Gov Okpebholo tasks ex-chairmanship aspirants with mobilising 2.5m votes for Tinubu

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has tasked former local government chairmanship aspirants in the state with mobilising 2.5 million votes for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election in the 2027 general elections.

The governor urged the aspirants to remain committed to the All Progressives Congress (APC), stressing that party unity, loyalty and sustained grassroots mobilisation would be crucial to securing victory for the president.

Okpebholo gave the charge when he received members of the Forum of All Past Chairmanship Aspirants in Nigeria (FAPCAN), led by its convener and president, Hon. Ikoko Emmanuel, at the Government House, Benin City.

He urged members of the forum not to allow electoral setbacks to discourage them, noting that political fortunes could change and that those who failed to secure electoral victories could still contribute meaningfully to the party's growth and success.

"I'm happy to see you all. Let me sincerely thank you for keeping faith with our party. One can lose today and win tomorrow. The faith is what matters," the governor said.

He encouraged the former aspirants to remain steadfast, adding that loyalty and commitment to the party could open doors to other opportunities, even for those who had yet to win elective positions.

According to him, a decisive victory for Tinubu in 2027 would strengthen the APC's political standing and create opportunities for party members to benefit from appointments and other opportunities at the federal level.

"When we win big, we will have a lot of appointments coming our way. So, if we win the big victory for our president, we will benefit even from the Federal Government," Okpebholo said.

Earlier, FAPCAN president, Hon. Ikoko Emmanuel, said

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2027: Okpebholo's pension move wins retirees' support for Tinubu

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

Retirees in Edo State have pledged to mobilise support for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election in the 2027 general election, commending Governor Monday Okpebholo for approving their return to the Defined Benefits Scheme (DBS) from the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).

The pensioners made the pledge on Wednesday during a solidarity and appreciation visit to Government House, Benin City, where they praised the governor for addressing their longstanding concerns over pension administration and welfare.

Chairman of the Association of Retirees under the Contributory Pension Scheme, Mr. Asemota Osagie Andrew, said the CPS, as implemented under the previous administration, had left many retirees struggling to cope with the realities of retirement.

Andrew, who said he retired after 35 years of service, noted that he had experienced the challenges associated with the scheme and understood the difficulties confronting pensioners.

He described Governor Okpebholo's decision to approve their return to the DBS as evidence of a government willing to listen to the concerns of its citizens and translate promises into concrete action.

The association chairman also pledged the retirees' political support for the governor's commitment to deliver 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election.

"We are here to thank you for matching words with action," he said. "We will support you politically and ensure President Tinubu returns to Aso Rock for a second term. You have promised the President 2.5 million votes. Leave the strategy to us; we will deliver."

Recalling the association's engagement with the governor, Andrew said the retirees had appealed for a return to the DBS and were assured that their concerns would receive attention.

"Within two weeks of our discussion, you granted our request," he said, contrasting the development in Edo with the continuing struggle of pensioners in Lagos State to secure a similar outcome.

"Our colleagues in Lagos State are still fighting for theirs, while our amiable governor has settled ours here in Edo State," he added.

The association's Secretary, Mr. Aikpitanyi Felix, also commended the governor, saying the retirees' appreciation went beyond mere words and would be demonstrated through political support in the 2027 elections.

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SOLIDARITY VISIT:
Edo State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo, addressing Association of Retirees under the Contrubutory Pension Scheme during the retirees' solidarity visit to Government House, Benin City, on Wednesday.

INEC, police warn Edo political parties against campaign violence

Oliver Ijiogbe

BENIN CITY

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Nigeria Police Force have urged political parties, candidates and their supporters in Edo State to comply strictly with electoral laws and guidelines to ensure peaceful campaigns ahead of the elections.

The appeal was made on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at a stakeholders' meeting convened by INEC in Edo State to address potential electoral violations and promote peace and order during the campaign period.

The Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) in the state, Mr Obo Effanga, reminded political parties and other stakeholders of the laws and regulations governing campaign activities, as well as the penalties for violations.

He urged all stakeholders to adhere to the established

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FG to pay workers N70,000 transport allowance for six months —Pg 2

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About 64 people killed in deadly Spain train crash —Pg 8

2026 GCU Relays closes entries after inspection of facilities ...Nesiama raises safety concerns over Ughelli track —Pg 13

NEWS

FG to pay workers N70,000 transport allowance for six months

...Strikes accord with NLC to constitute minimum wage committee

Aghedo Iyobor / Miracle Joseph / Igiebor Confidence

ABUJA

The Federal Government has agreed to pay workers a N70,000 transport intervention allowance for six months, starting from November 2026, following conciliation meetings with the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

The agreement was reached at meetings held on October 22 and 27 at the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, convened to address workers' concerns over rising cost of living and other unresolved labour issues.

A statement issued by the Ministry on Tuesday, October 27, signed by the Head, Press and Public Relations, Annah Daniel, said the allowance would be paid across all levels for six months.

The conciliation meeting held on Tuesday was chaired by the Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Muhammad Maigari Dingyadi, while the NLC delegation was led by its President, Comrade Joe Ajaero.

The meetings followed concerns raised by the NLC's Central Working Committee (CWC) and National Executive Council (NEC) over high living costs and soaring fuel prices which had made basic commuting unaffordable for most public sector workers. The Congress had issued a 14-day ultimatum demanding immediate financial relief and welfare measures.

The Labour centre also demanded an immediate review of the national minimum wage, a position the Federal Government had earlier opposed on the grounds that the current wage was signed into law in July 2024 and was not legally due for review until June 2027. The NLC rejected the delay, insisting that negotiations must begin immediately to cushion workers against inflation.

At the end of the meeting, both parties agreed to immediately constitute a Minimum Wage Negotiation Committee to commence engagement. However, they remain divided on the effective date for implementation.

Other key resolutions include the commencement of payment of peculiar allowance arrears in November 2026 in three equal instalments, and settlement of 19 months outstanding allowances owed to health workers within three months, beginning from December.

The meeting also addressed tax relief for workers, hazard allowances for agricultural workers and the proposed adjustment of the Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS).

The statement partly reads: "National Minimum Wage: It was agreed that the Minimum Wage Negotiation Committee would be constituted and commence a meeting immediately. However, there is a disagreement on the effective date of implementation.

"Reduction in Petroleum Pump Price and Palliatives: The Federal Government will pay a transport intervention of Seventy Thousand Naira (N70,000) across all levels for a period of six months, commencing from November 2026.

"The Federal Government has approved the peculiar allowance, effective 1 May 2026. Payment of arrears will begin."

Both parties further agreed to reconvene after one month to review progress on implementation of the resolutions.

The transport intervention is expected to provide temporary relief for workers amid ongoing economic pressures, although the Ministry did not specify modalities for payment or categories of beneficiaries.



APPRECIATION:
The Chairman, Association of Retirees under the Contrubutory Pension Scheme, Edo State, Mr. Asemota Osage Andrew (middle), speaking during the association's solidarity and visit to Government House, Benin City, on Wednesday.

...Okpebholo's pension move wins retirees' support for Tinubu

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Felix recalled that the struggle began under the previous administration, which he accused of failing to address the pensioners' concerns despite their repeated appeals.

"This struggle began under the last administration, which failed to listen to us while we continued to suffer," he said.

He praised Okpebholo for combining infrastructure development with attention to the welfare of Edo residents, stressing that the development of the state must also include improving the lives of its people.

"You have come to develop the state's infrastructure, but also to develop its people," he said.

Other members of the delegation, including Mr. Lawrence Osifo, Mrs. Veronica Ojehumen and Mrs. Mercy Itohan, also expressed gratitude to the governor for approving their return to the DBS.

They pledged their loyalty and support for the governor's political mobilisation efforts, particularly his target of securing 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu in 2027.

Responding, Governor Okpebholo said his administration remained committed to developing Edo State and improving the welfare of its people.

He explained that his emergence as governor was driven by the need to address the challenges confronting Edo residents, adding that his administration would continue to prioritise decisions that directly benefit the people.

"I was voted for because of the plight of Edo people, and I am in office to solve the challenges facing them," he said.

"You voted for me to develop Edo State, and that is exactly what I am doing. Anything that will not benefit Edo people, I will not do it."

The governor also acknowledged President Tinubu's support for his administration, describing him as a leader who cares about the welfare and development of Edo State.

According to Okpebholo, the President's backing has contributed to the progress recorded by his administration, adding that he consults Tinubu on important decisions affecting the state.

"The President cares for us. That is why, whenever I am taking a decision, I consult him, and when he gives me the go-ahead, I proceed," he said.

On the pension issue, the governor disclosed that he had consulted the President before approving the retirees' request and received his support.

"I asked the President about your issue, and he gave me the go-ahead," Okpebholo said.

The governor reiterated that his administration would continue to pursue policies and programmes aimed at improving the lives of Edo people, assuring residents that their welfare would remain central to his government's development agenda.

Gov Okpebholo tasks ex-chairmanship aspirants with mobilising 2.5m votes for Tinubu

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the forum was ready to collaborate with the Edo State Government and relevant political stakeholders to strengthen grassroots political structures across the state's 18 local government areas.

Emmanuel said the forum recognised the importance of grassroots engagement, political reconciliation and inclusive leadership, noting that its members were prepared to deploy their political experience towards building stronger community-based structures.

He said FAPCAN was also committed to supporting the stated target of mobilising 2.5 million votes in Edo State for Tinubu's re-election in 2027 through grassroots mobilisation, stakeholder engagement, political awareness and community outreach.

The FAPCAN leader appealed to the governor to recognise and support the forum as a platform through which former chairmanship aspirants could contribute to the administration's grassroots development agenda and broader political mobilisation efforts.

Meanwhile, Okpebholo reaffirmed his administration's determination to tackle illicit drug use among youths, disclosing that the state government was working with the Edo State House of Assembly towards enacting legislation to address the menace.

The governor spoke while responding to discussions on progress in the fight against illicit drugs in Etsako West Local Government Area.

He said the proposed legislation would establish a legal framework for appropriate sanctions against drug-related offences, drawing a parallel with the state government's efforts to combat cultism.

"As for the illicit drugs being taken by youths, we are already talking to the House of Assembly to make a law. The same way we dealt with the issue of cultism is the same way we are going to deal with drugs," he said.

According to the governor, the government intends to intensify efforts to curb illicit drug use across the state, adding that the absence of a clear legal framework limits the imposition of punishment.

"Where there's no law, there will be no punishment. We will make sure that it doesn't happen in Edo again. Where there's no drugs, there will be no crime. We are coming to that," he added.

Those present at the meeting included the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Chief of Staff, Hon. Yakubu Musa, JP; Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Paul Ohombamu; and APC State Secretary, Lawrence Okah, among others.

INEC, police warn Edo political parties against campaign violence

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

guidelines, stressing that strict compliance was essential to ensuring peaceful, orderly and credible elections.

Also speaking, the Edo State Commissioner of Police, CP Patrick Daor, reaffirmed the commitment of the Nigeria Police Force to providing adequate security throughout the campaign period.

Daor assured the stakeholders that appropriate security measures would be deployed to prevent hoodlums and other disruptive elements from infiltrating campaign activities and causing disturbances.

The meeting underscored the importance of collaboration among INEC, security agencies, political parties and other stakeholders in maintaining peace, enforcing electoral regulations and safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process.

INEC, Edo State, consequently called on political parties, candidates, supporters and other stakeholders to conduct their campaign activities peacefully and in strict compliance with the law.

NEWS

FG sets 2030 deadline to end lead-based paints, moves to protect Nigerians

IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE / KEBONKWURUTH

ABUJA

The Federal Government has reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating lead exposure in Nigeria, setting 2030 as the target for phasing out lead-based paints across the country.

The government said the initiative was aimed at protecting public health, particularly children, pregnant women and workers whose occupations expose them to lead contamination.

The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Environment, Dr Salihu Usman, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja during the 2026 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week.

Usman, who was represented by the Director of Pollution Control and Environmental Health in the ministry, Mrs Omotunde Adeola, described lead poisoning as a preventable environmental and public health challenge that requires urgent and coordinated action.

He explained that there was no known safe level of lead exposure, warning that prolonged contact with the toxic substance could pose serious health risks, especially to vulnerable groups.

The permanent secretary stressed the need for stronger collaboration among government agencies, manufacturers, health professionals, regulatory bodies and civil society organisations to tackle the problem.

He said efforts must focus on improving environmental monitoring, enforcing product safety standards, encouraging the use of safer alternatives and raising public awareness about the dangers of lead exposure.

Usman also highlighted the importance of the National Inter-Agency Working Group on Lead Poisoning Elimination and a proposed five-year strategic plan designed to strengthen the country's response to lead contamination.

According to him, progress should be measured by a reduction in lead exposure, the removal of unsafe products from the market and the proper management of contaminated sites, rather than relying solely on policies and meetings.

He reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to strengthening environmental regulations and ensuring that preventive measures translate into tangible improvements in public health.

Stakeholders at the event also called for improved laboratory testing, stricter enforcement of environmental standards and effective monitoring of industries associated with lead contamination.

They identified lead-based paints and the recycling of used lead-acid batteries as major areas requiring sustained attention because of the potential risks they pose to human health and the environment.

The stakeholders emphasised the need to strengthen prevention programmes, rehabilitate contaminated environments and protect communities exposed to hazardous substances, particularly children and industrial workers.



VISIT:
NDLEA Edo State Commander Mitchell Ofoyeju PhD while receiving a souvenir from Commissioner of Police Patrick Daaor during a visit to the NDLEA's Command headquarters in Benin City.

SDN hands over methane tracking platform to NUPRC to strengthen regulation

IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE / AHEDO IYOBOR

ABUJA

The Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) has handed over the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Emission Tracker (NOGIET), a digital platform designed to strengthen monitoring of methane emissions, to the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).

The platform was presented to the Commission in Abuja on Tuesday by the Board Chairman of SDN, Mr. Inemo Samiama.

Samiama described NOGIET as a major step towards improving environmental accountability and enhancing methane emissions surveillance in Nigeria's oil and gas sector.

He explained that the platform integrates satellite-based methane detection, regulatory mapping of oil blocks and pipelines, and emissions data directly obtained from facility operators.

According to him, the integration will allow regulators to compare satellite observations with operators' reports, identify discrepancies, trace emissions to specific facilities and prioritise inspections for enforcement.

Samiama stressed that methane remains one of the most potent drivers of climate change, noting that over a 20-year period, a tonne of methane warms the planet more than 80 times as much as a tonne of carbon dioxide.

He said Nigeria has committed to reducing methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, stressing that regulatory agencies are central to achieving the target.

"The commission sits at the heart of that commitment, and regulators cannot enforce what they cannot see," he said.

He disclosed that NOGIET was developed with support from the Global Methane Hub to provide NUPRC and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) with a clearer overview of methane emissions across the sector.

Samiama said SDN handed over the platform, including its front-end and back-end components, to the Commission at no cost, adding that it would be migrated to the Commission's subdomain, while a separate handover would be done for NMDPRA.

He urged the Commission to integrate NOGIET into its daily monitoring, inspection and enforcement operations, ensure regular data updates and guarantee adequate security of the platform.

He expressed hope that NUPRC and NMDPRA, alongside the National Council on Climate Change, Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and the Global Methane Hub, would showcase the platform at the 31st Conference of Parties (COP31) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change scheduled for Antalya, Türkiye, in November.

MTN explains data consumption, urges Nigerians to optimise phone settings

EWERE EMMANUELLA

ABUJA

The Chief Executive Officer of MTN Nigeria, Mr Karl Toriola, has urged Nigerians to optimise their mobile phone settings and manage their online activities to prevent unnecessary depletion of their data bundles.

Toriola made the call at the "Data on Trial" experience organised by MTN Nigeria in Abuja to address public concerns about data consumption and pricing in the country.

He explained that several factors influenced data pricing in Nigeria, including the high operational costs faced by telecommunications operators in maintaining their networks.

According to him, operators incur substantial expenses on electricity, transportation and other infrastructure needed to keep telecommunications sites running.

Toriola disclosed that MTN spent about N4.05 trillion on power in the preceding year, highlighting the financial pressures associated with providing telecommunications services.

He noted that electricity and transportation costs in Nigeria presented significant challenges for operators compared with some other countries, including the United Kingdom.

"Even within the context of data being perceived as more expensive in Nigeria, the UK is the example I was giving," he said.

He added that telecommunications companies in Nigeria and some other African countries had to provide power and transportation to their network sites, contributing to the overall cost of operations.

The MTN chief executive also explained that Nigerian operators deployed telecommunications equipment and technologies comparable to those used in Europe and the United States, including Fourth-Generation (4G) and Fifth-Generation (5G) networks.

He said the "Data on Trial" initiative was designed to educate consumers on how mobile phone settings, online activities and application preferences could affect data consumption.

PANDEF demands 50% derivation, comprehensive environmental clean-up In Niger Delta

AGHEDO IYOBOR

ASABA

The Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) has demanded an increase in derivation allocation to oil-producing states from the current 13 per cent to 50 per cent to address decades of environmental degradation and underdevelopment.

The forum also called for urgent and comprehensive clean-up of polluted communities across the Niger Delta and sustained funding for the Ogoni clean-up programme.

The demands were contained in a communiqué issued at the end of a joint meeting of PANDEF's Board of Trustees and National Executive Committee held in Abuja on Tuesday to mark the forum's 10th anniversary.

The communiqué was read by the National Chairman of PANDEF, Amb. Godknows Igali, in the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and former Akwa Ibom Governor, Obong Victor Attah, alongside former ministers, traditional rulers and other stakeholders from the six South-South states.

PANDEF noted that the minimum 13 per cent derivation provided under Section 162(2) of the 1999 Constitution has remained unchanged for over two decades despite the enormous environmental and developmental burdens borne by oil-producing communities.

The forum therefore called on the Federal Government, the Revenue Mobilisation, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) and the National Assembly to initiate legislative and constitutional steps to raise the allocation to at least 50 per cent.

PANDEF also demanded the abolition of the onshore/offshore dichotomy in revenue allocation, arguing that offshore oil operations equally affect coastal communities through oil spills, destruction of marine ecosystems and disruption of fishing activities.

"Offshore operations damage marine ecosystems and fishing grounds relied upon by coastal communities and threaten livelihoods and local economic sustainability," the forum said.

On environmental restoration, PANDEF expressed concern over pollution in the region after more than six decades of oil and gas exploration, identifying Nembe Creek in Bayelsa, Odidi in Delta and Kula in Rivers as areas requiring urgent intervention.

It urged the Federal Government to ensure transparent and sustained funding for the Ogoni clean-up and extend remediation to other affected communities.

The forum also called for accelerated completion of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, rehabilitation of the East-West Road and increased investment in gas infrastructure and modular refineries to harness the region's economic potential.

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Two Years 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



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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.

Thank you for your continued patronage and support.

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NEWS

Reps move to establish College of Nursing in Lagos

ABUJA

The House of Representatives has passed a bill through a second reading, seeking to establish a Federal College of Nursing and Midwifery in Ifako/Ijaiye Local Government Area of Lagos State to expand access to professional training and help address the shortage of healthcare personnel in the country.

The bill, sponsored by the member representing Ifako/Ijaiye Federal Constituency, Lagos State, Mr Benjamin Olabinjo was read on the floor of the House on Wednesday.

The proposed law seeks to establish the institution as a specialised centre for training, research and continuing education in nursing, midwifery and related fields.

Leading debate on the bill at plenary, Olabinjo said the proposed college would help "increase the number of qualified nurses and midwives available to hospitals and healthcare facilities across the country."

He expressed concern over the shortage of nursing personnel, noting that "the migration of trained professionals to the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and other Western countries has further strained Nigeria's healthcare system."

He continued, "Ask any hospital in Nigeria what it needs most, and the answer is almost always the same: more nurses and midwives," he said.

He added that nurses and midwives played critical roles in patient care, maternal health and newborn survival, but the country was losing trained professionals faster than it could replace them.

"Yet we are losing them faster than we are training them. This bill is about training more of them, and training them where they are needed," the lawmaker added.

Olabinjo noted that Lagos, one of Nigeria's most populous states, required more training opportunities to meet the growing demand for qualified healthcare workers.

According to him, the limited number of federally accredited training places had left many aspiring nurses and midwives struggling to secure admission, while healthcare facilities continued to grapple with shortages of personnel.

The proposed legislation provides for the college to offer professional certificates, diplomas, degrees and post-basic qualifications in nursing, midwifery and related specialities.

It also empowers the institution to admit students, conduct examinations and research, organise academic programmes and provide continuing education for practising professionals.

Under the proposed framework, the college would have a governing council, a School of Nursing and a School of Midwifery, alongside principal officers responsible for its administration and academic activities.



PRESENTATION:
Minister of Interior, Dr Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo (4th R); Chairman, The Independent Investigative Committee set up by the Federal Government to Probe the Deaths of 33 Alleged Illegal Miners who Died in Custody of NSCDC Niger Command, Jonathan Kure (4th L) and members of the committee, after the presentation of the committee's report to the Minister in Abuja on Tuesday.

Police, NDLEA vow to crush criminals planning to disrupt the peace of the state

...As CP Daaor visits NDLEA Command

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Commander of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Commander of Narcotics Mitchell Ofoyeju and the Commissioner of Police in the State Patrick Daaor, have warned criminal elements planning to disrupt the peace of the state to have a rethink.

The warning came at the weekend when the Commissioner of Police, Daaor, paid a courtesy visit to the Edo State Command of the NDLEA at its headquarters, Upper Sakponba Road, Benin City.

The meeting was part of a broader strategy by the two agencies on crime fighting and prevention of illicit drugs trading and abuse ahead of the January 2027 general election.

CP Daaor, who was received by the Edo State Commander of Narcotics, Mitchell Ofoyeju, and senior officers of the Command, said the visit was to deepen inter-agency synergy in the fight against illicit drugs, violent crimes and election-related violence.

According to Daaor, "there is an inseparable link between drugs and crime, stressing that most cases of cultism, armed robbery, thuggery and electoral violence are fuelled by drug abuse".

In his remarks, the NDLEA Commander, Ofoyeju, commended his guest for the visit, describing it as strategic and timely, especially as the political season unfolded.

Ofoyeju lauded the political will of Governor Monday Okpebholo and his strict posture against kidnappers, terrorists and other enemies of the State.

He disclosed that drug abuse was a major enabler of electoral violence, adding that the Command has already mapped out strategies under the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) initiative to sensitise youths against being used as political thugs.

"Even the devil is aware of the hard position of Governor Monday Okpebholo against kidnappers, terrorists and criminal elements. As we approach the general election next year, we are aware that some elements may want to use drugs to recruit and embolden thugs.

"We are sending a clear warning: Edo State will be too hot for criminals. Anyone caught with drugs or planning to foment trouble during the election will be arrested and prosecuted.

"We have the intelligence; we now have stronger collaboration with the police, and we will not spare anyone who wants to jeopardise the peace of Edo State before, during and after the election," Ofoyeju warned.

He noted that under the leadership of the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), CON, the NDLEA remains committed to supply reduction and demand reduction and will work with the Police to dismantle drug joints and black spots across the three senatorial districts.

The police boss assured that the command under his watch will provide intelligence and operational support to the

NELFUND moves to stop students collecting loans while parents pay fees

ABUJA

The Nigerian Education Loan Fund has said it will take steps to stop students from benefiting from its loan scheme while still relying on their parents to pay their school fees.

The Managing Director of NELFUND, Akintunde Sawyerr, disclosed this during a press briefing on Wednesday, saying the fund had identified cases of students allegedly receiving support through the scheme while continuing to depend on their parents for tuition payments.

Sawyerr said the development had informed plans to strengthen transparency in the administration of the student loan scheme and educate students, parents and tertiary institutions about changes to the payment system.

"This comment is based on our recognition that there are so many students out there who are double-dipping. They are taking from NELFUND and still stressing their parents," he said.

The managing director explained that the fund would introduce an arrangement through which parents could confirm whether their children's school fees had been paid without necessarily being given details of the amount involved.

According to him, the measure is intended to provide clarity for parents who remain financially responsible for their children's education while ensuring that the payment process is better understood.

The development comes as the Federal Government continues to implement its student loan programme, established to reduce financial barriers to tertiary education and enable eligible Nigerian students to access higher education without immediate financial constraints.

Under the scheme, NELFUND provides loans for institutional fees, while upkeep allowances are processed separately to support beneficiaries' living expenses.

Safety, welfare of residents our priority - LG Chairman

Lamai Cassius

IGARRA

The Executive Chairman of Akoko-Edo Local Government Area, Hon. Akande Olumole, has stated that the safety and welfare of residents remain top priorities of his administration.

The Chairman made this known during the commissioning of the Igarra Unit Command gate of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC).

Hon. Olumole expressed concern over the practice of traders displaying their goods along major roads, particularly on market days, describing it as a significant threat to motorists, traders, pedestrians and other road users.

He emphasised the need for a coordinated approach to road safety enforcement, noting that effective collaboration between the council and the FRSC would help prevent avoidable road accidents and create a safer environment for all road users.

The Chairman announced plans to constitute a committee and an enforcement team comprising selected local government officials and FRSC personnel to address the situation and ensure that trading activities do not obstruct traffic or endanger lives.

The council boss commended the Unit Commander, Assistant Superintendent of the Corps (ASC) Damian Abuchu, for his efforts towards repositioning the command for improved and effective service delivery.

Hon. Akande applauded the Unit Commander and officers of the Corps for their dedication to promoting road safety and enhancing the operational effectiveness of the command.

He also inspected an ongoing project initiated by the FRSC Igarra Unit Command and pledged the support of the local government towards its completion.

Meanwhile, the local government chairman has allocated a building at the secretariat to the FRSC.

The proposed office is expected to serve as a centre for driver's licence registration and biometric capturing, as well as other related services. The initiative is aimed at bringing essential services closer to residents and reducing the need to travel long distances to access driver's licence processing facilities.

The Chairman assured the command of his administration's readiness to facilitate the renovation and preparation of the allocated building to make it suitable for official use. He further pledged the necessary support to facilitate the installation of required equipment and the commencement of driver's licence processing services at the facility.

On his part, the FRSC Unit Commander, ASC Damian Abuchu, pledged the support of his personnel, assuring the Chairman that officers of the Corps would work closely with designated council officials to enforce road safety regulations and address identified challenges.

The Chairman was accompanied at the commissioning by the Vice Chairman, Hon. Gloria Umoru, councillors, supervisory councillors and aides to the Chairman.

"Sometimes you can pray for God to give you a son, but that son might be the one to bring down the name of the family.

"Sometimes when God doesn't give you something, don't push. I don't think a son would have done something better than these three daughters that I have. That one, I think, you know, it's not my priority," he said.

NEWS

AI-powered fraud threatens telecom security, banking – NCC

ABUJA

The Nigerian Communications Commission has warned that the growing use of artificial intelligence by cybercriminals poses significant threats to Nigeria's telecommunications infrastructure, banking system and national security.

The Executive Vice-Chairman of the NCC, Dr Aminu Maida, raised the alarm on Tuesday at the second International Cybersecurity Conference in Abuja, where he said AI-powered attacks were becoming increasingly sophisticated and capable of compromising digital networks and financial transactions.

Maida, represented by the commission's Executive Commissioner for Technical Services, Sunday Oshadami, said, "We now face AI-driven phishing tailored to individuals, automated credential attacks, deepfakes designed to bypass multi-factor authentication, and malware that rewrites itself to evade detection."

Maida explained that telecommunications had become central to Nigeria's digital economy, supporting banking transactions, business operations, public services and communications.

He warned that attacks targeting telecom operators could consequently disrupt other critical sectors.

"An attack on a telecom provider is an attack on the financial sector, national defence, and civil governance," he stated.

According to him, artificial intelligence has transformed cybercrime by enabling attackers to identify vulnerabilities and execute sophisticated operations faster than conventional security systems can respond.

"We are no longer defending against human hackers operating at human speed; we are confronting machine learning systems operating at microsecond computational speed," Maida said.

He cited reported cyberattacks on supermarket refrigeration systems in France and a spyware campaign targeting at least 45 devices belonging to journalists and media personnel in the Middle East between 2024 and 2025 as examples of emerging threats.

The NCC boss said Nigeria's designation of telecommunications infrastructure as Critical National Information Infrastructure reinforced the need to protect networks against cyberattacks.

He disclosed that the commission had established a Computer Security Incident Response Team to monitor threats, coordinate intelligence sharing and enforce incident reporting.

He added that the NCC had rolled out a Cyber Resilience Framework establishing common security standards for licensed telecommunications operators.

Maida urged operators to adopt zero-trust security systems, continuously audit AI models for vulnerabilities and develop networks capable of recovering from attacks without prolonged service disruptions.

The Director-General of the National Information Technology Development Agency, Kashifu Abdullahi, said cybercriminals were increasingly exploiting human vulnerabilities rather than attacking technological systems directly.

Abdullahi disclosed that NITDA was collaborating with the Office of the National Security Adviser and the National Assembly on reviewing the Cybercrime Act, while exploring a national cybersecurity architecture and strengthening digital sovereignty.

The Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, represented by the Director of Public Prosecutions, Rotimi Oyedepo, disclosed that the ministry was developing legislative reforms to address emerging cyber threats.

Fagbemi said the proposed legislation would improve electronic evidence management, investigations and prosecutions while protecting fundamental rights.



INAUGURATION:
Gov. Douye Inaugurate Medical University Teaching Hospital in Yenagoa

Ebonyi govt strengthens Ebola preparedness, urges residents to remain calm

Maxwell Okechukwu

ABAKALIKI

The Ebonyi State Government has assured residents of its commitment to preventing the spread of Ebola disease, urging the public to remain calm, vigilant and avoid spreading unverified information.

The State Commissioner for Health, Dr Moses Ikenna Ekuma, gave the assurance while addressing newsmen in his office, stressing that the state's preparedness and response measures followed developments concerning the virus in Nigeria.

Dr Ekuma said the state government, under the leadership of the Governor Francis Nwifuru, was working with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, NCDC, and other relevant agencies to strengthen surveillance and emergency response mechanisms.

He further explained that the state's measures include improved disease surveillance, contact tracing, laboratory investigation, infection prevention and control, as well as areas of prompt identification, reporting and management of suspected cases in line with national guidelines.

The commissioner stressed that the confirmation of a case in another part of the country does not automatically mean that Ebola has spread to Ebonyi State.

The World Health Organization, WHO had on Monday declared Nigeria Ebola-free following the medical evacuation of the only confirmed patient to Switzerland.

Dr Ekuma therefore urged Ebonyi residents to avoid panic, rumours, misinformation and the stigmatization of persons who may be affected or identified as contacts.

He advised them to practise regular handwashing with soap and running water, avoid direct contact with the blood and other body fluids of suspected cases, and seek prompt medical guidance if they develop compatible symptoms following possible exposure.

He also warned against attempting to manage suspected cases at home, stressing the importance of following instructions from trained health professionals. The commissioner directed public and private health facilities across the state to strengthen screening, maintain standard infection prevention and control practices, and promptly report suspected cases to the appropriate public health authorities.

He further called on traditional rulers, religious leaders, market associations, school administrators, transport operators, community groups and the media to support public health education and ensure the dissemination of accurate information.

Dr Ekuma reiterated that the state government would continue to collaborate with the Media, Security personal and relevant stakeholders to strengthen preparedness, public awareness and response capacity.

52,225 PVCs uncollected in Bayelsa — INEC

YENAGOA

The Independent National Electoral Commission has said that a total of 52,225 Permanent Voter Cards remain uncollected in Bayelsa State.

This was disclosed at a stakeholders' meeting attended by electoral officials, Representatives of political parties, security agencies and civil society organisations in Yenagoa, the state capital, on Tuesday.

The commission and the police warned politicians against violence, hate speech and misinformation ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Participants raised concerns about voter apathy and the challenges facing residents of riverine communities.

According to figures presented by the commission, Ekeremor Local Government Area has the highest number of uncollected PVCs at 12,023, followed by Sagbama with 10,080 and Southern Ijaw with 7,115. Yenagoa has 6,332, Brass 6,211, Kolokuma/Opokuma 3,712, Nembe 3,620 and Ogbia 3,132.

INEC's Resident Electoral Commissioner in Bayelsa, Isah Ehimeakhe, urged eligible voters to collect their cards, warning that low participation could undermine the credibility of the electoral process.

He also called on political parties, traditional rulers, religious leaders and community organisations to step up voter education and mobilisation.

"The commission is concerned that 52,225 Permanent Voter Cards are still uncollected in Bayelsa State. We appeal to all eligible voters who have registered to make efforts to collect their cards so that they can exercise their constitutional right to vote in the 2027 general elections," he said.

The REC noted that transportation costs and difficult terrain in riverine communities demanded concerted efforts from stakeholders, so that eligible voters would not be discouraged from collecting their cards.

"We recognise the peculiar challenges confronting residents of riverine communities, particularly transportation difficulties and the cost of accessing collection centres. We urge stakeholders and community leaders to work with the commission to sensitise eligible voters and encourage them to collect their PVCs," he said.

Awujale: Abiodun urges patience, promises peaceful succession process

ABEOKUTA

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has urged the people of Ijebuland to remain patient and support a peaceful succession process as preparations continue for the emergence of a new Awujale of Ijebuland.

The governor gave the assurance on Tuesday during a stakeholders' meeting in Ijebu-Ode.

Abiodun's Media Adviser, Kayode Akinmade, disclosed this in a statement released in Abeokuta on Wednesday.

The Awujale stool became vacant in July 2025 following the death of Oba Sikiru Adetona at the age of 91, after a 65-year reign.

Addressing concerns over the vacant Awujale stool, the governor said his administration was committed to ensuring a peaceful succession process that would enjoy broad acceptance among the people of Ijebuland.

He urged residents to exercise patience as the necessary procedures were being completed, noting that the traditional institution remained central to the cultural heritage, identity and unity of the people.

"I acknowledge the importance of the Awujale institution to the cultural heritage, identity and unity of Ijebuland, our people should remain calm and patient as the necessary processes are being concluded.

"Our administration is giving the matter the attention it deserves, with a view to ensuring that the process is concluded peacefully and the emergence of a new Awujale enjoys the acceptance and support of the people," he said.

Abiodun also linked the district's economic prospects to ongoing oil exploration activities and the proposed Gateway Deep-Sea Port in Ogun Waterside Local Government Area.

He said the meeting was convened to strengthen communication between the government and residents, discuss issues affecting the district and present an account of his administration's achievements over the past seven years.

He commended the people of Ijebuland for their support and cooperation, assuring them that his government remained committed to addressing issues affecting the district and maintaining peace across the state.

On economic development, the governor identified oil exploration around Eba Island and the proposed Gateway Deep-Sea Port as major projects that could attract investment, expand commercial activities and generate employment.

NEWS

Delta gov signs 13th-month salary, four other bills into law

ASABA

Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori, has signed five bills into law, including the 13th Month Salary Law, 2026, "to improve workers' welfare, strengthen the judiciary, protect property rights and reform the state's tax administration".

The governor signed the bills at the Executive Council Chambers, Government House, Asaba, on Wednesday, describing the development as part of his administration's commitment to reforms under the MORE Agenda.

Oborevwori said the laws would strengthen public institutions, improve service delivery and promote economic development.

On the 13th Month Salary Law, the governor said "the initiative would boost workers' morale, reward their contributions and improve productivity".

He also signed amendments increasing High Court judges from 46 to 50 and Customary Court of Appeal judges from nine to 12 to improve justice delivery.

According to the governor, the Public and Private Properties Protection Amendment Law would strengthen safeguards against unlawful occupation and destruction of properties.

He also explained that the Delta State Revenue Service (Consolidated) Law, 2026, would harmonise tax administration, curb multiple taxation and promote investment.

Oborevwori said development went beyond infrastructure to include policies that improve lives. He commended the Assembly and urged relevant agencies to ensure effective implementation of the laws.

Presenting the bills, Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly, Hon. Emomotimi Guwor, said they would strengthen governance, improve justice delivery and protect investments.

He said the 13th Month Salary Law provides for the benefit for eligible public servants, while the judicial amendments would enhance court efficiency and the property law to safeguard public and private assets.

Meanwhile, the outgoing Delta Head of Service, Dr. Mininim Oseji, has described the 13th Month Salary Law as "a boost to workers' welfare and family wellbeing".

She said the policy would stimulate business activities and thanked Governor Sheriff Oborevwori for the initiative, describing it as a welcome development for workers and Deltans.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Chief Judge of Delta State, Justice Tessy Diai, represented by Justice Briki Okolosi; the President of the Customary Court of Appeal, represented by Justice Tracy Uriah; the Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly, Hon. Arthur Akpowowo; principal officers of the Assembly; the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice; the Secretary to the State Government; Commissioners and other senior government officials.the remand of Omoyele Sowore, the presidential candidate of African Action Congress (AAC), over his alleged failure to fulfil the earlier bail terms.

The DSS lawyer, Akinlolu Kehinde, SAN, made the oral application before Justice Mohammed Umar adjourned the day's proceedings until July 13.

Customs seize N5.8m unregistered drugs, hand over to NAFDAC in Sokoto

SOKOTO

The Nigeria Customs Service, Sokoto/Zamfara Area Command, has handed over seized unregistered pharmaceutical products worth ₦5.8m to the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control for further investigation and appropriate action.

The Acting Customs Area Controller, Deputy Comptroller Haliru Abdullahi, said the products were intercepted by Customs patrol teams along the Illela-Sokoto Road following credible intelligence.

Speaking at the handover ceremony held at the command headquarters in Sokoto on Wednesday, Abdullahi explained that the seizure formed part of efforts to stop the circulation of unregistered drugs and protect public health.

He listed the seized items as 360 packages of anti-cold drugs, 500 packages of amodiaquine, 140 packages of paracetamol and 100 packages of quinine, with a total Duty Paid Value of ₦5,804,062.06. He attributed the seizure to the commitment of the command's patrol teams and reliable intelligence.

According to him, importing unregistered pharmaceutical products violates Section 55 of the Nigeria Customs Service Act 2023 and NAFDAC regulations.

He warned smugglers and dealers in such drugs to stop the illegal trade, stressing that the command would not tolerate activities that endanger public health.

"Let me use this opportunity to warn smugglers and those who deal in such unwholesome products that the Sokoto/Zamfara Command, under my watch, will not tolerate any form of smuggling.

"We remain vigilant and committed to safeguarding the health of citizens and the nation's economy," he said.

The acting controller praised the officers involved in the interception and acknowledged NAFDAC's continued partnership with the Customs Service in tackling the circulation of prohibited and unregistered products.

Customs recruitment: Excluded candidates threaten legal action

He then handed the seized items over to NAFDAC officials.

Receiving the products on behalf of the agency, the NAFDAC State Coordinator in Sokoto, AbduSalam Lawal, commended Customs for its collaboration and efforts to rid the country of unwholesome pharmaceutical products.

He said the partnership between the two agencies was crucial to protecting Nigerians from potentially harmful medicines.

"On behalf of the Director-General of NAFDAC and the entire management of the agency, I want to express our sincere appreciation to the Nigerian Customs Service for the wonderful collaboration we've been enjoying," he said.

He noted that sustained cooperation between the agencies would help keep unregistered pharmaceutical products from reaching consumers.

"This is the only way we can rid the country of some of these unwholesome products from circulation. We sincerely appreciate the efforts of your men," Lawal said.

He also pledged NAFDAC's commitment to strengthening the partnership with Customs to ensure that seized pharmaceutical products go through the necessary regulatory processes.

The handover highlights the role of inter-agency collaboration in combating the illegal movement of pharmaceutical products and protecting public health.

ADVERTISEMENT

OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL
KING'S SQUARE, P.M.B. 1052, BENIN CITY,
EDO STATE.

Our Ref: ABC 1501/47 *Date:* 26th October, 2026

INVITATION FOR TENDER

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Oredo Local Government Council intends to apply part of its approved budgetary provision for the fiscal year 2026 to cover eligible payments for contracts to be procured under this budget. Bidding is open to all eligible bidders in line with Part IV, Section 35 of the Edo State Public Procurement Law 2020 and EOPPA's *Procurement Guidelines (current edition)*. **Bidders are advised to note the following minimum criteria to qualify for the award of the contract.**

2.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Oredo Local Government Council now invites bid(s) for civil works as described in the table below:

Bidding No.	Project Description	Scope of Work
ABI922/98	Construction of Ultra Modern Health Center in Ward 3 Oredo Local Government Area.	Site clearing, Removal of Trees, Shrubs, Demolition of existing ,dilapidated structure of temporary fencing, construction building with blocks, reinforced concrete, roofing, installation of doors, windows, rendering, electrical fitting and finishing plumbering installation
ABC1501/46	Construction of Modern Shopping Complex at Ogiso Market (Block A)	Site clearing ,Removal of Shades, Temporary structure, clearing of debris temporary fencing of site, construction of main building with blocks reinforced concrete floor reinforced concrete slab, Roofing, installation of doors , rendering, electrical fittings, finishing-floor tiles and staircase.
ABC1500/48	Construction of Modern Shopping Complex at Ogiso Market (Block B)	Site clearing -Removal of Shades, Temporary structure, clearing of debris temporary fencing of site, construction of main building with blocks reinforced concrete floor reinforced concrete slab, Roofing, installation of doors , rendering, electrical fittings, finishing-floor tiles and staircase.
ABC1499/47	Construction of Modern Shopping Complex at Ogiso Market (Block C)	Site clearing ,Removal of Shades, Temporary structure, clearing of debris temporary fencing of site, construction of main building with blocks reinforced concrete floor reinforced concrete slab, Roofing, installation of doors , rendering, electrical fittings, finishing-floor tiles and staircase.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

You are required to submit a detailed profile which should contain the following:

a. Certificate of incorporation/registration with Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)
b. Evidence of registration with Edo State Public Procurement Agency.
c. Evidence of payment of tax by the company for the immediate past 3 years (i.e. 2023, 2024, 2025)
d. Company's audited financial account (indicating turnover) and funding information over the past 3 years endorsed by a firm of chartered accountants.
e. Company Profile including names of Partners, Director(s), or if it is Private Limited Company (names of Shareholders and Beneficial Owners to that company); organization structure, key professional staff with their names and registration with appropriate regulatory bodies (COREN, QSRBN, ARCON, CORBON, etc.) with their current practicing license
f. Evidence of previous/similar work done in the past three (3) years showing the following:
   I. Letter of Award of the previous work done.
   II. Completion certificate obtained from previous work done.
g. A sworn affidavit indicating that:
   i. None of the Directors of the Company has been convicted in any court for any criminal offence including fraud and financial impropriety.
   ii. The Company is not in receivership, insolvent or bankrupt.
   iii. No officer of Oredo Local Government is a former or present Director, shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the company.
   iv. No Staff of Oredo Local Government should be involved in illegal activity.
h. Bid security of 1% of the Contract sum for each of the projects.

i. All documents for submission must be transmitted with a covering letter on the company's letter head paper bearing all necessary details:

i. Equipment and technology capacity if applicable, with evidence of ownership or lease.
ii. Letter of consent to allow verification of documents submitted.
iii. Evidence of payment of a non-refundable tender fee of **N100,000.00 only**

4.0 COLLECTION/SUBMISSION OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS

Bidding documents may be collected from the **Department of Public Procurement, Oredo Local Government Council Benin City** from 27th **October to 13th November, 2026** between the hours of 8.00am and 3.00pm on Mondays to Fridays, except on public holidays for a non-refundable tender fee of **₦100,000.00** payable only to Oredo Local Government Allocation Account **Account Number: 1023650452 U.B.A Bank**. Bidding documents shall be submitted duly signed by bidders in two separate sealed envelopes marked **"Technical Bid" and "Financial Bid"** Against the bided project title at the right top corner of the envelopes.
The two envelopes are to be placed in one large envelope and address to:

The Chairman
Oredo Local Government Council,
Kings Square,
Benin City, Edo State.

5.0 OPENING OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS

Bids must be submitted to the **Oredo Local Government's Tenders Board** as detailed in the bidding documents on or before **11:59am on 13th November, 2026** and the bids will be opened on the same day at **12:00pm** at the Oredo Local Government Council Secretariat, Conference Hall Benin City, in the presence of the bidders' representatives and Civil Society Organizations (with mandate of ensuring transparency and accountability) who wishes to attend. If the office happens to be closed on the date of the receipt and opening as specified, the bids will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and location.

6.0 NOTE:

i. Late submission will be rejected
ii. This invitation shall not be construed to be commitment on the part of Procuring Entity for contract award nor shall it entitle the bidder to make any claims whatever and seek indemnity from the Agency by virtue of having responded to this advertisement.

7.0 Other details can be seen in the bidding document.

Engr, Emmanuel Ibhadode
HOLGA,
Oredo Local Government Council.
For,
Executive Chairman,
Oredo Local Government Council,
Benin City.

NEWS

FOREIGN



OVERTURNED COACHES OF THE CRASHED SPEED TRAIN IN ORDA, SPAIN ON WEDNESDAY

Serbian shot dead after attacking officer outside Israeli embassy, minister says

Serbian police shot dead a young man outside the Israeli embassy in Belgrade in the early hours of Wednesday after what authorities called a "terrorist attack".

The country's interior minister, Ivica Dacic, said the attacker had rushed at a police officer with two knives while shouting the phrase "Allahu Akbar". The officer sustained a minor knife wound to the face and shot the attacker.

Dacic said the suspect has not been identified, but he was a minor and Serbian citizen who was being monitored by security services as he was "known to be a supporter of the Islamic State".

Speaking to reporters outside the embassy, Dacic said an investigation is ongoing, but security services said the suspect had posted a picture of the Islamic State flag on his Instagram.

Dacic raised the country's terrorism threat level to "red alert" - the highest threat level – meaning stricter security checks and increased police presence at places like infrastructure facilities and areas where large crowds gather.

The interior minister said he had visited the injured police officer, who was reportedly doing well and did not need hospital care for his wounds.

Armed security personnel were seen standing guard outside the Israeli embassy on Wednesday morning.

Israel's foreign ministry confirmed in a social media post that no embassy personnel were injured and the mission was closed at the time of the incident.

This is the second such attack on Belgrade's Israeli embassy in less than three years; in June 2024, a man shot a police officer in the neck with a crossbow.

The officer who was shot survived the attack and shot dead the assailant, identified as a Serbian man who had converted to Islam.

Wednesday's attack comes just one day after elections in Israel.

Ceasefire extended across Ukraine's Kherson region, officials say

A ceasefire that began with the aim of getting food and medicine to the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Oleshky has been extended across the wider southern region of Kherson, according to sources.

Several thousand residents are trapped in the city with no access to food, water and electricity. On one side is the Dnipro river, while Russian forces are on the other and all the roads out are too dangerous.

However, no breaches of the truce that began early on Tuesday have so far been reported.

US First Lady Melania Trump, who helped broker the ceasefire along with Pope Leo XIV, said that the area involved had been expanded to provide "safe passage" for humanitarian convoys.

That was later corroborated by the press secretary to Ukraine's public ombudsman, and by Oleksandr Tolokonnikov, deputy head of Kherson, who said Russian shelling had stopped both in Kherson city, which is in Ukrainian hands, and the wider region.

Under the deal, the ceasefire will be followed by deliveries of humanitarian aid to Oleshky and then evacuations, planned for Friday, for anyone wishing to leave.

An estimated 1,700 to 2,000 people remain in Oleshky itself and a few thousand more in surrounding areas.

Many residents have resorted to cooking garden weeds to survive, telling the BBC they are suffering extreme hunger and want to leave.

Both sides said the ceasefire was being observed. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said everything was proceeding "according to plan", and paid tribute to US mediation and in particular representatives of Melania Trump.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said if the ceasefire produced results, it could "pave the way for other steps in the peace process".

A key official in President Volodymyr Zelensky's parliamentary party, David Arakhamia, said it would continue until 22:59 Ukrainian time on Sunday 1 November, and described the truce as the "largest de-escalation since 2022".

Before the war Oleshky was home to 24,000 people, but it was seized by Russia during the first days of its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

No shops are open, and the city has had no electricity, gas or water since the Kakhovka Dam was blown up in 2023, flooding the area and killing many people in Oleshky itself.

Conditions have become so desperate that not only is getting supplies into the city extremely difficult, but escaping is too risky because the routes out of Oleshky have been mined and subject to drone attack.

One woman said she had stepped on a landmine and was currently in hospital where she had undergone two operations: "I don't know how long I will have to spend there," she said, worried about not being able to join the evacuation.

Pope Leo appealed earlier this month to Russia's President Vladimir Putin to allow food and medical aid into Oleshky as well as a safe evacuation, and urged his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky to co-operate with Moscow over a ceasefire.

Then the White House said last week that Melania Trump had secured a ceasefire.

On Tuesday, the US first lady said on X that the area covered by the ceasefire "has expanded beyond Oleshky, within the Kherson region, to provide safe passage for the humanitarian convoys".

The current truce is supposed to enable roads to be cleared of mines for supplies to get into the city possibly on Thursday, and for residents to have safe passage out in an evacuation planned for Friday.

Russia's defence ministry said units from the army's Dnepr group had been conducting "engineering reconnaissance" and clearing main access roads into the village of "explosive and booby-trap devices".

Many details on the evacuation plans are unclear, and residents are wary of trusting officials with their names and addresses. However, a local volunteer told the BBC that about 500 people had already expressed interest by Tuesday afternoon.

About 64 people killed in deadly Spain train crash

Two trains l collided in Spain south of the capital Madrid on Wednesday morning.

Rail operator Adif said the incident occurred between a Renfe train and another of the Iryo company, which covers the Madrid to Seville route.

So far at least 60 people are confirmed to have died in the incident.

Where and when did the crash happen?

The two trains collided just after 09:00 (08:00 GMT) between municipalities Mora and Orgaz, and about 140km (100 miles) south of Madrid.

The accident happened when a high-speed train travelling from Madrid to the south of the country collided with another train that was apparently stationary. The crash caused at least two carriages to fall down.

Broadcaster RTVE, quoting the transport ministry, said a Renfe train rear-ended an Iryo train.

Renfe is Spain's national state-owned railway company while Iryo is a private high-speed railway operator.

All train traffic on this line has been stopped at stations along the route, Adif said.

Renfe said services between Madrid, Ciudad Real and Andalusia remain suspended.

A passenger on board one of the trains told local media that there was a heavy impact about 40 minutes into the journey.

What caused the crash?

The cause has not been confirmed, though reports in Spain suggest a high-speed train hit another train which had stopped on the tracks.

How many passengers were on board?

More than 500 people were believed to be on board both trains.

Esther Padilla, spokesperson for the government of Castilla-La Mancha region, told TVE that one of the trains - managed by the Iryo company - was carrying 146 passengers plus one baby, while the Renfe-managed train had 397 passengers on board.

A former government minister was also among those reported missing.

The Spanish Confederation of Business Organizations (CEOE) posted on X that, Fátima Báñez - who heads the organization's foundation - was on board one of the trains involved in the crash.

The Castilla La Mancha regional government said 64 people are now confirmed to have died.

Speaking separately to Spanish media, he warned the death toll could increase further.

Eighty people are being treated for injuries, according to authorities, with 50 of the casualties said to be in a serious condition, and 15 more in a critical condition.

Luxury cruise passengers stranded in Cambodia due to soaring fuel costs

A luxury cruise ship on a years-long voyage around the world said it suspended operations due to extraordinarily high fuel costs, leaving passengers stranded in Cambodia.

The US-based operator of the Villa Vie Odyssey said it was working with passengers on disembarkation plans and "temporary living arrangements".

It is unclear how many were on board but the nearly 200m (656ft) vessel can carry up to 650 passengers. It departed Belfast in October 2024 for a "continuous voyage around the world".

Global fuel prices have soared since the Iran war started earlier this year. The ship's operator said the monthly fuel cost per cabin in parts of Asia has risen to as much as $8,000 (£6,000) from $1,800.

Villa Vie Residences said it had taken "significant steps to reduce fuel consumption, including slowing the itinerary and spending more time in port". But those measures turned out to be insufficient to "offset the extraordinary increase in fuel costs".

"Passing the full increase on to residents is not a realistic solution," it said.

The company would spend the next 60 days on "restructuring and recapitalisation", though "no outcome is assured", it said.

There were reportedly around 200 passengers on board when they were ordered to disembark in the Cambodian port city of Sihanoukville, a once sleepy beach town that has gained global notoriety in recent years as a hub for Chinese casinos and scam centres.

The Villa Vie Odyssey's voyage was expected to span 3.5 years and cover nearly 150 countries, according to its website.

Its departure had faced delays as the ship underwent repairs, leaving passengers stranded in Belfast for months and costing the company millions of pounds.

FOREIGN

NEWS



Agnes Wanjiru was discovered in a septic tank near a British army camp in Kenya in 2012 aged 21

Anger in Kenya over extradition hearing delay for ex-British soldier accused of murdering woman

The family of a Kenyan woman allegedly murdered by a former British soldier 14 years ago has expressed outrage after being told an extradition hearing for the accused had been postponed until May 2027.

Relatives of Agnes Wanjiru, whose body was found in a septic tank near a British army training camp in Kenya in 2012, described the delay as "completely unacceptable" and have accused the authorities of failing to keep them informed.

Robert James Purkiss was arrested in the UK last November and is fighting extradition to Kenya to face trial for the murder of the 21-year-old mother.

He denies the allegation. His hearing was due to be held in London next month.

Murdered Kenyan's friends want UK soldier to face justice

Wanjiru's niece, Esther Njoki, told the BBC that the family had learnt of the postponement through the UK embassy and had received no official explanation.

"We have exercised patience and endured uncertainty for years, but our patience is now being taken advantage of," she said in a statement.

"Agnes deserves justice. Her daughter Stacy deserves answers about what happened. And as a family, we deserve to be treated with dignity and kept informed about proceedings that profoundly affect our lives."

The family said it had already raised money and made arrangements to travel to the UK for the hearing, which was due to take place in three weeks.

It is now calling on the authorities to expedite the proceedings, warning that the latest postponement means the case will enter its 15th year without a trial.

The family said a UK court was expected next week to give the reasons for the hearing delay.

Wanjru disappeared in March 2012 after spending an evening at a hotel in Nanyuki, about 200km (124 miles) north of the capital, Nairobi, where British soldiers were stationed for training.

Her body was found nearly three months later in a septic tank at the hotel. She had suffered stab wounds to her chest and abdomen and left behind a five-month-old daughter.

A Kenyan inquest concluded in 2019 that she had been unlawfully killed by one or two British soldiers.

In September 2025, a Kenyan High Court issued an arrest warrant for a British national after prosecutors presented evidence they said justified bringing murder charges.

Purkiss' lawyers said he intended to contest his extradition to Kenya.

He appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court in February via video link, where he was further remanded in custody.

Tanzania celebrates first natural gas discovery in more than 10 years

Tanzania has announced a significant discovery of natural gas in the Mnazi Bay area in the south of the country - the first such find in a decade.

Energy Minister Juma Homera attended a ceremony at the Kasa-1X ST2 well, which is jointly owned by state-owned Tanzania Petroleum Development Corporation (TPDC) and French oil firm Maurel & Prom, to mark the occasion.

He said the estimated 223 billion cubic feet (6.3 billion cubic metres) discovery was a "major milestone" in the development of the small oil and gas sector in the East African nation.

The new well is expected to start production early next month and is intended to boost domestic supplies.

Tanzania has existing natural gas reserves of 57.54 trillion cubic feet.

Tanzania's energy ministry An aerial view of a natural gas field with a central well, buildings, vehicles and equipment surrounded by trees and with the beach and sea seen to the left.Tanzania's energy ministry

Gas from the field will be for domestic and industrial power generation and also for vehicles

"The discovery is important in ensuring the country has reliable, clean and safe energy at affordable costs, particularly at a time when demand is increasing due to industrial growth and other economic activities," Homera said.

Natural gas accounted for nearly 80% of Tanzania's sources of electricity generation, according to government statistics for 2024.

In recent years, the country has also encouraged the use of compressed natural gas to power vehicles, with natural gas plants and filling stations set up mostly in the largest city, Dar es Salaam.

Some Tanzanians have been converting their vehicles to a dual-fuel system - with the locally available natural gas allowing for cheaper prices than petrol.

Tanzania made its first natural gas discovery in 1974 on the Songo Songo Island in the south-east Lindi region, followed by a second discovery at Mnazi Bay in neighbouring region of Mtwara in 1982.

The commercialisation of these discoveries began in 2004. This propelled further gas exploration both onshore and offshore, with the largest single discovery of 2.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in 2016.But protesters say several demands remain unmet, chief among them an investigation into the irregularities by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's premier federal investigative agency.

Unlike the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protests, which emerged outside party politics, the Ranchi agitation has drawn strong political backing.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) , which is in opposition in Jharkhand, has backed the protesters, staged demonstrations, raised the issue in the state assembly and demanded a federal investigation. Congress, a partner in the state government but the BJP's national rival, has also expressed support for the students.

On Sunday, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, who is the head of the regional Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) party, alleged that vested interests were trying to disrupt democracy in the state. He warned that the protesters' agitation should not be politicised and also reiterated his promise to take action to deliver justice.

How could Israel break political deadlock? Here are four scenarios

With 85% of votes counted, neither incumbent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, nor his key challenger Gadi Eisenkot look set to have sufficient seats for a majority.

In order to form a government, it looks likely one of the leading parties would have to break their campaign promises - meaning the most probable outcome may well be new elections.

Here are four possible scenarios.

Could Netanyahu persuade Eisenkot to join him in a national unity government?

Eisenkot would have to abandon his key platform to do so. He's framed himself as the only alternative to Netanyahu, and built his campaign on ousting him from power.

Just last night, he took to the stage at his campaign HQ and called on Netanyahu to "announce his retirement from political life today," telling the crowd that Israelis are fed up with Netanyahu's "culture of lies", "division and incitement".

But that was before one of the main exit polls - which had initially projected a lead for Eisenkot's bloc - was revised, and he was overtaken by Netanyahu.

Netanyahu could try to persuade Eisenkot's Yashar Party to join his Likud Party in a unity government by ditching the far-right and ultra-Orthodox parties he is currently in coalition with. But last night at Likud HQ he thanked his "loyal partners" and called for a "strong right-wing government"- remarks some have interpreted as meaning he intends to preserve his alliance with them.

One thing that could make a unity government more likely is a renewed conflict with Iran, which could place serious pressure on party leaders to put aside their political differences and work together. In the days prior to the election, Israeli and US media reported that Netanyahu was pushing for fresh strikes on the country, and had pressed Donald Trump to approve US involvement.

This would no-doubt be framed by Netanyahu's critics as an attempt to save his own political skin by entering another regional conflict.

Russia's President Putin hosts counterparts from Mozambique, Libya and Equatorial Guinea

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed counterparts from Mozambique, Libya and Equatorial Guinea for talks on Tuesday.

The African leaders were in Moscow for the Gas Exporting Counties Forum (GECF).

"We engage in constructive cooperation in multilateral international platforms, first and foremost the United Nations," Putin said as he addressed Mozambique's President Daniel Francisco Chapo.

"We appreciate Mozambique's support for many Russian initiatives and its rejection of odious Russophobic actions."

Putin also emphasised Russia's intention to develop joint initiatives with Libya. The two countries have long-standing ties and celebrated 70 years of diplomatic ties last year. Some Western observers have warned of the risks of Russia's growing influence in the strategically placed Mediterranean nation.

"Despite the challenging situation in international politics and the economy, bilateral trade (with Libya) continues to grow," Putin said. "In April, the first meeting of the co-chairs of the joint intergovernmental commission took place in Moscow. We are, of course, interested in resuming its full-scale activities as soon as possible."

During the meeting with Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Putin thanked the counterpart for mutual cooperation and welcomed him in Moscow.

Judge throws out attempted murder case against Zimbabwe VP's ex-wife

After seven years on remand, the ex-wife of Zimbabwe's vice president walked out of a Harare prison on Tuesday after a judge ordered her release.

Marry Mubaiwa had been accused of attempting to murder her former husband Constantino Chiwenga in 2019.

Chiwenga's doctor alleged that Mubaiwa pulled an intravenous tube out of her husband's chest while he was hospitalised.

Mubaiwa was remanded in custody and denied bail while awaiting trial.

This week prosecutors sought another delay to the proceedings, prompting the magistrate to throw the case out.

Speaking outside the court, Mubaiwa thanked her lawyers and declared victory.

The state could still move for a new trial.

Chiwenga was instrumental in the coup d'etat that ousted long-time leader Robert Mugabe in 2017.

NEWS FEATURE

Odianese: Caring for orphans, vulnerable children, demands integrity, honesty, compassion

EDWARD OSEGHE



GOD'S GRACE ORPHANAGE MARKS FOURTH ANNIVERSARY:
Founder and CEO, Mrs. Kate Okunrobo Odianese (middle in red), celebrates with children and other participants as the orphanage renews its commitment to the care, protection and welfare of vulnerable children in Benin City, Edo State.

The Founder and Chief Executive Officer of God's Grace Orphanage and Motherless Babies Home, Mrs. Kate Okunrobo Odianese, has urged orphanage proprietors, caregivers and humanitarian organisations to uphold integrity, honesty, accountability and genuine compassion in protecting orphans and vulnerable children.

Odianese made the call at the fourth anniversary celebration of the orphanage on Saturday, at its residence in Evhukun Quarters, along the Sapele Road axis of Benin City, Edo State.

Reflecting on the organisation's four-year journey, she expressed gratitude to God for the grace and guidance that had sustained its humanitarian mission despite the challenges encountered.

"Looking back over the past four years, I can confidently say that our journey has been nothing short of a miracle, a testament to God's faithfulness, sustaining grace, and unwavering love. What began as a vision driven by compassion and a commitment to serving humanity has continued to grow into a mission of hope, care, and transformation for vulnerable children and families in our society," she said.

She appreciated the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, fellow orphanage owners, humanitarian organisations, caregivers, volunteers and other stakeholders for their contributions to child welfare.

Emphasising the responsibilities of humanitarian service providers, Odianese described childcare as a calling requiring selflessness, patience, sacrifice and an unwavering commitment to protecting children's dignity and rights.

"Caring for orphans, abandoned children, and other vulnerable members of society is more than a professional responsibility; it is a calling that demands integrity, honesty, patience, sacrifice, and genuine compassion.

"We must always remember that every child entrusted to our care is a human being of immeasurable worth, deserving of love, respect, protection, and dignity. Their circumstances must never define their potential, and their past must never determine the limits of their future," she said.

She stressed the need to promote children's physical, emotional, psychological, mental, social and educational well-being, adding that every child deserved opportunities to thrive regardless of their background.

"At God's Grace Orphanage and Motherless Babies Home, we believe that every child deserves not merely to survive, but to live with dignity, grow with confidence, and look forward to a future filled with hope and opportunity."

Odianese called for stronger collaboration among community leaders, government agencies, humanitarian organisations and other stakeholders, noting that sustainable childcare required collective responsibility.

> Odianese called for stronger collaboration among community leaders, government agencies, humanitarian organisations and other stakeholders, noting that sustainable childcare required collective responsibility.

She also urged stakeholders to support orphanage proprietors, administrators and caregivers in sustaining their humanitarian efforts.

"Orphanage proprietors, administrators, and caregivers must not be forgotten in our collective pursuit. We must encourage them, support them, recognise their efforts, and work towards creating sustainable systems that enable them to continue their work effectively.

"As people of faith, we are reminded in Psalm 68:5 that God is "a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows." This powerful truth reinforces our responsibility to extend love, protection, and practical support to those who are most vulnerable among us".

The founder further acknowledged the contributions of the organisation's local and international partners, describing their generosity and commitment as instrumental to the growth and sustainability of its vision.

"Your generosity, commitment, encouragement, and willingness to go the extra mile have been invaluable to the growth and sustainability of this vision. Through your support, you have demonstrated that compassion knows no geographical boundaries and that the desire to improve the lives of vulnerable children can unite people across nations and cultures".

In his goodwill message, the orphanage's patron, Evangelist Ogbemudia Osunde, commended Odianese for her resilience, compassion and commitment to humanitarian service.

He described her as a rare gem and trustworthy vision-bearer whose dedication had brought hope and transformation to underprivileged children and others around her.

AI Deep fakes, Ransomware, Crypto Laundering: IGP Disu exposes new front in financial crime

Stories by Joy Odor

ABUJA

Nigeria's Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Rilwan Disu, has warned that cryptocurrency laundering, ransomware attacks and artificial intelligence-enabled fraud are creating a dangerous new front in financial crime, urging banks to report cyberattacks immediately before criminals erase evidence, move stolen funds across borders and frustrate investigations.

Disu said the transformation of criminal activities from conventional street-level offences to sophisticated digital operations had exposed financial institutions, businesses and individuals to threats that increasingly transcend national boundaries.

Represented by Assistant Inspector-General of Police Uche Ifeanyi Henry of the Department of Training and Development, the police chief raised the alarm while delivering a presentation titled "From AI-Enabled Cybercrime to Cross-Border Crypto Laundering: Building Resilient Digital Investigations"* at the second edition of the International Cybersecurity Conference.

He warned that criminals were exploiting artificial intelligence, internet-connected devices and complex financial technologies to infiltrate banking systems, impersonate trusted individuals, steal sensitive information and conceal illicit proceeds.

The emerging threat, he said, demands a fundamental shift in how law enforcement agencies, banks and technology companies detect, report and investigate financial crimes.

"The trend is no longer the same. The armed robbers we used to have on the streets have moved from the streets into the operational room," Disu said.

His remarks highlighted a growing challenge for security agencies: financial crime is no longer confined to physical locations, as perpetrators can manipulate digital identities, compromise computer systems and transfer funds across jurisdictions without directly confronting their victims.

Disu identified AI-generated deepfakes, identity theft, phishing, business impersonation, disinformation and ransomware among the methods increasingly deployed by cybercriminals.

He warned that artificial intelligence could be used to create convincing images, videos and voice recordings of prominent personalities and corporate executives, enabling fraudsters to impersonate trusted authorities and deceive unsuspecting victims into transferring money or surrendering confidential information.

Chinda vows God-fearing rule as Wike unites 7 parties for Rivers 2027

ABUJA

Hon. Ogundu Kingsley Chinda, the All Progressives Congress (APC) Governor ship candidate for Rivers State in the 2027 general election, has pledged to govern with the fear of God if elected, declaring that peace, unity and inclusive leadership would form the foundation of his administration.

Hon. Chinda made the pledge during the unveiling of candidates under the Rainbow Coalition at the Yakubu Gowon Township Stadium, Elekahia, Port Harcourt, where a large crowd of party faithful gathered for a political mobilisation event centred on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election bid and the 2027 governorship contest.

The candidate said the coalition's candidates would work together towards electoral victory and the formation of a government that would rise above rancour, division and exclusive claims to political entitlement.

His declaration placed unity at the centre of his campaign message, as he presented the Rainbow Coalition as a platform for bringing different political interests together in pursuit of a common political objective.

Clad in white with blue accents, party insignia and campaign images of himself and President Tinubu, Hon. Chinda appeared before supporters as the coalition unveiled candidates seeking various elective offices across Rivers State.

He said he would govern Rivers with the fear of God from May 29, 2027, if elected, while emphasising the importance of peace and cohesion to the state's development.

Hon. Chinda commended the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Ezenwo Nyesom Wike, for the political strategy behind the Rainbow Coalition, describing the initiative as an exercise in bipartisan political cooperation.

According to him, the Coalition brings together structures from about seven political parties under a common umbrella, with the stated objectives of securing Tinubu's re-election, supporting his own governorship ambition and mobilising votes for other coalition candidates.



TRAINING:
Newly recruited 300 volunteers by Fire Safety Protection and Environmental Surveillance of Nigeria, leaving their campto Police College for one week training in Kaduna on Wednesday.

AFRIDEX 2026: CDS courts 6 global defence partners in push for military technology, equipment

ABUJA

Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, General Olufemi Oluyede, has stepped up the country's international defence diplomacy, holding high-level engagements with six foreign military and defence delegations at the ongoing African International Defence Exhibition (AFRIDEX) 2026 in Lagos, as the Armed Forces pursue wider cooperation in technology, equipment acquisition, military training and operational capabilities.

The engagements, held on the sidelines of the exhibition, brought together representatives from Poland, the United States, Italy, Guinea-Bissau, the Kingdom of Eswatini and the United Arab Emirates, highlighting Nigeria's efforts to strengthen bilateral military relationships and improve cooperation in confronting emerging security threats.

The discussions covered defence technology, capacity development, professional military education, technology transfer and operational cooperation.

However, the Defence Headquarters did not disclose the financial value of any prospective arrangements or announce specific contracts concluded during the meetings.

At a time when security threats increasingly cross national borders, the engagements place defence partnerships and the exchange of expertise at the centre of Nigeria's efforts to strengthen its military capabilities.

Among the delegations received by General Oluyede was a Polish team led by the country's Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Michał Cygan, accompanied by executives from the defence industry.

Their discussions focused on possible collaboration in defence technology, equipment acquisition and capacity development.

The participation of defence industry executives gave the engagement an industrial dimension, extending the conversation beyond diplomatic relations to the potential supply of military equipment and the development of technical capabilities.

For Nigeria, such cooperation could create avenues to explore available technologies, strengthen personnel expertise and broaden options for meeting defence requirements.

The statement, however, did not identify specific equipment under consideration, disclose proposed contract values or confirm that procurement agreements had been signed.

NCS, NFIU launch stocktaking exercise to expose enforcement gaps, protect gains

ABUJA

The Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has pledged to intensify its fight against money laundering, terrorism financing and cross-border financial crimes, warning that Nigeria must protect the gains that secured its removal from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list on October 24, 2025.

The warning came as Nigerian authorities began taking stock of the country's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing framework ahead of its next mutual evaluation, a process that will scrutinise how effectively institutions implement measures designed to protect the nation's financial system from illicit funds.

At a stocktaking meeting held at the Customs headquarters in Abuja on October 26, 2026, the Comptroller-General of Customs, Adewale Adeniyi, represented by the Deputy Comptroller-General in charge of Finance, Administration and Technical Services, Kikelomo Adeola, described the country's exit from the international monitoring list as a major national achievement that must not be reversed.

The meeting brought together officials working to assess progress, identify weaknesses and strengthen Nigeria's readiness for the next evaluation of its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing measures.

For the Customs Service, the stakes extend beyond revenue collection and trade facilitation.

Its access to cargo manifests, import and export records, trade documentation and border intelligence places it in a strategic position to help detect suspicious movements of goods and identify activities potentially linked to illicit financial flows.

Adeola said the stocktaking exercise should not be treated as a routine administrative meeting but as an opportunity to determine whether Nigeria's reforms are delivering sustainable results.

NEWS

NCGC unlocks N64bn for 174,000 borrowers, tackles collateral hurdle

Kebonkwu Ruth / Agenomoh Winner

ABUJA

The National Credit Guarantee Company Limited (NCGC) has unlocked N64.13 billion in loans for 174,495 borrowers across the country within its first 14 months of operation.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Bonaventure Okhaimo, disclosed this on Tuesday while briefing State House correspondents at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

He said the intervention has supported an estimated 914,791 direct and indirect jobs.

Okhaimo said the company, established by President Bola Tinubu, was set up to dismantle longstanding barriers to credit access, especially collateral requirements that have excluded viable businesses from formal financing.

He revealed that 22,616 Nigerians who had never accessed formal credit before have now benefited from the guarantee scheme.

He assured that NCGC would scale up its guarantee operations to deepen financial inclusion and ensure that no viable business is denied funding due to lack of collateral.

According to the company's performance report as of October 21, 2026, the scheme has reached beneficiaries in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory through 19 participating financial institutions, including commercial banks, microfinance banks and development finance institutions.

He said NCGC was established to reduce lending risks for financial institutions and enable them to lend to businesses and individuals who lack adequate collateral. The company does not lend directly but provides partial guarantees and shares the risk of default.

On whether the scheme makes loans cheaper, Okhaimo said the primary mandate is to improve access, though the guarantee could help reduce borrowing costs by addressing the risk premium banks charge MSMEs.

He clarified that NCGC does not determine interest rates, as lending decisions remain with the participating institutions. He added that the company is working with the Central Bank of Nigeria to explore capital relief for lenders.

Okhaimo said the intervention targets viable businesses that lack conventional collateral, including youths in the creative and technology sectors.

The report showed that women accounted for 74,503 borrowers, or 42.7 per cent of beneficiaries, while 22,616 borrowers accessed formal financing for the first time. A total of 7,731 beneficiaries were recorded under youth empowerment.

Trade and commerce, alongside agribusiness and agro-processing, accounted for more than 80 per cent of beneficiaries. Some initial beneficiaries were smallholder farmers onboarded through an agricultural aggregator in north-central Nigeria.

INEC probes suspected AI-generated photos in voter register, promises corrections

Caroline Ameh

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has launched an investigation into suspected artificial intelligence-generated photographs found in the Preliminary Register of Voters, assuring Nigerians that verified irregularities will be corrected before the final register is certified.

The commission disclosed this in a press statement issued on Tuesday by Mohammed Kudu Haruna, Chairman of its Information and Voter Education Committee (IVEC), following public concerns over questionable photographs circulating on social media.

INEC explained that the register published on its website on October 26, 2026, was the same preliminary register physically displayed at Registration Areas nationwide between October 9 and 15 as part of the Display, Claims and Objections exercise.

According to the commission, some questionable registration records had already been identified and flagged for further examination during the physical display, prompting the commencement of a review and corrective process.

It clarified, however, that the online publication contained the original preliminary register and did not incorporate all ongoing data-cleanup activities.

INEC stressed that the preliminary register was not the final certified register, noting that the display exercise was designed to allow citizens and stakeholders to scrutinise voter records, identify inaccuracies and irregularities, and facilitate necessary corrections before certification.

The commission also said it was investigating the circumstances surrounding the suspicious photographs, including possible technical or procedural lapses that might have contributed to their appearance in the register.

It added that appropriate action would be taken based on the findings of the investigation.

INEC commended citizens and stakeholders who raised concerns over the photographs, describing public scrutiny as an important part of efforts to improve the accuracy and integrity of the voter register.

The commission assured Nigerians that verified irregularities would be addressed through established procedures and that further updates would be provided as the review progresses.

Tinubu seeks law amendment to expand transfer of convicted offenders

Caroline Ameh

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has transmitted a bill to the House of Representatives seeking to amend Nigeria's law governing the transfer of convicted offenders between the country and foreign jurisdictions.

The proposed Transfer of Convicted Offenders (Enactment and Enforcement) Amendment Bill, 2026, is aimed at facilitating the transfer of convicted persons between Nigeria and countries with which it has relevant agreements.

The amendment would extend the framework to cover countries outside the Commonwealth, potentially broadening the scope of international cooperation in the transfer of convicted offenders.

Tinubu has urged the House of Representatives to expedite consideration of the proposed legislation.

The bill is expected to be considered by lawmakers as part of efforts to update the legal framework governing the transfer of convicted offenders between Nigeria and other countries.

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, is expected to provide further details on the legislative process.



AWF MASTER CLASS:

From left: Special Assistant to the President on Humanitarian Affairs and Development Partners, Inna Binta-Audu representing Vice President and Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), retired Brig.-Gen. Mohamed Marwa and Founder/President of Aspire Women Forum (AWF), Dr Zainab Marwa, during the AWF master class for women and youths in Abuja on Wednesday

Delta APC to begin 2027 campaigns in Oleh

Ajuwa Victor

ASABA

The Delta State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) will begin its campaign for the 2027 general elections in Oleh, headquarters of Isoko South Local Government Area, on November 5.

Director-General of the Delta APC Campaign Council, Senator James Manager, disclosed this during an interactive meeting with members of the campaign council, directors, party candidates, local government council chairmen, party chairmen and local government campaign coordinators in Asaba.

Manager said the decision to commence the campaign in Isoko Nation was deliberate, adding that the campaign would eventually end in Okpe Local Government area of the state at a date and venue yet to be announced.

He urged party candidates to intensify their preparations for the elections, stressing that the limited time available required them to be proactive and committed to the party's campaign activities.

The campaign council Director-General also appealed to candidates to promote the interests of all APC flag bearers rather than concentrate exclusively on their individual ambitions.

He said the party's success would depend on the ability of its candidates and supporters to work together to secure victory for President Bola Tinubu, Governor Sheriff Oborevwori and other APC candidates in the 2027 elections.

Manager said: "Whatever you are doing, please do it for everybody. As a candidate, whatever you are doing, do it for Mr President, do it for the governor and do it for the entire APC family."

He urged the candidates to use their respective platforms, including social media, to publicise the party's programmes and achievements, while warning them against being distracted by opposition propaganda.

According to him, the meeting was convened to address questions and concerns that had emerged following the inauguration of the campaign council and to enable party leaders to exchange views with candidates and grassroots coordinators.

He explained that the gathering was part of a series of meetings being held to strengthen coordination and ensure that the campaign structure functioned effectively at all levels.

Manager further directed local government campaign committees to submit their membership lists by Wednesday, saying the campaign council needed to know the composition of the various committees to facilitate effective planning and coordination.

The former senator stressed the importance of reaching every community and ward, urging local organisers to identify capable representatives who could mobilise support at the grassroots.

₦4bn fund to empower 15,000 Deltans will be accounted for –DSSIP boss

Ajuwa Victor

ASABA

The Delta State Government has assured residents that the ₦4 billion empowerment fund earmarked for 15,000 indigent Deltans across the state's 25 local government areas will be transparently and judiciously utilised, with strict measures in place to prevent diversion and ensure that only genuine beneficiaries are reached.

The initiative, implemented under the Delta State Social Investment Programme (DS-SIP), is designed to alleviate poverty, empower vulnerable residents, and improve their living conditions through targeted government intervention.

The General Manager of DS-SIP, Hon. Chief Dr. Henry Afure Sakpra, JP, gave the assurance, emphasising that the fund would be applied strictly to its intended purpose and that the programme would not be allowed to serve fraudulent interests.

Chief Sakpra explained that due process would guide the implementation of the initiative, with a focus on transparency, accountability, and the identification of genuine beneficiaries.

He stressed that the empowerment fund was intended to provide meaningful support to vulnerable Deltans who genuinely require government assistance, adding that measures would be taken to prevent the diversion of resources from their intended purpose.

Sports

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

2026 GCU relays closes entries after inspection of facilities

...Nesiama raises safety concerns over Ughelli track

With entries now closed for the November 14 competition, urgent repairs to the Government College Ughelli Athletics Arena have emerged as a major priority ahead of the eighth edition of the GCU Relays.

Retired Commodore Omatseye Nesiama and Professor Jeff Okpako have called attention to the deteriorating condition of the arena's tartan track following a final assessment of the facility ahead of the annual intercollegiate athletics meet.

The inspection team, led by GCU Relays Coordinator Nesiama and Nigeria Association of Athletics Technical Officials (NAATO) President Okpako, identified several sections requiring urgent attention, raising concerns about the safety of athletes expected to compete at the event.

Among the major defects are potholes on the track, erosion affecting lane one and damage to the 100-metre section and home straight. The condition of these areas has prompted calls for immediate intervention before the competition gets underway.



Nesiama acknowledged the scale of the challenge but expressed hope that the most critical defects could be addressed before the November 14 deadline.

"Unfortunately, a couple of places look bad. But we will see what we can do before November 14, 2026," he said.

He warned that the damaged sections could expose athletes to avoidable risks, particularly in races where the condition of the track is crucial to performance and safety.

"There are a few potholes that can create serious safety issues. Even the 100m area and the home straight need retouching. Erosion has taken over some portion of lane one. It could be dangerous to the athletes," Nesiama cautioned.

The home straight, where athletes complete their races, is receiving particular attention, with plans underway to engage specialists to repair its worst sections.

However, the challenge extends beyond temporary repairs. The technical team has urged corporate Nigeria to support the construction of a new tartan track, noting that the existing facility is now a decade old.

The appeal highlights the importance of sustained investment in sports infrastructure, particularly facilities that serve school athletics and grassroots talent development.



Enabulele hails Ezinore on African scrabble championship performance

The Executive Chairman of the Edo State Sports Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, has congratulated Team Edo athlete George Ezinore on his outstanding performance at the 16th Africa Scrabble Championship in Monrovia, Liberia, where he finished as runner-up in the individual category.

The continental championship, held from October 22 to 25, 2026, brought together some of Africa's finest Scrabble players. Nigeria's Abdulmumin Jimoh emerged champion, while Ezinore finished second and Emmanuel Umujose placed third, giving Nigeria a clean sweep of the individual podium.

In a statement issued by his Media Aide, Edoko Wilson Edoko, Enabulele described Ezinore's achievement as a source of pride for Edo State and Nigeria, noting that the feat reflected years of dedication, discipline, consistency and commitment to excellence.

The Sports Commission Chairman also commended Team Nigeria for winning the team championship, ahead of Kenya in second place and host nation Liberia in third.

"Nigeria's impressive performance, including placing 11 players among the overall top 20, further demonstrates the country's depth of talent and sustained competitiveness in African Scrabble," he stated.

"I particularly celebrate Ezinore's steady progression in the sport, as demonstrated by his achievements at national and international competitions."

Enabulele recalled that Ezinore won a bronze medal at the 2021 National Sports Festival hosted by Edo State before finishing second at the Africa Scrabble Championship in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2024.

In 2025, Ezinore won the National Scrabble Championship and subsequently captained Team Edo's Scrabble contingent at the National Sports Festival in Ogun State, where he won a gold medal. He is currently the reigning National Scrabble Champion.

N15m Prize: Pros storm BCGS fairways for Oba of Benin golf tourney

The ancient city of Benin is agog as top professional golfers from across the country stormed the Benin Club Golf Section (BCGS) for the prestigious 9th Oba of Benin Golf Tournament.

The pros arrived on Tuesday in high spirits, ready to battle for a share of the mouth-watering N15 million prize purse in honour of His Royal Majesty, Omo N' Oba N' Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, CFR.

The arrival of the big guns follows a thrilling Caddies showdown that officially teed off the tournament on Tuesday, setting the perfect tone for what promises to be five days of world-class golf.

Teeing off first for the pros event are Samuel Agbeyebye, Osas Eniagbe and Tony Udumoh, follow by kanayor Chukwu, S. Omole and Festus Makelemi, while Favour Efenedo, Rachael Danjuma and C. James are on third tee off.

The fourth tee off will involve Chukwudi Okoro, Vincent Ikemefune and F. Eweka just as Chidi Tobias, Collins Odile and Victor Eniagbe battle in the fifth flight ahead of Solomon Ideriah, Uche Ukwor and Lucky Idehen. Hannah Obadina, Henle Alechenu and Nkechi Arumona.

Others are Austin Akpodiete, Solomon Okoromi and Francis Isuku. Mike Ubi, Samson Okorhi and Femi Olagbenro. Valentine Ogieva, Londi Paul Pwaspo and H. Adamu. Francis Epe, U. Okon and Idris Garba.

Also, Gift Willy, John Oche and Matthew Lawrence. Magnus Onumajuru, Victor Ojeabulu and Monday Ighodaro. Emmanuel Ojeabulu, Kingsley Okparaku and J. Jayeola. Peter Adikpe, Oladakpo Akinwande, Donatus Isuku and Bola Mustapha.

The BCGS course, according to Captain Engr. Stephen Ebaretonbofa, is in pristine condition with lush fairways and slick greens, ready to test the skill and nerves of the nation's finest.

With the professionals now on ground, the battle for royal glory officially begins today and continues through Thursday, ahead of the veterans, ladies and handicap categories.

Edo Queens, Ampem Darkoa to settle WAFU-B ticket in 30-minute decider

Kehinde Osagiede

CAIRO, Egypt - Nigeria's Edo Queens FC will face Ghana's Ampem Darkoa Ladies on Thursday, October 29, in a 30-minute extra-time period to decide who represents the WAFU-B zone at the 2026 CAF Women's Champions League.

The two sides will resume their interrupted playoff in Cairo, where the tournament runs from November 1 to 15.

The fixture follows a dispute over the WAFU-B qualifiers in Burkina Faso two months ago. Edo Queens beat Ampem Darkoa 4-1 on penalties after a 2-2 draw in regulation time and were declared winners.

Ampem Darkoa Ladies, however, petitioned CAF over the officiating, and the continental body ordered that 30 minutes of extra time be played to settle the matter.

Edo Queens' camp in Cairo is said to be confident ahead of the match. "The players are in the right frame of mind," Coach Moses Aduku said

The winner will take the last place in Group B, alongside Morocco's AS FAR, Uganda's Kawempe Muslim Ladies and Mali's US FAS Bamako. The tournament brings together eight of Africa's leading women's clubs.

Qualification would give Nigerian women's club football another chance to compete on the continental stage, and many pundits at home have tipped Edo Queens to prevail again.

The Champions League winner will also earn a place in the qualifying round of the FIFA Women's Champions Cup, to be held in the United States in 2027.

Nigeria Rugby League set to begin in November 2026

The Nigeria Rugby Football Federation (NRFF) has announced plans to launch the Nigeria Rugby League in November 2026 after securing support for the competition.

The decision was reached at an emergency board meeting in Abuja, where members deliberated on the league's format and arrangements for its successful take-off.

The competition will begin with regional contests, which are expected to produce six regional champions.

The successful teams will advance to the national finals, tagged the Super Cup, scheduled to take place in Abuja in February 2027.

Speaking after the meeting, NRFF President, Dr. Ademola Are, said the federation had been working behind the scenes to secure the necessary support to launch the league.



SPORTS

The Nigerian OBSERVER That The People May Know

FIFA investigates alleged racism as England abandon U-15 world cup match against Ireland

The world football governing body, FIFA, has launched an investigation into an allegation of racist abuse during the FIFA U-15 World Cup and Festival match between England and the Republic of Ireland in Azerbaijan.

The match was abandoned on Monday after England's players left the pitch following an alleged racist incident involving a Republic of Ireland player.

Ireland were leading 4-1 as the encounter approached its final minute when an England player reportedly approached the touchline to alert the coaching staff to the alleged abuse.

England's coaching staff subsequently brought the complaint to the attention of the referee before instructing their players to leave the pitch.

FIFA has confirmed that it is gathering official reports to establish the circumstances surrounding the incident, which will be referred to its independent disciplinary committee for consideration.

"FIFA is aware of an incident at the U-15 World Cup and Festival match between England and the Republic of Ireland," a FIFA spokesperson said.

"The match was abandoned by the referee following England's refusal to continue.

"The official reports are being gathered, and the matter will be referred to the independent disciplinary committee, who will decide in due course."

England head coach Matt Thorpe was reportedly seen approaching the referee before directing his players to leave the field.

Reports indicated that Thorpe was told by the official that he could not hear the alleged abuse.

An assistant coach was subsequently heard telling the referee, "We are reporting racism," before adding that the team did not want to continue playing.

One of the England players was reportedly upset following the incident.

The situation also triggered a heated exchange between members of the two coaching staffs as the teams sought to address the matter and protect their players.

The alleged incident has placed the spotlight on FIFA's efforts to address discrimination and protect young players participating in international football competitions.

However, the circumstances surrounding the allegation remain under investigation, and no conclusion has been announced regarding responsibility.

Neither the Football Association (FA), which governs football in England, nor the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) had issued an official statement at the time of the report.

FIFA's independent disciplinary committee is expected to examine the official reports before determining any appropriate action.

The outcome of the investigation could clarify the circumstances that led to the abandonment of the match and establish whether disciplinary measures are warranted



Doumbouya elected New Guinea football federation president

Mamady Doumbouya has been elected president of the Guinea Football Federation (FEGUIFOOT) after securing 21 votes out of a possible 52.

Doumbouya will lead the country's football governing body for the next four years, working alongside members of his list to oversee the development and administration of football in Guinea.

His election marks the beginning of a new leadership era for Guinean football, with expectations that the new administration will work towards improving the country's football structure and competitiveness.

Doumbouya and his team will now be responsible for steering the affairs of the federation throughout their four-year tenure.

NPFL warns Barau FC over security lapses

The Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) has issued an official warning to Barau FC over security lapses observed during the club's home matches.

In a statement signed by its Chief Operating Officer, Dr Ayo Abdulrahaman, the league body disclosed that it had received a video circulating on social media showing some of Barau FC's stewards encroaching onto the field of play after their Matchday 10 encounter against Kwara United.

The NPFL described the incident as a serious security concern, warning that such actions could result in a major security breach if not addressed promptly. The league emphasised that club stewards are expected to remain within their designated duty areas in the terraces, where they are responsible for crowd control and maintaining order among supporters. It stressed that stewards must not encroach into restricted areas or onto the field of play, adding that their activities fall under the full responsibility of the host club.

The NPFL further warned that Barau FC would face sanctions if a similar incident occurred during any of its subsequent home fixtures.

The league has consequently urged the club's management to take immediate steps to strengthen its security arrangements and ensure strict compliance with established matchday security regulations. The warning comes as the NPFL continues to reinforce security standards across its clubs to ensure the safety of players, officials, supporters and other matchday participants

Burna Boy sets Stade de France ablaze at NFL Paris Game

Nigerian music superstar Burna Boy delivered an electrifying performance at the 2026 NFL Paris halftime show, captivating spectators at the Stade de France during Sunday's matchup between the Pittsburgh Steelers and New Orleans Saints.

The Grammy-winning Afrofusion singer thrilled the crowd with an energetic display, performing some of his biggest hits, including Ye, On the Low and Last Last.

Burna Boy's commanding stage presence and signature blend of Afrobeat, reggae, dancehall and other musical influences brought excitement to the halftime show, further showcasing the growing global appeal of African music.

Ahead of the performance, the Nigerian singer expressed optimism about returning to the iconic Paris venue, hoping the atmosphere would match the reception he received during his previous concert there.

“If it is anything like my shows, like the last time I was here? Then, it would be amazing,” he said.

The performance further strengthened Burna Boy's growing association with major international sporting events.

In 2023, the singer performed at the NBA All-Star Game and the UEFA Champions League final kickoff show, taking his music to audiences across different sporting platforms.

He also joined Colombian superstar Shakira for a performance at the inaugural FIFA World Cup halftime show in 2026, adding another major international appearance to his growing list of achievements.

His appearance at the NFL Paris halftime show came just weeks after fellow Nigerian singer Ayra Starr made history as the first artiste to headline an NFL halftime show, highlighting the increasing visibility of Nigerian musicians on major international stages.

Born Damini Ogulu, Burna Boy rose to prominence with Like to Party, the lead single from his debut studio album, L.I.F.E, released in 2013.

Since then, he has established himself as one of Africa's most successful musical exports, building an international following through his distinctive Afrofusion sound and acclaimed albums.



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