she was a child.

Gunmen kill at least 10 villagers and loot shops in North-East Nigeria

Unknown gunmen have raided a remote village in the north-eastern Nigerian state of Taraba, killing at least 10 people, looting shops and setting houses ablaze, police say.

There are fears the actual death toll is much higher, with eyewitnesses speaking of 20 lives lost and a non-governmental organisation suggesting a toll of as many as 50.

The gunmen reportedly swooped on the village of Binari in the Karim Lamido area mounted on motorcycles just after midday Muslim prayers on Friday in a rampage that went on for up to four hours.

Police say they are searching for other casualties in the bush but the authorities were accused by Amnesty International of failing to protect rural communities.

Nigeria continues to face attacks by armed groups across several regions, including the northwest, northeast and central regions.

The country is also battling a jihadist insurgency in its north-east that has lasted nearly two

decades, drawing persistent criticism of the government's handling of insecurity.

Following the latest incident, police said they recovered 10 bodies with gunshot wounds after officers responded to a distress call.

The attackers had fled by the time they arrived but they continued to patrol the area to restore calm, they told BBC News on Saturday.

"We were able to disperse the unknown gunmen though there was no casualty on their side and ours because the terrain is difficult and they're used to the terrain," Assistant Superintendent of Police Victor Mshelizah said.

He added that officers were continuing to search the bush nearby for people who might have been killed or wounded, and warned the death toll could still rise.

Community leader Malam Abubakar Saifullahi told news agency AFP that the attackers had arrived on about 50 motorcycles, two men apiece.

Australian MP's condition improves after alleged car attack

The condition of Helen Haines, the Australian MP hit by a car five days ago in north-east Victoria, has improved from critical to serious but stable.

The independent MP, 65, had both her legs amputated after what authorities say was a deliberate attack outside her electorate office in Wangaratta, north-east of Melbourne, on Monday.

In the latest update on Saturday morning, the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne said Haines was in a serious but stable condition, the first improvement since she was airlifted there.

Her alleged attacker, 43-year-old Brendan Nugent, was arrested shortly after the incident and has since appeared in court on three charges.

The politician's husband, Phil Haines, said on Wednesday that the "horrendous incident" had caused his wife sig-

nificant injuries but "her heart and her mind" were "in good shape".

Nugent, who was arrested moments after he allegedly drove his Toyota LandCruiser into the MP, appeared in court to face three charges: dangerous driving causing serious injury, intentionally causing serious injury, and causing harm to a Commonwealth public official.

Police said more charges might be laid, including attempted murder.

His lawyer said his client had "mental health concerns" but did not give any further detail.

Victoria Police has said its investigation, with support from the Australian Federal Police, remains ongoing and a motive is yet to be established.

Investigators are looking into whether drug use or medication played a part in the incident.



Ex-US President Barack Obama

Niger imposes curfew on petrol sales amid national fuel shortage

Niger imposes curfew on petrol sales amid national fuel shortage. Niger's government has announced an overnight curfew on the sale of petrol across the country, except at designated stations.

As of this week, they are not able to sell fuel between nine at night and six in the morning to enable suppliers, including the Nigerien Petroleum Company (Sonidep), to restock them.

It said this temporary measure aimed to improve the smooth running of operations

while guaranteeing deliveries and the availability of petrol, following a countrywide shortage.

But the measure is impacting taxis drivers, like Moussa Idé Boubacar, who said he has not been able to make his payments for two days.

"Normally, we generate revenue of around 20,000 a day, of which 8,000 is for payments and 12,000 is for fuel. With this shortage, we've had some management issues," he said.

As the fuel shortage spread, motorists have been facing increasingly long queues at sta-

tions.

Residents in the capital, Niamey, and elsewhere said this was disrupting daily life, making it difficult to get to work and carry out their daily activities.

The taxi union, Synctaxi, has called for the new curfew to be relaxed for operators who are struggling to make ends meet.

"To obtain fuel, you need authorisation. The petrol station must be open around the clock," said its secretary-general, Ganda Sanda.

"We are appealing to the

governorate and the governor as well to reconsider because it does not suit us," he said.

Sanda added that the union wanted to draw the authorities' attention to the fact that the transport sector "makes a significant contribution to the country's development".

In addition to the curfew, the sale of fuel in jerry cans outside stations has also been prohibited in all areas that have at least one petrol station.

The authorities have called on Nigeriens to show "understanding and civic-mindedness" saying the measures were aimed at improving supply.

Mazik foundation holds policy dialogue on waste reduction, urges integration into Delta's 2027 strategy

By ISAAC ERANGA

ASABA

As part of the effort in celebrating the International Green Action Week 2026 Campaign, the Mazik Foundation for Consumer Rights (MFCR) successfully convened a stakeholder policy dialogue in Asaba.

The event, themed "Sharing Community, Greening Delta: A Transformative Path to Sustainable Consumption," brought together key representatives from the Delta State Ministry of Environment, Delta State Waste Management Board, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), market associations, Micro, Small, and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs), and local consumers.

The dialogue focused on ad-

ressing the mounting environmental pressures in the State, particularly the daily generation of over 1,200 tons of solid waste and the choking of Asaba's urban drainage systems by single-use plastics and packaging materials. Delivering his welcome address, the Director of Programs for the Mazik Foundation, Kingsley O. Kefe, emphasized that sustainable consumption cannot be left to the government alone. He noted that collective action among government bodies, businesses, civil society, and local communities is crucial to tackling environmental degradation. Kefe highlighted that the dialogue served as an essential platform to advocate for practical measures—such as refill systems, bulk buying, reuse, and community knowledge sharing—and pushed for their direct integration into

the upcoming Delta State 2027 Waste Management Strategy. Goodwill messages were delivered by stakeholders, including representatives from

the Delta State Ministry of Environment, Delta State Waste Management Board and Market Associations, leading into the core keynote presentation

on shifting from community action to policy change.

There were interactive breakouts where participants were splinted into working groups to tackle critical community waste challenges, identify operational barriers, and formu-

late actionable solutions.

Stakeholders expressed optimism that the collaborative frameworks established during the Asaba dialogue will lay a robust foundation for institutional policy reforms ahead of 2027.



LEGISLATIVE ROUND TABLE ON EDUCATION REFORM:

L-R Amarachi Itenebe, Director Shared Services Board for Technical, Vocational, Education and Training, Mrs Onomen Briggs Executive Chairman, Board for Technical and Vocational Education, Hon Donald Okogbe, Chairman Edo State House of Assembly standing committee on Education, and Prof Saga, Vice Chancellor Edo State University, Iyamho during the Legislative Round Table on Education Reform Organised by Edo State House of Assembly standing committee on Education at John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy recently.

Photo: Godwin Iseguan.

Mother of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala passes 13 years after her kidnap ordeal

DELTA STATE

Mother of renowned Director General of World Trade Organisation (WTO), Prof Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Obi (Prof) Kamene Okonjo has reportedly passed at the age of 96.

She was the wife of the former Obi of Ogwashi-Uku kingdom Obi Professor Chukwuka Okonjo who had since joined his ancestors.

The Palace Secretary, Prince Ifeakanachukwu Emordi, according to Oasis Magazine, who broke the news on behalf of the Umu Obi Obahai Royal Family of Ogwashi-Uku on Sunday stated that she passed peacefully last Friday.

Abducted in 2013 from the Palace

Recall that the woman was abducted from the Palace sometime in March 2013 when her daughter Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and former Finance Minister and Coordinating Minister for the Economy.

It is generally believed that providence played a crucial role in her release by the kidnappers after collecting N13 million out of the N200 million earlier demanded which they (abductors) had considered to be 'paltry'.

An ex-palace guard, was said to have masterminded the abduction.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala speaks about the kidnap

In April 2016, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, broke silence on why the mother was kidnapped when she granted an interview to The Cable.

She claimed in that inter-

view that her mother who was 83 years old when she was kidnapped was the price she (Ngozi) was confronted to pay because of her position about the monster called fuel subsidy.

When asked during the interview what her failures and successes in the fight against corruption were, Okonjo-Iweala said: "Your answer would take a whole day. "On my first experience as Minister, I wrote a book, Reforming the unreformable (ed. The MIT Press, 2012). For the second, it was really difficult. Nigeria subsidizes fuel. About \$ 6.7 billion that it costs, we found that 1.5 billion was fraudulent.

"One importer claimed that his boat was waging its oil while at the other end of the world, according to maritime classification society Lloyd's Register Marine.

"I told the president that we would stop paying. What happened? They kidnapped my mother, 83 years. During the first three days, their only demand was my resignation. I was supposed to go on television and announce my resignation.

"This was one of the worst moments of my life. Can you imagine what happens in your head if you have to be responsible for the death of your mother?

"I will not go into details, but you must understand that in a country like this... in the fight against corruption, we must be prepared to pay a personal price. My father asked me not to resign. The president asked me not to resign. At the end, everyone began looking for her, and the kidnappers released her".

...A decade of peace & reform

Continued from Page 5

The abolition restored sanity to land administration and community governance.

The Oba's next major action, he said, was a historic curse against human trafficking, particularly the trafficking of young women for prostitution.

"He invoked a curse that strictly restricted Edo people from engaging in the obnoxious trade, which was telling badly on the image of Edo people," Edionwe said.

The action, he noted, drastically reduced trafficking and restored the dignity of Edo State.

The historian also credited the Oba with the revival of Benin cultural heritage.

"Long-forgotten traditional norms and practices were reawakened. Abandoned shrines were brought back to life in communities," he said.

Oba Ewuare II redefined ascension to the Odionwere stool, restoring the old order where the most senior elder in

a community becomes Odionwere.

Ascension through age groups was invalidated.

"This has restored peace and order. The transition from one Odionwere to another, with a three-year period of incubation, has become very smooth and peaceful," Edionwe said.

"It has greatly reduced the tussle for Odionwereship across communities."

To resolve disputes, the Oba set up the Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee.

The Arase Panel was also set up for quick resolution of land disputes.

"It has discouraged many land grabbers from venturing into the illegal act," Edionwe said.

The Oba also backed the blueprint for the industrial revolution of the state — the Gelele Export Processing Zone and Seaport project.

Located in Ughoton and Gelele, in Ovia North-East and Ovia South-West Local Government Areas, the project is designed as a modern container terminal, agro-industrial park and export-free processing zone.

Governor Uduaghan was a detribalized statesman - Enahoro

BENIN CITY

The late former Governor of Delta State, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan has been described as a doctor who brought healing into governance and a detribalized leader who saw people beyond projects.

In a tribute titled "Dr. Uduaghan: Tribute To A Doctor And A Detribalized Leader", a Journalist, Eubaldus Enahoro said he received the news of Uduaghan's passing with profound shock and deep sorrow.

The former Governor, who died on October 19, 2026 at 71, three days to his 72nd birthday, served as Governor from 2007 to 2015.

Eubaldus Enahoro, who served under his administration through his principal, Chief P.D.O. Akpeki, the Ugo

of Okpe kingdom said he knew Uduaghan as a Governor.

"I did not know him from afar. I served under his administration as Manager, Communications, through my former principal, Chief P.D.O. Akpeki who was then Commissioner for Housing and Chief of Staff Government House, Asaba

"In that capacity, I saw firsthand the man behind the office who obliged me and a colleague the opportunity to write a book on him, titled, "The Man," Enahoro said.

He described the late former Governor as a man of few words, very articulate and calm even in crisis.

"Dr. Uduaghan was not a noise maker. He was a man of few words, very articulate, calm even in crisis - just as Governor Sheriff Oborevwo described him.

"In Government House Asaba, while others were shouting, he was thinking. While others were politicking, he was healing - bringing the compassion of a medical doctor into governance," he noted.

Enahoro who is a former Editor of the Nigerian Observer Newspaper added that Uduaghan's mother was from Ubiaja in Edo State, and he believed in the Niger Delta beyond oil and was very compassionate about governance.

He recalled that as Commissioner for Health (1999-2003), Secretary to the State Government (2003-2007) and Governor (2007-2015), Uduaghan's focus was human capital, introducing the Free Maternal Healthcare and Free Under-Five healthcare programmes which saved thousands of mothers and children.

"He saw people and respected them, not just projects.

He was a bridge-builder who treated everyone as a Deltan, from Itsekiri to Urhobo to Ijaw to Anioma, and he gave opportunities to young professionals, especially journalists who crossed his path.

"He was undoubtedly a man who prepared for eternity. Now he has gone to meet his Creator, leaving behind legacies like the Asaba International Airport and a template for peace-building in a time of militancy," he said.

Enahoro extended his deepest condolences to his beloved wife, Deaconess Roli Nere Uduaghan, his children, the Uduaghan family of Abigborodo, the Itsekiri Nation, and the Government and people of Delta State.

He prayed for the peaceful repose of the soul of the former Governor whom he described as a detribalized statesman, distinguished medical practitioner and public servant.

Tinubu blames opposition for Nigeria's challenges

KADUNA

President Bola Tinubu on Saturday blamed opposition leaders for Nigeria's hunger and poverty, accusing them of creating problems they now exploit against his administration.

"I hear my opponents talking about hunger and poverty. Who created it? They did. They created the hunger; they created the poverty. We are trying to eradicate it," Tinubu said.

He spoke at the flag-off of his presidential campaign for the 2027 general elections at

Ranchers Bees Stadium in Kaduna.

In a statement issued by Presidential Spokesperson Bayo Onanuga in Kaduna, Tinubu's remarks appeared directed at opposition leaders, including former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar.

Abubakar served as vice-president between 1999 and 2007, when several state-owned enterprises were privatised.

Thousands of affected workers were reportedly left without their gratuities and pensions following the priva-

tisation exercises.

The Tinubu administration has been paying outstanding entitlements to some of the affected workers.

At the rally, Tinubu also inaugurated an 81-kilometre section of the Abuja-Kaduna highway through a symbolic ribbon-cutting ceremony.

He recalled Kaduna's historical significance as a city of leaders and the former Northern Region's political head-

quarters.

The President said his administration was working to eradicate poverty and thanked Kaduna residents for supporting him in the 2023 presidential election.

He urged them to renew his mandate in 2027, citing investments in critical economic infrastructure across Kaduna State and the wider Northern region.

The rally attracted APC

National Chairman, Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, Vice-President, Kashim Shettima, and First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu.

Others included the Vice-President's wife, Nana Shettima; 32 APC governors; former National Chairman Sen. Abdullahi Adamu; and former Governor, Abdullahi Ganduje.

Speaking at the rally, Shettima reaffirmed Tinubu's

commitment to national unity, democratic stability and economic development. He urged Nigerians to support the administration for continuity. The Vice-President recalled Tinubu's support for Northern presidential candidates in previous elections, including former President, Muhammadu Buhari.

Buhari won the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections.

Tinubu is loved by Nigerians – Information Minister

KADUNA

The Minister of Information and National Orientation, Alhaji Mohammed Idris, has described the large turnout at the rally as an indication of the president's acceptance among Nigerians, particularly supporters who believe in his policies.

Idris gave this indication on Saturday at the rally ground in Kaduna State, expressing confidence in Tinubu's popularity and the support for his administration's reform agenda. He described the large turnout at the rally as an indication of the president's acceptance among Nigerians, particularly supporters who believe in his policies. He urged Nigerians to look beyond social media reports and opposition crit-

icisms, insisting that the crowd at the rally demonstrated support for Tinubu. "We have always been saying this: forget about all the social media news, forget about all the talk from the opposition. Asiwaju is loved by Nigerians," Idris said.

He described Kaduna as a significant location for the campaign flag-off, noting its historical importance as the former capital of Northern Nigeria.

According to him, the presence of supporters from different political backgrounds demonstrated a willingness to unite behind Tinubu and his administration's reform agenda.

Idris said that Nigerians were increasingly recognising the potential benefits of the government's policies and the prospects for economic recovery.



CAMPAIGN RALLY FLAG OFF:

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (right) and Vice President Kashim Shettima (left) during presidential campaign rally flag off organized by the APC Presidential Campaign Council for Tinubu's re-election bid in Kaduna on Saturday.

TUC backs CONUA, demands immediate signing of agreement

ABUJA

The Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) has expressed solidarity with the Congress of University Academics (CONUA), demanding the immediate conclusion and signing of its proposed agreement with the Federal Government.

TUC General Secretary, Comrade Nuhu Toro, said this on

Saturday after the congress's National Executive Council (NEC) meeting at the University of Abuja.

Toro said CONUA deserved fair representation, improved welfare and effective collective bargaining, adding that any attack on the union amounted to an attack on the entire Nigerian labour movement.

He urged the Federal Government to translate its recognition of CONUA into

meaningful negotiations and a signed agreement that protected members' interests.

He said collective bargaining agreements were binding commitments, not political favours or administrative conveniences, stressing that their implementation was essential to protecting workers' rights

and maintaining industrial peace.

He also condemned inadequate university funding and the neglect of academics, warning that undermining collective bargaining threatened national development and workers' welfare.

Edo power supply is restored as Okpebholo, NLC resolve labour dispute

ABUJA

Electricity supply to Edo State has been restored following a resolution of the dispute between the state government and organised labour over the recognition of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) caretaker committee in the state.

The agreement was reached at a closed-door meeting in Abuja convened by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator George Akume, with Edo State Governor, Senator Monday

Okpebholo, and leaders of organised labour in attendance.

Other participants included NLC President, Comrade Joe Ajaero; Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Muhammad Maigari Dingyadi; and former Edo State Governor and ex-NLC President, Senator Adams Oshiomhole.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Governor Okpebholo confirmed that the parties had resolved the disagreement, assuring that his administration would recognise the NLC caretaker committee

and work with labour leaders towards conducting a substantive election.

"There is no issue actually, and we have resolved the issues that border the NLC caretaker committee in Edo," the governor said.

Ajaero also confirmed the resolution, commending Governor Okpebholo, Akume, Dingyadi and Oshiomhole for their contributions towards settling the dispute.

He said organised labour had agreed to work with the state government on the recognition of the caretaker committee, the conduct

of a substantive election and the resolution of issues relating to the committee's rights and privileges.

"Consequently, power will be restored in Edo," the NLC president declared.

Oshiomhole described the disagreement as a communication gap that had now been addressed, noting that the circumstances that sustained the industrial action no longer existed.

He also welcomed the governor's willingness to rebuild trust between the Edo State Government and organised labour, stressing the need for cooperation to sustain industrial peace and harmony.

...Sultan hails Oba

Continued from page 2

He also acknowledged the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Edoba Omoregie, and a team of veterinary doctors led by the Director of the UNIBEN Veterinary Clinic, Professor Paul Paul Nwiyi Okechukwu, for their professional contribution to ensuring the health and well-being of the horses and riders ahead of the event.

Their efforts, he noted, formed part of the preparations that helped facilitate the successful staging of the royal Durbar, where the horses and their riders were central to the spectacle.

Beyond its ceremonial splendour, the 10th coronation anniversary Durbar stood as a celebration of the enduring legacy of the Benin monarchy and its place in Nigeria's rich tapestry of traditional institutions.

The Sultan's tribute to Oba Ewuare II brought a further dimension to the occasion,

highlighting the importance of exemplary leadership, mutual respect and cooperation among royal institutions in a culturally diverse nation.

As the royal procession, traditional pageantry and horse race animated the celebration, the occasion offered a compelling reminder that the strength of a kingdom lies not only in the grandeur of its ceremonies, but also in the heritage it preserves, the values it upholds and the unity it inspires.

For Benin Kingdom, the anniversary was both a moment of thanksgiving for a decade of royal stewardship and an opportunity to showcase a cultural inheritance that continues to command admiration far beyond the ancient city.

The Durbar thus left an enduring impression of royal dignity, cultural pride and inter-community fellowship, befitting a landmark celebration in the reign of Oba Ewuare II.

NEWS EXTRA

80% of large enterprise lending to manufacturing, infrastructure

LAGOS

The Bank of Industry (BOI) says 80 per cent of its large enterprise lending now goes to manufacturing and infrastructure to boost industrial output, create jobs and strengthen productive capacity.

Managing Director of BOI, Dr Olasupo Olusi, said this on

Wednesday in Lagos while outlining the bank's strategic priorities and efforts to mobilise long-term financing for businesses across key sectors of the economy.

Olusi said the bank had organised its operations around 15 priority sectors grouped into five divisions to ensure wider coverage of the Nigerian economy.

Nigerian news analysis

The divisions comprise agro-manufacturing, other manufacturing, infrastructure, extractive industries and services.

He said the priority sectors included agro-processing, food processing, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, engineering, transport and logistics, power, information and communications technology (ICT), mining,

healthcare, creative industries and tourism.

According to him, ICT is the bank's newest priority sector because the digital economy increasingly supports activities across other industries.

"For our large enterprise lending, 80 per cent now goes to manufacturing and infrastructure, because these are the sectors that create the most jobs and output

for every naira we lend," he said.

Olusi said the bank was also working to bridge the financing gap facing Nigerian businesses, particularly their need for long-term, affordable capital that commercial banks could not adequately provide.

He said that, within three years, the bank had secured more than 2.2 billion euros and N250 billion in new funding to support Nigerian industry.

He listed the funding transactions to include a 1.879 billion euros syndicated facility secured in 2024, 210 million euro from international development partners in 2025 and a N250 billion development bond issued in 2026.

Others were 85 million euro from the European Investment Bank (EIB) for agriculture and

50 million euros for healthcare manufacturing, both secured in 2026.

Olusi said the successful mobilisation of the funds reflected investors' confidence in the bank's governance, project pipeline and performance.

He added that BOI had delivered more than 95 per cent of the Federal Government's N200 billion intervention package for businesses.

The intervention comprised a N50 billion Presidential Conditional Grant Scheme, a N75 billion Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Intervention Fund and a N75 billion Manufacturing Sector Fund.

According to him, the programme has reached 957,400 grant beneficiaries, 9,000 MSMEs and 104 large manufacturers.



LEGISLATIVE ROUND TABLE ON EDUCATION REFORM:

Prof Victor Adetimirin, Vice Chancellor, Edo State University Iyamho (Middle) Flanked on his left and right by Dr Dan Eheremwen, Director, Academic planning Quality Edo state College of Education and Prof Osagie Ekhat, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma, during the Legislative Round Table on Education Reform Organised by Edo State House of Assembly standing committee on Education at John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy recently.

Photo: Godwin Iseguan.

Oil, Gas host communities' youth council endorses Tinubu

ABUJA

The Host Communities Producing Oil, Gas and Pipeline-Impacted States Youth Council of Nigeria (HOSTCON Youth Council) has endorsed President Bola Tinubu for re-election in 2027.

The council's President, Emmanuel Pathfinder, announced the endorsement at a news conference on Friday in Abuja.

Pathfinder said the endorsement followed what he described as Tinubu's excellent performance in the Niger Delta and the oil and gas sector.

He said the administration had supported greater involvement of indigenous people in

pipeline protection and oil and gas infrastructure security.

According to him, local participation is essential to promoting peace, stability and development in the oil-producing region.

"We express our sincere appreciation to President Tinubu and the 10th National Assembly for supporting efforts to safeguard Nigeria's oil and gas infrastructure," Pathfinder said.

He also expressed confidence in Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Ltd. (PINL), citing its contributions to pipeline security, employment and community engagement across parts of the Niger Delta.

Pathfinder criticised moves

to revoke PINL's pipeline surveillance contract, arguing that its continued operations would benefit host communities and strengthen security.

He said the company's management and personnel included Niger Delta indigenes who understood the region's challenges and had a stake in its stability.

According to him, PINL has engaged host communities through stakeholder meetings and social intervention programmes, including scholarships and women's empowerment initiatives.

Pathfinder defended the company against what he described as attempts to undermine its operations, pledging the council's

continued support.

He maintained that indigenous participation in pipeline surveillance created employment opportunities for young people and strengthened relationships between security operators and host communities.

The youth council president called for a comprehensive review of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), particularly its provisions allocating three per cent of operating expenditure to Host Community Development Trusts.

He questioned the adequacy of the allocation and expressed concern over disbursement delays, saying communities needed timely access to funds.

USOSA urges alumni to lead restoration of unity schools' standards

ABUJA

The Unity Schools Old Students Association (USOSA) have called for collective action to restore the academic standards and boarding-school experience of Federal Government Colleges across the country.

USOSA President-General, Michael Magaji, made the call at the 50th Anniversary Plenary and Annual General Meeting of the association in Abuja on Saturday.

Magaji said that the meeting with the theme, "Over 60 Years of Unity Schools: Preserving

National Unity and Reimagining Education for Nigeria's Future" provided the association with the opportunity to reflect on achievements and strengthen its contribution to the education sector.

Magaji said the association had grown into a national network connecting alumni of Federal Unity Colleges, with an expanding presence in Nigerian cities and among Nigerians in the diaspora.

He called on members to become more involved in education governance and national development, stressing that the benefits they received from the

unity schools came with a responsibility to give back.

"Show me your education and I will tell you the kind of country you have. All of us have been privileged to come from this very rich background that has produced great alumni.

"It is time for us to consolidate this position and become more actively involved in the governance of education and of this country," he said.

Magaji said USOSA had strengthened engagement with alumni in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States to harness their professional experience, networks and resources

for the country's education system.

He also said that the association had partnered with BudGIT, a civic organisation focused on public finance and budget transparency, to monitor expenditure and promote accountability in Federal Unity Colleges.

He said the association's relevance should ultimately be measured by its impact on members and the schools.

The USOSA president-general urged alumni to use their shared experiences to promote national cohesion and help address challenges facing the education sector.

BOI targets N1.85trn annual lending, 3m jobs by 2027

LAGOS

The Bank of Industry (BOI) says it is targeting N1.85 trillion in annual lending and financing for 24,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) under its corporate strategy.

The Managing Director of BOI, Mr Olasupo Olusi, disclosed this on Thursday during an engagement with media executives in Lagos.

He added that the bank also targeted three million jobs between 2025 and 2027.

Olusi said the strategy prioritised manufacturing, agriculture, local healthcare, climate-friendly businesses and technology-driven enterprises to strengthen domestic production, expand access to long-term capital and create sustainable employment.

He said the bank was also working to close financing gaps in climate-related investments and the digital economy.

According to him, the strategy's 2X ambition is to double the bank's loan book, disbursements and impact instruments within three years.

He said the strategy was built around six thematic areas, each with specific targets to guide implementation and measure progress.

"We will deploy many of the resources that we need for growth in our country, in areas such as agriculture, local healthcare and manufacturing. "This is so that Nigeria is able to provide more of the stuff of the food that it consumes and of medicines, all the relevant key materials," he said.

Olusi said BOI's 2025-2027 corporate strategy was structured into three phases, with 2025 serving as the foundation year for establishing governance frameworks, products, digital tools and budgetary

provisions.

He described 2026 as the year of execution and scale, while 2027 would focus on consolidating results and meeting set targets.

The managing director said the bank disbursed a record N625 billion in 2025, supporting the creation and sustenance of 1.6 million jobs and reaching 12,501 businesses.

He said the amount represented a 26 per cent increase over the N410 billion recorded in 2024.

According to him, MSMEs received more than 31 per cent of the bank's 2025 funding, while about N120 billion was disbursed to women-owned businesses.

He said BOI would continue to expand financing for underserved enterprises, particularly women-owned and youth-led businesses, while strengthening its capacity to mobilise funds from domestic and international markets.

Olusi said the bank would also deepen its support for local production in line with the Federal Government's Nigeria First policy.

"Our mission is very simple. We have to finance what Nigeria makes," he said.

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