

Okpebholo vows to rebuild Oluku market, support fire victims

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY
Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged to rebuild Oluku Market, destroyed by a devastating fire, and provide support to traders who lost their shops, goods and livelihoods in the disaster.

The governor gave the assurance on Friday, October 16, 2026, during an inspection of the burnt market along the Benin-Lagos Expressway in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of the state. Expressing sadness over the incident, Okpebholo assured the affected traders that his administration would not abandon them in their moment of distress.

He disclosed that the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, had also expressed sympathy with the victims and families of those who lost their lives in the fire. "I spoke to the First Lady this morning, and she expressed her sadness over what happened yesterday," the governor said.

Okpebholo urged residents to exercise caution and stay away from scenes of fire disasters involving petroleum products, warning that attempts to scoop fuel could lead to further loss of lives. We are sorry. We, as human beings, should also take precautions whenever something like this happens. Before the explosion, people were scooping fuel. "But the state and federal governments have spent a lot of money on advertisements to educate the public to stay away from such disasters, but people won't listen," he said.

The governor also faulted the owner of the affected tanker for allegedly bringing another tanker to evacuate the spilled fuel without adequate safety precautions. "The owner of the affected tanker also brought another tanker to evacuate the fuel, which is very wrong. If this had not happened, there would not have been any fire incident."

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GOV. Okpebholo receives Christian Icon Award ...It puts excellence, integrity and value of faith on spotlight -CAN

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Royal Chess Classic: Oba Ewuare 11 pledges royal prizes at anniversary tournament ..Hails chess as game of the intelligentsia

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

BENIN CITY
In a heartwarming gesture underscoring the spirit of care, mentorship and cultural responsibility that defines his 10th coronation anniversary, the Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare II, has pledged royal care for eight-year-old chess prodigy, Emmanuela Iyobosa Omoragbon, declaring her a child of the palace. The monarch made the declaration on Saturday, October 17, 2026, after playing the ceremonial first move with the young chess star to officially open the Royal Rapid Chess Classic 2026 at the palace in Benin City.

Moved by the remarkable talent and promise of the young player, the Oba directed palace chiefs in the administrative arm to obtain her details from her mother, Mrs Doris Omoragbon, a national chess champion and senior player with the Edo State Sports Commission, to facilitate the palace's sustained interest in her development. "This child is now a child of the palace. From now on, I want the palace to monitor the progress of the little girl: how she is doing with chess, her education and her welfare. Even the food she eats, we want to know. The palace will now take care of her needs," the monarch declared.

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AWARD FOR COMPASSIONATE PUBLIC SERVICE: Edo State Gov., Sen. Monday Okpebholo (2nd left) flanked by some top officials of the state government and CAN shortly after receiving CAN Christian Icon Award in Abuja on Saturday.

NEWS

**OPENING OF ROYAL RAPID CHESS CLASSIC 2026:**

The Oba of Benin, Oba Ewuare 11, performing the ceremonial first move with 8-year-old chess prodigy, Emmanuela Iyobosa Omoragbon, during official opening of the tournament in his honour on Saturday.

Oluku tanker fire: Edo Fire Service DG warns against fuel scooping, issues safety guidelines

BENIN CITY

The Director-General of the Edo State Fire Service, Hon. Anthony Ojo, has warned residents against scooping fuel from fallen tankers, describing the practice as extremely dangerous and potentially fatal.

Ojo gave the warning on Saturday while briefing journalists on the tanker fire that occurred at Oluku Market, along the Benin-Lagos Expressway, in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State.

According to the Fire Service, a petrol-laden tanker fell at about 7:30 a.m., spilling Premium Motor Spirit (PMS)

around Oluku Market and adjoining drainage channels.

The Service said it immediately deployed two fire trucks from its Ikpoba Hill and Government House stations, with support from the Federal Fire Service.

Meanwhile, security agencies, including the Police, Nigerian Army, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and Edo State Security Corps, cordoned off the area to prevent residents from scooping the spilled fuel.

However, some residents reportedly resisted the security measures and continued collecting petrol in jerry cans.

Tragedy struck at about 11:50 a.m. when the spilled fuel

ignited, engulfing the tanker and spreading to more than 20 shops, two buses, a truck and an Audi car.

Firefighters, working alongside the Federal Fire Service, the NUPENG emergency response team and security agencies, battled the blaze for over an hour before bringing it under control.

Ojo said the crowd's resistance and continued fuel scooping initially obstructed emergency responders and made access to the scene difficult.

He, however, maintained that his men arrived as soon as practically possible and immediately commenced firefighting and rescue operations.

The Director-General disclosed that two fire trucks remained at the scene to ensure that the fire was completely extinguished and to prevent possible re-ignition.

He commended the Nigerian Army, Police, FRSC, Federal Fire Service and market youths for their assistance in containing the inferno.

As of press time, the casualty figure had yet to be officially reconciled, with the Police confirming eight injured persons, while the FRSC reported 11 casualties.

Some victims who sustained varying degrees of burns were evacuated to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) for treatment.

Okpebholo vows to rebuild Oluku market, support fire victims

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

"The owner of the affected tanker also brought another tanker to evacuate the fuel, which is very wrong. If this had not happened, there would not have been any fire incident.

"This is the result of it. We are sorry; it is not our making. We pray God keeps us alive," he said.

As part of his visit, Okpebholo proceeded to the burns and plastic ward of the Accident and Emergency Department of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), where some victims of the fire were receiving treatment.

Addressing parents and relatives of the victims, the governor reiterated the need for residents to heed safety warnings and avoid the dangerous practice of scooping fuel from fallen tankers.

He also reaffirmed his ad-

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Royal Chess Classic: Oba Ewuare 11 pledges royal prizes at anniversary tournament

He urged the family to keep the palace informed of any challenges that might affect the child's growth, education or chess career, describing her achievement at such a tender age as remarkable.

"If there are any challenges concerning her, the parents must bring them to my notice. For a child of eight to be playing chess at this level is wonderful," he said.

The royal gesture added a deeply personal and inspiring dimension to the anniversary celebration, highlighting the Oba's commitment to nurturing young talent and encouraging the next generation to pursue excellence in intellectual and sporting endeavours.

Chess: A game of the intelligentsia

Speaking on the intellectual value of chess, Oba Ewuare II described it as a strategic game of the intelligentsia, lamenting that many people mistakenly associate it with draughts played in beer parlours.

The monarch said chess goes beyond recreation, serving as an instrument for sharpening the mind, developing strategic thinking and preparing individuals for leadership and responsible decision-making.

"Many people do not know the advantages of chess. They think it is the same as the game of draughts people play

ministration's commitment to rebuilding the market and assisting affected traders to recover their businesses and livelihoods.

Earlier, the market's secretary, Blessing Itoje, appealed to the governor for urgent assistance, explaining that traders had been unable to salvage any of their goods before the fire razed their shops and wares.

"We couldn't even pick anything; everything burnt to ashes. Some of us are widows, and we use our meagre earnings to care for our families.

"Some of the traders were admitted to hospital due to the shock; some are on oxygen. Please, our father, some of us are servicing loans as I speak," she said.

Another trader, Julie Ologbosere, also appealed for assistance, lamenting that the affected traders had been left with nothing.

'Appointment of 250 Special Assistants boosts grassroots Participation' — APC leaders

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Leaders of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State have commended Governor Monday Okpebholo for appointing 250 Special Assistants in the area, describing the initiative as a boost to grassroots participation and development.

The commendation came as the newly appointed Special Assistants received their appointment letters at a meeting with party leaders in Egor Local Government Area.

Some of the leaders, who spoke with journalists, said the appointments went beyond political recognition, expressing confidence that the initiative would strengthen grassroots engagement and bring government closer to the people.

They said the appointments would also provide an avenue

for citizens at the community level to contribute to governance and ensure that government policies and programmes were effectively communicated and implemented across Edo State's 18 local government areas.

Deputy Chief of Staff to the Edo State Government, Pius Alile, who attended the event, urged the appointees to collaborate with community leaders and elders to promote development in their respective wards.

He described the appointments as a grassroots initiative capable of improving the socioeconomic well-being of beneficiaries while creating opportunities for greater community participation in governance.

"This is a grassroots initiative of the governor, and it is going to improve the socioeconomic lives of those who have benefited.

"It will enable the grassroots to contribute to governance because those who benefited are

part of the grassroots, and they are going to work in their communities," Alile said.

The APC Chairman in Egor Local Government Area, Emma Iyase, charged the appointees to demonstrate commitment and hard work, assuring them that the Okpebholo administration would reward dedication.

"There is a reward for hard

work, and the reward has come. I encourage all appointees to galvanise votes for the party to ensure victory. As victory comes, more benefits will come," he said.

Other party leaders expressed the hope that increased grassroots participation would provide more citizens with opportunities to contribute to governance and benefit from the dividends of democracy.

Edo Govt terminates appointment of New Edo Line Ag. MD

...Appoints Engr. Paul F. Ogedegbe as new Managing Director

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has terminated the appointment of Aigbodion Ewanifo Smart as Acting Managing Director of New Edo Line Ltd. over alleged managerial inefficiency.

The government also announced the appointment of Engr. Paul F. Ogedegbe as

the new Managing Director of the state-owned transport company.

The decisions, which take immediate effect, were contained in a Government Special Announcement dated October 18, 2026, and signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilior, Esq.

Okpebholo receives Christian Icon Award

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Okpebholo, who assumed office on November 12, 2024, has anchored his administration on the SHINE Agenda, which focuses on security, healthcare, infrastructure, natural resources, agriculture and education.

Founded in 1976, CAN is the umbrella body of Christian denominations in Nigeria. The association is marking its Golden Jubilee with activities highlighting its contributions to the Christian community and national development.

NEWS**Health Minister invited to commission Ikpea's 62 – bed - medical centre in Ewatto**AGHEDO IYOBOR /
OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH**EWATTO**

In a major boost to healthcare in Edo State, Agbonjagwe Leemon Ikpea Foundation, has completed a 62-bed state-of-the-art medical centre in Ewatto and is seeking a partnership with

the Federal Government to operate and manage it.

The proposal was presented to the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate, when the foundation's board of trustees paid him a courtesy visit in Abuja.

Led by its Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Lee

Engineering, Dr. Leemon Ikpea, the delegation said the partnership would guarantee professional management and long-term sustainability of the facility.

The centre located in Idumu-Iyase, Ewatto, Esan South-East Local Government Area, and is designed to expand access to quality healthcare in under-

served communities.

Dr. Ikpea explained that under the proposed public-private partnership, a designated Federal Government medical institution would manage the hospital, while ownership would remain with the Foundation.

He said the arrangement would guarantee clinical excel-

lence, efficient administration and sustainable operations.

The facility is equipped with male, female and paediatric wards, operating theatres, an accident and emergency unit, labour and post-natal wards, diagnostic services including X-ray and CT scan units, physiotherapy services and ambulances.

Among others are consultants' offices, administrative buildings, standby power supply, restaurant and laundry services, doctors' residences and a police post are also under construction.

The delegation also formally

invited Prof. Pate to the official launch of the Late Augustus Akhabue Aikhomu Foundation and the public presentation of the biography of the late Chief of General Staff, Admiral Augustus Akhabue Aikhomu.

The event is scheduled for October 20, 2026, at the Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, Edo State.

Pate was equally invited to commission and officially receive the 62-bed medical centre on behalf of the Federal Government, as part of efforts to strengthen healthcare delivery in Edo State and across the country.



COURTESY VISIT:

Gov. Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers (L) and IGP Olatunji Disu, during the IGP's courtesy visit to Fubara in Port Harcourt.

Edo reviews VAPP Law to strengthen fight against SGBV, cyber abuse

● **Proposes life jail for rape, gang rape, stiffer penalties for tech-facilitated violence**

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH /
AGHEDO IYOBOR**BENIN CITY**

The Edo State Government has commenced a review of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law, 2021 to close implementation gaps and strengthen protection against sexual and gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated abuse.

The review was the focus of a consultative forum held on Friday in Benin City on strengthening policy implementation for SGBV prevention, which

brought together government agencies, security institutions, civil society organisations and development partners.

Chairperson of the Edo Gender-Based Violence Management Committee and Coordinator of the Office of the Governor's Wife, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo-Anani, said the state was committed to protecting women, girls and children and ensuring timely assistance for survivors.

She said survivors must be treated with compassion and dignity rather than blamed or stigmatised, adding that women and girls need to know their

rights and where to seek help.

Okpebholo-Anani called for increased awareness in schools, including the establishment of gender-based violence clubs in primary and secondary schools across Edo North, Central and South, to teach children personal safety, boundaries and prompt reporting of abuse.

She urged parents to maintain open communication with their children and not assume that boys are less vulnerable to abuse, expressing concern over sexual abuse within families where children may not recognise inappropriate conduct or

may be afraid to speak out.

Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Mrs. Eugenia Abdallah, said the review would address gaps in the implementation of the law and strengthen coordination among institutions.

Abdallah stressed the need for a survivor-centred approach, involving government agencies, security institutions, health workers, justice-sector actors and civil society organisations working together to guarantee protection, justice and support, while safeguarding survivors' privacy and dignity.

Abuah commends Tinubu, Umahi over second Niger bridge rehabilitation

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The Senior Special Assistant to the Delta State Governor on Youth Mobilisation, Hon. (Chief) Lucky Blessing Abuah, has commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the Minister of Works, Senator (Engr.) David Umahi, for the rehabilitation of the Second Niger Bridge and its reopening to traffic.

Abuah gave the commendation while speaking following the reopening of the bridge at its Onitsha end, describing the intervention as an important step towards preserving critical national infrastructure and improving transportation between the South-East and South-South regions.

He said the Federal Government's intervention demonstrated the importance of regular maintenance and timely rehabilitation of strategic infrastructure that supports economic activities, facilitates the movement of people and goods, and connects communities across the country.

According to him, the rehabilitation became necessary following concerns over the condition of some structural components of the bridge, including reports of the removal of bolts from its steel components, inadequate maintenance and other activities capable of compromising its structural integrity.

The Delta State governor's aide stressed that protecting major national infrastructure should be a collective responsibility involving government

agencies, road users, host communities and the general public.

He urged Nigerians, particularly youths in the South-East and South-South, to take an active interest in national development and support initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, creating economic opportunities and strengthening regional connectivity.

Abuah also called on youths across the two geopolitical zones to participate actively in the democratic process ahead

of the 2027 general elections. He urged them to consider the records, policies and development programmes of political parties and candidates as they make their electoral choices.

The bridge, which serves as a major transportation link between Delta State and Anambra State, is strategically important to commercial activities, inter-state travel and the movement of agricultural produce and other goods across the southern part of the country.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **FRIDAY AISOSA** now wish to be known and addressed as **IRUEGHIAN OMOROVBIYE ANNABEL**. all former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF MIDDLE NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **AIWUYO ETINOSA GOD'SPOWER** and **AIWUYO ETINOSA** are one and the same person. Henceforth I now wish to be known and called **AIWUYO ETINOSA GOD'SPOWER**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note

Iyamu volunteers to replace opponent destroyed campaign materials

AGHEDO IYOBOR

BENIN CITY

The All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate for Oredo Federal Constituency in the 2027 general election, Dr Paddy Iyamu, has pledged to replace campaign materials belonging to his opponent, Hon. Frank Omosigho of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), that were destroyed.

Iyamu, a former Edo State Commissioner for Education, condemned the destruction, describing it as unnecessary and unacceptable in a democratic society.

He made the pledge on Wednesday during a meeting with members of the Benin Journalists Forum in Benin City.

The APC candidate stressed that political competition should not be an excuse for hostility or the destruction of opponents' campaign materials.

He called on politicians and their supporters to embrace issue-based campaigns and allow voters to determine their preferred candidates through the ballot box.

Iyamu urged candidates to focus on presenting their achievements, policies and programmes to the electorate rather than engaging in activities capable of heightening political tension.

"Voters should assess political office holders based on their performance and the impact of their policies on the people. Candidates' records should also speak for them during elections," he said.

He said his involvement in politics was motivated by a desire to improve the lives of ordinary citizens rather than accumulate wealth, insisting that public office should be used to create opportunities for the less privileged.

Imasuen facilitates ultr-modern market to boost commerce in Amagba

AGHEDO IYOBOR

AMAGBA

The Senator representing Edo South, Neda Imasuen, has facilitated the construction of an ultra-modern market in Amagba Community, Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, to boost commerce.

Performing the ground-breaking ceremony for the market, which will comprise 30 lock-up stores and 40 open stores, Imasuen said the project would give residents easy access to basic goods.

The project, being executed as a federal constituency intervention, attracted community leaders at the ceremony, including representatives of the Landlords Association and the Odionwere of the community, among others.

Speaking at the ceremony, Imasuen said the market was conceived in response to the difficulties residents face travelling long distances for basic commodities.

He said the rapid growth of Amagba in population and economic activities made the provision of a functional market imperative.

The senator noted that residents should not have to travel far outside the community to purchase everyday necessities, stressing that the new market would create opportunities for traders while strengthening the local economy.

"What prompted me to embark on this project is because the community is becoming a huge one that needs this facility to boost businesses.

"You can imagine that you have to travel far from here to access whatever it is that you want to buy. These are busy communities. And so I thought it wise that, as big as Amagba is, it is good that we have a market here," he said.

According to him, the market would have a multiplier effect on the community as more people move into Amagba and commercial activities continue to expand.

NEWS

Drug-free Delta campaign hits varsities as Oborevwoiri intensifies war against substance abuse

By AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

Delta State Government in collaboration with the State Command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), has intensified efforts to combat substance abuse, illicit drug use and trafficking among young people, with the second phase

of its statewide Drug-Free Delta Campaign set to extend to state-owned universities and other tertiary institutions from October 20, 2026.

The initiative, being coordinated by the Delta State Bureau for Orientation and Communications, is designed to deepen public awareness of the dangers of substance abuse, discourage drug-related criminal activities and promote a healthy, responsible and drug-free society.

Director-General of the Bureau, Dr Wilfred Latimore Oghenesivbe, disclosed this in a statement, announcing that the University of Delta, Agbor (UNIDEL), would host the first university engagement at its auditorium on Tuesday, October 20.

According to the schedule, Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, will host the campaign on Thursday, October 22, while

Southern Delta University, Ozooro, is scheduled to receive the campaign on Wednesday, October 28. Delta State University, Abraka, as well as polytechnics and colleges of education across the state, will be covered at a later date.

Oghenesivbe explained that the transition to tertiary institutions represents an expansion of the campaign, which has already reached several secondary

schools across Delta State's three senatorial districts.

He said the programme would educate students on the harmful effects of substance abuse and illicit drug consumption, including their potential consequences for physical and mental well-being, academic performance, family relationships, personal safety and future career prospects.

The Bureau DG warned that drug abuse and illicit trafficking pose serious threats to the development of young people, public safety and the overall well-being of communities. He stressed that the unlawful distribution and sale of controlled substances can expose young people to exploitation, criminal networks and other harmful activities, with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families and society.

He noted that the campaign would promote informed decision-making, responsible conduct and early intervention, while encouraging students to resist peer pressure and reject the use, sale and distribution of illicit drugs. As part of efforts to sustain the initiative beyond the campaign engagements, Oghenesivbe said the state government and NDLEA would establish more War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) clubs in secondary tertiary institutions.

The clubs are expected to serve as platforms for continuous drug-prevention education, peer awareness, responsible behaviour and sustained advocacy against substance abuse and trafficking within school communities.

Commending Governor Sheriff Oborevwoiri for supporting the Drug-Free Delta initiative, the Bureau DG said the administration remained committed to protecting young people from the dangers associated with drug abuse and creating an environment in which students can pursue their education and aspirations without the destructive influence of illicit substances.

He added that the Governor had directed that the campaign's message should reach its intended audiences and that persons requiring professional counselling, treatment and rehabilitation should receive appropriate support.

According to him, individuals who need rehabilitation will be referred to approved National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) facilities and other authorised rehabilitation centres across the state, where services will be provided free of charge in line with the government's directive and applicable arrangements.

The Bureau DG emphasised that substance dependence should be addressed through appropriate professional care, counselling and rehabilitation, alongside public education, law enforcement and community participation.

He further called on university administrators, lecturers, student union leaders, parents, community leaders and other stakeholders to support the campaign by promoting drug-prevention messages and encouraging students to seek help when necessary.



INAUGURATION CAMPAIGN

From left: Gov. Abiodun Oyeibanji of Ekiti State; Vice President Kashim Shettima and Gov. AbdulRahman AbdulRazaqr of Kwara State acknowledging cheers from party supporters, during the inauguration campaign for Gov. Oyibanji second term, in Ado-Ekiti on Friday.

Edo cracks down on fake, expired drinks, adulterated products

By OBAAZEE ENDURANCE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Consumer Protection Committee, led by its chairman, Comrade Osaro Iyamu, on October 16, 2026, removed suspected fake and expired drinks from a shop on Lawani Street, New Benin, Benin City, following an intelligence report on the alleged sale of unwholesome beverages.

Iyamu said the committee received information about the alleged activities at the premises, prompting officials to visit the shop to investigate the report and examine the products being offered for sale.

During the operation, the committee reportedly conducted preliminary checks before removing the suspected counterfeit and expired drinks from circulation. The products were said to be worth millions of naira, although the exact quantity and estimated value were not disclosed.

The discovery has raised concerns about the availability of potentially unsafe beverages

in commercial outlets. Fake or expired drinks may pose health risks to consumers, particularly when products have been tampered with or stored under improper conditions.

Iyamu reaffirmed the committee's commitment to monitoring markets across Edo State, stressing that regular inspections were necessary to identify violations and ensure traders complied with applicable regulations.

He also urged business owners to stop selling counterfeit, expired or unwholesome products, calling on traders to check their stock regularly and remove items that are no longer fit for sale or consumption.

The operation highlights the importance of market surveillance and public cooperation in identifying unsafe products.

Group demands accountable governance, stronger social protection to curtail poverty

By KEBONKWU RUTH

BENIN CITY

The Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) has urged Federal, State and Local Governments to intensify poverty eradication efforts through accountable governance, effective social protection and inclusive economic opportunities.

In a statement on Friday to mark the 2026 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, Executive Director, Rev. David Ugolor, reaffirmed the organisation's 31-year commitment to its vision of "Africa Without Poverty."

This year's observance is marked under the UN's 2026-

2028 umbrella theme "United for Peace and Human Rights," with specific focus for 2026 on "Safe Homes for All" — highlighting adequate, safe and affordable housing as foundation for dignity and social inclusion.

Rev. Ugolor said Nigeria's commitment to poverty eradication must be measured not by policies announced, but by lives improved.

"The scale of Nigeria's poverty challenge makes urgent and sustained action imperative," he said, citing World Bank data that an estimated 69.6 per cent of Nigerians lived below the lower-middle-income poverty line of \$4.20 per person per day in 2025, while 50.8 per cent, about 123 million people, lived in extreme poverty.

He noted that the figures, which use different thresholds, underscore the need to translate policy commitments into measurable improvements in access to essential services and resilience against economic shocks.

ANEEJ said it is currently implementing the three-year Act Naija! — Civil Society Action to Strengthen Social Protection in Nigeria project, which commenced in April 2025.

The project is co-funded by the European Union under its Human Rights and Support to Civil Society in Nigeria programme, in partnership with Bread for the World (Brot für die Welt) and the New Initiative for Social Development

Edo NDLEA tasks youths with leading war against drug abuse

By OBAAZEE ENDURANCE

BENIN CITY

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Edo State Command, has urged youths to become ambassadors in the fight against drug abuse during an awareness lecture organised for members of the NDLEA/National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Drug Free Club in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area, Benin City, on Friday, October 16, 2026, to promote drug abuse prevention and encourage healthier lifestyles through public education and youth participation.

The Edo State NDLEA Commander, Dr. Mitchell Ofoyeju, gave the charge during the awareness lecture held at the agency's state command headquarters in Benin City.

The lecture, titled "Drug Abuse and Substance Misuse Prevention Among Youth," focused on educating young people about the dangers of substance misuse and equipping them with information to sup-

port prevention efforts in their communities.

Ofoyeju explained that drug abuse poses serious risks to the health, education and future prospects of young people. He stressed the importance of sustained awareness campaigns and preventive measures to discourage substance misuse.

During the session, participants received information on the dangers of illicit drugs, warning signs of substance misuse and practical ways to prevent drug-related problems. They were also encouraged to make responsible choices and resist negative peer pressure.

The NDLEA commander urged the youths to share the knowledge gained with their peers, families and communities. He emphasised that young people could contribute to the campaign by educating others and promoting healthy lifestyles.

The programme highlighted the importance of cooperation among the NDLEA, youth organisations, local government authorities and community stakeholders in addressing drug abuse.

2027: Mobilise for Tinubu, APC candidates, Owan East Chairman urges party leaders

LAMAI CASSIUS

Afuze

The Executive Chairman of Owan East Local Government Area, Hon. Ernest Oyaole Aitalegbé, has urged leaders, stakeholders, youths and party faithful of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the local government

to throw their weight behind the administration of Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo and ensure total victory for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and all APC candidates in the 2027 general elections.

The Chairman made the call during Governor Okpebholo's thank-you visit to Afuze and Otuo in Owan East Local Gov-

ernment Area, as part of his tour across the 18 local government areas of the state.

Hon. Aitalegbé described Governor Okpebholo as a pragmatic and visionary leader whose developmental strides have cut across all 18 local government areas of Edo State within a short period in office.

According to him, the

SHINE Agenda of the Okpebholo administration has opened the eyes of Edo people to the true dividends of democracy, noting that Owan East has benefitted massively in the areas of road infrastructure, healthcare delivery, education and human capital development.

"The governor has shown

capacity, compassion and commitment. For the first time in a long while, our people are feeling the direct impact of government. From Afuze to Otuo and all our communities, there is renewed hope," he said.

He assured the governor that Owan East remains a stronghold of the APC and pledged that the party will deliver all 11 wards in the local government for President Tinubu and other APC candidates in 2027.

Aitalegbé also called on party leaders to close ranks, mobilise at the grassroots and sustain the tempo of sensi-

sation ahead of the elections, stressing that unity remains the party's greatest strength.

He commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his bold reforms under the Renewed Hope Agenda, noting that despite initial challenges, the policies are laying a solid foundation for national recovery and growth.

The visit attracted APC leaders, ward chairmen, women leaders, youth groups and traditional rulers who trooped out in large numbers to welcome the governor and reaffirm their support for the party.



INAUGURATION CAMPAIGN:

From left: Deputy Senate President, Sen. Barau Jibrin; Senate President Godswill Akpabio; Vice President Kashim Shettima; Gov. Abiodun Oyeibani of Ekiti State and his wife, Olayemi during the inauguration campaign of Gov. Oyeibani second term, in Ado-Ekiti on Friday.

Owan East chairman's wife distributes sanitary pads across wards, lauds First Lady's Girl-Child Initiative

LAMAI CASSIUS

AFUZE

The wife of the Executive Chairman of Owan East Local Government Area, Prophetess Peace Favour Aitalegbé, has reaffirmed the commitment of Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, to dignify the girl-child as she distributed sanitary pads to secondary schools across various wards in Owan East Local Government Area.

Mrs. Aitalegbé, who championed the menstrual hygiene campaign for the girl-child, said the distribution exercise was an initiative of the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, in commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child marked on October 11.

She explained that the programme is being implemented through the office of the First Lady of Edo State, Mrs. Edesili Okpebholo Anani, as part of coordinated efforts to support and empower the girl-child across the state.

According to her, the initiative is aimed at promoting menstrual health, boosting self-confidence and ensuring that no girl misses school as a result of period poverty.

She thanked Senator Oluremi Tinubu and the Edo State Government for the gesture,

noting that access to sanitary pads would go a long way in helping school girls stay in class during their menstrual periods and maintain proper hygiene.

While addressing students in the various schools, Mrs. Aitalegbé urged them to remain focused on their education and to shun social vices and activities that could expose them to sexual abuse and exploitation.

She also called on parents and teachers to play their part by inculcating sound moral values in children and creating an environment that gives the girl-child equal opportunities

with the boy-child.

The local government First Lady noted that the present administration remains committed to building an inclusive and progressive society where every woman is empowered and every girl-child is given the opportunity to realize her full potential.

She added that other strategic initiatives and programmes designed to empower, inspire and transform the lives of women and girls would be unveiled in due course in Owan East.

The distribution exercise took Mrs. Aitalegbé to several schools including Ikhin Mixed

Secondary School, Ikhin; Edeki Grammar School, Otuo; Otugo Grammar School, Ake; Igwe Sale Grammar School, Igwe Sale; Uoha Grammar School, Uoha; St. James Grammar School, Afuze; Eviamé Grammar School, Eviamé; Ihievbe Grammar School, Ihievbe; Inu Umoru Memorial College, Warrake; and Ivbiaro Grammar School, Ivbiaro.

Students and teachers in the visited schools expressed gratitude to the First Lady of Nigeria, the Edo State First Lady and Mrs. Aitalegbé for remembering the girl-child, describing the intervention as timely and impactful.

Second term: Oyeibani pledges shared prosperity for Ekiti

Ado-Ekiti

Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyeibani, has thanked President Bola Tinubu, the people of Ekiti State and Nigerians at large for their support and goodwill during his inauguration for a second term in office on Friday.

This is just as he promised shared prosperity for the state in the second term.

Oyeibani said he was "deeply humbled by the overwhelming show of love, solidarity and goodwill that accompanied the historic occasion."

This was contained in a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Yinika Oyeibode, made available in

Ado Ekiti on Sunday.

He said the successful inauguration marked the beginning of another phase of service to the people of Ekiti State.

He reaffirmed his administration's commitment to building on the achievements of its first term and pursuing policies and programmes that would promote shared prosperity, inclusive development and improved living standards for all citizens of the state.

"Together, we shall continue to work towards shared prosperity for all Ekiti citizens and make our dear state the number-one destination of choice for those seeking a place to live, work, invest and relax," Oyeibani said.

The governor stated, "We

owe Mr President a huge debt of gratitude for his love and support for Ekiti State. The impact of his policies and the resources made available to subnational governments have contributed significantly to the achievements recorded by our administration."

He also thanked Vice President Kashim Shettima for attending the inauguration on behalf of the President and presiding over the ceremony, noting that the Vice President's presence marked his third visit to Ekiti State in 2026.

Oyeibani also appreciated the Senate President, Senator Godswill Akpabio; Deputy Senate President, Senator Ji-

brin Barau; All Progressives Congress National Chairman, Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda; and members of the party's National Working Committee for their support and participation in the historic event.

He also thanked the state governors and deputy governors in attendance, as well as former governors of Ekiti State, Niyi Adebayo, Ayodele Fayose, Segun Oni and Dr Kayode Fayemi, for their presence and support.

He also appreciated former governors from other states, as well as National and State Assembly members who graced the event.

Lagos water network reaches only 1.03% of residents — LWC

LAGOS

The Lagos Water Corporation says its water network serves 34,424 registered households, representing an estimated 1.03 per cent of the state's 20 million residents.

The corporation, through the Deputy Director, Corporate Affairs and Brand Management, Mr Rasaq Anifowoshe, disclosed this in an exclusive interview with the News Agency of Nigeria in Lagos, NAN reports on Sunday.

Anifowoshe said this while responding to questions bordering on the LWC's water coverage and expansion plans.

"Using an estimated average household size of six persons, the number of residents associated with these connections is 206,444, equivalent to approximately 1.03 per cent of the state's estimated population of 20 million," he said.

Anifowoshe disclosed that the corporation had an installed water production capacity of approximately 210 million gallons per day.

This, he said, was against an estimated state's daily water demand of approximately 540 MGD, as stated in the Lagos State Water Supply Master Plan.

"A review of the corporation's 2025 production records indicates an aggregate annual production of approximately 2,633.22 million gallons, equivalent to an average daily production of about 7.21 MGD.

"Based on these records, actual daily production is three per cent of the installed capacity," he said.

The above figures highlight a substantial gap between installed capacity, actual output and estimated water demand across Lagos State.

Anifowoshe identified ageing distribution pipelines, increasing demand arising from population growth and rapid urbanisation, as well as the need to rehabilitate and expand existing water infrastructure as the major constraints.

These challenges affect the corporation's ability to extend public water supply, particularly to communities relying on boreholes and private vendors.

Across Lagos, residents spend thousands of naira on alternative water sources as irregular public supply and inaccessible connections increase household costs.

Some Lagos residents interviewed across Iponri, Oronshoki, Costain, Apapa Road and Ebute Metta revealed concerns about unreliable supply, failed facilities and inadequate water pressure. At the Iponri Housing Estate, Mr Adebayo Solomon said his household spent about N1,500 daily on vendor-supplied water, amounting to N45,000 monthly.

Solomon said the expenditure would total approximately N547,500 if sustained throughout the year.

He said electricity shortages sometimes disrupted water availability, forcing his household to manage stored supplies or pay higher rates, adding that he would welcome an LWC connection if it provided regular supply and reduced dependence on vendors.

Another Iponri resident, Mr Abdulkareem Ibrahim, said he relied on public boreholes provided by philanthropists because his community received no LWC supply.

"I depend on public water, the one provided by philanthropists. I fetch it in the morning or when I return from work at night," he said.

Ibrahim said the boreholes helped him avoid direct water expenses, although power interruptions sometimes disrupt pumping, forcing him to buy from vendors.

Edo Muslims push for unity, reconciliation ahead of 2027 Elections

BENIN CITY

Muslim stakeholders in Edo have called for unity, reconciliation and stronger cooperation among members of the community to address internal divisions and advance their collective interests ahead of the 2027 General election.

The stakeholders made the call on Saturday in Benin during a one-day Muslim engagement, where participants raised concerns about disagreements among Muslim leaders and institutions.

They also raised concern about poverty alleviation, education, youth development, welfare of Muslim workers and issues surrounding the wear-

ing of hijab.

The meeting, themed "Unity, Cooperation and the Development of the Muslim Ummah," provided a platform for Muslim leaders and other stakeholders to discuss challenges facing the community and explore ways of strengthening unity and promoting social and economic development amongst the faithful.

Participants stressed the need for greater understanding and cooperation among Muslxlum groups, noting that a united community would be better positioned to address its concerns and contribute meaningfully to the development of the state.

Speaking at the engagement, Mallam Ahmed Momoh, Spe-

cial Adviser to Gov. Monday Okpebholo on Islamic Religious Matters, said the meeting was convened to address divisions within the Muslim community and promote reconciliation.

"The essence of this programme is unity of the Ummah. We don't want that divi-

sion in the Muslim sector," he said.

Momoh said the engagement was part of efforts to provide a platform for dialogue between the government and Muslim stakeholders.

He added that the office of the Special Adviser was intended to facilitate communication

and address issues affecting the community.

He also announced plans for a Muslim Engagement Summit in Edo North in November, where stakeholders would deliberate on the future of the community and its political direction.

"For us as Muslims, it's not

what we will get that is most important to us. That unity. We don't want that division in the Muslim sector," he said.

Momoh attributed the establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Islamic Religious Matters to the Okpebholo administration's efforts to promote engagement with the Muslim community.

Ogun CP summons four officers over viral assault video

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun State Commissioner of Police, Bode Ojajuni, has summoned four operatives of the command who were recorded assaulting a young man in a viral video to the state police command headquarters in Elewera, Abeokuta.

The spokesperson for the state police command, DSP Oluseyi Babaseyi, disclosed this in a statement on Sunday.

A video posted on social media showed about three police personnel pinning a young man to the ground, after which he was handcuffed.

The incident, which reportedly occurred at Ijagba, Sango-Ota, drew outrage from members of the public who were angered by the conduct of the police officers.

A voice accompanying the video said the young man was allegedly arrested for wearing a camouflage knicker, questioning why the police were treating him with such cruelty.

However, responding to the incident, Babaseyi said, "The officers involved have been identified, and the Commissioner of Police, Ogun State Command, CP Bode Ojajuni, psc, FCSS, MNIPR, has ordered immediate action in line with established procedures.

"The command remains committed to accountability, professional discipline and the highest standards of policing.

"The four officers are already on their way to the headquarters. Further updates will be communicated as developments warrant."

Ogun Gov, NUJ mourn late FRSC Commander

ABEOKUTA

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, and the Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Ogun State Council, have expressed deep sorrow and shock over the death of the State Sector Commander of the Federal Road Safety Corps, Corps Commander Oludare Ogunjobi, describing his passing as a painful loss to the Corps, the road safety community and the nation.

The Public Relations Officer of the state sector command, Afolabi Odunsi, disclosed the sudden demise of Ogunjobi after a brief illness on Sunday.

Abiodun, in a statement by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Kayode Akinmade, and available to journalists on Sunday, commiserated with the Corps Marshal and the national leadership of the FRSC in Abuja, the management, officers and men of the Corps across the country, as well as the family, friends and professional asso-

ciates of the deceased.

He noted that "The late Ogunjobi's commitment to road safety administration, public enlightenment and stakeholder engagement reflects the importance of dedicated service to the protection of lives and property.

"The late Sector Commander played an important role in promoting responsible road use, improving compliance with traffic regulations and advancing efforts to make Ogun State's roads safer for motorists and other road users.

"Commander Ogunjobi's death is a painful loss, particularly at a time when the collective efforts of road safety officials remain critical to reducing road traffic crashes and protecting the lives of citizens."

While praying for the peaceful repose of the deceased's soul, the governor urged his family, colleagues and associates to take solace in the worthy service he rendered to the nation.



VISIT: Gov. Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers (L) and IGP Olatunji Disu, during the IGP's courtesy visit to Fubara in Port Harcourt

Bauchi health agency boss, four children die in car crash

BAUCH

Bauchi State Governor, Bala Mohammed, has mourned the death of the Executive Secretary of the Bauchi State Health Contributory Management Agency, Ibrahim Duguri, who died in a motor accident alongside four of his children.

The accident reportedly occurred at Yalwan Duguri in Alkaleri Local Government Area of the state on Saturday.

The deceased's children were identified as Hajara, Usman, Rukayya and Maryam, while another son, Suleiman, reportedly survived the accident.

The governor's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mukhtar Gidado, disclosed this in a statement issued on Saturday.

According to the statement,

Mohammed expressed condolences on behalf of his family, the state government and the people of Bauchi State, describing the incident as a devastating loss.

The statement quoted the governor as saying, "The death of Ibrahim Duguri represents a monumental loss to Bauchi State, particularly the health sector, where he distinguished himself through dedication, commitment, and an unwavering passion for improving access to healthcare services for the people."

Mohammed said the deceased played a significant role in advancing the state's health contributory management system and supporting efforts to make healthcare more accessible, particularly to less privileged residents.

He added that Duguri had also contributed to the state's

medical team during pilgrimage exercises in Saudi Arabia, where he demonstrated commitment to the health and well-being of pilgrims.

The governor described the deceased as a close personal friend and classmate, saying his death was a personal loss beyond the loss of a dedicated public servant.

"His death, therefore, represents not only the loss of a valued public servant but also the painful departure of a beloved family member and trusted companion whose life was marked by service, loyalty, and dedication to humanity," the statement quoted Mohammed as saying.

The governor expressed particular sadness over the deaths of the four children in the same incident, noting that the tragedy had compounded the family's grief.

He said, "The loss of four young members of the same family in one tragic incident makes this tragedy even more heartbreaking. No words can adequately express the pain and anguish of the bereaved family at this difficult moment."

Mohammed prayed to Almighty Allah to forgive the shortcomings of the deceased, accept their good deeds and grant Ibrahim Duguri and his children eternal rest in Aljannatul Firdaus.

He also prayed for the surviving son, Suleiman, and other members of the bereaved family to find the strength to bear the loss.

The governor urged residents of the state to remember the family in their prayers and extend compassion and solidarity to them during the period of mourning.

Scavengers stole wires from N3bn power line - Zulum

MAIDUGURI

Borno State Governor, Babagana Zulum, has said metal scavengers looted all the wires purchased for a N3bn electricity distribution line linking Damaturu, Yobe State, to Maiduguri.

He said the incident, alongside other security concerns, informed the state government's decision to ban the scrap metal trade in Borno State.

The governor's Senior

Technical Assistant on Print and Digital Communications, Abdulrahman Bundi, said in a statement on Sunday that Zulum disclosed this while addressing business operators in Maiduguri on Saturday.

Zulum explained that the ban was initially imposed in the overall interest of the state and was not intended to deprive operators of their livelihoods.

He stressed that the government had no personal interest in stopping their businesses, adding that the measure was

aimed at protecting public assets and strengthening security.

Borno state governor, Babagana Zulum while addressing metal scavengers in Maiduguri. Credit. Borno state govt.

Borno state governor, Babagana Zulum while addressing metal scavengers in Maiduguri. Credit. Borno state govt.

He said, "Before the ban, hundreds of your members were killed in the process of scavenging for metals in the villages that are not yet safe for civilian activities."

He added, "It is deeply concerning to me if one person loses his livelihood for whatever reason in Borno; believe me, there is nothing I stand to gain from banning scrap metal trade rather than addressing the serious security concerns associated with your activities."

"We spent more than N3 billion to connect an electricity distribution line from Damaturu to Maiduguri, but unfortunately we lost all the wires to the metal scavenging activities," Zulum recounted.

Edo deploys OMO-SHINE App to tackle newborn immunisation gaps

By Edward Oseghe

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has deployed the OMO-SHINE referral application to strengthen newborn immunisation, close gaps between Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) and health facilities, and reduce preventable infant illnesses

and deaths, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

The initiative, developed through a partnership between the Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency (EDSPHCDA) and independent researcher, Dr. Maureen O. Anyanwu, under the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, is

designed to ensure that every child receives life-saving vaccinations and essential healthcare interventions from birth. Described as the first of its kind in Edo State, the application aligns with the governor's SHINE Agenda on sustainable healthcare, inclusion and community empowerment, while advancing primary healthcare principles of accessibility, affordability and community participation.

Anchored on the slogan, "Catch Them Young, Catch Them at Birth!", OMO-SHINE has been successfully piloted to address persistent weaknesses in grassroots maternal and child healthcare delivery. Although TBAs remain trusted providers in many rural communities, weak referral systems between them and formal health facilities have often resulted in missed opportunities for timely newborn immunisation, exposing

infants to preventable illnesses and potentially fatal complications.

The initiative emerged from earlier research that identified gaps in maternal and child health services at the community level. Dr. Anyanwu, a community-based health systems specialist and digital health innovator, conceptualised and designed the project to promote equity in maternal and child healthcare through practical, community-driven

solutions.

To translate the concept into an operational system, she worked closely with the Office of the Executive Secretary of EDSPHCDA, under Dr. Coulson Oahimire Osoikhia. The collaboration brought together key agency officials and technical personnel to develop a referral mechanism connecting informal community-based care with the formal healthcare system.

Anglican Primate urges resilience amid economic, security challenges

ABUJA

Most Rev. Henry Ndukuba, the Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria (Anglican Communion), has urged Christians to remain steadfast in their faith amid the economic, security and political challenges facing the country.

Ndukuba made this call during an interview with the NAN on the sidelines of the 27th Annual Diocesan Women's Conference of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Diocese of Abuja.

He said the conference theme, "Rooted in Christ: The Hallmark of a Believer," was relevant at a time when Nigerians were dealing with economic some socio-economic challenges.

The Primate said many families were experiencing hunger and deprivation, making it important for Christians to strengthen their faith and trust in God.

"Many families are suffering from hunger and deprivation and at such a time as this, it may seem as if nothing will hold.

"But we are assured that as we have God on our side and put our hope and trust in Him, the Lord will uphold us as we remain rooted and built up in Him," he said.

Ndukuba expressed hope that the conference would strengthen participants' faith, deepen their understanding of the word of God and encourage them to apply its teachings in their daily lives.

He said he trusted that God would uphold families and bring blessings to the nation.

Mrs Angel Ndukuba, President of the Mothers' Union, Diocese of Abuja and Church of Nigeria, urged women to participate actively in the 2027 general elections and reject vote-selling.

She advised women to collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) and vote for candidates of their choice.

NSCDC rallies media support to curb vandalism, misinformation

ABEOKUTA

The Ogun Command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has called for more collaboration between security agencies and journalists to protect critical national infrastructure and build public trust.

The call was made during a meeting between the NSCDC and executive members of the Ogun Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Abeokuta on Friday.

Speaking on the imperative of a media-security synergy, the State Commandant, Dr Remilekun Ekundayo, described the media as an indispensable pillar in Nigeria's national development architecture and overall security governance.

Ekundayo noted that effective national security was not just about tactical operations, but also about engaging people and communities, and

about sharing verified facts.

"National security agencies across the federation must build structured partnerships with journalists to combat misinformation, stem public panic during emergencies, and uphold operational integrity.

"To ensure seamless coordination and verified information flow, the Command's public relations office will maintain an open operational lines with national correspondents stationed in the state," she said.

Ekundayo added that while law enforcement agencies must remain committed to transparency, media practitioners must equally balance the right to information with operational confidentiality and national stability.

Responding on behalf of the media delegation, Yetunde Fatungase, Chairman of the NUJ Correspondents' Chapel, reaffirmed reporters' commitment to ethical journalism and patriotism.



ANNIVERSARY:

From left: President, Chartered Institute of Statisticians of Nigeria (CISON), Dr Godday Ebu; Technical Assistant in office of the Vice President, Dr Fred Ekaga; Chief Statistician/Director, OECD Statistics and Data Directorate, Paris, Prof. Steve Macfeely; Statistician-General/CEO National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Prince Adeyemi Adeniran, during the ongoing 3rd International Conference and 50th year Anniversary of the CISON in Abuja on Thursday

Veritas Kapital Assurance reports N3.046bn profit in 2025, up 286%

ABUJA

Veritas Kapital Assurance Plc has announced a significant 286 per cent increase in its Profit After Tax (PAT), which grew from N1.634 billion in

2024 to N3.046 billion in 2025. Mr Babatunde Irukera, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the company stated this at its 49th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Friday in Abuja.

Irukera also said the company's Profit before Tax (PBT)

rose to N3.156 billion in 2025 from a negative position of N1.485 billion reported in the previous year, indicating a growth of 313 per cent.

According to him, the underwriter posted a Gross Premium of N23.733 billion for the 2025 financial year, representing 0.2 per cent growth from 23.694 billion recorded in 2024.

The chairman announced that the Insurer's shareholders equity grew by 27 per cent, from N11.917 billion in 2024 to N15.173 billion in the year under review.

Irukera however revealed that the company's insurance revenue contrasted slightly by 3 per cent to N22.602 billion in the year under review, from N23.330 billion in 2024.

"Total assets also dipped by 10 per cent from N33.060 billion in 2024 to N29.877 billion in 2025.

"2025 presented both trials and opportunities for the insurance company, as it navigated through challenging economic landscape.

"In spite of these uncertainties, Veritas Kapital Assurance demonstrated resilience and strength in its core businesses," he said.

The chairman further lauded the successful recapitalisation of the company in line with the minimum capital requirements prescribed under the Nigerian Insurance Industry Reform Act (NIIRA) 2025.

He said the milestone has substantially strengthened the company's capital base, enhanced its underwriting capacity and improved its financial resilience.

"Recapitalisation has positioned us to compete more effectively in an increasingly dynamic and capital-driven insurance market," Irukera said.

FAO urges Nigeria on innovation to mitigate hunger, boost food security

ABUJA

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has urged Nigeria government to scale up investment in innovation to end hunger, improve nutrition and ensure affordable healthy diets for all.

Dr Hussein Gadain, FAO Representative in Nigeria and ECOWAS made the call at the 2026 World Food Day Sensitisation Walk on Friday in Abuja.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Innovate Today. Nourish Tomorrow."

Gadain represented by Mr Jimmy Owani, Senior Programme Officer, Office of Emergency and Resilience identified innovation as central to achieving food security and sustainable devel-

opment.

He emphasised that innovation delivers its greatest impact when it reaches the people that need it most.

According to him, the benefits of innovation must not remain confined to laboratories or policy discussions. They must reach farmers' fields, fishing communities, pastoral systems and households across Nigeria.

He called for collective action from governments, farmers, researchers, academia, private sector, financial institutions, civil society, development partners, women and youth.

"Let us commit ourselves to ensuring that every Nigerian household has access to safe, nutritious and affordable food. Let us continue to empower farmers, women and young people as drivers of ag-

ricultural transformation.

"Every innovation begins with knowledge, every harvest begins with a hand, and every sustainable future begins with both.

"By investing in people, fostering innovation and strengthening partnerships, we can build resilient agri-food systems, end hunger and ensure that no Nigerian is left behind.

"Innovation is not only about artificial intelligence, drones or sophisticated digital technologies.

"It also includes climate-smart agriculture, improved farming practices, quality seeds and breeds, irrigation, mechanisation, sustainable natural resource management, indigenous knowledge, stronger institutions, innovative business models and enabling policies," he said.

NEWS

Edo deploys OMO-SHINE App to tackle newborn immunisation gaps

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He emphasised that innovation delivers its greatest impact when it reaches the people that need it most.

According to him, the benefits of innovation must not remain confined to laboratories or policy discussions. They must reach farmers' fields, fishing communities, pastoral systems and households across Nigeria.

He called for collective action from governments, farmers, researchers, academia, private sector, financial institutions, civil society, development partners, women and youth.

"Let us commit ourselves to ensuring that every Nigerian household has access to safe, nutritious and affordable food. Let us continue to empower farmers, women and young people as drivers of ag-

ricultural transformation.

"Every innovation begins with knowledge, every harvest begins with a hand, and every sustainable future begins with both.

"By investing in people, fostering innovation and strengthening partnerships, we can build resilient agri-food systems, end hunger and ensure that no Nigerian is left behind.

"Innovation is not only about artificial intelligence, drones or sophisticated digital technologies.

"it also includes climate-smart agriculture, improved farming practices, quality seeds and breeds, irrigation, mechanisation, sustainable natural resource management, indigenous knowledge, stronger institutions, innovative business models and enabling policies," he said.

NEWS

FOREIGN



BUILDING ABLAZE IN FRANCE:
La Barrique bar in Paris was set on fire.

Violent clashes, looting and buildings ablaze in France as more than 1,200 arrested after protests

Violence broke out across France on Saturday during the latest day of demonstrations against hardship in schools and the cost of living.

At least 1,200 people were arrested during what the French government described as an "escalation in violence" alongside an estimated 550,000 taking to the streets.

In Paris, there were significant clashes into the evening with riot police, who used tear gas and water cannon on crowds.

Buildings were set alight in the capital and other areas, including in Limoges where a large fire in the town hall caused the roof to partly collapse.

Looting broke out in several cities, with widespread vandalism targeting city halls and businesses also reported.

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu said 150 police officers were injured in the unrest.

In the French capital, the main march appeared to be largely peaceful during the afternoon. A group of young people told the BBC that they were "pacifists" who were "just trying to make things change, but nothing is moving".

Watch: Moment historic French town hall spire collapses in flames amid protests

However, as the day wore on some groups lit fires in the street and torched vehicles, including in iconic locations in the city centre like the Place de la République.

Shops were ransacked, at least one restaurant was gutted by fire, and the BBC saw fighting breaking out among some of the groups.

Riot police were seen charging at one crowd in central Paris and hitting several people with batons.

In Lyon, Mayor Grégory Doucet said the burning of the city's tourist office was "a tragedy", telling BFMTV "it breaks our hearts because it's a very iconic, well-known historic building".

Local police said "hostile individuals" prevented firefighters from safely tackling the blaze.

Fire crews also battled the fire at Limoges town hall, which the local prefecture said caused part of the building to collapse.

La Barrique bar in Paris was set on fire

A young man "had his hand blown off" by a small explosive in Saint-Étienne, the south-eastern city's Mayor Régis Juanico said on social media, adding: "Such a tragedy

should never have happened."

Hundreds of thousands of students have protested in recent weeks over staff shortages and dilapidated facilities in the country's lycées - secondary schools attended by 15- to 18-year-olds.

Their numbers have been bolstered by trade union members and other protest groups.

These groups include the so-called gilets jaunes (or "yellow vest") movement, which demonstrated against cost-of-living hikes for more than a year from 2018 - becoming one of the longest-lived protest movements in French history.

Several dead or injured in major fire at Canada military base

Several people have been killed or injured as a result of a large fire near a Canadian military base in Alberta, the nation's defence minister has said.

David McGuinty did not confirm the cause or the number of casualties, describing the situation as "very, very active and delicate". The Canadian military and local authorities were managing the fire, he said.

Canadian Forces Base Wainwright, where the fire broke out, is one of the country's busiest military training bases.

Canadian TV network Global News reported that at least seven were killed and dozens more injured when a gas line or gas well was hit during a live-fire training exercise, citing unnamed military sources.

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney said that a "serious incident creating a major fire" had occurred, adding that his "thoughts are with all the brave

women and men affected".

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) said Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton had declared a code orange, a disaster response protocol for responding to a high-casualty incident.

Warren Thirsk, an emergency department doctor there, told the broadcaster that the number of patients would otherwise "overwhelm" Edmonton's healthcare facilities.

"It is more patients than any of us want to count right now. It's a disaster. It's a one in every 15 to 25-year disaster."

After the fire erupted on Saturday, it "spread rapidly due to high winds" and tore through the fences of the base, the Municipal District of Wainwright said.

The region experienced gusts of up to 100km/h (62mph), though local officials indicated fire crews had contained the blaze.

The defence minister told

reporters he "cannot recall an incident like this in recent memory".

It is unclear when the fire broke out, but the district first posted about the incident at about 17:30 local time (23:30 GMT).

Local authorities have urged residents to avoid the area and give all emergency vehicles right of way.

The mayor of the nearby town of Wainwright, Bruce Pugh, said it was a "heavy day" for his community.

"We have neighbours who are either serving or former members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We're integrated, our kids play in the same hockey teams, attend the same schools," he told CBC.

While details on the impact of the fire remain unclear, Pugh said he believed this would come to be the area's largest-ever mass casualty event.

Canadian Forces Base Wainwright is a busy military training base used for live-fire exercises.

European diplomats attacked by Israeli settlers in West Bank

A delegation of European diplomats has been attacked by masked Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank.

Belgium condemned the assault on its consul general and the other envoys and called for Israel to bring those responsible to justice.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) also condemned what they called "the severe act of violence" and said they were investigating.

But the office of the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cast doubt on what happened and suggested it was part of a "coordinated campaign to smear Israel".

The attack came only a day after a number of Palestinians and Heidi Levine, a Washington Post photographer, were injured in a separate assault by settlers in another village in the West Bank.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the attack on Levine was "disturbing" and "not a good look".

It was also condemned by the US Ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who called it a "despicable act of terror carried out by masked cowards". A staunch ally of Israel, Huckabee said the assailants must face "prosecution to the fullest extent of the law".

Rubio 'very disturbed' over video of West Bank settler attack on US journalist

In Saturday's incident the European diplomats - from Belgium, France, Poland and the

Catholic Church - had come to the largely Christian village of Taybeh near Ramallah.

They were there to assess the situation on the ground after almost daily attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians trying to bring in their olive harvest.

Video footage from the scene showed masked settlers confronting the convoy. Reports suggest stones were thrown.

The Belgian authorities said a car from its consulate had a window smashed and a French mayor was assaulted. Video showed a man wearing a French tricolor sash slumped beside a vehicle.

Belgium's foreign minister Maxime Prevot condemned the attack and said Israel had a responsibility to bring those responsible to justice.

"Palestinians face this violence every day. Settlers also target journalists reporting on it and diplomats. Harvesting olives, reporting the news or carrying out diplomatic duties should never put anyone at risk of attack," he said.

"As the occupying power, Israeli authorities must protect Palestinians, ensure the safety of diplomats and journalists, and bring those responsible to justice."

"Impunity for violent settlers must end. Belgium will continue to press for EU sanctions against those responsible for this violence and those who support them."

Trump waives several Russia sanctions as row with Zelensky intensifies

Donald Trump has blocked numerous sanctions on Russia two days before they were due to take effect, as a row with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky deepens.

The sanctions were passed by the US Congress and signed into law by the US president in September.

But Trump issued an executive order on Friday night saying that suspending some was in the US national interest, prompting a backlash from US lawmakers. Zelensky said it was unfortunate the US has decided to "completely disregard" the sanctions.

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev said Trump's order was "an important and truly historic moment", and that the sanctions would have inflicted "serious damage" on the US and global market.

Relations between Washington and Kyiv frayed after the US struck a controversial deal to import Russian diesel last week. Ukraine has accused the Trump administration of withdrawing key military support.

Since then, Ukraine's president declared it was nice to be among "real leaders" while addressing an EU summit,

after Trump said Zelensky was "more difficult to deal with" than Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The sanctions suspension seemed to add further fuel to the fire.

Zelensky said on Saturday morning that the sanctions "could have helped enormously" and that the law was "supposed to impose truly effective pressure on Russia to bring this war to an end".

He pointed to Russian overnight attacks on 15 Ukrainian energy facilities that had caused power cuts in several regions and said: "Russia is trying to cause a blackout in Ukraine - right before winter."

Zelensky said it was "important that everyone in America also sees what is really happening" on the ground.

The new US sanctions law took aim at Russia's economy by giving Trump broad powers to levy tariffs of up to 100% on imports from the top five purchasers of Russian oil and gas - most significantly China and India.

It also included sanctions against senior Russian figures, including Putin, as well as Russian financial institutions and Moscow's so-called "shadow fleet" of vessels used to circum-

vent existing embargoes.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that the suspension would consist of a 60-day pause to allow for the Trump administration to analyse the impact they might have on the US and global economy.

The suspension drew criticism from US politicians from both main parties.

Democrats including the Virginia Congressman Don Beyer criticised the move, accusing Trump of capitulating to Moscow and turning his back on Kyiv and Zelensky.

A handful of Republicans also came out against the move.

Texas Senator Ted Cruz, a Trump ally, called waiving the sanctions a mistake, telling Fox News that there were other ways to address fuel prices, while the state's other Senator John Cornyn called the move "reckless".

North Carolina Senator Thom Tillis called it "beyond irresponsible", arguing that Trump could bring energy prices down by ending the Iran war instead of "doing a solid" for Putin.

Nebraska Representative Don Bacon indicated that US lawmakers will now resist funding Trump's agenda.

FOREIGN

NEWS

**CRUSH SITE:**

Rescue efforts at a crush site in the Indian city of Kolkata. Crush happened during an event to mark the Hindu festival of Durga Puja killing 17 people and injured several others.

At least 17 dead in crush at Hindu festival event in India

At least 17 people have been killed and many more injured in a crush at an event in the Indian city of Kolkata to mark the Hindu festival of Durga Puja, officials say.

The incident occurred during sudden rainfall, which witnesses say prompted a surge of people to try to seek shelter.

West Bengal's Chief Minister Suwendhu Adhikari said a seven-year-old girl was among the dead, and that 25 people were being treated for injuries.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi described it as a "tragic" incident and said the regional government was providing help to affected families.

Six of the dead have been identified, Adhikari said.

A senior police official told the AFP news agency that an announcement caused "commotion" after it started raining and the crowd started "pushing, pulling and rushing forward and fell on the ground, leading to the stampede."

Deadly crowd incidents, including during religious festivals, are not uncommon in India due to poor management and lack of adequate safety precautions.

Two years ago, 121 people were killed in Uttar Pradesh during a Hindu religious gathering.

Nigeria's Army Chief of Staff visits troops in Borno after deaths of 15 soldiers

The Nigerian Army Chief of Staff visited troops stationed in the north-east of the country on Saturday, a few days after jihadists killed fifteen soldiers in the region.

Suspected Islamic State-aligned fighters killed 15 troops and five anti-jihadist militia members when they attacked and burnt down a military base in northeastern Nigeria's Borno state, according to defence and local sources.

Borno is the epicentre of more than 17 years of jihadist insurgency by Boko Haram -- and later its splinter group Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP) -- which has killed thousands and displaced millions across north-east Nigeria.

The violence, which erupted in 2009, had eased from its peak a decade ago but has been on the rise over the past two years.

A large group of ISWAP fighters overran a military base in Mairari village in the Lake Chad area overnight from Tuesday to Wednesday, looted weapons and then burnt down the base, the sources said.

"The terrorists killed 15 soldiers and five civilian JTF (anti-jihadist militia) assisting the soldiers during the attack," a Nigerian military officer told AFP.

The militants "razed the base to the ground", forcing troops to withdraw towards the garrison town of Monguno, about 18 kilometres away, the officer said, asking not to be named because he was not authorised to speak publicly about the incident.

Several soldiers were missing, raising fears among their colleagues that they may have been captured by the jihadists, the military source said.

Grema Butari, a Mairari resident, said the fighters attacked the base around 2200 GMT, dislodged the troops after a "prolonged battle" and

remained there until daybreak.

"They took everything of value they could carry and burnt the rest along with several vehicles," Butari said, giving the same death toll.

The jihadists were believed to have launched the attack from their base in Gudumbali, in neighbouring Guzamala district, said another resident, Ahmad Sherif, who also confirmed the "total destruction" of the base.

Rising violence

Nigeria is experiencing its most violent period in nearly three decades, with the second quarter of 2026 recording the

highest level of violence since the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project began tracking it in 1997.

Last week, around two dozen militants and soldiers were killed when ISWAP fighters attacked a military outpost in neighbouring Kukawa, looting weapons before being driven back with the help of fighter jets, according to military and local sources.

The 17-year insurgency has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced around two million from their homes in northeastern Nigeria, according to the United Nations.

Senegal's Macky Sall withdraws from race for UN top job

Senegal's former president Macky Sall is pulling out of the race to lead the United Nations.

Saturday's announcement comes one day after an informal straw poll by UN Security Council members saw all seven candidates receive at least one veto.

In a statement on social media, Sall said he "hoped to contribute now to the emergence of a consensus candidate."

Candidates need nine 'encourage' votes from the Council's 15 members. 'Discourage' votes from any of the body's five permanent members - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - effectively constitute a veto.

After a first straw poll in July, Sall received just six votes in favour, with seven against and two abstentions.

None of the polls so far are binding and other rounds will

take place before the final ballot in the autumn.

After Friday's poll, Costa Rica's Rebecca Grynspan remains the frontrunner, with seven positive votes. But she also got five 'discourage' votes - including two from permanent members.

Senegal initially refused to back Sall's bid for the top UN job and he was nominated for the post by Burundi. But Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye threw his support behind Sall in July after a meeting between the two men.

It is tradition that the UN's top job should rotate between different regions. Under that premise, the role should go to a candidate from Latin America this time and most of the seven candidates are from the region.

Sall's withdrawal leaves Uganda's Olara Otunnu as the only African contender.

Sudanese gold miners describe deadly airstrike that killed 72

Sudanese miners injured in a deadly airstrike along the border with Egypt have been describing how the incident unfolded.

Seventy-two people are believed to have been killed in last week's attack on Jabal al-Uqaydat, a sprawling gold-mining area in the mountains near the frontier. The region stretches across the border and includes territory claimed by both Sudan and Egypt.

Rights group have blamed the strike on the Egyptian air force.

"We were working, and then, around 8 in the morning, we prepared some tea, while an aircraft appeared overhead and began filming us, circling above about three times, on the fourth pass, it struck us," said Ali Mohamed Hamza, a miner injured in the air strike.

Omar Mohie El Deen Abdullah was also injured in the attack:

"The first strike caused an explosion right in the middle of the miners. There were nearly 300 people or more there at the time. By the grace of God, I only sustained an injury to one of my fingers, but I lost my brother, my

cousin, and my maternal cousin, they all got killed."

The region has become a magnet for informal miners as Sudan's war has wrecked livelihoods and driven thousands toward the gold trade.

Gold remains one of Sudan's few functioning economic lifelines and a major source of revenue for both sides of the conflict.

The area is also a key corridor for smuggling.

Omar Abdullah is the father of victim Osman Omar:

"Most of our work here is in agriculture, but the current farming season has largely failed, as a result, everyone has turned to mining to try and earn a living. A sack of flour here has reached 700,000 Sudanese pounds."



DRC accuses ex-president Kabila of planning 'general attack' on the country

The DR Congo government on Friday accused former president Joseph Kabila of planning a "general attack" after he teamed up with Rwandan-backed armed group M23 to take on government forces.

Kabila "has decided to formalise his widespread attack against the Republic," government spokesman Patrick Muyaya told AFP, adding that "the choice to take up arms means killing Congolese in order to try to conquer territories."

"They want to launch a movement to give themselves a new face, but in reality the intentions, the macabre

plans, the modus operandi are known," Muyaya said in an interview.

"The players remain the same, the nature of the movement remains the same," he added.

Kabila on Monday joined forces with the M23 to head a new outfit, taking a more direct role in the insurgency ravaging the Democratic Republic of Congo's volatile east.

The new group -- the Front for the Refoundation of the Nation (FRN) -- was presented as a "politico-military" outfit that will "pool their strengths, resources and means" with the aim of "putting an end to tyranny by any

means, including force."

It will be headed by Kabila with M23 leaders serving as deputies.

Kabila was sentenced to death in absentia a year ago for "complicity" with the M23.

The 55-year-old Kabila, who ruled from 2001 to 2019, is accused by Congolese authorities of being an initiator of the Congo River Alliance (AFC), the now dissolved political wing of the M23.

Kabila has denied the allegations.

After several years outside the country, Kabila reappeared in May 2025 in the major east-

ern city of Goma that is now controlled by the M23. He has since made regular visits to rebel-held territory.

In early 2025, an offensive led by the M23 and the Rwandan army in the eastern DRC resulted in the capture of Goma and Bukavu.

Since then, the front line has stabilised, though fighting continues -- at times intense, involving drone strikes and artillery barrages -- particularly in South Kivu province.

Kabila's return to the political scene comes at a volatile time.

Opposition rallies in June and September protested

against a proposed constitutional amendment that could pave the way for a third term for the current president, 63-year-old Felix Tshisekedi.

Tshisekedi, who succeeded Kabila, reaches the end of his second and constitutionally last five-year term in 2028.

The main opposition coalition has so far kept its distance from Kabila.

Kabila however has expressed support for the opposition. In a speech posted online Friday, he criticised the government for being "motivated solely by its own perpetuation in power."



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Sports

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Oyedeji vows to seek justice over NBBF election, alleges predetermined outcome

Former D'Tigers captain Olumide Oyedeji has vowed to seek justice over the outcome of the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) Elective Congress in Abuja, claiming irregularities in the process and describing it as a "selection" rather than a credible election.

Oyedeji, who contested for a South-West representative position and the President at the congress held at the ICC Centre in Abuja on Thursday, said his name was initially omitted from the list of candidates and was only included on the ballot after he protested on the floor.

Although he acknowledged his eventual defeat, the former Nigerian international questioned the fairness and transparency of the process, insisting that candidates should be given equal opportunities to contest.

"I am not saying there was no election, but there was a selection," Oyedeji said in an interview.

"Everything I said before the election played out. You can go back and review my statements before the election. Everything I predicted happened."



OLUMIDE OYEDEJI

He stated that his name was excluded from the list of South-West candidates while those of other aspirants, including Mustapha and Ugo, were included.

He also claimed that some presidential aspirants and candidates from other zones,

including the North-Central, experienced similar omissions.

Oyedeji said he had to challenge the omission at the last minute before his name was eventually added to the ballot.

"Yes, I eventually lost, but I believe the outcome had already been predetermined," he

added.

The President of the Nigerian Olympians Association and Chairman of the Nigerian Athletics Commission warned that allowing such irregularities to go unchallenged could have wider implications for sports administration in Nigeria.

Kwara United drop points at home against Abia Warriors

Kwara United were forced to settle for a disappointing 1-1 draw against visiting Abia Warriors in their Euromatch Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) Matchday 9 encounter played on Saturday at the Rashidi Yekini Main Bowl of the George Innih Stadium, Ilorin.

The Harmony Boys came close to taking an early lead in the 27th minute, but efforts from Abdulsalam Abdulsalam and Thomas Omokhafe were denied by the crossbar.

Kwara United eventually broke the deadlock in the 34th minute through Ferinyaro Ali, who unleashed a powerful and well-placed

free kick to put the hosts ahead.

However, Abia Warriors restored parity after Emmanuel Nnaji capitalised on a defensive error that exposed goalkeeper Suraj Ayeleso, bringing the visitors back into the contest.

Kwara United had a golden opportunity to reclaim the lead in the 64th minute when Stephen Gideon was brought down by the Abia Warriors goalkeeper inside the penalty area. However, Alao Mohammed failed to convert the resulting spot kick, sending his effort against the crossbar.

Both sides continued to search for a decisive goal, but their efforts proved unsuccessful as the encounter ended in



KWARA UNITED AND ABIA WARRIORS

a stalemate, leaving the hosts frustrated after missing the opportunity to secure maximum points at home.

NSC inaugurates four Sports Federation boards, charges members on accountability, deligence to national duty



The National Sports Commission (NSC) has inaugurated the boards of four national sports federations, charging the new members to demonstrate diligence, accountability and commitment to the development of their respective sports.

The inauguration took place on Thursday in Abuja, with the newly inaugurated boards expected to provide effective leadership, strengthen the administration of their federa-

environment for athletes to excel at national and international competitions.

The Director General of the NSC, Hon. Bukola Olopade, urged the board members to regard their appointments as a call to service and an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the growth of Nigerian sports.

"These appointments come with a responsibility to serve diligently, uphold the highest standards of accountability and put the interests of our athletes

NPFL: Enyimba set to launch club television

Enyimba FC of Aba are set to launch their own television channel, Enyimba Football Club TV, as part of efforts to strengthen communication with supporters and provide comprehensive coverage of the club's activities.

The proposed television platform is expected to focus on the day-to-day activities of the People's Elephant, offering fans closer access to developments within the club.

The initiative is also aimed at

improving fan engagement by keeping supporters informed about the team's activities, preparations, and other important developments.

The launch of Enyimba FC TV would mark another step towards improving the club's media presence and strengthening its relationship with supporters.

However, details regarding the official launch date, broadcasting platforms, and programming schedule are yet to be announced



ENYIMBA PLAYERS

Journalists threaten to boycott Euromatch branding over lack of media engagement

Sports journalists covering the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) have vowed to boycott the use of the Euromatch logo in their news reports, expressing dissatisfaction over what they describe as the sponsor's failure to recognise the media's role in promoting Nigerian football.

The journalists are also threatening a broader boycott of the Euromatch sponsorship branding, insisting that the media cannot be expected to promote a commercial partnership without being adequately recognised and engaged by the sponsors.

The development follows the reported \$2.5 million sponsorship deal involving Euromatch and the NPFL, with \$1 million said to

have already been released.

However, the journalists are questioning why, despite the significance of the sponsorship agreement and the reported payment, no representative of Euromatch has engaged the media to explain the partnership, its objectives, or what sports journalists stand to gain from the arrangement.

For sports journalists, the issue goes beyond the display of a logo on match reports and other football-related publications. It touches on the broader question of the value of sports journalism in promoting the league, attracting commercial partners and expanding the NPFL's reach to football fans across Nigeria and beyond.



SPORTS



Oba of Benin's 10th coronation anniversary: Youngsters edge Benin chiefs 1-0 in novelty football match

BENEDICT OKATE

BENIN CITY

The Benin Palace playfield in Benin City came alive with an exciting

novelty football match, one of the key events marking the 10th Coronation Anniversary of the Benin monarch, His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II. The encounter officially

kicked off on Friday evening with the Omo N'Oba N'Edo performing the ceremonial kick-off with royal elegance.

The thrilling contest, which pitted wisdom against youthful

exuberance, featured the Palace Chiefs taking on the energetic Royal Sceptre Bearers, led by the Senior Benin Sceptre Bearer, Frank Nomwengho, who dazzled spectators with his impressive dribbling skills.

In attendance to witness the encounter were Oba Ewuare II, accompanied by his Queens, members of the royal family, Chiefs, palace functionaries, Edo State Football Association Chairman, Fred Newton Erhunmwunse, and an enthusiastic crowd of spectators.

The drama began early when 15-year-old winger Aizenomwan Eboh opened the scoring just six minutes into the match, sending the young Sceptre Bearers into jubilant celebrations.

Undeterred by the youngsters' energy and frantic pace, the Palace Chiefs stood firm, determined to fight back and restore parity.



OBA OF BENIN PALACE PLAYFIELD

CAF CL: Angry Algerian fans went berserk, assault coach, vandalize stadium facilities after losing 2-0 to Rangers

ABEOKUTA

Enugu Rangers took an important step toward qualifying for the group stage of the CAF Champions League on Sunday afternoon, beating MC Alger in the first leg of the final round of qualification.

In a thrilling encounter played at the MKO Abiola Sports Arena, Kuto, Abeokuta, Ogun state, Rangers struck twice late on Sunday to put themselves in a promising position ahead of the return leg in Algiers on October 23.

The Nigerian Champions will travel to the Ali La Ponte Stadium in Algiers knowing that their two-goal cushion offers no guarantee of progression, especially against an opponent who overturned the same deficit 50 years ago.

Recall that in 1976, Rangers also won the first leg 2-0 played on October 24, only to suffer a stunning reversal in the return leg on November 11, 3-0 to advance MC Alger 3-2 on aggregate and subsequently went on to lift the continental title.

Rangers hosted the Algerian side about 50 years after they overturned the Flying Antelopes' two-goal lead to reach the final of the 1976 African Cup of Champions Clubs before eventually winning the title against Guinea's Haifa FC on penalties.

It was a fiery affair that saw both teams pick up red cards on the pitch, while an official of the Algerian team got his marching orders

in a keenly contested match.

Super Eagles left-back Kenneth Igboké scored from the penalty spot in the 81st minute, while James Emo found the back of the net a few minutes later to help the "home side" to a 2-0 win ahead of the second leg.

Fidelis Ilechukwu's side will look to avoid what happened in 1976, when ahead of the second leg in Algiers, as they look to reach the group stage of the new CAF Champions League format for the first time.



ALGERIAN ANGRY FANS

CAF Champions League: 10-man Rangers stun MC Alger with late goals

Enugu Rangers moved closer to the CAF Champions League group stage after producing a spirited performance to defeat Algerian heavyweights MC Alger 2-0 in the first leg in Abeokuta.

Despite being reduced to 10 men, the Flying Antelopes showed resilience and attacking determination, scoring twice in the final seven minutes to secure a vital advantage ahead of the return fixture in Algeria.

Kenneth Igboké opened the scoring from the penalty spot in the 84th minute before James Emo struck three minutes later to give Rangers a commanding position in the tie.

The late goals sparked celebrations for the Nigerian side, whose ability to overcome their

numerical disadvantage underlined their determination to make progress in Africa's premier club competition.

Rangers' clean sheet also proved crucial, leaving MC Alger with a two-goal deficit to overturn when the teams meet again on Algerian soil.

For the Flying Antelopes, the result represents a major opportunity to secure a place in the group stage, but the job remains unfinished.

The return leg will test Rangers' defensive organisation, discipline and ability to withstand pressure against an opponent determined to recover from the defeat.

With a two-goal advantage in hand, the Nigerian side will need to approach the second encounter with composure,

avoiding unnecessary mistakes while remaining alert to MC Alger's attacking threat.

A goal away from home could further strengthen Rangers' position, although their immediate priority will be to preserve the advantage gained in Abeokuta.

The Algerian side, meanwhile, must produce a significant response to keep their continental campaign alive. Rangers will be aware that the atmosphere and pressure of playing away from home could make the return fixture considerably more demanding.

Nevertheless, scoring twice late in the first leg has given the Enugu-based club a valuable platform from which to pursue qualification.

NFF Elections: FIFA imposes 5-year ban on normalisation committee members

Any Nigerian football stakeholder appointed to a proposed Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Normalisation Committee could be barred from contesting the elections they are appointed to organise, in line with FIFA's established practice.

With the proposed Normalisation Committee reportedly expected to serve a six-month tenure ending in May 2027, any Nigerian appointed to the committee could be barred from contesting football-related elections until 2031.

Article 3 of FIFA's Regulations Governing the Application of the FIFA Statutes outlines the responsibilities

and requirements for Normalisation Committees, including organising elections for a new executive body.

FIFA has previously stated that members of such committees are ineligible to contest the positions to be filled in the elections they are appointed to conduct.

The restriction was reflected in FIFA's interventions in Ghana in 2018, Egypt in 2019 and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2023.

The development could have implications for Nigerian football stakeholders who may be considered for a proposed Normalisation Committee amid the NFF leadership crisis.

Iwobi fires Fulham to first victory of the season

Alex Iwobi scored the decisive goal as Fulham secured a 1-0 victory over Hull City in the Premier League yesterday.

The Nigerian midfielder struck in the 33rd minute at Craven Cottage. His finish gave Fulham a crucial victory after a difficult start to the campaign. Super Eagles defender Semi Ajayi started for Hull City but could not prevent the visitors from suffering defeat.

Iwobi delivered when Fulham needed him most. The midfielder capitalised on a defensive error before firing into the bottom-right corner.

Sander Berge played a key role in the move. After Hull failed to clear their lines, Berge

recovered possession and helped create the opportunity for Iwobi to score.

The goal proved decisive as Fulham held on for all three points. It also ended their wait for a Premier League victory this season.

Before yesterday's match, Fulham had collected just two points from six league games. They had drawn against Manchester United and Liverpool but suffered defeats against Ipswich Town, Crystal Palace, Sunderland and Chelsea.

Iwobi had yet to score in his previous six league appearances this season. His strike against Hull therefore marked an important personal milestone and gave his team a much-needed boost.



IWOBI AND BASSEY