

Oba Ewuare II, Portugal reaffirm historic bond at 10th coronation anniversary

BENEDICT OKATE
BENIN CITY

The 10th coronation anniversary of the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, has provided a significant platform for the reaffirmation of the centuries-old historical ties between the Benin Kingdom and Portugal.

The presence of the Portuguese Ambassador to Nigeria, Ambassador Paulo Martins Santos, at the monarch's coronation thanksgiving service on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, at the Holy Aruosa Cathedral in Benin City, Edo State, underscored the enduring diplomatic and cultural relationship between the two historic societies.

The occasion was particularly symbolic, given the historical connection between Portugal and the Holy Aruosa Cathedral, also known as the Edo National Church, which traces its origins to the reign of one of Oba Ewuare II's forebears, who sought to introduce Portuguese Catholic religious practices into the Benin Kingdom.

Addressing the diplomatic delegation, which included the Portuguese envoy, the Consul-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Frank Keurhorst, and the Executive Director of Museum de Fundatie, Netherlands, Beatrice von Bormann, the Benin monarch said the kingdom maintained a unique historical relationship with Portugal.

The delegation's engagements also featured the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Festival Hall at the Oba's Palace, shortly after the monarch's royal procession from the church. During the palace event, von Bormann presented a mudfish artefact to the Oba. Oba Ewuare II, who described his interest in the Holy Aruosa Cathedral as deeply

rooted in its historical origins, recalled that one of his ancestors had attempted to embrace Portuguese Catholic religion and doctrine, leading to the establishment of the church along those lines. The monarch, however, acknowledged the complexities of that historical religious en-

CONTINUES ON PG 2>>



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That The People May Know



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2027: Okpebholo says Esan turnout signals APC's growing support, targets 2.5m votes for Tinubu in Edo

UROMI

...Assures Uromi residents of compensation for houses affected by road project

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has expressed confidence that the All Progressives Congress (APC) will secure substantial votes in the 2027 elections, following what he described as an impressive turnout at the party's grassroots mobilisation tour of Esan South-East and Esan North-East local government areas. Okpebholo spoke on

Wednesday at Ewohimi, headquarters of Esan South-East Local Government Area, where he thanked party supporters for turning out in large numbers, saying the crowd demonstrated growing support for the APC ahead of the elections.

The governor said the turnout had strengthened his confidence that the party's target of 2.5 million votes for President Bola Tinubu in Edo State was achievable, urging sup-

porters to remain committed to the party and its candidates. Describing Tinubu as the nation's leader and father, Okpebholo called for sustained support for the President, noting that the success of his administration depended on the continued backing of party members in Edo and across the country.

He assured supporters that the party would return to celebrate its electoral victory after

the polls. The governor also canvassed votes for Tinubu's re-election, Hon. Odianosen Okojie, the APC House of Representatives candidate, and Joseph Ikpea, the party's Edo Central senatorial candidate. "Uromi, all those houses blocking the road construction, we have released money for compensation. The president is working, and we are going to pay him back with 2.5

million votes," he said. The governor also declared that cult-related killings and kidnapping had ended in the state, while attributing increased financial support to Edo State to the Tinubu administration. He urged residents to support the President's bid for a second term. Edo State Commissioner for Public Safety and Security, Chief Festus Ebea, said the turnout at the mobilisation

tour demonstrated the APC's acceptance among men, women and youths in Esan South-East. Ebea expressed confidence that the party's candidates would secure substantial votes in the area, describing Okpebholo as an effective political mobiliser who had continued to strengthen the party's grassroots structures.

CONTINUES ON PG 2>>



CAMPAIGN TOUR: Gov Monday Okpebholo addressing party faithful at Uromi as APC continues it's state wide visit to members



GRASSROOTS MOBILISATION: Gov Monday Okpebholo addressing a mammoth crowd at Ewohimi, Esan South East local government area of Edo State

Edo cracks down on organ harvesting, cultism

—Pg 2

FG assures Nigerians of preparedness to contain Ebola

—Pg 4

US orders some diplomats to leave Saudi Arabia as Houthi attacks escalate

—Pg 14

NPFL matchday 10 preview: Bendel insurance aim to end rivers United's strong start in Benin

—Pg 19

NEWS



Marking the building of suspected cultist/ kidnappers for demolition



Demolition of the building by the taskforce



Edo security squad and other security personnel supervising the demolition

Edo cracks down on organ harvesting, cultism

RICHARD EWEKA

EDO

The Edo State Government has intensified its crackdown on violent crime and ritual activities in Edo Central Senatorial District, arresting two suspected criminals, including an alleged organ harvester and a cultist, and demolishing buildings reportedly used for criminal operations in Uromi and Ewatto.

The operation, carried out by the state's special security squad, Operation Flush Out Kidnapping and Cultists, in collaboration with the Edo State Security Corps, the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies, was supervised by the Principal Security Officer to Governor Monday Okpebholo.

The demolished properties included a bungalow and boys' quarters at Uwalor-Oke, Uromi, Esan North-East Local Government Area, allegedly belonging to 40-year-old Ebhata Eromosele, who was arrested over suspected ritual activities and organ harvesting.

Another property at Idi-Negbon Eguare, Ewatto, Esan South-East Local Gov-

..demolishes suspects' buildings in Esan

ernment Area, reportedly used for cult-related activities, was also pulled down by bulldozers.

Speaking to journalists after the operation, the Coordinator of Operation Flush Out Kidnapping and Cultists, Amiole Idemudia, declared that the state government would not tolerate criminal activities, warning that Edo would no longer provide a safe haven for kidnappers, cultists and other criminal elements.

Idemudia said Eromosele was arrested following investigations into a series of alleged ritual attacks in Uromi, which reportedly left one young woman dead, another hospitalised and a third discharged after treatment.

He disclosed that security operatives traced a lifeless body to the bungalow allegedly used by the suspect, adding that a subsequent search of the premises reportedly uncovered bloodstained beddings and other items being treated as evidence.

"A lifeless body killed and dumped was traced by Edo State Security Corps to this bungalow apartment used by the suspect.

"A search of this residence exposed the suspect as securi-

ty operatives saw bloodstained bedspread and other incriminating evidence indicating that Ebhata is into ritual activities and organ harvesting," Idemudia said.

He said the governor had directed security agencies to sustain the offensive against criminal networks, adding that the demolition of properties allegedly used for criminal activities was intended to discourage others from establishing such hideouts.

On the cult-related violence in Ewatto, Idemudia identified Bright Ejetuwamen as a suspected leading figure in the disturbances, alleging that his property was used for cult-related activities.

He said Ejetuwamen had been apprehended and the property demolished as part of the government's determination to restore peace and security to the community.

"Governor Monday Okpebholo will not spare any hideout or properties used to perpetrate crime as it will be demolished. The cultist has been apprehended. All criminals must leave Edo State," he said.

The Zonal Commander of the Edo State Security Corps, SP Johnson Oyamede (rtd),

2027: Okpebholo says Esan turnout signals APC's

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The State APC Chairman, Mr. Jarrett Tenebe, also commended the turnout, stressing that political leaders must prioritise the welfare of the people, regardless of their reasons for entering politics.

He cited ongoing road projects as evidence of the administration's commitment to development and urged residents to support leaders whose programmes directly benefit their communities.

Tenebe called on supporters to vote for Tinubu and other APC candidates, while urg-

ing party members to remain united ahead of the elections.

He also advised voters to scrutinise the backgrounds and track records of candi-

dates before making their choices, while expressing support for Senator Adams Oshiomhole, who represents Edo North Senatorial District.

Oba Ewuare II, Portugal reaffirm

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counter, noting that the influence and resilience of African Traditional Religion remained firmly established in Benin and recognised internationally, including in the Vatican, Rome.

Drawing from his diplomatic experience as Nigeria's Ambassador to Italy before ascending the throne, Oba Ewuare II said he had observed the international recognition of African

traditional religious practices.

The Oba, who serves as the spiritual leader of the Holy Aruosa Cathedral, expressed delight at the presence of the Portuguese ambassador, describing the historical connection between Benin and Portugal as unique.

"We have a very unique link with the Portuguese. When I was told that the Ambassador of Portugal was around, it was like a telepathy," the monarch said.

Former deputy governors seek electoral reforms, more women in governance

EDO

The Forum of Former Deputy Governors of Nigeria (FFDGN) has called for reforms to the leadership recruitment process, greater representation of women and young people in governance, and stronger public accountability.

The call was contained in a communiqué issued on Thursday at the end of the Forum's fifth national conference, held in Abuja from Oct. 20 to Oct. 21.

The communiqué was signed by Dr Chris Alozie Akomas, FFDGN National Chairman, Hazeem Gbolarumi, Deputy National Chairman (South), and Mukhtar Anka, Deputy National Chairman (North).

The conference had the theme, "Rethinking Nation-Building: Bridging the Leadership-Citizen Disconnect Through Orientation, Attitude, Character, Culture and Tradition for Sustainable Development."

It was chaired by former Katsina Governor Aminu Masari,

with former Delta Governor Ifeanyi Okowa as co-chairman.

The Forum said Nigeria's leadership recruitment process needed to be reassessed to facilitate the emergence of credible individuals capable of earning citizens' trust and securing legitimacy to govern.

It also called for recruitment into the public service to prioritise competence, character and merit.

The Forum urged the Federal Government to establish inclusive governance structures through gender quotas that would reserve executive positions and legislative seats for women, young people and marginalised minorities at the federal, state and local government levels.

It recommended a strategic communication framework requiring public officials to communicate openly and honestly about government achievements and challenges to reduce public suspicion of governance.

The Forum also called for the full implementation of clear service standards by government institutions, includ-

NEWS

Senate moves to strengthen NUC powers, tighten university regulation

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate has passed for second reading a bill seeking to repeal and re-enact the National Universities Commission (NUC) Act 2026 to strengthen the regulation of university education and improve academic standards in Nigeria.

Sponsored by the Senate

Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, the proposed legislation seeks to update the legal framework governing the commission in response to developments in the higher education sector, including the proliferation of private universities, technological advancements and the internationalisation of education.

Leading the debate, Bamidele said the bill would strengthen the NUC's regulatory powers, improve accreditation procedures, enforce

minimum academic standards and provide sanctions for institutions that violate established regulations.

He added that the proposed law would modernise the commission's governance structure while promoting research, innovation and institutional autonomy.

Contributing to the debate, Senator Victor Umeh, representing Anambra Central, called for stronger legal powers for the NUC to address alleged irregularities in the manage-

ment of private universities.

Umeh expressed concern that some institutions operated corporate structures that allegedly contravened existing laws and disregarded directives issued by the commission.

In his remarks, Senate President Godswill Akpabio stressed the need to empower the National Assembly to support the NUC in enforcing compliance with its regulatory requirements.

Akpabio suggested that where a university persistently

failed to comply with the commission's directives, appropriate action should be considered within the framework of the law, including recommending to the President that the institution be proscribed.

The Senate subsequently adopted the bill for second reading, paving the way for

further legislative consideration.

If enacted, the proposed legislation is expected to strengthen regulatory oversight, promote accountability among university operators and improve the quality of university education across the country.

Ned Nwoko pays tribute to Uduaghan on Senate floor, recounts story behind Asaba airport

AJUWA VICTOR

ABUJA

Senator Ned Nwoko, representing Delta North Senatorial District, paid tribute to former Delta State Governor, Dr Emmanuel Eweta Uduaghan, on the floor of the Senate, describing him as an exemplary leader whose accessibility, humility and commitment to promises set him apart.

Senator Nwoko, who honoured the late governor during plenary, recalled how Uduaghan followed through on a commitment to construct the Asaba Airport, describing the project as an example of the former governor's determination to translate discussions into action.

Uduaghan died on Monday, October 19, 2026, at the age of 71. Nwoko had earlier issued a condolence message expressing sympathy over his passing.

Speaking during the tribute in the Red Chamber, the Delta North senator described Uduaghan as a quiet, focused and unassuming leader who delivered on important projects without seeking unnecessary attention.

"Dr Uduaghan was an exemplary governor. He was a very silent operator; he didn't make noise. He wasn't a show governor. Uduaghan was a very calm, very calculating and very focused governor," Nwoko said.

Recounting the story behind the establishment of the Asaba Airport, Nwoko said the initiative began during his time in the House of Representatives between 1999 and 2003, when he recognised the need for an airport in the state capital.

He explained that he took up the proposal with the then Minister of Aviation, Kema Chikwe, and subsequently accompanied her to meet former President Olusegun Obasanjo, where approval was secured for the

project, initially proposed for a location behind Ogwashi-Uku.

The distinguished lawmaker said he later discussed the importance of the airport with Uduaghan during the primaries preceding the latter's election as governor, emphasising that the facility would serve not only Delta State but also neighbouring states, including Anambra.

"I told him, 'Look, I am going to support you, but I am going to ask for one favour. I have this approval for an airport in Asaba, and it is very important for all of us. It will serve not just Delta, it will serve Anambra and others,'" the senator recalled.

According to Nwoko, Uduaghan remembered the discussion after assuming office and personally visited his residence to request a copy of the approval, demonstrating his commitment to the project.

"He came to my house to ask for a copy of the approval because he wanted to follow through on the discussion we had. He also asked if I had a contractor in mind. I mentioned a local contractor, ULO, and he told me the project would be done," the senator said.

Senator Ned Nwoko identified the contractor as the late Uche Okpunor, noting that the contract was subsequently awarded and the airport constructed.

Beyond the airport project, the Senator praised Uduaghan's personal approach to leadership, describing him as one of the most accessible governors Delta State had produced.

"He was probably the most accessible governor we had to date. He was well educated, a very good doctor, but there was no air of arrogance around him," he said.

Nwoko added that Uduaghan's leadership style offered important lessons for public office holders, particularly in the value of listening to people, keeping commitments and pursuing projects that serve the wider public interest.

Concluding his tribute, the Delta North lawmaker said the former governor would be deeply missed by Delta State.

"We will miss him sorely. He was a great governor. He operated without any air of arrogance, and may his soul rest in perfect peace," he said.

**STAKEHOLDERS DIALOGUE:**

Director General, Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA), Adewale Oyerinde (L), presenting a laptop to one of the technical specialists, Onyeka Chioma, during a stakeholders dialogue forum and 2025 outstanding trainee's awards ceremony organised by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF)-NECA Technical Skills Development Project (TSDP) in Abuja.

Edo police arrest five suspected cultists, recover gun in fresh crackdown

MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Police Command has arrested five suspected cultists and recovered a firearm in two separate operations targeting criminal hideouts across the state.

The arrests came amid a renewed push against cult-related violence, following Governor Monday Okpebholo's October 12 warning that unrepentant cultists would face the full force of the law.

Briefing journalists in his office on Wednesday, October 21, the Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daaor, said the arrests were made on Oc-

tober 2 and 17 following intelligence reports.

The operations took place before and after the governor's warning at a mass cultism renunciation ceremony organised by the state government in Benin City.

CP Daaor said in the October 17 operation, operatives of the Command's Violent Crime Response Unit (VCRU) arrested four suspected cultists along Upper Siluko Road, Benin City.

The suspects were identified as Kevwe Kokori, 30, Omoregbe Iguma, 38, Gabriel Kokori, 32, and Emmanuel Friday, 39.

The police Chief in Edo added that the operation followed intelligence that some suspected cultists were plan-

ning to initiate new members into their group.

He stated further that one of the suspects, Kevwe Kokori, who claimed to be a member of a vigilante group, was initially intercepted and released.

However, he was alleged to have returned shortly afterwards with about 20 young men on motorcycles, armed with dangerous weapons, in an attempt to attack the operatives.

CP Daaor said the confrontation left a police vehicle's windscreen damaged, but the operatives overpowered the group and arrested four suspects while others fled.

He said the four suspects confessed during interroga-

tion to being members of the Eiye Secret Cult Fraternity as efforts are ongoing to apprehend the fleeing suspects.

CP Patrick Daaor also said that in a separate operation on October 2, VCRU operatives arrested another suspected cultist, Chidiebere Osazee, at an uncompleted building near AY Junction in Ulegun Community, off the Benin-Abraka Road recovering a cut-to-size single-barrel gun during the crackdown.

He stated that Chidiebere Osazee confessed to being a member of the Eiye Secret Cult Fraternity and claimed ownership of the recovered firearm as efforts were ongoing to track down other suspected members of the group.

Bayelsa community leader hacked to death over land dispute

PHILIP JEREMIAH EKE

ABUJA

A 26-year-old man identified simply as Tari, popularly known as Heavyweight, has allegedly been hacked to death on Sunday during a clash between two rival youth factions in Diema community, Brass Local Government Area of

Bayelsa State.

The deceased, said to be from Opu-Nembe (Bassambiri) in Nembe Local Government Area, was reportedly a member of a youth faction loyal to Ingo Ikele, the Amayana-bo of Diema-Brass.

Community sources, who craved anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the incident, told our reporter that

the crisis erupted when Ikele allegedly directed youths loyal to him to join an inspection visit to a parcel of land reportedly earmarked for a crude oil tank farm by an unidentified oil company.

However, the youths were allegedly confronted by another faction loyal to Baratuaipe Amaene, described by sources as a rival traditional ruler in the

community.

The disagreement reportedly degenerated into a violent confrontation, during which Tari sustained injuries that eventually led to his death.

Sources close to the Divisional Police Headquarters disclosed that the victim was rushed to a hospital for medical attention but was pronounced dead on arrival by medical per-

sonnel.

The incident has heightened concerns over tensions between the rival youth groups in the community, although the circumstances that led to the confrontation remain unclear.

When contacted, the Bayelsa State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Musa Mohammed, confirmed that normalcy had been restored to the area.

NEWS

FG assures Nigerians of preparedness to contain Ebola

ABUJA

The Federal Government has assured Nigerians of preparedness to contain Ebola Virus Disease spread following detection of imported case in country and reaffirmed commitment to protecting public health nationwide.

Chairman of Presidential Task Force on Ebola Preparedness and Emerging Public Health Threats Chief of Staff

Femi Gbajabiamila gave assurance Wednesday in Abuja after emergency meeting at State House presidential villa.

Gbajabiamila spoke to State House correspondents after task force emergency meeting at State House to brief newsmen on preparedness measures and national response coordination efforts for containment nationwide.

He said the task force had been working behind the scenes

since its inauguration in June strengthening surveillance and preparedness measures across all entry points and health facilities nationwide.

He attributed early detection of index case to surveillance systems and protocols established by Ministry of Health task force and relevant agencies collaborating effectively to ensure rapid identification and response nationwide.

"It's very important to note this. Since the issue of Ebola came up in June, there have been about 44,000 flights in and out of Nigeria.

"So, it's because of what the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the task force and all the agencies have been doing. All hands have been on deck."

Gbajabiamila said infected passenger showed no symptoms upon arrival with symptoms developing four days after woman arrived in Abuja before laboratory confirmation and subsequent isolation for medical care and treatment protocols

"The passenger with the disease showed no symptoms, which came four days after the woman got into Abuja, and it was the identification process and the protocols that were put in place that enabled the quick

identification.

"That also speaks to the country's capacity and ability to deal with this disease as best as we can," he said.

Track Exec Orders

He said task force would strengthen existing protocols and ensure stricter enforcement of public health measures at airports borders and health facilities to prevent further spread nationwide.

Security bedrock of Nigeria's trillion-dollar economy ambition —Defence minister

ABUJA

The Minister of Defence, retired Gen. Christopher Musa, says sustainable national security, strong governance and credible institutions are the indispensable foundations required to drive Nigeria's transition into a trillion-dollar economy.

This is contained in a statement by his Special Assistant on Media, Leah Katung-Babatunde.

The minister said this while delivering a keynote address titled "National Security: Pathway to a Trillion-Dollar Economy" at the 56th Annual Accountants Conference of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), held in Abuja.

Musa said national security must be viewed beyond traditional military operations and law enforcement.

He said it must be recognised as an essential economic catalyst that safeguarded human capital, protected critical infrastructure and fostered predictability required to attract long-term investment.

"No investor commits capital where lives and assets are not

safe, and no economy grows beyond the reach of its security," he said.

He acknowledged Nigeria's security challenges, including targeted community attacks, highway kidnappings and isolated insurgent activities.

The minister however, assured that concerted operations by the Armed Forces of Nigeria were steadily turning the tide to restore stability across economic corridors, agricultural belts and industrial zones.

He aligned his address with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu, outlining key strategic priorities to leverage security for macro-economic expansion.

He listed the priorities to include protection of strategic economic assets, promotion of good governance and human capital, defence financial discipline, cybersecurity and financial intelligence and domestic defence industrial capacity.

Musa announced the establishment of a joint Ministry of Defence-ICAN Implementation Committee to develop collaborative frameworks proposed by the President of ICAN, Hajia Queensley Seghosi.

New MPB chair says delayed death benefits demoralise troops, vows reforms

ABUJA

The new Chairman of the Military Pensions Board (MPB), Maj.-Gen. Julius Osifo, has warned that delays in paying death benefits to families of soldiers killed in action could undermine troop morale and diminish the sacrifices of fallen military personnel.

Osifo gave the warning in Abuja during the handing and taking-over ceremony between him and his predecessor, AVM Mikail Abdulraheem, at the MPB headquarters.

He pledged to eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks, deploy modern technology and accelerate the payment of pensions, gratuities and death benefits to retired and discharged military personnel and Next-Of-Kin (NOK) of deceased service members.

The chairman said inefficient

administration resulting in delayed payments to families of personnel killed in action could diminish the sacrifices of troops and weaken the fighting spirit of those still engaged in combat operations.

"From my personal experience in OPHK, I can tell you outright that inefficient administration leading to default in payments of benefits to NOK of Kill-In-Action (KIA) personnel not only diminishes the sacrifices of our gallant soldiers, dishonours the memory of those killed in action and demoralises the fighting spirit of those in combat," he said.

Osifo, who drew from his operational experience in Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK) in the North-East, said the military's responsibility to its personnel extended beyond active service to ensuring that their families were adequately catered for after their death.



VISIT:

A delegation from Xinhua News Agency, Africa Regional Bureau visits News Agency of Nigeria headquarters in Abuja

2027: Wike mobilises FCT political forces for Tinubu, Aduda, Gabaya, Chiya

ABUJA

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mr Nyesom Wike on Thursday, led a convergence of political forces in Bwari Area Council for the re-election of President Bola Tinubu and National Assembly candidates in the FCT.

Wike, during an interactive session with members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and political stakeholders in Bwari, formally presented a consolidated ticket under the banner of the ruling APC.

He urged the residents to vote Tinubu for president, Sen. Philip Aduda for Senate, FCT, Mr John Gabaya for AMAC-Bwari Federal Constituency and Mr Danladi Chiya for FCT South Federal Constituency.

Outlining a unified electoral strategy under the Rainbow Coalition, the minister warned community leaders, traditional rulers, youth groups and residents of the area against electing wrong people to represent them in 2027.

Wike described political parties as mere "vehicles" to deliver development and urged the territory's electorate not to repeat what he termed the "political

mistake of 2023."

"Party is a vehicle that conveys you to where you are going. When you get there, you drop down from the vehicle and work for the interest of the people," he said.

Questioning the performance of the current legislative representation in the territory, the minister asked the gathering whether they felt the impact of their incumbent representative.

"The mistake we made in 2023, will we make that mistake again? If it was an error, will we make that error again?" he asked.

Presenting Sen. Aduda to the gathering, Wike described

him as "the man who understands when you are sleeping, the man who knows when you are crying, the man who knows when Gwagwalada people are in need."

He highlighted the ongoing infrastructural interventions across the territory, including the ongoing rehabilitation of the strategic Bwari to Kubwa road scheduled for completion in December.

According to him, all achievements recorded by the FCT Administration stemmed directly from Tinubu's unalloyed backing.

The interactive session witnessed cross-party endorsements from major political leaders, traditional rulers and grassroots coordinators across Bwari.

Take Tinubu's message to grassroots, Oborevwoori tells Delta APC family

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwoori, has charged members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Campaign Council to take the party's message to the grassroots and mobilise voters across units, and wards ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Oborevwoori gave the charge on Thursday in Asaba during the inauguration of the Delta State APC Campaign Council, where he unveiled "MORE Plus"

as the theme of his re-election campaign.

He described membership of the council as a call to service, urging members to work with unity, discipline and dedication to secure victory for President Bola Tinubu, himself and other APC candidates.

The governor said the party must go beyond rallies and political meetings to engage ordinary citizens, including market women, youths, workers, farmers and traders, through door-to-door campaigns and direct interaction with voters.

He urged campaign coordinators at the local government and ward levels to strengthen their structures, work with support groups and ensure that the party's message reached every polling unit.

Oborevwoori said the APC should campaign on its record in government, pointing to the Federal Government's policies and his administration's M.O.R.E Agenda, which focuses on infrastructure, education, healthcare, workers' welfare, youth empowerment and security.

"Our achievements must speak for us, but we must also be

prepared to explain them convincingly," he said, urging party members to communicate the impact of government policies to the electorate.

He assured Deltans that political activities would not distract his administration from delivering on its promises, adding that ongoing projects and development programmes would continue during the campaign period.

The governor also appealed to politicians and their supporters to preserve peace, avoid hate speech and ensure that political differences did not divide the state.

No licensed treatment for Ebola strain, says minister

ABUJA

The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Professor Ali Pate, has said there is no licensed specific treatment or vaccine for the Ebola virus variant involved in Nigeria's current outbreak, adding that the infected patient is receiving supportive medical care.

Pate disclosed this during an interview with Arise Television on Wednesday, explaining that while researchers were exploring potential treatments, the patient's body was also fighting the infection through its immune response.

"Specific treatment for this variant of Ebola virus, or a specific vaccine, is not yet licensed, approved to be used," he said, adding that "there are various efforts to try different types of vaccines or molecules to see whether they can bring relief."

The minister said the infected patient received antibiotics and

antiviral medication at different stages of her treatment because doctors initially suspected a viral illness before confirming Ebola.

"But this particular patient received appropriate medical care, supportive medical care. She received antibiotics, she received antiviral medication at different stages because the consideration was she had a viral illness, which in fact ended to be Ebola," he said.

Pate said the patient's immune response might also have contributed to her condition, adding that she was stable at the time of the interview. However, he cautioned that her condition could change as the disease progressed.

"I think we're very fortunate that she is stable at this moment. We hope she continues to remain stable, because things can change when you have an infectious disease that you don't fully control the course of illness," he said.

The minister said Nigeria's healthcare infrastructure, laboratory capacity and trained health

professionals had helped identify and manage the case. He added that public health experts and epidemiologists were working to trace people who might have been exposed to the virus.

According to Pate, the country's public and private health facilities, alongside laboratory services, helped ensure the patient was detected and received care within the healthcare system.

"We've got laboratory capacity that has all come together to allow the patient to walk through

the Nigerian healthcare system, be detected, and be catered for," he said.

He added that the public health response had been intensified, with experts working to track contacts, but stressed that Nigerians also had a responsibility to comply with health authorities' instructions.

"But it goes beyond the public health system; it also requires Nigerians themselves in how we behave, so that those who may have contact with her continue to

comply," Pate said.

The Federal Government confirmed Nigeria's first reported case in the current outbreak after a woman who had travelled from Uganda developed symptoms and was admitted to a private hospital in Abuja. The patient was subsequently diagnosed with the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola.

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention activated response measures, including contact tracing, enhanced sur-

veillance and infection prevention efforts, while urging public and private health facilities to remain vigilant and promptly report suspected cases.

It has been reported that 44 contacts had initially been identified for monitoring. Anambra State also followed up 40 persons of interest, with 33 completing their monitoring period and seven remaining under active follow-up as of October 20. Ogun State was tracing 111 persons of interest.

Lagos can't prosper through isolated planning — Bamidele

LAGOS

Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, has urged the Lagos State Government to establish a regional development and investment compact to coordinate infrastructure, economic corridors and investment opportunities across the Southwest.

Bamidele made the call on Thursday while delivering a keynote address at the Lagos Physical Planning Summit held at Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island.

Lagos is a major commercial hub in Nigeria, with economic and transport links extending into neighbouring Ogun State and other parts of the Southwest.

The movement of workers, goods and services across state boundaries makes coordination in transportation, housing, industrial development and environmental management important to regional growth.

He said Lagos needed to move beyond treating physical planning as a government activity and adopt a coordinated approach that delivers economic growth, social welfare, environmental sustainability and regional prosperity.

According to him, achieving this transition would require a change in mindset, stronger institutions, a reorganisation of investment priorities and closer alignment between development plans and implementation.

"Lagos' long-term prosperity cannot be secured through isolated state planning alone. Its economy is closely connected

to neighbouring states through shared boundaries, labour markets, housing, agriculture, manufacturing, transportation logistics, trade and environmental systems," he said.

Bamidele proposed a Lagos-Southwest Spatial Development and Investment Compact to enable Lagos and participating states to coordinate regional planning, identify shared infrastructure needs and mobilise investment for projects that benefit communities across state boundaries.

He said the proposed framework should involve Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states, alongside relevant federal institutions, planning authorities, infrastructure agencies, private-sector organisations, professional bodies and development partners.

He added that the initiative should prioritise regional transport networks, complementary economic corridors, cross-border urban planning, environmental resilience and investment mobilisation.

The Senate leader also urged Lagos to take advantage of digital technology by expanding broadband infrastructure, smart-city systems, digital services, innovation hubs and technology-driven businesses.

He stressed the need to equip the workforce with relevant digital skills to support the state's development ambitions.

Bamidele said the future of Lagos would depend not only on the quality of its development plans but also on how effectively they were funded, coordinated and implemented.



The Vice Chancellor Wellspring University, Prof. Isaac Rotimi Ajayi presenting certificate to one of the inductees during the induction of fresh computing graduates of the University.

Expert harps on increased job chances despite advent of AI technology at computing graduates induction

AWKA

A computer expert and immediate past Vice Chancellor of Kiyabodo University in Delta State Professor Chinye Chiemeké has allayed fears of possible job losses globally on account of evolving computing technology, saying that for every job eliminated, two new ones are created.

Prof Chiemeké spoke at the 3rd induction and oath taking ceremony of graduates of computing from Well-

spring University, Benin City on Wednesday amidst global fears of machines taking over jobs from humans and the attendant consequences on families.

The former Vice Chancellor whose lecture was titled: Beyond the Certificate in Building a Future-Ready Career Through Professionalism, Innovation, and Life-Long Learning, said that in as much as the fears are real, the corresponding opportunities created by the new technologies in the area of jobs creation, far

out number those that would be lost.

She said the world could not do without computer technology as could be seen in its deployment in all human endeavours thus posing a challenge to the computing professionals to take effective ownership of the technology in aid of the human society.

She charged the Computing graduates and other professionals in the industry to strive to adapt to the changing technologies in the industry by embracing innovation, life

long knowledge development that would grow their competences in their respective areas of specializations.

The fastest growing skills in demand she said are Artificial Intelligence, big data, network and cyber security, stressing that the skills at the center of the global economy were the skills of their profession.

She advised them against attempts to be a jack of all trade, but becoming master of none, instead she averred, they should stick to areas where they have comparative advantage and grow to becoming expert in the particular field.

FCT motorists, commuters divided over NNPC petrol discount

LAGOS

Some motorists and commuters in FCT have expressed mixed reactions to the N66-per-litre petrol discount offered by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. as the Oct. 31 deadline approaches.

Speaking with newsmen on Thursday, some of them commended the initiative while others expressed reservations about its impact.

The Federal Government announced a 30-day discount

on petrol sold by the NNPC Ltd., with public transport operators to receive priority under the arrangement.

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Taiwo Oyejede, said the arrangement was not a return to petrol subsidy.

The minister said the government was also negotiating a ceiling of N1,350 per litre on the ex-gantry or landing cost of petrol in an effort to reduce sharp fluctuations in pump prices.

Dangote Petroleum Refinery cut its gantry petrol price by N25 per litre from N1,350 to N1,325.

Mr Abubakar Saidu, a motorist who resides in Wuse, commended the Federal Government for the discount offered at NNPC Ltd. retail outlets.

Saidu stated that he purchased petrol through the app but sometimes had to wait in long queues before accessing the product.

He said that many Nigerians were unable to benefit from the discount due to network challenges.

"I downloaded the app and followed the procedure before buying the petrol at N1,339 per litre," he said.

Another commuter who

resides at Nyanya, Mr Obi Anyawu, said the intervention had not translated into lower transport fares.

Anyawu said the intervention had failed to ease the burden of high transportation costs on Nigerians.

According to him, commuters are still struggling to afford daily transportation to work.

"The transportation fare keeps increasing, and there has not been any difference," he said.

Mrs Stephanie Okoro, a commuter who resides at Karu, said commuters were still struggling to afford daily transportation to work.

Judge warns against 'judicialisation' of elections

ENUGU

The President of the Enugu State Customary Court of Appeal, Justice George Nnamani, has decried the alarming trend of the "judicialisation of elections" in West Africa, warning that it strips citizens of their fundamental democratic agency.

Nnamani stated this on Thursday while delivering the keynote address at the fourth edition of the Civil Society Week for West Africa (CSWWA 2026), themed "Strengthening Judicial Protection of Civic Space in West Africa," hosted by Spaces for Change in Enugu State.

He lamented that courts were gradually replacing electoral management bodies as

the ultimate arbiters of electoral outcomes, party registrations and candidate eligibility.

"When judicial decisions dictate who can contest and who is excluded, citizens are effectively stripped of their fundamental agency to choose their leaders, severely compromising the freedom of association and assembly," he said.

The keynote speaker also warned that executive overreach was increasingly being shielded by judicial endorsement, noting that "repression effectively puts on the robes of the law."

Addressing the theme, Nnamani stressed that financial autonomy remained the "crankshaft of the rule of law," needed to protect the judiciary from external pressures.

He praised the Enugu State Government for implementing judicial autonomy but condemned states where judges were forced to beg for funds, a situation he said weakened the judiciary.

Earlier, in her welcome address, the Executive Director of Spaces for Change (S4C) West Africa, Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri, raised the alarm over the systematic weaponisation of judicial processes across

the sub-region.

Citing the organisation's recent report, Civic Space in West Africa: Trends, Threats & Futures (2nd Edition), Ibezim-Ohaeri disclosed a 700 per cent increase in judicially backed human rights violations.

"Our findings indicate that judicially backed violations of human rights surged from just nine cases over six years to 70 cases within less than three

years—representing an alarming increase of nearly 700 per cent," she said.

She noted that legal mechanisms were increasingly being deployed to hamper public movements, delegitimise opposition actors and justify state-led crackdowns.

The S4C executive director also pointed to the alleged weaponisation of anti-terrorism laws, citing Nigeria's 775

terrorism-related convictions in 2025, alongside similarly high figures in Mali and Burkina Faso. She warned that human rights must never be sacrificed on the altar of state expediency.

Furthermore, Ibezim-Ohaeri condemned the rise in strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), describing them as baseless legal actions designed to intimidate, exhaust and silence journalists, whistleblowers and grassroots movements.

Why pornography may fuel child sexual abuse - Expert

ABUJA

Behavioural Change and Public Health Communication Consultant, Prof. Ehiz Odigie-Okpataku, has said exposure to pornography may lower inhibitions and contribute to sexually predatory behaviour.

She warned that sexual offences against children cannot be explained by high libido alone.

Odigie-Okpataku stated this on Thursday during an appearance on the Nigeria Television Authority's programme, Good Morning Nigeria, while discussing the psychological factors behind sexual abuse, including offences involving children.

She said rape and sexual abuse were often wrongly viewed as expressions of excessive sexual desire, arguing that the desire to dominate or exercise power over victims could also drive such acts.

"We often think that rape is a sexual expression or sexual molestation is sexual expression of a high libido. It is often an oppressive tendency, so you want to conquer that person."

"That is why somebody hates a person, despises a person, but tries to now conquer that person. And then the person does that, expresses that through sexual abuse or violence," she said.

Addressing the sexual abuse of children within families, the consultant said it was important to consider the psychological factors involved, including paedophilia and incest.

She linked repeated exposure to pornography with the possible weakening of an individual's boundaries around acceptable sexual behaviour, particularly when the material involves children or sexualised family relationships.

"When I mentioned earlier on, pornography, what you

feed your mind is what grows. We have different genres in pornography. Pornography is poison to the mind because what it does is that it kills your inhibitions. In terms of what you think is right or wrong, so it blurs those lines. It begins to create a curiosity in that area," she said.

Odigie-Okpataku warned that some people deliberately consume pornographic material involving children or family members, arguing that such content could encourage curiosity about acting out what they had watched.

"There are people who don't just watch pornography, but they feed their mind with child porn. Then some of them feed it with — they'll say mother-daughter, mother-son trope, we have father-daughter trope, schoolgirl and man trope, neighbour, young neighbour."

"You understand? So, when you start going into those subdivisions of all those things, you have people who are now curious in wanting to find out what it means," she said.

She added that such curiosity could, in some cases, translate into attempts to reproduce the acts in real life.

"So, there's that expression or wanting to express that in real life. You understand? So, it makes predators, or it feeds that desire, or that curiosity, or that need to want to express that," she said.

The consultant further argued that sexual offending was not necessarily dependent on a person's ability to engage in sexual intercourse, citing cases involving offenders with erectile dysfunction.

"We've had people who have erectile dysfunction and are predators, and are on sexual sex offenders registers abroad. Some of them have, some of them are even castrated, but they are still sex offenders. So, it tells you it is in the mind, not only just in the genitals," she said.



MEETING:

From left: Special Regional Representative to the Director General, Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr Aliko Ahmed; Comptroller General, Nigeria Immigration Service, Kemi Nandap; Senior Special Assistant to the President on Administration and Operations and Secretary of the Task Force, Mrs Oyinade Nathan-Marsh; Mandate Secretary for Health and Environment, FCT, Dr Dolapo Fasawe; Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabamila; Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Mohammad Ali Pate; WHO Representative, Pavel Ursu, after an emergency meeting of the Presidential Task Force on Ebola Virus Disease in the State House.

NUJ seeks probe of Kaduna journalist's four-year sentence over facebook post

KADUNA

The Nigeria Union of Journalists has called for an impartial investigation into the arrest of Nagarta Radio journalist, Farida Isiak, in Kaduna State, following reports that she was sentenced to four years' imprisonment over a Facebook post criticising the police treatment of her parents.

The union also urged the relevant judicial authorities to ensure a fair hearing during her retrial, scheduled for November 3, 2026, while calling on the police to account for the circumstances surrounding her arrest and the reported detention of her parents.

According to NUJ, Isiak, 23,

was reportedly sentenced to four years' imprisonment or a fine of N1.75m for defamation after publishing a Facebook post about the incident.

She was subsequently granted bail following the intervention of lawyers, who prevented her immediate transfer to a correctional centre.

In a statement on Thursday, the NUJ National President, Alhassan Abdullahi, said her release did not resolve the concerns surrounding the case, particularly the implications for freedom of expression and the treatment of journalists who criticise public institutions.

"The union considers the circumstances surrounding Farida's ordeal a matter of serious public interest, raising fundamental questions about freedom

of expression, personal liberty, due process and the protection of citizens against the possible misuse of public authority," the statement read.

According to the union, the incident reportedly began with a dispute over N100 change from a charcoal sale involving Isiak's mother and a neighbour.

Her mother was reportedly arrested, while her father was detained after going to the police station to secure her bail.

The union said Isiak later presented herself at the police station and was accused of defaming the police in a Facebook post about the reported treatment of her parents.

She reportedly deleted the post and apologised before the court proceedings that resulted in her sentence.

The NUJ said the case required careful examination to ensure that allegations of defamation were handled in accordance with the law and that the rights of all parties were protected.

"Although journalists are not above the law and freedom of expression does not confer immunity from lawful consequences, allegations of defamation must be handled in accordance with the law, with due regard for constitutional safeguards, the rights of all parties and the requirements of a fair hearing," it said.

The union expressed concern that criminal proceedings against journalists following criticism of public officials could discourage citizens from raising concerns about alleged misconduct.

Awaiting-trial inmate escapes during court appearance in Edo

BENIN CITY

Authorities of the Nigeria Correctional Centre, Edo State Command, have announced the escape of an awaiting-trial inmate, Osita Thomas (28). This was contained in a statement by the state command PRO, Aminu Suleman, dated October 21 and made available to journalists in Benin on Thursday.

According to the statement, the inmate escaped during an appearance in court last week

for the offence of conspiracy and stealing.

The statement read, "The Nigerian Correctional Service, Edo State Command, hereby notifies the general public of the escape of an awaiting trial inmate of the Medium Security Custodial Centre, Auchu. "The incident occurred during his appearance in court for trial for the offence of conspiracy and stealing."

"The Service solicits the cooperation of the general public to recapture the fugitive. Anyone with useful information about

his whereabouts should please contact the nearest Custodial Centre or Police Station, or call the following numbers: 08038075882, 08039243704.

"The Controller of Corrections, Edo State Command, assures the general public that no effort will be spared to recapture the fugitive, while security of all inmates in custody has been strengthened." However, an official of the NCC said the warden who took him and others to court could not pursue him to avoid

other inmates from escaping, blaming the dearth of manpower for the escape.

The official said over 1,000 personnel of the NCC would be retiring this year without any plans to recruit new personnel.

"The warden couldn't leave other inmates to pursue Osita as he will risk losing others. The dearth of manpower should be addressed now so that this kind of incident does not happen again," the official added.

ABUAD graduates record 2,194 students, honours two

ADO-EKITI

Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, has conferred honorary doctorate degrees on United Nigeria Airlines Chairman, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, and Cavista Holdings Chairman, Niyi Olajide, as two foreign universities also honoured its founder, Aare Afe Babalola, SAN.

The honours were an-

nounced during the university's 14th convocation ceremony held in Ado-Ekiti on Wednesday.

Okonkwo was recognised for his contributions to enterprise and functional education, while Olajide received the award for his investments in healthcare, enterprise, poverty alleviation and women's empowerment.

Western University, Canada, and Trinity International

University, United States, also conferred honorary doctorates on Babalola in recognition of his contributions to law, education, philanthropy and public service.

Speaking at the ceremony, ABUAD Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Smaranda Olarinde, said the university graduated 2,194 students, comprising 1,759 from undergraduate and professional programmes and 435 postgraduate students.

She described the Class of 2026 as the largest in the institution's history and praised the honourees for their contributions to society, economic growth, education and human welfare.

A cross-section of the graduates

The ABUAD Governing Council representative, Folasade Alli, SAN, called on the Federal Government to extend the Nigerian Education

Loan Fund to students in private universities.

Alli said, "The exclusion of students of private institutions from NELFund should be looked into. They are qualified, their parents are Nigerians and they are paying tax. That is a form of discrimination which should be addressed."

She also called for private universities to be included among institutions benefiting from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund.

Speaking after receiving his award, Okonkwo praised Babalola for establishing ABUAD, saying the institution had grown into a university capable of transforming society.

He said United Nigeria Airlines would explore areas of collaboration with the university, particularly in skills development, technology

transfer and employment opportunities for graduates.

"The partnership will include scholarships, employment opportunities and an annual award for outstanding students," Okonkwo said.

Olajide commended Babalola for building the university, saying his achievement demonstrated that people could continue making meaningful contributions to society regardless of their age.

He reaffirmed his commitment to expanding employment and enterprise opportunities and urged successful entrepreneurs to establish businesses that would create more jobs.

Reacting to the honour from the foreign universities, Babalola thanked their representatives for travelling to Nigeria to present the award, describing the recognition as a source of encouragement.



LEGISLATIVE ROUND TABLE:

L-R The Clerk of Edo State House of Assembly, Alhaji Yahaya Omogbai, Hon Donald Okogbe, chairman house committee on Education and the organizer of the programme, Hon Okaka Eric Allison and Hon Richard Edosa during the legislative Round Table on Education Reform Hosted by the house committee on Education at John Odigie Oyeegun Public Service Academy yesterday. Photo : Godwin Iseguan.

Kebbi gov creates seven districts, appoints traditional rulers

BIRNI-KEBBI

Kebbi State Governor, Nasir Idris, has approved the creation of seven new districts and the appointment of district and village heads across parts of the Zuru Emirate to strengthen traditional institutions and improve grassroots administration.

The approval, announced in a statement signed by the state Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Garba Umar Dutsinmari, was made public in Birnin Kebbi on Thursday.

The new districts are Peni,

Mahuta, Bangu, Gele, Chonoko and Ummu, while Chonoko Village in Danko-Wasagu Local Government Area has also been upgraded to district status.

The governor also approved the appointment of new district heads for the affected areas and village heads in parts of Zuru Local Government Area.

According to the statement, Peni District was carved out of the existing Bajida District in Fakai Local Government Area, with its headquarters at Yoko.

Alhaji Ayuba Bende was appointed as its district head.

Mahuta and Bangu districts

were created from the existing Marafa District, also in Fakai LGA, with Alhaji Farke Anama and Alhaji Abubakar Wamale appointed as their respective district heads.

Similarly, Gele District was created from the existing Bajida/Birnin Tudu District in Fakai LGA, with its headquarters at Boko. Alhaji Ahmad D. Gele was appointed as the district head.

In Danko-Wasagu LGA, Chonoko Village was upgraded to district status under the existing Waje District, with Bamaayi Bawada Chonoko appointed as the new district head.

The government also created Ummu District from the existing Rafin Zuru District in Zuru LGA.

Under the new arrangement, Kabiru Chaka Diga was appointed village head of Sabon Garin Ummu, while Markus Yumu, Yakubu Maliki, Sale Oda and Usman Idris were appointed village heads of Domo, Ugeva, Chepko and Adhava Hanto, respectively.

The governor also approved the appointment of Muhammadu Danwarai as the new village head of Mumsu in Zuru LGA.

Police defend handling of Kaduna journalist's alleged defamation case

KADUNA

The Kaduna State Police Command has defended its handling of the case involving Nagarta Radio journalist, Farida Isiak, saying her Facebook post contained statements directed at the police force, an officer and his family.

The command said the incident should not be viewed solely as an attempt to suppress press freedom, insisting that the circumstances surrounding the dispute needed to be considered before conclusions were drawn.

The police stated this in a statement signed by the command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Mansir Hassan on Thursday, following criticism of Isiak's arrest and sentencing, including a call by the Nigeria Union of Journalists for an impartial investigation into the case.

According to the command, the matter arose from a Facebook post by Isiak containing comments about the Nigeria Police Force, the officer concerned and his family.

The command quoted the journalist as writing, "The police force is f***ed up that's why they don't end well. I'm going to tag you to this post so you know I'm talking about your wife, not so sorry to say, you married wrong. Maraban Jos DPO, I'm not sorry to say, you've failed as a leader."

It said the incident followed a disagreement between the parties after a request was made by the journalist, but did not specify the nature of the request or provide further details about the disagreement.

"The command maintains

that the circumstances should be considered objectively and in their proper context, rather than being characterised solely as an attempt to suppress press freedom without a comprehensive assessment of the facts," the statement read.

The police also disclosed that the Commissioner of Police had intervened to resolve the matter, saying the move was part of efforts to maintain cordial relations between the command and journalists.

"In the spirit of mutual respect, professionalism, and a cordial relationship between the Kaduna State Police Command and members of the media, the Commissioner of Police personally intervened to facilitate an amicable resolution of the matter since yesterday," Hassan said.

The command expressed concern over reports it said condemned the police without adequate verification or an opportunity for the command to respond.

"The command expresses concern over publications that condemn the police without adequate verification of the facts and efforts to obtain the command's position," it said, adding that such reports could create misleading impressions and damage the reputation of the police and the people involved.

The command urged journalists to ensure that reports involving allegations against public institutions were thoroughly checked before publication.

"The command therefore urges media organisations and practitioners to uphold the fundamental principles of accuracy, fairness, balance, and responsible journalism.

Shettima, govs move to tackle malnutrition

ABUJA

Nigeria has pledged to strengthen its fight against malnutrition by adapting Ethiopia's approach to nutrition financing, intergovernmental coordination and community-level interventions, following a three-day leadership exchange in Addis Ababa.

Speaking on Thursday in Abuja upon his return from Addis Ababa and Oromia, Vice President Kashim Shettima, who led a high-powered Nigerian delegation to the

Ethiopia-Nigeria Nutrition Leadership Exchange Forum, said the lessons from the engagement would be applied to the Nutrition 774 (N774) Initiative, which seeks to improve nutrition outcomes across the country's 774 local government areas.

The commitment comes amid persistent malnutrition challenges in Nigeria, particularly among children and women, with insecurity, poverty, food insecurity and inadequate access to essential health services compounding the problem in vulnerable

communities.

Shettima said the exchange provided an opportunity for Nigeria to examine practical approaches to tackling malnutrition and strengthening food systems, while identifying strategies that could be adapted to the country's political, economic and social realities.

He said the priority was to improve coordination among the federal, state and local governments to ensure that nutrition interventions reached households and communities where they were most needed.

"The knowledge gained

from the three-day Nutrition forum would be adapted to Nigeria's realities, particularly in strengthening collaboration among the federal government, states and local governments, in order to improve nutrition outcomes at the community and household levels," the Vice-President said.

Shettima also stressed the importance of sustainable nutrition financing, accountability and effective implementation at the subnational level, noting that improved nutrition was essential to human capital development, productivity and economic growth.

Give local firms more gas, energy contracts, Tinubu urges IOCs

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has urged international oil companies operating in Nigeria to give competent Nigerian engineering and manufacturing firms greater opportunities to take part in major energy projects.

The President spoke on Thursday while receiving the Founder and Chairman of Lee Engineering Group, Leemon Ikpea, at the State House, Abuja. Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, revealed details of the engagement in a statement titled 'President Tinubu Backs Nigerian Engineering as Local Firm Builds Compressor Stations to Unlock Escravos-Lagos Pipeline's 2.3 Billion Cubic Feet Daily Gas Capacity.'

Lee Engineering is carrying out the engineering, procurement and construction of two midline compressor stations in Edo State.

Onanuga said the stations were needed to raise operating pressure on the Escravos-Lagos Pipeline System so that it

could deliver at its full capacity of 2.3 billion standard cubic feet of gas a day.

The designed capacity of the pipeline was raised from 1.1 billion under the ELPS II expansion.

The statement said the project was expected to strengthen gas supply to power plants and industries along the corridor and increase supplies to neighbouring West African coun-

tries through the West African Gas Pipeline, creating opportunities for additional export revenue.

He stated, "President Tinubu said Nigeria First must translate into more contracts for capable Nigerian firms, greater use of locally manufactured equipment and more skilled jobs for Nigerians."

He encouraged international oil companies to build stronger

partnerships with indigenous engineering companies have demonstrated the capacity to deliver complex projects.

"He also pointed to his administration's 2024 executive orders and presidential directives on local content compliance, contracting costs, and approval timelines as measures to attract investment, cut delivery costs and expand opportunities for Nigerian businesses," he said.

Bayelsa Assembly approves state police, introduces two bills

YENAGOA

The Bayelsa State House of Assembly has approved the proposed sixth alteration to the 1999 Constitution to provide for the establishment of state police services and other related matters.

The approval followed the transmission of the constitutional amendment bill by the National Assembly to the 36 state Houses of Assembly for consideration and endorsement.

The lawmakers considered the proposal during plenary in the Committee of the Whole before voting in favour of the amendment.

The Speaker of the House, Abraham Ingobere, represented by the Deputy Speaker, Michael Ogbere, commended members for their prompt consideration and approval of the proposal.

He described the decision as another historic milestone for the Seventh Assembly, commending the lawmakers for their commitment to the legislative process.

The Speaker said, "The approval of the proposed establishment of state police services is a significant step in the constitutional amendment process. I commend members for their prompt consideration and commitment to the legislative responsibilities before the House."

"The participation of members and their contributions during plenary demonstrate the importance we attach to issues affecting governance, security and the well-being of our people."

The proposed constitutional amendment seeks to provide a legal framework for the establishment of state police services, although its implementation will depend on the completion of the constitutionally prescribed amendment process.

In another development, the Assembly has taken the first readings of two bills: the Ijaw Cultural Heritage Bill and the Retirement Age for Magistrates and Chairmen of Customary Courts Bill, 2026.

The introduction of the Ijaw Cultural Heritage Bill marks the beginning of its legislative consideration, with the proposed legislation expected to address issues relating to the preservation and promotion of Ijaw cultural heritage.

The Retirement Age for Magistrates and Chairmen of Customary Courts Bill, 2026, is also expected to undergo further legislative scrutiny before the House determines its next steps.

The Speaker, in his remarks, urged members to sustain their commitment to legislative duties and the consideration of bills and motions brought before the Assembly.



INTERSWITCH TECHCONNECT:

From left: Director, Business Unit, Easys Edge Cloud Services Limited, Dr Jinmisayo Awokola; Managing Director, Handsbrow, Funke Adetunji; Managing Director, Consistent Trus MFB, Jola-Micheal Samson; Head, Digital Channels Interswitch, Onyinyechi Ejirbe; Vice President, Enterprise Business Interswitch, Tomisin Olapo and Managing Director, FullRange MFB, wole Akinnusi, at Interswitch Techconnect in Ibadan on Thursday.

FG makes leasing registration mandatory for procurement contracts

ABUJA

The Federal Government has made the Equipment Leasing Registration Authority certificate a mandatory requirement for contractors seeking public procurement contracts involving equipment leasing, hiring or provision.

The government also warned that procurement approvals and

contract awards would not be granted for equipment leasing transactions that failed to comply with the new requirement.

The Bureau of Public Procurement disclosed this in a statement signed by its acting Head of Public Relations, Ngozi Anyaelezu, on Thursday.

The directive was conveyed in a circular issued by the Secretary to the Government of

the Federation, Senator George Akume, with reference number 59780/S.2/B/584.

The Director-General of the BPP, Adebawale Adedokun, urged all procuring entities to ensure strict compliance with the directive.

According to the statement, the circular mandates all Ministries, Departments and Agencies and procuring entities to require evidence of Equipment Leasing Registration Authority registration for procurement processes involving the leasing, hiring or provision of equipment.

The government also directed MDAs to incorporate compliance with the registration of lease agreements, in line with Section 13 of the Equipment Leasing Act, 2015, as an additional eligibility and responsiveness criterion for bids involving equipment leasing.

Adedokun said procurement advertisements and solicitation documents for new projects and programmes must clearly specify the registration requirement.

The statement said this applied to "prequalification exercises, financial bids and combined procurement exercises," adding that prospective bidders involved in equipment leasing "must submit evidence of ELRA registration."

The BPP chief warned that "no procurement approval, contract awards or execution would be recognised or granted" for equipment leasing procedures

that failed to meet the requirement.

He said the directive was signed to promote safety quality standards while eliminating unregistered and unregulated equipment leasing practices within public procurement.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MI IGHEDESA JULIET OFURE**, now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. DICKSON JULIET OFUI**. All former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **ATOTOE HAPPY POWETEI** and not **HAI GOOD** as was written on my (B.I) all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/ ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified **MISS. ALONGE LINDA** and **MRS. IRE LINDA OSATOHAMWEN**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **MRS. IREDIA LI OSATOHAMWEN**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

RE-ARRANGEMENT AND RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified **OSAGIE AIMUFUA** and **SAMUEL OS/ AIMUFUA**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **SAMUEL OSAGIE AIMUFUA**. All former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

Senator faults system making Nigeria export cocoa, import chocolate

ABUJA

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions, Senator Neda Imasuen, has faulted the global economic system that allows Nigeria to export raw materials such as cocoa and import finished products, including chocolate, at significantly higher prices.

Imasuen warned that the imbalance deprives resource-rich developing countries of the benefits of their natural resources, contributing to unemployment, poverty and migration.

The senator, who represents Edo South Senatorial District, spoke while delivering an address on Thursday as an Honorary Guest Speaker at the Golden Rule Summit Roma 2026 in Italy.

His media aide, Moshood Karim, disclosed this in a statement made available to journalists in Abuja.

Speaking on "The Golden Rule as a Principle from a Legal and Legislative Perspective: Advancing Development for Underserved Communities," Imasuen argued that the principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated should extend beyond person-

al relationships to international trade, economic policies and legislation.

Using Nigeria's cocoa industry as an example, he questioned why a country that produces the agricultural commodity in commercial quantities must export it to developed economies for processing and subsequently buy chocolate and other finished products at much higher prices.

"Establishing more processing and manufacturing industries in Nigeria would enable the country to retain greater value from its agricultural produce, create jobs and improve living standards."

"If chocolate factories were established in an industrial state or an agricultural state, would the development reduce economic imbalances, lower unemployment and ultimately curb irregular migration and human trafficking?" he queried.

The lawmaker stressed that his criticism of the international economic system was not intended to absolve Nigerian leaders of responsibility for domestic economic challenges. Rather, he said, the structure of international trade should be examined to determine whether it delivered equitable benefits to countries producing valuable agricultural commodities and natural resources.

Opinion

Critics of Governor Okpebholo should wake up from their slumber



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

In the words of the Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Apostle General Dr. I.U. Omoike, "We all have a part to play for a better Edo State and Nigeria as a nation."

The remarks by the CAN chairman during the 2026 Plenary Session of CAN, held in Benin City on Tuesday, have undoubtedly raised questions about why some individuals deliberately choose to play the role of spoilers, who see nothing good in the achievements of the administration of Senator Monday Okpebholo.

For instance, social media platforms have been inundated with stories, videos and claims about the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo. While some reports reflect genuine concerns that deserve attention and scrutiny, others are allegedly fabricated narratives designed to mislead the public, provoke anger and tarnish reputations.

We all know that false stories thrive on three things: emotion, anonymity and speed. A sensational headline attracts more clicks than an ordinary fact. A faceless account can publish what a responsible individual would hesitate to say publicly. And by the time the facts are verified, the falsehood may have travelled around the world twice, as the old proverb suggests.

There are also desperate individuals seeking the attention of the Governor, who are prepared to go to any length to concoct stories, oblivious to the damage such actions could inflict on the state.

They have repeatedly claimed that Governor Monday Okpebholo has done nothing, while exploit-

ing public sentiments over insecurity in the country.

But, as the CAN chairman rightly pointed out, there are several positive things the Governor has done, which Edo people should be proud of.

What, however, do we find today? Armchair critics who appear unable to recognise the efforts of the Governor and who continue to circulate false narratives.

The damage is not limited to one individual. When false stories target a sitting governor, the target is also Edo State. Investors may become hesitant, development partners may raise questions, and citizens may lose confidence. The image of our state, the Heartbeat of the Nation, inevitably suffers.

It is therefore disturbing that some individuals have made themselves serial critics of the government, deliberately closing their eyes to the strides recorded by the administration so far.

They have refused to acknowledge that no government anywhere is perfect.

They also forget that when they succeed in destroying what they ought to help build, it is the people who ultimately suffer the consequences.

While constructive criticism strengthens democracy, such criticism must be anchored on facts.

Every allegation should be subjected to verification before it is presented as truth.

In Edo State, some individuals, apparently belonging to opposition political parties, are unhappy with the achievements of a Governor whom they least expected to perform beyond their expectations in less than two years.

Several statements have been issued by armchair critics seeking to discredit the government of Senator Monday Okpebholo. Among other allegations, they have accused the Governor of doing nothing and failing to address insecurity in the state.

Interestingly, they appear not to recognise how the administration's transformative development blueprint, Project SHINE, is impacting Edo people. The programme, which stands for Security, Health, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Food Sufficiency, and Education, is designed to address critical areas of development across the state.

The Governor is not merely interested in keeping a blueprint on paper but in translating it into projects and programmes that Edo citizens can

see and benefit from, including the Ramat Park Flyover and several other projects across the state.

Governor Okpebholo has remained focused on the successful implementation of the five-point SHINE agenda for the development of Edo State and has refused to be distracted by political attacks.

It must be emphasised that Governor Okpebholo, like every public official, is accountable to the people and can be scrutinised through verifiable data, official records and responsible journalism. That is how democracy grows and flourishes.

However, the spread of unverified claims does the opposite. It distracts the government from its responsibilities, divides communities and wastes valuable energy that should be channelled into building roads, schools and hospitals.

One would have expected critics of the Governor to acknowledge the bold initiatives that have turned Edo into a construction site, with massive road construction and rehabilitation, school and hospital projects, two flyover bridges, the revival of the New Edo Line Transport Service, agricultural development and food security programmes, as well as support for local farmers and sustainable food production.

Edo people are witnesses to how the Governor has moved to address challenges inherited by his administration, providing solutions to years of underdevelopment across the state.

The critics should be discussing the progress of work on the Gelelege Road, the completion of the Evbuotubu Road in Egor Local Government Area, and the road linking Ekenhuan to Siluko Road, which has brought significant relief and restored economic activities in the area.

They should also acknowledge the construction of the road linking 14 villages in Uhumwode, the Uromi axis and the Ekpoma-to-Uromi road projects, which are reportedly nearing completion, as well as the transformation of the rural community of Udomi in Esan Central.

In Edo North, the Ibillo Road and the Ekpeshi-Igarra roads are wearing new looks, while more than 80 schools and 160 primary health-care centres are being spread across the 18 local government areas to provide essential services to rural communities.

Work at Stella Obasanjo Hospital is nearing completion following the state government's settlement of the huge debt inherited, while the Oredo Health Centre has been adequately equipped to serve the healthcare needs of residents.

Those who continue to claim that Governor Okpebholo has done nothing should take a closer look at the projects spread across the 18 local government areas.

Critics should also open their eyes to the government's intervention to ameliorate the plight of victims of the recent fire at Oluku.

Earth-moving equipment has been handed over to local government areas to open up rural communities and complement the state government's efforts in critical infrastructural development.

If, however, critics insist they cannot see what the Governor is doing and maintain that nothing has been achieved, Edo people have no choice but to tell them to wake up from their slumber, because Edo is SHINING.

Irrespective of our political affiliations, let us protect our collective image, because Edo's reputation is built by all of us.

When false stories go viral, they risk becoming the first results when someone searches for Edo State online.

Let the truth be the first story we tell about our state.

It is important to remember that laws exist, and they must be applied responsibly.

The Cybercrimes Act and defamation laws are there for a reason, and everyone must understand the consequences of spreading harmful falsehoods.

But more important than the law is conscience. Let us not circulate information we cannot defend with facts.

While Governor Okpebholo and his administration remain open to scrutiny, citizens must equally remain committed to truth, fairness and responsible public discourse.

Edo does not need more rumours. It needs more results. And results are possible when we spend less time fighting false stories and more time building our state.

• Eubaldus Enahoro is a former Editor of the Nigerian Observer Newspaper.

Causes of accidents, caution on Nigeria roads

EVESHOTAMEN JOSEPH

Lies and unnecessary arguments are usually accredited to road accidents either immediately when they happen or after they happen. Although, accidents don't just happen like that, they are being caused by humans especially when moving with cars on the road. Sometimes, when these humans caused the accident, they refused to say the actual truth of what really caused the particular accident.

What is important in every society is being able to understand the cause of an accident and adjust to the truth, accept the blame for the particular cause. We also see that many drivers don't want to really accept wrong at any time.

The major cause of accidents on Nigeria roads is the art of driving recklessly, where the driver refused to drive consciously to see how many vehicles are coming behind and at the front but instead, some of the Nigeria drivers prefer to always enter the road like that without a proper check before entry to the roads to avoid painful accidents. As a good driver, one has to learn how to drive carefully and gently to avoid the accident that could claim lives.

There ought to be smooth driving on the road because life is better than a dead corpse. We need to be very cautious about our driving. When driving

Rough driving especially, driving at full speed without the application of the break. So many drivers do take unnecessary risk in terms of over speeding, while travelling, they tend to put their driving speed limit on the highest and when the accident occurs, they begin to blame the government for not making good roads available to some extent.

Although, the government on its own does try its best to make good roads available but sometimes when the roads are dilapidated, the body that is in charge for the monitoring, fails to do their own work as at when due. At times, we usually see a lot of pot holes that do cause accidents in the high ways which sometimes spring dangers on the road until it amounts to a dangerous accident nobody attends to it.

This is not supposed to be so. For instance, the recent disastrous fire accident at Oluku which has really gone viral in the world today was as a result of a pothole which was not taken care of by the citizens of the area.

We ought to have good roads where we are free to move at any time, where no dangers come up. We need good roads that are free of accidents and we need to always be proud of our roads, though, no road can be totally free from accidents except with proper checking and with the grace of God on an individual to be able to overcome an accident on the road.

People sometimes wait for the government to

repair roads without making efforts to ensure that a particular road is fixed. We need not to always wait for the government on anything. If we are able to do anything good with our heart for the good of the country, let us do and not to always wait and to wait usually cause a lot of damages and disaster at the end of everything.

This is also as a result of negligence of duty to cause a big disaster that is beyond expectations. When we allow disaster to happen, the result is always huge and beyond the expectations of humans, just like the recent fire incident that happened at Oluku. Several people were feared dead following a petrol tanker explosion along the road leading to Oluku, on the outskirts of Benin City, Edo State.

Also the incident triggered a fire outbreak, reportedly destroying market goods and money belonging to several traders, leaving many market women counting their losses.

Eyewitnesses and residents said the incident occurred after a petrol-laden tanker fell on the road, allegedly due to a pothole. You can see that it is just a pothole that partly caused the fire accident due to lack of maintenance on the road. We need to always ensure proper maintenance, checking and rechecking all the time to avoid the terrible accidents that usually affect lives, like that of Oluku.

Another thing that is also causing accidents on

the road is carelessness on the part of the citizens, where people fail to check their cars to see if they are suitable to enter the road or not. But we discover that people do not check their vehicles when going out. If the vehicles are properly checked, the dangers that follow the risk will be minimal.

It is always an adage if one has anything he or she needs to do, should better be done quickly, because you don't know tomorrow and anything can come up at any time. In view of the above, we see that many drivers do drive hurriedly and as a result over speeding to the place they go. There is danger in over speeding on the road. It causes accidents quickly and it affects lives quickly when it happens. Over speeding is very dangerous. Avoid it. The earlier, the better.

Accidents are also caused by drinking alcohol. A driver takes alcohol before going on a journey. Sometimes, they drink and forget that they are going on a journey, when they climb their vehicles, they could not understand their right from left. Getting drunk before driving is another dangerous thing that could cause an accident on the road. We need to be careful not to take alcoholic drinks or get ourselves drunk when we are traveling. For instance, a driver who was going to a party, alighted at a bar to a shot of drink. The driver forgot that he was on a journey, he took more of the drinks which he never wanted to take.

COLUMN

Nigeria: The comedy that never ends

Nigeria is a comedian. Yes, I say so without mincing words. In this country, some things happen that could leave the world laughing in disbelief. If Nigeria were a person, one might wonder whether it were deliberately auditioning for a global comedy show, with its citizens playing the roles of both bewildered spectators and unwilling cast members.

Yet, beneath the humour lies a troubling reality. Some of our most amusing national stories are not merely jokes; they are disturbing reflections of institutional weaknesses, questionable accountability and a culture in which extraordinary things can happen without the public receiving satisfactory explanations.

Consider the story of a purported federal agency operating from the Federal Secretariat in Abuja. It reportedly had staff, occupied office space and presented itself as a legitimate government institution. Yet, in September 2026, Reuters reported that a man had been charged with allegedly creating a fictitious agency known as the Presidential Foreign Investment Promotion Council (PFIPC). Authorities alleged that the organisation was not authorised by the Presidency, despite having secured office space and a reported federal budget allocation, while attempting to open accounts with the Central Bank of Nigeria. The defendant pleaded not guilty, according to Reuters.

Just pause and reflect on that. How could an allegedly fictitious agency penetrate the corridors of government and operate with such apparent legitimacy? Who verified its existence? Which offices examined its credentials? How did it reportedly secure public funding? And what safeguards failed along the way?

These are not questions for comedy writers. They are questions for public officials, auditors, investigators and everyone entrusted with protecting the integrity of government institutions.

Then came another episode that seemed to challenge our understanding of aviation. On 10 June 2026, a private jet landed on a paved road under construction near Asaba Airport in Delta State instead of the designated runway. According to the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau's preliminary report, the aircraft's crew had discontinued an earlier approach before attempting another. The investigation examined how the crew came to land on the wrong surface. Seven people were aboard, and no injuries were reported.

Imagine an aircraft descending towards what its crew believes is a runway, only for the intended landing surface to turn out to be a construction road! One could be forgiven for asking whether the road had suddenly acquired the status of an airport runway.

Of course, aviation incidents are serious matters, and the preliminary findings should not be treated as the final verdict. But the incident raises legitimate questions about flight safety, navigation, crew coordination and the effectiveness of the relevant safeguards. We must resist the temptation to laugh away a potentially dangerous occurrence simply because its cir-



cumstances appear bizarre.

And who can forget the celebrated Nigerian snake that allegedly swallowed N35 million belonging to the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB)?

In February 2018, a staff member at JAMB's Makurdi office reportedly claimed that a mysterious snake had swallowed money she could not account for during an audit. The story became a national sensation. It was so extraordinary that Senator Shehu Sani visited JAMB's headquarters with snake charmers and snake repellents in a satirical attempt to help recover the missing money.

The matter was subsequently investigated by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and the official was arraigned alongside other defendants in May 2019 over alleged offences connected with missing funds.

What an incredible country! In other places, an unexplained financial discrepancy might prompt a forensic audit. Here, a snake entered the national conversation as a possible suspect in the disappearance of public money.

But let us be serious. The real issue was never whether a snake could swallow millions of naira. It was whether public funds had been properly accounted for, whether the relevant financial controls had worked and whether the investigation would establish responsibility. The snake was a comic distraction; accountability was the real business.

Then came the rodents in the Presidential Villa.

In August 2017, Nigerians learnt that President Muhammadu Buhari would work from his residence rather than his official office following reports that rodents had damaged furniture and air-conditioning equipment during his absence from the country.

Meanwhile, TheCable reported that N4.953 billion had been appropriated in 2017 for the routine maintenance of mechanical and electrical installations, building and civil works, and environmental services within and around the Presidential Villa.

Yet, rodents allegedly damaged the President's office!

One could hardly invent a more ironic story. The nation's seat of power, with its considerable maintenance budget, had reportedly been inconvenienced by rats. The president's office was affected by creatures that most households would expect to control with ordinary pest-management measures.

Was the problem simply an unfortunate maintenance failure? Were the funds adequately utilised? What improvements followed? These are the questions that matter beyond the initial laughter.

The latest aviation episode has provided yet another reason for Nigerians to shake their heads in disbelief. On 15 October 2026, a private jet operated by Triton Aviation reported-

ly lost a door shortly after taking off from Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport in Abuja. The crew declared an emergency and returned safely to the airport. No injuries were reported, and the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau subsequently announced an investigation into the incident.

A door detaching from an aircraft at approximately 3,500 feet! What next? Will a ship sail out of port and report that its captain mistook the Atlantic Ocean for a swimming pool? Or will a train arrive at its destination with the tracks still searching for it?

The humour almost writes itself. Nevertheless, we must remember that the safe return of the aircraft does not diminish the seriousness of the incident. The investigation must establish what happened, why it happened and what corrective measures are necessary to prevent a recurrence.

These episodes and many others are not identical, and they should not be carelessly lumped together as proof that every Nigerian institution is dysfunctional. Some have prompted formal investigations, regulatory action or court proceedings. Nevertheless, they share a troubling ability to capture public attention through their sheer absurdity, leaving citizens asking how such things could happen

in the first place.

Indeed, Nigeria's capacity to endure adversity is remarkable. Our people survive economic hardship, rising living costs, insecurity, unemployment and inadequate public services with a resilience that deserves admiration. We laugh at our troubles, exchange jokes on social media, compose songs about our misfortunes and find reasons to celebrate even when circumstances are bleak.

Sometimes, however, I wonder whether our humour has become a convenient coping mechanism for an exhausting national experience.

The late Afrobeat maestro Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, captured this contradiction brilliantly in his evergreen song, "Suffering and Smiling". His music exposed the irony of people enduring hardship while maintaining outward cheerfulness. Decades later, the expression remains relevant to a society where laughter can coexist with frustration, and where public outrage may evaporate before the underlying problems are resolved.

Perhaps we have become so accustomed to extraordinary occurrences that we no longer demand extraordinary explanations. We laugh, create memes, assign nicknames to the latest scandal and move on to the next trending story. Before long, yesterday's outrage becomes tomorrow's forgotten headline.

The grievances that recently fuelled unrest in France must be viewed against the prolonged hardship, frustration and indignities that Nigerians have endured for decades.

This is where my concern lies.

What happens after the laughter? What becomes of the investigations? Are recommendations implemented? Are responsible individuals held to account where wrongdoing is established? Do institutions review their procedures and close the loopholes that allowed the incidents to occur?

These questions are essential because publicity is not accountability. An arrest is not a conviction. The announcement of an investigation is not proof that its findings have been acted upon. Equally, the absence of a widely publicised conclusion does not automatically establish that nothing was done. What citizens deserve is credible information about the progress and outcome of matters of legitimate public interest.

The danger is that, when explanations are delayed, incomplete or inaccessible, public confidence suffers. Citizens begin to suspect that influential individuals can escape scrutiny, that official investigations can lose momentum and that embarrassing matters can quietly disappear from public consciousness.

Such suspicions become even more damaging when ethnicity, political loyalty, nepotism and favouritism are perceived to influence the administration of justice. In a country as diverse as Nigeria, public institutions must demonstrate that the same standards apply regardless of an individual's ethnic background, political connections, social standing or access to power.

It would be unfair to conclude, without evidence, that every unresolved matter has been swept under the carpet because of ethnic consid-

erations. Nevertheless, the perception that connections can protect the powerful is itself a serious problem. The antidote is not speculation or accusation; it is transparent, consistent and impartial enforcement of the law.

Our institutions must also recognise the importance of institutional memory. Investigations should produce documented findings, corrective measures and follow-up reports. Where a case enters the judicial process, the public should receive accurate updates on significant developments, subject to the requirements of due process and the rights of the accused. Where a safety investigation identifies deficiencies, regulators and operators should demonstrate how the recommendations are being implemented.

The media have an equally important responsibility. Journalists should revisit significant stories after the initial excitement has faded, track investigations, examine public expenditure and question official explanations. Investigative journalism is not merely about breaking scandals; it is also about following the evidence until the public understands what happened and what has changed.

Government agencies, meanwhile, must communicate clearly and consistently. They should not wait until a scandal erupts before explaining their procedures. Proactive disclosure, accessible records and regular progress reports can help restore confidence and reduce the space in which rumours flourish.

Above all, Nigerians must learn to distinguish between laughing at an absurd situation and accepting the conditions that made it possible. Humour can expose contradictions, challenge authority and make difficult truths accessible. But humour becomes counterproductive when it replaces scrutiny and allows those responsible for public administration to escape difficult questions.

Nigeria may be a comedian, but the country should not become a theatre where public institutions repeatedly perform acts of incompetence without consequence. Our citizens deserve more than entertainment from their leaders. They deserve institutions that work, investigations that inspire confidence, regulations that are enforced and public money that is properly accounted for.

The next time a bizarre Nigerian story sends social media into a frenzy, let us enjoy the jokes if we must. Then let us ask the more important questions: Who is responsible? What does the evidence show? What action has been taken? And what has changed to prevent a recurrence?

Until we develop the discipline to ask these questions and insist on credible answers, our national comedy will continue. The only difference is that the jokes will keep changing, while the underlying problems remain stubbornly familiar.

Nigeria must learn to laugh at its absurdities without becoming comfortable with them.

• **Kelly Odaro, PhD**, is a columnist and lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria.

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Journalists should revisit significant stories after the initial excitement has faded, track investigations, examine public expenditure and question official explanations.

ArtsWorld

with
Francis Odupute
08023680030

“I want my music to inspire people to keep pushing” — TJ VYBEZ

The Nigerian music industry continues to provide a platform for emerging talents determined to tell their stories through sound, rhythm and creativity. Among the artists working to establish a distinct identity is TJ VYBEZ, whose music reflects the realities, ambitions and experiences of young Nigerians.

The emerging Afro sounds sensation discusses his creative evolution, the inspiration behind his music, his *I Must Succeed* EP and the decision to bring Nollywood-style storytelling into his latest music video. With tracks such as *Illegal*; *Myself*; *Available*; and *Baddie*; featured on his EP, *I Must Succeed*, alongside songs including *Garden*, TJ VYBEZ is developing a catalogue that reflects his artistic growth and determination to connect with listeners.

His song *YAWA* takes that creative expression further, combining catchy street-inspired lyrics with themes of courage, self-confidence and perseverance. The project also features a cinematic music video directed by INO MOSES, a multiple award-winning Nollywood Director, bringing together contemporary Nigerian music and dramatic visual storytelling.

TJ VYBEZ shares his perspective on the music business, artistic development and the motivation behind his creative work with The NIGERIAN OBSERVER Newspapers in an interview:

Q: Your music is beginning to attract attention. How would you introduce TJ VYBEZ to someone hearing about you for the first time?

A: I see myself as a creative person who uses music to express feelings, experiences and the realities of everyday life. My music is inspired by things happening around me, the challenges people face and the desire to achieve something meaningful. I want to make music that people can enjoy while also recognizing parts of their own experiences in the lyrics. For me, it is about creating a connection with listeners.

Q: Your latest creative project, *YAWA*, carries a very bold message. What was going through your mind when you developed the song?

A: The inspiration came from the need to remain determined regardless of what life brings your way. When you are trying to achieve something, there will always be challenges, distractions and situations that test your confidence. *YAWA* expresses the attitude of someone who understands his direction and is unwilling to be discouraged. The song has an entertaining side, but underneath that energy is a message about staying focused.

Q: The phrase “If you try to cross my lane — *YAWA*” stands out in the song. What does it represent?

A: It represents confidence and the determination to protect your dreams. Sometimes people misunderstand your ambitions or try to distract you from what you are building. You have to know what you want and remain committed to it. For me, the

expression is not simply about confrontation. It is also about having the courage to continue your journey despite obstacles.

Q: Many young Nigerians can relate to the themes in your music. How much of your personal environment influences your songwriting?

A: My environment plays a major role in the way I create music. The conversations people have, the challenges they experience and the way they express themselves all contribute to the ideas behind my songs. I believe music becomes more meaningful when people can identify with it. That is why I try to maintain a sense of authenticity in my lyrics and delivery.

Q: Your EP, *I Must Succeed*, features songs including *Illegal*, *Myself*, *Available* and *Baddie*. What does that project say about your development as an artist?

A: The project reflects my desire to keep growing and discovering different aspects of my creativity. Each song gives me an opportunity to explore an idea, experiment with my sound and improve my approach to music. I don't want to remain at the same level creatively. I want every project to contribute something to my development as an artist.

Q: Looking at the title *I Must Succeed*, would you say success is a major motivation behind your music?

A: Absolutely. Success is something many young people are working towards, and I am no different. However, success is not only about recognition or money. It is also about personal growth, discipline and being able to look back and see how far you have come. I believe that if you remain committed to your goals, continue learning and taking your opportunities seriously, you give yourself a better chance of achieving something meaningful.

Q: *YAWA* is being presented through a cinematic music video. Why was it important to approach the visuals differently?

A: I wanted people to experience the music in a way that went beyond simply watching me perform. A song can create pictures in your mind, and I believe a music video should help bring those pictures to life. We wanted to introduce characters, emotions and situations that would make the video interesting as a story while still maintaining the energy of the music.

Q: You collaborated with INO MOSES, a multiple award-winning Nollywood Director. What attracted you to his approach?

A: The important thing for me was working with someone who understood how to tell a story through pictures. INO MOSES brought a cinematic perspective to the project, which helped shape the way the music could be interpreted visually. The objective was to create something that would entertain viewers while communicating the message behind the song.

Q: What makes the *YAWA* video

special?

A: I like the fact that the concept focuses on a journey. It explores ambition, relationships, challenges and the decisions people make while trying to move forward in life. There is energy and entertainment, but there are also moments that reflect everyday experiences. I believe that combination gives the video its character.

Q: Do you think Nigerian musicians should explore more collaboration with filmmakers?

A: Definitely. Music and filmmaking are both forms of storytelling, and they can strengthen each other. A filmmaker brings an understanding of characters, emotions, lighting and visual presentation. When those elements are combined with music, the result can be more engaging. I think these kinds of collaborations can also help Nigerian artists create content that appeals to wider audiences.

Q: With so many emerging artists competing for attention, how do you intend to establish your own place in the industry?

A: I believe the most important thing is to stay original and remain consistent. You cannot build a lasting career by depending only on what is popular at a particular moment. You have to develop your identity, understand your strengths and continue improving. I want people to recognize my music for its energy, sincerity and the experiences it represents.

Q: What are some of the things you hope to achieve in the coming years?

A: I want to continue developing as an artist, release more quality music and connect with a larger audience. I also want to collaborate with other talented people who can contribute positively to my growth. My ambition is to build a music career that reaches listeners across Nigeria,



The emerging artiste, TJ VYBEZ

Africa and beyond.

Q: What would you say to talented young people who are struggling to find opportunities in the entertainment industry?

A: I would encourage them not to give up on their dreams. Talent is important, but you also need discipline, patience and the willingness to keep learning. There will be difficult moments, but you should not allow temporary setbacks to determine your future. Keep developing your skills, maintain good relationships and be prepared when opportunities come.

Q: Finally, what message do you

have for your supporters and everyone following your musical journey?

A: I sincerely appreciate everyone who has supported my music and encouraged me to continue. Every listener, every person who shares my songs and everyone who believes in what I am doing contributes to the journey; even The NIGERIAN OBSERVER Newspapers, who are offering media exposure to my journey.

I want them to keep supporting TJ VYBEZ, enjoy *YAWA* and look forward to more music. There is still a lot I want to achieve, and I believe the journey is only beginning.

CARTOON

By Francis Odupute



Gas Over Petrol: The CNG Revolution and Edo's Quiet Transport Rebirth under Okpebholo



GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO AND CNG BUSES

LARETH SOLOMON

Benin City woke up to a different sound on Thursday, October 15, 2026. It was not the usual roar of petrol engines and black smoke. At Garrick Memorial Field, Ekehu Road, 50 brand new white and green buses stood in a straight line, silent, clean, and ready. They were not running on petrol. They were running on Compressed Natural Gas, CNG. And with their commissioning, Governor Monday Okpebholo quietly announced Edo's entry into Nigeria's gas future.

"Governance is not measured by how loudly a government speaks, but by its tangible impact. These 50 CNG buses will reduce transport costs for workers, traders and students," the governor said, as Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, unveiled the set.

For many who were there, it looked like just another commissioning ceremony. But for transport economists, it was a revolution. And Edo is not new to — the state is building on history.

FROM EDO LINE TO ECTS: THE STORY OF COMEBACK

To understand the significance of these 50 buses, you must understand where Edo transport was. For years, the Edo City Transport Service, ECTS, was almost dead. Buses were grounded, routes abandoned, and private keke and Okada took over, charging exploitative fares. Inter-state travel was worse. The famous Edo Line, which once connected Benin to Lagos, Abuja and the North with pride, col-

When Governor Okpebholo came in under his SHINE Agenda, his first move was not to buy new buses for optics. He revived Edo Line with 100 Toyota Hiace buses. That move restored inter-state confidence. Drivers were recalled, mechanics re-engaged, routes reopened. Edo people could again board Edo Line at Ramat Park and be sure of reaching their destination.

The 50 CNG buses are Phase Two. While Edo Line handles inter-state, ECTS will now handle intra-city and inter-LGA movements across Edo South, Edo Central and Edo North. The plan, according to Government House sources, is to deploy 20 buses to Edo South (Benin metropolis, Ovia, Orhiomwun, Ikpoba Okha), 15 to Edo Central (Ekpoma, Uromi, Irrua) and 15 to Edo North (Auchi, Igarra, Agenebode). That spread is political wisdom and economic sense. It says every senatorial district matters.

WHY CNG AND WHY NOW?

Nigeria removed fuel subsidy in 2023. Since then, petrol price has jumped from N195 to over N1,000 per litre in many cities. Transport fare is the first casualty. A worker in Benin who used to spend N500 daily to work now spends N2,000. Traders who bring tomatoes from Auchi to Benin now add transport cost to market price, fuelling inflation. Students miss classes because they cannot afford Keke fare.

President Bola Tinubu's government responded with the Presidential CNG Initiative, Pi-CNG, pushing for conversion from petrol to gas. The

largest gas reserves in the world — over 200 trillion cubic feet — but we flare it and import petrol. CNG is 40-50 percent cheaper than petrol, cleaner, and engines last longer.

A litre of petrol gives you about 8-10km. One standard cubic meter of CNG, which costs about N300-N400 compared to petrol at N1,000+, gives similar distance but with less engine wear and almost zero soot.

For Edo State, this is strategic. Edo is a gas state. Oben Gas Plant in Edo produces significant gas. So running CNG buses in Edo is using what you have to solve what you lack. It is energy sovereignty at sub-national level.

THE ECONOMICS FOR COMMON MAN

Let us break down what this means for a regular Edo person.

Mr. Sunday Kolawole, NURTW Chairman, Benin Chapter, who spoke at Garrick Field, said drivers are happy. But more importantly, passengers will be happier. If ECTS runs CNG buses at regulated affordable fares — say N300 from Ring Road to Oluku, instead of N700 charged by Keke — a worker saves N800 daily. In 22 working days, that is N17,600 saved. That is school fees for a child.

For traders, it reduces cost of moving goods. A woman who carries plantain from Ugboke to New Benin Market spends less on transport, so she can sell cheaper and still profit. That reduces food inflation.

For students of University of Benin, Edo State University Uzairue, Ambrose Alli University, the buses mean they can move between campuses afford-

ation, that is critical.

THE CHALLENGES NO ONE SHOULD IGNORE

But CNG is not magic. Officials at the event were honest: its success will depend on refueling infrastructure, maintenance and effective fleet management.

As of October 2026, Nigeria has less than 50 active CNG refueling stations nationwide. Edo has only two — one at Obagie and one being built at Ikpoba Hill. If you have 50 buses but only one station, you will have queues and breakdowns. The state must invest in at least 5 daughter stations across the three senatorial districts.

Maintenance is second. CNG engines are different from petrol engines. You need trained technicians, not roadside mechanics. Edo must train at least 100 CNG technicians in partnership with NIPCO, Bovas and other Pi-CNG partners. Otherwise, when a bus develops a fault in Agenebode, it will be abandoned.

Fleet management is third. Who manages ticketing? How do you prevent revenue leakage? How do you ensure buses don't become political buses used only during campaigns? The answer is technology: deploy electronic ticketing, GPS tracking, and publish monthly revenue and ridership data, as Lagos does with BRT.

If Edo gets these three right, the 50 buses will be the beginning, not the end.

WHAT OTHER STATES ARE DOING

Edo is not alone. Ogun State has

started CNG BRT. Niger State has ordered 200. Kogi Governor Ahmed Ododo, who was present at Garrick Field, is also pushing CNG in Lokoja. So there is peer learning. Edo can learn from Ogun's maintenance model and Lagos's BRT regulation.

THE GREEN ANGLE

There is also a climate angle. Petrol buses emit carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and soot that pollute Benin air. Benin, known for its cleanliness in the 70s, now suffers from air pollution due to old vehicles. CNG emits 20-30 percent less CO2 and up to 90 percent less particulate matter. For a city preparing for Oba Ewuare II's 10th Coronation Anniversary with thousands of visitors, cleaner air matters. It is also good for Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions under Paris Agreement.

CONCLUSION: A QUIET REVOLUTION

Governor Okpebholo did not make noise about these buses. He simply commissioned them. But the impact is loud.

For the first time in many years, Edo people will see a government bus system that is affordable, runs on Nigerian gas, and covers all three zones. If sustained, it will reduce poverty, reduce pollution, and restore dignity to public transport.

At Garrick Field, after the First Lady left, children climbed into the buses to take selfies. Drivers smiled. Market women calculated how much they would save. That picture tells the story more than any speech.

CNG is not just fuel. In Edo today, it

The gender dimension: What Oba Ewuare II honour for Oluremi Tinubu means for Edo culture at 10



L-R: Oba of Benin HRM Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolopolo, Oba Ewuare II, First Lady of Nigeria, Oluremi Tinubu, Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo and Kogi State Governor, Usman Ododo when the First Lady paid a courtesy visit to the Oba's palace on the sideline of her visit to Edo State on Thursday 15th October 2026.

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

There are visits, and there are blessings. When Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, entered the hallowed courtyard of the Palace of the Oba of Benin on Thursday, October 15, 2026, it was not just a courtesy call. It was a cultural homecoming and a strategic honour at a historic moment — 10 years of Oba Ewuare II on the throne of his forefathers.

The Benin Palace does not honour people lightly. Benin monarchy is over 900 years old, one of the oldest continuous monarchies in the world. When the Oba speaks, it is history speaking. And when he lauds a sitting First Lady for projecting Nigeria positively on the global stage, as he did on Thursday, it is a statement that goes beyond protocol.

The Oba's address, delivered by his daughter, Princess Ikuoyemwen Aimuwa Ewuare, was precise and layered. "We have watched with pride your international engagements, including the acknowledgement recently received from US President Donald Trump. Such recognition is not only an honour to you but also pride to the entire nation," the Oba said.

That line matters. In September 2026, Senator Tinubu was acknowledged during a US-Africa First Ladies dialogue in New York for her work on women and children through Renewed Hope Initiative. For the Oba to reference it shows the Palace follows global affairs and understands soft power. Benin Kingdom has always understood diplomacy — from the Portuguese in the 15th century to the British in 1897

and now to America. Projecting Nigeria positively is not flattery; it is foreign policy at the royal level.

LET'S CONSIDER WHY THIS HONOUR MATTERS NOW: 10 YEARS OF EWUARE II

Oba Ewuare II ascended the throne on October 20, 2016, after the passing of his father, Oba Erediauwa. His coronation anniversary is not just a party. It is an audit of a decade.

In 10 years, Oba Ewuare II has redefined traditional rulership. He secured the return of looted Benin Bronzes from Europe — over 50 artifacts returned from Germany, Netherlands and USA since 2022. He built the Edo Museum of West African Art, EMOWAA, in partnership with state and international donors. He revived the Igue Festival as a global cultural tourism event. He mediated in community land disputes and spoke against human trafficking, which has stigmatized Edo youth.

He also created the Oba Ewuare II Foundation, the institutional arm of his reign. The Foundation's focus — scholarships for indigent students, promotion of Edo language, vocational training, and rehabilitation of victims of human trafficking and irregular migration — shows a monarch who knows culture without human development is empty.

This is why his call for alliance with the First Lady's Renewed Hope Initiative is strategic, not ceremonial. RHI focuses on women, children, education, and empowerment. Oba Ewuare II Foundation focuses on women, children, culture, and trafficking vic-

tims. The overlap is 80 percent. Partnership would mean RHI provides federal funding and national reach; Palace provides cultural legitimacy and community trust.

In Edo, if the Palace says, "Do not traffic your daughter to Libya," families listen more than if government says it. That is the power of culture.

OF COURSE, WE NEED TO MENTION THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BENIN MONARCHY

There is irony that a First Lady was honoured by a Palace where women have historically been powerful. Benin has a rich history of female power: Queen Idia, mother of Oba Esigie in the 16th century, was a warrior queen who went to war. Her ivory mask is the symbol of FESTAC 77. Queen Ewuare's mother, Queen Ikuoyemwen, wielded influence. Today, Princesses like Ikuoyemwen Aimuwa Ewuare are frontline ambassadors of the throne.

When the Oba used his daughter to deliver his message, he was making a statement about women leadership. It aligns with First Lady Tinubu's own message at Garrick Field on girls' education.

In Benin tradition, when the Oba blesses a woman, it is not just personal; it is institutional. It means the entire Benin traditional council, chiefs, and Enigie are behind her mission. For Senator Tinubu, who came with 5,000 women empowerment, that blessing converts a political programme into a culturally sanctioned movement.

There was the Politics Without Politics too!

Interestingly, the Palace avoided partisan politics. The Oba did not mention APC, PDP, or 2027 elections. He spoke about peace, unity, and development. That is the Palace's genius. While Garrick Field was political with party uniforms and slogans, the Palace was statesmanlike.

Governor Monday Okpebholo, Kogi Governor Ahmed Ododo, Senator Adams Oshiomhole, and other politicians who accompanied the First Lady to the Palace understood this. You can campaign at Garrick, but at the Palace, you listen.

The First Lady's response showed understanding. "I thank His Royal Majesty for his fatherly blessings and pray for long life on the throne. His reign has brought peace and cultural revival," she said. She pledged that RHI would be open to working with Oba Ewuare II Foundation, especially on girls education and trafficking — two issues dear to Edo.

WHAT PARTNERSHIP COULD LOOK LIKE

If this alliance happens, what would it look like in practice? Three possibilities:

First, joint scholarship scheme. Oba Ewuare II Foundation already gives scholarships to indigent students who speak Edo language. RHI could co-fund 1,000 additional scholarships for Edo girls in secondary and tertiary institutions, with condition that they learn Edo language and mentor other girls.

Second, joint skills centre. A RHI-Oba Ewuare II Foundation Skills Acquisition Centre at Oba Akenzua II Cultural Centre, where victims of traf-

ficking are trained in tailoring, hair-dressing, catering, and ICT, then given starter packs. This would complement the food festival, art exhibition, trade fair, and skills acquisition already planned for the 10th anniversary.

Third, advocacy. Palace queens and women chiefs could become RHI champions against harmful practices like female genital mutilation, child marriage, and trafficking, using palace town criers and traditional communication channels.

A DECADE, A BLESSING, A FUTURE

As Benin prepares for the grand 10th coronation anniversary — expected to feature Calabar Carnival troupe, Durbar from the North, and Benin cultural groups — the First Lady's visit is a curtain raiser. It signals that Benin Kingdom is not isolated; it is nationally and internationally recognized.

For Nigerian Observer readers, the lesson is this: traditional institutions are not relics. When properly positioned, they are development partners. Oba Ewuare II has shown that a throne can be both ancient and modern, sacred and developmental.

His honour for Oluremi Tinubu is therefore not just a honour for one woman. It is an honour for Nigerian women who project the nation positively, for Edo culture that has survived 900 years, and for a partnership that could redefine how First Lady's office and traditional stools collaborate.

In the end, the First Lady left the Palace with more than photos. She left with royal blessings, which in Benin, are weightier than any communiqué.

NEWS

FOREIGN

US orders some diplomats to leave Saudi Arabia as Houthi attacks escalate

The US State Department has ordered some diplomats and their families to leave Saudi Arabia as attacks escalate, with three people killed in strikes across the country.

Saudi authorities said debris from a drone intercepted during an attempted attack on

an oil field killed two people, while one person died after a strike at the King Fahd International Airport in Dammam.

Conflict between Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis and Saudi Arabia has been rising in the past month.

The Houthis have responded to Saudi strikes by launching missiles and drones at airports,

energy facilities and military bases in Saudi Arabia. A recent strike on Riyadh's international airport was the deadliest in the kingdom in years.

"The US Department of State issued an ordered departure for non-emergency US government employees and their family members in Saudi Arabia,"

a state department spokesperson said in a statement.

"Iranian-supported Houthis have increasingly engaged in hostilities against Saudi Arabia, including attacks on civilian airports and other critical infrastructure resulting in civilian casualties and severe travel disruptions," it added.

The spokesperson also warned "the hostilities have the potential to escalate rapidly".

In the latest attack on the King Fahd International Airport eight people sustained injuries that ranged from "minor to serious", officials said.

No details of the attack have yet been given, but the strike

comes after airports in Saudi Arabia have been repeatedly targeted by Houthi forces.

The energy ministry has also not said who had launched the drone aimed at the Shaybah oil field near the border with the United Arab Emirates that left two people injured.

How Arab parties could hold critical balance of power in Israeli election

At rush hour in Nazareth, the largest Arab-majority city in Israel, students are handing out leaflets by the roadside urging motorists to vote in next week's closely fought, general election. Polls indicate that Arab parties could be left holding a critical balance of power.

Disaffection has often driven down past turnout among Arab Israelis - who account for about a fifth of the population and often describe themselves as Palestinian citizens of Israel. But this election, there is a strong push to get rid of the most right-wing governing coalition in the country's history - an alliance between veteran Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and far-right and ultra-Orthodox parties.

"I see it as our duty to bring down this extremist government. They treat us as second-class," says Arkan Badran, 23, who is with the students giving out flyers. "I call on all young men and women to vote for Arab lists, which represent us, because this is our future."

All but one of the leading Jewish parties have ruled out

forming a coalition government with Arab parties

Most opinion polls indicate that neither Netanyahu and his partners nor the main "Change Bloc", led by centre-right former military chief Gadi Eisenkot, has a clear path to a parliamentary majority.

If they are right, after the election anti-Netanyahu parties wanting to form a governing coalition would either have to go back on pledges not to work with the prime minister or make a deal with Arab-majority lists.

A major sticking point is that Eisenkot has so far ruled out forming a government with Arab parties, citing a lack of shared values.

Israel's politics and society have been changed by the deadly, unprecedented Hamas-led assault on the country on 7 October 2023, and subsequent war in Gaza. There is increased mistrust of and hostility towards the country's Arab minority.

Salman Mousa accuses ministers of "systematic discrimination and incitement" against Arab Israelis



Students in Nazareth are handing out leaflets encouraging Arab Israelis to vote in next week's election

Canada accused of election meddling ahead of US midterms

The US Embassy in Ottawa has accused Canadian officials of election meddling ahead of the November midterms.

The embassy said Canadian leaders have brushed off concerns over "potential interference", and that ministers and premiers "openly describe plans to influence American politics in official documents and public appearances".

Canadian leaders, including Prime Minister Mark Carney, have dismissed the claims. Relations between the North American neighbours have hardened during second Trump administration.

The midterms will determine which political party controls both branches of the US Congress, which could have a significant impact on the rest of Donald Trump's presidency.

The fact sheet released by the US Embassy on Wednesday alleges the Canadian government "brushes off concerns about potential interference in U.S. elections, even as its ministers and premiers openly describe plans to influence American politics in official documents and public appearances".

It cites comments and actions, like meetings with US Democrats and calling for retaliatory tariffs against the US.

For example, it says that when Industry Minister Melanie Joly was asked what she expected regarding tariffs if Democrats were to win midterm elections, she responded, "That's exactly why

I'm meeting so many governors and potential presidential candidates."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford pushed Canada's federal government, it states, to consider additional retaliatory tariffs on imports from "politically significant states to the current administration's base of support".

Asked on Wednesday about the allegations, Carney noted that it was the US that first initiated trade actions against Canada.

"We've responded to those to protect Canadian jobs, to protect Canadian companies and development of our economy," Carney said.

He said his government's response has been "in the interests of Canadian workers, Canadian families and the future of this economy".

Carney, who was announcing a nearly C\$9bn (\$6.2bn) aid package in response to US tariffs, was accompanied by both Joly and Ford.

Ford said that he has "no interest at all" in interfering in US elections.

"I'll tell you what the American people want. They want certainty, they want stability," Ford said, adding that he will focus on Ontario and Canada.

"The people of the United States will make that determination in the midterms," he said.

Last week, Minister Joly denied Canadian interference and said that Canadians "never accept that also being done to us in Canada", according to CBC.

She said that her recent visits to the US were "to attract investments" from American compa-

nies, which she plans to continue.

Washington and Ottawa have argued for months over tariffs and trade, which once flowed freely across their borders, and the effects of Canada's counter measures.

Earlier this month, US Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra warned that US officials are "closely watching" Canada's politicians for signs of election interference.

Trump administration officials have also been accused of making inappropriate remarks about the separation referendum in the province of Alberta this week.

A petition calling for Hoekstra's removal from his post for "undermining the Canada-U.S. diplomatic relations" has received more than 280,000 signatures.

When in the forest, Shukrani fell ill and his condition deteriorated because medication was banned.

"My mother would throw away all the medicine I was supposed to take because she believed that only God could heal me," Shukrani said.

The community was described as mud houses scattered across the vast forest. "We lived a quiet normal life, fasting for a few days then having a small meal," Shukrani said.

By March 2023 when the first remains were discovered by local herders, hundreds of people had died. "We would carry someone out of the forest but they were so frail that they would die in our arms," explained Salim Karisa, one of the gravediggers.

Shukrani was one of the men

rescued from the forest in March 2023.

He was ill and bed-ridden for weeks until that point, but his condition worsened because his mother would throw away all the medication he needed to recover.

"My mother believed Pastor Mackenzie's doctrine that medicine was evil," Shukrani said.

"I would have died if I wasn't rescued from Shakahola forest."

Peter Shukrani says he would have died if he had stayed in the forest but still believes Mackenzie is a good man

In the 298 pages detailing the charges against him in the current case, 190 victims out the 191 Mackenzie and his followers are accused of murdering are children.

Many of the bodies are still unidentified, owing to their advanced state of decomposition.

In the court documents, several are referred to as "unknown male child" and identified by the location of their grave and date of their discovery.

Despite the suffering endured by Mackenzie's followers, men, women and children who died due to starvation, strangulation and even being bludgeoned to death, as well as his own suffering, Shukrani believes Mackenzie was "a good person who cares for me".

"Mackenzie didn't force anyone to fast. People made those choices by themselves because of their beliefs," Shukrani said.

"I still love him and he is still my pastor."

In contrast Dan Mackenzie believes his father should be found guilty of murder.

New Mexico sues Epstein lawyer and accountant, accusing them of hiding his sex crimes

Prosecutors in the US state of New Mexico have filed a civil lawsuit against two longtime aides of Jeffrey Epstein, accusing the men of profiting from the late financier's sex trafficking ring.

Lawyer Darren Indyke and accountant Richard Kahn are the sole executors of Epstein's estate, controlling all his wealth and possessions. They have denied any role in his crimes.

New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez says they played a key role in concealing abuse at Epstein's remote Zorro Ranch near the city of Santa Fe, and that they continue to earn money while victims seek accountability.

The lawsuit is separate to the state's ongoing criminal probe into Epstein, which was relaunched in February.

An attorney representing both Indyke and Kahn told the

BBC that they "emphatically reject" the claims in the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed in New Mexico on Wednesday under the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act and New Mexico Racketeering Act.

During a news conference, Torrez argued that the two men are blocking efforts by Epstein's victims to seek compensation from his fortune, estimated at roughly \$635m (£474m) at the time of his death.

"Those resources rightfully belong in the hands of survivors - there should be no distribution of Mr Epstein's remaining assets to people like Mr Indyke and Mr Kahn for participation in what I think is one of the most horrific criminal enterprises in modern America," he said.

Both men worked with Epstein for decades, and have previously testified to Congress that they were unaware of the crimes he committed alongside accomplice Ghislane Maxwell.

Missiles hit Kyiv after Russia agrees to US call to resume Ukraine peace talks

Ukraine's capital has come under a new missile attack, hours after Russia said it was "ready in principle" to resume peace talks and the US president said the world was "the closest we've been" to ending the war. Several houses were hit on Wednesday night, injuring six people, Kyiv Mayor Vitaliy Klitschko said.

The attack came amid a new diplomatic push led by Donald Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. Witkoff met Russia's President Vladimir Putin in the city of St Petersburg on Wednesday - a day after meeting Ukraine's leader.

Three-way talks were paused in February, after which Russia stepped up attacks as Ukraine ran out of Western-supplied interceptors to defend against missiles.

Speaking on Wednesday, Trump said: "The other day I

was talking to Vladimir Putin about settling his war with Ukraine, which I think we're getting closer to, by the way, maybe now the closest we've been."

The US president has so far failed to bring the Russia-Ukraine war to an end despite his repeated comments that he would be able to achieve this.

Rosenberg: US diplomatic push offers little hope for imminent Ukraine peace

Trump's special envoy Witkoff went to St Petersburg after meeting Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky as well as the leaders of Norway and Finland in the Norwegian capital, Oslo, on Tuesday.

It is not clear what specific proposals Witkoff brought to Putin, but Zelensky said after the talks that "strong" security guarantees for Ukraine and energy ceasefire proposals had been discussed.

Putin's aide Yuri Ushakov said their ideas were not very "useful".

Top officials from Russia, Ukraine and the US have held several rounds of talks aimed at ending the war.

Russia blamed last month's "massive" Ukrainian strikes during its general elections for their disruption.

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

Speaking to reporters after Wednesday's talks in St Petersburg, Ushakov suggested that a new round could be held around 10 November in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

He stressed that the talks must focus on "building a security system for Russia and Ukraine after the end of the conflict."

Ushakov also told reporters that Putin reiterated to Witkoff that Russian troops were

advancing everywhere across the vast front line and had a "strategic initiative".

Ukraine and its European allies have disputed Putin's claim, pointing to a virtual stalemate on the front.

On Wednesday, Zelensky said he would accept a deal that would freeze the war along the current front line.

"We call it 'ceasefire' or 'stop killings' like President Trump called it. Freeze and stop. And of course this is minimum what we need from Russia to-

day," he told Fox News, adding that security guarantees for Ukraine could be discussed after this.

Witkoff described the latest talks as "constructive", while Kushner, who was participating via a video link, said: "There is still hard work ahead, but we have a real opportunity to move beyond this war and build a framework for lasting peace, security, and prosperity for generations to come."



Eva Greztmacher

Two killed in attack inside Airport in Eastern Saudi Arabia, authorities say

Two people were killed and eight others injured in an attack on an airport in Dammam, eastern Saudi Arabia on Wednesday evening, the kingdom's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) says.

Those killed at King Fahd International Airport were a Saudi citizen and an Indian resident, while the injured were Saudi, Indian, Yemeni, Bangladeshi and Nepalese nationals.

The GACA did not say what type of attack occurred, but Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi movement has repeatedly targeted the kingdom's airports with drones and missiles.

On Wednesday morning, two people were killed by debris from a drone that was intercepted over Eastern Province, where Dammam is located, the Saudi energy ministry said.

The ministry said the drone was intercepted as it attempted to target a processing facility owned by Saudi Arabia's state oil company Aramco in the Shaybeh oil field, where a contractor's vehicle was set ablaze.

It identified the dead as residents from the Philippines and Nepal.

Another four drones were also intercepted on Wednesday night, according to the Saudi-led coalition that is supporting the Yemeni government in its war against the Houthis.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis, but they have previously said they are attacking Saudi airports, energy facilities and military bases in retaliation

for deadly Saudi air strikes on the territory they control in western Yemen.

On Yemen's desert battlefield, a war with global consequences is being waged

At least 21 people have been killed in Houthi attacks on Saudi airports since the start of October, according to Saudi authorities.

One missile strike on Riyadh's international airport on 10 October killed 13 people and injured 308 others - the deadliest attack in Saudi Arabia in more than a decade.

The Houthis' military spokesman said on Wednesday that they had targeted military equipment at an airport in the southern Yemeni city of al-Mukalla, which it said had been transported by Saudi Arabia for use by pro-government forces.

Meanwhile, Houthi-run media reported that at least six people had been killed and 11 injured in air and artillery strikes over the previous 24 hours.

According to the Houthi-run health ministry, 155 civilians have been killed since Yemen's devastating civil war flared up three months ago.

The government's health ministry has said at least 1,574 people have been killed in the conflict over the same period. The UN says more than 256,000 people have also been displaced.

The war began in 2014, when the Houthis ousted the internationally-recognised government from the capital, Sanaa. The conflict escalated the next year, after the Saudi-led coalition of Arab states intervened

Two European women held captive for more than a year in Niger freed in Libya

Two women - a Swiss and an Austrian - have been freed after more than a year in captivity in Niger and handed over to authorities in the Libyan city of Benghazi.

Swiss national Eva Greztmacher, 76, and Austrian Claudia Abbt, 69, were kidnapped separately in the northern Nigerien city of Agadez in January and April last year.

No details have been given about who was holding them or their demands, although some reports have previously linked the kidnapping to Islamic State militants. The

circumstances of their release were not disclosed.

Libyan officials were reported as saying the women would be handed over to authorities in their respective countries after necessary procedures were completed.

Libya's al-Masara TV showed the two women entering what looks like an ambulance and later being attended to by a health worker.

Speaking in French, the women thanked Khalifa Haftar, military commander of eastern Libya, and his son, Saddam Haftar, for their re-

lease.

Gretzmacher was an aid worker who had lived for many years in Niger, while Abbt had spent several years living and working as a community worker in Agadez.

A plane was expected to leave Benghazi on Thursday, first stopping in Vienna to transfer Gretzmacher to Austrian authorities before continuing to Switzerland with Abbt, privately owned Air Info Agadez news outlet reported.

Libya has struggled to recover from the chaos that fol-

lowed the 2011 Nato-backed uprising that toppled long-time ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

It is split between two administrations - one in the east backed by Haftar, and the other in the west in the capital Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah.

Niger and the broader Sahel region have faced years of jihadist violence, including kidnappings and deadly attacks, carried out by different groups linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State.

The country has been under military control since 2023 when Gen Abdourahmane Tchiani deposed the country's elected President, Mohamed Bazoum.

This war must end!: UN and Swiss officials hold talks on Sudan conflict

United Nations and Swiss officials met in Geneva on Wednesday to flesh out a plan to end the war in Sudan.

Nearly two dozen countries joined the talks but the warring parties - Sudan's military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces - were not represented.

"The war in Sudan is in its fourth year. In many aspects, however, the conflict

has changed its face since it began in April 2023. The war in Sudan has become a drone war. It kills mostly civilians. Famine like conditions persist in Darfur, the Kordofan state and elsewhere in the country. It is the war that drives this hunger," Swiss State Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alexandre Fasel said in an opening statement.

"Cross-border inter linkages and regional dynamics are worrisome. We are hearing

of spillovers into neighboring countries. The war is not only affecting people in Sudan, it is a threat to regional stability."

This is the sixth meeting aimed at finding a pathway to ceasefire and transition to a new peaceful government in Sudan.

"At the heart of that purpose must be an unwavering commitment to ending the war, alleviating the suffering of the Sudanese people, and upholding the right to a future of peace, security and dignity in a united Sudan," Pekka

Haavisto, UN special envoy for Sudan, told the gathering. "I reiterate this because it's the message I have heard consistently from Sudanese people in Sudan, across the region and further afield, whatever their circumstances, their appeal is clear. This war must end."

The war has created what the UN has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with more than 34 million people in need of support. Tens of thousands of people have been killed and some 11 million displaced.

Crime with Mike Osarogiagbon

Edo police bust syndicate over N400m Auchi robbery, murder

The Edo State Police Command has arrested four suspects over a robbery at the popular Paparazzi Communication Complex in Auchi,

where properties worth more than N400 million were reportedly stolen and a security guard was murdered.

The robbery occurred on

July 12, 2026, according to the police.

Commissioner of Police Patrick Daaor disclosed the breakthrough during a press briefing in Benin City on Wednesday, October 21.

The suspects are Hamisu Nuhu, 34, from Jattu, who was identified by the police as the alleged mastermind, and

three others: Suleiman Rabi, Hussaini Gago and Ibrahim Haruna.

The police said the Auchi Area Command dismantled the suspected criminal syndicate following investigations into the incident.

The command did not provide further details about the individual roles allegedly played by the suspects or whether any stolen property had been recovered.

Kokori, 30; Omeregbe Iguma, 38; Gabriel Kokori, 32; and Emmanuel Friday, 39.

Police Commissioner Patrick Daaor said the suspects confessed during interrogation to belonging to the Eiye Secret Cult Confraternity. The alleged confession has not been independently established.

In a related operation on October 2, police arrested Chidiebere Osazee at an uncompleted

building around AY Junction in Ulegun community, off the Benin-Abraka Road.

A cut-to-size, single-barrelled gun was reportedly recovered from him.

The police said Osazee also claimed membership of the Eiye confraternity and ownership of the firearm.

Efforts are ongoing to arrest other suspected members who remain at large.



EDO COMMISSIONER OF POLICE PATRICK, DAAOR.

Four suspected cultists arrested after attack on Edo police operatives

Four suspected cultists have been arrested after a group of about 20 motorcycle-riding men allegedly attacked police operatives along Upper Siluko Road in Benin City.

The incident occurred at about 10 p.m. on October 17, 2026, when operatives of the Edo State Police Command's Violent Crime Response Unit were gathering intelligence about a planned cult initiation.

According to the police, the

operatives initially encountered Kevwe Kokori, 30, who claimed to be a vigilante member and was released after questioning.

He allegedly returned later with about 20 men carrying dangerous weapons, who attempted to attack the operatives and damaged the windscreen of their vehicle.

The officers were said to have overpowered the group and arrested four suspects.

They were identified as Kevwe



ARRESTED SUSPECTS

85-year-old grandmother arrested with 179kg of cannabis in Edo

An 85-year-old grandmother has been arrested with 179kg of cannabis at her residence in Warake community, Owan East Local Government Area of Edo State.

The suspect, Grace Ehimeka, popularly known as Mama Grace, was arrested on October 16 alongside five other suspects during coordinated raids by operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

The raids yielded a total of 407.39kg of cannabis and other illicit substances.

The Edo State NDLEA Commander, Mitchell Ofoyeju, disclosed this in a statement on Monday in Benin, warning that old age would not shield anyone from prosecution for drug-related offences.

"The NDLEA Act is clear, you cannot hide under the canopy of old age and perpetrate acts that violate the law,"

Ofoyeju said.

He described the octogenarian's involvement as a bad example for her children and grandchildren.

He further said the operations, driven by credible intelligence, covered Warake, Ivbiaro and Ewe-Uzeba communities.

A 57-year-old suspect, Ali Garba, was arrested in Ivbiaro on October 15 with 5.85kg of cannabis, while 45-year-old Habib Braimoh was apprehended in the same community with 100 grammes.

In Warake, operatives arrested 35-year-old Musa Mu-bid with 2kg of cannabis, 309 grammes of cannabis seeds, 114 grammes of loud and 135 grammes of pharmaceutical drugs, including tramadol, swinol and diazepam.

Another suspect, 53-year-old Ayo Aigberadion, was arrested on October 16 in

Ewe/Irue, Owan East, with 220.8kg of cannabis.

Also arrested was 35-year-old Hope Okoro, from Ndo-kwa West Local Government Area of Delta State, who was allegedly found with 237 grammes of loud in Auchi.

Other substances recovered during the oper-

ations included 546 grammes of loud, 114 grammes of tramadol, four grammes of diazepam and three grammes of swinol.

Mama Grace reportedly admitted ownership of the cannabis, blaming financial hardship for her involvement in the illegal trade.



ARRESTED SUSPECT

Police intercept commercial bus with 350 rounds of ammunition in Edo

A routine stop-and-search operation on the Benin-Lagos Road has led to the recovery of 350 rounds of ammunition and three bags of substances suspected to be cannabis from a bus belonging to GUO Transport Company.

The Edo State Police Command said its operatives intercepted the Toyota Ultra bus, with registration number AGU721ZL, on October 20, 2026.

The bus was driven by Godwin Emeka, 37.

A search uncovered 100 rounds of 7.62mm AK-47 ammunition, 50 rounds of 7.65mm ammunition and 200 rounds of 9mm ammunition.

Police also arrested Enearu

Louis, 40, identified as the transport company's operational manager.

Commissioner of Police Patrick Daaor announced the recovery during a press briefing in Benin City on Wednesday, October 21.

The circumstances surrounding the transportation of the ammunition and the suspected cannabis were not fully disclosed.

The police did not state whether the driver and operational manager knew about the items or explain their alleged individual roles in the incident.

Further investigation is expected to establish the source, destination and intended use of the recovered ammunition.



RECOVERED AMMUNITIONS

Man arrested over alleged theft of five vehicles in Benin

A 30-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly stealing five vehicles from a mechanic workshop in Ogheghe Community, Benin City.

The suspect, identified as Osakpanwan Ekuase, was arrested by operatives of the Edo State Police Command on August 31, 2026.

According to Commissioner of Police Patrick Daaor, the suspect posed as a worker at the

workshop before carrying out the thefts.

CP Daaor disclosed the arrest during a press briefing in Benin City on Wednesday, October 21.

The police did not disclose the makes and registration numbers of the vehicles or state whether all five had been recovered.

The command is expected to establish the circumstances surrounding the incidents as investigations continue.

Woman's report leads to arrest of Two suspected armed Robbers in Edo

A woman's report about her boyfriend's suspicious late-night movements has led to the arrest of two suspected armed robbers and the recovery of a motorcycle in Benin City.

The woman, name withheld alerted the police on October 11, 2026, that her boyfriend, Nanta James, alias Sani, often returned home late at night with bloodstains on his clothes.

Acting on the information, operatives of the Edo State Police Command's Violent Crime Response Unit, working with officers from Ugbor Division and members of the Edo State Security Corps, arrested the suspect.

Police Commissioner Patrick Daaor said James confessed during interrogation to robbing motorcycle riders around Amagba, Ugbor and GRA in Benin City.

Sports

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

CAF CL: Edo Queens FC accept CAF decision, set for WAFU-B final completion, Champions League proper in Cairo

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

Edo Queens Football Club has accepted the decision of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) that the outstanding extra time of the WAFU-B final match against Ampem FC of Ghana be played on October 29, 2026, in Cairo, Egypt.

The position of the club's management was made known on Thursday in a statement signed by the Media Manager Ehiosun Ogieva.

In the statement, the club said the outcome of the appeal was not what it had hoped for, but that after consultations with its Board, the Edo State Government and the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), it decided to obey the directives of CAF to complete the match in the interest of sporting fairness and so the contest can be

settled on the pitch. The team will depart for Cairo on Monday, October 26.

The club thanked the Edo State Government and the NFF for their support, guidance and representation throughout the appeal process.

"Our mission remains unchanged: to fight, to win and to secure our place in the CAF Women's Champions League," the club said. The tournament is scheduled to begin in Cairo on November 1, 2026.

Acknowledging the disappointment among supporters, the club said it shares their determination to see the matter decided on the pitch. "We have chosen to move forward with courage, discipline and resilience," it added.

Edo Queens also expressed gratitude to its fans and the media for their support dur-

ing the appeal period, and called on supporters to keep backing the team ahead of the decisive match."

The statement added that the players and technical crew are focused and ready to represent Edo State and Nigeria with pride.

Recall that Edo Queens defeated Ampem FC of Ghana 4-1 via penalty shootouts after the WAFU B final match in Burkina Faso had ended 2-2 in the 90-minute regulation period and were declared winners on September 5, 2026, only for the Ghanaians to file a protest against the direct penalty shootout, demanding that extra time of 30 minutes should have been played before penalties in accordance with the rules of the game. The disciplinary and appeal board of CAF later heard the case and ruled in their favour.



Edo Queens FC

LA28: Nigeria joins global Olympic stakeholders at pre-games meeting in Los Angeles



TEAM NIGERIA

Nigeria has joined representatives of nations and Olympic stakeholders in Los Angeles, United States, for the pre-Games meeting ahead of the 2028 Olympic Games, marking a significant step in preparations for the next edition of the world's biggest sporting event.

Nigeria was represented at the meeting by the Director General of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Hon. Bukola Olopade, and the President of the Nigeria Olympic Committee (NOC), Engr. Habu Gumel.

The meeting provides an important platform for participating nations and Olympic stakeholders to engage with organizers, exchange information and begin aligning their preparations for Los Angeles 2028.

For Nigeria, participation underscores the commitment of the NSC and NOC to early planning, effective coordination and strategic engagement as the country works towards assembling a competitive con-

tingent for the Games.

Speaking on Nigeria's participation, NSC Director General Hon. Bukola Olopade said early engagement with Olympic organizers was essential to the country's ambitions.

"Preparations for the Olympic Games cannot begin when athletes arrive at the competition venue. They begin with deliberate planning, strong institutional coordination and early engagement with the Olympic movement. Nigeria's participation in this meeting reflects our determination to approach LA28 with purpose, clarity and a clear focus on athlete performance.

"We want to build on the lessons of previous Olympic Games, strengthen our preparations and ensure that our athletes have the support, facilities and competitive opportunities they need to represent Nigeria with pride. Our ambition is not simply to participate, but to prepare thoroughly and compete with distinction," Hon. Olopade said.

The NSC Director Gener-

al's participation alongside NOC President Habu Gumel also highlights the importance of collaboration between Nigeria's sports development authorities and its Olympic movement in coordinating the country's preparations for the Games.

The Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games are scheduled to take place from July 14 to 30, 2028, returning the Summer Olympics to Los Angeles for the first time since 1984. The city previously hosted the Games in 1932 and 1984, making LA28 its third time as Olympic host.

With Los Angeles preparing to welcome the world's leading athletes, the meeting represents an early milestone in the road to 2028.

The NSC, working in collaboration with the NOC, remains committed to building a coordinated pathway towards LA28, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that Team Nigeria arrives in Los Angeles ready to compete at the highest level.

Dakar 2026: NSC unveils operational timeline for Team Nigeria's Youth Olympic Games campaign

The National Sports Commission (NSC) has unveiled the operational timeline for Team Nigeria's participation in the 4th Summer Youth Olympic Games, scheduled to take place in Dakar, Senegal, from 31 October to 13 November 2026.

The Games, which will be the first Olympic sporting event hosted on African soil, will bring together young athletes from across the world, with Team Nigeria set to compete in six sports: athletics, boxing, road cycling, swimming, table tennis and beach volleyball.

The Nigerian contingent will begin with a 21-day local camping programme from 9 to 29 October 2026, ahead of the team's departure from Abuja on 29th October.

The camping programme will feature medical screening, anti-doping education, technical and tactical preparations, kit fitting, travel documentation and final confirmation of the team's participation requirements.

Team Nigeria is expected to arrive in Dakar on 30th October for accreditation, accommodation and equipment checks, technical meetings and familiarisation with competition venues across the three host zones of Dakar, Diamniadio and Saly.

The opening ceremony will take place on 31st October at the Diamniadio Olympic Stadium, the same day competitions begin in table tennis and beach volleyball.

The competition schedule will

see beach volleyball and table tennis lead Nigeria's campaign from 31 October, with swimming beginning on 1st November. Boxing is scheduled for 7th to 12th November, while athletics and road cycling will take place on selected dates between 8th and 10th November.

Beach volleyball will be staged at Saly Beach West, table tennis and boxing at Dakar Expo Centre, swimming at the Tour de l'Écluse complex, road cycling along Corniche Ouest and athletics at the Iba Mar Diop Complex.

The Games will conclude with the closing ceremony on 13th November at the Diamniadio Olympic Stadium, after which the Nigerian contingent

is expected to return to Abuja following the completion of departure formalities and equipment reconciliation.

The operational timeline is designed to coordinate Team Nigeria's preparations, travel, accreditation and competition schedules, while ensuring that athletes and officials are adequately prepared for the demands of the international sporting event.

Nigeria's participation in Dakar 2026 forms part of the country's broader efforts to strengthen grassroots sports development, nurture emerging talents and establish a pathway for young athletes to progress to elite international competition.



Sports FEATURE

No clear King - The most open Ballon D'or race in history

DOUGLAS BAYE-OSAGIE
dbayeosagie@yahoo.com

Football's Grammy night is here again. It is the red-carpet night where the best players, coaches, legends, celebrities gather in one theatre, and one man is called up to take the biggest individual prize in the sport. The 70th Ballon d'Or ceremony will take place on Monday, October 26, 2026. For the first time in its history, the brainchild of French journalists Gabriel Hanot and Jacques Ferran at *France Football* magazine, the event moves from Paris to the London Palladium in England. This is football's Grammy night.

The Ballon d'Or is arguably the biggest individual prize in sports, given to the best footballer in a calendar year. In its early decades, the award was strictly European - only players from European clubs and European nations could win it. That changed in 1995 when eligibility expanded to include any player at a European club regardless of nationality. By 2007, the award went fully global, allowing players from any club or country to compete.

How is that hard choice made? For 2026, *France Football* kept it journalists only - no fan vote, no players, no coaches. The 30-man shortlist is drawn up by *France Football*, *L'Equipe*, one previous juror and UEFA ambassadors Luis Figo, Fabio Capello for the men and Nadine Kessler for the women. The final say goes to 100 specialist journalists, one from each of the top 100 FIFA-ranked nations for the men's award, and 50 for the women's award as of September 8, 2026. Each juror names his Top 10 in order.

Points are awarded 15 for first, 12 for second, 10 for third, then 8, 7, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. That is 67 points per ballot, 5,700 points total in play for the men, with a ceiling of 1,500 if one player is first on every ballot. Tie-break goes to most first-place votes, then most second-place votes, and so on, with disputes settled by *France Football*'s editor-in-chief. The criteria are clear and ordered: 1) Individual performance, decisive and impressive, 2) Team performance and titles, 3) Class and fair play. Voting closed on September 28, 2026, covering the season from August 3, 2025 to July 19, 2026 including the World Cup, so what Kane and Ramal are doing now won't move the needle in London.

Between 2010 and 2015, the Ballon d'Or merged with FIFA's World Player of the Year award to create the FIFA Ballon d'Or. That partnership ended in 2016 and the two bodies reverted to running separate ceremonies. Since then *France Football* has operated the Ballon d'Or independently, restoring its original identity. The award was not given in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic - the only year in its history it was cancelled.

In years past, football fans could boldly crown the king before the season even found its rhythm. One of my favourite years was 2005. By February 2005, we already knew - it would be Ronaldinho winning it in November. It wasn't just about goals and assists,



it was pure magic. Irrespective of the club you supported, we just enjoyed the weeks as he blessed us with constant entertainment all season.

The entire 2010s was almost a two-man coronation - Messi or Cristiano, Cristiano or Messi. Just Luka Modric stained that duopoly in 2018. The question was never who, but which one again. That decade was a crazy two-man competition between the players with the most Ballons d'Or: Messi with 8 and Ronaldo with 5.

This year the competition is different. Never in recent memory has the queue been this long, this loud. Not two. Not three. Five, six, seven men with a legitimate shout, a season to point to, a trophy to hold up. No one has blown the field away. No one can say, "It is mine." And yet, with days to go, one must go home wearing the most prestigious hat in football.

Start with the favourite, *Harry Kane*. No footballer in the world scored more in 2025/26 than Kane - 61 goals for Bayern Munich, 36 in the Bundesliga to win his third straight Torjägerkanone and a second Euro-

pean Golden Shoe. He delivered a domestic treble - Bundesliga, DFB-Pokal and the Franz Beckenbauer Supercup. If I was voting, I will vote for Harry Kane.

His moment? April was brutal and beautiful. 100 Bundesliga goals in record time, then that semi-final vs PSG where he scored twice but Bayern went out 6-5 on aggregate. At the World Cup he led England to bronze with 6 goals, including a 6-4 thriller against France in the third-place playoff. Could he be the first English winner since Michael Owen in 2001?

Then *Kylian Mbappe* - football's ultimate World Cup man. 38 goals in 33 games for Real Madrid before the tournament, winning the Pichichi. Then in America, 10 goals to become the World Cup's all-time top scorer at just 27. He is now the first player in history to win the Golden Boot in the Champions League, La Liga and the World Cup in the same calendar year - a treble of scoring crowns that may never be broken.

His moment was not lifting the trophy - France finished fourth - but

the way he left it all on the pitch. A breathtaking opener against Senegal to get his World Cup account going, a hat-trick vs Norway in the group stage, and four assists on top of the 10 goals. 22 goals in 22 games across three World Cups is the story of greatness. He did not win the World Cup, but he won history.

Lamine Yamal is so many people's favourite. He and Olise at the highest level are the most entertaining footballers in the game at the moment and he already has an archive of breathtaking goals. At 19, he could become the youngest Ballon d'Or winner ever, a record held by the great Ronaldo Nazario who won it at 21 years and 96 days in 1997. Yamal's story writes itself: La Liga champion, La Liga Player of the Year, and then World Champion with Spain.

His tournament was quiet by his standards, but he contributed to Spain's victory which was largely a team performance. He completed 27 dribbles from 51 attempts - the highest total at the World Cup. He was Man of the Match twice, against Aus-

tria and Belgium in the semi-final - a game in which Spain were underdogs - and he won the crucial penalty that gave Spain the opening goal. For Barcelona this past season: 24 goals and 17 assists, averaging a goal contribution every 85 minutes. He is no longer the future. He is the present.

If Yamal is the present, *Michael Olise* is pure magic. Bundesliga Player of the Season with numbers that read like a video game - 15 goals, 19 assists in the league, 22 goals and 31 assists in 52 games across all competitions.

Two moments define him. First, the Freiburg game: Bayern down 0-2, Olise scores two and assists three in a 6-2 comeback. Then the quarter-final vs Real Madrid - 90+3, 4-3 on the night, that left-foot curler past Lunin to send Bayern through. At the World Cup he broke Pelé's record with 7 assists in one tournament for France. As Thomas Müller said, "He has that dance-like, artistic ease you can't learn."

And then *Lionel Messi*. At 39, in what might be his last World Cup, he took Argentina to the final and lost 1-0 to Spain in extra time. Heartbreak in New Jersey. He was Player of the Tournament until the final against Spain. He single-handedly dragged Argentina to the World Cup final in a manner that clearly stood him apart from the pack.

But look at what he still did: 25 goals and 15 assists for Inter Miami this season, first player ever to record 15+ assists in three straight MLS seasons, first to have 30+ goal contributions in three different seasons. His moment? October 17th vs Atlanta - two goals, one assist, his 934th career goal. He is chasing a third straight MLS MVP. He is 39 and still top-two in the Golden Boot race.

The defending champion *Ousmane Dembele* wants back-to-back. PSG retained both Ligue 1 and the Champions League, and Dembele was again their engine - 20 goals in the league campaign, 7 in the Champions League.

His best moment came in the World Cup quarter-final run - 6 goals including that hat-trick against Norway. France faded late, but Dembele proved last year's Ballon d'Or was no fluke. Can he retain it?

Rodri is the anomaly. He left Manchester City for Barcelona this summer after winning the World Cup Golden Ball. Spain's captain, the metronome who made Spain champions again. His moment wasn't a goal, it was control. In the final against Argentina, with Messi throwing everything at Spain in extra time, Rodri won the ball back 11 times and completed 96% of his passes. The anchor. The man who makes everyone else look good.

So who does the cap fit? If you want pure numbers, it's Kane. If you want trophies, it's Yamal. If you want history, it's Mbappe. If you want beauty, it's Olise. If you want longevity, it's Messi. If it was just about who was the best player at the World Cup, Rodri has a real shout - World Cup winner and Golden Ball winner. On October 26th at the London Palladium, football will finally have to choose. For once, there is no wrong answer - only a hard one.

SPORTS



NPFL matchday 10 preview: Bendel Insurance aim to end Rivers United's strong start in Benin

KEHINDE OSAGIEDÉ

Bendel Insurance will look to recover from their 2-1 defeat to Sporting Lagos when they host Rivers United in Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) Matchday 10 fixture on Sunday.

The match is scheduled for the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin, with kick-off at 4pm. It offers the Benin Arsenal a chance to halt the impressive start to the season made by the former league champions from Port Harcourt.

Recent meetings between both sides have been tightly contested, producing draws and narrow wins for either

team. In the 2025/26 season, their first meeting in Benin ended goalless at the Samuel Ogbemudia stadium.

Speaking ahead of the Sunday clash, Insurance head coach Kennedy Boboye said his players are confident of turning the tide against the visitors.

"We are ready for Rivers United on Sunday, October 25. We know them and they know our strength. This time, they won't go back with any point. We are aiming for maximum points," Boboye said.

"We respect them, but they can't intimidate us at our fortress. Our team is in good shape despite some injury concerns. I believe we are good to go."

Boboye acknowledged that Rivers United have been impressive this season, but insisted their run would suffer a setback in Benin.

The defeat to Sporting Lagos in Matchday 8 left Insurance 10th on the table with 12 points. They are yet to play their Matchday 9 fixture against Rangers International, which was postponed to allow the Enugu club to honour their CAF Champions League tie against Algeria's MC Alger at the MKO Abiola Stadium last Sunday, October 18.

The postponement left Insurance idle last weekend. No new date has been announced for the rescheduled match.



World Cup Qualifier: Nigeria cruise past Zambia

Nigeria recorded a commanding nine-wicket victory over Zambia in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Sub-Regional Africa Qualifier C after chasing down a target of 143 runs in just 14.5 overs.

Zambia posted 142 runs for the loss of nine wickets in their

allotted 20 overs but struggled to contain Nigeria's batting lineup.

The Nigerian side responded impressively, reaching 146 runs for the loss of just one wicket in 14.5 overs to seal a comfortable victory.

The emphatic win underlined Nigeria's dominance in

the encounter and provided a significant boost to their campaign in the qualifying tournament.

Nigeria will now look to maintain their winning momentum as they continue their quest for a place in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.



BENDEL INSURANCE

Nigeria's Boxing resurgence shakes Nairobi as five fighters storm African Championships finals with gold medals in sight

Team Nigeria has staged a remarkable comeback at the African Elite Men's and Women's Boxing Championships 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya, with five Nigerian boxers securing places in the finals despite a difficult start to the continental competition.

After suffering five defeats earlier in the tournament, Nigeria's remaining fighters have demonstrated determination and resilience, keeping the country's hopes of winning multiple gold medals alive.

Read Also: "I Don't Want Any Controversial Decision" — Raheem Inspires Nigeria's Boxing Revival as Khadijat, Iyabo Win in Nairobi | Sports247 Nigeria

Leading the resurgence is Ridwan Raheem, whose victory over Algeria's Ismail Bekhisis in the men's welterweight (60-65kg) category provided a major confidence boost for the Nigerian contingent.

Before his encounter, Raheem had expressed his determination to deliver a convincing performance that would leave no room for controversial judging decisions.

In the women's 54kg division, Ajishola Khadijat produced an impressive performance, defeating Kenya's Amina Martha by a commanding 5-0 unanimous decision to secure her place in the final.

Precious Anine also ad-



NIGERIA BOXING

vanced following her semifinal encounter against Egypt's Ayyad Yomna in the women's 60-65kg category, strengthening Nigeria's medal prospects.

Similarly, Blessing Orakwe booked her place in the final after overcoming Uganda's Aiwine Diana in the women's 75-80kg division.

Completing Nigeria's five finalists is Patricia Mbata, who had already secured qualification for the championship's final stage.

The achievement represents an encouraging turnaround for Nigeria's 10-member contingent, which endured several disappointing results during the early stages of the championship.

Nigeria Boxing Federation

board member and Head of Delegation, Capt. Rasulun Kashim, had earlier expressed confidence in the athletes, insisting that Nigerian boxers possessed the talent and determination to compete successfully against their continental counterparts.

With five finalists now confirmed by the Nigerian camp, attention shifts to the championship's gold medal contests.

For Team Nigeria, the mission is no longer simply about recovering from early setbacks but converting five final appearances into continental glory.

The stage is set in Nairobi, and Nigeria's boxing warriors have everything to fight for.