

Okpebholo, Pate commend Ikpea for building 62-bed medical centre in Edo

By RICHARD EWEKA

EWATTO

Gov. Monday Okpebholo of Edo and the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, have commended Dr. Leemon Ikpea for establishing a 62-bed ultramodern medical centre in Ewatto.

The medical centre, located at Idumu-Iyase, Ewatto, Esan South-East Local Government Area of the state was established to improve access to quality healthcare services for residents of the community and neighbouring areas.

Okpebholo, who spoke at

the inauguration of the facility on Monday, said the investment demonstrated the importance of private sector participation in strengthening healthcare delivery.

He added that government alone could not meet the healthcare needs of the population.

He commended Ikpea for the initiative and urged other well-meaning individuals and organisations to emulate his example by investing in projects that would improve the welfare of residents.

The governor also charged the management of the medical centre and its

healthcare professionals to maintain high standards of patient care.

He urged the people of Ewatto to protect the facility and make proper use of it, describing it as a valuable asset that should be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

According to him, let me also appreciate President Bola Tinubu and for supporting our efforts to strengthen healthcare delivery.

"My administration has recruited over 2,000 Health-

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The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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#200



Oba Ewuare II: 10 years of iconic reign

Ten years ago, on October 20, 2016, a new chapter opened in the over 800-year history of the Benin Kingdom. Prince Eheneden Erediauwu, the Edaiken of Uselu, ascended the ancient throne of his ancestors as Omo N' Oba N' Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, the 40th Oba of Benin.

Today, as the Kingdom celebrates the 10th Coronation Anniversary of the Oba, the moment is not just for celebration, but for reflection and projection — a look at a decade of transformation and the road ahead.

A DECADE OF PEACE AND REFORMS

Since his coronation, Oba Ewuare II has pledged and lived by the ideals of his father, Oba Erediauwu the philosopher king blending tradition with modernity.

Under his reign, the Benin Kingdom has witnessed:

Cultural Renaissance: The Oba has been at the forefront of the global campaign

for the return of the looted Benin Bronzes, restoring pride and identity to the Edo people and putting Benin City back on the world cultural map.

Peace and Unity: His palace has remained a stabilising force in Edo State, fostering peace among the people, resolving conflicts and promoting unity across the seven local governments of the old Benin Kingdom and beyond.

Youth and Human Trafficking: The Oba made history in 2018 when he invoked curses on human traffickers and native doctors who aided them, a bold move that drastically reduced Edo State's human trafficking crisis and freed thousands of victims.

Development and Diplomacy: Drawing from his distinguished career as a career diplomat Nigeria's Ambassador to Angola, Sweden and Italy and Permanent Secretary in the Federal Civil Service, the Oba has brought international exposure, diplomacy and development partnerships to the Kingdom.

Education and Intellect: As an advocate for intellectual legacy, the Oba has championed the Oba Erediauwu Memorial Lecture Series, a platform that continues to define the intellectual foundation of the Benin monarchy and its role in modern African civilisation.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As the 10th anniversary activities continue, including the pre-inaugural lecture of the Oba Erediauwu Memorial Lecture Series held at the University of Benin, the Oba has announced a new direction.

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Oba Ewuare II

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The king reigns, long live the Oba

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NEWS

Edo Assembly passes 2026 supplementary budget bill

RAYMOND OSOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has passed the 2026 Supplementary Budget Bill into law following its consideration and adoption at yesterday's plenary session in Benin City.

The bill scaled third reading after the presentation of the

report by the House Standing Committee on Appropriations, Budget and Project Monitoring.

According to the committee's report, a total sum of N939 billion had earlier been presented to the House by Governor Monday Okpebholo as the proposed supplementary budget.

Under the supplementary budget, capital expenditure is projected at N588,324,843,804.66, while

recurrent expenditure stands at N350,525,195.34.

To expedite the passage of the bill, the House subsequently dissolved into the Committee of the Whole for further consideration before its final adoption.

The House Majority Leader, Hon. Osezua Sunday Ojezelle, moved the motion for the passage of the bill, which was seconded by Hon. Atu, representing Orhionmwon South Constituency.

Following the passage of the bill, the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idiaye, directed the Clerk of the House, Alhaji Yahaya Omogbai, to transmit clean copies of the legislation to Governor Monday Okpebholo for his assent.

The Speaker also congratulated the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, on the occasion of his 10th coronation anniversary, joining other well-wishers in celebrating the Benin monarch's decade on the throne.

10 years of iconic reign

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With the dissolution of the old planning committee and the appointment of Prof. Osarhiemen Benson Osadolor as Chairman of the new Memorial Lecture Committee, the Oba is signaling a fresh intellectual and cultural roadmap leading to March 23, 2027 the date of Oba Erediauwa's coronation in 1979.

The road ahead, according to the palace, will focus on:

Completion of the Benin Royal Museum and protection of returned artefacts

Deepening of cultural tourism in Benin City, Edo State

Youth empowerment and education

Strengthening traditional

institutions as partners in governance and development

Speaking through his representatives at the University of Benin, Oba Ewuare II reiterated:

"We pledge our commitment once again to walk in his footsteps of progress and meaningful impact."

That commitment, palace watchers say, is the defining promise of the next decade — a reign that honours the past while deliberately building a modern, prosperous Benin Kingdom.

As the drums beat and the people celebrate, the consensus in Benin City, Edo State is clear: The first 10 years laid the foundation. The road ahead will define the legacy.

Oba gha to kpere! Ise!



COMMISSIONING:

L-R: Governor Monday Okpebholo, Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, Dr. Leemon Ikpea during the commissioning of a 62-bed ultramodern medical center in Ewatto, Esan South East Local Government, Edo State

...Okpebholo, Pate commend Ikpea for building 62-bed

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

care workers to boost our workforce, and upgrade over 65 primary healthcare centres across the three Senatorial district of the state.

"Government alone cannot do it, we need private-sector partners and other individuals to complement public sector investments.

"Ikpea has set a good record, and I encourage other well-meaning individuals and organizations to emulate him.

"I charge the management of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital and the medical professionals who will serve here to uphold the highest standards of patient care.

"To the people of Ewatto, protect this facility and make good use of it. Let it become a place of hope and healing," he said.

The governor, however, assured the people that his administration would mobilise the contractor's back to site to complete the ongoing construction of the Ewatto-Udo road now that the dry season is fast approaching.

Similarly, Pate commended Ikpea, the Agbonjagwe Leemon

Ikpea Foundation and his family for investing in healthcare infrastructure to serve the people of Ewatto and surrounding communities.

Pate described the project as a source of pride for the community and Edo as a whole, noting that access to quality healthcare was essential to the development of any society.

He said a healthy population was better positioned to contribute to economic growth, adding that farmers, teachers, children and other members of society benefited when healthcare ser-

vices were accessible and effective.

The minister called on wealthy Nigerians and private sector organisations to partner with the Federal and state governments to expand healthcare infrastructure and improve service delivery across the country.

He said such partnerships would complement public sector investments and support efforts to transform Nigeria's healthcare system.

In his remarks, Ikpea, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Agbonjagwe Leemon

Ikpea Foundation (ALI), said the 62-bed medical centre was equipped with modern facilities to provide healthcare services to the people.

He urged community leaders, residents and security agencies to take collective responsibility for protecting the hospital, its equipment and buildings against damage and vandalism.

Ikpea said the facility belonged to the community and should be treated as a collective asset, stressing that its protection would ensure its continued availability for healthcare delivery.

Edo political class celebrates 10 years of Benin monarch on the throne

OLIVER IJIJOBGE.

BENIN CITY

As the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, celebrates ten years on the ancient throne of his forefathers, prominent political figures across Edo State have joined in celebrating a reign they regard as significant to the preservation of Benin cultural heritage, the promotion of unity and the projection of the kingdom's historical legacy to the world.

The tenth coronation anniversary marks a decade since Oba Ewuare II ascended the throne on October 20, 2016.

Over the years, the revered monarch has remained a rallying point for the Benin people and a prominent traditional figure whose influence extends across political, social and cultural boundaries.

His reign has drawn renewed attention to the kingdom's history, customs, artistic accomplishments and continuing efforts to preserve its heritage for future generations.

Speaking on the significance of the milestone, the Edo State

Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Comrade Imoikhe Kelly Roland-Bello, described the anniversary as a moment of immense pride for the Benin people and the entire Edo nation.

He noted that the Oba represents the enduring identity of a people whose history, traditions and achievements have earned them recognition across the world, adding that the monarch's position as custodian of the kingdom's heritage makes the anniversary worthy of celebration.

Roland-Bello observed that the Benin throne transcends partisan politics, serving as a unifying institution that connects the present generation with the illustrious history of their ancestors. He commended the monarch's role in preserving traditional values and promoting awareness of Benin civilisation, stressing that the kingdom's rich cultural heritage remains one of Edo State's most valuable assets. He said the anniversary provides an opportunity for the people to renew their commitment to unity.

While the workers' grievances centre on conditions of service and welfare, the economic implications of the strike extend beyond the immediate dispute between labour and management. The interruption of electricity supply threatens the capacity of businesses to operate efficiently, sustain employment and contribute to economic growth.

A swift and lasting resolution of the dispute is therefore imperative, not only to restore power supply but also to protect businesses, minimise economic losses and prevent further disruption to commercial activities.



GOODWILL MESSAGE



**EDO STATE GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

10th CORONATION ANNIVERSARY

On behalf of the Government and good people of Edo State, I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to Your Royal Majesty on the auspicious occasion of your 10th Coronation Anniversary as the Oba of Benin Kingdom.

This remarkable milestone is a moment of great celebration and thanksgiving for a decade of wise, dignified, and purposeful reign. Over the past ten years, Your Royal Majesty has exemplified the enduring values of peace, unity, reconciliation, service, and leadership to the Great Benin Kingdom and humanity. As the revered custodian of the ancient heritage of the Benin Kingdom, Your Royal Majesty has continued to preserve, promote, and project our rich culture, tradi-

tions, history, and identity on a global stage. Your efforts to advance the dignity of the Benin people and promote the Kingdom's heritage on the global stage have further strengthened the place of the Benin Kingdom in the comity of great civilisations.

We deeply appreciate Your Royal Majesty's goodwill, wise counsel, and support for the Edo State Government. We remain grateful for the important role the Palace continues to play in fostering peace, stability, and development across the State.

On this auspicious occasion, I pray that Almighty God will continue to grant Your Royal Majesty wisdom, sound health, strength, and many more years of purposeful and impactful reign.

Happy 10th Coronation Anniversary, Your Royal Majesty.

Oba Gha re, Ise!

SEN. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

Executive Governor, Edo State.

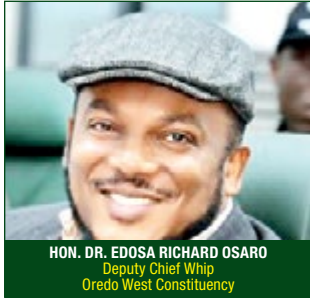




HON. OSAWARU NATASHA IROBOSA
Minority Leader
Egor Constituency



HON. INEGBEDOH OJIE EUGENE
Deputy Chief Whip
Igueben Constituency



HON. DR. EDOSA RICHARD OSARO
Deputy Chief Whip
Oredo West Constituency



ALH. AUDU YAHAYA OMOGBAI
Clerk
Head of Legislative Service



HON. UZAMERE OSADOLORA. EDOBOR
Ovia North East II
Constituency



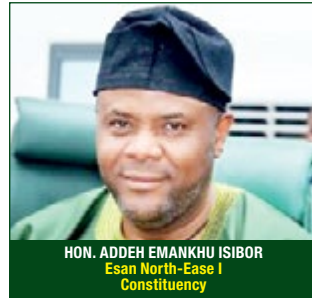
HON. OKAKA ERIC ALLISON
Owan East
Constituency



HON. OMOSGBHO UYI FRANK
Oredo East
Constituency



RT. HON. IDAIYE YEKINI OISAYEMOJE
Speaker
Edo State House of Assembly



HON. UGABI KINGSLEY OGHENAKHOGIE
Etsako East
Constituency



RT. HON. ATU OSAMWONYI EGBAGUEHITA
Deputy Speaker
Edo State House of Assembly



HON. OJIZELE OSEZUA SUNDAY
Majority Leader
Esan South-East Constituency



HON. EDEKO MARIA OMOZELE
Esan North-East II
Constituency



HON. OKOGBE OJEME DONALD
Akoko-Edo II
Constituency



HON. LECK HUSSEIN MUSTAPHA
Chief Whip
Estako West Constituency



HON. OSHOMA AHMED
Estako Central
Constituency



HON. ASONSERE NICHOLAS FRIDAY
Ikpoba-Okha
Constituency



HON. EGBIREMONLEN FADA SUNDAY
Esan Central
Constituency



HON. IBHAMAWU JONATHAN AIGBOKHAN
Esan West
Constituency



HON. OSAMWONYI KAYCEE
Umunwode
Constituency



HON. YAMU AITENGUOBA BRIGHT
Orhionmwon II
Constituency



HON. AGHEDO SUNDAY
Ovia South-West
Constituency



HON. AKOKHIA ABDULGANIYU
Etsako West II
Constituency



HON. AGBEBAKU BLESSING SHERIFF
Owan West
Constituency



HON. AIGBOARUEGHIAN I. CHARITY
Ovia North-East I
Constituency



With profound joy, immense honour, and the deepest reverence, We the Distinguished Members, Clerk and Entire Staff of the 8th Assembly extend our heartfelt congratulations and royal felicitations to His Royal Majesty, Omo N' Oba N' Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR, Oba of Benin, on the auspicious occasion of Your Majesty's 10th Anniversary of Your Coronation. Ten remarkable years of royal dignity, wisdom, cultural renaissance, peace, purposeful leadership, and unwavering devotion to the preservation of the heritage of our great people. Your Majesty, you have continued to uphold the sacred traditions, customs, history, and enduring values of the Benin Kingdom, while embracing the opportunities and responsibilities of the modern era. Your reign has unified all the traditional rulers and leaders of the State irrespective of political affiliation. Your Majesty's vision in collaborating with the legislature has put a stop to land grabbing, youth restiveness, and thus, brought a remarkable development to Edo State. It is our earnest prayer that Almighty God will continue to preserve Your Majesty in excellent health, divine wisdom, strength, peace, and abundant grace, and grant you many more glorious

and fulfilling years upon the throne. May Your Majesty's reign continue to shine as a symbol of royal excellence, cultural pride, dignity, and enduring heritage, inspiring generations yet unborn. May your heart be filled with the joy of knowing that your reign continues to hold a special place in the hearts of your people and admirers of the Benin Kingdom across the world. Congratulations on your 10th Coronation Anniversary. May this glorious celebration herald many more years of honour, fulfilment, wisdom, and distinguished service upon the ancient throne of your forebears.

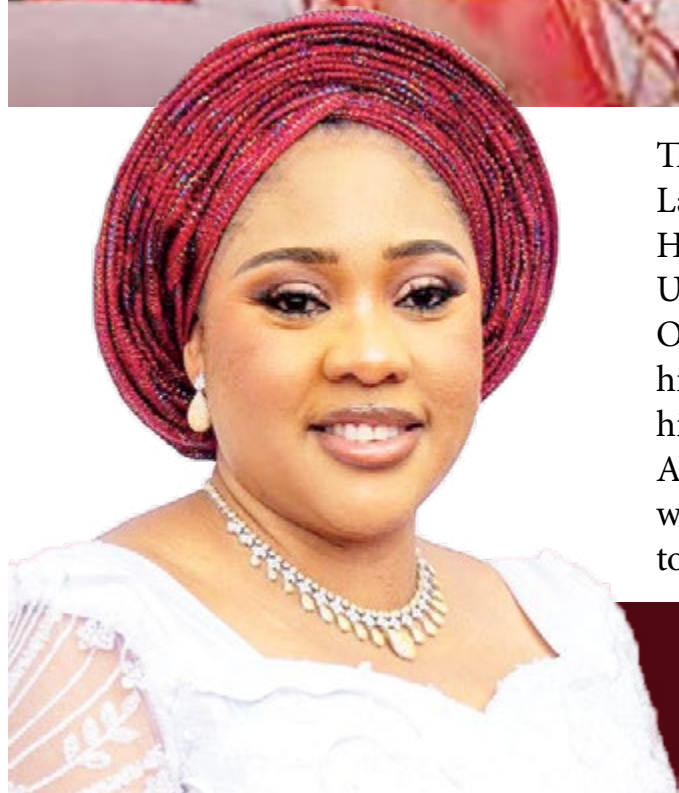
OBA GHA TO KPEE!

SIGNED: **Rt.Hon.(Prince) YEKINI OISAYEMOJE IDAIYE**
SPEAKER, Edo State House Of Assembly.



10th CORONATION ANNIVERSARY

Hearty Felicitation



The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State, heartily congratulate His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin, on the joyful occasion of his birthday and the 10th anniversary of his reign over Benin Kingdom. As we celebrate this double milestone, we pray Almighty God and our ancestor to grant Your Royal Majesty long life,

sound health, divine wisdom, and greater strength to lead the Benin Kingdom to greater heights.

May your reign to bring peace, prosperity and progress to Benin Kingdom.

Long may you reign Your Majesty.

- Long live Benin Kingdom.
- Long live Edo State.

Oba gha to kpere! Ise!

Signed:

MRS. EDESILI OKPEBHOLO-ANANI

The Coordinator, Office of the First Lady, Edo State.



10th CORONATION ANNIVERSARY

A DECADE OF ROYAL EXCELLENCE, PEACE AND CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO HIS ROYAL MAJESTY, OMO N'OBA N'EDO UKU AKPOLOKPOLO, OBA EWUARE II, CFR, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 10TH CORONATION ANNIVERSARY

On behalf of my family and myself, I heartily congratulate Your Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR, the revered Oba of Benin, on the auspicious occasion of the 10th anniversary of your coronation.

This historic milestone marks a decade of distinguished traditional leadership, peace, cultural renaissance and the unwavering preservation of the rich heritage and enduring identity of the great Benin Kingdom.

Your Majesty's reign has continued to inspire pride among the people of Edo State and beyond, strengthening the bonds of unity, promoting our cherished cultural values and sustaining the revered institution of traditional leadership as a bea-

con of wisdom, dignity and communal harmony.

As we celebrate this remarkable anniversary, I pray that Almighty God will continue to grant Your Majesty sound health, divine wisdom, strength and many more years of fruitful reign. May your royal throne continue to radiate peace, prosperity and progress, while the ancient Benin Kingdom flourishes under your fatherly guidance.

Long live His Royal Majesty!

Long live the Benin Kingdom!

Long live Edo State!

MUSA IKHILOR, Esq.

Secretary to the

Edo State Government



NEWS

NMA raises alarm over doctors' shortage in Kaduna

KADUNA:

The Nigerian Medical Association, Kaduna State Branch, on Monday, raised the alarm over the shortage of medical doctors in the state, disclosing that only about 1,600 doctors are currently licensed to practise there, down from approximately 2,000 previously.

The state chairman of the association, Dr Aisha Mustapha, said the declining number of doctors, coupled with insecurity,

poor remuneration, professional burnout and inadequate healthcare infrastructure, was threatening effective healthcare delivery.

Mustapha spoke at a press conference on Monday, ahead of the 2026 National Physicians' Week, themed "Securing the Future of Medicine in Nigeria."

She said Kaduna State had an estimated doctor-to-population ratio of one physician to 6,000 residents, describing the situation as a major challenge

requiring urgent intervention.

"The number of doctors currently licensed to practise in Kaduna State is approximately 1,600. We used to have about 2,000, but because of all these challenges, the numbers keep declining," she said.

Mustapha warned that the declining workforce was increasing pressure on available doctors, making it necessary for the government to strengthen recruitment and retention measures.

She identified poor remuneration, inadequate staffing,

limited career progression, insecurity and difficult working conditions as some of the factors discouraging doctors from remaining in the state's healthcare system.

According to her, improving doctors' welfare and providing a conducive working environment were essential to reversing the trend.

She also expressed concern over disparities in remuneration between doctors employed by the Kaduna State Govern-

ment and their counterparts in teaching hospitals, saying the situation had encouraged internal migration within the healthcare system.

The NMA chairman acknowledged efforts by the state government to improve doctors' remuneration but said more needed to be done to ensure that doctors in general hospitals were not disadvantaged.

She explained that when doctors moved from general hospitals to institutions offering better financial benefits, the facilities they left behind were further weakened by staffing shortages.

Mustapha called for salary harmonisation and improved working conditions to encourage doctors to remain in public hospitals and provide essential medical services to residents.

She also identified insecurity as a major obstacle to retaining doctors, particularly in communities where healthcare workers faced threats to their safety. "Some of us, even if we get a job in certain hospitals where we would love to work, will not be able to go there because of the insecurity situation in that area," she said.

She warned that insecurity could prevent vulnerable communities from accessing essential healthcare, especially in rural areas where medical personnel were already limited.

According to her, residents in affected communities still needed medical attention despite the security challenges confronting their areas.

She urged the government and security agencies to work together to protect healthcare workers and ensure that hospitals remained accessible to patients.

Mustapha further expressed concern over doctors' welfare, warning that excessive workloads, prolonged duty hours and inadequate rest were exposing medical practitioners to physical and emotional exhaustion.

"A physician who is physically exhausted, emotionally depleted, chronically stressed and personally neglected cannot provide the quality healthcare patients deserve," she said.

She called for improved staffing, reasonable duty schedules, adequate rest periods and access to healthcare and psychological support for medical professionals.

Mustapha said doctors needed a supportive working environment to maintain their health, remain productive and provide quality services to patients.

She added that limited opportunities for career progression and professional development could also discourage doctors from remaining in some general hospitals.

The chairman said clear promotion pathways, continuous training and access to modern medical equipment would help improve morale and encourage doctors to build their careers within the state.

On the migration of Nigerian doctors abroad, Mustapha expressed concern that the country was losing trained medical professionals because of inadequate incentives and unfavourable working conditions.

She called for deliberate retention policies, better remuneration and stronger collaboration with Nigerian medical professionals in the diaspora to strengthen the healthcare system.

Mustapha said improving doctors' conditions of service was necessary to reduce pressure on the remaining workforce and ensure that public investment in medical education translated into better healthcare outcomes.

She also advocated increased investment in digital health, medical innovation and education to prepare Nigerian doctors for emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, telemedicine and electronic medical records.

**CONFERENCE:**

From left: Director-General, Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Prof. Nnanyelugo Ike-Muonso; Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Dr Kingsley Udeh; Chairman, RMRDC Governing Board, Alhaji Isa Achida and the Chairman, Senate Committee on Science and Technology, Sen. Animu Abbas, during the opening of the Africa Raw Materials Summit 2026, in Abuja on Monday

Obi's overseas trip forces NDC to shift campaign council inauguration

ABUJA

The Nigeria Democratic Congress has postponed the inauguration of its National Campaign Council for the 2027 general elections due to the overseas engagement of its presidential candidate, Peter Obi.

The party announced the change in a statement issued on Monday by its National Publicity Secretary, Osa Director, explaining that Obi's tight schedule and important engagement abroad necessitated the postponement.

The inauguration was initially scheduled for Tuesday, October 20, alongside a meeting of the party's National Executive Committee, where key decisions concerning the 2027 elections were expected to be ratified.

Director said the new date for the unveiling and inauguration has been fixed for Monday, October 26.

"The shift is occasioned by the very tight schedule of our Presidential Candidate, His Excellency, Mr Peter Obi, who has a very important engagement overseas," the statement said.

The party apologised for any inconvenience caused by the change of date and urged its members and supporters

to remain focused on securing victory for Obi and other NDC candidates in the forthcoming elections.

The postponement comes as political parties intensify preparations for the 2027 general elections, with the NDC seeking to consolidate its structures and counter allegations of internal divisions and inadequate preparation.

Earlier on Saturday, the

party's National Chairman, Senator Moses Cleopas, had announced the planned inauguration, insisting that the opposition party was prepared for the electoral contest and that its leadership remained committed to the Obi-Kwankwaso presidential ticket.

Cleopas had said the October 20 NEC meeting would also provide an opportunity to inaugurate the campaign council, ratify key decisions relating to the elections, present Certi-

icates of Return to the party's candidates and hold a dinner to strengthen cooperation among them.

He also dismissed claims that the party was inactive or divided, describing such allegations as propaganda by opponents.

According to him, the party's National Working Committee had held several meetings since August and submitted proposals on the composition of the campaign council for consideration by the leadership.

Rotary club donates 50 chairs to Bayelsa school, unveils literacy project

YENAGOA

The Rotary Club of Yenagoa Sunshine has donated 50 chairs to Luxuriant Mission Academy, Azikoro, in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, as part of efforts to improve the learning environment for 185 pupils and students of the school.

The donation was made on Monday during the inauguration of the club's Basic Education and Literacy (BRED) Project, aimed at addressing inadequate furniture and other infrastructural challenges affecting teaching and learning.

The ceremony was led by

the Rotary International District 9141 Governor, Rotarian Anthony Chibueze Olikagu, alongside the Assistant Governor, Rotarian Solomon Chuks; District Secretary, Rotarian Innocent Jumbo; President of the Rotary Club of Yenagoa Sunshine, Rotarian Onyaye Edgar Kunle-Olowu; members of the club; and other invited guests.

The intervention also included the provision of a modern writing board, floor plastering and other educational support to make the school environment more conducive to learning.

Speaking at the event, Kunle-Olowu said her decision to support the school followed

an emotional first visit during which she was confronted with the difficult conditions under which the pupils and students received lessons.

She said the experience strengthened her determination to mobilise members of the club's management board and other partners to improve the facilities and create a better learning environment for the children.

According to her, the BRED Literacy Project was conceived as a practical demonstration of Rotary's commitment to education and community development. She said, "The condition of the school during my first visit touched me deeply.

Hamzat was my bunkmate 49 years ago, says Otedola

LAGOS

Billionaire businessman Femi Otedola has recalled sharing a bunk bed with Lagos State Deputy Governor, Obafemi Hamzat, during their boarding school days 49 years ago.

Otedola disclosed this in a post on his X account on Monday, following a dinner he hosted in honour of Hamzat, the All Progressives Congress governorship candidate for the 2027 Lagos State election.

"Yesterday, I hosted dinner in honour of @DrObafemiHamzat, the incoming Governor of Lagos State. A man of the highest integrity, with whom I shared a bunk bed at boarding school 49 years ago," Otedola wrote.

He praised Hamzat's character, saying his experience of the deputy governor over the years

had been defined by honesty, sincerity, fairness and strong moral principles.

"My experience of his character over the years has been defined by his honesty, sincerity, fairness and strong moral principles," he added.

The dinner was attended by prominent Nigerian businessmen, including Aliko Dangote and Abdul Samad Rabiu.

Hamzat emerged as the APC's governorship candidate in May after winning the party's Lagos State primary ahead of the 2027 election. He polled 657,917 votes to defeat his challenger, Olanrewaju Jim-Kamal, who secured one vote, according to the announced results.

Hamzat has served as Lagos State deputy governor since 2019 and is seeking to succeed Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, whose second term ends in 2027.

NEWS

Jigawa gov pledges upward review of corps members' allowance

Dutse

Jigawa State Governor, Umar Namadi, has pledged to review the allowances of National Youth Service Corps members posted to the state.

The governor made the pledge on Monday when he visited the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp in Fanisau, Dutse, during the passing-out ceremony for the 2026 Batch C Stream corps members.

Namadi said the proposed increase was to appreciate the contributions of corps members to the development of the state and cushion the effects of the current economic challenges.

He said, "We will review up and increase NYSC corpsers allowance posted to the state to encourage them to give their best."

The governor congratulated the corps members on completing their mandatory six-week orientation course and urged

them to be good ambassadors of the scheme.

He also announced an immediate N10,000 transport allowance for each corps member to ease movement to their places of primary assignment.

"We have provided N10,000 transportation allowance to each of you to ease your movement to your places of primary assignment," he said.

Namadi said the government would consider constructing a bigger hall at the camp to accommodate more corps mem-

bers during activities.

He said, "We will look at the possibility of construction of a bigger hall at this camp for your large gatherings."

The governor also assured the corps members that the state government would procure a larger generator to address power supply challenges at the NYSC camp in Fanisau.

According to him, the intervention would improve the welfare and living conditions of corps members and camp officials.

He said, "We will procure a

larger generator at the NYSC camp in Fanisau to ensure steady power supply."

Earlier, the NYSC Jigawa State Coordinator, Muhammad Baba, commended the governor for his continued support for the scheme.

Baba said the Batch C corps members had been adequately trained and found worthy in character and learning to proceed to their primary assignments.

He said, "These corps members have completed the man-

datory orientation course and are ready to contribute to the development of Jigawa State."

The coordinator thanked the governor for the transport allowance and other interventions at the camp.

He appealed to the state government to sustain its support to enable the scheme to achieve its objectives.

Baba also urged the corps members to respect the cultures of their host communities and contribute meaningfully to their development.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

House of Representatives Committee on Petroleum Resources (Downstream), Rep. Ikenga Ugochiyenre (M) and other members of the committee, during the news conference on the downstream week 2026 technical report, in Abuja

Sultanate council plans Islamic bank to fight poverty, create jobs

SOKOTO

The Sultanate Council says it is working to establish the Caliphate Islamic Microfinance Bank to combat poverty, create jobs and promote sustainable livelihoods across Nigeria and the West African sub-region.

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar, disclosed this on Sunday in Sokoto at the opening of a three-day training and capacity-building programme for stakeholders on Baitul Mal wat Tamweel.

The event was organised by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in collaboration with the Sokoto State Zakat and Endowment Agency.

Represented by the District Head of Kilgore, Alhaji Jabbi Kilgore, the Sultan said the proposed bank would provide small-scale entrepreneurs with access to Islamic finance to expand their businesses, create employment and improve livelihoods.

He said the initiative had

reached an advanced stage, with investors, including those from outside Nigeria, expressing interest in partnering with the project.

"The aim is to establish a bank that will serve as a model not only for Nigeria but also for the West African sub-region," he said.

The Sultan described the IsDB's collaboration with the Sokoto State Zakat and Endowment Agency as a significant step towards poverty eradication through effective Zakat collection, sustainable administration and productive use of charitable resources.

He urged participants and resource persons to ensure that the training translated into practical measures for improving the welfare of vulnerable people and strengthening poverty alleviation efforts.

Speaking, the Chairman of the Sokoto State Zakat and Endowment Agency, Malam Lawal Maidoki, called for a shift from excessive dependence on Zakat and other charitable as-

sistance to productive activities that would enable beneficiaries to become self-reliant.

Maidoki said the BMT model combines social welfare with economic development by providing immediate assistance to vulnerable people while helping them acquire resources and capabilities for sustainable livelihoods.

He noted that although Zakat and other charitable resources provide essential relief to disadvantaged households, such interventions must be complemented by opportunities that enable beneficiaries to establish businesses, generate income and gradually escape poverty.

"In many communities, Zakat and other charitable resources provide essential relief, but relief alone may not create a clear, supported pathway from vulnerability to sustainable livelihoods.

"At the same time, conventional microfinance may be inaccessible or unsuitable for people who cannot meet its conditions or who seek financing consistent with Islamic principles," he said.

Maidoki explained that BMT mobilises and distributes social funds, including Zakat, Sadaqah and Waqf, to eligible beneficiaries while supporting productive activities through Shariah-compliant financial services and business development support.

He said the approach could strengthen poverty reduction efforts by linking social protection with economic empowerment and providing vulnerable households with opportunities to become financially independent.

Earlier, one of the resource persons, Saat Suharto, an Indonesian social activist and Islamic economics and finance expert, said the programme was designed to strengthen stakeholders' capacity to apply BMT principles in an inclusive, accountable and locally appropriate manner.

Suharto said the initiative would support the poorest and most vulnerable individuals in developing sustainable livelihoods and, over time, becoming financially capable of contributing Zakat themselves.

Why electricity supply has reduced – Ikeja Electric

LAGOS

Ikeja Electric Plc on Monday attributed the reduced hours of electricity supply across its network to a shortfall in power allocated to it from the national grid.

The electricity distribution company disclosed this in a public notice dated October 19, 2026, signed by its management.

"We wish to inform customers across Ikeja Electric network that the reduced hours of electricity supply is due to a shortfall in the amount of power currently allocated to our network from the national grid," the notice read.

The company acknowledged the inconvenience caused by the reduced supply and appealed to customers for patience and understanding.

"We understand the inconvenience this may cause and sincerely appreciate your patience and understanding," it stated.

Ikeja Electric said it was engaging relevant stakeholders to improve the amount of electricity available to its network.

"Please be assured that we are actively engaging the relevant stakeholders to improve the available power supply and will continue to distribute the power received from the grid as efficiently and equitably as possible," the notice added.

FG says foreign investment up 83%, reserves top \$50bn

ABUJA

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Jumoke Oduwale, has said that Nigeria's capital importation rose to \$23bn in 2025 from over \$12bn in 2024, while foreign exchange reserves exceeded \$50bn.

Oduwale also disclosed that capital importation increased by 83 per cent year-on-year, from \$5.5bn in the first quarter of 2025 to over \$10bn in the first quarter of 2026.

She said the economy grew

by over four per cent in 2025 and maintained growth above that level in the first half of 2026, while inflation declined from 33.2 per cent in 2024 to 14.63 per cent in September 2026.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MBIDOM NWAMAKA AJUJUO** now wish to be known as **MBIDOM AMAKA FESTA**. Former documents remain valid. Concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ABEL OKO-OBON UWA** and **ABEL UWA** are one and same person hence now wish to be known and called **ABEL OKO-OBON UWA** all former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS ELABOR SARAH OMUA** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. AFENG SARAH OMUA**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I wish to notify the general public that my correct arranged name is **OJO JOHN** and not **JOHN OJO** as was wrongly arranged in my bank verification number (BVN) and also my correct date of birth is 21st June, 1985 and not 1st January, 1983. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **OSA-IRUGHE EFE BRIANNA** now wish to be known and addressed as **OSA-IRUGHE EFE BRIANNA LAYLA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **IVIE IDAHOSA - CHARLES** and **IVIE IDAHOSA** are one and the same person. Henceforth, I now wish to be known and address as **IVIE IDAHOSA**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **VICTOR DICK OYAKHIRE** now wish to be known and called **VICTOR DENNIS**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

PUBLIC NOTICE

NON FATHERHOOD

The general public is here by notified that I **MR, FRIDAY OSA'S EKHAЕ**, That I am only married to my wife **MRS AMEN ANTHONIA EKHAЕ**, that he has never been married to any woman before except his wife with the above name, that the only children he has are from his wife **MRS. AMEN ANTHONIA EKHAЕ**,That he has not fathered any child, that at no time did he acknowledge paternity of any child, that any claim record of assumption suggesting that the he is the father of any child is incorrect.Hence this publication for record purposes concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

SIGNED:
MR FRIDAY OSA'S EKHAЕ

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **EDOSA RICHES ENDURANCE** now wish to be known and addressed as **EDOSA RICHES IYENGUMWENA**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss. STELLA OSASUYI**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. STELLA AKPORE**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MRS. OKORO ROSELINE**. now wish to be known and addressed as **Miss. ROSE PEACE EFEMWENKIEKIE ERINMWIONROSE OJO**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EVANS O. EKHATOR**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **OSUNDE EVANS EKHATOR**. all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

REMOVER OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **AYODEJI OGHENETEGA-JOHN OBANURE** and **AYODEJE OGHENETEGA OBANURE**. are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **AYODEJI OGHENETEGA OBANURE** all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **CLINTON DOMINIC**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **OSASU CLINTON AIWUYOR**. all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **OKPISA JOY**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **OKPISA ANN ANTHOSIMHE**. and my correct date of birth is 19th of July, 2004 and not 8th July, 2003 as was wrongly written on my (B.V.N) all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Miss. ESENE OSEHONTUE FAVOUR**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **Mrs. IKEKELE OSEHONTUE FAVOUR**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MR. ASEMIEN RAIPH MOORE OMHAN**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MR. ASEMIEN AMAY RALPH MOORE OMIHAN**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE 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.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ODHIBI ALEXANDER**. and **ODHIBI ALEXANDER UZUAZOGHENE**. are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **ODHIBI ALEXANDER UZUAZOGHENE**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss. PRIYE OSARETIN MERIT** now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs OSAYANDE MERIT OSARETIN**. all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss. ONUWAREJENA OSEDEBAMEN HAPPINESS**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. THANKGOD OSEDEBAMEN HAPPINESS**. all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **EDOSA RICHES**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **EDOSA RICHES IYENGUMWENA**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **Miss. ESENE OSEHONTUE FAVOUR**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. IKEKELE OSEHONTUE FAVOUR**. All former documents Remain valid concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **FRANK NANCY** now wish to be known and addressed as **OMOAGHE OSARUMWENSE NANCY**. and also my correct date of birth is 22th DEC 2000. and not 23th FEB 1999. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

ARRANGEMENT OF NAMES

The general public is hereby notified that the correct arrangement of names is **IMOISILI ABIGAIL OSEMEGBE**. and not **OSEMEGBE IMOISILI ABIGAIL**. as was erroneously written in my NIN registration. All former documents Remain valid concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/ CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH

I, formerly known as **Miss ROSELINE OKHIRI**.Now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs OMORUYI ROSE**. All so my correct date of birth is 9th day of September 1970. and not 9th day of September 1966.As was wrongly captured on my NIN. All former documents Remain valid concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **ARCHIGOR CHRISTIANA**. now wish to be known and addressed as **ATSEGOR CHRISTIANA OLOHITARA**. All former documents remain Valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MR. ASEMIEN RAIPH MOORE OMHAN**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MR. ASEMIEN AMAYO RALPH MOORE OMIHAN**. all former document remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **OKORO AMOS SUNNY**. and **OKORO AMOS SUNNY IKECHUKWU**. are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **OKORO AMOS SUNNY IKECHUKWU**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **FELIX OMOKERE JOAN** now wish to be known and addressed as **DANIA OMOKERE JOAN**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **AKIOYAMEN OSETOHAMEN CHRISTOPHER** and **AKIOYAMEN OSETOHAMEN LAZARUS** are one and the same person. Henceforth I now wish to be known and addressed as **AKIOYAMEN OSETOHAMEN CHRISTOPHER**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **MISS ELABOR SARAH OMUA** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. AFENGЕ SARAH OMUA**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **JOHN ABUH SAMSON**. now wish to be known and Addressed as **JOHN SAMSON OMAYE**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **JOSEPH BASSEY**. Now wish to be known and Addressed as **EMMANUEL JOSEPH OKON**. all former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

REMOVAL OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EBIAKU BEAUTY OGHEGHE** now wish to be known and addressed as **JAMANI BEAUTY**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.a



ESAN WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL

INVITATION TO TENDER FOR PROJECTS UNDER THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

The Esan West Local Government Council hereby invites qualified and interested contractors to submit bids for the execution of various infrastructural and developmental projects earmarked for implementation within the first 100 days in office of the Executive Chairman, Rt. Hon. Blessing Ebhodaghe.

The projects, which are aimed at improving public infrastructure, strengthening security, enhancing healthcare delivery and improving the working environment of the Council, reflect the administration's commitment to delivering tangible development to the people of Esan West Local Government Area.

The projects proposed for execution are as follows:

1. Reconstruction/completion of three blocks of six flats for senior police officers at the Police Barracks, Barrack Road, Ekpoma.
2. Construction of a new Magistrates' Court at Barrack Road, Ekpoma.
3. Construction of a Basic Type II Primary Healthcare Centre at Upper Izogen, Ujiogba.
4. Provision of office furniture and minor renovation of the Legislative Chambers and the Council Chairman's office.
5. Renovation of Ihumudumu Primary Healthcare Centre, Ekpoma.
6. Construction of a modern police station to serve as the Ekpoma Police Area Command office at Illeh, Ekpoma.

BID SUBMISSION AND OPENING

The bidding process opens on Tuesday, October 20, 2026, and closes on Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at 12 noon.

All bids must be submitted to the Procurement Department of the Council on or before the closing date and time.

The opening of bids will take place at 1.00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 3, 2026, at the Council Secretariat.

All interested and qualified contractors are encouraged to participate in the bidding process. For further information and details concerning the tender, interested bidders should contact the Head of the Procurement Department.

The general public and all interested parties are hereby advised to take note.

Signed: **Mrs HAPPINESS ORHEWERE**
H.O.D., Information
For: Executive Chairman

EDSG re-commits to improved rural access roads, boost economy

HAMEED BRAIMAH

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Rural Access Road Agency (EDSARA) has expressed its commitment to making all rural roads in Edo state accessible through constant maintenance and interface with communities, and other stakeholders for purposes of improving the lives

of rural dwellers.

According to the Director General of the Agency Engr Goodluck Momodu, the idea is to open up rural communities in the state with a view to addressing challenges posed by inaccessible rural roads which had hampered communication, integration and economic prosperity among rural dwellers.

Addressing newsmen in his

office on Monday, Engr Momodu said the State Governor Monday Okpebholo was very keen at opening up as many rural roads as possible given his passion for grassroots development as could be seen from the number of rural roads he has built across the state since he assumed office nearly two years now.

Engr Momodu who is also the state Coordinator of RARA, commended the governor for facilitating the establishment of the agency in the state because of his deep respect for the rural dwellers and his determination to improve their living standards beginning with improved rural access which would ultimately boost their economies.

He urged Edo people to continue to build their trust in the leadership of the Governor as according to him, "the governor's passion to lead the State to social economic prosperity is top notch".

"The governor is one person who is very committed to rural development and that's why he insisted that this agency must be created as soon as he assumed office as Governor.

"He believes the people in the rural areas deserve access to quality social and infrastructural facilities including the creation,

repair and rehabilitation of rural roads to achieve that objective", he explained.

He urged patience among communities whose roads are yet to be touched by the present administration, stressing that with the passage of time, every communities would be covered.

He advised them to draw the attention of the Agency to rural roads requiring urgent attention using social Media platforms for proper documentation and response.

He said the agency has done

a feasibility study on many rural roads especially those outside the financial scope of the Agency with a view to escalating same to the state government for proper construction.

Speaking on the specific mandate of the Agency, the director general said it was birthed through an act of parliament following the passage of its establishment laws by the Edo State House of Assembly in 2025.

He explained that passage of the law by the state Assembly

fully domesticated the agency whose versions are expected to be set up across the 36 states in Nigeria.

The initiative according to the Director General, started in 2019, as a World Bank project with multiple funding windows including but not limited to the World Bank, states and local governments as well as others which could be developed to generate enough resources to tackle the challenges of development in rural communities.

Parents urged to conduct regular blood pressure checks for children to prevent Hypertension

BENIN CITY

An appeal has been made to parents to ensure regular blood pressure checks of their children to avoid Hypertension which has been on the increase in Nigeria

The appeal was made by Dr. Ene Augustina Ochaba, Consultant Paediatric Cardiologist, Institute of Child Health, University of Benin, UNIBEN/ University of Benin Teaching Hospital, UBTH during a Seminar organized by the Institute of Child Health in Benin City.

According to Dr. Ochaba in her lecture titled, "Silent Pressure: Unmasking Hypertension in Children and Adolescents," there is an increase in the cases of Hypertension in Children damaging important organ of the body.

"Hypertension is often silent with no symptoms present and symptoms can be non specific.

The percentage is increasing in Nigeria and these findings reinforced the need for regular check up," She noted.

She disclosed that there are certain lifestyles which has made the disease common in children.

"Today, there are no play grounds in schools and the children do not go out to play and this put the children at risk of having Hypertension.

"Children now eat more of processed food with chemicals and overtime they develop health challenges. Today too much screen time has displaced playtime, obesity increases cardiac work load and activate salt and water retained in the pathways.

While noting that there has to be a change of life style to safe guide their tomorrow, Dr. Ochaba said checking blood pressure should be regular and they should not wait for symp-

Italian delegation visit Favour British model school, advances international excursion plans and pledges medical support

BENIN CITY

The President of Mater Africa ETS (Italy), Mr. Alberto Cicala, on Thursday, 15 October 2026, visited Favour British Model School, Benin City, as part of efforts to advance plans for an international educational excursion and cultural exchange programme proposed for May/June 2027.

The visit was aimed at assessing the school's facilities and exploring opportunities for educational collaboration, cultural exchange, and humanitarian support between Nigeria and Italy.

The engagement followed an earlier meeting between Mr. Cicala and the Consul General of Italy in Nigeria, during which the school management's proposal for an international excursion and cultural exchange programme was formally presented and discussed.

Mr. Cicala and his delegation received a warm welcome on arrival, with the school's cultural dance troupe showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Edo State. The delegation was received by the Proprietress

and Head of School, Mrs. Favour Okojie, alongside members of the school's management team.

During the visit, Mrs. Okojie led the delegation on a guided tour of the school's facilities, including its academic blocks, laboratories, library, sports facilities, and hospital facility.

Medical Support for the Needy

A major highlight of the visit was Mater Africa's commitment to facilitating medical support for the school's hospital facility, with the aim of extending assistance to indigent members of the host community.

Mr. Cicala disclosed that the organisation would facilitate the provision of essential medicines and medical consumables through CCM in Florence, Italy, subject to the necessary arrangements and applicable regulatory requirements.

The proposed support is intended to strengthen access to essential healthcare supplies and complement efforts to assist vulnerable individuals who may otherwise struggle to obtain medical care.



VISIT:

Mr Alberto Cicala with students of Favour British model school during the Italian delegation visit to the school.

NDLEA arrests 85-year-old grandmother with 15 bags of cannabis in Edo

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has arrested an 85-year-old woman, Grace Ehimeka, also known as Mama Grace, with 15 bags of cannabis weighing 179kg.

The NDLEA Commander in Edo State, Mitchell Ofoyeju, disclosed this in a statement made available to journalists in Benin on Monday.

Ofoyeju said Ehimeka was arrested alongside five other suspected drug traffickers during coordinated raids in communi-

ties across Edo State.

He said the operations led to the seizure of 407.39kg of cannabis, 546g of loud, 114g of tramadol, 4g of diazepam and 3g of Swinol.

The other suspects were identified as Ali Garba, 57; Habib Braimoh, 45; Musa Mubid, 35; Ayo Aigberadion, 53; and Hope Okoro, 35. They were arrested in Warake, Ivbiaro, Ewe/Irue and Auchu following intelligence reports.

Ofoyeju said the agency would not excuse criminal activity on the grounds of age, adding that the command remained

committed to tackling illicit drug trafficking in the state.

He said, "The NDLEA Act is clear: you cannot hide under the canopy of old age and perpetrate acts that violate the law. The octogenarian, Grace Ehimeka, was apprehended on October 16, 2026, in her house at Warake community. This is a bad example for her children and grandchildren."

According to the commander, Ehimeka admitted ownership of the drugs in her statement to the agency and pleaded for forgiveness.

"I am a widow and started

selling cannabis over two years ago just to survive. My family members have warned me to stop, but I kept postponing my decision to stop. Officers, if you give me another chance, I will never sell cannabis again," she pleaded.

Ofoyeju said operatives arrested Garba in Ivbiaro on October 15 with 5.85kg of cannabis, while Braimoh was apprehended in the same community that day with 100g of the substance.

He added that Mubid was arrested in Warake with 2kg of cannabis, 309g of cannabis seeds, 114g of loud and 135g of assorted pharmaceutical drugs, including tramadol, Swinol and diazepam.

ACNPN hails Ewuare 11's decade of peace, cultural renaissance, traditional upliftment

BENIN CITY

The Association of Community Newspaper Publishers of Nigeria (ACNPN), Edo State Chapter, has lauded the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR, for a decade of purposeful traditional leadership, cultural renaissance and far-reaching reforms as the ancient Benin Kingdom celebrates the 10th anniversary of his coronation.

In a statement signed by its Edo State Chairman, Com-

rade O'Ray Osawe, the association described the monarch's first decade on the revered throne of his ancestors as a period of remarkable progress in the preservation of Benin's cultural identity, promotion of peace and stability, and advancement of traditional institutions.

The ACNPN observed that the relative peace and stability fostered under the Oba's reign had provided a conducive atmosphere for social, economic and political development, strengthening the bond between the palace and the

people while reinforcing the enduring relevance of traditional leadership in contemporary society.

The association particularly commended Oba Ewuare II's resolute campaign against irregular migration and human trafficking, which had exposed many young Benin and Edo women to exploitation, abuse and dehumanising experiences in foreign lands.

It noted that the monarch's sustained advocacy and interventions had helped raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking and the

urgent need to protect vulnerable youths from criminal networks that prey on their aspirations for a better life.

The association also applauded the Oba's decisive stance against the activities of Community Development Associations (CDAs) accused of land grabbing, intimidation and extortion in communities across Edo South, describing the intervention as a significant step towards safeguarding the rights of residents, land developers and prospective investors.

GOVERNANCE

Uhunmwode chairman swears in 21 appointees, charges them on effective service delivery

By Ogiehor Ehis Tornado, Chief Press Secretary,
Uhunmwode Local Government

In a renewed drive to strengthen grassroots governance, enhance administrative efficiency and accelerate development across Uhunmwode Local Government Area, the Executive Chairman, Hon. Austin Imafidon, popularly known as ISIWINA, has sworn in five Supervisors, three Special Advisers, 12 Special Assistants on Community Development and a Director of Operations for the Uhunmwode Road Obstruction and Traffic Intelligent Management Scheme.

The swearing-in ceremony, held at the Uhunmwode Local Government Council Secretariat, Ehor, marked another significant step in the administration's efforts to strengthen institutional capacity and improve service delivery across the council's 10 political wards.

The ceremony was attended by members of the council's administrative leadership, prominent leaders and stakeholders of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The oath of office was administered by the Head of the Legal Department, Mrs. Loveth Aigbe, Esq., who supervised the formal administration of the oath and the signing of relevant documents by the newly appointed officials in the presence of the Executive Chairman.

Addressing the appointees, Hon. Imafidon congratulated them on their appointments, describing their selection as a call to greater responsibility, dedication and selfless service to the people of Uhunmwode.

He charged them to justify the confidence reposed in them by bringing their experience, professional competence and innovative ideas to bear on their respective assignments.

The Chairman reaffirmed his administration's commitment to transparency, accountability, discipline and people-oriented governance, stressing that every appointee must contribute meaningfully to consolidating the developmental strides already recorded by the council.

He urged the officials to embrace teamwork, remain accessible to the people and demonstrate diligence in addressing the needs of their respective communities.

Similarly, prominent APC leader in Uhunmwode Local Government Area, Prof. David Osrumwense Osifo, urged the newly sworn-in officials to demonstrate loyalty, commitment and an unwavering sense of responsibility in the discharge of their duties.

Prof. Osifo encouraged them to emulate the leadership qualities, developmental vision and high standards of service delivery established by Hon. Imafidon, noting that their appointments offered an opportunity to contribute positively to the transformation of Uhunmwode.

Responding on behalf of the appointees, Supervisor Hon. Adesuwa Menyagan expressed appreciation to the Executive Chairman, the APC leadership and other stakeholders for finding them worthy of their respective appointments.

She assured the Chairman and the people of Uhunmwode that the appointees would not betray the confidence reposed in them, pledging their collective commitment to diligence, loyalty, teamwork and effective service delivery.

Hon. Menyagan further promised that they would deploy their individual experiences, expertise and capacities towards advancing the developmental



SWEARING IN:

The Executive Chairman, Uhunmwode Local Government Council Hon. Austin Imafidon speaking during the swearing in of political appointees

objectives of the administration.

The Appointees

A. Supervisors

Hon. Osaretin Smith Eboigbe

Hon. Sunday Ogbeide

Hon. Adesuwa Menyagan

Hon. Blessing Abangbee

Hon. Jane Idaho

B. Special Advisers

Hon. Jonathan Atoe Igbiginie – Legislative Affairs

Hon. Unuagbon Sylvester Aigbokhae

– Transportation

Hon. Sunday Erhabor – Environment

C. Special Assistants on Community

Development

Marvellous Omoruyi Okharedia

Sunday Abusomwan

Osasere Ekhuerohan

Jonathan Orhiakhi

Jude Bazuaye

Osamudiamen Nosa Obamwonyi

Joseph Adomoye

Faith Oamen

Aganmwonyi Friday

Osaigbovo Kelvin

Idemudia Sunday

Adams Raphael

D. Uhunmwode Road Obstruction and Traffic Intelligent Management Scheme

Onobun Lucky – Director of Operations

The inauguration of the new officials underscores the administration's determination to deepen grassroots participation, strengthen institutional coordination and promote efficient service delivery across Uhunmwode Local Government Area.

With the new appointees assuming their respective responsibilities, the council is expected to further consolidate its initiatives in infrastructure development, environmental management, transportation, community development and public welfare.

RELIGION

From sorrow to joy

BY APOSTLE SULE FARADAY AZEKHUMEN

The word of God is a seed and Jesus is the word, sow good seed with your mouth for the blessing. I Samuel 1:17-18, Psalm 30:5. The shunamite woman said it is well even when her son was dead and she needed someone like the Prophet of God (Elisha) to help her in bringing back her son to life, when asked by Elisha if everything was well and she said it is well instead of fear she demonstrated a great faith in the Lord. 2 Kings 4:26.

You should speak good things about the Nation Nigeria and Edo State. Speak words of blessings about the country, the President and the Edo State Governor and stop speaking against them. Anytime you speak against your leadership you are speaking against yourself. John 16:20 some people may be in sorrow but at the end there shall be joy, weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.

Naomi came back to Moab after she lost her husband and children but God gave her joy in Ruth her daughter in law.

What about Joseph he was sold into Egypt by his brothers at the end he received joy from prison to palace. The book of Ecclesiastics says there is a time for everything, a time to be born, a time to laugh a time to mourn, a time for joy a time to die, a time for peace and a time to love. The good-news is that sorrow is not a permanent situation when God is involve.

Job 42: God change Job sorrow to joy, job said I know that my redeemer liveth. Stop blaming people wait and your change will come, don't talk the way Job wife talked; don't behave the way Lot wife behaved, she looked back and turned to pillar of salt; don't ask question any more your change has come.

Your door may not have been open and you are sad, life may be difficult with you but your day has come.

Your night may be difficult but your

new day has come, its day break for you and your family, stop complaining because it's a dawning of a new day for you and everyone hearing the sound of my voice today.

Sorrow is a season and not a destination. In John 16:33 Jesus said in me you will have peace and in the world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world. Your present situation or season may not be palatable, it is not the end of your life. Joseph said in Genesis 50:20 to his brothers you intended to harm me but God turned it around for good to the saving of lives. God will turn your sorrow into Joy. God can take your shame and turn it into joy. God didn't say in the bible that you will not experience difficulty, mockery, did they not mock Hannah but that very year after Hannah left shiloh she was no longer sorrowful because God gave her joy.

Do not give up in your season of sorrow. Everybody have a season of sorrow but its not the end. Don't let anybody deceive you. Even Jesus experience His season of sorrow and said if it is your will let this cup pass from me but never the less not my will but thy will be done. What about Solomon his experience makes him to say vanity upon vanity its all vanity. Even our present Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo when he was given ticket to be Governor, he had a lot of enemies that wanted him to remain in the senate, they said to him we sent you to senate and not to be Governor but today the will God is done in his life as the incumbent and present Governor of Edo State. The enemies talk and talked but their talk could not stop the Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo. When your time come no man can stop you; your season of upliftment cannot be change by anybody. When Jesus was faced with his season of

sorrow he wanted to give up what He was sent to do because of this world wickedness, but He said Father never the less let thine will be done.

Job never gave up in his season of sorrow; Joseph never gave up also. Sometimes when temptation come we may want to give up but do not give up keep praying, your breakthrough may be delayed but don't give up on your faith in God because God is working out something for you.

God is with you in your season of sorrow, but sometime you think that God is far away, no, God is ever near you. When no one seems not to understand you, but God understand everything you are going through. The same God who answered Hannah will definitely answer you. Even if someone said that he do not need your help, please, help still because he may be in position to render help to you tomorrow.

COMPILED BY HELEN BAZUAYE



APOSTLE SULE FARADAY AZEKHUMEN

OBA EWUARE 11 @ 10... OBA EWUARE 11 @ 10.. OBA EWUARE 11 @ 10

Why we love and revere the Oba of Benin



BENIN CITY

Aghedo Iyobor

In the Benin Kingdom, the Oba is far more than a traditional ruler. He is a father to his people, a custodian of their history, a guardian of their culture and, for many, a sacred link between the living and their ancestors.

This profound relationship between the throne and the people explains the enduring reverence with which the Benin monarchy is regarded across generations. It is a bond rooted in history, tradition and identity, and one that has remained unmistakable during the 10 years of the reign of His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR.

For the people of Benin, the Oba represents the continuity of a kingdom whose traditions have endured centuries of change, adversity and transformation.

HE IS OUR LIVING ANCESTOR

To the Edo people, the Oba occupies a position of extraordinary spiritual and cultural significance. In traditional Benin belief, he is regarded as a living link between the present generation and the ancestors, embodying the history, aspirations and sacred heritage of the kingdom.

His authority transcends the ordinary functions of leadership. The prayers and traditional rites associated with the throne are believed to invoke divine protection, peace and prosperity for the land and its people.

The annual Igue Festival, one of the kingdom's most important traditional observances, underscores this spiritual responsibility. Through its ceremonies of thanksgiving, renewal and prayers for the kingdom, the festival reinforces the enduring connection between the Oba, his people and their ancestral heritage.

It is this sacred dimension of the monarchy that makes the throne inseparable from the identity of Benin.

HE CARRIES CENTURIES OF HISTORY

The Benin monarchy is one of Afri-

A father to his people, a custodian of history and a symbol of Edo identity

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To the Edo people, the Oba occupies a position of extraordinary spiritual and cultural significance

as face the threat of extinction, the Benin monarchy remains an important anchor of cultural preservation.

The Bini language, traditional names, coral bead regalia, palace ceremonies, music, dance and festivals are essential expressions of Edo identity.

Oba Ewuare II, following the cultural legacy of his father, Oba Erediauwu, has continued to draw attention to the importance of preserving and promoting Benin traditions.

Through the palace and its cultural activities, younger generations are re-

minded that modernity need not mean the abandonment of their roots.

The continued observance of traditional festivals, the use of the Bini language and the preservation of royal customs affirm that Benin culture is not merely a relic of the past. It is a living heritage that continues to shape the present and inspire the future.

THE PEOPLE'S REVERENCE IS UNMISTAKABLE

The love and respect for the Oba are evident in the public celebrations, palace ceremonies, traditional greetings and expressions of loyalty that accompany important occasions in the kingdom.

The reverence is also reflected in the careful observance of palace protocols, which distinguish the sacred institution of the monarchy and its ceremonial traditions.

Practices concerning royal greetings, the use of umbrellas during certain ceremonies, and the conduct expected within the palace environment are part of a broader tradition of respect for the throne.

For many Edo people, these customs are not empty formalities. They are expressions of belonging, cultural pride and a deep attachment to the institution that has helped define their collective identity.

FROM EWUARE THE GREAT TO

EWUARE II

The story of the Benin monarchy is also a story of remarkable rulers whose reigns have left enduring marks on the kingdom.

Oba Ewuare the Great, who reigned approximately from 1440 to 1473, is remembered for his transformative leadership and the expansion of Benin's political and cultural influence.

Oba Erediauwu, the father of the present monarch, was widely admired for his wisdom, dignity and intellectual approach to traditional leadership.

Today, Oba Ewuare II carries the responsibility of sustaining that historical legacy while guiding the monarchy through the demands of a modern society.

Ten years after his coronation on October 20, 2016, the throne remains a rallying point for cultural pride, ancestral memory and the aspiration for peace and unity.

For the people of Benin Kingdom, Edo State and the wider Edo community across the world, the Oba is more than a traditional ruler.

He is the enduring symbol of a people's history, the guardian of their heritage and a father whose throne continues to command profound affection and reverence.

To love the Oba is, for many Edo people, to honour the history and identity of Benin itself.

Oba gha to kpere! Ise!



OBA EWUARE 11 @ 10... OBA EWUARE 11 @ 10.. OBA EWUARE 11 @ 10

The king reigns, long live the Oba

A decade of royal renaissance, cultural resurgence and the enduring majesty of the Benin throne As the ancient kingdom celebrates its revered monarch's birthday and 10th coronation anniversary, the reign of Oba Ewuare II stands as a defining chapter in the preservation of Benin heritage, the renewal of royal traditions and the affirmation of the kingdom's historic identity, writes MATTHEW OKAGHA

In the heart of the ancient Benin Kingdom, where history speaks through the grandeur of the royal palace, the splendour of coral beads and the enduring dignity of ancestral traditions, the throne stands majestically as a symbol of identity, continuity and the collective memory of a great people.

Today, that throne is the centre-piece of a historic celebration as His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR, marks his birthday and the 10th anniversary of his coronation as the 40th Oba of Benin.

It is a remarkable convergence of two momentous occasions: the birthday of a monarch whose life has been shaped by service and diplomacy, and the celebration of a decade of royal leadership in one of Africa's most distinguished traditional institutions.

Ten years ago, on October 20, 2016, the ancient kingdom witnessed the enthronement of a new monarch following the transition from the reign of his revered father, Oba Erediauwu.

The coronation of Oba Ewuare II was not merely the installation of another occupant of the royal throne. It was the renewal of an ancient covenant between the monarch, his ancestors and the people of Benin—a covenant founded on the preservation of culture, the dignity of the kingdom and the responsibility of safeguarding a heritage that has survived centuries of change.

As the kingdom celebrates this milestone, the significance of the Benin monarchy is once again brought into sharp focus. The throne remains a powerful repository of the kingdom's history, its customs, its spirituality and its distinctive place in the cultural evolution of Nigeria and Africa.

The Benin monarchy occupies a unique position in the history of traditional institutions in Nigeria. Its roots reach deep into the past, sustained by an elaborate system of royal succession, palace institutions, guilds, chiefs and cultural practices that have shaped the identity of the Edo people across generations.

The palace is much more than the residence of the Oba. It is the spiritual and cultural centre of the kingdom, a living institution through which the history of the people is preserved and transmitted.

Its authority is reflected in the reverence accorded the monarch, the intricate customs of the royal court, the craftsmanship of Benin artists and the enduring significance of ancestral traditions.

The story of the throne is also a story of resilience.

The kingdom endured the traumatic events of the 1897 British invasion, during which Benin City was invaded, the palace was destroyed and thousands of priceless cultural objects were looted. The exile of Oba

Ovonramwen Nogbaisi marked one of the most painful chapters in the history of the kingdom.

Yet the institution survived.

The rebuilding of the palace and the restoration of the monarchy under subsequent Obas demonstrated the determination of the Benin people to preserve their identity and reclaim their place in history.

It is against this background that the 10th coronation anniversary of Oba Ewuare II assumes profound historical significance. The celebration is not only about the passage of ten years but also about the continuing vitality of an ancient institution that remains central to the cultural consciousness of its people.

Born on October 20, 1953, Oba Ewuare II, then known as Prince Eheneden Erediauwu, was prepared for a life of public service long before his emergence as the Oba of Benin.

His educational and professional journey took him beyond the shores of Nigeria, where he acquired academic qualifications and diplomatic experience that broadened his understanding of international relations and global affairs.

Before ascending the throne, he served Nigeria in the diplomatic arena, including as Ambassador to Sweden and in other international postings.

That background brought a distinctive dimension to his emergence as monarch. The experience of diplomacy, international engagement and public service became part of the wider context of his reign, particularly in the kingdom's engagement with the global community over issues of culture, heritage and the restoration of looted Benin treasures.

His coronation on his 63rd birthday in 2016 was the culmination of a series of traditional rites and ceremonies that formally prepared him for the responsibilities of the ancient throne.

The moment was historic. A new chapter had opened in the life of the kingdom.

One of the defining themes of Oba Ewuare II's reign has been the renewed emphasis on Benin cultural identity and the preservation of the kingdom's heritage.

The monarch's role as custodian of tradition has been reflected in the continued observance of royal ceremonies, the promotion of Benin history and the encouragement of cultural activities that connect younger generations with their ancestral roots.

The palace remains a focal point for the celebration of the kingdom's rich artistic and cultural traditions, from the intricate beauty of Benin bronze and ivory craftsmanship to the elaborate coral bead regalia that symbolise royal authority and prestige.

The anniversary programme itself

has provided a platform for cultural festivals, exhibitions, lectures, sporting activities and other engagements designed to celebrate the history and achievements of the kingdom.

These activities underscore the enduring relevance of traditional institutions in contemporary society. They demonstrate that culture is not a relic of the past but a living inheritance that continues to shape identity, values and community life.

For the Benin people, the celebration is also an opportunity to reflect on the responsibility of preserving their heritage for generations yet unborn.

The campaign for the return of cultural objects looted during the 1897 British invasion has remained a major issue in the international cultural heritage debate.

Oba Ewuare II has consistently championed the restoration of Benin artefacts, stressing their historical, spiritual and cultural significance to the kingdom.

The objects, many of which are held in museums and private collections outside Nigeria, represent far more than artistic masterpieces. They embody the history, craftsmanship, reli-

gious traditions and collective memory of the Benin people.

The return of artefacts in recent years has brought renewed hope to the kingdom's long-standing campaign.

The monarch's advocacy has helped sustain international attention on the issue, reinforcing the demand that cultural objects taken under colonial violence should be returned to their rightful communities.

For the palace and the people of Benin, every returned artefact represents a meaningful restoration of history and dignity.

The campaign remains a defining expression of the kingdom's determination to reclaim its cultural patrimony and ensure that the story of Benin is told with the objects, voices and historical perspectives of its own people.

Beyond the splendour of the palace and the rituals of the royal court, the Oba remains a central symbol of unity among the people of Benin.

The traditional institution carries responsibilities that extend beyond ceremonial functions. It is a point of reference for cultural identity, community dialogue and the preservation of customs that have helped sustain

the kingdom through periods of political and social transformation.

The palace continues to receive traditional rulers, political leaders, diplomats, scholars and other distinguished visitors, reflecting the enduring influence of the Benin monarchy in the affairs of Edo State and the wider Nigerian society.

In a rapidly changing world, the institution offers a sense of continuity—a reminder that a people's identity is rooted not only in the present but also in the history and values inherited from previous generations.

The 10th coronation anniversary therefore provides an occasion for the Benin people to renew their attachment to their heritage and reflect on the role of the monarchy in the future of the kingdom.

For Oba Ewuare II, the celebration carries an additional personal significance.

The monarch was born on October 20, 1953, and was crowned on the same date in 2016. His birthday and coronation anniversary have consequently become inseparable in the calendar of the Benin royal institution.

The coincidence gives the celebration a distinctive character: a birthday that marks the life of a man and an anniversary that commemorates his emergence as the custodian of an ancient throne.

As the monarch turns 73, the occasion offers the kingdom an opportunity to reflect on his journey from prince and diplomat to the revered traditional ruler of the Benin people.

It is also a moment to celebrate the enduring bond between the monarch and his people, expressed through the reverence accorded the throne and the collective pride in the kingdom's history.

The Benin throne has witnessed generations of rulers, periods of glory, moments of adversity and the steady passage of history.

Its survival is a testament to the resilience of the people and the enduring power of their cultural identity.

Ten years into the reign of Oba Ewuare II, the ancient institution continues to command respect as a symbol of heritage, tradition and continuity.

The monarch's birthday and coronation anniversary thus transcend the celebration of an individual. They represent the affirmation of a kingdom whose history remains alive in its people, its palace, its customs and its enduring determination to preserve its place in the world.

As royal drums sound and the ancient city celebrates, the message of the occasion is unmistakable: the throne endures, the heritage lives on, and the kingdom remains steadfast in its reverence for its monarch.

**Oba ghatu kpere, Ise!
Long live Oba Ewuare II.
Long live the Benin Kingdom.
Long live the ancient throne.**



FOREIGN

NEWS



GAZA: FAMILIES HIT BY INSUFFICIENT FOOD AIDS DUE TO THE CUTS.

Major fire at Canada military base leaves four dead, dozens injured

Four members of the Canadian military have died and dozens were injured at a base in the province of Alberta after a fire broke out in a grassy training area and spread rapidly due to strong winds.

Addressing the nation on Sunday from Ottawa, Prime Minister Mark Carney described it as "one of the worst tragedies for the forces on Canadian soil in peacetime".

The fire broke out at about 16:00 local time (22:00 GMT) on Saturday at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright, one of the country's busiest military training bases, and is now contained.

"The nation is in mourning for those brave members of our armed forces who we have lost," said Carney.

The BBC has confirmed that Sgt Morgan Wong, Pte Shaun Farrell, Pte Aidan

Goulding and Pte Hayden Lykkemark have died.

Of the 39 injured people being cared for in hospital, at least 19 are in a critical condition, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith said at a press briefing on Sunday evening.

Fire and rescue teams are remaining at the scene to contain any potential flare-ups, Wainwright Mayor Bruce Pugh told the BBC.

Members of the infantry had been conducting "high-intensity combat training with live munitions" at a grenade range and attack range, where 10 soldiers practise attacking a simulated enemy, Maj-Gen Wade Rutland told reporters at the briefing.

"There was a multitude of ordnance moving through the Wainwright training area," he said, including a grenade launcher, grenades, small arms and ammunition.

A grass fire ignited about 1km (0.6 miles) away, with the cause currently under investigation, and moved toward the attack range.

"What I would say is there was multiple training activities happening throughout the training area at the time," he said. "Uncommonly strong winds caused the fire to spread rapidly and shift direction towards the range administrative area."

Cannon fire had been heard coming from the base on Saturday before it suddenly stopped, Mayor Pugh told the BBC, noting it's not uncommon to hear cannons being fired there.

News then came through that local emergency services had been deployed to an "all hands on deck" situation.

Carney said military and emergency crews fought the flames throughout the night

in "some of the worst conditions imaginable".

The people who were hurt were on the attack range and included reservists and soldiers from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, officials said.

In a statement early on Sunday, the Canadian Armed Forces said that "while the incident remains under investigation, at this time, there are no indications that it was the result of any terrorist activity".

Rutland told the briefing: "We do not believe this [incident] to be a result of any oil and gas infrastructure nor any outside interference".

Warren Thirsk, an emergency department doctor at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, told broadcaster CBC that the number of patients involved in the incident had "completely overwhelmed" healthcare facilities in Wainwright.

The Royal Alexandra Hospital is in Edmonton, where patients are being transferred.

Macron calls for 'calm and order' after riots across France

French President Emmanuel Macron has called for "calm and order" after a major day of protests turned into rioting and looting on Saturday, and as some disorder continued in Paris on Sunday.

In a national address from the Élysée Palace, he warned those who had taken part not to "escalate", adding: "We all feel anger and shame."

Some 550,000 demonstrators took to the streets for largely peaceful protests against rising fuel prices, the cost of living and deteriorating public services, including schools.

Macron said a distinction must be drawn between the "legitimate demands" of protesters and "those who destroyed, smashed and looted".

Police have arrested about 2,400 people, according to France's interior ministry.

The French president said "nothing justifies" the "unbridled" violence seen and said those involved would face justice.

Groups of rioters, some dressed in black and wearing masks and balaclavas, also came out in Paris, Marseille and other towns and cities, with some setting fire to cars and buildings.

Following some of the worst scenes of public disorder in modern French history, France's Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu will on Monday

hold a crisis cabinet meeting.

'Very upsetting': Residents in shock after historic French town hall set alight

On Sunday, looting and clashes with police continued on a smaller scale in parts of the capital and Lyon.

Tear gas and stun grenades were fired at hundreds of people in Paris, according to the AFP news agency, and bottles and rocks were again hurled at police.

Sunday saw cities across the country confront the impact of what developed into one of the worst bouts of disorder in modern French history.

In Limoges, the ornate 19th Century city hall was gutted by a fire started by rioters on Saturday, its clock tower and roof collapsing and the flames took hold.

Speaking near the ruined building, Annèse said: "This is very upsetting. Harming heritage buildings just because you are angry at the government is selfish, I think. It's hurting everybody."

"It's awful and unbelievable," said another man who gave his name as Gerrard. "We are very sad and I think it will be a long time to put it back as it was before."

Shopkeepers were seen early on Sunday morning picking up large shards of glass in Paris as rubbish trucks cleared up debris on some of the larger streets.

Funding shortages force World Food Programme to cut aid to Gaza

One of the main suppliers of food aid to the Gaza Strip, the World Food Programme (WFP), says that it is being forced to "drastically reduce lifesaving assistance" to the Palestinian territory due to funding shortages.

Overall, the number of people helped by the UN agency will drop by about a third - from 1.6 million to 1.1 million.

The cuts will hit as winter approaches and at a time when many families in Gaza are still struggling to feed themselves.

One effect is that the number of hot meals that are currently being provided by community kitchens will be cut from 250,000 to 150,000 each day.

Families living in hard-to-reach areas, for example near the so-called Yellow Line, which demarcates Israel's area of military control, will receive a meal every other day instead of daily.

Nearly all of Gaza's 2.1 million population remains displaced and two-thirds rely on

food aid to survive.

Mervat al-Satari, a mother-of-five, says the cuts are a "disaster"

"It's a disaster! What will we do with these reduced rations? How will we provide for the little ones?" said Mervat al-Satari, a displaced Palestinian mother-of-five at a camp in the al-Mawasi area of Khan Younis after being told of the WFP's news. "Sometimes we wait for these meals to eat."

"This will affect us a lot. The daily aid was somehow ticking the box but now it will be every two days," said Sawsan Bahloul, who is also from al-Mawasi and is a mother of three. She added that the portions given by the community kitchen - usually pasta or lentils with occasional potatoes and aubergines - were already too small to feed her family.

The Palestine director for the WFP, Shaun Hughes, is clear that the cuts are being made because of finances, and "not because the needs are coming down, or because we don't have access - we do."

Trump says suspension of Russia sanctions is to keep peace negotiations going

President Donald Trump has said his decision to suspend several Russian sanctions is an effort to keep Moscow at the negotiating table.

"I am in the process of negotiating Peace in the war between Russia and Ukraine," Trump said on his Truth Social messaging platform, adding that he didn't want to "do anything that will drive, foolishly, Russia away from the bargaining table".

Trump blocked numerous sanctions on Russia on Friday night, two days before they were due to take effect, as a row with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky deepened.

Zelensky told NBC News on Sunday that siding with Rus-

sian President Vladimir Putin would be a "historic mistake".

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev has responded to Trump's order by calling it "an important and truly historic moment". He said the sanctions, which were passed by the US Congress and signed into law by the US president in September, would have inflicted "serious damage" on the US and global market.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has described the suspension of the sanctions as a 60-day pause during which their potential impact on the US and global economies would be analysed.

In his Truth Social post, Trump also said Zelensky "doesn't want to end this war,

and probably never did", adding "he could have made a better deal two years ago than he can now".

Zelensky has pushed for an end to fighting, and has repeatedly said that Putin doesn't want peace, since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Relations between Washington and Kyiv frayed after the US struck a controversial deal to import Russian diesel last week.

Despite the international sanctions, Russia has still been able to export oil, much of it to China and India - often at attractive discounts. According to the think-tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), China has taken about

half of Russia's crude exports, with India accounting for about 37%.

In remarks to a European Union summit, after Trump announced the deal to buy diesel from Russia and said Zelensky was "more difficult to deal with" than Putin, Zelensky said it was nice to be among "real leaders".

Ukraine's President Zelensky attended an EU leaders' summit in Brussels on Friday

Zelensky has repeatedly pushed for stringent sanctions to limit funding that Russia can use in its war effort. After the latest move from the US, however, he said he believed the Trump administration would lift more sanctions against Russia.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

Bomb threat forces Israel to Austria flight into emergency landing

An Austrian Airlines flight from Israel to Austria was forced to divert to Bulgaria after a reported bomb threat.

The Airbus A320 plane was travelling from Tel Aviv to Vienna on Sunday night but made an emergency landing in Sofia, where passengers were evacuated, the Bulgarian transport ministry said in a statement.

The Bulgarian air force scrambled a MiG-29 fighter jet to escort the airliner, the statement said. No injuries have been reported and an investigation has begun.

It comes after a pilot attempted to hijack a Flydubai flight en route to Tel Aviv last month by attacking the captain, before the flight's crew and passengers overpowered him and landed the plane safely in Saudi

Arabia.

Bulgarian and Israeli media reported that a bomb threat had been made.

Austrian Airlines confirmed a threat was made, without giving further details. A spokesperson told the BBC there were 51 passengers and six crew members on board the jet.

Authorities conducted a security

search of the plane after it landed in Sofia, about 30 minutes from when the alert was first raised. It was over Romania when it diverted to Sofia.

Austrian Airlines confirmed that no threat was found and the flight finished its journey to Vienna with all passengers on board.

Flight tracking data showed Austrian Airlines 82 left Ben Gu-

rion Airport in Tel Aviv on Sunday evening before landing at Vasil Levski airport in Sofia three hours later.

Last week, Croatia and Germany both scrambled fighter jets after a commercial flight from the Greek holiday island of Corfu to the German city of Nuremberg accidentally sent out a hijacking alert.

Inside the shadowy world of anti-Putin sabotage from within Russia

Two Russian men secretly working for Ukraine's intelligence services have given rare accounts of operations they claim to have been involved with, that have targeted military assets and personnel inside Russia.

One of the men, whom we are calling Ivan, claims to have played a role from Russia in Ukrainian drone attacks on strategic bombers and munitions factories on his home soil.

He features in a BBC World Service documentary about the shadowy world of Russian saboteurs.

The documentary, by independent Polish journalist Marcin Mamon, also features a man we are calling Foma, a Russian living in exile in Poland.

Foma runs a network of undercover volunteers in Russia, that surveils high-level officers that the GUR - Ukraine's military intelligence service - is considering targeting, he says. He stresses they are never involved in the attacks themselves.

He was also tight-lipped about who they were surveilling, but after Lt Gen Fanil Sarvarov was assassinated in December last year in Moscow, Foma admitted he had provided the Ukrainians with intelligence on him.

There have been previous media

reports of Russian sabotage groups, but it is rare to get access to someone operating on the ground, like Ivan, explaining alleged activities.

The GUR has confirmed that Ivan and Foma are both working for the agency. But it also has acknowledged that it cannot know the full picture. When Ivan's handler was pressed on whether he could be trusted, the handler replied: "I'm not sure of anyone, except myself."

And both the GUR and the men are cautious about how much detail they share, making it impossible to verify the activities the men claim to have carried out.

The broad tactics Ivan and Foma describe, however, have been acknowledged by the Ukrainian authorities. Kyiv has spoken of its strategy of co-ordinated drone attacks on what it claims are legitimate targets inside Russia, and has acknowledged it uses secret agents for this.

There have also been several political assassinations in Russia since the start of the war. As a matter of policy, Ukraine never officially admits or claims responsibility for targeted attacks, though a Ukrainian intelligence officer has previously admitted to the BBC it was behind the killing of senior military figure Lt Gen Igor Kirillov in December 2024.

Bulgaria summons Russian ambassador after ship sinks in Black Sea drone attack

As Ebola continues to devastate eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, health workers are warning of a less visible crisis: the psychological toll on patients, survivors and families left behind.

At a mental health treatment centre in Bunia, one woman is receiving support after losing two close relatives and three members of her extended family to the disease. She says fear and stigma have left her feeling isolated.

Mental health patient, lost relatives to Ebola: "We were afraid, but we went to the hospital. Everyone at home was afraid. The neighbours are afraid to come near us. It is as though you are alone because of this disease."

Healthcare workers say stigma affects patients, survivors and medical staff, sometimes deepening the trauma of those already struggling with loss.

Anicet Katembo Vyaluva: "It affects almost all of us, it affects the health care community, the patients themselves, even the survivors of this disease here. Because in the community, there will often be stigma, the

isolation of this patient. And when the patient, for example, finds himself in a center for the treatment of the disease, he feels isolated."

The crisis is unfolding against a backdrop of armed conflict and displacement across eastern Congo.

Mirella Riccardi, MSF mental health and psychosocial support: "The crisis, the war, the conflict, internal conflict makes an already fragile community even more vulnerable. So Ebola, it's one more element to fragilize the condition of mental health of people."

Aid workers say psychological support is essential alongside medical treatment, as communities face grief, fear and the stigma surrounding Ebola.

Radev came to office during the summer and has since rejected suggestions that he is "pro-Russian".

Ukraine has directly blamed Russia for the latest attacks and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen spoke on Tuesday of the Black Sea becoming "another front of escalation of the Russian war in Ukraine. This is unacceptable".



An Austrian Airlines jet similar to the one diverted to Bulgaria

Judgement day for Kenya pastor accused of ordering parents to starve their children to death

A Kenyan court is set to deliver a judgement in a mass murder case involving doomsday preacher Paul Mackenzie.

Mackenzie and 29 of his followers are being charged with the murder of 191 people, nearly all of them children.

His cult is alleged to have forced children to starve to death so that they could "meet Jesus". His doomsday doctrine said that education was forbidden and modern medicine was considered "evil".

Mackenzie and the 29 others have all pleaded not guilty to murder, repeatedly insisting that nobody was forced to die.

Mackenzie's former head of security, Enos Amanyangala, was initially accused but then entered a plea deal and became a witness for the prosecution.

Mackenzie and other leaders of the cult are facing a raft of other legal cases, including for terrorism, radicalisation and denying education to children.

But this is the first time the pastor will face a verdict on the most serious charges of murder.

Authorities said over 400 bodies were found in shallow graves in Shakahola forest near the Kenyan coast, where Mackenzie led his followers from across the country.

Seventeen men were hired from the nearby town for the horrifying task of digging up the shallow graves. Some were paid just \$8 (£6) a day.

"Every grave we found had at least three bodies," James, one of the gravediggers, told the BBC. "Some of the remains were of children as young as a

few weeks old."

"We once found 12 bodies of children in a line inside a grave. It was massive, the bodies were arranged like clothes. One on top of another."

Gravediggers described some of the bodies of children as having had their "hands and legs tied and bodies wrapped in bedsheets".

Although many of Mackenzie's followers were from elsewhere in Kenya, some of the remains are of people who were familiar to the community because the people in the cult would often go to nearby Shakahola town for supplies and to fetch water from the River Galana which flows through the town.

"We would sometimes carry people on our motorbikes into the forest," said Salim Karisa, another gravedigger. "But it was so planned and secretive that nobody could tell what was happening inside."

Stephen Mwiti, 48, recounted losing all six of his children to the cult and seeing "many bald women and tens of children" surrounding Mackenzie in his house when he went to confront him. Mackenzie forbade make-up and hairstyles, so told women to shave off their hair or keep it unkempt.

Mwiti's former wife is one of those accused alongside Mackenzie.

"If I met Pastor Mackenzie today, one of us will have to die," told the BBC.

"All six of my children died in Shakahola forest," Mwiti said, visibly emotional holding a photograph of his family. "I only found and buried the remains of my son Samuel."

"This little thing here was the start

of all my misery," Mwiti said as he pointed at a dusty TV and cable box in his home in the coastal town of Malindi, 70km (43 miles) from Shakahola. It was from that TV that Mackenzie's doctrine made it to his home.

The pastor established Good News International Ministries in 2003. Over the next 16 years, the church grew in popularity to draw thousands of followers in the church's branches across Kenya.

His church ran a television station called Times TV which would broadcast his sermons from his church in Malindi.

His End Days sermons included conspiracy theories that described education as "evil", healthcare as "against the doctrine" and digital identity cards as "the mark of the devil".

This is the building from where Mackenzie broadcast his sermons

Mackenzie's son, Dan Paul Mackenzie, said he worked as a cameraperson in the church. "The children would sit at the back, adults in the middle, and everyone would sing worship songs all morning."

The pastor would start his fiery sermons at noon, some of which included "casting out demons".

The main church shut down in 2019 and Paul Mackenzie moved to Shakahola forest, encouraging his devotees to follow him.

Peter Shukrani, 23, says his mother relocated to Shakahola with him at the time. He started going to Mackenzie's church when he was eight years old and described him as his "spiritual father", adding that he would "never say a bad word about him".

Edo Targets Return as Nigeria's Leading Rubber Producer, Processing and Investment Hub — *Okpebholo*

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to restoring the state's historic position as Nigeria's leading rubber producer and transforming it into a major hub for rubber processing, industrial development and investment.

The governor said Edo would leverage its rich rubber heritage to promote value addition, create jobs, boost farmers' incomes and expand economic opportunities for young people.

Okpebholo stated this on Tuesday through his Chief of Staff, Alhaji Yakubu Musa, who represented him at the International Rubber Research and Development Board (IRRDB) Fellowship, Training and International Rubber Conference in Benin City.

He described the conference as a strategic platform for international collaboration, knowledge exchange and innovation, capable of unlocking the economic potential of rubber and driving sustainable development.

"Edo State is not a stranger to the global rubber industry. We are its historic home in Nigeria and, indeed, globally, with an estimated 40,000 hectares of land under rubber cultivation, major estates and thousands of smallholder farmers," he said.



CHIEF OF STAFF TO EDO STATE GOVERNOR, ALHAJI YAKUBU MUSA, (5TH FROM RIGHT) WITH MEMBERS INTERNATIONAL RUBBER RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD (IRRDB) DURING THE FELLOWSHIP, TRAINING AND INTERNATIONAL RUBBER CONFERENCE IN BENIN CITY.

Okpebholo joins dignitaries to celebrate Oba Ewuare II 10th coronation anniversary

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Tuesday joined dignitaries and residents of Benin City to celebrate the 10th coronation anniversary of the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II.

The monarch was received with resounding cheers, traditional praises, drumming, singing and dancing as he arrived at the historic Holy Aruosa Cathedral, where he worships, for a thanksgiving service marking the milestone.

Governor Okpebholo joined the Oba at his palace and accompanied him on a slow drive to the cathedral, where a mammoth crowd of jubilant residents gathered to celebrate the revered traditional ruler.

Residents and traders lined the route as the royal convoy, accompanied by the governor and other prominent Edo sons and daughters, proceeded to the worship centre as part of activities marking the 10th anniversary of the Oba's coronation.

Various groups of men and women, dressed in colourful traditional red and white attire, also

joined the procession, adding cultural splendour to the historic celebration.

Speaking to newsmen at the cathedral, the Edo State Commis-

sioner for Mining, Mr Kayode Iriabekhai, said they had gathered to celebrate a traditional ruler whose reign had brought peace to the state.

Iriabekhai commended Oba Ewuare II for his support for Governor Okpebholo since the governor assumed office, ex-

pressing hope that the monarch's reign would continue to foster peace, unity and development in Edo State.



EDO STATE GOVERNOR SEN. MONDAY OKPEBHOLO (LEFT) AND THE OBA OF BENIN EWUARE II DURING A THANKSGIVING SERVICE TO MARK THE 10TH CORONATION ANNIVERSARY OF HIS ROYAL MAJESTY AT THE HOLY ARUOSA CATHEDRAL IN BENIN CITY ON TUESDAY.

FEATURE

The Nigerian woman: The story of widowhood

GRACE IJEOMA UMEH

I remember the day my father died as if it happened yesterday, even though many years have passed. The house was unusually quiet that morning. There was no sound of his old radio, no cough from his corner of the room, no voice calling out instructions for the day. When the news finally came, it did not come with a loud announcement. It came in whispers, in muffled cries from the inner room, in the way the older women in the compound began to cover their heads and sit on the floor. My father was gone. And with his departure, the roof that had held nine children together under one name and one blood suddenly collapsed.

I did not understand at that age what death could do to a family beyond the pain of not seeing a person again. I thought we would cry, bury him, and life would continue the way it was. I did not know that in many Nigerian homes, when a man dies, his children become properties to be shared and his wife becomes a stranger in a house she built with her own sweat.

That was what happened to us.

A few days after the burial, the relatives gathered. They came not just to mourn, but to decide. Our family meeting was not about how to keep us together. It was about how to distribute us. I was there, sitting on a mat in the corner with my younger ones, listening to grown men and women argue about who would take which child as though we were pieces of furniture from my father's small parlour. One uncle said he would take two boys because he needed hands on his farm. The only two sons of my parents.

An aunt said she would take my immediate elder sister that was fair in complexion because she was good looking and could help in her shop. Another relative said the smallest children, myself and two younger ones, should stay with our mother because we were still too young to be useful elsewhere. My mother sat there, helpless, with tears rolling down her face without any sound. She had no say. In that moment, she was not seen as a mother of nine. She was seen as a widow who could not provide. And so, we were shared.

I lived a while with mother until I eventually went to live with an uncle in a town far from where I grew up. My other siblings were scattered across different states, some in the village, some in the city, some with people we barely knew. For the first time in my life, I slept in a house where my mother's voice was not the last thing I heard before sleeping. The loneliness was heavy. I missed the noise of nine children fighting over food, fighting over who would wash plates, laughing over nothing. Now I was alone, trying to adjust to a new mother who was not my mother and new siblings who reminded me daily that I was not their own.

Every Nigerian child who has passed through this system knows the feeling. You become careful. You learn to wake up early before everybody else, to do chores before you are asked, to eat little so that you are not accused of eating too much. You learn to endure, because you have no choice. You tell yourself that it is for your own good, that your mother would want you to endure. But deep inside, you long for home.



WIDOWS:

My mother did not give up. That is one thing I will never forget about the Nigerian woman. She does not give up. Even when her husband died and her children were taken from her, even when society told her that she was now nobody, she fought. Her fight was to bring us back together under one roof. She wanted her nine children back. She would travel from one relative's house to another, sometimes trekking long distances because she had no transport fare, begging, pleading, arguing that children should not be separated from their mother. Some relatives listened. Some laughed at her. Some told her plainly that she had no husband, no job, no money, and therefore had no right to keep children she could not feed. Now I know what being empowered does for every woman, regardless of their marital or socially classified status.

She tried to start small businesses. She sold akara in the morning, she sold pure water in the afternoon, she farmed at the back of a small rented room that she managed to get after she was driven from my father's house by his brothers. The Nigerian widow often suffers double jeopardy. First she loses her husband, then she loses her home. The same family that came to eat and drink in her husband's house during festive periods suddenly claims the house as family property. My mother faced that, but not houses but lands acquired by my father. Uncles seized them all.

In most cases, the Nigerian widow would be told to leave, that the house belonged to the family, not to her, even though she had plastered its walls with her own hands and cooked in its kitchen for more than twenty years.

Still, mother rented a small room. One room. That was her dream house. She said if she could bring all her children back, we would manage in that one room. She would spread wrappers on the floor. We would sleep side by side like we used to. But life was not that kind. The economy was hard. Very hard. Things became more expensive by the day. The little money she made

from her petty trade could not even feed two children, let alone nine. The school fees were heavy, the house rent was heavy, and there was no help coming from anywhere. In Nigeria, when a woman loses her husband, many people avoid her. They see her as a burden. Friends stop calling. Family members keep their distance, afraid she will ask for help.

She kept struggling. She would call us on borrowed landlines in homes she went to do cleaning and cooking for big madams, telling us to be of good behaviour, to respect our host families, to read our books. Sometimes her voice would break on the phone, and I knew she was crying. She missed us. She would say, very soon, I will come and carry all of you. Very soon, we will be together again. That very soon never came.

Then she fell sick.

It started like a small fever. She thought it was stress. She had been working too hard, not eating well, not sleeping well. She kept selling her akara even when her body was hot. She kept going to the farm even when her legs

were shaking. Nigerian women are like that. They never put themselves first. They will give their last strength to their children and forget that they too need care. When the fever did not go down after many days, she went to a chemist. The chemist gave her drugs. The drugs did not work. By the time she was taken to the hospital, it was already late. The doctor said her body was weak, that she had been carrying too much load for too long without proper nutrition or rest.

I was not there when she died. None of us were there together. We were scattered. We were called one by one. The news came again like it came when my father died. Quiet, heavy, unbelievable. My mother, who had fought so hard to bring us together, was gone. The woman who endured humiliation, who sold everything to feed us, who refused to marry another man quickly just because society pressured her to find a man to cover her, was gone.

Her death sealed our separation. After she died, there was no longer any centre to hold us. We became children of the wind, each one trying to survive wherever he or she was. Some of my brothers dropped out of school to learn handwork. Some of my sisters had to become housemaids in distant cities. We all grew up too fast. We learned that life does not wait for you to be ready.

This is the story of many Nigerian widows. It is not just my story. If you go to our villages, to our towns, to the markets where women sit from morning till night selling pepper, you will see them. Women who lost their husbands at a young age and have been left to carry a load too heavy for one person. They are strong, but they are tired. They smile, but their eyes are full of worries. They watch their children suffer things they cannot control, not because they are lazy or careless, but because the system has failed them. There is no insurance, no support, no pension for most of them. When the breadwinner dies, the whole family falls into poverty instantly.

And society does not make it easier.

Instead of supporting the widow, some traditions punish her. She is made to undergo humiliating rites to prove she did not kill her husband. She is denied her husband's property. She is accused of being a witch. She is isolated. At a time when she needs love the most, she is given pain.

The economy makes it worse. Today, the cost of living in Nigeria is biting hard. A widow who manages to feed her children today does not know what will happen tomorrow. School fees are rising, house rent is rising, food is expensive. Many widows go to bed hungry so that their children can eat a little. Many are sick but cannot afford hospital. They keep managing, managing, until their bodies break down like my mother's did.

Yet, in the midst of all this, the Nigerian woman remains resilient. She still finds a way to laugh. She still finds a way to send her child to school even if she has to borrow. She still believes that one day, her children will make it and all her suffering will not be in vain. That is the spirit that kept my mother going until her last breath.

I am grown now. And whenever I see a widow by the roadside, struggling with her children, I see my mother. I see her wrapper tied firmly around her waist, her face sweaty from hawking, her eyes looking into the distance as if searching for her children who were taken from her. I remember her promise that we would one day be under one roof again. We never did. But in my heart, we are together, because her love is the roof that still covers us.

Widowhood in Nigeria is not just the loss of a husband. It is the beginning of another battle. A battle against poverty, against tradition, against loneliness, against an economy that shows no mercy. And many of our mothers are fighting that battle alone, with no weapon except their faith and their love for their children. They deserve more. They deserve laws that protect them. They deserve support from government, from communities, from all of us. Because when we protect a widow, we protect a generation.

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Widowhood in Nigeria is not just the loss of a husband. It is the beginning of another battle. A battle against poverty, against tradition, against loneliness, against an economy that shows no mercy.

Anniversary Celebration

OBA EWUARE II @10: A royal toast to the great monarch

OSAHENIRO MIRACLE OFUWENGBE

On October 20, 2026, the great Benin Kingdom will celebrate a remarkable royal milestone: the 73rd birthday of His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Ewuare II, CFR, the Oba of Benin, alongside the tenth anniversary of his accession to the revered throne of his ancestors. It is a double celebration that brings together the joy of a birthday, the significance of a decade of kingship, and the enduring story of one of Africa's most distinguished traditional institutions.

Such an occasion deserves more than routine congratulations. It calls for a heartfelt tribute to the monarch, a celebration of the ancient throne he occupies, and a renewed appreciation of the history and cultural identity that the Benin monarchy represents. It is an opportunity to honour the man, recognise the responsibilities of his office, and celebrate the heritage that connects generations of Benin people across time and geography.

As His Majesty marks 73 years of life and ten years on the throne, the occasion invites reflection on the enduring place of traditional institutions in a rapidly changing world. The Benin monarchy is not merely a relic of the past; it remains a powerful expression of history, customary authority, cultural identity, and ancestral continuity. Its significance rests in the generations that built it, the traditions that sustain it, and the responsibility of each succeeding generation to preserve its dignity.

A DECADE OF ROYAL STEWARDSHIP

Since ascending the throne on October 20, 2016, Oba Ewuare II has occupied a position shaped by centuries of royal history and the legacy of his predecessors. As the 40th Oba of Benin, he inherited an institution whose significance extends beyond the Palace to the cultural consciousness of the Benin people. The crown carries both honour and responsibility: to uphold the dignity of the throne, preserve the traditions of the kingdom, and safeguard an inheritance that belongs to generations past, present, and future.

A decade on the throne is an important milestone in the life of any traditional institution. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the responsibilities of kingship, the importance of cultural preservation, and the place of ancestral traditions in contemporary society. For the Benin monarchy, continuity is especially significant because the institution represents a long historical journey through changing political, social, and cultural circumstances.

The story of a reign is ultimately part of a larger royal narrative. Each monarch occupies a place in the chain of succession, receiving an inheritance from those who came before and bearing responsibility for what will be handed down to those who follow. In this sense, the tenth anniversary of Oba Ewuare II's accession is both a celebration of the present and a tribute to the generations whose legacies have sustained the throne.

His Majesty's public role has also been associated with cultural preservation, efforts towards the recovery of



OBA EWUARE II

Benin artefacts, and advocacy against human trafficking. These issues reflect the wider responsibilities often connected with traditional leadership in a society where history, identity, and social well-being remain important public concerns. The anniversary therefore offers an opportunity to recognise the cultural significance of the office while looking ahead to the continued preservation of the kingdom's heritage.

THE BENIN THRONE: A LIVING INSTITUTION OF HISTORY

The Benin throne occupies a distinguished place in the history of Africa. Its significance is rooted in the depth of its traditions, the continuity of its royal institution, and the remarkable civilisation that developed around the ancient kingdom. Across generations, the monarchy has remained a central symbol of Benin identity, carrying the memory of royal predecessors and the customs through which the people maintain a connection with their past.

The throne represents more than the authority of an individual monarch. It embodies the accumulated experiences of generations, the ceremonies that preserve cultural memory, and the traditions that give meaning to the relationship between the Palace and the people. Its endurance is a reminder that history is not preserved only in written records or museum collections; it also survives through living institutions, customary practices, oral traditions, and the collective memory of a people.

The Royal Palace stands as an important symbol of this continuity. Its historical significance reaches beyond its physical structures to encompass royal customs, ancestral observances, and the traditions associated with the institution. Through the preservation and transmission of this heritage, the Palace helps connect the present generation

with the generations whose lives and achievements shaped the kingdom.

As Oba Ewuare II marks his tenth anniversary on the throne, the significance of the institution he represents deserves renewed appreciation. The preservation of royal traditions is not simply an act of looking backwards. It is a way of ensuring that future generations understand the foundations of their identity and appreciate the historical experiences that have shaped their community.

THE GREAT BENIN KINGDOM: A HERITAGE OF GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE

The greatness of the Benin Kingdom is reflected in its political organisation, artistic achievements, royal traditions, and contributions to African civilisation. For centuries, Benin artists developed remarkable techniques in bronze and brass casting, ivory carving, and the production of ceremonial objects and royal regalia. Their works documented historical events, represented royal authority, and expressed the sophistication of a society with a distinctive artistic and cultural vision.

The Benin bronzes and other royal artefacts are therefore far more than objects of aesthetic beauty. They carry historical information, embody the creativity of generations of artists, and preserve aspects of the kingdom's cultural memory. Their continuing recognition around the world reflects the extraordinary skill of Benin craftspeople and the enduring significance of the civilisation from which these works emerged.

However, the history of Benin's cultural treasures also contains a painful chapter. During the British punitive expedition of 1897, Benin City was invaded and thousands of objects were looted from the royal palace and elsewhere. Many were subsequently dispersed among museums, institutions, and pri-

vate collections across the world. The consequences of this episode remain part of the wider discussion about colonial violence, cultural ownership, historical accountability, and the rights of communities to recover their heritage.

The continuing efforts to secure the return of looted Benin artefacts are important because these objects possess meaning beyond their material or artistic value. They are connected to the history of the kingdom, the memory of its ancestors, and the cultural identity of its people. Their return, where achieved, offers opportunities for historical understanding, cultural education, and the restoration of connections interrupted by the events of 1897.

Yet the greatness of Benin cannot be measured solely by the treasures that were taken from it. It also lives in the resilience of its people, the survival of its traditions, the continuity of its royal institution, and the achievements of its artists and custodians of history. As the kingdom celebrates its monarch, it celebrates a civilisation whose contributions remain worthy of recognition and whose heritage deserves to be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

A ROYAL CELEBRATION AND A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE

The 73rd birthday of Oba Ewuare II is an occasion to extend sincere wishes for good health, renewed strength, peace, and many more fulfilling years. Beyond the formalities of celebration, it is a moment to wish His Majesty continued wisdom in the discharge of his royal responsibilities and personal fulfilment in the years ahead. May the goodwill expressed on this milestone bring encouragement as he continues to occupy a throne deeply rooted in history and tradition.

The tenth anniversary of his accession also provides an opportunity to

look towards the future of the Benin monarchy. The preservation of an ancient institution requires more than reverence for its past; it calls for continued attention to the traditions, historical knowledge, and cultural values that give it enduring meaning. May the years ahead bring further opportunities to preserve Benin's heritage, deepen public appreciation of its history, and ensure that the kingdom's cultural inheritance remains accessible to future generations.

The people of Benin, both at home and across the world, remain connected to their ancestral heritage in different ways. For many, the kingdom represents family history, cultural belonging, and a continuing relationship with the traditions of their forebears. This royal milestone offers an opportunity to renew that connection and encourage younger generations to learn about the civilisation that has shaped their identity.

For the younger generation in particular, the anniversary carries an important message. Heritage is both a gift and a responsibility. To inherit a rich history is to accept the duty of understanding it, protecting its treasures, and transmitting its lessons faithfully. May the young people of Benin find inspiration in the achievements of their ancestors and contribute their own knowledge, creativity, and service to the future of their communities.

The generations yet unborn deserve the opportunity to encounter the same rich heritage with pride and understanding. May they inherit a kingdom whose history has been carefully preserved, whose cultural treasures have received the protection they deserve, and whose traditions continue to be passed on with wisdom. The true measure of a legacy is not only what one generation celebrates, but also what it successfully preserves for the next.

Felicitations on OBA OF BENIN 10th CORONATION ANNIVERSARY



His Royal Majesty
**Omo N'Oba N'Edo
Uku Akpolokpolo,
Ewuare II, CFR**

On behalf of the Board, Management and staff of the Central Bank of Nigeria, I convey my warmest felicitations to Your Royal Majesty on the auspicious occasions of your 10th Coronation Anniversary and Birthday.

This remarkable celebration marks a decade of purposeful reign upon the revered throne of your forebears and a life distinguished by wisdom, dignity and service. Your Majesty's reign has continued to uphold the timeless ideals of justice, peace and unity, while safeguarding the rich history, customs, language, arts and sacred heritage of the Great Benin Kingdom for generations yet unborn. Under Your Majesty's fatherly leadership, the Palace has remained a respected source of stability, wise counsel and cultural renewal. Your steadfast advocacy for the dignity of the Benin people, the preservation and restitution of the Kingdom's treasured heritage, and the peace and progress of Edo State continues to command admiration within Nigeria and beyond.

The Central Bank of Nigeria is especially grateful for the goodwill, encouragement and cooperation that Your Majesty and the Benin Royal Palace have consistently extended to the Bank and its operations in Benin. This valued support has helped to foster a peaceful and enabling environment in which the Bank can discharge its mandate and deepen its service to the people of Edo State and the wider Nigerian economy. We cherish this enduring relationship and look forward to its continued strengthening.

As Your Majesty celebrates these significant milestones, we pray that Almighty God and the revered ancestors of the Benin Kingdom grant you renewed strength, sound health, long life and greater wisdom to continue serving as a rallying point for your people and a beacon of national unity.

May your reign remain peaceful and prosperous, and may the ancient throne of Benin continue to flourish in honour and splendour.

Oba ghato kpere, Ise!

With profound respect and warm congratulations.



OLAYEMI CARDOSO

*Governor, Central
Bank of Nigeria*



10th CORONATION ANNIVERSARY

10 LOUD APPLAUSE TO OUR ROYAL DIADEM!

**A ROYAL TOAST TO HIS ROYAL MAJESTY,
OMO N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo,
Oba Ewuare II, CFR**

A DECADE OF ROYAL GRANDEUR, CULTURAL RENAISSANCE AND PEACEFUL REIGN

On this glorious occasion of the 10th Coronation Anniversary of His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR, the great Benin Kingdom celebrates with pride, joy and gratitude to God for a decade under your revered reign.

We join the royal family, the Benin Royal Palace, the chiefs, elders, and sons and daughters of the ancient kingdom, at home and in the diaspora, in celebrating a monarch whose reign has strengthened tradition, preserved Benin's rich heritage and inspired confidence in the enduring institution of the Benin monarchy.

Your Majesty, your reign has demonstrated the strength of our traditional institution, the majesty of our ancestral heritage and the relevance of royal leadership in promoting peace, unity, cultural pride and communal progress. Your commitment to preserving and promoting Benin history, arts, customs and traditions has advanced cultural renaissance and reaffirmed the kingdom's distinguished place in our nation's history.

As a political leader and philanthropist, I recognise and appreciate the importance of a peaceful and purposeful traditional institution in advancing community development, nurturing harmony and inspiring the younger generation to cherish their roots while embracing the future.

Your Majesty, this 10th anniversary is not merely a celebration of time passed; it is a tribute to the dignity of the royal throne, the resilience of the Benin people and the enduring legacy of a monarchy revered across generations.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations and prayers for divine wisdom, sound health, enduring strength and many more glorious years upon the throne of your illustrious ancestors.

May Almighty God continue to preserve Your Majesty, bless the Benin Royal Family, strengthen the chiefs and people of Benin Kingdom, and grant your reign greater accomplishments in peace, cultural advancement and the prosperity of Edo State.

Long live His Royal Majesty!
Long live the Benin Royal Palace!
Long live the great Benin Kingdom!
10 LOUD APPLAUSE TO OUR ROYAL DIADEM!
With profound respect and royal felicitations,

GODWIN OKODUWA
Political Leader and Philanthropist



NEWSEXTRA

Edo Govt to fix failed portions on Oluku, other roads, says Permanent Secretary

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has announced plans to intervene in failed portions of the Oluku-Lagos Road in and other roads in the state to address the deteriorating condition of

the roads in order to ease difficulties faced by motorists and avert likely dangers motorists could be exposed to.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works, Mr. John Obanor, disclosed this on Monday while briefing newsmen in

Benin City, where he said the government had mandated relevant officials to follow up on road failures at Oluku and other reaa within the metropolis and come up with appropriate intervention measures.

Obanor who expressed the commitment of the Okpebholo's administration to road infrastructure upgrade and

maintenance, lamented the failure rate of some interstate roads which has made swift commuting on affected corridors a challenging experience to motorists.

He attributed rate of delapidation of roads to the tonne weight of articulated vehicle which often time are overloaded beyond what the roads could withstand, due largely to the absence of effective train

haulage services in the country, stressing that efforts were being made by the relevant levels of government to restore them.

It would be recalled that a truck laden with petroleum products, had fallen over over and spilled its contents while attempting to manoeuvre its way through a failed portion on the Oluku Road.

The spillage subsequently triggered a fire outbreak, which

razed several shops and left several people with varying degrees of burns.

According to him, Edo State's strategic position as a major transit corridor connecting different parts of the country exposes its roads to considerable pressure from heavy-duty vehicles, making regular maintenance and timely intervention inevitable.

Okpebholo's 250 SAs appointment, commitment to grassroots inclusion

- Hon Dame Sadoh

Lamai Cassius

FUGAR

The Executive Chairman of Etsako Central Local Government Area, Hon. Dame Vera Sadoh, has commended the Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for the additional appointment of 25 Special Assistants per ward in the local government.

The Chairman, who spoke through the Etsako Central APC chairman, Rtd. Capt. Philip Itsede, stated this during the presentation of appointment letters to the beneficiaries at Fugar, the administrative headquarters of the local government.

Hon. Sadoh noted that the unprecedented appointment of twenty-five (25) Special Assistants per ward, totalling two hundred and fifty (250), demonstrated the absolute commitment of the Governor to grassroots inclusion and youth empowerment.

She described the gesture as historic and unprecedented in the political history of Etsako Central, saying it has never happened where 250 persons are empowered at once from a single local government.

According to her, the appointments form part of the governor's progressive drive toward inclusive governance and bringing government closer to the people at the rural level.

Sadoh said Governor Okpebholo has shown with this action that he is a true grassroots leader who understands the pains and yearnings of the people at the ward and unit levels.

She explained that the SHINE Agenda of the Ok-

pebholo administration can only succeed when there are committed foot soldiers at the grassroots to propagate its ideals and ensure its penetration to every household.

The Chairman charged the newly appointed Special Assistants to see their appointment not as a mere political patronage, but as a call to service and a huge responsibility placed on their shoulders.

She urged them to be loyal to the party and the administration, remain in their wards, mobilise support for the government, and serve as a bridge between the government and the people.

"Go to your wards and be my eyes and ears. You must defend this government and explain to our people what the Governor is doing. Do not betray the trust reposed in you," Sadoh told the beneficiaries.

She also assured that her administration would continue to align with the Governor's vision by ensuring that all appointments and dividends of democracy are distributed fairly and equitably across the ten wards of the local government.

Sadoh further called on party leaders and stakeholders in the area to support and guide the new appointees in order to deliver on their mandate.

In his remarks, the Etsako Central APC Chairman, Rtd. Capt. Philip Itsede, who presented the letters on behalf of the Council Chairman, congratulated the beneficiaries and charged them to be worthy ambassadors of the party in their respective wards.

He said the large-scale appointment was a clear signal that the APC government rewards loyalty, hard work and grassroots commitment, and urged other party faithful to remain steadfast.



SUMMIT: Jace Owie and another participant at the International Youth Succeed Conference in New York, USA held on October 9, 2026

Edo advocates political inclusion of persons with disabilities at Kaduna convention

...Commends Okpebholo for establishing state disability commission

Abdul-Kadir Abdullah

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has advocated greater political inclusion of persons with disabilities at the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) National Convention in Kaduna State, commending Governor Monday Okpebholo for establishing a state disability commission to advance the interests of the community.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Disability Matters, Comrade Yunusa Abdul-Salam Adepoju, made the call in a goodwill message at the convention on Monday, October 19, 2026, urging persons with

disabilities across the country to participate actively in politics and contribute to decision-making processes.

Adepoju, who led the Edo State delegation alongside the state Chairman of JONAPWD, Anne Ojugo, said political participation remained an important pathway for persons with disabilities to access leadership positions and contribute to governance.

He encouraged members of the disability community to take advantage of opportunities within the political system, drawing from his experience as a political participant who was subsequently appointed Special Adviser by Governor Okpebholo.

lo.

"I'm delighted to be here this morning. I consider this as an opportunity to interact with everyone in this community. I want to mention something I feel is very important to the people with disabilities. I want us to be fully participating in politics," he said.

The Special Adviser also called for the development of a comprehensive database of persons with disabilities across Nigeria, with information organised state by state, to support effective planning, policy formulation and the implementation of programmes that address their needs.

He described the initiative

as a priority of his office, stressing that reliable data would help stakeholders understand the population and circumstances of persons with disabilities and improve efforts to promote their welfare and inclusion.

"Let us find a way to get a comprehensive data of persons with disabilities across Nigeria, state by state. This is my priority as a Special Adviser," Adepoju said.

He commended Governor Okpebholo for what he described as his commitment to the welfare of persons with disabilities, citing the establishment of a disability commission in Edo State as evidence of the administration's recognition of the community's needs.

Jace Owie unveils initiative to empower youths through technology

...targets tech traineeships, international skills exchange, innovation hubs

Matthew Okagha.

ABUJA

In a strategic move to equip Nigerian youths with globally competitive technology skills and create new pathways to employment and entrepreneurship, President and Chairman of the Global Bridge Organ-

ization (GBO), Jace Owie, has launched the Jace Owie Initiative (JOI), a youth empowerment programme focused on technology, innovation and international skills development.

The initiative, unveiled this week, is designed to bridge the gap between Nigeria's growing youth population and emerging oppor-

tunities in the global digital economy through technology traineeships, international exposure and the establishment of innovation hubs across the country.

The Jace Owie Initiative will operate as a flagship youth development arm of the Global Bridge Organization, formally known as the Global Relations Foun-

dation, with a proposed programme of engagement involving state governments and international partners across the United States, Canada and Europe.

Under its three-pronged strategy, the initiative will provide intensive training for young Nigerians in high-demand technology fields, including Artificial

Intelligence, Data Science, Cybersecurity, Cloud Computing, Software Engineering, Product Design, Blockchain and Digital Marketing. The programme is expected to focus on equipping participants with practical, industry-aligned skills that can enhance their employability, promote self-reliance and enable them to establish technology-driven business-

es.

A key component of the initiative is the proposed foreign traineeship and skills exchange programme, through which selected high-performing participants will have opportunities for exposure to international work environments, advanced technology ecosystems and hands-on industry experience.



10th CORONATION ANNIVERSARY

TOAST TO THE THRONE **OBA EWUARE II** **73 & 10 YEARS**

The Royal Majesty
Omo N' Oba N' Edo,
Uku Akpolokpolo,
Oba Ewuare II, CFR.

We have celebrated Governors. We have celebrated Heroes. Today, we celebrate the Celebration itself — the Oba of Benin.

There are thrones that are occupied. And there is a Throne that occupies a people and a nation. The Throne of Benin occupies us. It lives in our language, our carvings, our pride and our name. And for the last ten years, it had lived in Your Royal Majesty.

On October 20, 2016, you emerged from the sacred seclusion of your forebears and the Benins breathed again. The son of Erediauwa had become the Ewuare II. The Ambassador has become the Monarch. The World you once served as a Diplomat now salutes you as a King. For ten years, you have shown us the modern colour of royalty.

It is not a noise, but influence. In an age of shouting, you whisper and a Kingdom obeys.

It is not politics, but fatherhood. You have blessed every government and belonged to none, because a father does not take sides among his children.

In absolute memory and courage, you stood at the gate of history and said —“bring home my ancestral works.” And the doors of the British Museum, of Berlin, of Glasgow began to open. Because no one argues with a King in his own house. In Your Majesty and firmness, you cursed the evil of trafficking and cultism, it broke the chains and handcuffs that held on many captives.

That is why the Edos are not just marking your anniversary but thanking God for your life.

So today, this Newspaper, The Nigerian Observer founded by General Sam Ogbemudia 58 years ago, to be the voice of Edo people, does not only report for development but also reverence.

We toast to your health.

We toast to your wisdom.

We toast to your continuity.

May your Ancestors grant you good health and longer stay on the throne.

May your reign turn Benin City and the entire country into what they were always meant to be — The Cultural Capital of Africa.

May the coral on your neck never lose its colour, and may the Kingdom under your feet never lose its peace.

You met a Kingdom. You kept a Kingdom. You will leave a Kingdom greater than you met it.

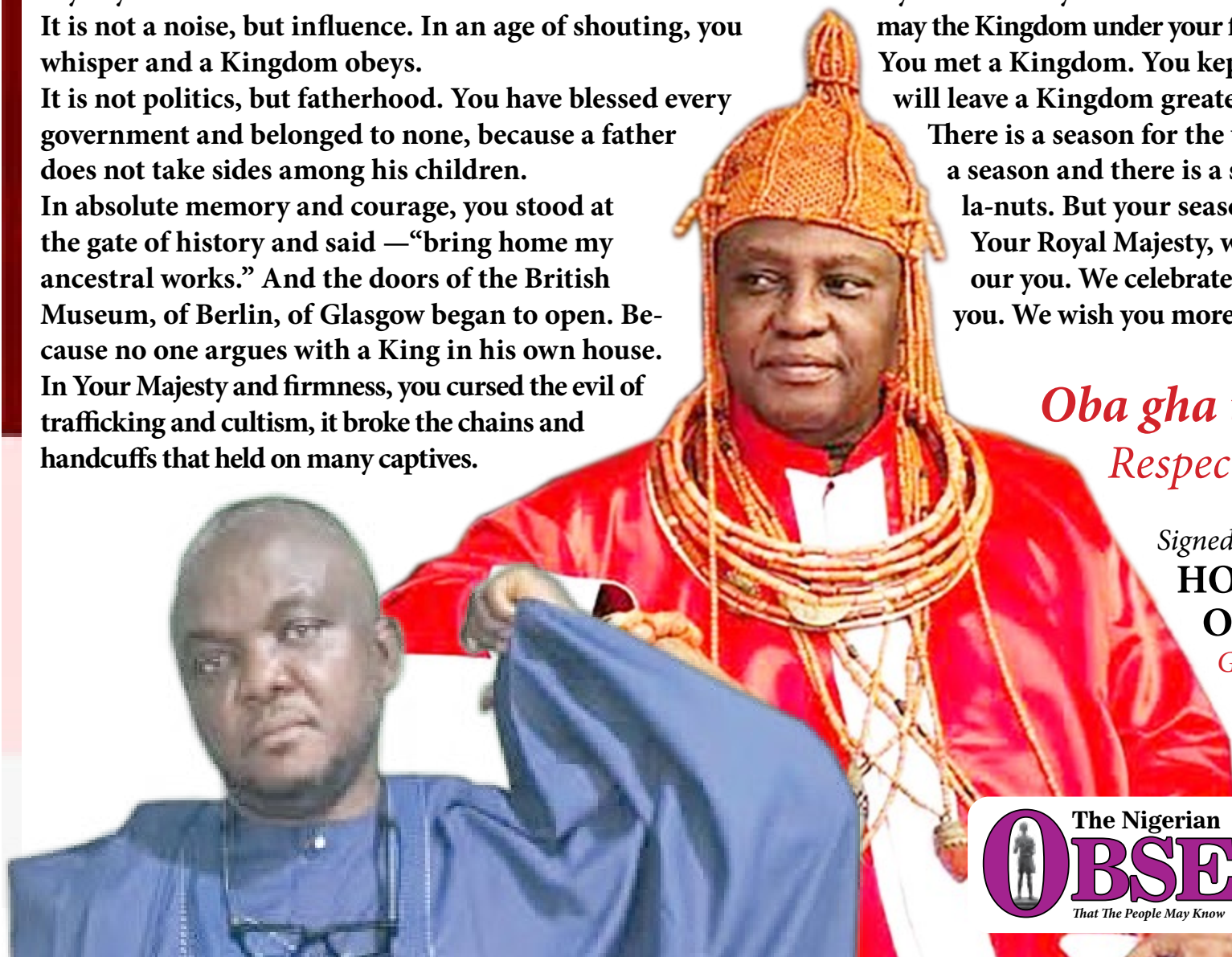
There is a season for the walnuts, there is a season and there is a season for the kola-nuts. But your season will never end. Your Royal Majesty, we love you and honour you. We celebrate you and rejoice with you. We wish you more years of celebrations.

Oba gha to kpere, Ise!
Respectfully,

Signed:

**HON. PETER
ODIBOH**

*General Manager
For Management
& Staff*



The Nigerian
OBSERVER
That The People May Know

Sports

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

NNL draws the line: Clubs given October 23 deadline for registration submission

The Nigeria National League (NNL) has issued a firm directive to all participating clubs to ensure the submission of their registration

forms on or before October 23, 2026, warning that failure to meet the deadline could jeopardise their participation in the 2026/2027 season.

With the submission deadline fast approaching, the league has urged club administrators to treat the date as a matter of urgency, complete all outstanding docu-

mentation and ensure that their registration forms are submitted within the stipulated period.

The NNL has also fixed October 30, 2026, as the final date for the collection of players' licences, leaving clubs with separate deadlines to meet ahead of the new campaign.

Chief Operating Officer of the NNL, Danlami Alanana, said the deadlines were designed to ensure proper organisation, administrative compliance and a smooth commencement of the season.

Alanana stressed that there would be no extension of the deadlines, calling on all clubs to act promptly and avoid unnecessary delays that could affect their eligibility for the new season.

He further disclosed that any club that fails to meet the stipulated requirements would be liable to an additional fee of N500,000.

The league's message to clubs is clear: October 23 is the key date for registration submission, and no club should wait until the last minute to comply.

Meanwhile, the 2026/2027 NNL season is scheduled to kick off on October 31, with a curtain-raiser at the Dan Anyiam Stadium in Owerri, where Heartland FC will host Crown FC of Ogbomoso in a Conference A encounter. The fixture will be the only match on the opening day, with other games scheduled to follow a week later.

2026/2027		
MD 1: 31/10/26 HEARTLAND vs CROWN DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM	MD 2: 14/11/26 EKO UNITED vs HEARTLAND MICHAEL O. JOHNSON ARENA 4PM	MD 3 HEARTLAND vs BYE
MD 4: 28/11/26 HEARTLAND vs EDEL FC DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM	MD 5: 6/12/26 REMO STARS vs HEARTLAND REMO STARS STADIUM 4PM	MD 6: 12/12/26 HEARTLAND vs STORMERS DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM
MD 7: 19/12/26 GOODSWILL AKPABIO LTD vs HEARTLAND LSD TOWNSHIP STADIUM 4PM	MD 8: 10/1/27 HEARTLAND vs ROVERS DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM	MD 9: 16/1/27 SUNSHINE STARS vs HEARTLAND AKINLE TOWNSHIP STADIUM 4PM
MD 10: 31/1/27 HEARTLAND vs SUNSHINE STARS DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM	MD 11: 6/2/27 ROVERS vs HEARTLAND LSD TOWNSHIP STADIUM 4PM	MD 12: 14/2/27 HEARTLAND vs GOODSWILL AKPABIO LTD DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM
MD 13: 21/2/27 STORMERS vs HEARTLAND M.K.O ABOLATA STADIUM 4PM	MD 14: 28/2/27 HEARTLAND vs REMO STARS DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM	MD 15: 7/3/27 EDEL vs HEARTLAND AKINLE TOWNSHIP STADIUM 4PM
MD 16 BYE vs HEARTLAND	MD 17: 20/3/27 HEARTLAND vs EKO UNITED DAN ANYIAM STADIUM 4PM	MD 18: 27/3/27 CROWN vs HEARTLAND SOLUN TOWNSHIP STADIUM 4PM



GIFT MONDAY

Boston Legacy unveils Super Falcons striker Gift Monday

Boston Legacy FC have officially unveiled Nigerian international striker Gift Monday following her transfer from fellow National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) side Washington Spirit.

The 24-year-old forward has signed a five-year contract with Boston Legacy FC and will wear the number 22 jersey at her new club.

Boston Legacy announced Monday's signing on October 6, with Washington Spirit reportedly receiving a transfer fee of \$500,000, alongside a 20 per cent sell-on clause.

Monday joined Washington Spirit from Spanish club UD Tenerife in March 2025 and

quickly established herself as one of the notable attacking talents in the American women's league.

The Super Falcons forward made history in September 2025 when she scored a hat-trick in 35 minutes and 52 seconds against Houston Dash, setting an NWSL record for the fastest hat-trick from kickoff.

Her impressive performances in the United States have further enhanced her reputation as one of Nigeria's promising attacking talents.

Monday will now aim to maintain her impressive form and make a significant contribution to Boston Legacy FC as the club prepares for its next chapter in the NWSL.

Moses Itauma reveals why he will still become World Heavyweight Boxing Champion

Nigerian-born boxer Moses Itauma has revealed that his young age is a major factor that will eventually help him become world heavyweight champion in the not-too-distant future.

The 21-year-old British boxer of the year 2025 is also staying upbeat about his chances of making a return to relevance in the coming year, despite losing his first world title fight to Filip Hrgovic in August.

Itauma, who had won all 14 of his professional fights, 12 by stoppage, thereby establishing himself as one of the division's most exciting young prospects, believes he will still win the illustrious world title because age is on his side.

"I'm 21. Of course, I'm going to have my opportunity again," said Itauma, who initially led against 34-year-old Hrgovic, who won an Olympic Games bronze in 2016 and went into the bout with 20 wins, 15 victories inside the distance, plus only one defeat.

However, despite knocking his opponent to the canvas

in the second round, Itauma could not sustain his high-octane tempo, as he gassed out and eventually crumbled like a pack of cards against the more experienced Hrgovic.

Afterwards, Hrgovic noted that Itauma is really good, special, very fast and talented, all of which revived confidence in

the lad with a Nigerian father and mother from Slovakia, as he now sets his sights on a sensational comeback soon.

"It taught me a lot. I walked away from the fight knowing there was something I learnt there that I couldn't get from sparring, reading books or what the coach would be able to tell

me. What happened there I had to see for myself. I'll be back.

"My identity as a boxer is still deeply rooted in me. A loss is not going to change that. I lost a boxing fight, that's it. Even though I didn't get the W, I'm proud of my performance for what I was, and I enjoyed it," Itauma declared

CAFWCL: Edo Queens set for Group B if they overcome Ampem Darkoa



EDO QUEENS

Nigerian champions Edo Queens will compete in Group B of the 2026 CAF Women's Champions League (CAFWCL) if they secure qualification ahead of Ghanaian side Ampem Darkoa Ladies.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has confirmed the group composition for the 2026 edition of the competition, with Edo Queens and Ampem Darkoa listed as alternatives for the remaining

spot in Group B.

Group B comprises Mali's US-FAS Bamako, Moroccan giants AS FAR and Uganda's Kawempe Muslim Ladies, alongside either Edo Queens or Ampem Darkoa.

Meanwhile, Group A features South African champions Mamelodi Sundowns, Egypt's FC Masar, Morocco's FUS Rabat and Cameroonian side Lekie Football Girls.

Edo Queens will be hoping to secure their place in the continental competition and represent Nigeria against some of Africa's leading women's football clubs.

FIBA Congratulates Abdullahi Mustapha on Election as NBBF President

The international basketball governing body congratulates Abdullahi Mustapha and the newly elected NBBF board, while commending the federation's commitment to good governance.

The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) has congratulated Dr Abdullahi Mustapha on his election as President of the Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF), alongside members elected to serve on the federation's board for the 2026-2030 term.

In a letter dated October 19, 2026, FIBA Secretary General

Andreas Zagklis acknowledged the outcome of the NBBF Elective Congress held on October 15, noting the successful completion of the electoral process.

FIBA commended the NBBF for its commitment to good governance and for conducting the elections in accordance with its constitution and applicable FIBA regulations. The international basketball governing body also acknowledged the support and recognition provided by relevant national authorities and stakeholders during the process.



ABDULLAHI MUSTAPHA

SPORTS



THE CHAMPIONS

AFCON U20: Egypt, Morocco emerge as potential replacements for Ghana

Ghana are reportedly at risk of losing the hosting rights for the 2027 U-20 Africa Cup of Nations, with Egypt and Morocco emerging as potential replacements. Ghana was awarded the hosting rights for the continental youth competition in April 2025. However, concerns have reportedly emerged over the

country's level of preparedness, particularly regarding stadium renovations and other necessary infrastructure. The situation has reportedly prompted the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to consider alternative hosts should Ghana fail to meet the required standards ahead of the tournament.

Egypt and Morocco have been identified as potential replacements, given their experience in hosting major continental football competitions and the availability of established football infrastructure. The 2027 edition of the U-20 Africa Cup of Nations is expected to bring together some of the continent's most promis-

ing young football talents, with participating nations competing for the continental title and opportunities to qualify for global youth competitions. However, CAF is yet to officially announce any change of host, and Ghana's hosting status remains subject to further developments regarding preparations for the tournament.

Adamu moves to CAF General Secretariat

Adamu's departure from the Competitions Department follows his appointment as acting General Secretary of CAF after Mosenko-Omba's resignation.

Before the transition, the Nigerian administrator played a significant role in the coordination of CAF competitions, placing him at the centre of the organisation's tournament operations.

His move to the General Secretariat represents a shift from overseeing competitions to assuming broader administrative responsibilities within the continental governing body.

The acting General Secretary position is a key administrative role, supporting the implementation of CAF policies and the coordination of its day-to-day operations.

Adamu's new assignment also places him within the leadership structure responsible for managing the organisation's affairs and supporting its programmes across African football.

The appointment of a new head of the Competitions Department comes at a time when CAF continues to manage an extensive calendar of club and

national-team tournaments. Effective competition administration is essential to coordinating participating teams, host associations, match officials and other stakeholders across different countries and venues.

Nassar will therefore be expected to ensure continuity in the department's work follow-

ing Adamu's transition, while maintaining the organisational standards required for CAF competitions.

The change also reflects the movement of administrators between key positions within the continental body as it manages its leadership and operational responsibilities.

However, no specific policy changes or new competition plans were announced alongside Nassar's appointment.

Attention will now turn to how the Egyptian administrator settles into the role and oversees the department's responsibilities as CAF prepares for its forthcoming tournaments.

Falcons suffer setback in latest FIFA World Rankings

Nigeria's Super Falcons have fallen seven places in the latest FIFA Women's World Rankings, dropping from 36th to 43rd position globally.

Despite the decline, the 10-time African champions remain Africa's highest-ranked

women's national team, maintaining their lead over South Africa, Morocco, Ghana and Zambia, who occupy the second to fifth positions on the continent, respectively.

The drop in the rankings comes after a disappointing run of results in recent months,

including Nigeria's quarter-final exit at the 2026 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) in Morocco.

The Falcons endured defeats against Malawi and Cameroon during the tournament before suffering a 2-1 loss to South Africa in the playoffs for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.

These results have contributed to the team's recent struggles on the international stage, raising concerns about their performances ahead of upcoming competitions.

However, the Nigerian side recorded some positive results in their bid to qualify for the 2028 Olympic Games, securing two victories over Comoros in the qualifying rounds.



SUPER FALCON

CAFCL: Rangers arrive in Algeria for MC Alger showdown

Nigerian champions Rangers International have arrived in Algeria ahead of their CAF Champions League second-leg encounter against MC Alger on Friday night.

The Flying Antelopes will head into the decisive encounter with a two-goal advantage following their 2-0 victory over the Algerian side in the first leg at the MKO Abiola Stadium in Abeokuta on Sunday.

However, Rangers will be without the services of Lucky Jimoh

and Falolu Azeez, who have both been ruled out of the encounter.

The Enugu-based club will be aiming to protect their first-leg advantage and secure qualification for the group stage of Africa's premier club competition.

MC Alger, meanwhile, will be desperate to overturn the deficit in front of their home supporters and keep their continental campaign alive.

The winner over the two legs will advance to the group stage of the CAF Champions League



RANGERS AND MC ALGER

FIFA suspends three Egypt officials after Argentina World Cup clash

FIFA have sanctioned three members of Egypt's team following incidents during their World Cup clash against Argentina.

Hossam Hassan and Ibrahim Hassan have each been handed three-match suspensions, while Ziko has received a five-match ban.

The disciplinary measures follow incidents that occurred during the encounter between both nations, although further

details regarding the specific charges have yet to be disclosed.

The Egyptian Football Association (EFA) is reportedly seeking clarification from FIFA regarding the sanctions before deciding whether to appeal the decisions.

The suspensions represent a disciplinary setback for the Egyptian team as the federation awaits further explanations from football's world governing body



EGYPT PLAYERS