

FG disburses ₦38.93billion revitalisation fund to 166 tertiary institutions

AGHEDO IYOBOR

ABUJA

The Federal Government has disbursed N38.93 billion to 166 public tertiary institutions across the country under the Needs Assessment Revitalisation Fund.

The disbursement was disclosed in a statement issued on Sunday in Abuja by the Head of the Media Unit of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Mrs Efe Ovuakporie. According to the statement, the beneficiaries comprise 79 universities, 46 polytechnics and 41 colleges of education.

A breakdown of the disbursement showed that universities received the largest share of N28.5 billion, while polytechnics received N5.8 billion and colleges of education got N4.7 billion. The ministry said the intervention was part of the Federal Government's efforts to address

infrastructure deficits, improve teaching and learning facilities, and support the implementation of agreed measures under the Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Government and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). "The funds are expected to

enable beneficiary institutions to commence or advance approved projects addressing critical infrastructure and other identified institutional needs, with the overall objective of strengthening the quality of tertiary education in Nigeria," the statement said. The ministry further stressed

the importance of effective co-ordination among the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Federal Ministry of Education and the beneficiary institutions to ensure that the approved public funds translate into tangible improvements in educational infrastructure.



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#200

Okpebholo tasks perm secs on accountability, performance

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has urged permanent secretaries to uphold accountability, transparency, and professionalism as the state works to improve governance and service delivery. The governor gave the charge on Monday while declaring open a two-day Strategic Leadership and Orientation Retreat for Permanent Secretaries, organised to strengthen

● Highlights measures to reposition Edo public service

leadership and institutional performance in the Edo State Civil Service. He asked the officials to resist corruption, cut unnecessary bureaucracy, embrace innovation, and make sure government policies translate into measurable benefits for Edo residents. Okpebholo described permanent secretaries as the accounting officers of their Ministries, Departments and

Agencies (MDAs), responsible for financial discipline. "This is not merely a title; it is a clear duty for accountability, due process, proper record keeping, and ensuring that every expenditure delivers real value to the Edo people," he said. He also cautioned them

against acting on instructions simply because someone claims, "the governor said." "Verify it. Confirm its authenticity. Ensure it complies with the law, financial regulations, and established procedures," he added. The governor reminded the participants that governments

come and go, but the civil service remains the custodian of institutional memory and continuity. He urged them to ensure timely decisions, faster movement of files, effective project monitoring, and responsive public services. Okpebholo said his administration had introduced several

reforms in less than two years to reposition the civil service as an engine of effective governance. These include prompt payment of salaries, continuation of the 13th-month salary, and an increase in the minimum wage from N70,000 to N75,000.

CONTINUES ON PG 2>>

Edo APC mobilises for 2027, pledges issue-based campaigns

OLIVER IJIOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) says it is strengthening its grassroots structures ahead of the 2027 general elections, pledging to focus its campaigns on policies, governance and development rather than personal attacks on political opponents. The State Chairman of the party, Jarrett Tenebe, disclosed this while addressing journalists on the party's preparations for the elections, expressing confidence in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election bid. Tenebe said the party had concluded a statewide tour aimed at consolidating its support base, mobilising members and communicating its political message to voters ahead of the polls.

According to him, the APC is committed to issue-based campaigns that allow political parties to present their policies and demonstrate how they intend to address the country's challenges. "We've been doing a tour around the entire state, which we just completed to wire up our base. We were preaching that we want campaigns of issue. We don't want campaigns of insults," he said. He urged political parties and their candidates to articulate clear policy proposals and explain how they intend to tackle Nigeria's economic and developmental challenges, stressing that the 2027 election-eering process should provide voters with an opportunity to evaluate competing ideas and records of performance.

CONTINUES ON PG 2>>



ORIENTATION RETREAT: Gov Monday Okpebholo (7th left) in a group photograph with permanent secretaries in Edo State Civil Service during a two-day Strategic Leadership and Orientation Retreat in Benin City, yesterday. PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE

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NEWS



ORIENTATION RETREAT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, addressing permanent secretaries in the Edo State Civil Service during a two-day Strategic Leadership and Orientation Retreat in Benin City, yesterday.

PHOTO: OKONDOH TALLE EBOSE.



RETREAT:

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, flanked by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Barr. Musa Ikhilor, Esq., and the Head of Service (HOS), Mr. Anthony Okungbowa, as permanent secretaries in the state civil service sit in two rows during a two-day Strategic Leadership and Orientation Retreat in Benin City on Monday.

Okpebholo tasks perm secs...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

He added that promotion arrears had been eliminated, promotions were now timely, and thousands of workers had been recruited or regularised.

The governor also highlighted EDO-PREP, designed to strengthen performance and capacity development, and EdoCloud, which supports the state's paperless governance initiative. According to him, merit, inclusion, and institutional accountability have become central to the reforms, and he urged participants to exchange ideas and commit to better service delivery across Edo.

Earlier, the Head of Service, Dr Anthony Okungbowa, commended the governor for prioritising workers' welfare and strengthening the civil service.

Okungbowa recalled that shortly after assuming office in November 2024, Okpebholo directed that salaries be paid by the 26th of every month. He also noted the introduction of the 13th-month salary in December 2024 and the later in-

crease in the minimum wage.

He thanked the governor for approving 20 brand-new permanent secretaries, describing the gesture as support for better administrative performance.

The head of service urged the participants to use the retreat to reflect on their responsibilities and develop practical strategies for improving service delivery. He said the success of the SHINE Agenda depends largely on how effective the MDAs are and challenged them to identify measurable outcomes their offices could deliver within three and six months.

Okungbowa described public office as a position of trust, insisting that permanent secretaries must show discipline, integrity, and professionalism in managing public resources. He also welcomed the newly appointed permanent secretaries and urged them to uphold the values of the civil service.

Among those present at the event were the Secretary to the State Government, Barr Musa Ikhilor, and the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Alhaji Yakubu Musa.

Edo APC mobilises for 2027...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

The Edo APC chairman argued that political discourse should focus on what opposition candidates intend to do differently to improve the country rather than resorting to verbal attacks against the incumbent administration.

On President Tinubu's re-elec-

tion bid, Tenebe expressed confidence in the President's leadership, citing his experience as a former governor of Lagos State and his record in public office.

He also defended the Federal Government's economic reforms, acknowledging the difficulties associated with their implementation but maintaining that the policies needed time to deliver their anticipated benefits.

Tenebe argued that reversing the removal of the fuel subsidy, as advocated by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, could undermine the reforms introduced by the Tinubu administration.

On security, agriculture and infrastructure, the APC chairman maintained that the Federal Government was making progress, citing reports of farmers returning to their farmlands as an indication that efforts to tackle insecurity were yielding results.

He urged Nigerians to assess presidential candidates based on their records in public office, experience and proposed solutions to the nation's challenges.

Tenebe also referenced the APC's recent presidential campaign rally in Kaduna State, which he described as evidence of support for Tinubu ahead of the 2027 elections.

He said the party would sustain its grassroots mobilisation efforts while promoting the policies and programmes of the President as preparations for the polls intensify.

The Edo APC chairman reiterated his call for issue-based campaigns, urging political parties to engage voters in constructive debates on the economy, security, agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure and economic empowerment.

Tinubu's reforms policies beginning to yield results, says Tenebe

BENIN CITY

AGHEDO IYOBOR

The Edo State Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Jarrett Tenebe, has defended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's economic reforms, insisting that the policies are beginning to yield results despite the economic challenges confronting Nigerians.

Tenebe, who spoke during an interview on TVC News, expressed confidence in the Tinubu administration's performance, citing what he described as progress in the economy, security, agriculture, infrastructure and economic empowerment.

He also attributed the large turnout at the APC presidential campaign rally in Kaduna State to growing public support for the President, describing the crowd as spontaneous rather than mobilised through financial inducements.

"The crowd was actually massive, and I think the opposition parties were taken by storm. What you are seeing here is organic. It was not something that paid the crowd," he said.

The Edo APC chairman added that supporters displaying their Permanent Voter Cards

(PVCs) at the rally demonstrated their readiness to participate in the electoral process.

He maintained that Tinubu's performance and experience in governance had strengthened the President's case for re-election, expressing confidence in the APC's prospects ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Addressing concerns over the impact of the Federal Government's economic policies, Tenebe acknowledged that reforms could be difficult in the short term but argued that their benefits would become more evident with time.

According to him, the administration inherited a challenging economic situation, making it necessary to allow its policies sufficient time to produce the desired outcomes.

"When you want to do reforms, it is not easy, especially when you have an economy that is crumbled before he got there. So reforms take time to manifest," he said.

Tenebe maintained that economic activities and the experiences of traders and other business operators should form part of the assessment of the reforms, arguing that the administration's policies were beginning to reposition the country.

He also criticised calls attributed to former Vice-President

Atiku Abubakar for a reversal of the fuel subsidy removal policy, questioning the financial implications of restoring the subsidy.

He argued that reversing the policy could create uncertainty for businesses and undermine the direction of the ongoing economic reforms.

"For somebody to come and say, after the President has worked, he's working on reform and he has removed subsidy, and we are seeing the gains that we have had since he came in there, and somebody just come and say he wants to take 360 degrees. It doesn't work, and it sounds desperate," he said.

The APC chairman urged Nigerians to consider the long-term implications of economic policy decisions rather than support what he described as a reversal of the current reform agenda.

Tenebe identified security, agriculture, infrastructure, healthcare and economic empowerment as some of the major issues likely to influence voters' decisions in the 2027 presidential election.

He expressed optimism that the Federal Government's efforts to tackle insecurity were beginning to yield results, particularly in restoring farmers' confidence to return to their farmlands.

According to him, reports of farmers resuming agricultural activities suggest that the security situation is receiving attention.

"When you talk of security, you can see farmers are saying they are going back to the farm. It showed that, yes, security is being tackled," he said.

He further urged Nigerians to assess presidential candidates based on their records in public office, competence and proposed solutions to the country's challenges rather than campaign promises alone.

Tenebe cited Tinubu's tenure as governor of Lagos State as evidence of the President's experience in governance, while challenging Nigerians to examine the records of other presidential contenders, including Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi.

He maintained that voters should carefully evaluate the candidates' antecedents and determine who possesses the capacity to address the nation's economic and developmental challenges.

The Edo APC chairman disclosed that the party had intensified grassroots mobilisation across the state as part of preparations for the 2027 general elections.

He said the party had recently concluded a statewide

tour aimed at strengthening its structures, consolidating its support base and communicating its political message to residents.

Tenebe said the APC was committed to issue-based campaigns that would focus on policies, governance and development rather than personal attacks against political opponents.

"We've been doing a tour around the entire state, which we just completed to wire up our base. We were preaching that we want campaigns of issue. We don't want campaigns of insults," he said.

He called on political parties and their candidates to concentrate on explaining how they intended to address Nigeria's challenges, urging them to present practical alternatives to the policies of the incumbent administration.

The APC chairman reiterated his support for Tinubu's re-election bid, maintaining that the President's experience, policy direction and record in public office should feature prominently in the political debate ahead of the 2027 elections.

He urged voters to make informed choices by scrutinising the records, programmes and proposed solutions of all presidential candidates.

NEWS

APC national chairman defends Tinubu's reforms, says policies yielding results

IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE

JOS

The national chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Professor Nentawe Yilwatda, has defended the economic reforms introduced by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, saying

the policies are beginning to produce results and improve Nigeria's economic outlook.

Yilwatda stated that the reforms were helping to restore investor confidence, strengthen the country's financial position and establish a foundation for achieving the Federal Government's ambitious \$1 trillion economy target.

He made the remarks during the Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda Colloquium 2.0, organised in his honour in Jos, Plateau State, to commemorate his 58th birthday. The event brought together political leaders, government officials, academics and other stakeholders to discuss leadership, governance and national development.

velopment.

Speaking at the gathering, the APC national chairman maintained that the economic decisions taken by the Tinubu administration, which he said had been avoided by previous governments, were beginning to produce measurable outcomes.

According to him, Nigeria's economic growth has begun to outpace population growth, while the country's gross domestic product (GDP)

has reportedly increased from below \$300 billion to approximately \$375 billion within two years.

Yilwatda attributed the development to the administration's economic policies, expressing optimism that continued implementation of the reforms would strengthen

the productive sector and improve the nation's economic prospects.

He also claimed that Nigeria's exports had exceeded its imports, adding that investors were gradually returning to the country as confidence in the economy improved.

NCDC tasks hospitals on infection prevention, workers safety

AGHEDO IYOBOR

IBADAN

The Director General of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), Dr. Jide Idris, has called on the leadership of all public and private healthcare facilities in Nigeria to immediately review and strengthen their infection prevention and control measures.

The DG said the Federal Government would prioritise the safety, health and welfare of health workers throughout the response.

This, he added, includes not only doctors, nurses and other professionals working in hospitals, but also the public health workforce responsible for surveillance, contact tracing, laboratory diagnosis, case management, infection prevention and control, community engagement and risk communication.

"I want to use this opportunity to call on the leadership of every public and private healthcare facility in Nigeria to immediately review and strengthen their infection prevention and control measures," Dr. Idris stressed.

Arewa Christians declare fasting, prayers for Tinubu

OMOYE AMINU

ABUJA

Northern Christian support group, Arewa Christians for Tinubu 2027 (ACT-2027), has declared a one-day fasting and prayer session for President Bola Tinubu and Nigeria.

The group also announced plans to dedicate its national secretariat in Abuja on Saturday, October 24, 2026, as part of efforts to strengthen its activities across the 19 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory.

In a statement, the National Coordinator of ACT-2027, Ambassador Ayuba Jacob Ngbako, said the fasting and prayers were intended to seek divine inter-

vention for the president and the country ahead of the 2027 political campaign season.

According to the group, the secretariat's dedication will mark the beginning of a new phase of activities focused on translating faith into development through educational support, skills acquisition, empowerment programmes, humanitarian services, peacebuilding and civic education across Northern Nigeria.

ACT-2027 is believed to be an emerging umbrella development platform for Arewa Christians across the 19 northern states and the FCT.

The group reaffirmed its commitment to supporting development initiatives and promoting peace and civic engagement in the region.

Shortage of oncology nurses threatens cancer care delivery in Nigeria

ABUJA

Nursing professionals have called for improved welfare, increased training opportunities and greater inclusion in health sector decision-making, warning that the shortage of oncology nurses is undermining cancer care in Nigeria.

They made call in separate interviews with the NAN in Abuja.

According to the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment (NICRAT), Nigeria records 102,000 to 127,763 new cancer cases and approximately 72,000 to 79,542 cancer related deaths annually.

The professionals noted that the country lacked sufficient specialists to meet the increasing demand for cancer care, added that the migration of trained nurses to other countries further worsen the situation.

Prof. Khadijat Musah, Dean of the Faculty of Nursing Sciences, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, estimated that Nigeria had about 300 oncology nurses.

Musah expressed concern over the migration of trained nurses and urged the government to address their welfare.

"I am using this opportunity to thank the leadership of Nigeria and everybody in government. But they should try and look into the welfare of oncology nurses," she said.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

From left: Secretary, Information Publicity of Obafemi Hamzat Campaign Council (OHCC), Mrs Bola Akingbeyin; Commissioner for Information and Strategy/Co-Director of OHCC, Mr Gbenga Omotoso; Director General, OHCC, Sen. Muslim Obanikoro; Deputy Director General, OHCC, Razak Ajala; Spokesman for APC Lagos Council, Mr Seye Oladejo and the Special Adviser to Governor Sanwo-Olu on Media and Publicity, Mr Gboyega Akosile, during a news conference on the campaign activities of Kadiri Obafemi Hamzat as Governorship Candidate of APC in Lagos State and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in Lagos on Sunday

Hamzat urges Lagos residents to increase voter participation ahead of 2027 elections

IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE

LAGOS

The Deputy Governor of Lagos State and All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, has called on residents of Lagos State to participate actively in the 2027 general elections, expressing concern over the low voter turnout recorded during the previous election.

Hamzat made the appeal during a visit to his campaign

office in Ikeja by members of the Committee of Wives of Lagos State Officials (COWLSO), led by the wife of the Lagos State Governor, Dr Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu.

Speaking during the meeting, the APC governorship candidate disclosed that although approximately 6.2 million residents were registered to vote in Lagos during the last election, only about 1.2 million eventually participated in the electoral process.

He described the figures as a concern and urged eligible voters to take greater responsibility

in determining the political future of the state through active participation in the democratic process.

Hamzat also called on APC members and supporters to intensify grassroots mobilisation, engage residents and communicate the achievements of the current administration to the electorate ahead of the 2027 polls.

According to him, the APC-led administration has taken steps to strengthen economic stability and uphold the rule of law, adding that party members must work collectively to ensure greater public engagement.

The Lagos State APC Chairman, Pastor Cornelius Ojelabi, described the visit by COWLSO as a demonstration of the group's solidarity with the party and its willingness to support APC candidates ahead of the forthcoming elections.

Ojelabi said the engagement would help consolidate support for President Bola Tinubu's administration and strengthen cooperation among party members. He emphasised the importance of sustained grassroots sensitisation, unity and effective communication in encouraging political participation.

NCDC traces 53 contacts after confirmed

SUCCESS EDENAMUIKI

ABUJA

The number of contacts linked to Nigeria's confirmed Ebola case in the FCT has risen to 53, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has said.

In its Situation Report dated October 24, 2026, the agency said the contacts include healthcare workers, domestic staff and the spouse of the index case. They have been identified, categorized and are being followed up for 21 days.

The NCDC also disclosed that a suspected case reported

by Rivers State on October 23 tested negative for Ebola.

According to the NCDC, the index case is a 42-year-old woman who returned to Nigeria from Uganda via Addis Ababa to Abuja on October 3. She became symptomatic four days later and visited private health facilities on October 10 and 11 before she was admitted.

The agency was notified on October 19, investigated the case and collected samples. The NCDC National Reference Laboratory confirmed Ebola on October 20. The patient presented with fever, diarrhoea, body aches and sore throat, but no bleeding.

Speaking at a press brief-

ing on Sunday, NCDC Director-General Dr. Jide Idris reassured Nigerians that the Federal Government is responding with urgency.

"I recognize the concern that the confirmation of Ebola may have caused. Ebola is a serious disease, and we are handling this situation with the urgency it deserves. We have a clear response plan, experienced personnel, and established public health systems," Idris said.

He said the response is being coordinated through the Emergency Operations Centre under Health Minister Mohammed Pate and the Presidential Task Force on EVD.

Idris explained that pub-

lic health teams are tracing all possible exposures, including healthcare workers, patients, caregivers, household members and travel contacts.

He appealed to Nigerians to cooperate if contacted by health officials.

"Being identified as a contact does not mean that you have Ebola. It means that public health teams need to assess and monitor your health so that any possible infection can be identified early," he said.

The NCDC boss commended healthcare workers whose vigilance led to the detection of the case and said the government will prioritise their safety and welfare.

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of Progress,
A Greater
Edo Ahead*

SPECIAL EDITION

INVITATION TO PLACE GOODWILL MESSAGES

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

2ND Years

ANNIVERSARY OF

**GOVERNOR MONDAY
OKPEBHOLO'S
ADMINISTRATION**

EDO STATE

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

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

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

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SECURITY | HEALTH | INFRASTRUCTURE | EDUCATION | AGRICULTURE | PROSPERITY

Nigeria Ebola-free after patient's evacuation to Switzerland — WHO

ABUJA

The World Health Organisation's Regional Director for Africa, Prof. Mohammed Janabi, says Nigeria currently has no Ebola cases following the medical evacuation of the infected patient and her husband to Switzerland.

Janabi disclosed this in a

post shared on X on Monday, saying the patient and her husband, who is also her contact, were evacuated earlier in the day.

Janabi stated quoting the tweet of the nation's coordinating minister of health and social welfare, Ali Pate who had confirmed the departure of the Swiss patient and spouse via an air ambulance to

Switzerland also on Monday.

He said both were Swiss citizens, adding that the patient was clinically stable following treatment by Nigerian medical personnel.

"The Nigerian medical team successfully managed her through the acute phase of the illness and stabilised her condition," he said.

Janabi congratulated the

Federal Government, health workers, clinicians, emergency responders and other partners involved in the response.

"On behalf of WHO and all partners, I warmly congratulate the Government of Nigeria, health workers, clinicians, emergency responders and all those involved in the response. This is a remarkable achievement and a testament

to what Africa can accomplish when we work together," he said.

He, however, stressed the need for continued vigilance, noting that Nigeria would maintain close follow-up of 52 contacts, while Switzerland would take responsibility for the continued management of the patient and the monitoring of her husband, identified

as contact number 53.

"With the evacuation of the patient and her husband, Nigeria currently has no Ebola cases," he stated.

"Congratulations once again to everyone involved. This is a proud moment demonstrating African expertise, resilience, and leadership in public health," Janabi added.



FITNESS WALK:

FCT Commandant of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Olusola Odumosu (M) stakeholders and personnel of the Command, during a 10km Fitness Walk in Abuja.

Ekiti education agency graduates 76, seeks more adult learners

ADO EKITI

The Executive Secretary of the Ekiti State Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education, Modupe Falade, has urged illiterate adults and youths in the state to enrol in literacy programmes to acquire essential reading and writing skills.

Falade, who described education as a powerful tool for socio-economic development, said quality mass education could liberate people from ignorance.

According to a statement by the agency made available in

Ado Ekiti on Monday, she spoke during the graduation ceremony of 76 adult learners at the Basic Literacy Centre in Ekameta Local Council Development Area, Ikogosi-Ekiti.

She described the graduation as part of the Oyebanji administration's efforts to promote inclusive education and extend literacy opportunities to underserved segments of the population.

Falade commended the Chairman of Ekameta LCDA, Adeniji Oluwaleye, and the council's management for ap-

proving funds to sponsor the centre.

She urged literate residents "to encourage illiterate adults and youths, including their neighbours and relatives, to enrol in literacy programmes."

The executive secretary also encouraged the graduands to "remain committed to learning and strive for excellence, adding that they could further their education through post-literacy classes."

She wished them success in their future endeavours.

One of the graduands, Dor-

cas Akinyemi, who spoke on behalf of the others, expressed appreciation to the Ekiti State Government and the LCDA chairman for providing them with the opportunity to acquire an education.

Akinyemi said the graduands would remain committed to their academic pursuits.

Activities at the ceremony included the presentation of cash gifts by the LCDA chairman to learners who came first, second and third in academic performance.

10 things to know about Obi-Kwankwaso campaign -DG Abdulkarim

ABUJA

The Nigeria Democratic Congress has appointed Alhaji Ibrahim Hussain Abdulkarim as the Director-General of the campaign for the Obi-Kwankwaso ticket, placing an ICT strategist, entrepreneur and political strategist at the helm of its campaign structure ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The appointment is part of the party's campaign arrangements for the presidential ticket featuring Nigeria Democratic Congress presidential candidate Peter Obi and former Kano State Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso.

The campaign list was released on Sunday evening.

Abdulkarim's background in technology, business development, political strategy and community engagement offers insight into the professional experience he brings to the campaign.

Here are 10 things to know about Abdulkarim, popularly known as Mallam Ziter or Ziter001.

*He was born in Sokoto State. Abdulkarim was born on October 14, 1976, in Sokoto State, to the family of Alhaji Hussain Abdulkarim. His early upbringing and education in northern Nigeria preceded a career spanning technology, business, politics and development.

*He studied Geography at Bayero University.

He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography from Bayero University, Kano. His academic background helped lay the foundation for his work in Geographic Information Systems, spatial data management and technology-driven development solutions.

*He is an ICT strategist and entrepreneur.

Abdulkarim is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of EasyGIS Nigeria Limited, a technology company that provides Geographic Information Systems, data management, information systems and business process improvement solutions.

His professional interests span technology, communication, business development and institutional innovation.

*He has experience in political strategy.

Beyond his technology and business interests, Abdulkarim has experience in politi-

cal strategy and public-sector engagement. His appointment as Director-General of the Obi-Kwankwaso campaign places him in a position to contribute to the coordination and strategic direction of the NDC's campaign activities.

*He has worked on projects across several sectors.

Abdulkarim has designed, coordinated and implemented technology-based projects addressing challenges in public administration, security, agriculture, land administration, revenue generation, membership management and project monitoring.

These engagements reflect his experience in applying digital tools to institutional and developmental challenges.

*He was involved in a nationwide vehicle-mapping project.

One of his notable projects was the AMDON System Integration Project, which mapped more than 1,500 dealerships and over 100,000 vehicles across 28 states.

The project demonstrates his experience in data management and the use of technology to organise information across multiple locations.

*He has contributed to public-sector technology projects.

His portfolio includes the Katsina Motor Vehicle Administration Software, the Zamfara Online Scientific Fertiliser and Seeds Distribution System, and a crime reporting and monitoring system for the Nigerian Police.

Other projects include EDU-GIS, the JIBWIS Live Community Membership System and the Adamawa Emirate Council Traditional Council Closed User Group.

*He served on a Nasarawa State government advisory committee.

Between 2019 and 2021, Abdulkarim served as chairman of the Advisory Committee on Efficient Land Administration, Urban Planning and Development, and Improving Revenue Generation and Collection in the Nasarawa State Ministry of Land and Urban Development.

The role exposed him to policy and administrative issues involving land management, urban development and public revenue.

*He is involved in youth empowerment and community development.

266 million faced hunger worldwide in 2025 — WFP

ABUJA

As many as 266 million people faced acute hunger worldwide in 2025, with conflict driving the most severe food crises, the United Nations World Food Programme has said.

The warning came as the organisation's new Executive Director, Luke J. Lindberg, assumed office on Monday, calling on governments, businesses, institutions and individuals to support efforts to deliver food to people facing hunger before it is too late.

"Conflict is driving peo-

ple into hunger, and extreme weather and maritime chokepoints exacerbate this reality," Lindberg said in a statement announcing his assumption of office on the agency's website.

He called for stronger global support for the WFP's humanitarian operations, warning that the organisation could not sustain its life-saving work alone.

"Governments, institutions, businesses, and individuals need to stand with us, fund the work, and help get food to people before it's too late. No more famines," he said.

The WFP said its teams currently operate in 83 countries

where hunger threatens livelihoods.

Lindberg's appointment comes as humanitarian organisations continue to grapple with food emergencies driven by conflict, extreme weather and disruptions to supply routes.

He succeeds Cindy McCain, who served as executive director from April 2023 to May 2026. Carl Skau has served as acting executive director since June.

Before joining the WFP, Lindberg served as Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs at the

United States Department of Agriculture, the release noted.

He previously founded a public-private partnership focused on expanding international markets for the state's exporters, serving as its president and chief executive officer.

He also served as chief of staff and chief strategy officer at the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

The WFP is the world's largest humanitarian organisation, providing life-saving assistance during emergencies and using food assistance to support recovery from conflict, disasters and extreme weather.

NEWS

Court orders El-Rufai to enter defence in wiretapping trial

ABUJA

A Federal High Court in Abuja on Monday dismissed a no-case submission filed by former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, over the alleged unlawful interception of telephone conversations involving the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu. Justice Joyce Abdulmalik, in a ruling, held that the prosecution

had presented sufficient evidence to require El-Rufai to enter his defence in the five-count amended charge filed against him by the Department of State Services. The judge consequently ordered the former governor to open his defence and adjourned the case until November 25, 2026, for him to do so. El-Rufai had filed the no-case submission after the Federal Government closed its case

following the testimony of two prosecution witnesses. Through his counsel, Paul Erokoro, the former governor urged the court to discharge and acquit him, arguing that the prosecution had failed to establish a prima facie case against him. Erokoro maintained that the evidence presented by the prosecution was insufficient to warrant compelling his client to enter a defence to the alle-

gations. However, opposing the application, prosecution counsel, Oluwale Aladedoye, urged the court to dismiss the no-case submission and direct El-Rufai to defend himself against the charges. Aladedoye argued that the oral and documentary evidence presented before the court was sufficient to establish a case requiring the defendant to respond to the allegations.

Ruling on the application, Justice Abdulmalik agreed with the prosecution that the case should proceed to the defence stage, thereby rejecting El-Rufai's request for discharge and acquittal at that stage of the proceedings. The charges stem from allegations that El-Rufai unlawfully intercepted telephone conversations linked to Ribadu. The controversy followed an interview the former governor granted on Prime Time, an Arise Television programme, in February 2026, during which he claimed that Ribadu's telephone conversation had been intercepted. During the interview, El-Rufai

said, "someone wiretapped" the NSA's phone, enabling him to listen to a conversation in which Ribadu allegedly instructed security operatives to arrest him. The allegation subsequently formed the basis of the DSS prosecution against the former governor. With the court's dismissal of the no-case submission, El-Rufai is expected to present his defence when the case resumes on November 25. The NDLEA Edo State Command remains committed to its mandate to eliminate illicit drug trade, enhance public safety, and promote community health.



INSPECTION:

From left: Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State; Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Gbenga Omotoso and Special Adviser to the Governor on Infrastructure, Mr Olufemi Daramola, during the inspection of the architectural development of the newly constructed Opebi-Ojota link bridge in Lagos.

Natasha hosts European ambassadors on Kogi investment tour

OKENE (KOGI)

The senator representing Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, has wooed European investors to Kogi State, including four ambassadors from Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Spain on a tour of the state's cultural heritage, tourism attractions and indigenous industries.

The visit was aimed at showcasing the area's economic potential and exploring investment and humanitarian partnerships that could create jobs, expand local enterprises and improve livelihoods.

The diplomats visited historical landmarks, interacted with local artisans and experienced the traditions and hospitality of the Ebira people as

part of efforts to expose Kogi Central to international investment opportunities.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued by the senator's media aide, Mike Idoko, in Abuja on Monday.

According to the statement, the engagement began with visits to Lord Lugard's Rest House on Mount Patti in Lokoja and the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers, before the delegation proceeded to Kogi Central for cultural activities and interactions with local communities.

The Ambassador of Italy to Nigeria, Roberto Mengoni, described the confluence as a symbol of national unity and expressed optimism about potential partnerships with the state.

"Kogi is very rich, and we look forward to partnership," Mengoni said, thanking Akpoti-Uduaghan for facilitating the visit.

Belgium's ambassador, Pieter Leenknecht, also praised the experience, particularly the hiking expedition around the historic hills of Ihima, commending the opportunity to explore the region's landscape, culture and local cuisine.

The cultural programme included a visit to Obeiba Hill, where the diplomats sampled traditional delicacies such as akara, apapa and akamu.

They also observed indigenous production processes, including shea butter and palm kernel oil extraction, black soap making, pottery and traditional Ebira cloth

weaving.

A masquerade performance further exposed the visitors to the community's cultural identity and artistic traditions.

Denmark's ambassador, Jens Hansen, expressed admiration for the skills of local artisans, particularly women involved in pottery, traditional clothing and other indigenous crafts.

He said the locally made products demonstrated the creativity and determination of the artisans, adding that their work offered opportunities for enterprise development and access to wider markets.

Addressing the delegation, Akpoti-Uduaghan said the visit was designed to demon-

Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority announces winners of \$275,000 prize for innovation

ABUJA

The Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) has announced the winners of the fourth edition of the NSIA Prize for Innovation (NPI 4.0).

A statement from the NSIA in Abuja on Sunday named Come Again Foods overall winner of the NPI.40, with the startup receiving a combined prize value of 100,000 dollars.

The announcement was made following the NPI 4.0 Demo Day themed "Building for Impact", where 12 finalists, selected from 6,000 applications, pitched their solutions to an expert panel drawn from Nigeria's business, investment and innovation ecosystems.

Come Again Foods manufactures packaged snacks using locally sourced agricultural commodities.

Protein Kapital, which produces protein and biofertilisers through insect farming and the processing of organic waste, emerged second, receiving a combined prize value of 70,000 dollars.

Instant Rad Inc., an artificial intelligence-enabled teleradiology platform connecting hospitals and diagnostic centres with radiologists across Africa, placed third, receiving 50,000 dollars.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the fourth edition focused on startups operating in manufacturing, climate and food security, and healthcare.

The NSIA said the sectors were selected for their potential to contribute to Nigeria's economic growth, resilience and sustainable development.

The authority said the edition offered a combined prize value of 275,000 dollars, comprising 220,000 dollars from NSIA, 45,000 dollars from Cascador

and 10,000 dollars from Wema Bank.

The NSIA said as part of the additional awards, Eight Medical and Uwana Energy received 15,000 dollars each in Cascador cash prizes.

Sambal Enterprises, Come Again Foods and Ebees Green received 5,000 dollars each under the Cascador Impact prizes.

Similarly, Eight Medical, Smartel Agri Tech and Tryctor received 4,000 dollars each in Wema Bank prizes.

Beyond the prize money, the authority said eligible winners will have the opportunity to access up to 1.5 million dollars in growth capital through Pula Xcelerator to support business expansion and operational growth.

The NSIA said winners will also participate in a fully funded entrepreneurial development programme at the Enterprise Development Centre (EDC), Lagos.

It said the programme will cover business strategy, leadership, governance, financial management, market expansion and investor readiness.

Speaking at the Demo Day, Mr Aminu Umar-Sadiq, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of NSIA, said the quality of solutions presented reflected the depth of innovation and entrepreneurial talent across Nigeria.

"Through the NSIA Prize for Innovation, we are not only recognising promising ideas; we are creating pathways for entrepreneurs to access the capital, capabilities, networks and partnerships needed to build sustainable, scalable businesses."

Umar-Sadiq said the expanded opportunities created through the programme's strategic partnerships reinforced the authority's commitment to supporting Nigerian innovators developing practical solutions to critical challenges.

2027: RMRDC DG urges Peter Obi to drop ambition, support Tinubu

ABUJA

The Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of the Raw Materials Research and Development Council, Prof. Nnanyelugo Ike-Muonso, has urged the Nigeria Democratic Congress presidential candidate, Peter Obi, to abandon his 2027 presidential ambition and support President Bola Tinubu's re-election bid, arguing that the South should complete its eight-year tenure before power returns to the North.

Ike-Muonso, who made the call at an interactive session in Abuja on Monday, also urged the former Anambra State governor to consider joining the ruling All Progressives Congress to contribute to its policy discussions and development agenda.

His position comes amid political manoeuvring ahead of the 2027 general elections, with the question of presidential power rotation between the North and South remaining a key consideration in debates over political alliances and succession.

Although the Nigerian Con-

stitution does not prescribe zoning or rotation of the presidency between the two regions, the arrangement has remained an informal political understanding among major parties and stakeholders since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

Ike-Muonso argued that Obi should shelve his immediate presidential ambition, support Tinubu's re-election and use the intervening years to build broader political alliances and contribute to national development.

He said, "Peter Obi has done

well by building a political following and brought issues of public expenditure, accountability and economic management into the national conversation. Those issues deserve sustained engagement.

"But political leadership also requires strategic decisions about when to contest, when to collaborate and how best to contribute to national development. Obi needs to step down. Let him shelve his presidential ambition and work with President Bola Tinubu to retain the ticket for the South."

NEWS**INEC ready for 2027 election in Kogi — Resident commissioner****LOKOJA**

The Kogi State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr Shehu Wahab, has said the Independent National Electoral Commission is fully prepared for the conduct of the 2027 general election in the state.

The commissioner spoke on Monday in Lokoja at a critical stakeholders' session with po-

litical party leaders and candidates held at the commission's state headquarters.

Wahab said the commission had put arrangements in place to ensure that the electoral process in Kogi State remained peaceful, transparent, credible and seamless.

He, however, warned all stakeholders, including candidates for various elective positions and their supporters, to

ensure peaceful conduct during and after the election.

"As key players in the political ecosystem, your role goes beyond seeking public office; it extends to sustaining public confidence in our democratic process. Today, we want to address vital operational arrangements, security protocols and compliance directives essential for our upcoming activities and future engagements," the REC

said.

He said the issuance of Permanent Voter Cards was ongoing across the commission's 21 Local Government Area offices.

"We strongly implore political parties, candidates and community leaders to join hands with us in mobilising citizens to pick up their PVCs at the LGA offices while we await the arrival and distribution of cards for subsequent phases,"

he said.

Wahab said the commission was also conducting a public awareness campaign to ensure maximum outreach, adding that it was sensitising residents through regular media jingles across various radio stations in the state.

He said that, in line with its strategic preparations for the 2027 general election, the commission was conducting comprehensive internal capacity-building workshops led by its Electoral Operations and Voter Education and Publicity departments.

"These initiatives cover critical operational areas, including the Collation Support and Verification System, Electoral Operations Support Centre, Voter Education, as well as Gender and Inclusivity training to ensure every segment of society is served effectively," he said.

Wahab added that the commission had acquired a fleet of vehicles to boost its logistical capacity and guarantee prompt deployment during elections.

He said additional operational vehicles had also been supplied to the state headquarters and LGA offices.

**2026 CONVOCATION:**

From left: Deputy Vice Chancellor, European University of Nigeria (EUN), Prof. Charles Omekwu; Group Managing Director Office of the EUN Chairman, Pastor Daniel Nwokedi; Senior Programme Director, Rite Place Health, Mrs Beatrice Ukonu, and the Director, Innovative, Collaborative and Consultancies, Dr Chukwumezie Okolo, during the closing of Africa 2026 Convocation on Water, Leadership and Transformation, in Abuja.

2027: Only Nigerians, not algorithms will decide election results — INEC**ABUJA**

The Independent National Electoral Commission has assured Nigerians that artificial intelligence will not determine the outcome of the 2027 general election.

This is as the commission insisted that the "choice of who leads the country belongs to the electorate."

The INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, stated this at the AI and Democracy Forum 2026 in Abuja, where he explained how the commission intended to use artificial intelligence (AI) to improve electoral operations without allowing it to replace voters' decisions.

Responding to the question,

according to Arise News, on Sunday, "Will algorithms decide the 2027 vote?"

Amupitan said, "Let me, as the chair of INEC, answer it unequivocally: no! Algorithms will not and must never decide the 2027 votes.

"Algorithms will not decide the votes because the choice of who leads Nigeria belongs exclusively to the Nigerian people."

He, however, said AI-driven geospatial analysis and predictive modelling could help the commission improve election logistics and meet its operational demands.

Amupitan said that since assuming office on October 23, 2025, he had overseen five major elections and more than 16 by-elections,

during which INEC tested predictive logistics optimisation.

He added that reports from civil society organisations and election observers indicated improvements in the early deployment of election materials and the commencement of voting during the elections.

Speaking during the panel session, the INEC chairman said AI components were already embedded in some of the technologies used by the commission, including the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System.

He explained that facial recognition and fingerprint technologies used for voter accreditation involved AI components, adding that similar technolo-

gies had been incorporated into smart card readers previously used by the commission.

Amupitan said INEC was refining its systems to address challenges associated with AI and ensure that the technology was deployed for lawful purposes.

He added that the commission could not publicly disclose some details of its preparations because of cybersecurity concerns.

At a press conference on October 6, Amupitan said INEC had established a dedicated AI division within its Information and Communication Technology Department to support result verification and strengthen cybersecurity ahead of the 2027 elections.

Ogun plant to recycle 6.5bn plastic bottles yearly**ABEOKUTA**

An indigenous plastic recycling plant in Mowe, Ogun State, Polysmart Packaging Limited, says it plans to process up to 6.5 billion discarded plastic bottles annually, as Nigeria grapples with plastic waste that contributes to blocked drainage channels, flooding and pollution of waterways.

The Head, Brands & Corporate Communications, Titilope Olayemi, in a statement released on Monday, said the organisation would commission the first phase of its expanded food-grade recycled polyethylene terephthalate plant on Thursday, with the facility designed to process up to 100,000 tonnes of post-consumer PET bottles annually.

According to her, the development is expected to increase the recovery of discarded plastic bottles for reuse in manufacturing, although the effectiveness of recycling efforts will depend on efficient waste collection, public participation and reliable networks for transporting and processing recovered materials.

According to the company, the \$60m facility is designed to produce 60,000 tonnes of food-grade recycled PET annually, alongside 20,000 tonnes of other recycled plastics. The recycled material is intended for use by manufacturers, including those seeking to increase the recycled content of their packaging.

Speaking ahead of the commissioning, the Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Polysmart Group, Wasiu Balogun, said

the investment was built on the efforts of plastic collectors, employees, industry partners, financiers and communities.

"When we started this journey in 2013, many people told us that world-class, food-grade recycling could not be built in Nigeria. Today, with deep gratitude, we can say that it has been built here by Nigerians, for Nigeria and for Africa," the statement quoted him as saying.

He credited the achievement to the collective efforts of plastic collectors, employees, industry partners, financiers and communities that have supported the company's growth.

"We are not only recycling plastic; we are restoring dignity to our environment and creating opportunity for our people," the statement quoted Balogun as adding.

The statement added that the plant was expected to generate approximately 1,000 direct jobs and more than 50,000 indirect jobs across the recycling value chain, including collection, aggregation, transportation and processing.

The company currently operates 25 aggregation centres across eight states and plans to establish another 250 centres across all 36 states within two years. The expansion is intended to increase the volume of discarded bottles collected and delivered to the plant.

However, the company acknowledged that the success of bottle-to-bottle recycling depends on effective waste collection, participation by households and businesses, reliable aggregation networks and collaboration across the packaging value chain.

Bauchi urges girls to embrace education, non-traditional jobs**BAUCHI**

Girls in Bauchi State have been urged to pursue education, acquire vocational skills and consider careers traditionally dominated by men to promote financial independence and tackle gender inequality.

The call was made at an event held in Bauchi on Sunday to mark the International Day

of the Girl Child.

The event was organised under the Renewed Women's Voice and Leadership Project in collaboration with Action-Aid Nigeria, Azurfa Women and Youth Development Initiative, and Fahimta Women and Youth Development Initiative.

Speaking at the event, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer of Fahimta Women and Youth Development Initiative,

Mustapha Idris, said the annual celebration was aimed at raising awareness of girls' rights and promoting their well-being.

He said the initiative was designed to encourage girls to explore different professions and address gender disparities in the workplace.

Idris urged the students to use their school holidays to acquire vocational skills, in-

cluding shoemaking and soap production, to improve their economic prospects.

"Girls should not feel ashamed of learning a trade or engaging in legitimate businesses. These skills can provide them with sources of income, promote financial independence and reduce their reliance on others," he said.

Also speaking, the Executive Director of Azurfa Women and

Youth Development Initiative, Monica Tanko, urged the girls to remain focused on their education and avoid dropping out of school before completing their studies.

Tanko advised them to uphold their dignity while acquiring practical skills that would enable them to become self-reliant.

She stressed the importance of combining formal education with vocational training to pre-

pare the girls for future challenges and opportunities.

In his remarks, an engineer with more than 20 years of professional experience, Timothy Ibrahim, encouraged the students to "consider careers in engineering," noting that the profession was not exclusive to men.

He urged the girls "not to allow gender stereotypes to discourage them from pursuing their ambitions."

NEWS

Northern senators seek probe into killing of 26 Taraba worshippers

LOKOJA

The Northern Senators Forum on Monday called for a thorough investigation into the killing of at least 26 people in Binari community, Karim-Lamido Local Government Area of Taraba State, urging security agencies to arrest and prosecute those responsible for the attack.

The forum also demanded an

urgent security reinforcement in the area, including the establishment of a Forward Operating Base and intelligence-led patrols along the Kompany-Asusar route and the River Benue corridor, following Friday's attack by suspected bandits.

The victims included women, children, Muslim worshippers who had just finished Jumaat prayers and members of a local vigilante group whose office is

located close to the mosque.

In a condolence message issued on behalf of the forum, its Chairman, Senator Abdulaziz Musa Yar'Adua, described the attack as barbaric and expressed sympathy with the Taraba State Government, residents of the community and families of the victims.

The statement, titled 'Condolence Message on Binari Attack and a Call for Action,' said

the lawmakers received the news of the killings with shock.

"On behalf of the Northern Senators Forum, we commiserate with His Excellency the Governor of Taraba State, the people of Taraba, and the bereaved families of Binari community in Karim-Lamido LGA over the barbaric attack of Friday 23rd October," Yar'Adua said.

He added, "We received with shock the murder of innocent

worshippers, vigilantes, women and children shortly after Jumaat prayers, and we share in your grief at this difficult time."

The forum urged the leadership of the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps to strengthen security operations in Karim-Lamido and communities along the River Benue corridor. It specifically called for the es-

tablishment of a Forward Operating Base and intelligence-driven patrols along the Kompany-Asusar route to improve surveillance and prevent further attacks.

The senators also called on the National Emergency Management Agency and well-meaning Nigerians to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to affected residents and families displaced or otherwise affected by the violence.



10KM FITNESS WALK:

FCT Commandant of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Olusola Odumosu (M) stakeholders and personnel of the Command, during a 10km Fitness Walk in Abuja.

Delta APC condemns election violence, promises issue-based campaign

ASABA

The All Progressives Congress Campaign Council Media Committee in Delta State has warned against electoral violence and pledged to focus on governance and performance rather than personal attacks ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The committee's chairman, Charles Aniagwu, stated this on Monday during a media briefing in Asaba, the state capital, where he said the party would present its record and explain its policies to voters.

"Electoral violence and threats to kill people are not part of our campaign strategy," Aniagwu said, in response to a question about a reported

warning by former Deputy Senate President Ovie Omo-Agege over alleged election rigging.

He added, "We are not going to engage in electoral malpractice, and we believe the people of Delta State should judge us based on our performance and the evidence we present."

Omo-Agege, the Nigeria Democratic Congress senatorial candidate for Delta Central Senatorial District, warned prospective election riggers to avoid such nefarious actions as the elections approach.

Omo-Agege, while flagging off his campaign in Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State on Friday, declared pointedly that whoever rigs the election will die.

"It's rig and die. Anybody

who tries to rig the 2027 election will face the consequences. We will not allow anyone to steal our votes," he said.

However, Aniagwu urged political leaders to exercise restraint in their public statements and advised anyone suspecting electoral malpractice to report it to security agencies rather than take the law into their own hands.

"Delta State is not a jungle republic. We must not encourage jungle justice or violence, regardless of political affiliation," he said.

The chairman also said the APC would avoid personal attacks and concentrate on the achievements of the state and federal governments.

"We will not make name-calling or personal attacks the cen-

tre of our campaign. We intend to focus on the issues, present our record and explain what we believe our administration has achieved," he said.

On the economic hardship facing Nigerians, Aniagwu acknowledged the difficulties confronting households and businesses but argued that some government policies needed more time to deliver their expected benefits.

"We will not ignore the economic challenges Nigerians are experiencing. We recognise the realities confronting households and businesses, but we will also explain the measures taken by the federal and state governments to address them," he said.

Ondo assembly passes state police bill

AKURE

The Ondo State House of Assembly has passed the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (Sixth Alteration) Bill, 2026, to establish state police services in Nigeria.

Lawmakers passed the bill during the plenary session on Monday after it passed second and third readings, with all members present supporting its passage.

During the session, the majority leader of the Assembly, Mr Olatunji Oshati moved the motion for the passage of the which was seconded, Allen

Oluwatoyin, who represents Ese Odo state Constituency.

Oshati said the lawmakers had carefully considered the implications of the proposed amendment for the citizenry, stating that the establishment of state police would address the numerous security challenges confronting the country.

RECONCILIATION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **IGHODARO, PETER ODION**, and **IGHODARO, ODION PETER**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **IGHODARO, PETER ODION**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

ADDITION OF FIRST NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ABEL UWA**, and **ABEL OKO - OBOH UWA**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **ABEL OKO - OBOH UWA**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

REARRANGEMENT AND RECONCILIATION OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MELE - DIARE OYOWOLI CHARITY**, now wish to be known and addressed as **OSEMWEGIE OYOWOLI CHARITY**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **ADU JUSTINA**, now wish to be known and addressed as **JUSTINA UKPEIGBE**. All former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

REMOVAL OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EHIGIEGBA EMWANTA**, and **EHIGIEGBA OMIS EMWANTA**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **EHIGIEGBA EMWANTA**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **CHRISTOPHER. ONOME IGHOSOTU** and **CHRISTOPHER - ODEH**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **CHRISTOPHER ONOME IGHOSOTU**. All former documents remain valid concern 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 concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **MISS. IGHEDOSA JULIET OFURE**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS. DICKSON JULIET OFURE**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME/ ADDITION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **Miss. ALONGE LINDA** and **Mrs. IREADIA LINDA OSATOHANMWEN**, are one and the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **Mrs. IREADIA LINDA OSATOHANMWEN**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **ATOTOBOH HAPPY POWETEI**, and not **HAPPY GOOD**, as was wrongly captured on my (B.V.N). All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **ERIAMIAOTIE OTANIYEN**, and **ERIAMIAOTIE MATTHEW OTANIYEN**, are one the same person henceforth now wish to be known and addressed as **ERIAMIAOTIE OTANIYEN**. All former documents remain valid concern Authorities and the general public should please take note.

Report online sellers who deliver wrong items, Lagos tells consumers

LAGOS

The Lagos State Government has urged consumers to report online vendors who deliver goods different from what they ordered, as part of efforts to address unfair business practices.

The Lagos State Consumer Protection Agency gave the advice in a consumer awareness message on Monday, urg-

ing residents to speak up when products purchased online fail to meet the descriptions or quality promised by sellers.

The agency said consumers should not remain silent when they receive goods that differ from their orders.

"Goods or products you order online should be delivered as promised.

"If the items delivered do not match their descriptions, are different from what you

ordered, or fail to meet the expected quality, do not keep silent!" the agency wrote on X.

LASCOPA further urged consumers to take action against vendors who failed to fulfil their obligations.

It encouraged affected consumers to register complaints with the agency, particularly in cases involving unfair business practices by online sellers.

"Register your complaint

with the Lagos State Consumer Protection Agency (LASCOPA) against unfair business practices," the statement added.

The agency provided a toll-free helpline, 080 0005 2726, and an email address, lasg-copa@gmail.com, through which consumers can reach it to report complaints.

Reaffirming its commitment to consumer rights, LASCOPA stated, "In Lagos State, consumers are kings."

FEATURE

Shortage of oncology nurses threatens cancer care delivery in Nigeria

ABUJA

Nursing professionals have called for improved welfare, increased training opportunities and greater inclusion in health sector decision-making, warning that the shortage of oncology nurses is undermining cancer care in Nigeri

They made call in separate interviews with the NAN in Abuja.

According to the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment (NICRAT), Nigeria records 102,000 to 127,763 new cancer cases and approximately 72,000 to 79,542 cancer related deaths annually.

The professionals noted that the country lacked sufficient specialists to meet the increasing demand for cancer care, added that the migration of trained nurses to other countries further worsen the situ-

ation.

Prof. Khadijat Musah, Dean of the Faculty of Nursing Sciences, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, estimated that Nigeria had about 300 oncology nurses.

Musah expressed concern over the migration of trained nurses and urged the government to address their welfare.

"I am using this opportunity to thank the leadership of Nigeria and everybody in

government. But they should try and look into the welfare of oncology nurses," she said.

She said only two institutions in Nigeria trained oncology nurses, with each admitting up to 50 candidates depending on available resources and capacity.

According to her, some universities have introduced postgraduate programmes in oncology nursing, including masters and doctoral degrees.

"Our voices need to be heard because we are patient advocates. We see them go through the pain," Musah said.

She said nurses' close contact with patients gave them first-hand knowledge of the challenges people faced during cancer treatment and recovery.

Also speaking, an oncology nurse, Ann Joachim, described the shortage of trained specialists as a major challenge.

"We are short-staffed. We have limited number of trained oncology nurses.

"You find out that a nurse will sacrifice her time, her talent, her skill just to acquire the specialty she needs as an oncology nurse," Joachim said.

She said oncology nurses were not adequately rewarded for their specialised skills and also faced occupational risks associated with cancer care.

In spite of the challenges, Joachim encouraged young nurses to specialise in oncology.

"I will advise them to come into the profession. If not for anything, for the love, for the compassion, for the ability to participate in curtailing this disease called cancer," she said.

Fatima Adam, Vice-President of the Oncology Nursing Society of Nigeria, under-

scored the critical role oncology nurses played in cancer treatment.

Adam, who works at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Katsina, said no multidisciplinary cancer care team was complete without an oncology nurse.

"In cancer care today, we talk about the multidisciplinary team (MDT), which is never complete without an oncology nurse, who is always at the bedside of the patient 24/7," she said.

She also advocated early exposure of nursing students to oncology to encourage more young professionals to specialise in the field.

"Catch them young," Adam said.

Similarly, Nanre Mampak, an oncology nurse and educator with more than 20 years of experience, called for nurses to be included in decisions affecting healthcare delivery.

"People who know nothing about nurses go to take decisions and ask nurses to implement.

"My advice for Nigerian government is that let us make nurses fully inclusive in decision-making in the health sector," she said.



2026 CONVOCATION:

From left: Deputy Vice Chancellor, European University of Nigeria (EUN), Prof. Charles Omekwu; Group Managing Director Office of the EUN Chairman, Pastor Daniel Nwokedi; Senior Programme Director, Rite Place Health, Mrs Beatrice Ukonu, and the Director, Innovative, Collaborative and Consultancies, Dr Chukwumezie Okolo, during the closing of Africa 2026 Convocation on Water, Leadership and Transformation, in Abuja.

2027: APC unveils Hamzat's manifesto Oct. 30— Obanikoro

LAGOS

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos State says it will unveil the 2027 governorship election manifesto of its candidate, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, on Oct. 30.

Sen. Musiliu Obanikoro, Director-General of the President Bola Tinubu-Kadri Hamzat Campaign Council, announced this at a news conference at the campaign office in Ikeja, on Sunday.

Obanikoro said the manifesto launch, scheduled to hold at the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and Creative Arts, formerly the National Arts Theatre, Igamu, would present Hamzat's vision and development priorities for Lagos.

He said the campaign's central message was continuity, shared progress and inclusive development, with emphasis on improving residents' quality of life.

According to him, the manifesto will address critical sectors, including transportation, housing, infrastructure, healthcare, security, environmental management and human capital development.

"Continuity is not about doing things the same way simply because they have been done before.

"It is about building on what works, correcting what needs improvement and developing new solutions to emerging challenges,"

he said.

Obanikoro said Lagos, with its growing population and cosmopolitan character, required a development agenda that recognised the different needs of its residents and communities.

He said the manifesto aimed to promote equal opportunities regardless of gender, social status, background or location, while ensuring that no community was left behind.

The campaign director-general said Hamzat's experience as a three-time commissioner and current Deputy Governor of Lagos State would inform his approach to consolidating existing development projects and addressing emerging challenges.

He said the campaign would prioritise policies that support economic growth, attract investment, encourage innovation and strengthen public services.

Obanikoro said the proposed agenda would also take into ac-

count the needs of Lagos' diverse population, adding that development policies must reflect the realities of different communities rather than adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

He disclosed that consultations had been held with traditional rulers, religious leaders, market women, traders, youths, professionals and other stakeholders to ensure that their concerns informed the proposed development priorities.

Nigeria sovereign investment authority announces winners of \$275,000 prize for innovation

ABUJA

The Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA) has announced the winners of the fourth edition of the NSIA Prize for Innovation (NPI 4.0).

A statement from the NSIA in Abuja on Sunday named Come Again Foods overall winner of the NPI.40, with the startup receiving a combined prize value of 100,000 dollars.

The announcement was made following the NPI 4.0 Demo Day themed "Building for Impact", where 12 finalists, selected from 6,000 applications, pitched their solutions to an expert panel drawn from Nigeria's business, investment and innovation eco-

systems.

Come Again Foods manufactures packaged snacks using locally sourced agricultural commodities.

Protein Kapital, which produces protein and biofertilisers through insect farming and the processing of organic waste, emerged second, receiving a combined prize value of 70,000 dollars.

Instant Rad Inc., an artificial intelligence-enabled teleradiology platform connecting hospitals and diagnostic centres with radiologists across Africa, placed third, receiving 50,000 dollars.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the fourth edition focused on startups operating in manufacturing, climate

and food security, and healthcare.

The NSIA said the sectors were selected for their potential to contribute to Nigeria's economic growth, resilience and sustainable development.

The authority said the edition offered a combined prize value of 275,000 dollars, comprising 220,000 dollars from NSIA, 45,000 dollars from Cascador and 10,000 dollars from Wema Bank.

The NSIA said as part of the additional awards, Eight Medical and Uwana Energy received 15,000 dollars each in Cascador cash prizes.

Sambal Enterprises, Come Again Foods and Ebees Green received 5,000 dollars each under the Cascador Impact prizes.

NCDC boosts states' Ebola response capacity through training

LAGOS

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) says it is strengthening states' capacity to respond to Ebola through continuous healthcare worker training and improved infection prevention and control measures nationwide.

The NCDC Director-General, Dr Jide Idris, said this at the agency's Sunday news conference, where he outlined ongoing efforts to strengthen preparedness and improve the country's response to potential Ebola threats.

Idris said the agency was conducting training and providing practical guidance to healthcare workers to improve preparedness and reduce infection risks in health facilities across the country.

He said preparedness capabilities at the subnational level varied, making continuous capacity-building essential to equip healthcare workers with the knowledge and skills required to respond effectively to Ebola.

Idris explained that NCDC teams were visiting health facilities to assess existing infection prevention and control systems, identify gaps and provide necessary guidance to improve safety practices.

The director-general added that members of the Federal Capital Territory response team had received training on the proper use of protective equipment to strengthen ongoing Eb-

ola response efforts.

He said training programmes would evolve as new evidence emerged, noting that regular updates were necessary to maintain healthcare workers' competence and improve Nigeria's readiness to manage infectious disease outbreaks.

On laboratory capacity, Idris said Nigeria had specialised facilities capable of testing for Ebola, including the National Reference Laboratory in Abuja and the Central Public Health Laboratory in Lagos.

He explained that the laboratories possessed genomic sequencing capabilities and appropriate biosafety infrastructure, while authorities continued strengthening laboratory systems to improve preparedness for Ebola and other infectious disease threats nationwide.

The NCDC director-general said not every laboratory could safely test for Ebola, emphasising that testing must occur in facilities with appropriate biosafety standards, equipment and trained personnel.

He added that Nigeria was expanding laboratory capacity through training, equipment optimisation and collaboration with teaching hospitals and partner institutions, while strengthening genomic surveillance to support faster outbreak detection.

Idris said laboratory equipment required proper calibration and skilled personnel to ensure accurate results, adding that technical capacity and professional collaboration were essential for reliable disease diagnosis and surveillance.

Africa's green transition hinges on energy access, jobs and investment, forum hears

FRANCIS ODUPUTE
(with ASF Reports)

Africa's transition to a greener economy will depend on its ability to expand affordable energy access, mobilise climate finance, create decent jobs and develop local industries, speakers at the inaugural Africa Sustainability Forum 2026 have said.

The forum, held on Tuesday, October 20, at the Oriental Hotel, Lagos, brought together business leaders, policymakers and sustainability professionals to examine how African economies can pursue climate goals while addressing poverty, infrastructure gaps and the need for industrial growth.

Under the theme Sustainable Futures: Driving Just Transitions, Green Growth and Shared Prosperity, discussions focused on the need to translate sustainability commitments into practical economic outcomes for businesses, households and communities.

In a presentation titled What Does a Just Transition Mean to Africa?, Marilyn Obaisa-Osula, Partner and Head of ESG, Sustainability and Climate Change Services and Net Zero Leader

for PwC's West Market Area, argued that Africa's transition must reflect the continent's development priorities.

Her presentation identified five central requirements: universal access to affordable and reliable energy, decent jobs for a growing workforce, industrialisation and local value addition, fair distribution of transition costs, and protection for workers and communities dependent on fossil-fuel industries.

The scale of the challenge is considerable. The presentation cited estimates of approximately 600 million Africans without electricity and one billion without access to clean cooking. It also highlighted a substantial financing gap, with less than \$2.5 billion committed towards energy access against an estimated annual requirement of about \$15 billion.

The sustainability expert argued that a credible transition must therefore expand energy access and support industrial development while keeping emissions low. She called for greater access to concessional and grant financing, the processing of critical minerals within Africa, regional value chains and stronger social protection

for affected workers and communities.

Dr Aminu Maida, Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), in his presentation highlighted the importance of clear and consistent policies in giving businesses and investors the confidence to commit capital.

He discussed green telecommunications infrastructure, infrastructure sharing and the Commission's efforts to support growth across the digital economy, stressing that a sustainable future would require effective regulation, partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders. The EVC was represented by Mrs Oluntunde Osunle, Principal Manager, Regulatory Services, at the Commission.

Fola Odufuwa, Managing Director of New Frontier Capital Advisors, in his fireside session titled "Beyond ESG: Financing Africa's Next Growth Opportunity", drew attention to the gap between Nigeria's international connectivity and the cost of distributing internet capacity within the country. He argued that policymakers should assess infrastructure investments by the number of people and businesses that can use them, rather than by the

infrastructure delivered alone.

Odufuwa also called for updated wholesale data policies and more effective implementation of regional digital and trade frameworks. He explained that the economic implications extend beyond telecommunications. Better connectivity could allow Nigerian service providers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs to reach customers across Africa, particularly as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) creates opportunities for trade across a market of approximately 1.4 billion people.

He posited that the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), established with Afrximbank's support, is an initiative designed to facilitate cross-border payments in African currencies and reduce reliance on traditional payment arrangements involving currencies outside the continent.

He called on African countries to draw on their own histories, institutions and development needs when shaping sustainability policies, while working with international frameworks where appropriate.

Olori Data Matemilola, Executive

Director, Solace Foundation, and the Project Director of the Olowu Hope Initiative, called for sustainability initiatives to reach homes, schools and communities rather than remain confined to boardrooms and policy discussions.

She highlighted the health and environmental challenges associated with dependence on firewood and argued that cleaner cooking solutions must be affordable, accessible and safe.

She urged sustainability organisations, businesses, educators and development partners to support community-based education and help turn awareness into practical change.

Earlier in his welcome address, Elvis Eromosele, Managing Editor of TheNumbersNG.com and Lead Coordinator of ASF 2026, said the Forum was designed to focus on practical ideas, partnerships and action rather than sustainability as a concept.

The consensus at the forum: the success of the green transition will depend not only on investment and regulation but also on whether households and vulnerable communities can participate in, and benefit from, the changes taking place.



AFRICA SUSTAINABILITY FORUM:

L - R: Epa Ogie Eboigbe, Publisher, Epa.com, and Executive VP of iNSDEC LTD/GTE, Olori Data Matemilola, Executive Director, Solace Foundation, and the Project Director of the Olowu Hope Initiative, Mr. Fola Odufuwa, Managing Director, New Frontier Capital Advisors, Martha Okpeke, Director, Mediacraft Associates, Elvis Eromosele, Lead Coordinator, Africa Sustainability Forum, and Louisa Olaniyi, Compere, at the Africa Sustainability Forum which held in Lagos Tuesday

Nigeria at 66: refocusing the nation's political culture for enhanced dividends of democracy.

Osamudiamen Lucky Aghedo.

Politics, simply defined, is the jostling and interplay between groups and individuals with the goal of obtaining and controlling the levers of government.

By whichever models, socialist or liberal democracy, the conduct of the game of politics is guided by set rules and conventions. It is as well as, played within the frameworks of philosophical or ideological foundations.

At every point in its political journey since independence in 1960, all the variants of Nigeria's political architecture have been patterned after the western liberal models of democracy. It was the Westminster parliamentary system in the First Republic, 1960 to 1966 and, the presidential system from the Second Republic, 1979 to 1983, the still-born Third Republic, 1992 to 1993

through to the ongoing Fourth Republic, 1999 to date.

However, while Nigeria is supposedly, practising the Western models of democracy, the country's versions have always been negatively tainted in ways that make democracy look more of a caricature of all its known universal features.

For one, political parties in Nigeria are not as such, ideologically defined. They are so amorphous and fluid that they are virtually, only different from each other by their names. This is the explanation for what is called "decamping", in the nation's political parlance.

In retrospect, the First and the Second Republics can be referred to as the golden eras in the nation's political trajectory. The political parties of the periods, exhibited party discipline, focus and commitment as well as, an overriding culture of altruism.

For example, Chief Obafemi

Awolowo's Action Group, AG, of the First Republic and its successor, the Unity Party of Nigeria, UPN in the Second Republic, were built on a modified variant of socialism with a local character. It was welfarism with cardinal focus on free education and poverty eradication.

The party's members elected or appointed to public offices, strictly adhered to its ideology by faithfully implementing its enshrined policies and programmes either as Governors, Ministers or Parliamentarians. In government, the Free Education programme was, the flag ship of the party's socialist ideological thrust.

The Aminu Kano's Northern Elements Progressive Union, NEPU, in the First Republic and its reincarnation, People Redemption Party, PRP, in the Second Republic, were established on the radical ideological flank of emancipation of the Masses, the "Talokawa"

from age-old feudal repression.

In frameworks of the party's socialist ideology, the PRP's governors, late Abubakar Rimi and late Abdulkadir Balarabe Musa pursued radical and populist policies and programmes in Kano and Kaduna states, respectively, in the Second Republic.

Ahmadu Bello's Northern Peoples Congress, NPC, made no pretences about its conservative ideological bent which primarily centred on the mobilisation of people in the north, and the projection of the region's interests at the national stage

Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe's National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC, later, the Nigerian Peoples Party, NPP, in the First and Second Republics respectively, projected the postures of a republican and a pan-Nigerian nationalist party. However, it was in practice, essentially a regional party.

Besides the exceptional incidence of the 1951 cross-carpeting in the defunct Western Regional House, a watershed with devastating consequences on the country's history, political parties in the First and Second Republics showed relative discipline that engendered stability. Incidents of defections were not as rampant and whimsical as they are done in the present times.

As a result of strong political parties with disciplined membership, the defunct Western, Eastern and Northern regional governments of the First Republic, built vibrant and self-reliant economies within a short space of time. It was groundnuts, cotton, hides and skin in the North; cocoa in the West; rubber and oil palm in the East.

Nigerians similarly experienced monumental developments during the Second Republic, 1979 to 1983, due to the culture of discipline and single-minded commitment of the politicians of that period to the task of implementing the manifestos of their respective political parties.

Among others, GNPP's late governor Muhammad Goni of old Borno state; late Abubakar Rimi and Balarabe Musa of the PRP in the old Kano and old Kaduna states respectively; late Lateef Jakande of Lagos state; late Pa Adekunle Ajasin of old Ondo state;

late Sam Mbakwe in the old Imo state; late Shehu Kangiwa of old Sokoto state, and, Professor Ambrose Ali of the old Bendel state, were all governors of the Second Republic who bequeathed enduring legacies in infrastructure developments.

Paradoxically, in spite of the stupendous financial resources available today, our political parties and politicians cannot hold the candle to their predecessors. Instead of advancement, the country seems to be on the reverse gear. The reasons are not unconnected to the emergent nature of the political parties and the characters of those driving political affairs.

Today, there are practically no ideological lines of demarcations between the political parties. Because, it is just a matter of nomenclature or, name change, a politician who jumped from one political party to another would have no difficulties or, problems of adaptation.

It is a negative commentary that altruism is not any more a motivation in politics. Rather, material and all sorts of mundane, pecuniary goals are the primary motivations. Politics is seen as an entrepreneurship with profit-making as the propellant.

The glaring lack of the elements of etiquettes and morality in politics, is, logically, one of the explanations for the breath-taking level of corruption and the scorched earth battles fought by our politicians in their scramble for electoral victories.

Understandably, the politicians who are reaping from the prevailing decadent order would be averse to any efforts at changing the status quo. But, for self preservation and the superior good of the country, that is precisely what the present political class must do to avert a catastrophic doomsday.

One of the ways of effecting the needed change is, the enforcement of the extant constitutional provisions on defections. Sections 68(1) (g) and, 109(2), unambiguously stipulate that an elected legislator at the federal and states legislatures who desires to change his or her political party, MUST have to first, vacate his/her office.

FEATURE

Reflections on the 10th Coronation Anniversary of the Oba of Benin



HIS ROYAL MAJESTY, OBA EWUARE II,

DR SAMSON R OSAGIE

DR. SAMSON R. OSAGIE

For centuries, the Kingdom of Benin stood as a beacon of African civilization, sophisticated governance, and artistic brilliance. At the absolute center of this magnificent heritage is the Monarch himself, the revered Oba of Benin—who is not just a traditional ruler, but the living soul, spiritual anchor, and historical custodian of the Edo people.

The Benin Monarchy has survived empires, colonial invasions, the systematic theft of its sacred artefacts and most recently the attempt by ex-Governor Godwin Obaseki led administration to denigrate, undermine and diffuse the significance of the institution of the Monarchy in contemporary governance; yet, a new and deeply painful threat is emerging. It is not coming from foreign adversaries, but from within our own house, driven by certain Benin and Edo indigenes living in Europe and the West.

A deeply disturbing trend has taken root across digital spaces - a coordinated wave of social media attacks, insults, and systematic denigration aimed directly at the revered stool of the Oba.

Shielded by geographical distance and emboldened by the anonymity of the internet, these diaspora elements backed by disgruntled political interests have weaponized social media platforms to launch reckless assaults on a throne that our ancestors defended with their blood and sustained with their resilience.

This is not a matter of harmless modern commentary, progressive dialogue, or standard political debate. This is a direct assault on our collective identity, culture and heritage. When sons and daughters of the soil, enjoying the comforts of Europe and the West, turn

around to insult the Oba of Benin, it is cyberbullying, stalking and a digital desecration of the entire Edo nation and the traditional institution in general.

Thanks to the United Nations General Assembly which has adopted Resolution 79/243 on 24 December 2024, endorsing the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime to strengthen international cooperation in preventing and combating cybercrime. The resolution is intended to strengthen international cooperation for combating certain crimes committed by means of information and communication technology systems and for the sharing of Evidence in Electronic Form of Serious Crimes. This Convention which is currently undergoing signing by State parties is expected to remain open for signature until 31st December 2026, hopefully as soon as the fortieth signatory endorses the treaty. It is expected to provide State parties with a range of measures to combat Cybercrimes at the International stage.

For us as Edolites and particularly as Benins, we must not spare any opportunity to bring to justice those who have weaponized social media platforms to launch unreasonable attacks, both on the person and institution of the Oba of Benin. We must confront this contemporary challenge to the throne, the same way our forebears did to all the historical challenges faced by the Kingdom in the past.

Happily, the absolute absurdity and hollowness of these attacks were laid bare during the historic 10th Coronation Anniversary of His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II, the Oba of Benin and Commander of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. While a tiny fraction of disgruntled voices spewed bile online, the rest of the world gathered in Benin City to witness a breathtaking display of royal splendor,

an intellectual discourse in honor of *Oba Erediauwa* hosted by the University of Benin, a spectacular royal Durbar, and global reverence amongst other cultural activities. While online detractors tried to diminish the Crown, leaders at the highest levels of governance showered unreserved accolades on the Royal Stool of Benin, embodied by His Royal Majesty, Oba Ewuare II.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu congratulated the Oba of Benin, warmly describing the monarch as "an enduring symbol of cultural heritage, dignity, and integrity." State governors, including Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, alongside political leaders and first-class traditional rulers, including the Sultan of Sokoto unreservedly affirmed the supremacy and sanctity of the Benin Royal Stool. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin, Professor Edoba Omoregie, SAN acknowledged "His Royal Majesty's role in fostering social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and strengthening the identity and cultural heritage of the Benin people."

Social and Cultural groups were not left out on the outpouring of eulogies for unarguably, the most revered Monarch in Sub Sahara Africa. The President of the Benin Club 1933, Professor Egbaziegbera Isibor in a Goodwill Message said, "We celebrate your reign of peace, unity and progress, which continues to inspire hope and strength our culture and bring pride to the Benin Kingdom." On its part, the Benin Consultative Forum through its Acting President noted "that the reign of His Royal Majesty has ushered into the Kingdom a new lease of life characterized by positive traditional reforms that will further consolidate the global respect for the Kingdom, and that the unprecedented number of artefacts that

had been returned from various parts of the world since the enthronement of His Royal Majesty is an attestation to the greatness of the Oba." All told, the pomp and pageantry that characterised the celebration of His Royal Majesty's 10th Coronation Anniversary have unequivocally demonstrated that the Oba's influence extends beyond local boundaries, affirming the global recognition and monumental significance of the Benin monarchy. It is profoundly tragic that while Nigeria's President, state governors and international delegations pay homage to our heritage, some Edo people living in Europe and other Western countries are engaging in a new form of cultural vandalism. By trying to strip the monarchy of its reverence and reduce a sacred institution to an object of social media ridicule, they are doing the work of dismantling Edo pride from within.

We cannot, and will not fold our arms and watch this happen. The freedom of expression and living abroad should never become a license for renegades, fugitives and cultural infidels to continue to denigrate our age long and God ordained monarchy. For as it is often said, "Aisagbonrioba, Erinmwinn Na Ke riore."

As a community, both at home and in the diaspora, we must rise with fierce urgency to defend the sanctity of the throne. While appreciating the few individuals who have risen to defend the inviolability of our sacred monarch, we must recognise that continued silence could invite further disrespect and assaults on our collective identity and cultural heritage. We must make it unequivocally clear to these foreign-based elements that the Oba of Benin is a red line that cannot be crossed. Digital platforms must not become tools for cultur-

al self-sabotage, nor should they be used by individuals to settle personal or political grievances against an ancient civilization.

The strength of the Edo people has always lie in our unyielding unity and our fierce loyalty to the Royal Court of Benin, much the same way the British remains unconditionally loyal to the British Monarchy, regardless of the liberal democracy the United Kingdom practice.

The overwhelming success of the 10th Coronation Anniversary is an indication that the bond between the Oba and his people remains completely unbreakable. Now, more than ever, the global Edo community must channel that ancestral resilience to the consolidating the pride of place the Benin monarch has always had the World over. The vast majority of Edo people in the diaspora who still hold their culture dear must speak up, isolate these toxic voices and recidivists and protect the custodian of our culture.

The Oba of Benin remains an enduring symbol of African dignity, a bridge to our glorious past, and the compass for our future. The modern world and its digital platforms will change, but the honor of the Benin Kingdom is eternal. Let those who launch arrows of disrespect from afar know this: the Edo soul is fiercely protective of its king, and we will completely reject, expose, and defeat any attempt to diminish the glory of the ancient Kingdom of Benin.

Oba gha t'o kpere, Ise!

• **Dr Samson R Osagie is a Lawyer, Former Minority Whip of the House of Representatives and the immediate past Attorney General of Edo State.***

Edo economy on the path of recovery: from oil dependence to diversified growth

CLARETH SOLOMON

In Oben, Orhionmwon Local Government Area, gas that was flared for decades is now being channeled for productive use. In Okpella, limestone that laid dormant is now feeding cement factories that employ thousands of Edo youths. In Benin City, the Oil Palm Programme is reviving plantations abandoned since the 1970s. These are signs of a new economic direction for Edo State and Nigeria.

Nigeria's economy is undergoing one of its most challenging but necessary reforms in history. For years, the economy relied heavily on crude oil, with over 80% of foreign exchange coming from oil sales. This made the economy vulnerable to global oil price shocks. Today, both Federal and Edo State governments are taking bold steps to diversify and build a more resilient economy.

THE BOLD REFORMS

Two major reforms have re-shaped Nigeria's economy: fuel subsidy removal and foreign exchange unification.

In 2022, Nigeria spent over N4.2 trillion on fuel subsidy – funds that could have built schools and hospitals. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on assumption of office on May 29, 2023, removed the subsidy. Though initial pain was felt with rise in transport and food prices, the long-term benefit is clear: Government now saves trillions which are being channeled to infrastructure, student loan scheme, CNG buses, and support for sub-nationals. Federal allocation to states, including Edo, has increased by over 50% since subsidy removal, giving states more capacity to execute projects.

Similarly, the unification of exchange rates by the Central Bank of Nigeria under Governor Yemi Cardoso has restored transparency. Before, multiple rates created arbitrage and discouraged investors. Now, there is a willing-buyer, willing-seller market that has boosted investor confidence and increased foreign direct investment inflow.

In Edo State, Governor Monday Okpebholo has keyed into these reforms with practical steps. His



Gov. Monday Okpebholo inside a farm

SHINE Agenda prioritizes economic diversification beyond federal allocation.

AGRICULTURE: EDO'S COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE

Edo State is blessed with fertile land and remains Nigeria's historic home of rubber and oil palm. Governor Okpebholo's administration has flagged off 1,000 hectares oil palm cluster under Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP), revived rubber plantations in Ovia and Orhionmwon, and initiated tractorization programme with 200 tractors for cooperatives in Edo Central, North and South.

This is strategic. A hectare of oil palm can generate over N2 million annually and employ 3 persons. If Edo cultivates 50,000 hectares in next 3 years, it can create over 150,000 jobs and generate billions in IGR.

Already, companies like Presco and Okomu Oil have shown what is possible. Presco, based in Edo, is one of Africa's most profitable palm

oil companies, paying taxes and employing thousands. The state government plan to replicate this model through smallholder clusters will empower rural women and youths.

In food production, Edo is pushing cassava, yam and plantain. The state Ministry of Agriculture has started distribution of improved seedlings to farmers in Etsako, Esan and Ovia. When fully scaled, this will reduce food prices in markets like New Benin and Oba Market.

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND IGR

Edo's Internally Generated Revenue has grown steadily. From less than N1 billion monthly in 2016 to over N4 billion monthly in 2024, and with target of N10 billion under current administration, the growth shows reforms in tax automation and blocking leakages.

The Benin Industrial Park at Ikpoba-Okha and the Okpella Cement cluster are key. Okpella alone, with Dangote Cement, BUA Cement and others, has made Edo the largest

cement producing state in South-South. This brings jobs, royalties, and CSR projects like roads and schools.

Governor Okpebholo's plan to provide 500MW embedded power for industrial clusters using Edo's abundant gas is commendable. Nigeria generates about 5,000MW for 230 million people. Edo can lead by generating its own power for industries. With gas in Oben, Amukpe and Ologbo, this is achievable.

THE INFORMAL SECTOR – ENGINE OF GROWTH

Over 90% of Nigerians work in informal sector – traders, tailors, welders, hairdressers, POS agents. In Edo, markets like Mission Road, New Benin, Ekpoma main market, and Auchu market are economic hubs.

Government support for SMEs through Edo State Skills Development Agency (EdoJobs), Bank of Industry matching funds, and market infrastructure upgrade will strengthen this sector. Recently,

Governor Okpebholo approved renovation of 5 major markets with solar lights, water and toilets to make trading environment more dignified, especially for women who dominate trading.

Small businesses need single tax system, not multiple levies. The Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy chaired by Taiwo Oyedele is harmonizing taxes so a business pays once. Edo State Board of Internal Revenue has already started harmonizing council levies to reduce burden on traders.

MANAGING DEBT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria's debt stock of N121 trillion needs context. Debt is not bad if used productively. The Federal Government is using debt to build Lagos-Ibadan railway, Second Niger Bridge, and now Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway – infrastructure that will unlock economy for decades.

In Edo, debt is being used to build roads like Benin-Auchi, Sapele Road, and Ekenwan Road, and to revive Edo College, Technical Colleges. These are investments that return value.

What matters is debt management and transparency, which Governor Okpebholo has emphasized through regular publication of state accounts and prudent spending.

WAY FORWARD

Economists agree Nigeria and Edo are on right path, but need consistency:

1. Sustain agriculture cluster model for 5 years without policy reversal.
2. Provide power to industrial parks to attract factories that will process palm oil, cassava and limestone locally instead of exporting raw.

3. Train 100,000 youths in technical skills – welding, fabrication, coding, solar installation – through EdoJobs.

4. Support market women with soft loans through cooperatives without collateral.

The gas flare in Oben that once symbolized waste can now symbolize prosperity if fully harnessed. Edo has what it takes. With Federal reforms and state-level implementation under Governor Okpebholo, the economy will stabilize, food prices will reduce, and jobs will be created.

The journey is not easy, but direction is right.

Nigeria's economy: Why we are poor in the midst of plenty

GREGORY OSAWE

In the heart of Oben in Orhionmwon Local Government Area of Edo State, gas flares have burned non-stop for over 30 years. At night, the sky glows orange. Children do homework under the flare light. The community has no electricity, no good road, no hospital. Yet beneath their feet lies billions of naira worth of gas that powers factories in Lagos and lights up homes in Europe.

That single image captures Nigeria's economy: rich ground, poor people.

Nigeria is not a poor country. Nigeria is a poorly managed rich country. We have crude oil, gas, gold, bitumen, limestone, cocoa, rubber, fertile land, a young population of 230 million people, and the largest

market in Africa. Yet over 133 million Nigerians live in multi-dimensional poverty, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. How did we get here?

THE OIL CURSE

In 1970, Nigeria discovered oil in commercial quantity and abandoned everything else. Before oil, Nigeria was the world's largest producer of palm oil. Groundnut pyramids in Kano, cocoa in Ibadan, rubber in Benin – agriculture contributed 65% of GDP and 90% of foreign exchange.

Today, agriculture contributes about 24% of GDP, but employs 70% of Nigerians. Oil contributes less than 7% of GDP, but provides over 80% of foreign exchange and 60% of government revenue. That is the trap.

When oil price goes up, government spends like a drunk. When oil

price crashes, we run to borrow. We never saved. Norway, which discovered oil same time as Nigeria, has a sovereign wealth fund of over \$1.5 trillion for 5 million people. Nigeria's Sovereign Wealth Fund has less than \$3 billion for 230 million people.

In Edo State, the story is the same. Edo has crude oil in Oredo, Orhionmwon and Ikpoba-Okha, large deposits of limestone in Okpella, gold in Dagbala, fertile land for oil palm. But Edo's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) hovers around N4 billion monthly, not enough to pay salaries without federal allocation. Why?

Because we extract raw materials and export them without adding value. We export crude oil and import petrol. We export cocoa beans and import chocolate. We export raw

cashew nuts to Vietnam and import roasted cashew. We are a warehouse, not a factory.

Aliko Dangote's refinery, which started operation in 2024, is the first serious attempt to break that cycle. But one refinery cannot carry 230 million people.

THE SUBSIDY LIE AND THE DOLLAR PALAVER

For 40 years, Nigeria told itself a lie called fuel subsidy. Government said it was paying subsidy to keep petrol cheap for the poor. In reality, it was paying subsidy to keep importers rich.

In 2022 alone, Nigeria spent N4.2 trillion on fuel subsidy – more than the entire budget for health, education and infrastructure combined. Where did the fuel go? Much of it was smuggled to Niger and Came-

roon. The poor who were supposed to benefit trekked, while the rich who owned SUVs benefited.

President Bola Tinubu removed fuel subsidy on May 29, 2023. It was painful but necessary. Petrol moved from N185 to N650, now over N1,000 in many states. Inflation shot up to 34%. Transport cost tripled. Small businesses collapsed. But for the first time, Nigeria stopped paying importers for doing nothing.

The second lie was multiple exchange rates. For years, Central Bank of Nigeria sold dollars at N450 to politicians and friends, while market women bought at N750 at black market. The gap was over N300. Whoever got dollars at official rate became millionaire overnight by just selling it. That was not economy, it was bazaar.

THE WEIGHT THEY CARRY: WHY GENDER EQUALITY IS STILL NIGERIA'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Grace Ijeoma Umeh

When 19-year-old Osasere finished secondary school in Uromi, Esan North East Local Government Area of Edo State, she had two dreams: to become a nurse and to leave her village. She had the grades. She had the admission letter to School of Nursing. What she did not have was permission.

Her father looked at the letter and said no. Not because there was no money, but because her elder brother needed to go to polytechnic first. "You go marry, you go leave house. Why I go waste money?" he told her. That was in 2023. Today, Osasere is 22, married with one child, selling recharge cards by the roadside in Uromi. Her brother never finished polytechnic.

Osasere's story is not an exception in Nigeria. It is the norm. And it is why, despite all the talk about gender equality, empowerment, and inclusion, Nigeria remains one of the most difficult places in the world to be born a woman.

The numbers tell a brutal story. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, women make up 49.4% of Nigeria's population, but they occupy less than 6% of elective positions. In the 10th National Assembly, out of 109 senators, only 3 are women. Out of 360 House of Representatives members, only 16 are women. At state level, the picture is worse. In Edo State House of Assembly, out of 24 members, only one is a woman.

In education, the gap is widening again. UNESCO reports that over 10 million Nigerian girls are out of school, the highest in the world. In Northern Nigeria, a girl is four times less likely to complete secondary school than

a boy. In Edo Central and Edo North, teenage pregnancy and early marriage still force hundreds of girls out of school every year.

But gender issues go beyond politics and education. They live in the economy, in the home, in the market, in the church, and in the law.

IT IS CLEAR THE ECONOMY IS NOT GENDER NEUTRAL

Walk into New Benin Market in Benin City at 7am. You will see the real economy of Edo State. More than 80% of the traders are women. They wake at 4am, go to farm or to wholesale point, carry goods, pay market tickets, pay council levies, feed their children, and still go home to cook.

Yet these women have no access to credit, no insurance, no pension. The World Bank says Nigerian women own only 20% of enterprises in the formal sector, but dominate 70% of the informal sector. That means they do the most work but get the least protection.

Mrs. Faith Ikhine, 45, sells vegetables at Oba Market. She has been trading for 18 years. She has put four children through school from vegetable sales. But she cannot get a loan of N500,000 from a bank because she has no collateral. Her husband, a civil servant who earns less than she does, can get a loan because he has a payslip.

"When BEDC bring light bill of N80,000, na me dey pay. When school fees come, na me dey pay. But when meeting dey for community, dem say make women no talk," she says.

This economic exclusion is deliberate and systemic. The inheritance law in many parts of Edo State still denies women the right to inherit their father's

property. A widow in Esan can be thrown out of her matrimonial home after her husband dies. A divorced woman in Benin often leaves with nothing, no matter how many years and amount she contributed to building the home.

And we already know violence is a means of control.

The most visible form of gender inequality is violence. And it is an epidemic.

According to the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, over 24,000 cases of gender-based violence were reported in Nigeria in 2023 alone. That is only reported cases. In Edo State, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development recorded 412 cases of sexual and gender-based violence in 2024, ranging from rape, defilement, spousal battery, to harmful widowhood practices.

At the Vivian Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Benin City, nurses say they see an average of 15 cases of rape and defilement every week. Many of the victims are girls under 14. Many of the perpetrators are family members, neighbours, pastors, teachers – people who should protect them.

Mrs. Itohan, whose name is changed to protect her 11-year-old daughter, recalls how her daughter was defiled by their landlord in Ikpoba Hill. When she reported to police, the first question was, "What did your daughter wear?" The landlord offered N50,000 to settle. Her family pressured her to collect the money and not shame the family.

Gender-based violence is not just about sex. It is about power. It is a way society reminds women that their bodies are not theirs.

And the justice system does

not help. Out of 100 rape cases reported in Nigeria, less than 2 end in conviction, according to FIDA Nigeria. Cases take 5-7 years in court. Police ask victims to pay for fuel to arrest suspects, to pay for medical reports, to pay for case files. Many victims give up.

THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION

Why does Nigeria keep failing women? Because politics is designed to exclude them.

Political parties charge millions for nomination forms. How many women can afford N20 million for governorship form? Meetings are held at midnight, in hotels, in places where a responsible mother cannot go. Campaigns are violent. Thugs are used. A woman who wants to contest is called wayward, prostitute, stubborn.

When Hon. Blessing Agbeba, a former woman leader, contested for councillorship in her ward in Egor, she was told by her party chairman, "Go and support your husband to contest."

The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill has been rejected five times by the National Assembly. Five times. The bill seeks to give women equal rights to inheritance, equal access to education, protection against gender-based violence, and 35% affirmative action. Male legislators say it is against culture and religion.

But whose culture? The culture that says a woman cannot be Oba of Benin, but can be Queen Mother and kingmaker? The culture that celebrates women as mothers but silences them as leaders?

Princess Margaret Jos-Bazuaye, President of Jasmine Ladies Club, a socio-cultural group of elite women in Benin, says the problem is that women are seen as helpers, not leaders.

"We raise money for charity, we support orphans, we pay hospital bills. But when it comes to decision-making table, they tell us to go and bring food. We must move from welfare to power," she says.

THE BOY CHILD QUESTION

Gender advocates are now asking a difficult question: Are we ignoring the boy child?

In many homes, boys are raised to be entitled. They are not taught to cook, clean, or respect consent. They are taught that a man must be tough, must not cry, must provide, must control. This toxic masculinity is killing men too. Men account for over 80% of cult-related deaths in Edo State. Men are dying of hypertension because they cannot express emotion.

Gender equality is not about

favouring women over men. It is about freeing both from rigid roles.

Mr. Osahon Ojo, a gender officer with a local NGO in Benin, runs a program called "Boys for Change" in secondary schools in Edo Central. He teaches boys about consent, about sharing house chores, about menstrual hygiene.

"First time I told boys that if you beat your wife, you are weak, not strong, they laughed. Now, some of them are reporting their fathers who beat their mothers. That is change," he says.

WHAT DEVELOPMENT IS MISSING

Development experts agree: No country can develop if it leaves half its population behind. The United Nations says closing the gender gap in Nigeria could add \$229 billion to GDP by 2030.

Edo State Government under Governor Monday Okpebholo has appointed women as commissioners, but more needs to be done. Gender budgeting – ensuring state budget addresses needs of women and girls – is still not practiced. Primary healthcare centres still lack delivery kits. Schools still lack separate toilets for girls.

The solution is not rocket science.

First, enforce free and compulsory education for girls up to senior secondary school, with conditional cash transfer to parents who keep girls in school.

Second, implement 35% affirmative action in all appointments and make party nomination forms free for women.

Third, domesticate and enforce the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law in all states with special courts for gender-based violence that give judgment within 90 days.

Fourth, economic inclusion – create a Women's Development Bank that gives loans without collateral, using cooperative guarantee.

Fifth, change the narrative – teach gender equality in school curriculum, train traditional rulers, pastors and imams.

Osasere, the girl from Uromi, now attends adult literacy classes organized by Jasmine Ladies Club. She still wants to be a nurse. She says, "If my daughter grows, I will not tell her to marry early. I will tell her to go school."

That is how change starts. One girl, one mother, refusing to repeat history.

Gender equality is not a women's issue. It is a development issue. It is an economic issue. It is a justice issue. And until Nigeria fixes it, we will keep walking with one leg.



INAUGURATION CEREMONY:

UN Women Rep to Nigeria, Beatrice Eyang, and the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walsen-Jack, with members of the Steering Committee and Technical Working Group (TWG) following the inauguration ceremony.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Venezuelan opposition leader María Machado returns after months in exile

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado has returned home to a fraught political landscape after more than 10 months in exile.

"I am here. With you," Machado wrote on X on Sunday. Her return comes after repeated prior efforts to re-enter the country came to no avail.

In January, a month after Machado left Venezuela on a

speedboat under cover of darkness to accept the Nobel Peace Prize in Norway, the US seized her opponent, President Nicolás Maduro.

The Trump administration then backed his deputy, Delcy Rodríguez, as leader and she was sworn in as interim president, later signing an oil deal which granted very favourable terms to the US.

Machado was photographed

on Sunday attending Mass at a church in the Venezuelan state of Lara, surrounded by supporters hugging her and clapping her hands.

She then began travelling to the capital Caracas in a caravan of cheering supporters. More supporters have lined the route of her journey to the capital.

She was photographed smiling as she leaned out of the sunroof of a car as she entered Caracas late on Sunday night.

"Night of reunion in our Caracas. For the reunion of each

family, for the Freedom of each political prisoner, for the Freedom of Venezuela," she wrote on X.

Her ally, former presidential candidate Edmundo González, confirmed her arrival, writing in a statement: "I am thrilled to announce to you that our leader, my dear María Corina, is on Venezuelan soil."

"Today is a very important day for Venezuelans. Our sovereign voice returns with her to lead and guide this process!" González said.

He added that he will soon join Machado in Venezuela to advance the country "toward

freedom".

An advisor to Machado said in September that over the previous few weeks Machado had attempted seven times to return to Venezuela, but was denied each time. There have been reports that the US was involved in delaying her return, which it has denied.

It's unclear what Machado plans to do next now that she's back, but she has previously said she would run for president again if an election were held. Her ability to return to her country was always contingent on approval from the Trump administration, which it ap-

pears has now been granted.

A staunch supporter of democracy, Machado won an independent presidential primary election - held outside the Maduro government's official election authority - in 2023, earning more than 90% of the vote.

Despite winning the primary, Maduro's government barred Machado from running for office, accusing her of fraud and tax violations. Machado denied the allegations, calling them politically motivated. She spent her final days in the country hiding in safehouses before her fleeing to Norway to accept the Nobel Prize.

Celebrations in Serbia after veteran ruler Vucic loses election to student-led protest movement

Serbia's long-standing leader Aleksandar Vučić has admitted defeat to a student-led protest movement in snap parliamentary elections.

Celebrations erupted as crowds descended on the centre of Belgrade, Novi Sad and other cities.

The student movement was formed less than two years ago in response to a railway station disaster blamed on corruption and negligence, but fought the election with candidates from a cross-section of Serbian society.

"It is clear we have lost these elections," right-wing populist leader Vučić said as he conceded late on Sunday, citing preliminary figures that gave the students 2.2 million votes and his party 1.72 million.

The students were on course to win 52.9% of the vote, according to a later projection by independent pollsters CeSID, with the highest turnout for years of 69.34%.

Vučić had spent two terms as president and could not seek a third term, so was leading his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) with the aim of returning to the post of prime minister, which he left in 2017.

He called the snap elections after two years of protests triggered by the collapse of a canopy in front of Novi Sad station which killed 16 people.

The Student List's lead candidate Ilija Srdanović told BBC Serbian: "This will be a free state."

He said the anti-corruption movement, which had attracted anti-government voters across Serbia, hoped to "free the country from tyranny".

There were celebrations on the streets of the city, with people dancing and chanting "victory", cars honking, and fireworks set off. "Serbia is free," one student told the BBC. "It's a miracle."

During a celebration speech, Student List candidate Radomir Saicic said Serbians had shown "no obstacle was greater than their will", Reuters reported. "No force can forever overpower a people who have decided to take their destiny into their own hands," he added.

Amid scenes of people dancing in the streets Belgrade, Se-

lena Lebovic said the result was "really fabulous".

"We are all crying, and what to say. We couldn't believe that it would be so easy," she told Reuters.

An aerial photo shows the size of the celebrations by Students' List supporters at Slavija square in Belgrade.

Vučić made his announcement at the headquarters of his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in the capital Belgrade.

The centre of Novi Sad - the northern city that triggered the student-led protests - was crowded. "Everything is going to get better now," David Vasić, one of those celebrating, told BBC Serbian.

The Student List - which has no obvious leaders and whose members are not used to politics - had attracted anti-government voters across Serbia.

It decided to field candidates to the 250-member parliament from across Serbian society including doctors, actors, academics and sports personalities.

The anti-corruption movement campaigned on a manifesto that included purging officials who broke rules cracking down on protesters, stopping party loyalists from leading public enterprises, and freeing the public broadcaster of political control.

Vučić and the SNS party have repeatedly denied corruption.

Vučić, who backed Serbia's candidacy for the European Union while refusing to impose sanctions on Russia over its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, had pledged to increase pensions and public sector salaries, and investment in state healthcare.

His defeat was welcomed by Hungary's prime minister, Péter Magyar, who said he was delighted to hear from the Student List's leaders "how much strength our victory in April had given them". Magyar's party ended 16 years of Viktor Orbán rule, while Vučić's SNS party had been in power since 2012.

European Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos said "a new chapter can begin for Serbia. The door to the EU is open, and we are ready to move forward together".



Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado

Deeply divided Israel braces for pivotal election

After three years of regional war, this is a battle Israel always knew was coming.

The general election on Tuesday hangs over a country that's deeply divided and ready for a fight.

Polls published on Friday put the governing coalition and the main opposition bloc almost neck-and-neck, with half a million first-time voters due to cast their ballot and some 70,000 Israelis reportedly flying in from abroad specifically to vote.

On Saturday night, vast crowds of opposition voters gathered in central Tel Aviv to

demand a change of government.

"We're optimistic," 21-year-old Omri told me. "I want peace, I want security, and I want to end corruption and get the religious fanatics out."

This campaign has been energized by new tactics - including AI videos designed to grab the headlines - and also by a new face.

Gadi Eisenkot is, perhaps, not the man you might expect to take on the flashy, aggressive, media-savvy brand of Israel's longest-serving prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Relatively new to politics,

with a working-class Moroccan background, Eisenkot is a former military chief of staff who is renowned for his calm manner and low-drama approach. He's been dubbed by some as a "non-politician".

But he and his centrist Yashar party have regularly pipped Netanyahu and his Likud party to the top spot in recent polls, the last of which was published on Friday, in line with Israeli election law.

Israeli politics is the art of coalition-building, rather than the task of any one party winning power, but with the predicted result too close to call, Eisenkot's rising profile has

sharpened a race many Israelis already see as existential for the future of their country.

I watched him slip past the cameras at a community centre for Ethiopian Jews in the city of Ramle last week, through a gaggle of security personnel and advisors.

One of those who had come to hear him speak was David, a smartly dressed man in a freshly-pressed shirt and navy jacket, who said he had met Eisenkot before.

"He looks you in the eye, not like a leader looking down at someone," David told me. "And he listens. He's very sympathetic."

Suspect in deadly Paris suburb shooting sent for psychiatric observation

A man suspected of a deadly gun attack near Paris has left custody and been placed under psychiatric observation, French anti-terrorism officials have said.

One person was killed and five others injured on Friday when an attacker opened fire from his car - first in Trappes, and then in nearby La Verrière - appearing to target people of migrant origin.

The suspect, named in French media as 39-year-old

Kevin T, will be observed to evaluate whether his "psychiatric health is compatible with pursuing his interrogation", the National Anti-Terrorist Prosecutor's Office (PNAT) said.

President Emmanuel Macron called it a "racist terrorist attack", adding that people had been targeted over their skin colour or religion.

It marked a "turning point in the life of our Republic and our nation", the French president said.

PNAT said the move to place the suspect under psychiatric evaluation followed guidance from a psychiatric expert.

The evaluation will determine whether the suspect should remain in police custody and is "likely to last 48 hours", PNAT added.

PNAT said the suspect was also found to have cannabis and cocaine in his bloodstream.

French newspaper Le Monde and news agency AFP report that a Bible, a Quran and a copy of Adolf Hitler's

Mein Kampf were found at the suspect's home, citing a source close to the investigation.

The lawyer for Pengo Bossio Wangi, the one person killed during the attack, told French media the move to place the suspect under observation was "very rare".

He alleged that it was being used to portray the suspect as criminally irresponsible rather than having acted deliberately.

Wangi, a 26-year-old French-Congolese martial artist, was named as the one fatality on Saturday.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

What is happening in France, Spain, Italy, Albania, Portugal: Warning signs to Nigerian/African and Global Leadership

ABBATI BAKO

This is Comparative Analysis on Global Governance, Especially in the Global Southern Hemisphere and Economic Precariousness in Nigeria and Some African Countries: Global Governance Needs to be Addressed. Globalization Policy Seems to be Dead by the Sign Expressed by the Global Leader USA "America First" by Donald Trump. Since 2004 Former UK's Prime Minister Gordon Brown Said in London that "Globalization Policy is Dead" The Current Global Governance Needs to be Looked Into and Find New Ideas on How to Change the World Governance With Positive Reform and Human Face.

I'm on the Same Page With my Teacher Professor John Groom of the University of Kent, UK, (Professor John Groom was among the top100 who is who in the world for his contributions to the establishment of UN and academics, especially IR @International politics.) He predicted that the World Governance Maybe Reviewed in the Next Years to Come as a New Version for Governance "to be Boundary—Less World" 2010. The World to be Countries Without Borders. Hence, I Understand that the European Union (EU) and Other Global Regional Organizations Should be an Excellent Example for Global Governance in the Years to Come. The review of UN's Charter must be on the way as well as possible global changes particularly after 2030.

This may Likely Control Global Insecurity and Change the Pattern of Global Economic, Political Integration and Multiculturalism. Although this Idea is not an Easy Task but it May Simplified for Future Global Governance, Economy and Security. The Current Global Economic Precariousness and Regional Wars Maybe Over. Global Stakeholders Should Come Up With New Ideas On How the World Can Change.

FROM PARIS TO TIRANA TO LAGOS — SAME ANGER, DIFFERENT ACCENT:

Look at your TV tonight. What have you seen in today's news?

In Paris, 550,000 people marched on Saturday, October 17, 2026 — 110 cities. 1,800 arrested, 500 police injured, 143-year-old City Hall of Limoges burnt to ashes. President Macron went on TV: "No room for violence in our Republic."

In Milan, Italy, black-clad youths clashed with police, 50 detained protesting cost of living and Gaza war. In Madrid and Barcelona, Spain not riots but silent rebellion thousands pitched tents in city squares. Their slogan: "We cannot afford rent." Average rent in Barcelona is now 65% of youth salary. So, they need change.

In Tirana, Albania 5th day of anti-government riots students throw Molotov at the Ministry of Education, demanding Prime Minister Edi Rama resign after 13 years. 167 arrests, 132 police injured, Ministry building on fire.

In Lisbon, Portugal the same tent protests.

What connects Paris, Milan, Madrid, Tirana? They are not poor countries. They are in Europe. But they are burning with the same fire burning Wuse Mar-



ket, economic precarity. And if it can happen in France, it can happen in Nigeria and other African countries faster.

FRANCE: WHEN SCHOOL CHILDREN START A REVOLUTION

It did not start with politicians. It started with 15-year-olds. On September 10, 2026, in Lycée Antoine-de-Saint-Exupéry, Créteil, Paris suburb students blockaded school with trash bins. Complaint: "No teacher for maths for 3 weeks. Roof leaks. 40 students per class. We study from 8am to 6pm with a 30 minute lunch." The government sent riot police. One boy, 15, picked up a police grenade in Len's hand.

That spark joined a bigger fire: Cost of living.

WHY FRENCH ARE ANGRY:

Debt: France debt €3.5 trillion 120% of GDP. Highest in 100 years. Investors selling French bonds 10-year yield now 4.9%, highest since 2002. Accumulation of debt is dangerous to economy, especially in emerging nations.

- Pension eats education: France spends 14% of its budget on education up 14% in 10 years but most went to pay pensions for retired teachers, not to build new classrooms. So students see an old building, no teacher.

- Fuel: US-Israel-Iran war pushed fuel price €2.1 per litre — record.

- Youth feeling: Sociology professor at University of Deusto, Spain, Maria Silvestre, said it best: "Young people feel disappointed with the social model and experience a strong sense of uncertainty and lack of control. When a spark comes, it channels discontent into the streets." Hence, disappointment by leaders is the root cause of anger to the citizens.

France has an election in April 2027. Macron cannot run again. Far-right Marine Le Pen leads polls. Far-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon was blamed for inciting.

LESSON FOR NIGERIA AND AFRICAN LEADERS:

When you neglect school, school will come to the street. When you neglect labor leaders the workers will one day come to the street.

SPAIN AND ITALY: HOUSING PRECARIAT WHEN RENT BECOMES 65% OF SALARY

In Spain, youth are not burning town halls, they are sleeping in tents outside town halls.

Average salary for youth 22-30 in Madrid:

€1,400. Average one-bedroom rent: €1,100. The remaining €300 cannot buy food, transport, data and other necessities for life.

So they chant: "No tenemos casa" — We have no house.

Italy: Same. Milan rent is up 42% from 2022. Youth unemployment 29%. But the government spends 13% of GDP on pensions for the old like France and little on housing for the young.

IN NIGERIA, ABUJA ONE-ROOM SELF-CONTAIN:

N600k per year. Bank teller salary N120k x 12 = N1.44m. Rent = 41% of salary. Same as Spain and other European countries. We laugh at Europe, but Abuja youth is one month rent away from tent protest too.

ALBANIA: WHEN CORRUPTION BECOMES UNBEARABLE

Albania is the most important warning for Nigeria and other emerging democracies:

Edi Rama, Prime Minister since 2013 — 13 years — same party dominates like APC? Accused of corruption, vote-buying and undermining opposition parties which is contrary to democratic systems which can lead to termination of democratic transition. The GDP grew, Tirana looks beautiful with skyscrapers. But youth say: "Growth without jobs." The same thing is happening in Nigeria and other African emerging democracies.

Unemployment is 35%. Many japa to Italy and Germany Albanian japa — like Nigerian japa.

Students now say: "Rama and Berisha — two men who ruled Albania for 35 years. Enough."

They burnt the Ministry of Education building on October 14 which is not right and unfortunate.

Lesson for Nigeria: When you stay

too long, build roads but not trust, youth will start thinking revolution. Because of the fact that about 75% of the population is between 15 to 35 years of age and they have been stagnated by insecurity, unemployment and economic precarity. The economy is the life ware of human life.

WHAT NIGERIA AND OTHER AFRICAN NATIONS MUST LEARN — 5 WARNING SIGNS FOR PRESIDENT TINUBU AND OPPOSITION:

I write as a patriot and researcher in "Globalization Policy" not as an opposition. If we don't learn from Paris and Tirana, some countries in Africa will be next. The debts of African countries have reached more than \$600b. Here are 5 warnings:

1. The Convergence Theory — Students + Market Women + Unions = Explosion.

In France, it was students alone in September. By October 17, CGT trade union, Yellow Vests, nurses, parents joined — 800,000 per union count. That's convergence. The global population has now reached more than 8.7b and before the end of the century will reach about 11b and Africa will be about 40% of the global population but 80% of them will be the poorest in the world. And insecurity, poor economic achievement, unemployment and stagflation will heat hard due to global scientific and technological developments; Robotics System and AI then will be at work hence, massive unemployment and insecurity may heat hard in Global South.

In Nigeria, 2020 #EndSARS was students alone — the government dismissed them as lazy youth. But in 2024 cost-of-living protests, market women joined students. Next time, if NLC, students, market women converge — 10 million in streets — no police can stop them.

2. DEBT VS SOCIAL SERVICES: YOU CANNOT EAT DEBT

France: €3.5trn debt, cannot fund schools. Nigeria: N138trn debt, debt service 102% of revenue. France in-

vestors selling bonds — Nigeria investors already left — GSK, P&G left. Hence, Nigeria needs what we call in (political science) "serialised strategic planning based on calendar time frame" this should implemented for the next 25 years.

The current Nigerian population is over 240m as of last week. The United Nations Human Development Index (UNHD) predicted that Nigeria's population will be "about 800m by the end of this century" and will occupy third place after India, China and then Nigeria. When debt service is more than education + health, you are France a rich country behaving like poor.

3. HOUSING AS TIME BOMB

Spain tent protest is what will happen in Lagos if rent keeps rising 30% yearly without rent control. Lagos already has "agbero rent" agent + agreement + caution = N1.5m for a N600k house. Youth cannot.

4. JAPA IS NOT SOLUTION — IT IS WARNING:

Albania's brightest left for Italy. Nigeria's brightest left for the UK. 16,000 doctors left in 2 years. When doctors japa, the hospital becomes a mortuary. France is not yet japa — but French youth say "If nothing changes, we go to Canada."

5. SOCIAL MEDIA MAKES IT FASTER

French protests organized on TikTok and Telegram — not TV. Nigerian protests will be organized on WhatsApp and TikTok — faster than the government can track.

FINAL MESSAGE TO GLOBAL LEADERSHIP, AFRICA AND TO NIGERIAN LEADERSHIP:

The world is entering the Autumn of Discontent — like 1968. What unites French students, Spanish tenants, Italian workers, Albanian protester, Nigerian keke driver? Same sentence: "My government taxes me like a rich man, treats me like a poor man, and tells me to be patient."

Patience has an expiration date.

In France, patience expired after 120% debt.

In Albania, patience expired after 13 years of the same man. In Spain, patience expired when rent became 65% of salary. In Nigeria, patience is expiring now — garri N3,500, the Naira N1,650, fuel N1,500, light 8 hours only.

The Government and National Assembly Should Try to Urgently Address:

- Publish debt breakdown and cut waste — 160m SUVs, 21bn VP house — like the French demanded budget transparency.

- Give NAFDAC power to test all drugs — not rely on FDA — as I wrote earlier.

- Pass rent control and student loan that works — not audio loan.

- Fix farm security so garri falls — not grammar about GDP 3.2%. France is warning. Albania is warning. Spain is warning. Other African Emerging Nations must use their style of leadership to boost their economic policies, providing security, economic interplay between states down to local areas of the country and the Continent.

Sports

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

Omorodion defends Lagos SWAN caretaker committee, dismisses claims of women's marginalization

Caretaker Chairman of the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN), Lagos State chapter, Patrick Omorodion, has defended the composition of the chapter's caretaker and electoral committees, dismissing allegations of women's marginalization as unfounded.

Omorodion, a former National Vice President of SWAN and former Secretary of the Lagos chapter, maintained that the committees were constituted to restore order, reposition the association and pave the way for a free and fair election.

Appointed by the national leadership of SWAN on October 9, 2026, following the resignation of acting chairman Aron Akerejola, Omorodion said his emergence was part of efforts to prevent a leadership vacuum and resolve the lingering crisis within the Lagos chapter.

In a statement, he traced the leadership dispute to the suspension of Olatutu Oladunni, whose first term had expired but who, according to him, failed to comply with directives from the national leadership to follow due process in organising a fresh election.

Omorodion said the caretaker committee subsequently announced an Extraordinary Congress to discuss plans for repositioning the association and organising a credible election.

However, he stated that Oladunni responded by mobilising a group of women to protest at the Lagos State House of Assembly over claims of marginalization within Lagos SWAN.

Questioning the relevance of the protest to the association's internal affairs, Omorodion described the allegations as an attempt to generate public sympathy amid the leadership dispute.

He also challenged the narrative that women had been excluded from the ongoing efforts to restore stability to the chapter, citing their representation on both committees.



...Freeman, Jonathan on target for Benin Arsenas at Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium

Kehinde Osagiede

Benel Insurance ended Rivers United's unbeaten run in the ongoing 2026/27 Nigeria Professional Football League with a deserved 2-1 victory in the Match Day 10 encounter at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin, on Sunday.

Freeman Wuchirwe put the hosts ahead early in the second half, Chijioke Oboama equalised for the visitors in the 82nd minute, and substitute Jonathan James snatched the winner on 90 minutes.

The first half was lively but goalless, with both sides cautious. Lekan Gabriel made a timely clearance in the 25th minute, and two minutes later Alex Oweilayefa forced a save from Rivers United goalkeeper Clinton Andy. Oweilayefa had another chance in the 32nd minute but sent his effort wide. Andy was again the

visitors' saviour in the 37th minute, parrying Fatai Abdullahi's close-range shot onto the post.

Insurance broke the deadlock three minutes after the restart. Midfielder Wuchirwe

unleashed a long-range effort that Andy failed to hold, and the ball crossed the line. Kayode Oke almost doubled the lead in the 54th minute with another long-range strike.

Coach Kennedy Boboye made his first changes

in the 66th minute, replacing Emmanuel Dung and Kayode Oke with Jonathan James and Suraju Lawal. The impact was immediate: three minutes later, Lawal's powerful shot, set up by James, hit the woodwork.

Flamingos to face 2025 FIFA U-17 Women's world cup bronze medalist in Round of 16



Nigeria's Flamingos will face Mexico in the Round of 16 of the 2026 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in Morocco after finishing second in Group B, setting up a challenging knockout encounter against the bronze medallists from the previous edition.

The Nigerian youngsters, coached by Hakeem Busari, secured their place in the knockout stage with six points from three group matches, capped by an impressive 3-1 victory over defending champions North Korea.

Mexico emerged as Ni-

geria's next opponents after the conclusion of the decisive Group F fixtures, bringing an end to the uncertainty surrounding the Flamingos' next assignment.

The Round of 16 clash, scheduled for Thursday, October 29, in Salé, presents Nigeria with another major test as they seek to extend their campaign and move closer to the tournament's latter stages.

The Flamingos head into the encounter encouraged by their statement victory over North Korea, in which Oluwakemi Adegbuyi opened the scoring in the 15th minute before Oluebube Umejiaku doubled Nigeria's lead in the 38th minute.

NFF congratulates Alex Iwobi on another milestone

The Nigeria Football Federation has celebrated Super Eagles' midfielder Alexander Iwobi on his new milestone of becoming the joint-second most-capped African football player in the English Premiership, alongside Egyptian icon Mohamed Salah.

Iwobi, who celebrated his

100th cap for Nigeria during this summer's friendly match with Portugal at the Estádio Dr. Magalhães Pessoa in Leiria, has now featured in 328 matches in the English Premier League.

Acting General Secretary of the NFF, Dr Emmanuel Ikpeke MON, congratulated Iwobi on his latest accomplishment. "The

NFF celebrates Alex Iwobi for this new achievement and we wish him even greater glory. We will be very happy to see him become the African with the most appearances in the Premier League in the near future."

The 30-year-old, who has won silver and two bronze medals with Nigeria at the Africa

Cup of Nations, achieved the latest milestone when he featured for his English Premiership club Fulham in their 1-0 win over Coventry City on Saturday. The game was his 328th appearance in the EPL, taking him joint-second with Salah, and 25 games more to match the all-time record holder, Ivorian Kolo Toure.

Enabulele Inaugurates MMA association board, urges members to attract sponsors ahead of NSF

By Kehinde Osagiede

The Edo State Sports Commission has inaugurated a Mixed Martial Arts Association board, with a charge to its members to secure sponsorships and build partnerships to prepare the state's athletes for the 23rd National Sports Festival in Enugu.

Commission Chairman, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, gave the charge at the inauguration of the board, which is led by Barr. Douglas Ogbankwa. He said collective responsibility, commitment and collaboration would be critical to the growth of mixed martial arts in Edo State.

Enabulele, who was represented by the Commission's Permanent Secretary, Mrs.

Patricia Agharese Efe Amenze, urged board members to contribute financially and to attract corporate sponsors to support competitions, training programmes and other developmental initiatives.

"Sports development is capital-intensive. Therefore, I call on board members to work closely with athletes, coaches and association officials to ensure the successful implementation of our plans and programmes in line with Governor Monday Okpebholo's sports development agenda," he said.

He expressed optimism that Edo State could win at least 15 gold medals in mixed martial arts at the festival, "provided there is adequate preparation and the necessary support from the board."



Godfred, Emeka commit N700,000 to Athletic Heat anniversary meet

Nigerian athletics stars Charles Godfred and Ugwu Emeka have committed a combined N700,000 to sponsor the men's long jump and hammer throw events at the Athletic Heat 10th Anniversary Meet in Lagos.

Godfred, an African U20 champion, two-time Nigerian national champion and Big Ten champion, is sponsoring the men's long jump with N500,000, while NCAA All-American shot putter

Emeka has pledged N200,000 for the men's hammer throw, which will be named the Ugwu Emeka Hammer Throw.

Godfred's sponsorship will reward the top eight long jumpers, while the top four hammer throwers will receive N100,000, N50,000, N30,000 and N20,000 respectively.

Explaining his decision, the University of Minnesota athlete said the long jump had transformed his life by giving him purpose and opening doors he never imagined possible.

