

Edo govt condemns 4am arrest of Pa Iduoriyekemwen

MATTHEW OKAGHA

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has welcomed the release of 90-year-old Pa Joseph Iduoriyekemwen by the Nigeria Police, while expressing strong reservations

over the manner of his arrest in the early hours of Tuesday.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Prince Kassim Afegbua, who disclosed this in a statement, said the initial report that the nagenarian had been abducted was later clarified to be an arrest following a petition allegedly filed by some members of

Amagba Community.

Afegbua, however, condemned the circumstances surrounding the arrest, describing the early-morning apprehension of the aged and fragile man as unacceptable.

According to him, Pa Iduoriyekemwen, at 90, could have been invited by the police to respond to the issues raised

in the petition rather than being arrested around 4am.

He said: "Whatever be the motive, arresting a 90-year-old and fragile man at 4am in such gestapo manner was a no-no for us."

The Commissioner stressed that Governor Monday Okpebholo remained committed to the rule of law and due

process, noting that his administration had consistently approached issues through lawful and established procedures.

Afegbua cautioned against the politicisation of minor disputes in the state, saying such tendencies could unnecessarily inflame passions and create narratives capable of under-

mining the government.

He said Edo people must continue to treat their elders with respect and decorum, describing such values as essential to building a decent and responsible society.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

f t i n NigerianObserver @Nigerian_Observer @NigerianObserver www.nigerianobservernews.com

PUBLISHED SINCE MAY 29, 1968

VOL. 47, NO. 1367

WEDNESDAY 7TH, OCTOBER 2026.

₦200

Gov Okpebholo credits President Tinubu for Edo's gains in fight against insecurity

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor Monday Okpebholo has attributed the gains recorded by his administration in the fight against insecurity to the support of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The governor spoke during a tour of Edo North Senatorial District by leaders of the All Progressives Congress (APC) to sensitise party members ahead of the 2027 general elec-

tions.

The governor and his entourage visited Olegauma Primary School, Uzebba Illeha; Obe Primary School, Sabongida-Ora; Afuze Mini Stadium; and Abadakhigua Primary School, Otuo, in Owan West and Owan East Local Government Areas of Edo State.

Okpebholo said the political will and strength to tackle kidnapping, cultism, banditry, and other forms of criminality in the state came from the support of the Tinubu admin-

istration.

"The political will and strength I have to fight insecurity in the state is because of the support from President Tinubu. The strength to fight kidnapping, cultism, banditry, and other criminality in the state is as a result of the support from Mr. President," he said.

He also said the removal of fuel subsidy by the federal government had increased the resources available to state governments for development.

"We pay salaries as at when due. We have successfully changed the narrative, and our people are enjoying practical governance," Okpebholo said.

The governor said the improved security situation had allowed residents to return to their farms without fear of kid-

napping.

"Today our people are no longer afraid of kidnappers as we have put them under check and our people can now go to the farm. We have also ensured no cult killings again in Edo State. We have achieved this because of the political will

and support of President Tinubu," he said.

Okpebholo said the tour was also aimed at enabling him to see firsthand the challenges confronting residents across the communities.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

Defence Minister mourns victims of military aircraft crash

ABUJA

Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa, has expressed deep sorrow over the death of military personnel and civilians in the crash of a Nigerian military aircraft with tail number NAF 931.

Musa, in a statement issued Monday in Abuja, described the incident as a painful loss to the Armed Forces and the nation, noting that the military personnel aboard the aircraft

were on a routine mission in the service of Nigeria.

He said the fallen officers and airmen demonstrated "courage, unyielding devotion and selfless patriotism" in the discharge of their duties.

"The loss of these valiant patriots is an irreparable blow not only to the military high command and their comrades-in-arms, but to the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria," he said.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

NAF names 25 victims of ill-fated flight

...mourns personnel, passengers

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has released the names of the 25 personnel and passengers who lost their lives in the crash of its ATR-42 aircraft, NAF 931, in the Igbo-koda area of Ondo State on Monday.

The disclosure, contained in a statement issued on Tuesday by the Director of Public Relations and Information, NAF Headquarters, Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, came as the military and the nation mourned the victims of the

ill-fated flight.

The aircraft, which was on a routine mission from Benin to Lagos, had five crew members and 20 passengers on board when the crash occurred.

The crew members were Sqn. Ldr. MI Aburime, Flight Captain; Sqn. Ldr. AP Man-Ugwueje, Co-pilot; Flt.-Lt. IS Bako, Co-pilot; Warrant Officer Abubakar A, Aircraft Technician; and Cpl. Uguru HC, Aircraft Technician.

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



MOBILISATION TOUR:

Leaders of the Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) led by Governor Monday Okpebholo (r) and former governor, Senator Adams Oshiomhole (2nd left) during a tour of Edo North Senatorial District on Tuesday.

Defence Minister mourns victims of military aircraft crash —Pg 2

Igbinedion University inducts 65 doctors, harps on patients welfare —Pg 5

Trump says 'threat' led US to pull bombers from RAF fairford —Pg 8

Edo Queens faultless, we'll fight CAF to the end-Enabulele —Pg 11

NEWS

Defence Minister mourns victims of military aircraft crash

ABUJA

Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher Musa, has expressed deep sorrow over the death of military personnel and civilians in the crash of a Nigerian military aircraft with tail number NAF 931.

Musa, in a statement issued Monday in Abuja, described the incident as a painful loss to the Armed Forces and the nation, noting that the military personnel aboard the aircraft were on a routine mission in

the service of Nigeria.

He said the fallen officers and airmen demonstrated "courage, unyielding devotion and selfless patriotism" in the discharge of their duties.

"The loss of these valiant patriots is an irreparable blow not only to the military high command and their comrades-in-arms, but to the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria," he said.

The Defence Minister described the deceased personnel as having exemplified the highest standards of military professionalism, loyalty and

commitment to the defence of the country.

Musa extended condolences to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the leadership of the Armed Forces, and the families, loved ones and colleagues of the fallen personnel.

He said the Ministry of Defence shared in the grief of the bereaved families and would stand with them during the difficult period.

The minister also expressed condolences to the families of civilians who were on board the ill-fated aircraft.

Musa disclosed that a comprehensive investigation had been ordered to establish the circumstances surrounding the crash, determine its cause and strengthen operational safety protocols across military aviation units.

He prayed that God would grant the souls of the departed eternal rest and give their families, the military community and Nigerians the fortitude to bear the loss.

The crash comes amid ongoing efforts by the relevant authorities to establish the circumstances surrounding the military aircraft accident.

ASUU-UNIBEN declares indefinite strike over unpaid emoluments

OKUNBOR DELIGHT ESOSA
BENIN CITY

The decision was the resolution of the Union's Congress held on Monday, 5th October, 2026, at the Ugbowo main campus.

In a statement signed by Branch Chairman, Dr. Enaruna Edosa and Secretary, L. O. Aimiyeagbon, the Congress

invoked two resolutions: the extant National Executive Council (NEC) resolution that grants branches authority to withdraw services when salaries are not fully paid by the 3rd of the new month, and the Emergency NEC resolution of 5th September, 2026 mandating branches in federal universities whose emolument was underpaid to take action.

...Gov Okpebholo credits President Tinubu

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

He said he noticed two bad portions of the road while travelling from Owan West to Owan East and directed the Commissioner for Works to mobilise and fix them.

"This is the reason why I embarked on this tour to see for myself the challenges facing the people in various communities across the state. Now I have come and seen, and it will be followed with solutions," he said.

On the 2027 presidential election, Okpebholo urged APC members to support Tinubu's re-election bid, declaring that there would be no vacancy in Aso Rock.

"I am here to identify with you and also let you know we have our candidates. The President is still contesting for the presidency, and there is no vacancy in Aso Rock in 2027 as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will retain his office," he said.

The governor commended APC members in Edo North for their support during his governorship election and the local government elections, urging them to increase their

efforts ahead of the 2027 elections.

Former Edo governor and senator representing Edo North, Adams Oshiomhole, also urged Nigerians to support the APC, saying the party had the experience and candidates required to continue the country's development.

Oshiomhole dismissed the political ambitions of former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and former Minister of Transportation Rotimi Amaechi, describing their proposed political combination as "a formula that will not work for Nigeria."

The Edo APC Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe, who received defectors into the party, urged members to focus on issue-based campaigns and grassroots mobilisation.

"We don't need to fight to achieve the 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu. Let us embark on the campaign of ideas, not to fight. Our party leaders have done so much for Nigerians, and all we need to do is to support President Tinubu to complete his good works of development," Tenebe said.


GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN

L - R: Former Governor of Edo State, Sen. Adams Oshiomhole (left), the State Governor, Sen. Monday Okpebholo (middle) and erstwhile Speaker of EDHA, Rt. Hon. Blessing Agbebaku (right) during a tour of Edo North Senatorial District yesterday.

Okpebholo appoints Ojiezele DG Edo Roads Fund Board

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the appointment of Dr. Ojiezele Alimhianga Augustine as the Director-General of the Edo State Roads Fund Board (EDSRFB).

The appointment, contained in a government special an-

nouncement signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilior, takes immediate effect.

Dr. Ojiezele is a seasoned financial management professional with more than three decades of experience in the Nigerian Public Service.

According to the statement, the new Director-General has

served in various senior accounting and administrative positions, where he acquired extensive experience and expertise in public sector financial management and administration.

The government expressed confidence that his wealth of experience and professional competence would contrib-

ute significantly to the effective discharge of the mandate of the Edo State Roads Fund Board and the attainment of its objectives.

The Edo State Roads Fund Board is expected to play a key role in supporting the state's road infrastructure financing and management efforts under the Okpebholo administration.

...NAF names 25 victims of ill-fated flight

CONTINUED FROM PG 1

The passengers were Flt.-Lt. TL Lazarus, Flt.-Lt. M. Akinloye, Flying Officer IM Adeshina, Master Warrant Officer Onwuka F, Master Warrant Officer Matini BA, Warrant Officer Nuhu FS, Flight Sergeant James RB and Flight Sergeant Mohammed AI.

Others were Sgt. Ani AE, Sgt. Izibenikien SI, Sgt. Alafuka C, Sgt. Mbadugha AN, Lance Cpl. Ugwuba FC, Lance Cpl. Eledan GE, Mrs. Ezeh Nneka, Godstmine Tarabina, Joy Micheal, Sunday Micheal, Ukeme David and Gideon Omotola.

The Chief of the Air Staff

(CAS), Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, expressed deep condolences to the families, loved ones and colleagues of those who died, describing the crash as a deeply painful moment for the Nigerian Air Force and the nation.

Aneke assured the bereaved families of the full support of the service as they come to terms with the loss, while directing a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding the accident.

He also assured the public that the NAF would provide timely and verified updates as the investigation progresses.

The CAS urged members

of the public to refrain from speculation and the circulation of unverified information, stressing the need to respect the privacy and dignity of the affected families at this difficult time.

According to Ejodame, a condolence register has been opened at NAF Headquarters, Abuja, for senior government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, heads of security agencies and other well-wishers wishing to pay their respects and convey messages of sympathy to the bereaved families and the NAF.

Search and rescue operations were activated immediately after the crash in

coordination with relevant authorities to locate and account for all persons on board.

The tragedy has left families, colleagues and the wider military community grieving the loss of personnel and civilians who were travelling on what had been a routine flight.

2027: Peter Obi, not a threat to Tinubu, APC -Umahi

OKUNBOR DELIGHT ESOSA
ABUJA

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, has said that the presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), Peter Obi,

does not pose a threat to President Bola Tinubu and the All Progressives Congress (APC) ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Umahi stated this on Sunday during an interview on Channels Television's 'Politics Today' while responding to

questions about Obi's potential impact on the APC, particularly in the South-East.

"By the way it is not only Peter Obi that is from the South-East that is contesting. We have about three or four other presidential candidates who are contesting.

NEWS

NAF aircraft crash: More Nigerians mourn crew, passengers

ABUJA

A sombre mood enveloped the Headquarters of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) in Abuja on Tuesday, as officers, airmen and civilian staff mourned 25 persons who died in the NAF 931 aircraft crash in Ondo State.

The Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, had described the incident as a deeply painful

moment for the NAF and the nation.

A look at tributes on the condolence register, showed heavy grief by serving and retired military officers and civilians who had paid tribute to the fallen heroes.

Speaking with the NAN on the development, Retired Air Vice Marshal Christian Chukwu said it was a mourning period for Nigerians.

"We are not happy, the mil-

itary is not happy, and we pray for their souls to rest in peace.

"This is a very sad day for the Nigerian Air Force and the nation at large, and obviously a terrible feeling for the families of our friends, whom it is still very difficult to comprehend that we cannot see again," he said.

Chukwu recalled that a similar incident occurred a few years ago and claimed the lives of over 160 officers.

He said the NAF had done

its best in ensuring safety.

"I have attended safety seminars here, even in retirement almost every year, and the air force spends a lot on safety.

"We must not start speculating now. We should wait for the investigations to come out. But as far as I am concerned, I think the air force has done what is humanly possible in avoiding these type of things.

"But once in a while, they will come. If you go to the

Remembrance Arcade there, you will see the list of people we have lost.

"It is a hazardous duty, so we should be ready for it. We should not pray for it to come, but when it comes, we should have the fortitude to accept it.

"So I really wish to extend my condolences to the Chief of the Air Staff, to President Bola Tinubu, because he too has done his best in getting the air force to fly better," he said.

Track Exec Orders

Similarly, a Military Contractor, Mr Ehije Balogun, described the incident as unfortunate, saying the loss was enormous.

"It is quite unfortunate. The lives lost are enormous, and

our prayers go to the families and the Nigerian air force as a whole, and we pray that such should not happen again," he said.

Balogun urged President Bola Tinubu to increase funding for the air force to enable it service its aircraft.

"My message is to Mr President to try and fund the air force more so that they have enough money to service their planes, even though we are not sure what caused the crash.

"The air force should be well-funded because they do most of the jobs. Apart from logistical jobs, they actually help in rescue operation, bombing of terrorists and the rest of it," he said



MARCH PAST:

Nigeria Union of Teachers, Adamawa State Wing, on a march past during the celebration of 2026 World Teachers Day in Abuja on Monday

Nigeria's oil reforms will unlock \$50bn deep offshore investments –Tinubu

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu says recent reforms in Nigeria's oil and gas sector are designed to unlock up to 50 billion dollars in new deep offshore investments.

Tinubu, represented by Vice-President Kashim Shettima, said this on Tuesday in Abuja at the fifth anniversary of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), established under the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021.

The President said the Deep Offshore Oil and Gas Projects Incentive Tax Order 2026 had replaced uncertainty with clear and published investment criteria.

"The order replaces that uncertainty with clear, published criteria and requires projects to be executed in Nigeria wherever applicable.

"It is designed to unlock up to 50 billion dollars in new investment, beginning with the Bonga South-West project.

"The message to the world is simple: Nigeria is open for

long-term investment and the terms are clear," Tinubu said.

He said the measure was particularly important because some of Nigeria's largest oil prospects were located in the deep offshore but had remained undeveloped for years.

According to him, the incentive is expected to unlock as much as 50 billion dollars in new investment, beginning

with the Bonga South-West project.

Tinubu said the development reinforced the Federal Government's message that Nigeria was open to long-term investment and committed to providing clear and predictable terms.

He said the PIA had provided a strong foundation for investment by establishing clear

rules, a predictable regulatory framework and mechanisms for greater participation of host communities.

The President said Nigeria had also recorded progress in restoring security in oil-producing areas, attracting investors and improving upstream investment opportunities through open and competitive processes.

AAU lecturer found dead in hotel room after hiring sex worker

MIKE OSAROGIAGBON

EKPOMA

A lecturer in the Department of Medical Laboratory Science at Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, Matthew Uwuigbe, has been found dead in a hotel room after allegedly engaging the services of a 21-year-old sex worker.

The incident occurred in Ekpoma, headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area

of Edo State, with the police receiving a report at about 8am on Monday, October 5, 2026.

Confirming the incident, the Edo State Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Eno Ikoedem, said the hotel owner, manager and the sex worker had been arrested and detained for questioning as investigators work to establish the circumstances surrounding the lecturer's death.

ASP Ikoedem stated that Mathew Uwuigbe, believed to be in his 50s, had lodged at the

hotel and engaged the services of the 21-year-old woman, whose identity is being withheld by this newspaper.

The lecturer reportedly sent her out to buy water, but when she returned, she allegedly found the lecturer lying motionless inside the hotel room.

The police spokesperson revealed further that the deceased's remains had been deposited at a hospital mortuary for preservation, while investigation into the incident continues.

Death of miners: Investigative panel seeks 2-week extension

ABUJA

The Independent Investigative Committee set up by the Federal Government to probe the deaths of 37 alleged illegal miners has requested a two week extension to tidy up its report.

The Chairman of the committee, retired Deputy Director, Department of State Services (DSS) Jonathan Kure, disclosed this at a news conference in Abuja on Tuesday.

Kure explained that the additional two weeks was to enable the committee put together a thorough and credible final report before submission to the federal government.

He stated that the initial submission date of Oct.7, would thereby be extended to Oct. 21.

NAN reports that the Federal Government had set up a 10-man investigative panel to probe the deaths of 37 suspected illegal miners who died in custody of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Niger Command on Sept. 17.

According to Kure, the committee is yet to conclude its assignment on account of the large volume of testimony and documentary evidences requiring meticulous review and collation, as well as pending

forensic and pathology reports essential to establishing the cause of deaths.

"There is also the need to afford all persons implicated; including the officers already suspended, a fair opportunity to respond, so that the committee's findings and recommendations can withstand scrutiny and command public confidence."

Kure also revealed some steps the committee had taken to ensure a credible, transparent and effective report.

"Due to the peculiar nature of this investigation, we have been able to go to Minna, where we were able to interact with all the survivors.

"We were able to meet with bereaved families of all the deceased. We visited the mining site, as well as the state command headquarters of the NSCDC where the incident scene happened.

"We have also been able to meet and interact with all the NSCDC personnel were involved either directly or indirectly with the incident.

"However, we are still interacting with them, we are not through with that process because of the timeline given to us that by today we should have turned in our report," he said.

2027: Minister calls for informed, purposeful women's participation

ABUJA

Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development has urged Nigerian women to embrace informed, responsible and purposeful participation as the country prepares for the 2027 general elections.

Sulaiman-Ibrahim made the call on Tuesday in Abuja during the public presentation of "Rising Beyond Borders," a book authored by Dr Esther Uduehi, Found-

er and Board of Trustees Chairperson of the League of Women Voters of Nigeria (NILOWV).

She said women's empowerment should go beyond participation to building the capacity, confidence, knowledge and economic independence needed to influence national development.

"A truly empowered woman is not merely mobilised; she is informed.

"She is not merely counted; she is heard. And she is not merely present; she participates meaningfully," she said.



UNFORGETTABLE

A Legacy of Service and Benevolence

The family of Chief MCK Orbih announces the funeral arrangements for Chief Daniel Osi Orbih, whose passing leaves a profound void in the family and in the hearts of the many lives he touched through his service, generosity and humanity.



CHIEF DANIEL OSI ORBIH KSM, DSSRS
(1961 – 2026)

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7
Requiem Mass
Catholic Church of the Assumption,
Asokoro, Abuja
4:00 p.m.

Night of Tributes
Bola Ahmed Tinubu International
Conference Centre, Abuja
7:00 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9
Vigil Mass
St. John's Catholic Church,
Ogbona, Etsako Central
Local Government
Area, Edo State
4:00 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10
Funeral Mass
St. John's Catholic Church,
Ogbona, Etsako Central Local
Government
Area, Edo State
10:00 a.m.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11
Thanksgiving Mass
St. John's Catholic Church,
Ogbona, Etsako Central Local
Government
Area, Edo State
10:00 a.m.

Francis Udukhomoi Orbih, Esq.
For the Family

NEWS

Igbinedion University inducts 65 doctors, harps on patients' welfare

EDWARD OSEGHE

OKADA

The Vice-Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Okada (IUO), Prof. Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemone, has charged 65 newly qualified medical doctors of the institution to put patients' welfare above per-

sonal interests, declaring that medicine is a calling to humanity and not merely a profession.

Ezemone gave the charge on Monday at the university's 21st Oath-Taking and Induction Ceremony, urging the new doctors to uphold the sanctity of human life, professional integrity, confidentiality, compassion and ethical responsibility.

"Patients will trust you with their lives. Families will depend on your decisions. Communities will look up to you for hope and healing," he said.

The Vice-Chancellor stressed the importance of humility, teamwork and lifelong learning, noting that modern healthcare requires effective collaboration among doctors, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory scientists and other professionals. He said Nigeria particularly needs doctors

who are "competent, innovative, ethical and compassionate" and capable of improving healthcare delivery, research and public health outcomes.

"Medicine is not merely a profession; it is a calling. It is a commitment to serve humanity at its most vulnerable moments," he declared.

Delivering the induction lecture, titled "Take A Bow," renowned Otorhinolaryngologist and Public Health Professional,

Prof. Titus Sunday Ibekwe, urged the doctors to embrace medicine as a lifelong commitment to service, humility, gratitude and continuous growth. Using three bows as symbols, he asked them to "bow back" in gratitude to parents, teachers and mentors; "bow down" in service to patients and humanity; and "bow forward" towards the professionals they are still becoming.

"The white coat is not a crown. It is closer to a towel," Ibekwe de-

clared, stressing that leadership in medicine begins with service. He warned the doctors against allowing professional status to overshadow their responsibility to humanity, urging them to acknowledge what they do not know and remain committed to continuous learning. His central charge was: "Keep learning. Keep listening. Keep kneeling. Keep becoming." He further warned that "the day you stop bowing is the day you begin to decline."

Delta APC tasks over 400 support groups on grassroots mobilisation

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

The All Progressives Congress, APC, in Delta State has opened a fresh grassroots offensive ahead of the 2027 general elections, mobilising about 400 support groups across the state and charging them to take the party's message to the electorate.

The party leadership, at an interface with the support groups, directed them to immediately intensify mobilisation, identify and consolidate their support base while ensuring that their activities are aligned with the party's structure and electoral strategy.

The State Chairman, Chief Solomon Arenyeka, who declared the meeting open, described the support groups as a critical component of the APC's mobilisation ma-

chinery, saying their numerical strength and grassroots networks could significantly influence the party's performance in 2027.

Arenyeka said the meeting was designed to bring the groups under a more coordinated framework, eliminate duplication of efforts and ensure that their activities complemented the established structures of the party.

He disclosed that the party would soon unveil its campaign structure for the 2027 elections, with a dedicated directorate expected to coordinate the activities of the various support groups.

The chairman charged the groups to move beyond meetings and declarations to sustained grassroots engagement, stressing that electoral victories were often determined by the strength of a party's organisation at the grassroots.



ANNIVERSARY:

From left: Representative, Director-General, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Mr Tony Iloka; Deputy Director, SEC, Mrs Adama Babadoko; Managing Director, FundQuest Financial Services Limited, Mr Abiodun Akinjayeju; President, Association of Issuing Houses of Nigeria (AIHN), Mrs Kemi Awodein; Deputy Director, Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie, Mrs Ozofu Ogiemudia and Group Managing Director, Afrinvest West Africa Ltd, Dr Ike Chioke, during the 30th Anniversary Symposium of the Association of Issuing Houses of Nigeria (AIHN) in Lagos on Tuesday.

Nigeria hits inclusion target - EFIA 73% banked, 60.m still broke

OSEMUDIAMHEN O. FAITH

ABUJA

Nigeria has hit its 73 per cent formal financial inclusion target, yet 60.4 million adults remain financially vulnerable despite having bank accounts.

The 2026 Access to Financial Services in Nigeria Survey shows formal inclusion now at 73 per cent, above the 70 per cent target under the National Financial Inclusion Strategy. Only 30.7 per cent of those included are financially healthy.

The survey, by Enhancing Financial Innovation & Access and weighted by the National Bureau of Statistics, covered 18,679 adults across the 36 states and the FCT between April and June 2026.

Overall inclusion — formal and informal — rose to 79 per cent from 74 per cent in 2023 and 68 per cent in 2020. Formal inclusion alone covers about 87.2 million adults, up from 64 per cent in 2023.

Digital financial services drove the growth, climbing from 45 per cent in 2023 to 64.4 per cent in 2026, or about 77 million adults.

But access has not meant resilience. Only about 25 per cent of adults are financially healthy,

leaving a 48 percentage-point gap the report calls "participation without progress."

Just 10.6 per cent of formally included adults could raise N156,000 within seven days without difficulty, compared to 3.7 per cent of the excluded.

Formal credit use rose to 10 per cent, or 11.9 million people, from six per cent in 2023, but remains below the 40 per cent target.

Nigerians are now borrowing to cope, not to invest. Coping and consumption accounted for 40.8 per cent of formal borrowing in 2026, up from 31.7 per cent in 2023.

Productive enterprise borrowing fell from 40.2 per cent to 34.3

per cent, while household asset borrowing dropped to 23.4 per cent from 25.2 per cent.

The reversal is stark. In 2023, enterprise borrowing led coping by 8.5 points. By 2026, coping led by 6.5 points — a 15-point swing.

About 45.8 per cent of formal borrowers reported repayment stress, while 83.8 per cent reported ongoing financial stress.

Credit use among informally employed Nigerians tripled from five per cent to 15 per cent, and doubled among youths aged 18 to 35, from four per cent to 10 per cent.

Insurance and pension coverage remains weak, leaving millions exposed.

Counterfeit products: ESCPC's boss leads sensitisation walk in Benin

LUCKY EFESSE

BENIN CITY

The Chairman of the Edo State Consumer Protection Committee, Iyamu Osaro Culture, yesterday led other executive members on a sensitisation tour on major streets in the Benin Metropolis.

The sensitisation tour aimed at educating the public on the health risks associated with the production and sales of counterfeit and substandard products as well as the economic implications of adulterated products and exploitation of consumers by the private sector.

The sensitisation tour berthed at Lagos street, Upper Sokponba road, Oba and Ekiosa markets respectively, where traders were duly engaged in conversation by the ESCPC boss on the need to partner with them to wipe out fake products and sanitise the market environment to yield ultimate results in the state.

Iyamu, reiterated his committee resolves to carry out similar sensitisation tour on Edo

Central and Edo North in no distance time, saying many people have fallen victims to buying counterfeit products, which today, has posed serious health challenges on them.

He assured that the SHINE agenda of His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo, will continue to yield positive change in the state while soliciting for their cooperation and support to achieve the desired developments in the state. ensure that investments in neighbouring communities translated into practical and sustainable improvements in livelihoods.

"Our goal is to ensure that investments in neighbouring communities strengthen livelihoods in practical and lasting ways.

"When farmers can see what works, access the right inputs and remain connected to technical and market support, they are better positioned to improve productivity, build resilient farm businesses and ultimately improve their living conditions," he said.

Gas supply hits two bcf/d, FG targets \$30bn investment...Nigeria's production rises to 7.5bcf/d, reserves now 215tcf – Ekpo

OSEMUDIAMHEN O. FAITH

ABUJA

Nigeria's domestic gas supply has crossed two billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d) as the Federal Government intensifies efforts to boost supply to power plants and industries.

Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Gas), Ekperikpe Ekpo, said on Friday that gas production rose to 7.5 bcf/d from 6.8 bcf/d in 2023, while proven gas reserves increased to 215.19

trillion cubic feet (tcf) from 208.83 tcf.

He said Nigeria is targeting production of 10 bcf/d by 2027 and 12 bcf/d by 2030 to meet growing demand from power, industry, fertiliser, petrochemicals, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), transportation and export markets.

Ekpo disclosed that the Obiafu-Obrikom-Oben (OB3) pipeline, with 2 bcf/d capacity, has reached full completion and is being prepared for first gas, expected to unlock over 500 million standard cubic feet per day (MMscf/d) for the domestic

market.

He added that the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) pipeline is now 95 per cent complete.

The minister said N671 billion (\$434 million) deployed through the Midstream and Downstream Gas Infrastructure Fund has attracted about N1.6 trillion in private investment across 31 projects and 205 infrastructure assets.

The projects, he said, will deliver about 475 MMscf/d to the domestic market when fully operational, as the government targets \$30 billion in gas-sector investment by 2030. Also speaking,

the State Organising Secretary, Hon. Emmanuel Egbabor, told the groups that their registration and recognition by the party were only the beginning of their responsibilities.

Egbabor stressed that the groups were partners in the APC's political project and not parallel structures, warning that their activities must strengthen, rather than undermine, the party's established structures.

He charged them to take the policies and programmes of the APC to the grassroots, engage directly with voters and feed the party leadership with information on the challenges and concerns of their communities.

**THE NIGERIAN
OBSERVER**
THAT THE PEOPLE MAY KNOW

OBA EWUARE II AT 10

A DECADE OF ROYAL EXCELLENCE

Celebrating the

**10th Coronation Anniversary
& Birthday Anniversary**

of

HIS ROYAL MAJESTY

OMO N'OBA N'EDO UKU AKPOLOKPOLO

OBA EWUARE II, CFR
Oba of Benin

To mark this historic milestone,
The **NIGERIAN OBSERVER** presents a
Special Commemorative Edition
celebrating a decade of purposeful reign,
cultural preservation, peace and unity.

❖ **BE PART OF THE CELEBRATION** ❖

Place your **Congratulatory & Goodwill Message**
in this special edition.

ADVERT RATES

Page Size	Colour	Black & White
Full Page	₦448,645	₦396,213
Half Page	₦317,770	₦254,238
Quarter Page	₦206,561	₦122,119



SUBMISSION DEADLINE

October 18, 2026



BOOKINGS & ENQUIRIES

Marcus Atoe: **08081986842**

Mrs. Doris Igbinigie: **08051177163**

❖ **LONG MAY HE REIGN** ❖

NEWS

Senate suspends security summit over Ondo air crash

ABUJA

The Senate has postponed its two-day National Security Summit, earlier scheduled for October 12 and 13, following the death of 25 officers and seven crew members in the Nigerian Air Force aircraft crash in Ondo State.

The Leader of the Senate and Chairman of the Senate Ad-hoc Committee on the National Se-

curity Summit, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, announced the postponement in a statement issued in Abuja on Tuesday.

He said the decision was taken in honour of the victims of the crash and in line with the three-day national mourning declared by President Bola Tinubu.

Bamidele said, "The Senate has announced the postponement of its two-day National Security Summit scheduled for Monday,

12th and Tuesday, 13th October, 2026, until further notice.

"The upper chamber postponed the summit consequent upon the tragic crash of a Nigerian Air Force ATR-42 aircraft in Igbokoda, headquarters of Ilaje Local Government Area, Ondo State, which claimed the lives of 25 officers and seven crew members on Monday."

The Senate had planned the summit to bring together key

stakeholders to examine the country's persistent security challenges and develop practical measures to strengthen the protection of lives and property across the country.

The ad hoc committee had also completed preparations for the summit following the conclusion of zonal public hearings held ahead of the national event.

However, the crash involving the NAF ATR-42 aircraft in Igbokoda on Monday forced the

Senate to suspend the planned meeting.

The crash claimed the lives of 25 officers and seven crew members, prompting widespread mourning and renewed calls for a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragedy.

Following the incident, President Bola Tinubu declared three days of national mourning for the deceased officers and crew mem-

bers and directed that the national flags be flown at half-mast across the country.

The President also ordered a thorough investigation into the crash to determine its cause.

Bamidele said the Senate considered it appropriate to defer the security summit during the period of national mourning as a mark of respect for the deceased military personnel who died in active service.

Sadoh charges supervisors, advisers on dedication, integrity

LAMAI CASSIUS

FUGAR

The Executive Chairman of Etsako Central Local Government Council, Hon. Dame Vera Sadoh, has charged newly sworn-in Supervisors and Special Advisers to be good ambassadors of the local government and to discharge their duties with dedication, humility and integrity.

Hon. Sadoh gave the charge while swearing-in five Supervisory Councillors and Special Advisers to the local government at the council secretariat Fugar, urging them to see their appointment as a call to service and an opportunity to make meaningful impact in the lives of the people.

"I urge you to always put the interests of our people first as you work closely with them at the grassroots. I cannot be everywhere to see or hear everything all the time; you are my eyes and ears, so be my good representatives in your various wards and communities," she said.

Describing herself as a team player, the Chairman appealed to the appointees to work together as one team to deliver good governance, development and prosperity to the people of Etsako Central.

While congratulating them, she urged them to be dedicated, honest and loyal to the leadership of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the party

through which they were recognised and appointed.

She specifically charged them to key into the SHINE Agenda of the Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, and the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and replicate both at the local government level.

Ahead of the 2027 general elections, she encouraged them to mobilise the people and support all programmes and candidates of the party to ensure total victory.

In his remarks, the Local Government APC Chairman, Rtd. Capt. Philip Itsede, urged the appointees to be loyal and respectful to the Executive Chairman and the party leadership.

He congratulated them and advised them to see the appointment as the beginning of their political journey.

"A lot of great politicians you hear about today started from the very beginning like you. While some excelled, others withered away as a result of lack of trust and loyalty," he said.

Responding on behalf of the appointees, Hon. Samali Randolph, a supervisor, thanked the Chairman for finding them worthy of appointment and pledged to be loyal, dedicated and honest in the discharge of their duties.

He assured the Chairman on behalf of others of their total support and commitment to delivering the dividends of democracy to the grassroots.

**AWARD AND LECTURE SERIES:**

From left: Representative of the Governor of Niger State, Muazu Rijau; Special Adviser to the President on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives), Dr Wasiu Olanrewaju-Smart; Guest Lecturer/Secretary, Presidential Working Group on the National Policing Bill, Mr Nnadubem Moghalu; representative of the Speaker, House of Representatives, Rep. Akin Rotimi; Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), FCT Chapter, Ms Grace Ike and the Chairman, House of Representatives Press Corps (HoRPC), Mr Gboyega Onadiran, during 2nd Annual Distinguished Parliamentary Award and Lecture Series, theme: the imperative for state police: securing communities, strengthening federalism at the National Assembly Complex in Abuja

Ondo air crash: NAF opens condolence register in Abuja

ABUJA

The Nigerian Air Force has opened a condolence register at its conference centre in Kado, Abuja, following the crash of its ATR-42 aircraft in Ondo State that killed all 32 people on board.

The NAF announced the opening of the register on X on Tuesday, while expressing appreciation to Nigerians and well-wishers at home and abroad for their sympathy,

prayers and solidarity following the tragedy.

"The Nigerian Air Force deeply appreciates the outpouring of sympathy, prayers and solidarity from Nigerians and well-wishers at home and abroad following the tragic accident involving NAF 931," the post read.

The Air Force said the support had provided strength to the families, colleagues and loved ones of those who died in the crash. It also paid tribute to the deceased, describing their service to the country as one marked by honour,

dedication and distinction.

"Your compassion and support are a profound source of strength to the families, colleagues and loved ones of those who served our nation with honour, dedication and distinction, and whose sacrifice will forever be remembered," it added.

The post was accompanied by a photograph of the condolence register opened at the NAF Conference Centre, Kado, Abuja.

The aircraft, which had 25 passengers and seven crew members on board, crashed

into a swampy area in Igbokoda, headquarters of Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State, on Monday, October 5, 2026.

It was on a routine mission from Benin City, Edo State, to Lagos when contact with air traffic controllers was lost at about 9.13am.

President Bola Tinubu subsequently expressed condolences to the families of the victims and directed the Nigerian Air Force to commence a thorough investigation into the cause of the crash.

Trust is democracy's invisible currency, says Akpabio

Arusha (Tanzania) -

The National Assembly remains the bridge through which the hopes and aspirations of ordinary Nigerians must translate into government decisions, Senate President Godswill Akpabio has said, stressing that democracy can only endure when citizens feel heard, included and confident in their future.

Akpabio said this on Tuesday while addressing the 153rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Arusha, Tanzania, where he identified inclusion, trust and opportunity as the pillars of a democracy that delivers tangible benefits to citizens.

The Senate President, who is also Chairman of Nigeria's National Assembly and head of the Nigerian delegation to the global parliamentary gathering, said the success of democracy should not be judged by elections or economic statistics alone, but by its impact on the daily lives of Nigerians.

Akpabio said inclusion, trust and opportunity "are the foundations of a democracy that gives every citizen a voice, every community a place and every generation a reason to hope."

In his address titled "Inclusion, Trust and Opportunity," the former Akwa Ibom governor stated that democracy meant more than elections, while development meant more than impressive statistics.

Five feared killed as cult clash rocks Bayelsa

BAYELSA

At least five persons are feared killed in a renewed cult clash in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, with the police confirming the arrest of suspects and the restoration of law and order in the affected areas.

The renewed violence, which reportedly began at the weekend, involved rival cult groups identified as the Bobos and Greenlanders, with incidents reported in Agudama, Obele and the Back of St. Peters areas of the state capital.

Sources said the violence had raised concerns over the peace accord previously reached among some cult groups in the state.

One of the sources alleged that a youth was killed and beheaded during an attack in Agudama, while another person was reportedly shot in the buttocks and rescued by a neighbour.

The condition of the injured victim could not be immediately ascertained.

The exact cause of the renewed clash was not immediately established. However, sources said the Bobos and Greenlanders had remained rivals despite previous efforts to broker peace among cult groups in the state.

A check around Imgbi Road, Ovom and Obele, identified as areas where cult-related activities have previously been reported, showed

reduced movement of youths allegedly associated with cult groups amid fears of police arrests and possible attacks by rival groups.

Confirming the development, Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Musa Mohammed, on Tuesday, said suspects had been arrested, and normalcy had been restored.

"Suspects have been arrested, and law and order has since been restored," Mohammed said.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, Bayelsa State Command, CP Ajao Saka Adewale, has ordered intensified operations against cultism and cult-related violence across the state.

The CP directed Division-

al Police Officers and tactical commanders to increase patrols in vulnerable areas, identify emerging threats and act promptly on credible intelligence regarding planned clashes, initiation ceremonies and recruitment activities.

The Command also said it was strengthening engagement with community leaders to identify tensions early and prevent them from escalating into violence.

CORRECTION OF NAME

This is to notify the general public that **PRECIOUS OGHOMWEN** and **PRECIOUS OGHOMEN** is one and the same person. I wish to now be known and addressed as **PRECIOUS OGHOMWEN**. All former documents remain valid, concerned authorities and the general public please take note.

FOREIGN

NEW

Trump says 'threat' led US to pull bombers from RAF Fairford

President Donald Trump has said the US moved its bombers out of RAF Fairford because of "some threats" to the base.

The Pentagon confirmed on Sunday it had removed its bombers - thought to be about a dozen B-1s - from the base back to their home stations in America.

Speaking to reporters as he departed for Nebraska on Monday, Trump said the US had known of a "threat", which led them to move the bombers.

US media reports suggested that the decision was made due to intelligence suggesting that Iran was plotting a drone attack. The BBC has not confirmed this and Trump has refused to be drawn on the question.

The exact nature of the threat that prompted the aircraft's removal from RAF Fairford remains unclear, but sources in Washington speculated to the BBC it might have revolved around sabotage attempts or attempts to strike the sensi-

tive, expensive aircraft in the event of resumed hostilities with Iran.

One source close to the White House pointed to Ukraine's Operation Spiderweb as an example of what an enemy force could do, even at a distance.

Operation Spiderweb was an operation in June last year in which Ukraine smuggled drones into Russia. These were carried on lorries to locations near airbases by drivers who were unaware of their cargo, then launched and set upon their targets.

The source added: "Whatever they thought it was, it was taken extremely seriously."

Earlier on Monday, a No 10 spokesperson had insisted RAF Fairford was safe and pointed to Trump's comments last week, where he praised the UK's "police, defence and security services" in relation to the base.

Trump's comments appear to confirm reports by US media that a new threat led to the bombers being removed

after a major incident on 27 September when police were alerted to three "suspicious vehicles" near the airbase.

While speaking to a group of reporters outside the White House, Trump was asked if a "specific threat" had led the US to pull its bombers from the airbase.

Trump replied: "Yeah I think we can say that. They didn't fly out by accident."

"There were some threats. And rather than tempting the enemy, we'll capture the enemy and beat the enemy. But why should we leave them there? So we moved them around a little bit. Not very far."

He added Washington "actually knows the people that made the threat", but he did not confirm who - though later said "they would be linked to Iran" when asked.

The BBC has contacted the White House and the Ministry of Defence for comment.



DONALD TRUMP

Fort Hood shooter to be executed by firing squad - a first for US military since World War Two

An undated handout image of Hasan that was released by authorities in 2012.

The Pentagon has announced it will execute a former US Army major by firing

squad, the first such military execution in more than 60 years. Nidal Hasan fatally shot 13 unarmed US soldiers at Fort Hood in 2009, injuring another 32.

Pentagon spokesperson

Sean Parnell announced on social media on Monday that Secretary of War Pete Hegseth had made the recommendation and President Donald Trump approved it.

It will be the first military execution by firing squad since the end of World War Two.

Parnell said the secretary of the US Army would set the time and place of the execution.

"Judgement day for Hasan has finally come," he wrote on X. Hasan, a US Army psychiatrist from Virginia, killed 13 soldiers at the base in Texas in 2009 and later admitted in court he was the gunman and apologised for "any mistakes".

He said during his court-martial in 2013 that he believed he was protecting

Muslims and the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The killings on 5 November 2009 were the deadliest ever non-combat attack on an American military base.

The attack took place in a crowded medical building where deploying soldiers were awaiting check-ups and vaccines.

Hasan is currently one of four inmates on the US military's death row.

A military execution requires approval from the US president, according to mil-

itary law.

It also requires appellate review and a final judgment on its legality to move forward.

The US Court of Appeals the Armed Forces deen the military death penalty unconstitutional in 1971 but it was reinstated the following year by an executive order under then-President Ronald Reagan.

Military executions differ from those carried out at state level.

Former German spy chief arrested for espionage and treason

Former German spy chief August Hanning has been arrested on suspicion of espionage, treason and obtaining classified information for a foreign power, the German Federal Prosecutor's Office says.

Hanning headed the Federal Intelligence Service (BND) from 1998 to 2005 and has since been working as a private consultant.

Prosecutors allege that he used classified intelligence to "draft an analysis" for one foreign intelligence service and maintained contact with another foreign spying service. Investigators have not disclosed which foreign powers were involved.

Police also arrested former BND employee Mandred D, accusing him of passing Hanning about 2,000 classified documents for money.

Manfred D, who was Hanning's bureau chief and remained in the BND until this year, is charged with aiding and abetting attempted treason and treasonous espionage.

Local media reported Hanning was arrested at his home in Nordwalde near Münster

while Manfred D was arrested in Bavaria. Hanning is due in court on Wednesday and Manfred D will appear on Tuesday.

Prosecutors say Mandred D, who also served as the chief of staff for Hanning's successors between 2012 and 2026, used his role to gain access to highly confidential information which he then passed on to Hanning "in exchange for remuneration".

"The current findings suggest that, over the years, Manfred D provided Hanning with approximately 2,000 documents, many of which contained classified information to be used exclusively by the Federal Intelligence Service for internal purposes," the statement says.

"On one occasion, Hanning used classified intelligence ... to draft an analysis for an officer of a foreign intelligence service," prosecutors said, noting it was not clear if "the material reached the intended recipient".

Hanning is also accused of being "in close contact with a representative of another foreign intelligence service, to

whom he passed on political information, partially based on material provided by Manfred D, for several years".

Local media say Hanning's alleged possession of intelligence documents came to light during a separate case relating to German steakhouse heiress Christina Block.

Hamburg public prosecutor's office accused Block of orchestrating the kidnapping of her two youngest children in 2023 due to a custody dispute. Investigators allege Hanning was involved in an earlier attempted kidnapping of the children, which he denies.

State criminal police officers reportedly discovered an electronic data storage device containing sensitive information including recent BND documents.

It is not the first time the BND has faced similar controversy. A high-ranking German intelligence officer was charged with treason in 2023 for allegedly passing state secrets to Russia.

Prosecutors alleged Carsten L shared intelligence about the war in Ukraine and the Wagner mercenary group and received roughly €400,000 (\$450,000; £340,000). His trial is ongoing.

Ship sinks and crew missing after Black Sea drone attack

A civilian cargo ship has sunk and its crew is missing after being attacked by drones in the Black Sea, Bulgarian officials say.

A second vessel - carrying grain - was also hit within Bulgaria's exclusive economic zone, Prime Minister Rumen Radev said. Its 18 crew were rescued.

Radev did not say who was behind the attacks, which come as Russia intensifies strikes in the Black Sea, particularly the eastern side, as part of its war against Ukraine.

Moscow has not commented on the latest incident, a day after it was accused by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky of striking a civilian vessel carrying corn. EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the attacks were "unacceptable".

Air and sea drones were involved in the attacks at about

03:00 (23:00 GMT), some 70 miles (112 km) off the coastal town of Byala in eastern Bulgaria, Radev said.

The sunken ship was flying under the flag of Togo, he said. Named the Alfa Watan, it was a Turkish-owned general cargo ship and was reportedly heading for Sulina, Romania.

Tracking data shows the ship entered the Black Sea heading north on Monday. Its last reported position on MarineTraffic was at 2343 GMT last night in the Bulgarian exclusive economic zone of the Black Sea.

It is not clear what the Alfa Watan was carrying or how many people were on board.

A Bulgarian vessel was close by, but when they arrived all they saw was an overturned boat and rafts as well as life jackets. It was not clear how many crew members were on board. A search operation has been launched.

The vessel's cargo was not immediately known.

Radev said Bulgarian soldiers had rescued the crew members from the second ship - including two who were injured in a fire on board. Eleven were Turkish and seven Indian national. That ship, the Able, was flying the flag of Palau and transporting grain.

Its last reported position was five nautical miles (9 km) from the Alfa Watan.

Radev condemned the strikes as "a flagrant violation of maritime law".

He told reporters: "Such an attack within the Bulgarian exclusive economic zone is absolutely unacceptable."

He did not accuse Russia of carrying out the strikes but referred to the war in Ukraine, saying: "As I have long maintained, if this war is not halted in time, it will continue to expand its geographical reach and increase risks, including the risk of global conflict."

FOREIGN

NEWS

Kenya confirms its first Ebola death as outbreak spreads

Kenya has confirmed its first ever case of Ebola – a Kenyan citizen who has been living in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the past seven years.

Health Minister Aden Duale said the patient, who fell ill a month ago, and was treated in several hospitals in DR Congo, died days after arriving in Nairobi.

Duale said the patient boarded a flight on Saturday and underwent normal public screening at the main airport in Nairobi before he was trans-

ferred by a relative to a hospital in the city.

More than 4,000 people have died from Ebola in DR Congo this year, in what is the second most deadly known outbreak of the disease.

Shortly after DR Congo declared an outbreak of Ebola in May, it was also reported in Uganda, where two people died. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that county free of the disease in August.

Since then, all known cases of the highly infectious disease

have been in DR Congo.

The virus spreads through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or vomit.

The current outbreak in DR Congo has been caused by the Bundibugyo species of Ebola, which is relatively rare, with no approved vaccine or treatment.

There are however four vaccines in development, with human trials for one of them being launched in July.

Duale confirmed that the Kenyan national had tested positive for the Bundibugyo

species.

According to the minister, the patient first travelled by road from DR Congo to the Ugandan capital Kampala, where he boarded a flight to Nairobi.

Duale said that after being taken to the Nairobi Hospital, the patient was transferred to an isolation facility which was built during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was there that the patient "developed fever, chills, intense fatigue and weakness, painful

swallowing, muscle pain and bleeding under the skin".

"Doctors suspected a viral haemorrhagic fever based on his symptoms and travel history and collected samples for testing. The sample tested positive for Ebola Bundibugyo virus," Duale said.

The patient died at 23:30 (20:30 GMT) on Monday and his burial is planned for later on Tuesday in line with public health safety protocols.

At least 28 contacts, including family members and

healthcare workers, have been identified, while health authorities are tracing a further 23 passengers and four crew members who travelled on the same flight.

The health minister has urged Kenyans "not to panic, as all systems are in place to mitigate the spread of the disease".

He asked health workers to be "extra vigilant and maintain the highest infection prevention and control measures regardless of the condition being treated".

Yemeni military says it has 'secured' Red Sea waterway

Yemeni pro-government forces backed by Saudi Arabia say they have "secured" the Bab al-Mandab Strait at the southern end of the Red Sea, at the start of a major offensive against the Iran-backed Houthi movement.

The Yemeni military also said in a statement that its forces had captured the Red Sea city of Mokha on Monday afternoon with the help of Saudi air strikes.

But in conflicting reports, unnamed Yemeni government and military sources later told news agencies Reuters and AFP that the forces had only reached the city's outskirts.

The Houthis denied losing Bab al-Mandab and Mokha and said they had struck Riyadh's airport and other loca-

tions in Saudi Arabia in retaliation for the air strikes.

Saudi Arabia condemned the attacks and reiterated calls for the UN Security Council's permanent members to support Yemen's internationally-recognised government.

Turkey and Pakistan, allies of Saudi Arabia, meanwhile held an emergency meeting in Riyadh and agreed to rapidly deploy military forces to Saudi Arabia in an invocation of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, according to a statement shared by Pakistan's foreign ministry.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemned "the continued Houthi cross-border attacks" on Saudi Arabia and said he was "deeply concerned by the sharp escalation in fighting", in a statement to AFP.



YEMENI MILITARY:

Indian opposition MPs detained in protest against election chief

Police in Delhi detained several opposition lawmakers as they tried to march demanding the chief election commissioner resign over a controversial voter roll revision.

Main opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, his sister Priyanka and other MPs were forced into a police bus. Released shortly after, they resumed their march and began a sit-in near Election Commission headquarters.

It is the latest escalation in a growing row over a nationwide revision of voter rolls.

Opposition parties accuse Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar of overseeing a process that could benefit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), an allegation both the BJP and Election Commission have rejected.

Security officials blocked the roads from India's parliament to the election commission headquarters.

"Some of the MPs tried to take some other roads to the Election Commission building. We have officers stationed at multiple points, from where the protesters were picked up in buses and taken to different police stations", Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police

Manjeet Sheoran told the BBC.

The police did not disclose how many lawmakers had been detained. The opposition said 237 MPs from a range of parties participated in the march.

Tuesday's protest came just four days after the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a Gen Z-backed online satirical movement, organised demonstrations in Mumbai and Delhi, also demanding the CEC's resignation. The group has described those demonstrations as the beginning of a nationwide campaign and has called for another round of protests on 10 October.

At the centre of the controversy is the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The exercise began in the eastern state of Bihar in June 2025 before being expanded to other parts of the country. The Election Commission says the revision is intended to remove duplicate and ineligible voters from electoral rolls. More than 130 million names have so far been removed from draft voter lists nationwide.

Opposition parties and activists allege that many eligible voters have been wrongly excluded and accuse the poll body of conducting the process improperly.

Saudi Arabia urged to spare man sentenced to death over Facebook post

I plead for mercy for the wrongs committed by my son. Please forgive him and send him back to us."

Speaking through tears, Rasamanickam Yagalakshmi made a desperate plea for the life of her eldest son, Anojan Sivarasa. The 24-year-old migrant worker is facing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia after an appellate court found him guilty of blasphemy against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad over a comment he made on Facebook.

The case has sent shockwaves through Sri Lanka, sparking widespread concern and civil society petitions across the country. Multiple political parties and government bodies have co-ordinated diplomatic efforts seeking clemency.

However, the family has had no updates on his condition since 28 September. The Sri Lankan government has instructed the family to refrain from making further statements while diplomatic efforts take place.

Saudi authorities have not published an official execution timeline, and it remains unclear when the sentence will be carried out. Saudi Arabia has a history of carrying out executions without warning families or foreign embassies, only informing relatives after the sentence has

been carried out.

Anojan was prosecuted after a dispute on social media following an incident that took place during a Hindu pilgrimage in Sri Lanka. In late June, footage of a young Muslim man kicking a dog following Hindu pilgrims circulated widely on social media, triggering religious arguments online.

During the exchange, a user posted derogatory remarks about a Hindu deity, leading Anojan to post a response in Tamil insulting the Prophet Muhammad.

Although Anojan promptly deleted his comment and posted an apology video, it was screenshot and brought to the attention of his employer and Saudi officials, leading to his arrest in July.

His personal devices were subsequently seized, and his social media accounts were deleted by Saudi officials.

"People in Saudi Arabia knew nothing about this matter. It was individuals in Sri Lanka who sent emails to the company where my brother worked. I do not even wish to mention who those people are," Anojan's brother, Hamsidan Sivarasa, told BBC Sinhala.

The company employing Anojan notified the authorities in Saudi Arabia who registered

a case against him, according to Hamsidan.

Anojan was initially sentenced to five years in prison as well as a fine of 3m Saudi riyals (about \$0.8m; £0.6m) by the Al-Ahsa Criminal Court. An appeal submitted on Anojan's behalf seeking to reduce his sentence was rejected, according to Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath.

The case took a drastic turn on 17 September after Saudi prosecutors filed an appeal for Anojan to be prosecuted under Sharia law instead of the country's cybercrime legislation. The appellate court granted the prosecution's request, increasing his sentence to the death penalty.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sri Lanka confirmed it is taking all available steps to assist Anojan.

His family met President Anura Kumara Dissanayake at the Presidential Secretariat on 21 September. The president assured them that the government would spare no effort to obtain a general pardon for him, instructing diplomatic channels to engage Saudi authorities.

The case has brought together cross-religious support. Senior Buddhist leaders, the Mahanayake Thero of the Ramanna Nikaya and the Amarapura Maha Nikaya, together with Hindu religious leaders, handed over a memorandum to the

Presidential Secretariat calling for urgent state intervention.

In addition, a four-member Sri Lankan legal delegation is travelling to Saudi Arabia this week to meet Anojan's local defence lawyers.

"There are two law firms in Saudi Arabia handling Anojan's case. We are going there to meet the lawyers from these two firms, discuss the case and plan what can be done next," one of the team, Upul Kumarapperuma, President's Counsel, told BBC Sinhala.

Back home, communication between Anojan and his family has completely ceased.

"My brother hasn't called for two days," Hamsidan said on 28 September. "We informed the embassy and asked officials to look into the matter and update us. They said they would check. We are still waiting, as we have not yet received a response."

In Saudi prisons, inmates on death row typically lose access to personal mobile devices, with formal calls strictly facilitated through prison authorities.

Human rights organisations have repeatedly raised concerns regarding severe sentences for online speech in Saudi Arabia.

In July 2023, Mohammed Al Ghamdi, a retired Saudi school teacher, was sentenced to death over his comments on multiple social media platforms, according to the United Nations.

The ballot box has the final word

DR. PATRICK AKHERE
EBOJELE

Big man Sonala Olumhense's latest intervention on Edo State duly elected, INEC Certified and Supreme Court of Nigeria affirmed Governor Monday Okpebholo's 2.5 million-vote target for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu come January 2027, makes a big mistake from the outset— even the visually impaired can see it but not the author. It is treating an election that is in the future, as though its result has already been calculated.

Olumhense's arithmetic may look neat. But the politics is not. We do respect the elder as an accomplished columnist. But that does not make him a deity or a demon! His lame report of a 12-year-old walking six miles to an examination hall is strong. He knows too that emotion can not substitute for political analysis, just as past election figures can not predict a future election even with all the mathematical certainty. Moreso in our clime.

His submission is that if Edo recorded about 600,000 votes in the 2023 presidential election, a 2.5 million-vote target for 2027 is impossible. That is his very flawed conclusion. Perhaps amnesia has set in—Elections are not photocopies. Voters do not remain permanently attached to the choices they made two, three, or four years ago. Political alliances shift. Governments change.

Candidates change. Party structures expand or die. AD, PDP, and labour are political parties that died! Campaigns alter perceptions. Most importantly, voters make new choices based on new circumstances.

And so Elder Olumhense's purile figures prove only what happened in 2023. Peter Obi received 331,163 votes in Edo, while President Tinubu polled 144,471. These are undisputed facts, but why should they be treated as a political prophecy for 2027?

Edo politics has not remained frozen since 2023. Governor Monday Okpebholo represents the change in the political environment of Edo. Like he articulated, the 2023 figure was due to dissatisfaction with the beleaguered junta in the state at the time.

The elder then descends into the ridiculous when he suggests that Governor Okpebholo "did not really win" the 2024 Edo State governorship election. He did and not as a matter of political interpretation but of judicial record. And since Sonala lives in a far-away hamlet in his location abroad and is cut off from the rest of the global village, his challenge can be understood on this score. Shame.

Unknown to him, the Supreme Court, sitting as the final court in Nigeria, unanimously affirmed Okpebholo's election. That decision followed judgments by the Edo State Governorship Election Petition



Ballot Box

Tribunal and the Court of Appeal, both of which rejected the challenge by the petitioners.

The Court even noted that the petitioners challenged results from only 395 of 5,019 polling units and failed to discharge the burden of proof required to overturn the election. Three levels of court examined the evidence. Three levels reached the same conclusion. But Elder Sonala Olumhense can choose to play the ostrich

As a columnist, he is entitled to dislike a result. He is entitled to criticise the process or argue that the political contest was imperfect. What he can not reasonably do is turn a settled judicial decision into a matter of personal arithmetic. This can only depress his ilk.

Just as well is his claim that Governor Okpebholo's 291,667 votes were somehow insignificant.

But they are votes that were sufficient for him to win the election. This was a was not confined to the governor's traditional political strongholds but statewide. But how can someone so

cut off from reality comprehend such?

In Oredo Local Government Area, the home base of the former Governor Godwin Obaseki, the APC secured 30,780 votes against the PDP's 24,938. That result alone should caution anyone against assuming that Edo voters can be permanently assigned to one political camp.

What of the July 11, 2026, local government elections? The Edo State Independent Electoral Commission declared APC winner of all 18 chairmanship positions and all 192 councillorship seats. Twelve political parties participated in the election. Agreed, a local government election is not a presidential election. Nobody seriously should claim otherwise. It, however, provides a snapshot of the current political reality in Edo. It says something about party organisation, grassroots mobilisation, and the ability of APC as a political party to reach voters across the 18 local government areas.

Those are precisely the structures that will matter in 2027. On the 2.5 million target itself, Mr Olumhense is free and can argue that the number is too high, politically extravagant, or difficult to achieve. What he can not establish from previous election figures is that it is impossible. It is a target and not a result. Governor Okpebholo is not claiming that he has already received 2.5 million votes. He is setting a political mobilisation target for his party. The voters will decide whether that target is achieved. That distinction should ordinarily not be difficult to understand.

The more question now is, what Edo voters will consider when they enter polling booths in 2027. Will they look at roads? Security? Schools? Healthcare? Salaries? Infrastructure? Government performance? The strength of political parties? Their personal economic circumstances? Certainly.

That is why the performance of Governor Okpebholo since November 2024

deserves more scrutiny than a lengthy excursion into the governor's schooling and personal history.

If the argument is about what will determine how Edo people vote, then the policies, programmes, and results of the government should be at the center of the discussion. The governor has made a big promise. His political opponents should test it.

Edo is not a spreadsheet. The 2023 figures belong to 2023. The 2024 governorship election belongs to 2024. The 2026 local government election belongs to 2026. The 2027 presidential election will be decided by voters in 2027. When the votes are counted, we will know whether Okpebholo's 2.5 million target was achievable, ambitious, or wildly optimistic.

Until then, the ballot box—not an aging columnist's calculator—should have the final word.

Dr. Ebojele has his PhD in Public Administration and is the Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.

"The more question now is, what Edo voters will consider when they enter polling booths in 2027. Will they look at roads? Security? Schools? Healthcare? Salaries? Infrastructure? Government performance? The strength of political parties? Their personal economic circumstances? "

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

Super Falcons: 21 Players in Camp for 2028 Olympic Qualifier Vs Comoros

The Super Falcons' camp has swelled to 21 players as Nigeria intensifies preparations for the 2028 Olympic Games qualifying campaign against Comoros at the Remo Stars Stadium.

The latest arrivals include several established foreign-based stars, with Paris Saint-Germain forward Rash-eedat Ajibade, PSG midfielder Jennifer Echegini, Chica-

go Stars defender Michelle Alozie, Inter Milan midfielder Toni Payne and Al-Hilal midfielder Christy Ucheibe among those now in camp.

The squad also features players from clubs across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the United States, underlining the depth of experience available to the technical crew ahead of the crucial qualifying assignment.

AS Roma defender Shukurat Oladipo, SCU Torreense forward Shakirat Moshood, Beşiktaş defender Glory Ogbonna, MK Dons midfielder Omenazu Favour, Dynamo Brest forward Blessing Nkor and Fenerbahçe defender Suliat Abideen are among the other foreign-based players in camp.

The domestic contingent is led by players from Edo Queens, Nasarawa Amazons, Bayelsa Queens and Rivers Queens, including goalkeeper Christiana Uzoma, defenders Tumininu Adeshina, Valentina Uroko, Glory Edet and Sandra John, as well as midfielders Joy Igbokwe and Fatimoh Solaty.



Players currently in camp

1. Shukurat Oladipo — DF, AS Roma, Italy
2. Shakirat Moshood — FW, SCU Torreense, Portugal
3. Glory Ogbonna — DF, Beşiktaş JK, Turkey
4. Omenazu Favour — MF, MK Dons, England
5. Farida Abdulwahab — DF, Nasarawa Amazons
6. Tumininu Adeshina — DF, Edo Queens
7. Joy Igbokwe — MF, Nasarawa Amazons
8. Fatimoh Solaty — MF, Nasarawa Amazons
9. Christiana Uzoma — GK, Edo Queens
10. Blessing Nkor — FW, Dynamo Brest, Belarus
11. Valentina Uroko — DF, Edo Queens
12. Glory Edet — DF, Bayelsa Queens
13. Sandra John — DF, Rivers Queens
14. Suliat Abideen — DF, Fenerbahçe, Turkey
15. Folashade Ijamusi — FW, Lianiong Baiye, China
16. Toni Payne — MF, Inter Milan, Italy
17. Christy Ucheibe — MF, Al-Hilal, Saudi Arabia
18. Janet Akekoromowei — FW, SL Benfica, Portugal
19. Rasheedat Ajibade — FW, PSG, France
20. Jennifer Echegini — MF, PSG, France
21. Michelle Alozie — DF, Chicago Stars, USA

Total players in camp: 21

With the arrival of several key regulars, attention will now turn to tactical preparations, fitness work and the final selection ahead of Nigeria's Olympic qualifying fixtures. The Super Falcons are seeking to return to the women's football tournament at the Olympic Games after missing the Paris 2024 Olympics. Their preparations for the 2028 campaign, therefore, carry added significance as Nigeria targets a return to the global stage.

Further arrivals are expected as the camp continues, with the coaching crew set to assess the players before finalising the squad for the qualifying assignment.

Match Details:

Comoros vs Nigeria — Friday, 9 October 2026 — Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne-Remo Stream Soccer Return leg
Nigeria vs Comoros — Tuesday, 13 October 2026 — Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne-Remo

Super Eagles Backroom Faces Changes Ahead of November AFCON Qualifiers

The Super Eagles are set for changes to their backroom structure ahead of the team's November assignments against Tanzania in the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying campaign.

Nigeria are scheduled to host Tanzania in Uyo on November 11, before travelling to the East African country for the reverse fixture four days later.

We gathered that a reorganisation of the Super Eagles' backroom team is being considered, with several positions expected to be affected.

Among the roles under consideration are the team coordinator, media manager and curator, although the extent of the proposed changes is yet to be officially communicated.

The planned adjustments have reportedly generated considerable interest, with lobbying and counter-lobbying said to be ongoing among stakeholders seeking to influ-

ence appointments to some of the positions.

The changes come as the Super Eagles continue their preparations for the 2027 AFCON qualifying campaign, with the Tanzania double-header expected to be important to Nigeria's qualification ambitions.

The technical crew will also be keen to maintain stability around the national team as preparations intensify, particularly with the proximity of the November fixtures.

An official announcement on the proposed backroom changes is expected once the relevant authorities conclude their consultations and de-

cisions on the affected positions.

For now, the focus within the Super Eagles camp remains on ensuring that

the team has the necessary technical, administrative and logistical support ahead of the crucial encounters with Tanzania.

Ndidi Launches Men, Women Underwear Brand

Super Eagles captain Wilfred Ndidi launches his new underwear brand, DIIDS, for men and women.

DIIDS offers a comprehensive range of men's and women's underwear designed for everyday comfort, featuring breathable fabrics, supportive

fits, and varied multi-packs available across online marketplaces.

Ndidi described it as his first business venture beyond football under his "WN — Built for Legacy" plan.

He is also fronting the campaign, appearing in studio shots for the brand.



HENGZHI CUI

Volleyball: 2026 CGC Premier League final phase begins Oct 16 as CNS tackles NSCDC

Reigning champions, CNS Spikers will take on Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in the men's category as the 2026 CGC Volleyball Premier League final phase serves off on October 16 at the Indoor Sports Hall of Moshood Abiola Stadium, Abuja.

League leaders Nigeria Customs Service will face Ajase Ipo in their bid to secure the title after narrowly missing out on the championship last season.

Two-time champions Offa VC will take on Nigeria Police Force while Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) tackles second-placed COAS Spikers.

Former champions Kano Pillars will face Life Camp VC

while 2025 National Division One winners will battle Sunshine Spikers.

In the women's category, defending champions Nigeria Customs Service will face NAF Rockets as they begin their title defence.

Excelsior Angels will take on Olalomi Royal Angels while former champions, CNS Spikers will battle Benue Queens.

SPORTS



Edo Queens faultless, we'll fight CAF decision to the end -Enabulele

BY EDWARD OSEGHE

The Edo State Sports Commission has rejected the Confederation of African Football (CAF)'s annulment of Edo Queens' WAFU-B Women's Champions League final victory, insisting that the Nigerian champions should not be punished for an administrative error committed by match officials.

Executive Chairman of the Commission, Hon. Amadin Desmond Enabulele, who stated this while featuring on an AIT Sports programme, said Edo Queens had complied with the instructions of the match officials and had no role in the decision to proceed directly to penalties after the September 5 final against Ghana's Ampem Darkoa Ladies in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

"Of course, it was shocking news. The news was unbelievable. We didn't expect that from

CAF at all," Enabulele said.

Edo Queens defeated Ampem Darkoa 4-1 on penalties after regulation time ended 2-2 and were presented with the WAFU-B trophy and medals. CAF subsequently annulled the shootout, ruling that the match should have proceeded to two 15-minute periods of extra time before penalties in line with Article 72.4 of the competition regulations, and ordered the final to resume from the 2-2 scoreline.

Enabulele recalled that the match, originally scheduled for 7pm, was delayed by severe weather conditions and eventually kicked off at about 9pm. He said the match officials subsequently informed both teams that if the game ended in a draw, the winner would be decided directly through penalties.

According to him, neither Edo Queens nor Ampem Darkoa challenged the instruc-

tion, with the Nigerian champions proceeding to the shootout in obedience to the officials' directive. He also cited tactical substitutions made by Edo Queens towards the closing stages as evidence that the team had prepared for penalties as the prescribed method of determining the winner.

Edo Queens won the shootout 4-1 and were declared champions before the Ghana Football Association, on behalf of Ampem Darkoa, lodged a protest that led to CAF's decision.

Enabulele said CAF's own decision acknowledged that neither club was responsible for the procedural error, insisting that the consequences should instead be borne by those responsible for the erroneous administrative instruction.

"Edo Queens has not been found guilty of wrongdoing. Even the letter that they sent

to us stated that Edo Queens has not done anything wrong, neither the other team from Ghana. But this was purely an administrative error," he emphasised.

He further argued that the officials acted on instructions from higher administrative authorities.

"The referee took instruction from higher administrative authority," he said, stressing that the officials and administrators involved in the competition were appointed through CAF structures.

The Edo Sports Commission boss also rejected any suggestion that the final was inconclusive, maintaining that the match had been completed on the field and Edo Queens had been declared winners. He questioned the appropriate remedy where officials themselves failed to implement the prescribed competition procedure.

With the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) already appealing CAF's decision, Enab-

ulele expressed confidence in the strength of the Nigerian side's case.

"We know that we have a very good case."

He said Edo Queens were prepared to exhaust every available avenue, including the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), if necessary, should the matter proceed beyond CAF's Appeals Board.

On the possibility of another encounter between the two teams, Enabulele maintained that the existing position should remain until all available dispute-resolution channels had been exhausted.

He, however, said the controversy had not distracted Edo Queens from their prepara-

tions for the main CAF Women's Champions League. The team, he disclosed, had commenced preparations for the new season and was currently in Bayelsa State for a pre-season tournament.

Enabulele said the players remained motivated and focused on maintaining their impressive performances despite the ongoing legal process. He also confirmed the return of Coach Moses Aduku from his national assignment and the rejoining of players who had been away on national duty.

He assured that Edo Queens would continue to pursue the matter through the appropriate channels while concentrating on winning more matches.

West Africa University Games 2026 Get Underway

West Africa University Games, WAUG 2026, are underway at the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. The competition's opening ceremony on October 2nd brought together university leaders, sports administrators, athletes and officials.

The official curtain raiser also featured a colourful parade of delegations, cultural performances and lighting of the Games' flame.

The ceremony also celebrated the rich cultural heritage of the host city Ile-Ife.

The folklore showcased tradi-

tional performances and unveiling of the Games' mascot, Ori-Olokun, inspired by symbols of the host city's Yoruba heritage.

11 institutions are flying the Nigerian flag at the this year's Games themed "Uniting Universities, Inspiring Excellence."

The schools include hosts Obafemi Awolowo University, Afe Babalola University, Benson Idahosa University, Delta State University, among others.

Over 2,500 athletes and officials from 50 universities in the region will battle it out for honours in 18 sports from 2-12 October 2026.

WAFU B U17: Nigeria, Six Others Set For Battle In Burkina Faso

Nigeria and six other West African nations will battle for supremacy when the WAFU B U-17 AFCON Qualifiers kick off in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, this week.

The competition is scheduled to hold from October 10 to 23, with seven countries competing for the region's opportunity to advance to the continental stage.

Hosts Burkina Faso will be joined by Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Niger and Togo in the race for the coveted qualification ticket.

The participating nations will be aiming to produce

strong performances as they seek to secure a place at the next Africa U-17 Cup of Nations.

Nigeria will be hoping to make a strong impression in the competition and secure qualification from the WAFU B zone.

With the tournament set to begin on Friday, October 10, all seven teams are expected to intensify preparations ahead of the regional showdown.

The qualifiers will run until October 23 in Ouagadougou, with the eventual winner earning the opportunity to represent the zone on the continental stage.



Edo Queens

World Cup: Fifa finds DR Congo goalkeeper, Mpasi was ineligible to play against Nigeria

Fifa has found that Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, goalkeeper, Lionel Mpasi, was ineligible to play for the country throughout the 2026 World Cup qualifying campaign.

Investigations by Le Monde and The New York Times claim Fifa's legal team found that

Mpasi, who holds French and Congolese nationality, had not completed the required process to switch his allegiance to DRC after representing France at youth level.

The goalkeeper was born in Meaux to parents of Congolese origin and became provisionally cap-tied to France follow-

ing his appearance in an U17 Euro qualifier against Serbia in June 2011.

This revelation emerged following a formal objection submitted by the Nigeria Football Federation, NFF, after the Super Eagles suffered a penalty shootout defeat to the Leopards in the African playoff final

in November 2025.

The NFF had contested the eligibility of multiple Democratic Republic of Congo players citing nationality concerns and passport irregularities.

Notwithstanding this discovery, Fifa imposed no disciplinary measures against DR Congo, permitting the Leopards to advance to the intercontinental playoff against Jamaica.