

Okpebholo mourns Squadron Leader Aburime, hails his courage, humility

BENIN CITY
Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has mourned the death of Squadron Leader Mahmoud Idanegbe Aburime, describing him as a dedicated military officer whose courage, humility and commitment to national service would remain an enduring legacy.

Aburime, an indigene of Uwessan in Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, died in the Nigerian Air Force aircraft NAF 931 crash at Igbokoda, Ondo State, on October 5, 2026.

In a condolence message issued on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, Governor Okpebholo described the officer's death as a painful loss to his family, Edo

State and the nation.

"As Governor of Edo State, I mourn the loss of one of our own. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife, daughter, parents and everyone affected by this tragedy. While no words can ease the pain of losing a loved one, I want his family to know that Edo State grieves with them," he said.

The governor noted that

Aburime hailed from Uwessan, his home community, adding that the tragedy had touched him personally.

He extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and the entire Uwessan community, describing the officer's death as a painful loss to a community that had produced a son who served his country with dedication.

Born on November 12, 1991, Aburime joined the Nigerian Defence Academy as a member of the 62nd Regular Course and was commissioned as a Pilot Officer on September 12, 2015. He rose through the ranks to become a Squadron Leader in August 2025.

During his military career, he participated in several operations, including Operations

Lafiya Dole, Sharan Daji, Dirin Mikiya, Pulo Shield and Delta Safe.

With more than 4,000 flying hours, the late officer contributed to national security through operational missions and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activities.

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The Nigerian OBSERVER

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First Lady set to commission 50 CNG buses in Edo today

EUBALDUS ENAHORO/
MATTHEW OKAGHA

BENIN CITY
In a decisive move to transform the socio-economic fortunes of Edo State, ease the burden of transportation costs on residents and strengthen the economic capacity of women, the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo will today host Nigeria's First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu,

...And empower 5,000 women

CON, for the commissioning of 50 brand-new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses and the empowerment of 5,000 Edo women under the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI).

The twin events, scheduled for 9:00 a.m. at Garrick Memorial Field, Ekehuan Road, Benin City, represent a significant milestone in the state

government's drive to deliver people-oriented infrastructure, promote cleaner and more affordable public transportation, and expand economic opportunities for women in line with the administration's SHINE Agenda.

The Nigerian Observer learnt that the 50 buses, each with a seating capacity of 52 passengers, constitute the first

batch of 100 buses approved by the State Executive Council for the Edo City Transport Service (ECTS).

Powered by Compressed Natural Gas, the buses will, following their formal commissioning, be deployed across Edo South, Edo Central and Edo North Senatorial Districts to provide residents with safer, more affordable and environ-

mentally friendly transportation alternatives.

The intervention is also expected to help cushion the effects of rising transportation costs following the removal of the fuel subsidy, while improving mobility for workers, traders, students and other commuters across the state.

The initiative complements the earlier revitalisation of the New Edo Line, which received 100 Toyota Hiace buses, alongside the recruitment of drivers and other transport personnel to strengthen the state's public

transportation system.

In a further demonstration of its commitment to the emerging green economy, the Okpebholo administration is also investing in the training of female CNG conversion technicians, opening new opportunities for women to acquire specialised technical skills and participate in the expanding clean-energy sector.

Governor Okpebholo and Senator Oluremi Tinubu are expected to formally commission and flag off the buses for public service at today's ceremony.

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VISIT TO INEC:
Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan with the representative of the Chairman, Electoral Commissions of West African States (ECONEC), Mr. Serigne Mamadou, (middle), members of the delegation and INEC commissioners in a group photograph, during the delegation visit by the ECONEC to INEC headquarters in Abuja, yesterday.
Photo Omoye Aminu

NAF sets up 12-member board to unravel mystery of Igbokoda aircraft crash

SUCCESS EDENAMUIKI
ABUJA

Determined to unravel the circumstances surrounding the tragic crash of the ill-fated Nigerian Air Force aircraft, NAF 931, which claimed the lives of all those on board, the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has constituted a 12-member Aircraft Accident Investigation Board to establish the cause of the October 5, 2026, disaster in Igbokoda, Ondo State.

The board is expected to

conduct a comprehensive, evidence-based investigation into the circumstances surrounding the crash, determine its immediate and underlying causes, and recommend measures to prevent a recurrence.

The NAF disclosed this in a press release on Tuesday, stating that the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, had directed sustained search and recovery efforts alongside a thorough investigation into the tragedy.

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NEWS

Edo Assembly passes Revenue Levy Bill, advances Scrap Metal Bill

RAYMOND OSOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has passed a bill establishing a legal framework for the imposition, collection and administration of levies on contracts, consultancy services and winnings from gaming activities in the state.

The passage followed the presentation of a report by the House Standing Committee on Finance, Economic Planning and Development, chaired by Hon. Sunday Aghedo, which recommended the bill for passage.

Presenting the report, the committee identified four key

benefits of the proposed legislation, including boosting the state's internally generated revenue (IGR), establishing a proper legal framework for levy collection, preventing arbitrary revenue collection under non-existent laws and helping to reduce unemployment.

Following consideration of the report, the bill scaled third reading after a motion for its passage was moved by the Majority Leader, Hon. Sunday Ojezele, and seconded by Hon. Addeh Isibor, representing Esan North-East I Constituency.

The Speaker, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idiaye, subsequently directed that a clean copy of the bill be transmitted to Governor Mon-

day Okpebholo for assent.

In a related development, the House advanced a bill seeking to prohibit the unauthorised removal and vandalism of metal fixtures and public infrastructure, as well as regulate the activities of scrap metal dealers, to second reading.

The proposed legislation is aimed at addressing the destruction and unauthorised removal of public assets while establishing regulatory measures for scrap metal trading in the state.

Meanwhile, the House considered a petition by Mr. Okonoboh Oriabure, titled "My Retirement Money Is Not Paid to Me; I Am Denied the Benefits Accruing to My Last Promotion in Service."

The report of the House Standing Committee on Public Petitions highlighted concerns surrounding the petitioner's retirement date, entitlement to promotion benefits and deductions made from his gratuity over alleged salary overpayment.

The committee recommended that the Ministry of Education review the petitioner's retirement documents, issue a corrected retirement letter reflecting the appropriate retirement date and refund the disputed deduction from his gratuity.

After considering the report, the Speaker directed that the petition be communicated to the relevant authorities for necessary action.



XXX

The Majority Leader, Edo State House of Assembly, Hon Ojezele Osezua Sunday (standing) flagging off debate for the second reading for the year 2026 proposed supplementary Appropriation Bill during the house plenary session, while Hon Eugene Inegbeboh sitting right. Photo. Godwin Iseguan.

...Okpebholo mourns Squadron Leader

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Beyond his operational responsibilities, Aburime served as an instructor at the 401 Flying Training School in Kaduna, where he helped train future pilots, passing on his knowledge and experience to younger officers.

Governor Okpebholo also highlighted the late officer's humility, recalling that while studying Mass Communication at the University of Benin, Aburime did not flaunt his military rank.

According to the governor, his classmates remembered him as a quiet and gentle individual who often sat at the back of the lecture hall.

The governor said he was particularly touched by

Aburime's determination to pursue further education despite the demands of his military career. The officer reportedly sat a make-up examination at the university just days before the fatal crash.

"Aburime showed that a person can carry great responsibility without arrogance. Despite his demanding military career, he continued his education," Okpebholo said, describing the officer's commitment to learning as a testament to his character. The governor lamented that the officer's promising future had been cut short, leaving behind a wife and daughter who had lost a beloved husband and father.

He noted that beyond the military uniform was a family man whose interests included reading, gospel music, news

programmes and documentaries.

Okpebholo also commiserated with the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke; the Nigerian Air Force; Aburime's colleagues and coursemates; and the families of all those who died in the aircraft crash. He prayed that God would grant the bereaved families the strength to bear their losses and comfort all those mourning the departed officers.

Addressing young people in Edo State, the governor urged them to draw inspiration from Aburime's life of service, discipline, education and humility.

He said the officer's dedication to his profession, commitment to personal development and willingness to mentor younger personnel offered val-

uable lessons for the next generation.

"Edo State has lost a son, Uwessan has lost one of its own, the Nigerian Air Force has lost an experienced officer, and a family has lost a beloved husband and father. His service to Nigeria will remain part of his legacy," the governor said.

He prayed for the peaceful repose of the departed officer and divine comfort for his family.

"Rest in peace, Squadron Leader Mahmoud Idanegbe Aburime. You served Nigeria with honour, and we will remember you."

The condolence message was signed by Dr Patrick Akhere Ebojele, Chief Press Secretary to Governor Okpebholo, on Wednesday, October 14, 2026.

...First Lady set to commission 50 CNG in Edo today

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mony.

Meanwhile, the First Lady, who is the National Chairman of the Renewed Hope Initiative, will extend her nationwide economic empowerment programme to Edo State, providing support tools and grants to 5,000 women to strengthen their businesses, improve their livelihoods and enhance their capacity to contribute to household and community development.

The empowerment programme is being implemented in collaboration with the Office of the Edo State First Lady, Mrs Edesili Anani Okpebholo, and builds on previous RHI interventions in the state.

These interventions include agricultural support, the distribution of clean cooking stoves, recapitalisation grants for 500 women traders in partnership with the Tony Elumelu Foundation, and assistance to rural women farmers.

The latest initiative is expected to provide fresh economic opportunities for beneficiaries, particularly women engaged in small-scale businesses and other income-generating activ-

ities, while reinforcing the role of women in grassroots economic development.

Governor Okpebholo has described the twin events as a practical demonstration of his administration's philosophy that governance must not only move people but also empower them to improve their standard of living.

"When we provide buses, we reduce the cost of moving goods and people. When we empower women, we increase the wealth of families. Edo is moving from talk to tangible impact," the governor stated.

The commissioning and empowerment ceremony is expected to attract market women's associations, youth groups, transport unions, civil society organisations, political stakeholders and members of the public, who have been invited to participate in the landmark event.

The dual initiative underscores the state government's determination to combine infrastructure development with inclusive economic empowerment, translating its policy commitments into practical interventions capable of improving the daily lives of Edo residents.

...NAF sets up 12-member board to unravel mystery of Igboakoda aircraft crash

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The statement, signed by the Director of Public Relations and Information, Headquarters Nigerian Air Force, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, said Air Vice Marshal E.O. Ankeli would serve as President of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board, while Air Vice Marshal E.O.E. Ebiowe, head of the Investigation and Recovery Team, would coordinate the wider response.

According to the statement, the 12-member board comprises experienced personnel with specialist expertise in aviation operations, flight safety, piloting, air traffic control, aircraft engineering, maintenance, medical services and other relevant technical disciplines.

It added that representatives of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) had been included to provide additional civilian aviation expertise and strengthen the technical scope of the investigation.

The NAF said the board would examine operational, technical, environmental, human and organisational factors that may have contributed to the accident.

"Its work will involve the systematic examination, documentation and preservation of relevant evidence to establish the facts and determine the immediate and underlying causes of the occurrence," the statement noted.

Beyond determining the

cause of the crash, the investigation will assess the emergency response, including search and rescue operations, medical response, recovery efforts and the management of the crash site.

The Service said the board would make evidence-based recommendations to address any identified deficiencies, strengthen aviation safety and reduce the likelihood of similar accidents in the future.

On support for the bereaved families, the NAF disclosed that it had established a dedicated helpline at its headquarters, within the Office of the Directorate of Veterans Affairs, to provide the recorded next of kin with information, clarification and necessary assistance.

It added that administrative arrangements had been activated, including meetings with affected families and other support measures.

"The NAF recognises the public's legitimate interest in the ongoing process and remains committed to providing appropriate updates as verified information becomes available," the statement said.

The Service, however, cautioned against drawing premature conclusions about the cause of the crash, stressing that any determination must await the completion of the investigation and proper consideration of its findings. "Conclusions regarding the cause of the accident would be premature until the investigation is completed and its findings are duly considered," the statement added.

NEWS**AWARD OF EXCELLENCE:**

Group Editor, Nigeria Peace Magazine, Comrade Benjamin Igbedi(left), the Commender of Edo State Taskforce, ASP Smart Odigie (5th left) with other members of the taskforce in a group photograph in Benin City.

INEC unveils AI safeguards for 2027 elections

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has announced new measures to guard against artificial intelligence (AI)-generated misinformation ahead of the 2027 general elections, insisting that technology will support rather than determine the outcome of the polls.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, disclosed this on Wednesday in Abuja while delivering the keynote address at the 2026 Artificial Intelligence and Democracy Forum, organised in collaboration with Yiaga Africa.

Speaking on the theme, "Safeguarding the 2027 General Elections in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," Amupitan said the commission was strengthening its capacity to detect and respond to digital threats that could undermine electoral credibility.

"Algorithms will not, and must never, decide the 2027 vote," he declared, stressing that the authority to choose Nigeria's leaders rests with citizens.

He warned that advances in generative AI had made it easier to produce convincing fake videos, cloned audio recordings

Explains exclusion of some governorship candidates

and fabricated messages capable of misleading voters and impersonating electoral officials.

According to him, malicious actors could circulate false announcements about candidate withdrawals, election postponements, voting procedures or election results, potentially creating confusion within minutes.

"The greatest threat we face is not the hacking of a ballot box, but the hacking of the voter's mind," he said.

INEC Establishes AI Unit
Amupitan disclosed that INEC had established an AI Unit within its Information and Communication Technology Directorate, equipped with digital monitoring tools, deepfake detection software and data analytics expertise to identify threats to the electoral process.

He said the commission would not allow critical electoral decisions, including result collation, voter accreditation and candidate qualification, to be fully automated or handed over to autonomous systems.

He added that any AI tools deployed for logistics, database management or operational support would undergo rigorous audits to assess their fairness, security and explainability.

The commission is also developing a digital strategy to monitor election-related information and working with technology platforms to promote the rapid identification and labelling of AI-generated content concerning electoral processes.

Despite the risks, Amupitan said AI could improve election administration through better logistical planning, statistical checks on polling unit results, voter registration verification and cybersecurity.

He explained that geospatial analytics could help the commission plan the deployment of personnel, vehicles, boats and sensitive materials to 176,846 polling units, taking account of traffic, weather, road conditions and security incidents.

AI-assisted systems could also flag mathematical inconsistencies and unusual patterns in polling unit result sheets uploaded through the INEC Result Viewing Portal for administrative review.

The INEC chairman said biometric technology was helping detect duplicate facial and fingerprint records in the National Register of Voters, which contains more than 103

million records.

He also identified opportunities to use AI to translate voter education materials into indigenous languages and improve access to electoral information for persons with disabilities and citizens with low literacy levels.

The INEC chairman called on technology companies, including Meta, X, Google, TikTok and Telegram, to respond swiftly to synthetic media impersonating candidates, election officials and security personnel.

He also urged the platforms to enforce disclaimers on political advertisements and restrict micro-targeting based on ethnicity, religion and local origin.

Amupitan proposed strengthening an Electoral Information Integrity Coalition involving INEC, civil society organisations, media houses, fact-checkers and telecommunications operators to identify and counter viral election-related falsehoods.

He urged political parties and candidates to adopt an ethical AI code of conduct against deepfakes, synthetic impersonation, deceptive advertising and automated bot networks.

Akpabio predicts Tinubu's government of national unity if re-elected

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, has predicted that President Bola Tinubu could form a government of national unity if re-elected in the 2027 general elections.

Akpabio made the prediction on Wednesday in Abuja, saying the expanded membership of the All Progressives Congress Presidential Campaign Council indicated Tinu-

bu's readiness to accommodate political interests beyond the ruling party.

He made the remarks during plenary, citing the inclusion of opposition figures, including Anambra State Governor Charles Soludo of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State, who belongs to the Accord Party, and Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party.

According to Akpabio, the

presence of politicians from different political parties in the campaign council demonstrated a shared commitment to national unity and cooperation across party lines.

He urged opposition politicians to take note of the development, suggesting that the emerging political alignment offered an indication of what to expect in the 2027 general elections.

The Senate President described the broader political coalition as a symbol of national unity, arguing that it could

create an environment where Nigerians, regardless of their political affiliations, would feel secure and have opportunities to pursue their aspirations.

His remarks come amid political realignments ahead of the 2027 elections, with the composition of campaign structures and alliances expected to shape the contest for the presidency.

However, Akpabio's prediction of a government of national unity remains contingent on Tinubu securing re-election.

Edo Taskforce Commander receives Award of Excellence

BENIN CITY

The Commander, Edo State Taskforce ASP Smart Odigie has received an award as the most outstanding commander of the year following his role in reduction of crime and criminality in Edo State.

The award was presented to ASP Smart Odigie in his office at Edo State government House by leadership of Nigeria Peace Magazine led by the group editor Comrade Benjamin Igbedi.

Comrade Igbedi said the award presented to ASP Odigie was based on his outstanding contributions towards national security and community development.

"We are here in Benin City to present an award as the most outstanding commander of the year to Edo State Taskforce Commander ASP Smart Odigie Ibharagbotua for his leadership role, commitment to duty and service to humanity.

He added that ASP Odigie has done so much in Edo State in the area of crime and criminality which has been reduced significantly and the people of the State enjoying peace.

Comrade Igbedi said ASP Odigie was picked following the results of a questionnaire which was shared and filled by citizens who themselves scored him above 80 per cent overall.

He said the commander also scored 80 percent in the area of integrity and commended his leadership role to bring peace to the State.

The group editor of Nigeria Peace Magazine called on the taskforce commander to do

more for Edo people and ensure he brings the activities of criminals to the barest minimum.

Receiving the award of excellence ASP Odigie thanked God Almighty and also the Executive Governor of Edo State Senator Monday Okpebholo for the honour to serve in this capacity.

He noted that the task of combating crime is difficult and tedious but have to serve Edo people with diligent and commitment to duty which has resulted to the award.

ASP Odigie also thanks his subordinate and colleagues in the line of duty who are all very supportive, hardworking and ready to sacrifice their lives for the peace of the State, urging more commitment to keep Edo safe.

"I won't have won this award without the support and collaboration of dedicated colleagues and subordinates who have been very cooperative in the line of duty.

"I thank Edo people for their cooperation, I will continue to serve the people with integrity and transparency, we will restore peace and remove fear from the mind of the people, create a good environment for businesses to thrive and investors to choose the State as a business destination to do business", he concluded.

CORRECTION OF NAME

I, formerly known as miss **STELLA OSAUYI**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS STELLA AKPORE**. All former documents Remain valid concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

INEC explains exclusion of Governorship candidates

KADUNA

In a separate development, INEC has explained why some candidates were omitted from the final list for the 2027 governorship elections, citing a Supreme Court judgement on political parties' compliance with membership register requirements.

The commission said the decision followed the judgement delivered on September 24, 2026, in INEC v. Zenith Labour Party, Appeal No. SC/CV/495/2026.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee, Mohammed Kudu Haruna, said the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality and mandatory nature of Section 77(5)-(7) of the Electoral Act, 2026.

The provisions require political parties to submit their membership registers as a prerequisite for conducting valid party primaries.

According to Haruna, the court also upheld INEC's timetable requiring parties to submit their membership registers

between April 21 and May 10, 2026.

He said the Supreme Court ruled that parties that failed to comply with the requirements were ineligible to sponsor candidates in the election.

Haruna explained that INEC applied the judgement when finalising the list of governorship candidates, excluding parties that did not meet the statutory requirements.

He added that the final list of presidential and National Assembly candidates had been published on September 12, 2026, before the Supreme Court delivered its judgement.

The commissioner reminded political parties that Section 32(2) of the Electoral Act, 2026, allows a party that believes its candidate was wrongly omitted from a published list to notify the commission within 14 days.

He said the deadline for the relevant notifications was October 24, 2026.

INEC reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, adherence to the law and the credibility of the electoral process as preparations continue for the 2027 general elections.

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LONG MAY HE REIGN

Biotechnology key to tackling food insecurity, malnutrition —Minister

ABUJA

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, has described biotechnology as a critical tool for addressing food insecurity, malnutrition and emerging health challenges, urging researchers, government agencies and private-sector stakeholders to collaborate in translating scientific discoveries into practical solutions.

Alausa, represented by the Secretary-General of the Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO, Dr Idowu Olagunju, stated this on Wednesday at the fifth International Conference on Biotechnology for Food Security and Human Health in Abuja.

The minister said climate change, population growth, emerging diseases and disrup-

tions to food supply chains were placing increasing pressure on food systems and healthcare services, making scientific innovation more important.

"Traditional methods alone can no longer keep pace with these compounding problems and demands. So, biotechnology is the answer," he said.

According to him, biotechnology offers opportunities to improve agricultural productivity, enhance the nutritional quality of food crops and develop advanced medical interventions, including vaccines and gene therapies.

He explained that genetically modified crops could be developed to withstand pests and diseases and improve yield potential, while biofortification could help address nutrient deficiencies among vulnerable populations.

However, Alausa stressed that scientific discoveries would have limited impact without effective implementation, accessibility and collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

"The true power of scientific innovation does not lie within the walls of the laboratory. It lies in its application, accessibility, and scalability," he said.

The minister called for

stronger partnerships among government institutions, researchers, private enterprises, industries and civil society organisations to support research funding, strengthen regulatory frameworks and ensure that biotechnology innovations reach communities that need them.

He urged participants to produce actionable recommendations that could support industries and improve food security across Nigeria and the African continent.

The conference, which began on Wednesday and is scheduled to end on Thursday, is organised by the UNESCO International Centre for Biotechnology in partnership with the Post-harvest and Agroprocessing Research Centre of the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Speaking at the conference, the Foundation Executive Director of the International Centre for Biotechnology, Nsukka, Emeritus Professor

Umezuruike Okpara, called for greater public understanding of genetic modification, arguing that biotechnology should be assessed based on its safe application rather than public fears.

"The way we produce crops and what we eat now are not the same as what our grandparents had before. With scientific methodology, we can improve the quality of seeds. We can select those that grow taller and those that produce higher yields," Okpara said.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

From left: Chairman, House Sub-Committee on Host Communities, Rep. Clement Jimbo; Chairman, House Committee on Host Communities, Rep. Dumnamene Dekor; Deputy Chairman of the Committee, Rep. Abdulkadir Hussaini, and another member of the Committee, Rep. Peter Aniekwe, during a news conference on the outcome of the review meeting on effectiveness of the pipeline security surveillance contract and decision on petitions against Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited and its leadership at the National Assembly in Abuja on Tuesday

IG pledges stronger police support in Rivers

PORT-HARCOURT:

The Inspector-General of Police, IG Olatunji Disu, has reaffirmed the Nigeria Police Force's commitment to strengthening collaboration with the Rivers State Government to maintain law and order and promote peace and security across the state.

Disu gave the assurance on Tuesday, during a courtesy visit to Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, at Government House, Port Harcourt.

The visit marked a homecoming for the police chief, who previously served as Commissioner of Police in Rivers State in 2024.

According to a statement posted by the Nigeria Police Force on X, "the visit provided an opportunity to strengthen the existing partnership between the police and the state government."

Disu reaffirmed the Force's commitment to sustained collaboration with the Rivers State Government and relevant stakeholders to safeguard lives and property, maintain public order and promote peaceful coexistence.

The police chief also emphasised the importance of cooperation between security agencies and government authorities in addressing security challenges and ensuring public safety.

The engagement forms part of efforts to strengthen institutional relationships and improve coordination between the Nigeria Police Force and the Rivers State Government.

The visit underscores the im-

portance of sustained cooperation among security agencies, government institutions and other stakeholders in promoting peace and stability in Rivers State.

"Let me state in categorical terms that my comment does not in any way represent the ideals of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the administration of His Excellency, Governor Professor Babagana Umara Zulum," he stressed.

He further noted that the administration does not in any way undermine the rights of the citizenry.

"Rather, the party and the administration continue to uphold and respect every segment of our society, particularly our youth, who have remained steadfast supporters of both the party and the Zulum administration," he maintained.

Zulum, he said, and the APC have consistently demonstrated a true democratic spirit over the past seven years, assuring that the commitment will remain unwavering to the very end of his tenure. Prof. Abigail Jirgi, Team Lead of Consultants for the VCDP 2026 wet-season farming programme from the Federal University of Technology, Minna, said the consultants had visited four local government areas to train farmers.

Jirgi said the farmers were taught on how to identify quality seedlings, prepare land properly and establish nursery beds for rice production.

She said the training also covered mechanised land clearing and appropriate planting and transplanting spacing, while stressing the importance of maintaining the recommended spacing for optimum crop performance.

Keyamo slams Atiku over Nigeria Airways collapse

ABUJA

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, has accused the presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress, Atiku Abubakar, of hypocrisy over his comments on the state of the country, citing the liquidation of Nigeria Airways and the unpaid entitlements of its former workers.

Keyamo stated this in a post shared on his X handle on Wednesday, stating that the administration in which Atiku served as vice-presi-

dent liquidated the national carrier in September 2004, leaving thousands of workers jobless and without their pensions and gratuities.

"Your Excellency, Atiku Abubakar, this is hypocrisy at its peak! Let me just talk only about the sector that I head, Aviation," the minister wrote.

The minister claimed that the former workers were left to struggle for their entitlements, which he said amounted to billions of naira.

Keyamo said President Bola Tinubu had approved and released N36bn to settle outstanding payments owed to the former Nigeria Airways

workers, adding that beneficiaries had started receiving payment alerts.

"Twenty-two years later, after many of them have died out of frustration, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is now clearing the mess you left behind," he stated.

"Over a month ago, Mr President approved and released the total sum of N36bn to bring succour to these families. They have started receiving alerts and praying for Mr President. In fact, the President was given an award for this by the workers' union a few weeks ago," Keyamo added.

The minister accused the former Vice President of attempting to mislead younger Nigerians who might be unfamiliar with the history of the defunct national carrier.

"Yet you sit down there and pontificate? It's only the younger ones who don't know your history you can attempt to hoodwink, but we will expose you to them," he wrote.

Keyamo further accused the former vice-president of taking credit for decisions made by the administration he served in when politically convenient, while distancing himself from responsibility at other times.

Kebbi nursing college admits 172 students, to graduate first batch in 2028

KANO

Birni-Kebbi: The newly established Kaura Gwandu College of Nursing and Midwifery Science in Kebbi State has admitted 172 students, with its first batch of National Diploma and Higher National Diploma graduates expected in 2028.

The Provost of the institution, Dr Muhammad Musa, disclosed this on Wednesday during an interactive session with media aides to Governor

Nasir Idris, while commending the governor for establishing the college to expand access to healthcare education.

Musa said the institution had helped reduce admission pressure on the State College of Nursing Sciences, Birnin Kebbi, while creating employment opportunities and stimulating economic activities in the state.

He said the first set of students was currently writing examinations, adding that 80 students were sitting for the National Diploma examination.

"The first set of students is currently writing examina-

tions, while the first batch of ND/HND graduates is expected in 2028," the provost said.

He added that arrangements had been concluded for the admission of the second batch of students, expressing optimism that the institution would continue to expand access to nursing and midwifery education.

The provost also disclosed that the college had attracted students from outside Kebbi State, including Imo, Enugu, Niger, Ogun and Kaduna states, among others.

According to him, the growing interest from other states

demonstrates the institution's potential to become an important centre for training healthcare professionals.

Musa said the college had qualified lecturers, standard laboratories, a library and information and communication technology facilities to support effective teaching and learning.

He also acknowledged the state government's provision of essential infrastructure, including staff quarters, male and female hostels, and security arrangements to ensure a conducive learning environment.

NEWS**UBEC targets 29 million children in \$552m World Bank educational programme****ABUJA**

The Universal Basic Education Commission has said the \$552.18 million World Bank grant for the Human Capital Opportunities for Prosperity and Equity (HOPE-EDU) programme is targeting 29 million children, 500,000 teachers, 65,000 public schools and 10,000 non-formal learn-

ing centres across Nigeria.

The programme also targets the construction of 13,000 new classrooms as part of efforts to improve learning outcomes, expand access to quality basic education and strengthen service delivery across the country.

The Executive Secretary of UBEC, Dr Aisha Garba, disclosed this at a two-day meet-

ing with chairmen of State Universal Basic Education Boards on implementation readiness for the programme in Abuja.

According to a statement by the Commission on Wednesday, Garba, who appealed to state governments to demonstrate the political will and financial commitment required to achieve the programme's objectives, said HOPE-EDU

became effective on February 27, 2026, and had entered its implementation phase.

She explained that the programme, a Federal Government initiative supported by the World Bank, adopts a results-based financing approach under which disbursements are linked to the achievement of agreed targets and performance indicators.

According to her, "the initiative is designed to improve learning outcomes, increase equitable access to basic education and strengthen governance and accountability in the education sector."

She said it builds on the implementation of the Universal Basic Education programme and complements other government interventions in governance and primary health-care.

Garba explained that HOPE-EDU was structured around three result areas: improving the quality of basic education, increasing access to education and strengthening key systems.

She said, "\$262.239 million had been allocated to improving education quality, \$123.9 million to expanding access, and \$133.611 million to strengthening key systems."

According to her, the first

result area is open to 33 states, with the possibility of extending participation to all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, subject to participation in the HOPE-GOV operations.

She added that the second result area targets 15 states with the largest populations of out-of-school children that also meet other eligibility requirements, while the third is open to all 36 states and the FCT.

The UBEC boss said the programme places emphasis on improving teaching quality, providing essential learning resources and raising learning achievement among pupils in participating states.

She added that the initiative would promote the adoption of the Structured Pedagogy Programme to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy in primary schools.



VISIT: INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan (L) presenting a souvenir to the leader of delegation and representative of the Chairman of ECONEC, Mr. Serigne Mamadou, during the latter's visit to INEC headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday.

CAC sets December 1 deadline for insolvency practitioners' accreditation renewal**ABUJA**

The Corporate Affairs Commission has set December 1, 2026, as the deadline for accredited insolvency practitioners to renew their accreditation, warning that failure to comply will result in automatic suspension.

The commission said practitioners who fail to renew their accreditation by the deadline would become ineligible to undertake or continue insolvency assignments.

In a notice published on its official X account on Wednesday, the CAC said the directive was in accordance with Section 705 of the Companies

and Allied Matters Act, 2020, and Regulation 1.07 of the Insolvency Regulations, 2022.

The commission stated that accreditation for insolvency practice was valid for three years and subject to renewal upon expiration.

"All practitioners whose accreditation is due for renewal are required to renew on or before 1 December 2026, failing which their accreditation shall be automatically suspended, rendering them ineligible to undertake or continue insolvency assignments," the notice stated.

The CAC also announced mandatory re-registration

for all accredited insolvency practitioners, including those whose accreditation remained valid and unexpired.

According to the commission, the exercise was necessary to support its end-to-end automation process and update practitioners' identification records in line with the National Identity Management Commission Act, 2026.

The commission further disclosed that new certificates featuring enhanced security features would be issued to practitioners upon successful registration.

"Furthermore, in view of the Commission's end-to-end

automation and the need to update identification records in line with the NIMC Act, 2026, all accredited practitioners, including those with valid, unexpired accreditation, are required to re-register," the notice stated.

The CAC directed all affected practitioners to complete their applications and re-registration online through its dedicated insolvency portal.

"All applications and re-registration must be completed online via <https://insolvency.cac.gov.ng>," the commission said.

It advised practitioners to comply promptly with the directive to avoid disruptions to their professional activities.

Emir Sanusi urges Nigerians to diversify finances, unveils Halal fund**KANO**

The Emir of Kano, Alhaji Muhammadu Sanusi II, has urged individuals and business owners to diversify their financial portfolios and embrace ethical investment products in line with Islamic principles.

Sanusi made the call at the unveiling of the UTLAM Halal Fund during the commissioning of the Kano offices of UTL Trust Management Services Limited and UTL Asset Management Limited on Monday.

The fund provides investors with access to a professionally managed portfolio of selected Shari'ah-compliant investment opportunities aimed at promoting wealth creation in accordance with Islamic principles.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued by the media office of UTL Trust Management Services Limited, signed by Oduneye Oluwapelumi and made available to newsmen on Wednesday.

The monarch urged Nigerians to look beyond conventional savings and loan accounts by exploring other financial products, including insurance and investment services.

"I would like to urge every one of us to consider broadening our financial portfolios from just savings and loan accounts to insurance products, exploiting services that are offered by institutions like these.

"It is absolutely important for each and every one of us, not just for our families, but for those who wish to leave behind a legacy," he said.

Sanusi said businesses in Kano had suffered significant losses from disasters, includ-

ing fire outbreaks, theft and sabotage, with some forced to shut down because of inadequate access to financial services that could support recovery.

He noted that several financial products were compatible with Islamic principles and could help business owners protect their assets and strengthen their financial security.

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of UTL, Dr Shamsuddeen Usman, said the establishment of the Kano office was intended to bring the company's services closer to residents rather than merely expand its branch network.

"We are not just opening an office in Kano to add to our number of offices; we are in Kano to bring our services to the doorsteps of the people of Kano," he said.

Usman said the company had introduced Shari'ah-compliant services for customers in Kano, adding that the products had been reviewed and approved by its Shari'ah advisory board.

"We have launched a Shari'ah-compliant service to our Kano customers. Our services have been scrutinised and approved by the Shari'ah advisory board," he said.

He explained that the Kano office would offer services including trust management, wills and other Shari'ah-compliant investment opportunities for individuals and institutions.

The Executive Director of UTL Trust Management Services Limited, Mrs Omotoro Olaide, said the opening of the office marked an important step in the company's efforts to serve clients across Northern Nigeria.

Okorocho's camp breaks silence, denies arrest, challenges Imo govt**OWERRI**

The camp of a former Imo State Governor, Rochas Okorocho, has denied reports that he was arrested by the police, challenging the Imo State Government to provide evidence of an arrest warrant it allegedly relied upon.

Okorocho's Chief Press Secretary and Special Adviser on Media, Sam Onwuemeodo, described the report of the former governor's arrest as false, insisting that no arrest was made and no bail was granted.

However, the Nigeria Police Force confirmed that Okorocho was arrested on Monday night at the REIZ Continental Hotel in Abuja and released on bail after about an hour of

interrogation over allegations of criminal conspiracy, forgery and impersonation.

The Force Public Relations Officer, CSP Anietie Iniedu, said the former governor had been directed to return to the Force Headquarters for further questioning as investigations continued.

In a statement issued on Monday, titled, 'Arrest Warrant: We've Been Vindicated. Falsehood Has Never Prevailed Over Truth. Truth Is Sacred', Onwuemeodo maintained that "His Excellency, Owelle Rochas Okorocho, was never arrested."

The denial followed a statement by the Imo State Government, through its Commissioner for Information, Mbadiwe Emelumba, defend-

ing the arrest warrant reportedly issued against the former governor.

Onwuemeodo said the state government, in a statement titled, 'Bench Warrant: Okorocho's Lies', responded to the former governor's demand that it produce the court order it had cited.

He said the government attached a court order dated September 9, 2026, to its statement but maintained that the same order had been vacated by the issuing court five days later.

In the statement, Onwuemeodo said, "On Monday, October 12, 2026, the Imo State Government, through the Information Commissioner, Mr Mbadiwe Emelumba, issued a very lengthy press statement,

captioned, 'BENCH WARRANT: OKOROCHO'S LIES'.

"The release was in response to the earlier challenge we had thrown at them to produce their much-celebrated court order. They attached the same court order they had referred to, dated September 9, 2026, to the press release.

"Later, the same day, Monday, October 12, 2026, they came up with another cock-and-bull story that the former governor, 'Owelle Rochas Okorocho, had been arrested'."

Onwuemeodo maintained that the court order relied upon by the state government was issued on September 9, 2026, but was subsequently vacated by the same court on September 14.

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13 X 4	369,500	397,213	295,600	317,770	206,938	222,458	443,500	476,763	369,550	397,266
10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
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FP 5X2	81,100	87,183	97,300	104,598	5 X 2	51,950	55,846	42,120	45,279	
FP 4X2	73,000	78,475	80,700	86,753	4 X 2	45,260	48,655	34,400	36,980	
FP 3X2	64,870	69,735	73,000	78,475	3 X 2	30,900	33,218	26,600	28,595	
FP 2X2	59,000	63,425	64,900	69,768	2 X 2	18,680	20,081	15,600	16,770	
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NEWS

FOREIGN



POPE LEO ARRIVED AT ROME'S GEMELLI HOSPITAL AHEAD OF HIS SURGERY ON TUESDAY:

US inflation rises more than expected ahead of midterm elections

Inflation in the US rose by more than expected in the year to September, according to official figures, in the final data release before the midterm elections next month.

The pace of price rises increased to 3.7%, up from 3.4% in the 12 months to August.

Inflation was above forecasts, driven by higher gasoline prices which have spiked following disruption to Middle East energy supplies due to the US-Israel conflict with Iran.

The elections are being fought over cost of living pressures across the US.

What is inflation?

Inflation is the rate at which the price of products or services increase over time.

For example, if a bottle of milk costs \$1 but rises to \$1.10 a year later, then annual inflation for bottled milk is 10%.

Officials from the Bureau of Labor Statistics measure in-

flation through the consumer price index (CPI).

It tracks the price changes of hundreds of day-to-day items including fresh food, gasoline and medical services to work out the overall level of inflation in the US economy.

The bureau updates this so-called basket of goods over time as peoples' spending and lifestyle habits change.

What causes inflation?

There are several factors that can cause inflation to rise.

If demand for a product outstrips its supply, that can lead to producers raising prices - the craze for Labubu dolls in recent years and the high resale prices are an example.

Higher incomes can also lead to higher demand, for example, which in turn pushes up prices.

Supply can also affect inflation. If supply of a product is reduced, but demand remains

constant, that can cause prices to rise. A good example of this is crude oil, which is used to make gasoline and diesel.

Before the US-Israel war with Iran began, it was trading at just over \$70 a barrel but when the conflict constricted crude supplies, the price quickly rose and is currently over \$100.

What is the current rate of inflation?

Inflation has risen to 3.7% in the year to September, which is a higher-than-expected increase fuelled by gasoline prices.

Car fuel prices jumped by 34.2% over 12 months.

In September alone, they jumped by 9.1%, accounting for more than half of the increase in inflation, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Overall, energy inflation was up by 20.4% over the year as prices for fuel oil, energy services and electricity climbed. Fuel oil, used in home heating,

was up 74.2% over the year.

Experts said the US Federal Reserve - which sets the country's interest rate - will be closely watching to see if energy costs begin to affect other areas of the economy, such as food prices, and drive inflation higher.

At the moment, food inflation remains subdued. It was flat over the month of September, and was 2.5% across the year.

Core inflation, which strips out food and energy prices, was 2.6%.

How have tariffs affected inflation?

Since coming into office for the second time, President Donald Trump has introduced tariffs on most US trading partners around the world.

While most of the additional global levies were outlawed by the Supreme Court in February, the president immediately announced a new 10% global tariff to replace them.

Pope diagnosed with lung cancer but had successful surgery, Vatican says

Pope Leo XIV has been diagnosed with lung cancer but had successful surgery to remove a lower lobe of his right lung, the Vatican has said in a medical bulletin.

The 71-year-old underwent a 90-minute surgery on Tuesday at Rome's Gemelli Hospital and was subsequently diagnosed with lung adenocarcinoma - a type of cancer usually found in the outer part of the organ.

"The operation was successful and there were no complications," the Vatican said. "After the operation, the Pope awoke normally and returned after a brief period of observation to his room."

The pontiff had a "peaceful night" in the hospital, the Vatican said on Wednesday morning, and he is expected to remain there for about a week.

Large crowds had waited outside the hospital for the Pope's arrival on Tuesday, cheering as he waved and smiled through a window as his car went past.

He was met by staff on the hospital steps. "I'm sorry," one of them commiserated, to which the Pope gave a smile and a shrug.

The Vatican said the whole lower lobe of the Pope's right lung was removed during a roughly 90-minute surgery "to ensure the procedure was radical".

It was Leo himself who on Sunday announced news of his operation to the world during his weekly Sunday prayers, telling the crowd in St Peter's Square that doctors had found a nodule on his lung.

He reassured pilgrims that the mass was "well-contained"

and caught "at an early stage" but that his doctors had advised him to have it removed.

Nodules are quite common and not necessarily cancerous, but after it was examined the medical team confirmed it was, "as suspected by pre-operative tests", the Vatican said.

A Vatican source told news agency AFP that further tests were now being carried out to see whether the cancer had spread.

The Vatican has stressed that the Pope, who is generally thought to be fit, had no symptoms of infection or illness.

Cardinal Kikuchi Tarcisio Isao of Tokyo said he had had an audience with the pontiff on Monday and that he had felt "nothing wrong" physically.

He said the Pope - whose schedule has been cleared until 20 October to allow him to recover - had decided to check in for surgery as soon as possible because he was keen not to delay a planned trip to Latin America in early November.

The trip is particularly significant because it includes a visit to Peru, where he was a missionary and then a Bishop for many years.

Despite all the reassurances, the news has shaken Catholics worldwide - many of whom will have recent memories of Pope Francis's hospital visits.

Leo's predecessor, who died last year, also had part of his lung removed in his youth before suffering a series of respiratory infections later in life.

"Am I worried? Yes, because I certainly wasn't expecting anything like this," Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin told journalists on Tuesday.

Germany puts Ukrainian accused of blowing up Nord Stream pipelines on trial

A Ukrainian man has gone on trial in Hamburg accused of blowing up Russia's Nord Stream gas pipelines to Germany, four years after one of the most dramatic acts of sabotage in modern European history.

Prosecutors say Serhii Kuznetsov played a leading role in a team of saboteurs that destroyed the pipelines, accusing him of a war crime. His defence has called for the case to be dismissed.

The case is highly sensitive in Germany, one of Ukraine's closest allies since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, seven months before the attacks took place.

Extradited to Germany last year, Kuznetsov denies the charges, as does a second suspect who is fighting extradition from Croatia.

Kuznetsov became the first suspect to go on trial for the blasts on Wednesday morning, and a packed public gallery looked on as he entered the courtroom, appearing relaxed.

He even smiled at times, including during initial exchanges where he spoke to confirm personal details such as his name and place of birth.

He had previously only been identified by German prosecutors as Serhii K and pictured with his face blurred, before the court lifted an anonymity order on Wednesday.

Kuznetsov, 50, wore a pair of headphones and appeared to listen intently to a translation of proceedings in Ukrainian, as the prosecution read out the charges against him of ordering divers and an explosive expert to attack civilian infrastructure.

The defence outlined their case, telling the court that only circumstantial evidence had emerged in the four years since the Nord Stream blasts.

"[Prosecutors] made a thorough investigation of four years," Italian defence lawyer Nicola Canestrini told the BBC outside the courtroom. "They did not find one single witness, they did not find no forensics, no DNA, no fingerprints - nothing!"

Canestrini and his colleagues argued that as a soldier the defendant was bound to secrecy, and therefore he could not have a fair trial as he was unable to defend himself.

"Let's say he has an alibi, he was on another secret operation, how can you prove that if he's [not able] to tell us as defence attorneys where he was and which witnesses we could summon?"

Prosecutors argue the case falls under Germany's code of crimes against international law as a war crime, as an "attack by military means against civilian objects".

The defence told the court his extradition to Germany was flawed as no mention had been made at the time of the war crime allegation.

Starlink restrictions affecting Ukraine's front line operations, Kyiv says

New restrictions on the speed at which some of Ukraine's weapons can travel and still connect to the Starlink internet network have disrupted Ukraine's battlefield "missions", President Volodymyr Zelensky's adviser has warned.

Serhiy Beskrestnov said Ukraine had not been told about speed limits set overnight at 100mph (160km/h) by Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

Starlink is a vital tool allowing Kyiv to effectively guide drones to Russian targets and also protect Ukrainian skies.

Beskrestnov said SpaceX's move "cannot be a coincidence and is related to the current political situation". The firm has not commented.

In Wednesday's post on Telegram, Beskrestnov said SpaceX

had "implemented overnight a speed limit on Starlink terminals" and this had already resulted in "the disruption of a number of missions".

This comes as at least 600,000 people across Ukraine were left without electricity after deadly overnight Russian missile and drone strikes, Zelensky said.

He said "critical" energy infrastructure had been hit in Kyiv and the capital region, and in the north-eastern city of Kharkiv - despite US President Donald Trump's claim on Sunday that an "energy ceasefire" was in place between Russia and Ukraine.

Three people were killed in Kyiv, local officials said. Russia said its "massive" strikes had hit communications and energy facilities used by Ukraine's military.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Houthi missile hits Aramco building after Saudi-led coalition

A missile launched by Yemen's Houthi movement hit a building owned by Saudi Arabia's state oil company Aramco in the eastern city of Dhahran overnight, after a Saudi-led coalition struck a fuel depot near the Yemeni capital, Sanaa.

The Saudi energy ministry said the Houthi attack caused a "limited fire" in an administrative building at Aramco's headquarters complex.

Saudi authorities reported that several missiles and drones were intercepted elsewhere, and that falling debris injured four people in the capital, Riyadh.

The Houthis said they targeted Aramco and Riyadh's airport in response to the coalition's strike on the Yemen Petroleum Company's al-Sabaha facility on Tuesday.

The Iran-backed group also warned that there would be further attacks in the coming days.

International Monetary Fund director Kristalina Georgieva said the escalating conflict could have "potentially negative spillovers for everybody, everywhere".

The Saudi cabinet, chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, vowed on Tuesday that the Houthis would "bear the consequences" of their recent attacks on the kingdom, including a missile strike on Riyadh's airport on Saturday that killed 13 people.

The Houthis have said they are targeting airports, oil and gas facilities, and military bases in Saudi Arabia in retaliation for deadly Saudi air strikes on territory that they control in western Yemen, including Sanaa.

The Saudi-led coalition has

been providing air support for Yemeni pro-government forces mounting an offensive against the Houthis on Yemen's Red Sea coast and other front lines.

On Tuesday evening, coalition spokesman Maj Gen Turki al-Maliki said its forces intercepted and destroyed a ballistic missile launched by the Houthis towards Dhahran, but that debris fell in a residential area.

Later, the Saudi energy ministry said an Aramco building in the city was targeted, causing a "limited fire" but no injuries.

Sources with knowledge of the incident told Reuters news agency that a ballistic missile hit an office tower in the company's headquarters complex, causing extensive damage and a fire that spread between the sixth and 10th floors.

"[The] top three floors have gone," one Aramco employee

was quoted as saying by AFP news agency.

Maliki said the coalition also intercepted missiles and drones launched towards Riyadh, al-Kharj and Haradh, as well as the country's south on Tuesday and Wednesday morning.

The General Directorate of Civil Defence said two women, a man and a child were injured by debris from two intercepted cruise missiles in Riyadh, which also caused "limited material damage" to 15 homes in the city.

The Houthis' military spokesman, Yahya Sarea, said on Wednesday morning that they had targeted Aramco's headquarters in Dhahran, an Aramco refinery in Riyadh and the capital's King Khalid International Airport with ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones.

"Operations towards Sau-

di depths will continue in the coming days, targeting Saudi enemy airports and oil facilities," he added.

The Houthis had threatened a "harsh and painful" response to the Saudi-led air strikes in Yemen on Tuesday afternoon.

Houthi-run media reported that the air strikes targeted the Yemen Petroleum Company's al-Sabaha Central Station, on the western outskirts of Sanaa, as well as its facilities at the Ras Isa oil terminal on the Red Sea coast, north of the port city of Hudaydah.

Two civilians were killed and two others were injured in the Ras Isa attack, the Houthi-run health ministry said.

The coalition had earlier issued a rare warning to civilians to evacuate the al-Sabaha fuel depot, saying it was planning a "special operation".

Zimbabwean author denies using AI to write award-winning story

Zimbabwean writer Simbarashe Kundizeza has denied using artificial intelligence (AI) to write his short story, which won this year's Caine Prize for African Writing.

His statement comes a week after he scooped the £10,000 (\$13,000) award and a recent article in The Atlantic said AI-detection software Pan-gram had shown his work about a boy whose family falls on hard times was entirely AI generated.

"For the avoidance of doubt, I wrote The Blue Fighter," he posted on X.

The accusation has caused an uproar on social media and Caine Prize chair Ellah Wakatama told the BBC she was shocked that the US magazine had not waited for a full investigation before publishing.

"I do wish The Atlantic had spent more time investigating this so that alongside Pan-gram, they did have evidence of real human investigation of it before tainting the prize and tainting this winner," Wakatama told the BBC's Front Row programme.

The chair of the Caine Prize's board of trustees said she had been contacted on Friday about the allegation and Vauhini Vara's article - Yet Another Prizewinner Seems to Be AI - had been published on Sunday.

It follows rows over other literary prizes this year, in particular the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, which was won by Trinidadian writer Jamir Nazir despite allegations that he had used AI, and the withdrawal of Canadian-Haitian author Thélyson Orélien from France's top literary award, the Goncourt, over allegations he used AI for his first novel, which he denies.

Four killed in shooting after politician's memorial in South Africa

A gunman fired on a group of mourners leaving a memorial service for a local politician in South Africa, killing at least four people and injuring three others, police said Wednesday.

At least one of those wounded in the shooting late Tuesday in Katlehong township was a child, according to police, who said the suspect was in custody after turning himself in.

Police initially said two men died at the scene southeast of Johannesburg, but authorities raised the death toll to four after two more people died in a hospital on Wednesday.

The shooting is being investigated by a political killings task team, the South African Police Service said in a statement.

Some of the victims were members of the youth league of the African National Congress party, the largest party in South Africa's Parliament,

according to local media reports, which said the memorial service was for a woman who served as a local ANC leader and died in what was suspected to be a politically motivated shooting earlier this month.

Police did not immediately confirm the identity of the victims and only said they had attended a memorial for a "member of a political party."

South Africa has high rates of gun crime, including shootings related to local political rivalries.

A report earlier this month by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime said there had been 43 killings in South Africa this year that were suspected to be politically motivated.

South Africa will hold local elections on Nov. 4 to decide which parties control municipal councils.



The Houthi-run Yemen Petroleum Company assured residents of Sanaa that it had sufficient fuel supplies

Saudi employee charged with planting recording device in OpenAI office

A Saudi national has been charged with secretly planting a recording device in one of OpenAI's offices in California, federal prosecutors announced.

Abdulrahman Alfozan, who worked at the AI firm as an engineer, was charged federally with using or endeavouring to use an electronic, mechanical, or other device to intercept oral communications.

OpenAI said it had discovered a "sophisticated recording device" hidden in their San Francisco office and alerted the FBI. The company said it used its AI models to track that it had been planted by an employee.

Prosecutors say the device, wrapped in toilet paper, was found inserted in a USB port on the back of a TV in an executive conference room.

OpenAI, the maker of the popular chatbot ChatGPT, said that it has no indica-

tion that source code, model weights or customer data were inappropriately accessed or taken in the incident. It said the employee has been fired.

According to the complaint, Alfozan "allegedly concealed a covert recording device inside his employer's executive conference room to secretly capture sensitive communications," FBI Director Kash Patel said in a statement.

Patel said that the alleged goal was to capture information about the company's AI product.

Alfozan has been working as an engineer at OpenAI since July 2025, prosecutors say.

On 30 September, OpenAI employees discovered the device - two days after prosecutors say it had been installed. The device was encrypted, prosecutors said.

OpenAI said they were able to use their AI models "to un-

derstand the device and where it had come from, identifying that a specific employee had planted it a few days earlier".

According to the FBI, the suspect used a "productivity tool" and a "chatbot" to research sensitive locations at OpenAI and how to secretly place audio equipment.

Chatbot prompts that he is alleged to have searched include "building, customising, installing, audio recording, testing, obfuscating, and remote accessing a device", prosecutors allege.

He is also accused of using the chatbot to ask about "'build[ing] a continuous audio recorder,' 'customis[ing] Wi-Fi . . . connectivity,' 'improv[ing] audio and live listening,' and 'encrypt[ing] the SD card'".

On 5 October, prosecutors say he allegedly returned to inspect the device in the office room. Prosecutors used CCTV camera footage to link

him to the scene.

That same day, Alfozan left a bag unattended in a different part of the building. A security team for OpenAI opened it to find his wallet and ID, as well as another recording device that was similar to the one found in the office conference room, prosecutors said.

Alfozan appeared in court on Tuesday. It's unclear whether he has legal representation.

If found guilty, he faces up to five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 (£187,000).

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NEWS FEATURES

Safe migration parthways for skilled workers

• *MRC lists skills mismatch as cause of unemployment*

OSEMUDIAMHEN O. FAITH



INFORMATION SESSION ON REGULAR MIGRATION:

A cross section of key stakeholders during information session on regular migration pathways for skilled workers held in Benin City, Edo State, on Tuesday.

The Federal Ministry of Youth Development, in collaboration with EdoJobs and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, has sensitised youths in Benin City on regular migration pathways to Germany, career opportunities in Nigeria and how to avoid fraudulent recruiters.

The forum, held at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, Airport Road, Benin City, Edo State, on Tuesday, 13 October 2026, brought together migration experts and labour market counsellors who said while opportunities still exist in Nigeria, access to accurate information remains critical for those seeking prosperity abroad.

Mrs Joanne Ali of the MRC, speaking on career opportunities and emerging jobs in Nigeria, said contrary to the belief that there are no jobs in Nigeria, the real challenge is skills mismatch, outdated curriculum and slow job creation.

"There are jobs in Nigeria, but we do not have the right skills to match the jobs that are available," she said.

Ali listed slow job creation, graduates working outside their discipline, high power and logistics costs, low start-up capital, insecurity and economic shocks as drivers of persistent unemployment.

She said employers now demand practical, job-ready skills, digital literacy, communication, teamwork and problem-solving, while many graduates present only theoretical knowledge, generic CVs and certificates without portfolios.

She urged students to volunteer and intern while in school to build the two to five years' experience often

demanding by employers, and to tailor CVs to specific job adverts to beat automated tracking systems.

She urged youths to use Labour Market Information (LMI) from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), NELEX, Industrial Training Fund (ITF), NECA, Job Centres, MRCs, ILO and World Bank to know growing jobs, pay and required skills.

She said vacancies are published daily on NELEX (nelex.gov.ng), Vanguard, LinkedIn, Jobberman, MyJobMag and EdoJobs.

Listing trending jobs, she named technology (software development, fintech, data analysis, web design, ethical hacking, cybersecurity, AI, digital marketing), healthcare (pharmacy, nursing), agribusiness and agritech, solar and renewable energy, construction, creative industry, logistics and finance.

Based on LMI projections, she said in the next two years, growth is expected in data analysis, AI tools, UI/UX, digital marketing and solar installation; in three to five years, AI and machine learning, cybersecurity, renewable energy and agritech; and in five to ten years, robotics, biotech, healthcare, sustainability and green finance.

She warned against red flags including paying for job offers, no written contract, unlicensed recruiters, withholding of passports, restriction of movement and promises to handle all visas without due process.

According to her, MRCs in Benin (Federal Secretariat, Aduwawa), Abuja, Lagos, Kano and Nasarawa vet contracts and offer free pre-departure orientation, job matching, counselling and anti-trafficking awareness in partnership with GIZ

and EdoJobs.

A migration expert and first-class Philosophy graduate, who narrated how a fully-funded German Government scholarship in 2006/2007 for his master's degree transformed his life, said Germany is often not among the top five destinations for Nigerians, who prefer Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

Speaking on regular migration, study and work, and vocational training in Germany, he said Germany offers greater prospects as the world's third-largest economy after the United States and China, and the largest economy in Europe, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of over \$5.05 trillion compared to Nigeria's just above \$300 billion, and GDP per capita of about \$65,000 against less than \$1,500.

Citing data from the German Consulate in Lagos, he said over 84,000 Nigerians lived in Germany as of 2024. He put Germany's employment rate at 77.2 per cent and unemployment at about 2.8 per cent as of June.

"We are not a travel agency or a recruitment organisation. We are here to provide you with valuable information and guide you through migration advice and counselling. There are a lot of fraudulent agents in the country. We do not want you to fall victim," he said.

He advised youths to seek guidance only from verified agencies — MRCs, EdoJobs centres and offices of the Federal Ministry of Youth Development.

On the amended Skilled Immigration Act 2023, he explained three pillars: the Qualification Pillar (old route) which required working strict-

ly in field of study with certificate recognition; the Experience Pillar (new) where applicants with at least two years' experience can work in that sector even if unrelated to their qualification without mandatory recognition; and the Potential Pillar/Opportunity Card (Chancenkarte) which allows Nigerians to travel to Germany for one year to search for jobs.

He outlined five steps to securing jobs: Preparation (at least B1 German via Duolingo, Deutsche Welle, Babel); Job Search (Make it in Germany portal — <http://make-it-in-germany.com>); Application (tailored cover letter and Europass CV); Interview (research company); and Job Contract (formal contract with minimum 24 days annual leave).

On vocational training (Ausbildung), he said Germany operates a dual system — 70 per cent in-company, 30 per cent in vocational school — where trainees earn €724 to €1,300 monthly, with hospitality paying €800 to €1,180. Requirement is secondary school certificate and B1 German. He said 18 Nigerians trained in Lagos last year under a Goethe-Institut/AHK/IHK partnership, with seven already relocated in September.

On studies, he said public universities are tuition-free, unlike the UK where a master's costs £16,000-£20,000, with only Baden-Württemberg charging about €6,000 yearly for non-EU students. Students, however, pay about €300 per semester and must provide a blocked account of €11,904 for one year (about €992 monthly) for living costs.

The forum drew students, graduates, corps members and young entrepreneurs from across Edo State,

many of whom described the session as eye-opening.

Some participants who spoke with our correspondent at the end of the programme said they had previously relied on agents for information on travelling abroad, but now understood the importance of verified sources and acquiring relevant skills before migrating.

They commended the Federal Ministry of Youth Development, EdoJobs and the MRC for bringing accurate migration information to the state.

The organisers urged participants to visit the MRC at the Federal Secretariat, Aduwawa, Benin City and EdoJobs centres for free follow-up counselling, contract vetting and pre-departure orientation.

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Sports

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

NNL 2026/27: Akwa Utd unveil 10 new players in top-flight return bid

Akwa United Football Club have strengthened their squad with the acquisition of 10 new players ahead of the 2026/2027 Nigeria National League (NNL) season as the Promise Keepers intensify preparations for a return to the Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL).

The newly signed players comprise one goalkeeper, three defenders, four midfielders and two forwards.

The new additions are goalkeeper Robert Cole from Godswill Akpabio United; defenders Keme Okoriye from Abia Comets, Famoyegun Mi-

chael from Ikorodu City and Ikemdinachi Prince from Nasarawa United.

Others are midfielders Paschal Uba from Doma United, Asiriwa Godwin from Enugu Rangers, Ifeanyichukwu Nwune from Ozala Academy and James Peter from Blackpool Academy, while the forwards are Peter Asuquo from FC One Rocket and Apas Abel from Morak FC.

Head Coach of Akwa United, Paul Ofor, expressed satisfaction with the quality of the newly recruited players, expressing confidence that the team would be fully prepared

before the commencement of the new season.

The new signings have since commenced training alongside players retained from last season as the technical crew works to blend the squad into a competitive unit capable of achieving the club's promotion ambition.

Akwa United will be campaigning in Conference B of the 2026/2027 NNL season, which is scheduled to kick off on October 31, 2026.

The Promise Keepers will be hoping to build on their preparations and secure promotion to the top flight at the end of the season.



AKWA UNITED PLAYERS

Grassrunners JNR, Eko United ignite AFH pre-season tournament in Sagamu

Grassrunners JNR and Eko United open the African Football Holding (AFH) Pre-season Tournament in Sagamu on Thursday at 9 am., setting up an intriguing football contest.

The opening Matchday 1 fixtures of the tournament, tagged 'Good Football, Great Futures', will be held at FC Ebodei Stadium in Apele.

Sunshine Stars, FC Ebodei, Eko United, Dokkal Khairu, Grassrunners JNR, Crown FC, Stormers SC, Ebodei Sports College, Grassrunners FC and Ikorodu City FA will compete in the 10-day event, running from October 15th to 24th.

The AFH pre-season tournament is for teams in the Nigeria National League (NNL) and Nationwide League One (NLO), giving them a chance to prepare adequately for the new season in their respective divisions.

Five hours later, FC Ebodei and Sunshine Stars will bring the MatchDay 1 Group A schedule to a close with a blockbuster clash.

Tunde Shamsudeen, lead of the AFH Pre-Season Tournament Organising Committee, said, "After more than a month of planning, the kickoff is a few hours away."

"The unique thing about the

tourney is that all teams will get 360 minutes of football in total in the group phase to put their players through their paces and instil the tactical blueprint they want for their teams, before qualification to the final phase. This makes the tourney highly competitive.

"The eventual winner and runners-up of the maiden edition of the tourney will cart away a whopping N2m as prize money, while runners-up get N1m.



GRASSRUNNERS JNR

UCL: Arsenal beat Lille 3-0 to continue perfect Champions League start

Arsenal continued their impressive start to the UEFA Champions League campaign with a convincing 3-0 victory over Lille at the Emirates Stadium on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, securing another important result in their pursuit of European glory.

The Gunners produced a decisive second-half performance, scoring three goals in seven minutes to overcome the French side. Jurrien Timber, Eberechi Eze and Bukayo Saka were on target for Mikel Arteta's men, whose attacking quality eventually proved too much for the visitors.

The victory strengthened Arsenal's early position in the

Champions League league phase and offered further evidence of the team's determination to compete among Europe's leading clubs this season.

Lille initially made life difficult for the hosts, adopting a disciplined approach that restricted Arsenal's attacking movements during the opening exchanges. The visitors defended compactly, forcing the London side to work patiently for openings in the final third.

Arsenal continued to search for a breakthrough as the first half progressed, probing Lille's defensive organisation and attempting to create clear scoring opportunities. However,

the visitors remained resilient, ensuring that the teams went into the interval without a goal.

The deadlock was finally broken in the

64th minute when Timber finished confidently after receiving a pass from Noni Madueke. The Dutch defender lifted the ball over Lille goalkeeper Berke Özer to give Arsenal the lead and energise the home supporters.

Arsenal doubled their advantage just three minutes later through Eze. The England international converted a delivery from substitute Saka, with a deflection helping the ball find its way into the net.

NFF normalisation committee's tenure to end May 31, 2027

A proposed Normalisation Committee for the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) is expected to have its tenure end on May 31, 2027, according to a report by UK-based Nigerian journalist Osasu Obayiuwana.

Obayiuwana disclosed that a highly reliable source confirmed the proposed tenure, which has reportedly been presented to the FIFA Council for approval.

The proposal, if approved, would set May 31, 2027, as the deadline for the committee to conclude its assignment.

The report also indicated that Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Patrice Motsepe is in agreement with the proposed arrangement.

However, the proposal is still subject to approval by the FIFA Council, and no official confirmation of its adoption has been provided in the information available.

Further details regarding the committee's composition, mandate and plans for restoring normal football administration in Nigeria are yet to be confirmed.



IBRAHIM GUSAU

Augustine Eguavoen promises more opportunities for new Super Falcons players



AUGUSTINE EGUAVOEN

Interim Nigeria coach Augustine Eguavoen has assured players who did not feature in Nigeria's recent matches that they will have further opportunities to prove themselves as the coaching crew continues to build a strong squad.

Eguavoen disclosed that the team initially invited 23 players but eventually had 27 in camp, leaving several members without the opportunity to feature

during the two matches.

The coach said he had spoken directly with players who did not get playing time, explaining that they would be considered for subsequent fixtures.

"We invited 23 players and ended up with 27. Most of them didn't get to feel the game. I have spoken to those ones who didn't get involved in these two games that they have to come for next games to

be given the chance," Eguavoen said.

He explained that managing a large squad requires communication and mutual understanding, particularly when some players are unable to take part despite being invited to camp.

Eguavoen specifically mentioned Joy Omewa, Shakirat Moshood and Blessing Nkor among the players to whom he had explained the selection decisions.

"Joy Omewa is another player I wanted to play but I have explained things to her and she understood. Moshood Shakirat, a young talented player as well. I also had to explain to Blessing Nkor," he said.

The interim coach acknowledged that he was not necessarily required to explain every selection decision but considered it important to maintain professionalism and good relationships within the squad.

SPORTS



FIFA identifies four key areas African teams must improve ahead of 2030 World Cup

African Teams Qualified	FIFA Ranking
1 MOROCCO	7TH
2 SENEGAL	14TH
3 EGYPT	28TH
4 ALGERIA	29TH
5 IVORY COAST	34TH
6 DR CONGO	45TH
7 TUNISIA	46TH
8 MALI	51ST
9 SOUTH AFRICA	60TH
10 CAPE VERDE	68TH
11 GHANA	73RD

FIFA's Technical Study Group has identified four key areas African teams must improve to strengthen their competitiveness at the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

The recommendations focus on attacking efficiency, high pressing, game management and maintaining the strengths that have helped African teams compete against the world's leading football nations.

The technical experts urged African teams to create more scoring opportunities inside the penalty area rather than relying excessively on long-range efforts.

According to the analysis, improving the quality of

chances created in dangerous areas could help African sides become more clinical in front of goal.

The second area highlighted was the need for teams to improve their high pressing and ability to recover possession in advanced positions.

The study group stressed the importance of winning the ball back quickly, moving it accurately and exploiting opportunities before opposing defences can reorganise.

FIFA's technical experts also emphasised the importance of game management, particularly in the closing stages of matches.



RASHEEDAT AJIBADE

Eguavoen gives updates on Ajibade injury after Comoros win

Nigeria captain Rasheedat Ajibade has been taken to hospital for an MRI scan after sustaining an injury during Nigeria's 5-0 victory over Comoros in the second leg of their 2028 Olympic Games qualifying tie.

Interim head coach Augustine Eguavoen confirmed the medical examination after Tuesday's encounter at the Remo Stars Stadium in Ikenne, Ogun State, saying the scan would determine the extent of the injury.

Nigeria secured a commanding 7-0 aggregate victory to advance to the third qualifying round, where they will face Morocco. However, Ajibade's injury cast a shadow over the emphatic result.

The Paris Saint-Germain forward was forced off in the

28th minute following a collision with a Comoros defender. She was visibly in pain before being stretchered off, with Folasade Ijamilusi coming on as her replacement.

Speaking at the post-match press conference, Eguavoen said he was waiting for the medical team's assessment before commenting on the severity of the injury.

"Ajibade, I have not heard anything. I was with the medical team and they said they are taking her to the hospital for an MRI to ascertain the degree of the injury," Eguavoen said.

He added that the team hoped to receive an update before returning to their hotel, explaining that the medical team would communicate the findings through the Super Falcons' media manager.

Court fixes November 3 hearing for suit challenging NBBF elective congress

The Federal High Court in Abuja has fixed November 3, 2026, for the hearing of a suit challenging the conduct of the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) elective congress, after declining an application seeking to stop the election scheduled for Thursday.

The suit, marked FHC/ABJ/CS/2428, was instituted by Ayodele Olaseinde Bakare against the NBBF and the National Sports Commission (NSC).

In his application, Bakare challenged the legality of the congress held in Yola, Adamawa State, alleging that it was convened in violation of provisions of the NBBF Constitution.

The plaintiff argued that neither two-thirds of the Congress members nor the NBBF Board issued the required notice convening the extraordinary congress in Yola.

Additionally, Bakare contended that only 44 out of the 50 Congress members at the Yola meeting were served the notice for the congress which contravened the applicable constitutional provisions governing the composition and conduct of the Congress and also breach the right of fair hearing on other congress members that were not served.

At Wednesday's proceedings, the court declined to grant the plaintiff's request for an interim order restraining the federation from proceeding with its scheduled elective congress.

However, the court granted a relief to abridge the timeframe for the defendants to respond to the substantive claims, re-

ducing the period from one month to two weeks. The matter was subsequently fixed for November 3 at the Federal High Court in Abuja.

In considering the application to halt the election, the court reportedly took into account the proximity of the scheduled congress and the financial and logistical commitments already made, including travel arrangements for delegates from across the country, venue bookings and other related



Nigeria targets sports tourism boost as Abuja prepares for World Polo Championship qualifiers

Nigeria is preparing to welcome international polo competition to Abuja in November, with the National Sports Commission (NSC) exploring is preparing to welcome international polo competition to Abuja in November, with the National Sports Commission (NSC) exploring support for the hosting of the Federation of International Polo (FIP) Zone E World Cup Play-Offs.

The tournament is scheduled for November 9-16, 2026, at the Guards Polo Club in Abuja. Nigeria will compete alongside India, Iran and Pakistan for qualification for the 2027 FIP World Cup finals in Uruguay.

The hosting opportunity presents Nigeria with a chance to attract international visitors, promote sports tourism and demonstrate its ability to organise competitions involving athletes and

teams from different countries.

The Chairman of the National Sports Commission, Shehu Dikko, received a delegation of the Nigeria Polo Association (NPA), led by its chairman, Suleman Abubakar, on Monday, October 12. The delegation briefed the commission on preparations for the tournament and sought support for the event.

Dikko expressed the commission's willingness to consider areas of support within its available resources, stressing that the competition should be treated as a national event requiring cooperation among relevant stakeholders.

The hosting arrangement comes with opportunities beyond the competition itself. International sporting events can create demand for accommodation, transportation, hospitality services and other businesses that cater to visiting teams, officials and spectators.



SHEU DIKKO

Edo SWAN congratulates Frank Ilaboya on appointment as Special Adviser to Okpebholo

Edo State chapter of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) has congratulated veteran sports journalist and administrator Hon. Frank Areguame Ilaboya on his appointment as Special Adviser to Governor Monday Okpebholo on Grassroots Sports Mobilisation.

The appointment took effect from October 9, 2026, according to a letter dated same date, with reference No. SGA. 15/ Vol. XVIII/1116, signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq.

"His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo has approved your appointment as Special Adviser to the Governor on Grassroots Sports Mobilisation with effect from Oc-

tober 9, 2026," the letter read in parts.

The appointment also entitles Ilaboya to the emoluments stipulated under the Political and Public Officers Emolument (Amendment) Law, 2023.

In a statement signed by the chapter chairman, Comrade Kehinde Osagiede, SWAN described the appointment as well deserved and pledged its support.

"We congratulate Hon. Frank Ilaboya on his appointment as Special Adviser to Governor Okpebholo on Grassroots Sports Mobilisation.

"As a former chairman of SWAN, Lagos State chapter, and former chairman of the Edo State Football Association, he remains one of us and will enjoy our support and cooperation.