Double- barrelled celebration in Edo as APC takes 2027 presidential campaign to Benin

MATTHEW OKAGHA/
RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

It was a double-barrelled political celebration in Edo State on Thursday as the All Progressives Congress (APC) brought its presidential campaign train to Benin City, in an event that coincided with the second anniversary of Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration.

The convergence of the two landmark political events transformed the Dr Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, into a massive arena of political mobilisation, party solidarity and celebration, drawing an impressive gathering of APC leaders, elected public office holders, party faithful and supporters from across the state and beyond.

The rally, which formed part of the APC's nationwide campaign activities ahead of the 2027 general elections, also provided an opportunity for the Edo APC leadership to showcase its political structures and mobilisation capacity before the party's national leadership.

The stadium was filled to capacity, with enthusiastic supporters occupying virtually every available space within and around the facility. The atmosphere was characterised by party songs, solidarity chants, dancing, colourful displays and renewed expressions of allegiance to the APC and its national leadership.

For Edo State, however, the occasion carried an additional significance. It was not merely another political gathering but a celebration that brought together the second anniversary of Governor Okpebholo's administration and the national party's campaign engagement in the state.

Governor Okpebholo, visibly elated by the turnout, danced his way to the podium to welcome the Vice President, members of the Presidential Campaign Council, APC governors, the leadership of the

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Tinubu pledges more Federal projects for Edo at APC flag-off

RICHARD EWEKA

Shettima assures state of support in roads, healthcare, energy, agriculture, security...

Okpebholo promises 2.5m votes for President in 2027

BENIN CITY

President Bola Tinubu has assured Edo State of sustained Federal Government support in infrastructure development, healthcare, energy, agriculture, entrepreneurship and security, declaring that the state remains central to Nigeria's national development agenda.

The assurance was conveyed by Vice President Kashim Shettima on Thursday at the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential campaign rally held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium, Benin City, which coincided with the second anniversary of Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration.

Shettima reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to its development partnership with Edo State, stressing that Nigeria's infrastructure deficit could not be effectively addressed without carrying the state along.

"We have come to assure you that you can count on us too. When we came to you four years ago, we said we could not address our nation's infrastructure deficit without carrying Edo State along. We have not abandoned that agreement," he declared.

The Vice President disclosed that work had commenced on the dualisation of major federal roads leading to Ekpoma, Auchi and Okpella, as well as the Benin-Agbor-Sapele Road, assuring that more road projects would be undertaken across the state.

He also highlighted the Federal Government's commitment to supporting Edo in healthcare delivery, energy development, entrepreneurship, agriculture and security, noting that these sectors remained critical to national growth and improved living standards.

On cultural heritage, Shettima acknowledged ongoing efforts towards the return of Benin artefacts and the transfer of ownership of the treasured cultural objects to Nigeria,

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



APC PRESIDENTAL RALLY:
Vice President Kashim Shettima (middle), flanked by APC chieftains, addressing party faithful during the APC presidential rally at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City yesterday.



Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, acknowledges cheers from an enthusiastic crowd at the APC Presidential Campaign flag-off rally held at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin City yesterday.

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INEC slates nationwide mock election November 28 —Pg 2

Okpebholo's two years: Reviving healthcare, rebuilding public confidence —Pg 11

President Tinubu, Senate shower victorious Flamingos with bountiful rewards —Pg 23

NEWS

Reforms take time, not magic, says Okpebholo

.Governor highlights Tinubu's support, infrastructure projects at APC solidarity walk

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has described the reforms being implemented by President Bola Tinubu's administration as a gradual process, stressing that sustainable development cannot be achieved overnight.

Okpebholo stated this on Wednesday in Benin City while addressing members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) during a solidarity walk organised by the party's Support Group Directorate of the Presidential Campaign Council (PCC).

The governor highlighted some of the achievements of his administration, including the establishment of the Nigerian Army's 83 Division, the dualisation of roads in Ekpoma and other road infrastructure projects across the state, noting that the Federal Government had provided support and resources that enabled Edo to execute various development programmes.

He maintained that genuine development required patience, proper planning and consistent efforts, rather than expectations of immediate transformation.

Reflecting on the Federal Government's decision to remove fuel subsidy, Okpebholo said major policy reforms required time to produce the desired results.

According to him, the reforms introduced by the Tinubu administration would gradually transform the country and improve the living conditions of Nigerians.

The governor also expressed appreciation to Edo residents who participated in the solidarity walk, describing their presence as a demonstration of confidence in his administration.

Earlier, the Director of the APC Support Group Directorate, Mr Silas Agara, commended Governor Okpebholo for the development projects being executed across the state.

Agara described Okpebholo as the first governor to identify with the group, expressing appreciation for his support and recognition.



ROAD WALK:
Members of All Progressives Congress, APC during a solidarity walk organized by the support group Directorate of the APC presidential campaign Council (PCC) on Wednesday in Benin city.

...Tinubu pledges more Federal projects for Edo at APC flag-off

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

describing the development as an important issue in the country's relationship with the international community.

The Vice President commended Governor Okpebholo for his administration's activities in Edo State, saying the governor had made the APC proud. He also conveyed President Tinubu's confidence in Okpebholo and his commitment to supporting the state government.

In his address, Governor Okpebholo declared that Edo State was prepared to deliver on its pledge of 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu in the January 2027 political contest.

According to him, the Federal Government's interventions and the achievements of his administration had strengthened the state's relationship with the President.

"In Edo State, we are ready to deliver come January 2027. The President has done so much for Edo people. Today, we don't owe salaries. We don't owe pensioners. Construction work is going on everywhere," the governor said.

He maintained that ongoing construction projects across the state reflected his administration's commitment to infrastructure development, workers' welfare and improved service delivery.

Former Governor of Edo State and Senator representing Edo North, Adams Oshiomhole, congratulated Okpebholo on his second anniversary in office, commending his administration's efforts towards the development of the state.

Other dignitaries who addressed the gathering included President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, and Chairman of the Progressive Governors' Forum and Governor of Imo State, Hope Uzodimma.

The rally attracted top Federal Government officials, APC national and state leaders, political stakeholders and residents of Edo State.

It also provided an opportunity for the party's leadership and supporters to reaffirm their commitment to President Tinubu's anticipated re-election campaign in 2027, with Edo APC leaders reiterating the state's 2.5 million-vote pledge.

...Double- barrelled celebration in Edo as APC takes 2027

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

National Assembly and other distinguished party stakeholders.

In his brief but electrifying address, the governor expressed appreciation to the national leadership of the APC for choosing Edo as one of the important destinations on its presidential campaign trail.

He declared that Edo people had made a firm commitment to deliver the state for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election, describing the relationship between Edo State and the President as one founded on mutual understanding, political commitment, unbroken promises and a shared determination to advance development.

The governor's message was unmistakably political: Edo, under his leadership, would remain an important pillar of the APC's electoral mobilisation in the South-South geopolitical zone.

He also used the occasion to underscore the importance of the relationship between the

Edo State Government and the Federal Government, stressing the need for sustained cooperation to accelerate development and deliver democratic dividends to the people.

The political significance of the rally was further underscored by the presence of prominent national and regional political figures, including former Edo State Governor and Senator representing Edo North, Adams Oshiomhole; the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio; the governors of Delta and Akwa Ibom states; and the Director-General of the APC Presidential Campaign Council, Senator Abdulaziz Yari, among other party leaders.

In their respective remarks, the speakers highlighted Edo State's strategic importance in the nation's political calculations and the role of the state in the APC's preparations for the 2027 general elections.

The presence of these political heavyweights also provided a platform for reaffirming party cohesion, strengthening intergovernmental relationships and mobilising support for the Tinubu administration's second-term ambition.

Vice President Kashim Shettima, who represented President Tinubu at the rally, delivered the central message of the Federal Government, outlining projects, policies and programmes undertaken by the Tinubu administration.

He highlighted the administration's reform agenda and its development priorities, presenting the Federal Government's record as part of the case the APC intends to take to Nigerians ahead of the next general election.

His appearance in Benin City was preceded by a traditional courtesy visit to the palace of the Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, where he paid homage to the revered monarch in recognition of the historical and cultural significance of the Benin Kingdom.

The palace visit added a traditional dimension to the political engagement, reflecting the importance of acknowledging established traditional institutions and the cultural heritage of the host community during major national engagements.

The rally was also the culmination of a series of mobilisation activities undertaken by the Edo APC ahead of the main event.

On Wednesday, November 11, party members and supporters participated in a major road walk which commenced from the APC Presidential Campaign Council office on Airport Road and terminated at Government House.

The procession, which attracted party faithful and support groups, formed part of the build-up to the rally and demonstrated the extensive mobilisation effort deployed by the party to ensure a large turnout.

Beyond the spectacle and party excitement, the coincidence of the rally with Governor Okpebholo's second anniversary in office gave the occasion a broader political dimension.

Since assuming office on November 12, 2024, the governor has anchored his administration's policy direction on the SHINE Agenda, covering Security, Health, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and Education.

The second anniversary therefore provided an opportunity for the administration to reflect on its policy priorities, projects and interventions, while the APC rally offered a national political platform for the governor to demonstrate his place within the party's leadership structure.

INEC slates nationwide mock election November 28

CAROLINE AMEH

LONDON

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has announced November 28, 2026, as the date for a nationwide mock accreditation and voting exercise to test the Commission's upgraded electoral technology.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, SAN, disclosed this on Thursday in London, while speaking on the new technological safeguards to prevent the uploading of inaccurate election results to its Result Viewing Portal (IReV) ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Amupitan spoke at a high-level dialogue organised in partnership with the Kimpact Development Initiative (KDI) at Chatham House, London, under the theme, "Nigeria's 2027 Elections: Democratic Trajectory and Regional Stability Beyond the Ballot."

The INEC chairman said the new safeguards were designed to address the controversies surrounding the 2023 general elections, particularly discrepancies in election results uploaded to the IReV portal.

Acknowledging that the 2023 election had significantly damaged public confidence in the Commission, Amupitan said INEC had since used subsequent off-cycle elections to identify operational weaknesses and improve its electoral processes.

He cited the governorship elections in Anambra, Osun and Ekiti states, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections and 16 legislative by-elections as evidence of improvements in the Commission's performance.

According to him, the recent elections in Anambra and Osun demonstrated significant progress in result management, as both governorship elections were concluded with results declared the day after voting.

"Why must Nigerians trust me? Nigerians must trust me because, number one, I have conducted off-cycle elections, and observers agree that the recent election in Osun State marked a clear improvement," he said.

Explaining the new IReV safeguards, Amupitan said INEC's post-2023 assessment identified collation centres, rather than polling units, as major sources of discrepancies in election result management.

He explained that the Commission had introduced a validation mechanism that would prevent inaccurate results and figures indicating over-voting from being uploaded to the portal.

Edo Assembly moves to introduce statewide dress code

IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has called on the state government and relevant agencies to develop a statewide dress code to address what lawmakers described as growing concerns over indecent dressing.

The resolution followed a motion of urgent public importance moved by the member representing Egor Constituency, Ms Natasha Osawaru, during plenary.

Osawaru expressed concern over dressing practices, particularly among young women, which she said were inconsistent with cultural and moral values. She cited biblical and Quranic teachings on modesty, urging authorities to promote decent dressing and protect young people from harassment.

The motion received support from the Deputy Speaker, Mr Osamuyi Atu; Majority Leader, Mr Sunday Ojiezele; and member representing Ikpoba-Okha Constituency, Mr Patrick Asosere.

The lawmakers urged the Ministry of Women Affairs and other relevant agencies to intensify public enlightenment and sensitisation, while emphasising the roles of parents, schools and religious institutions in promoting moral values.

They also stressed the need for clear guidelines and stakeholder consultations to ensure that any proposed policy respects individual rights and freedom of expression.



CONFERENCE:
From left: Chairman, Power Correspondent Association of Nigeria (PCAN), Obas Esiedesia; Director-General, Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency, Olusegun Adesayo; representative of the Minister of Power, Martins Olajide and Managing Director, FGN Power Company, Kenny Anuwe, during the 6th Annual conference of PCAN in Abuja

FG offers N2trn bonds as DMO unveils November auction

IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE

ABUJA

The Federal Government has announced plans to raise N2 trillion through the issuance of bonds as the Debt Management Office (DMO) prepares to conduct its November 2026 Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) bond auction, in a move expected to attract investments from institutional and high-net-worth investors.

The latest offer forms part of the government's domestic borrowing programme and provides investors with an opportunity to invest in government-backed securities while earning fixed returns over specified periods.

According to the DMO's offer circular, the subscription covers four existing Federal Government bonds with maturity dates ranging from March 2028 to May 2033. The auction is scheduled to hold on November 16, 2026, while settlement is expected to take place on November 18, 2026.

The largest portion of the offer is the 17.945 per cent FGN August 2030 bond, valued at N750 billion, making it the biggest component of the N2 trillion issuance.

Other bonds included in the offer are the 21.00 per cent FGN March 2028 bond worth N700 billion, the 19.30 per cent FGN April 2029 bond valued at N250 billion, and the 19.89 per cent FGN May 2033 bond worth N300 billion.

The different maturity periods provide investors with options depending on their investment objectives and preferred holding periods, while the interest rates attached to each bond determine the returns investors can expect over the investment period.

The News Chronicle reports that investors will receive interest payments twice annually, while the principal investment will be repaid upon maturity. The minimum subscription amount is N50.001 million, with additional investments permitted in multiples of N1,000.

The bonds will be listed on the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) and the FMDQ OTC Securities Exchange, providing investors with access to the secondary market, where the securities can be traded in accordance with applicable market regulations.

In addition, the bonds will qualify as liquid assets for banks and eligible investments for trustees. They will also enjoy applicable tax benefits under relevant legislation, making them attractive instruments for investors seeking exposure to government securities.

Delta commits over N2bn to 2026 pilgrimage

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori, has warned intending Christian pilgrims against using the 2026 pilgrimage to Israel and Jordan as an opportunity to abscond, cautioning that such conduct could bring shame and embarrassment to their families and the state.

The Governor gave the warning as the screening of applicants for the 2026 pilgrimage commenced at the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Secretariat in Asaba. The exercise is being conducted by the Nigeria Christian Pilgrim Commission (NCPC).

Represented by the Commissioner for Special Duties, Hon. Etacherure Terry, Governor Oborevwori described the pilgrimage as a spiritual exercise rather than an avenue for fanfare, urging successful applicants to conduct themselves as worthy ambassadors of Christ and Delta State.

He disclosed that the state government had committed more than N2 billion to the 2026 programme, with successful applicants enjoying full sponsorship for the spiritual journey.

According to him, the investment reflects his administration's commitment to the spiritual well-being of residents and the promotion of values that strengthen individuals, families and communities.

The Governor noted that the pilgrimage would provide beneficiaries with opportunities for spiritual renewal, deeper understanding of biblical history, stronger faith and renewed commitment to Christian values, with potential

Senate summons NCC, MTN, Airtel, others over dropped calls, unjustified airtime deductions

CAROLINE AMEH

ABUJA

The Senate has summoned the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and major telecommunications operators, including MTN, Airtel, Globacom and T2, over persistent network failures, dropped calls and unexplained airtime deductions affecting subscribers across the country.

The lawmakers are demanding explanations and accountability over complaints that Nigerians frequently lose airtime on calls that fail to connect, terminate prematurely or experience repeated disruptions.

The resolution followed deliberations on the financial burden poor telecommunications services place on consumers, with senators insisting that subscribers should not be charged for services they do not receive.

Lawmakers expressed concern that network subscribers are often forced to redial numbers several times before establishing successful connections, resulting in repeated airtime deductions and unnecessary financial losses.

They noted that the situation particularly affects low-income earners, traders, students and small business owners who depend heavily on telecommunications services for their daily activities.

Contributing to the debate, Senator Ned Nwoko, representing Delta North, described the proposed intervention as a straightforward consumer protection measure, stressing that the problem affects virtually every Nigerian who relies on mobile telecommunications.

The Senate maintained that although network challenges may sometimes be unavoidable, consumers should not be made to bear the financial consequences of service failures beyond their control.

Following deliberations, the lawmakers adopted the sixth prayer of the motion, which consolidated the proposed interventions contained in the earlier five prayers.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **GINGER OWENS**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **GINGER OLAYINKA OWENS**. All former documents Remain valid. concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known as **EZEWELE INNOCENT BEST**. Now wish to be known and addressed as **PATRICK BEST**. All former documents Remain valid concerned Authorities and the general public should please take note.

Our strength lies in our grassroots support - Oborevwori

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has said that the All Progressives Congress (APC) strength lies in its grassroots support and growing acceptance among the people, insisting that the party does not need to buy votes to win the 2027 elections.

Oborevwori made the declaration at the APC Local Government-by-Local Government campaign rally in Akwukwu-Igbo, headquarters of Oshimili North Local Government Area, where he expressed confidence that the area would sustain its strong electoral support for the party in the 2027 general elections.

"How can we buy votes when we have the votes? Do you buy what you already have? It is those who do not have the people that will resort to such practices," the governor declared, urging party supporters to translate their enthusiasm into massive votes.

He recalled that Oshimili North recorded the highest number of votes in Delta State in the last election, expressing optimism that the local government would consolidate its position in 2027.

The Governor described the rally as an opportunity to celebrate his administration's achievements and appreciate the people's support, assuring that more development projects would be delivered.

TWO YEARS OF PURPOSEFUL LEADERSHIP:

HON. AUSTIN IMAFIDON

Congratulates

GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

ON SECOND ANNIVERSARY IN OFFICE

The Executive Chairman of Uhunmwode Local Government Council, Hon. Austin Imafidon (AKA ISIWINA), heartily congratulates the Executive Governor of Edo State, His Excellency, Senator MONDAY OKPEBHOLO, on the successful celebration of his second year anniversary in office.

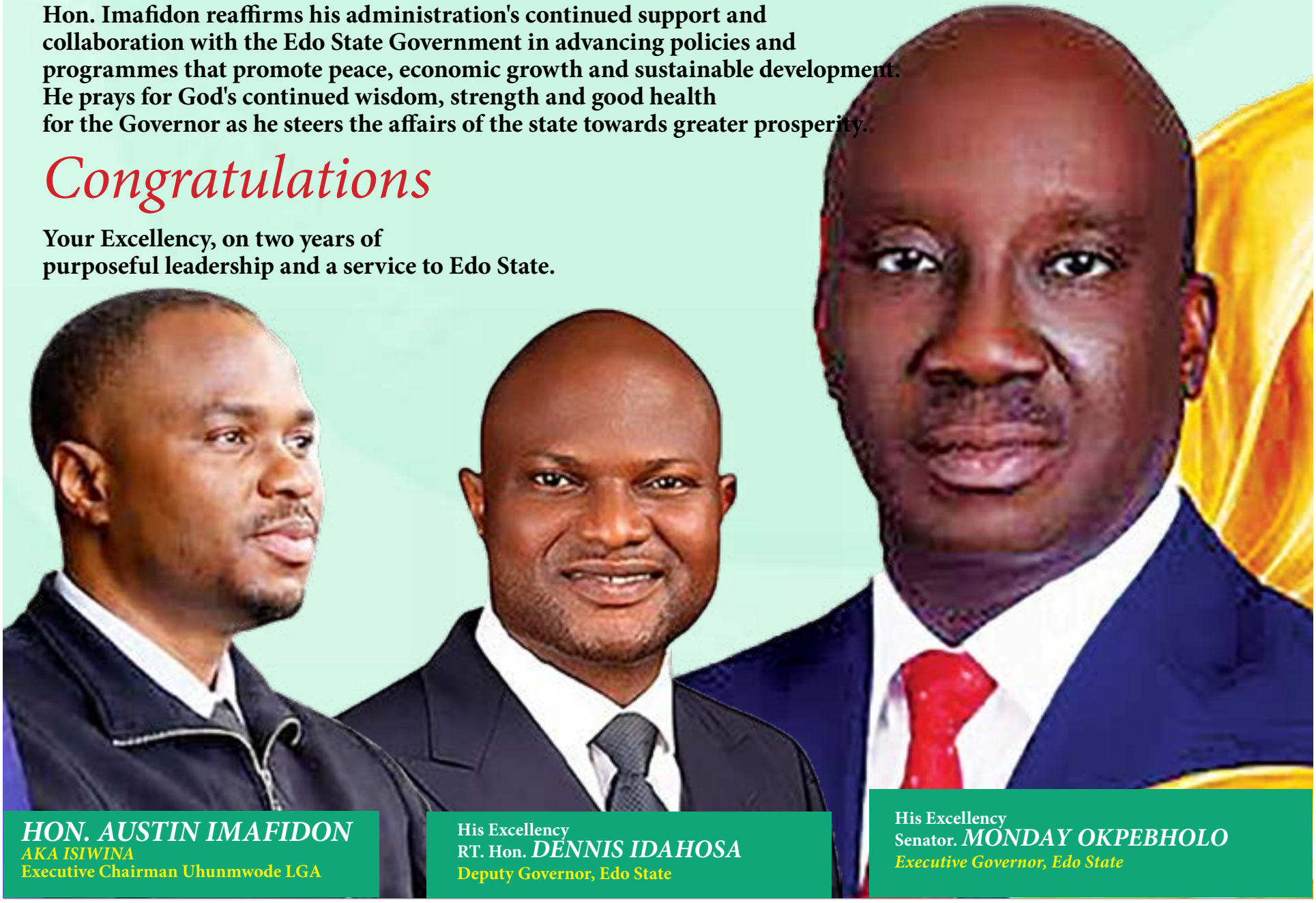
Hon. Imafidon commends the Governor for his purposeful leadership, developmental strides and unwavering commitment to repositioning Edo State through his SHINE Agenda. His administration's sustained efforts towards infrastructural renewal, road construction, security enhancement, improved public services, education and grassroots development reflect a clear determination to deliver meaningful dividends of democracy to the people.

The Uhunmwode Council Chairman particularly appreciates the Governor's inclusive leadership style, accessibility and commitment to strengthening local government administration as a vital instrument for grassroots transformation. He notes that the progress recorded under the present administration provides renewed hope and confidence in the state's development trajectory.

Hon. Imafidon reaffirms his administration's continued support and collaboration with the Edo State Government in advancing policies and programmes that promote peace, economic growth and sustainable development. He prays for God's continued wisdom, strength and good health for the Governor as he steers the affairs of the state towards greater prosperity.

Congratulations

Your Excellency, on two years of purposeful leadership and a service to Edo State.



HON. AUSTIN IMAFIDON
AKA ISIWINA
Executive Chairman Uhunmwode LGA

His Excellency
RT. Hon. *DENNIS IDAHOSA*
Deputy Governor, Edo State

His Excellency
Senator. *MONDAY OKPEBHOLO*
Executive Governor, Edo State

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THE BUILDER AT TWO:

A TOAST TO GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO

Your Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo, Governor of Edo State,

Two years ago, Edo entrusted you with a mandate. Today, the footprints of that mandate are becoming visible across the state.

- You came not merely to occupy an office, but to make a difference; not to govern by grand promises, but to translate vision into action. Two years on, your story is being written in roads, bridges, renewed communities and the growing promise of a better Edo.
- Across Benin City, the evidence speaks. At Ramat Park, a flyover has risen where flooding and traffic congestion once held sway. Along Sapele Road, another landmark project is taking shape. Roads are receiving renewed attention, while communities are experiencing the touch of government.
- Beyond infrastructure, the administration's efforts in security, education, agriculture, employment and social empowerment reflect a determination to improve the lives of our people. From classrooms to farms, workplaces to markets, the pursuit of a more prosperous Edo continues.
- Your Excellency, these two years have demonstrated a leadership disposition that values action, personal commitment and tangible results. Indeed, governance finds its greatest expression not in promises made, but in lives touched and opportunities created.
- As a newspaper founded 58 years ago to inform, enlighten and remain the voice of the people, **The NIGERIAN OBSERVER** acknowledges your efforts and salutes your commitment to moving Edo forward.
- On this memorable anniversary, we pray that Almighty God will renew your strength, deepen your wisdom and grant you the grace to serve with courage, humility and vision.
- May the years ahead usher in greater accomplishments, enduring prosperity and a stronger Edo State.
- Your Excellency, thank you for daring to build, for choosing action over rhetoric and for keeping the aspirations of Edo people at the heart of governance.

2nd ANNIVERSARY IN OFFICE

His Excellency,
Senator Monday Okpebholo
Governor of Edo State



Ramat Park Flyover, Benin City

Two years of purposeful strides.
Two years of building.
Two years of renewed hope.

Happy Second Anniversary, Your Excellency!

Respectfully,

THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF
THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER
Benin City.

Congratulations

WE CELEBRATE TWO YEARS OF DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP

I heartily congratulate His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo, Governor of Edo State, on the second anniversary of his administration. This milestone reflects two years of purposeful leadership, bold decisions and a firm commitment to repositioning Edo State for sustainable growth and development.

Your administration's focus on security, infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture and education through the SHINE Agenda demonstrates a clear vision of governance anchored on practical results and improved quality of life for the people.

As Executive Chairman of the Edo State Senior Secondary Education Board, I particularly appreciate your commitment to strengthening the education sector and creating a more enabling environment for teaching and learning.

Education remains the foundation of a prosperous society, and sustained investment in it will secure a brighter future for Edo children.

As you mark this milestone, I wish you greater wisdom, strength and divine guidance as you continue to steer the affairs of our dear state.

May the years ahead bring more remarkable achievements and enduring dividends of good governance.



His Excellency,
Sen.MONDAY OKPEBHOLO,
Executive Governor, Edo Sate

Dr. RITA OTIBHO EREWELE
Executive Chairman, Edo State Senior Secondary Education Board (SSEB)

NEWS

Tinubu seeks Reps approval to implement N10.79tn external borrowing plan

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has written to the House of Representatives, seeking approval to implement the N10.79tn external borrowing component of the 2026 Appropriation Act to finance part of the federal government's budget deficit.

The President, in a letter addressed to the Speaker of the House, Tajudeen Abbas and read during Wednesday's plenary, requested the House's approval for the government to raise $7.71bn at the budget exchange rate of N1,400 to a dollar.

Tinubu explained that the request was in compliance with Sections 21(1) and 27(1) of the Debt Management Office Establishment Act, 2003, which require the terms and conditions of external loans to be laid before and approved by the National Assembly.

He said the proposed borrowing was already captured in the 2026 Appropriation Act and formed part of the N29.22tn approved new borrowing to finance the federal government's budget deficit.

According to the President, the approved borrowing comprises N18.28tn in domestic loans and N10.79tn in external borrowing.

"I write to request for the permission of the House of Representatives to implement the new external borrowing plan contained in the 2026 Appropriation Act in the sum of N10,790,366,835,481, which is equivalent to $7,707,404,882.49 at the budget exchange rate of $1 to N1,400, for the part financing of the budget deficit," he stated.

Tinubu said the government would pursue different borrowing options simultaneously, taking into consideration the cost of borrowing and the time required to access the funds.

He, however, indicated that greater emphasis would be placed on Eurobond issuance, which he described as a faster means of raising substantial funds at relatively lower costs.

"All options will be pursued simultaneously considering the cost of benefit to the country as well as the time required to access the funds. In view of this, emphasis will be on the issuance of Eurobonds which is typically faster to conclude," the president said.

He added that the final terms and conditions of the Eurobond issuance would depend on prevailing market conditions at the time of pricing.

Tinubu assured that the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Debt Managent Office would work to secure the most favourable borrowing terms available in the international market.

The president further explained that the external loans would finance projects and programmes contained in the 2026 budget, particularly in critical sectors including defence and security, transportation, agriculture, power, education and health.

He also argued that the proceeds would help strengthen the country's external reserves and support the naira, noting that the funds would be received by the Central Bank of Nigeria on behalf of the Federal Government.

In the resolution sought from the House, Tinubu requested authorisation for the government to raise the funds through multilateral and bilateral institutions, conventional and commercial lending windows, the International Monetary Fund, bridge financing facilities and Eurobond issuance.

He also sought authorisation for the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, in collaboration with the DMO, to take all necessary steps to implement the proposed borrowing arrangement.

Responding to the request, Speaker Abbas clarified that the president was not seeking approval for a fresh borrowing plan, stressing that the N10.79tn external borrowing had already been approved by the National Assembly and provided for in the 2026 Appropriation Act.



PLENARY SESSION:
Hon Natasha Osawaru, Minority leader Edo State House of Assembly (left) moving a motion of urgent public importance calling on the Edo State Government, relevant bodies and agency to curb indecent dressing in the state, while Hon Atu Evbaguehita, Deputy Speaker of the house sitting right, during the house plenary session. Photo; Godwin Iseguan.

Nigeria woos investors for CNG, EV expansion

ABUJA

NIGERIA is seeking increased private sector investment and international climate finance to accelerate the adoption of compressed natural gas and electric vehicles, as the Federal Government moves to balance energy security, affordable transportation and emissions reduction.

The Presidential Initiative on Compressed Natural Gas and Electric Vehicles and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority made the call at a side event on mobilising green finance for low-carbon transport under Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions at the ongoing COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye, on Wednesday.

The discussion examined how Nigeria can attract investment into CNG and electric mobility infrastructure, develop local manufacturing capacity and make cleaner transportation commercially viable.

Speaking at the event, the Chief Investment Officer of the Pi-CNG and EV initiative, Babajide Awolowo, said Nigeria's clean mobility transition had moved beyond climate ambition and was increasingly becoming an investment opportunity.

He said the initiative had recorded significant progress in its two-year implementation, including the conversion of more than 140,000 vehicles to CNG, the development of over 100 CNG retail stations and 17 mother stations across the country.

Awolowo added that the initiative had deployed more than 550 CNG buses and attracted approximately $2.6bn in investments from both government and private sector participants.

He said state-level partnerships were also expanding adoption, citing the deployment of 2,000 CNG trucks in Lagos, 100 buses in Enugu, 200 in Nasarawa, and 50 each in Delta and Edo states.

According to him, major private sector operators, including Dangote, Lafarge and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, are also transitioning parts of their transport operations to CNG, involving more than 10,000 trucks and vehicles.

On electric mobility, Awolowo disclosed that 12 EV charging stations were being developed across major cities, while 40 electric buses had been deployed. He said the initiative was also pursuing a battery-swapping programme targeting 800 electric tricycles in selected northern states.

He added that 37 electric buses had been deployed in the Federal Capital Territory, with plans to increase the number to 100 before the end of the year.

However, he said Nigeria needed more investment in electric vehicle assembly, battery-swapping networks, charging infrastructure, public transportation and renewable-powered mobility solutions to deepen the transition and create employment.

Osun monarch decries seven months' unpaid salaries, appeals to Adeleke

OSOGBO

The Oloyan of Oyan, Oba Adekeye Oluyeye, has appealed to the Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, over the alleged non-payment of salaries of traditional rulers and chiefs for seven months.

The monarch, speaking in Yoruba, made the appeal in a video posted on Facebook by Osogbo Updates on Wednesday.

"The king is starving. They are starving the king and chiefs," he said.

Oluyeye said the affected traditional rulers in Odo Otin were many, putting the number at 17 kings and 440 chiefs.

"In this Odo Otin, there are 17 kings. The chiefs alone are 440," he said.

He claimed that none of them had been paid in the past seven months, adding that "this is the seventh month that has ended."

The monarch also complained about the rising cost of living, saying it had worsened the situation.

"With the way things are expensive, we are many. It is frustrating. Isn't it?" he said.

Oluyeye said President Bola Tinubu had played his part, saying: "The President has done what is proper."

He asked that his message be passed on to the governor.

"Please tell Ademola, hunger

2027: INEC to review ADC judgment after receiving certified copy

LAGOS

The Independent National Electoral Commission has said that it will not take any action on the Federal High Court judgment nullifying the leadership of the African Democratic Congress until it obtains a certified true copy of the ruling.

INEC National Commissioner and Charman of Information and Voter Education Committee, Mohammed Haruna, disclosed this on Wednesday during a webinar organised by the PUNCH Media Foundation, explaining that the Commission needed to study the judgment and obtain legal advice before deciding its next move.

The judgment, delivered on November 5 by Justice Peter Lifu of the Federal High Court in Abuja, nullified the emergence of the Senator David Mark-led ADC leadership and invalidated decisions taken under it, including the process that produced former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar as the party's presidential candidate for the 2027 election.

The ruling followed a suit filed by a former Deputy National Chairman of the party, Nafiu Bala Gombe, who challenged the emergence of the Mark-led leadership.

The ADC has rejected the judgment and appealed the decision. It also filed an application for a stay of execution and urged INEC not to take any consequential action while the appeal is pending.

Haruna said the Commission's legal department would first examine the judgment and advise a committee chaired by a national commissioner, which would subsequently make recommendations to the Commission.

He explained that the Commission had already taken steps to obtain the document but could not compel the court to issue it immediately.

"We can't rush the courts, but we do our own part. We have a whole legal department. As soon as judgments like this come, what they do, of course, is to go to the courts, to go to the court register, to see if they can obtain it. But they have their own processes," he said.

According to him, it usually takes about a week to obtain a certified true copy of a judgment.

Haruna noted that the judgment was delivered towards the end of the previous week, adding that the Commission would begin its internal review once the document was received.

"So, as soon as we get it, we run a committee system. The department which is in charge of litigation will look into it, then they will advise. There is a committee which is chaired by a national commissioner. They, in turn, will advise the Commission itself, and then the Commission will take a decision on exactly what to do," he said.

He added that the Commission could not take a decision on the matter until it received the certified true copy.

"So, for now, until we receive that certified true copy, there's really nothing that we can do about it," he said.

NEWS

Amnesty demands unconditional release of detained FIJ journalist, Ojukwu

ABUJA

Amnesty International Nigeria has called on the Federal Government to immediately and unconditionally release investigative journalist Daniel Ojukwu, following a Federal High Court order remanding him in prison custody for 21 days.

The organisation warned that his continued detention could further undermine press freedom and create an atmosphere of fear among journalists reporting on corruption and alleged abuse of power.

Amnesty International Nigeria made the demand in a statement published on its X account on Wednesday.

"His detention raises serious concerns about the use of judicial processes to intimidate journalists and undermine the right to freedom of expression and media freedom in Nigeria," the organisation said.

Ojukwu, an investigative reporter with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism, has faced legal proceedings since December 2024 following his reports on alleged corruption and the diversion of public funds involving government officials.

On Tuesday, Ojukwu was remanded by the Federal High Court in Abuja at the Kuje Correctional Centre over cyberstalking charges arising from investigative reports on President Bola Tinubu's Senior Special Assistant on Sustainable Development Goals, Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire.

Justice Joyce Abdulmalik ordered his remand until December 1, 2026, when the court is expected to hear his bail application, after the journalist pleaded not guilty to the 12-count charge.

The rights organisation recalled that officers of the Nigeria Police Force abducted him in May 2024 in connection with his journalistic work.

It expressed concern that his prosecution and continued detention reflected what it described as a broader pattern of using the criminal justice system to punish journalists for investigating alleged wrongdoing and demanding accountability from public officials.

"The continued prosecution and detention of Ojukwu appear to be part of a broader pattern of using the criminal justice system to punish journalists for exposing allegations of corruption and holding public officials accountable," it said.

Amnesty International added that the latest remand order could discourage journalists



PLENARY SESSION:
Hon Andrew Uzamere Edobor, member representing Ovia North East constituency 11, Edo State House of Assembly (left) and Hon Jonathan Ibhamawu member representing Esan West constituency in the house during a motion calling on relevant authority to curb indecent dressing in the state at the house plenary session recently. Photo; Godwin Iseguan.

2027: Tackle fake news early, Yiaga urges INEC

LAGOS

Yiaga Africa's Director of Programmes, Cynthia Mbamalu, has said the Independent National Electoral Commission must provide accurate and timely information on the electoral process.

This, Mbamalu said, would prevent AI-enabled disinformation from eroding public confidence and discouraging voter participation ahead of the 2027 general elections.

She warned that deliberate attempts to mislead voters posed a greater threat than misinformation shared unknowingly, urging the electoral commission to adopt proactive communication and establish clear channels through which citizens can verify election-related information.

Speaking at The PUNCH webinar on AI, misinformation and Nigeria's 2027 general elections on Wednesday, organised by the PUNCH Media Foundation, YIAGA Africa's Director of Programmes said public trust was critical to electoral participation, warning that citizens who lost confidence in the process were less likely to participate.

"When people are confident, then they are more inspired to participate. When they don't trust the system, they are less inspired to participate. And I always say this: trust is a currency for electoral participation. For citizens, especially Nigerians, we already operate in a context where we naturally have a major trust issue as a people. This is a country where we ordinarily do not trust each other, so we struggle with trust.

"When it comes to the electoral process, if there is anything that anyone targets, if you want to limit participation or affect how citizens engage, the major target is trust and confidence, which is why we are having this conversation on AI and misinformation," she said.

Mbamalu further noted that the growing use of digitally manipulated content made it necessary for electoral stakeholders to strengthen information integrity before, during and after elections.

She explained that the country currently faced a bigger challenge of disinformation, which is deliberate attempts to deceive and manipulate the public.

Mbamalu said building public confidence required the provision of reliable information, especially by the electoral commission, which she urged not to remain passive in the face of emerging threats.

"If the currency of all citizens' participation is trust, then the first thing is to build trust and to build confidence. And what is the one important way of doing that? Provide accurate, timely information on the process. And as a civil society organisation and as observer groups working, our role first is to provide accurate information, which is why most of us conduct pre-election observation.

"But for the electoral commission in this process, INEC cannot be a silent or passive participant. INEC has, in fact, the most important role of being forthright and being proactive and timely with information, because it's easier to pre-bunk than debunk," the lead for the #WatchingTheVote project stated.

Mbamalu said proactive communication should go beyond publishing information on social media or using traditional media, urging INEC to inform citizens of where and when to obtain credible information.

She stated, "Now, providing timely information is not just about putting posts on social media platforms or leveraging traditional media. It's also about providing information to citizens on where and when to access credible information. What we need from the electoral commission is a clear timeline on how.

Katsina Hisbah bans girls from hawking after 10pm

KATSINA

The Katsina State Hisbah Board has prohibited girls from engaging in night hawking across the state, directing that the activity must stop by 10pm daily.

The Commandant General of the board, Saifullahi Musa, announced the directive on Tuesday during a press briefing at the board's headquarters.

The directive comes amid wider concerns about the risks faced by children engaged in street trading.

Research on child hawking in Nigeria has linked the practice to household economic pressures and identified risks including harassment, robbery and disruption to children's education.

The Katsina State Hisbah Board was established by Governor Dikko Radda in 2023 as part of efforts to address social and moral concerns in the state.

Its activities include promoting Islamic values and intervening in social and family-related matters.

Musa said the measure was intended to protect girls from abuse and other social risks while ensuring that public activities complied with Islamic teachings.

According to him, the restriction covers motor parks, markets and other public places where hawking takes place across the state.

Musa said the board had received reports of girls involved in night trading being exposed to sexual abuse and other activities considered contrary to Islamic principles.

"Reports indicate that some of these girls engage in illicit activities, while others are raped and some commit adultery. These practices are against the teachings of Islam, and we will not allow them to continue," he stated.

He disclosed that Hisbah personnel would be deployed to strategic locations, including markets and motor parks, to ensure compliance with the directive.

The commandant also cautioned parents against allowing their children, particularly girls, to hawk late at night, urging them to take greater responsibility for their safety and welfare.

In another development, Musa said the board would begin regulating traditional medicine dealers to ensure that their activities aligned with Islamic values.

He expressed concern over the use of vulgar and offensive language by some practitioners when advertising their products, warning that the board would no longer tolerate such conduct.

The Hisbah chief also raised concerns about reports of brothels reopening in some parts of the state, directing operators to close their establishments or face legal action.

He further reiterated that the ban on the sale of alcoholic drinks, particularly beer, remained in force in Katsina, warning traders against selling alcohol in public places.

Police uncover 'phone farms,' arrest suspect over election misinformation

ABAKALIKI

The Nigeria Police Force has uncovered and raided facilities known as phone farms allegedly used to manipulate online conversations ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The police also arrested a suspect accused of spreading false information about a political candidate from the Southern region to influence voter behaviour and discredit the candidate.

Assistant Commissioner of Police, Bashir Abdullahi who disclosed this during a webinar, explained that phone farms were facilities where hundreds of mobile phones and automated accounts were deployed to create the impression that large numbers of people were promoting or discussing particular issues online.

He said the police discovered the facilities while investigating alleged coordinated attempts by some individuals to manipulate the electoral process.

"We have recently come across information regarding the coordinated effort being made by some individuals to see that they tamper with our elections. Having dissected the information, we were able to carry out targeted raids at phone farms," he said.

Explaining how the facilities operate, Abdullahi said individuals used multiple phones and bots to spread information simultaneously and manipulate public perception.

"They call it phone farms, where you have bots arranged to manipulate and spread information simultaneously, making you believe that a whole lot of people are talking about the same subject.

"Meanwhile, it is just an individual behind hundreds of phones, arranged in what they call a phone farm, so that they can manipulate the system. The police were able to disrupt this," he added.

The ACP also disclosed that the police had arrested a suspect accused of circulating false information about a candidate from the South-South region.

NEWS

RMAFC moves to ensure fair sharing of 13% derivation fund

OWERRI

The Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission has called for the equitable distribution of the 13 per cent derivation fund among oil and gas-producing states.

The Chairman of the commission, Mohammed Shehu, made the call in Owerri on Thursday during the flag-off of an oil and gas wells verification exercise.

Shehu said the commission was empowered by the 1999 Constitution, as amended, to monitor revenue accruals to and disbursements from the Federation Account, including the 13 per cent derivation fund.

He said, "The Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission is empowered by Paragraph 32(a) of Part I of the Third Schedule of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) to, amongst others, 'monitor accruals to and disbursement of revenue from the Federation Account'.

"By virtue of this, the commission is empowered to ensure that the 13 per cent derivation fund is disbursed equitably among oil and gas-producing states."

He said the exercise would involve examining and verifying the coordinates of disputed oil and gas wells, as well as newly drilled wells from 2017 to date.

According to him, the Inter-Agency Technical Committee set up for the exercise would also conduct physical verification of affected wells, ensure accurate plotting of their coordinates and use only approved maps for the exercise.

He added that the committee would consider court decisions in resolving disputes over oil and gas wells and submit its findings exclusively to the commission for ratification and adoption.

Shehu described the exercise as important to determining the accuracy of revenue allocations from the Federation Account, noting that the coordinates and locations of oil and gas wells determine the financial entitlements of the affected states.

"This exercise represents a crucial phase in establishing statutory accuracy, technical fidelity, and fiscal equity within the Federation Account allocation framework.

"The determination of exact coordinates and spatial alignments for the subject wellheads directly governs the legal and financial entitlements of the respective sub-national entities," he said.

He urged technical officers deployed for the exercise to carry out their assignments in accordance with established surveying standards, official maps and relevant legal provisions.



INDUCTION:
(Fifth right backrow) Ms.Helen Bazuaye, associate member shortly after the induction of the Institute of Certify Secretaries and Reporters of Nigeria in Benin city.

NERC approves N30bn to meter band A, B customers

ABUJA

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission has approved N30 billion for the third phase of the Meter Acquisition Fund to accelerate the installation of electricity meters for unmetered Band A customers and expand coverage among Band B consumers.

The regulator has also directed electricity distribution companies to complete all meter installations under the programme by May 31, 2027, warning that customers must not be charged for meters provided through the initiative.

The commission disclosed this in Order No. NERC/2026/121 on the operationalisation of Tranche C of the Meter Acquisition Fund, effective November 2, 2026.

It announced the order in a post on its official X handle on Tuesday.

The post read, "The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC or the Commission) hereby informs electricity consumers and stakeholders of the issuance of Order No. NERC/2026/121 on the Operationalisation of Tranche C of the Meter Acquisition Fund, effective 2 November 2026.

"The Commission has approved N30 billion for Tranche C, to be allocated among the eleven Distribution Companies (DisCos) in proportion to their respective contributions to the Fund.

"The funding is intended to meter all remaining unmetered Band A customers and accelerate the metering of Band B customers, with equitable distribution across states within the respective DisCo franchise areas."

The latest funding is part of the Federal Government's Presidential Metering Initiative, which seeks to close the country's persistent electricity metering gap, protect consumers from estimated billing and improve accountability in the power distribution system.

Under the arrangement, the distribution companies are required to conduct transparent procurement exercises involving eligible Local Meter Manufacturers and Assemblers and Meter Asset Providers with verified meter stocks.

NERC said it had prescribed maximum procurement prices based on the median national bid prices submitted by Meter Asset Providers during the September 2026 bidding cycle.

The commission also introduced a two-stage payment arrangement to strengthen accountability and ensure that providers deliver the meters before receiving full payment.

Under the arrangement, 70 per cent of the contract payment will be released after verification of delivered meter stocks, while the remaining 30 per cent will be paid after the complete installation of the meters has been confirmed.

The regulator reiterated that all meters supplied and installed under the fund must be provided free of charge to electricity consumers, warning against attempts by distribution companies or their agents to sell them.

It further directed that every meter supplied under the programme must prominently display the name of the relevant distribution company, the applicable tranche of the Meter Acquisition Fund and the inscription, "NOT FOR SALE".

The order also addressed situations where distribution companies relocate customers' existing connection points for revenue protection purposes.

According to NERC, where a DisCo initiates such relocation, it must bear the associated cost rather than transfer the financial burden to the affected customer.

Ebonyi health insurance agency records 417% growth in enrolment, expands access to healthcare

Maxwell Okechukwu

ABAKALIKI

The Ebonyi State Health Insurance Agency (EBSHIA) has recorded a 417 per cent increase in enrolment over the past four years, bringing its total number of beneficiaries to 166,118, as the agency intensifies efforts to expand access to affordable healthcare across the state.

The Executive Secretary of the agency, Dr. Divine Okemefuna Igwe, disclosed this during a press conference in Abakaliki, where he presented the agency's achievements, highlighted its challenges and outlined strategies for expanding health insurance coverage.

According to Dr. Igwe, the agency's enrolment increased from 32,149 in 2023 to 166,118, representing an additional 133,969 enrollees under the administration of Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru.

He attributed the remarkable growth to the state government's commitment to improving healthcare delivery and expanding health insurance coverage, noting that the scheme currently accommodates civil servants, pregnant women, children, students and informal sector workers across the state's 13 local government areas.

He further disclosed that the agency had enrolled 38,322 pregnant women and approximately 39,400 children, while civil servants enjoy free health insurance coverage sponsored by the state government.

The press conference also featured testimonies from beneficiaries, who expressed appreciation for the impact of the scheme on their access to healthcare services.

One of the beneficiaries, Ivoke Nwakaego Nancy, from Ivo Local Government Area, commended the state government for providing her with free maternal healthcare services.

Another beneficiary, Uguru Precious, recounted how the scheme enabled her to deliver twins without the financial burden associated with childbirth under conventional out-of-pocket payment arrangements.

The programme also highlighted the support available to other vulnerable groups, including sickle cell survivors.

Despite the impressive growth in enrolment, Dr. Igwe acknowledged that the agency's overall coverage remains approximately 5.2 per cent, stressing that increased enrolment figures alone would not guarantee universal health coverage.

He therefore called on wealthy individuals, philanthropists, religious organisations, community leaders and other well-meaning residents to support the initiative by sponsoring health insurance enrolment for vulnerable members of society.

APGA in Ebonyi adopts APC Governor, Nwifuru, for second term ahead of 2027 election

Maxwell Okechukwu

ABAKALIKI

The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) in Ebonyi State has endorsed Governor Francis Nwifuru of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for a second term in office ahead of the 2027 governorship election.

The endorsement followed the decision of APGA's governorship candidate, Chief Mrs Lucy Odom, to withdraw from the race and support the incumbent governor after extensive consultations with party leaders, stakeholders and other political interests.

The decision was announced on Saturday in Abakaliki during a gathering of the party's state and national leadership, candidates and other stakeholders, signalling a significant political realignment ahead of the 2027 general election.

APGA State Chairman, Hon. Chukwudi Nwankwo, said the endorsement was a deliberate decision by the party to sustain peace, unity and development in Ebonyi State.

Nwankwo, who presided over the gathering, explained that the party had resolved to support Nwifuru's second-term ambition in recognition of what he described as the governor's efforts towards promoting peace and political harmony across the state.

He described the endorsement as part of the progressive political collaboration between APGA and APC, dismissing suggestions that the two parties were working at cross-purposes.

"We endorse our dear governor to continue his good work. We endorse him because he has brought peace and unity among everybody," Nwankwo said.

He disclosed that the party would issue directives to its structures across the 13 local government areas of the state to mobilise members and supporters for Nwifuru's re-election.

"The endorsement today is a solemn commitment. After endorsing him, we will give directives to all our people across the state so that they will vote massively for Nwifuru," he added.

Nwankwo further called on party members to sustain the atmosphere of political understanding, insisting that the alliance would strengthen unity and promote development across the state.

In her remarks, APGA's governorship candidate, Chief Mrs Lucy Odom, explained that her decision to step down followed extensive consultations with party members, political stakeholders and other relevant interests.

FEATURE

...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY

SECURITY: Okpebholo strengthens Edo's security architecture, intensifies war against criminality



Men of the Edo state security corp undergoing training at Ogida police traning school

MATTHEW OKAGHA/ RICHARD EWEKA

From security equipment and personnel recruitment to forest surveillance and stronger collaboration with security agencies, the administration is pursuing a more coordinated approach to protecting lives and property.

Security has remained one of the defining priorities of Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration, recognising that peace and stability are indispensable to economic growth, investment and sustainable development.

One of the administration's significant interventions has been the provision of operational vehicles and mobility equipment to security agencies. During its first 100 days, the government announced the provision of 38 Toyota Hilux vans and 16 Prado jeeps for security operations, alongside additional plans to equip the Edo State Security Corps.

The administration subsequently reported the procurement of 80 Hilux patrol vehicles and 400 motorcycles to improve security surveillance and response operations across the state. These interventions are designed to strengthen patrols, improve rapid response and extend security coverage to difficult terrains and vulnerable communities.

The initiative is particularly important given the security challenges associated with remote forests, kidnapping and attacks on rural communities.

Improved operational support and intelligence gathering

The administration has equally strengthened collaboration with the Nigerian Army, Police, Department of State Services, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and other security formations.

In February 2026, Governor Okpebholo reaffirmed his administration's partnership with the Nigerian Army in tackling kidnapping and other criminal activities. The governor acknowledged the contributions of the Army's 4 Brigade, particularly its operations in forests and remote locations where criminal elements sometimes seek refuge.

For Governor Okpebholo, the ultimate test of the security component of the SHINE Agenda is the ability to create an environment where farmers can access their farmlands without fear, traders can conduct business freely, investors can operate confidently and families can sleep peacefully.

The administration's investments in security personnel, operational equipment, forest protection and inter-agency collaboration provide an important foundation for this objective.

Ultimately, security is not merely about deploying personnel or procuring patrol vehicles; it is about guaranteeing the safety, dignity and confidence of the people.

A peaceful Edo is a productive Edo, and a secure Edo is an Edo

Okpebholo changes the narrative on kidnapping, cultism in Edo

..Over 500 youths renounce cultism as governor vows no criminal will be spared

Today, under Governor Monday Okpebholo, the state is witnessing a renewed push against criminality, alongside efforts to give repentant youths a second chance.

AGHEDO IYOBOR

The narrative is changing in Edo State.

For years, cultism, kidnapping and violent crimes cast a dark shadow over communities, instilling fear among residents and threatening the future of many young people. Today, under Governor Monday Okpebholo, the state is witnessing a renewed push against criminality, alongside efforts to give repentant youths a second chance.

In a significant development, more than 500 youths have renounced cultism, reportedly abandoning their former associations and embracing the path of peace. The development represents an encouraging milestone in the state's ongoing efforts to tackle cult-related violence and restore public confidence in security.

A GOVERNOR WHO MEANS BUSINESS

From the outset, Governor Okpebholo has maintained a firm position against kidnapping, cultism and other forms of criminality: Edo must not become a safe haven for criminals.

His administration has demonstrated this resolve through support for security agencies, intensified security operations, the dismantling of criminal hideouts and enforcement of laws against kidnapping and cult-related activities.

The governor's message is unmistakable: those who persist in criminal activities will face the full weight of the law, irrespective of their connections or influence.

FROM DARKNESS TO A NEW BEGINNING

For the more than 500 youths who have renounced cultism, the decision marks an opportunity to turn a new page.

Beyond abandoning cult groups, their reintegration into society will be crucial to sustaining the gains of the initiative. Access to education, vocational training, employment opportunities and positive community engagement could help prevent a return to criminal activities.

Community and religious leaders who witnessed the renunciation reportedly described the development as significant, expressing optimism that the initiative would encourage other youths to abandon violence and embrace peaceful living.

CHANGING THE SECURITY NARRATIVE

Edo's security challenge cannot be wished away. Years of cult-related violence, kidnapping and criminal activities have left painful memories in several communities.

However, the reported mass renunciation of cultism offers a positive indication that sustained security enforcement, community engagement and opportunities for rehabilitation can work together to address the problem.

Governor Okpebholo's approach rests on two complementary principles: firmness against those who choose criminality and an opportunity for those genuinely willing to abandon it.

This distinction is important. While the state must remain uncompromising in dealing with criminals, it must also create pathways through which repentant youths can become productive members of society.

THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR

To kidnappers, cultists and other criminal elements still operating in Edo, the message is clear: abandon criminality or face the consequences of the law.

To the youths who have renounced cultism, the message is equally important: society must give you an opportunity to rebuild your lives, provided you remain committed to peace and lawful conduct.

The renunciation by more than 500 youths is an encouraging development in Edo's quest for a safer society. The real test, however, will be sustaining the process, preventing a relapse into cultism and ensuring that communities experience lasting peace.

Under Governor Okpebholo, the ambition is clear: to replace fear with confidence, violence with peace and criminality with opportunity.

Edo must move forward, and the gains in security must be sustained.

NEWS

...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY

Okpebholo's two years: Reviving healthcare, rebuilding public confidence

...Reopens long-abandoned hospitals, builds primary healthcare centres, strengthens specialist services

MATTHEW OKAGHA/
RICHARD EWEKA

Healthcare delivery is one of the critical areas through which the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo is seeking to improve the quality of life of Edo residents, with interventions aimed at revitalising public health facilities, expanding access to primary healthcare and strengthening the state's medical workforce.

Under the administration's SHINE Agenda, healthcare occupies an important position, reflecting the government's recognition that a healthy population is fundamental to sustainable development.

One of the notable developments in the sector is the reopening of public health facilities that had remained closed or moribund for several years, denying residents, particularly those in rural communities, access to essential medical services.

Among the facilities brought back to life are the Anegbette General Hospital, which had been closed for 19 years, and the Obayantor General Hospital, which had remained shut for 22 years.

The administration also restored operations at the Usugbenu Cottage Hospital and the Uneme-Osu health facility, both of which had been in a moribund state for about five years.

The reopening of these facilities represents an important intervention in addressing the challenge of access to healthcare, particularly for residents who previously had to travel considerable distances to obtain medical attention.

Beyond the rehabilitation of existing facilities, the government has also pursued an expansion of healthcare infrastructure through the construction of Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) across the state.

As disclosed by the government in April 2026, more than 70 primary healthcare centres had been built, while another 160 were at various stages of development.

The expansion is expected to bring basic healthcare services closer to communities, improve maternal and child healthcare, support immunisation programmes and strengthen early diagnosis and treatment of common ailments.

At the secondary and specialist healthcare levels, the state's hospital development programme includes a 150-bed specialist hospital in Edo Central and a 100-bed hospital at Uwessan, among the major projects identified in the administration's healthcare infrastructure inventory.

These investments are significant in the context of the need to expand the capacity of the state's health system and reduce pressure on existing tertiary healthcare institutions.

Strengthening the health workforce

Recognising that healthcare infrastructure alone cannot guarantee effective service delivery without qualified personnel, the Okpebholo administration has also taken steps to strengthen the state's medical workforce.

The recruitment of 1,376 clinical and non-clinical personnel represents a major component of the government's efforts to address manpower shortages in public health institutions.

The additional workforce is expected to improve service delivery, enhance patient care and support the effective utilisation of rehabilitated and newly established health facilities.

At the tertiary healthcare level, the administration has also recorded developments at the Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH), one of the state's foremost medical institutions.

The hospital absorbed 126 contract workers, while additional recruitment and improvements in clinical services have strengthened its operational capacity.

Another significant development is the attainment of full accreditation for its residency training programme, an achievement that enhances the institution's capacity to train specialist medical professionals and contribute to the development of Nigeria's healthcare workforce.

Healthcare with a human face

Beyond infrastructure and institutional reforms, the administration has also demonstrated attention to the welfare of vulnerable residents.

An example was the provision of a wheelchair and crutches to 89-year-old Mrs Marina Darwang, in an intervention aimed at easing her mobility challenges and improving her quality of life.

The items were presented on behalf of the governor by the Commissioner for Health, Dr Cyril Adams Oshiomhole, accompanied by the Permanent Secretary, Dr Eighemherio Paul Ikhumosa.

Although modest in scale compared with major infrastructure projects, such interventions underscore the importance of compassion and social responsibility in public healthcare delivery.

The road ahead

While the developments recorded in the health sector provide evidence of renewed attention to healthcare delivery, the sustainability of the interventions will depend on effective management, adequate funding, regular maintenance of facilities and the continued availability of qualified medical personnel.

The completion and equipping of ongoing hospital projects, the delivery of the additional primary healthcare centres and the provision of essential drugs and medical supplies will also be important in translating infrastructure investments into improved health outcomes.

Ultimately, the success of the administration's healthcare agenda will be measured not merely by the number of hospitals reopened or facilities constructed, but by the extent to which ordinary Edo residents can access affordable, timely and quality medical services.

For an administration whose SHINE Agenda places human development at the centre of governance, the revitalisation of the health sector remains an important measure of its commitment to improving the welfare of the people.





FEATURE

...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY

Okpebholo @ 2: Governance works, not words

Osemudiamhen O. Faith

Governor Monday Okpebholo's administration is anchored on a simple principle: governance must translate into tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens.

For years, governance in Edo State was often perceived as distant from the everyday realities of the people. Decisions took time, projects suffered delays, workers and contractors faced uncertainties, while many communities waited endlessly for government attention.

Two years into the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the emphasis has shifted towards a more practical approach to governance — one defined by visibility, responsiveness, supervision and the delivery of tangible results.

The philosophy is simple: government must not exist merely in policy documents, official pronouncements and political promises. Its impact must be felt in the lives of the people.

This is the defining principle of practical governance.



A GOVERNOR WHO SHOWS UP

Governor Okpebholo has consistently projected a hands-on leadership style, taking governance beyond the confines of Government House to ministries, agencies, local government areas, markets, schools and communities.

His frequent inspections and direct engagements with public officials are intended to strengthen supervision, demand accountability and ensure that government decisions translate into action.

By asking questions, setting deadlines and demanding results, the Governor has sought to reinforce a culture of responsibility within the public service.

The underlying message is unmistakable: public office is a responsibility, and those entrusted with it must deliver.

DISCIPLINE WITH PUBLIC RESOURCES

Responsible management of public resources remains central to effective governance.

The Okpebholo administration has placed emphasis on project execution, financial discipline and accountability, with the expectation that public expenditure must produce measurable value.

The principle is straightforward: government must get value for every naira spent. Contractors must deliver according to specifications, while abandoned or poorly executed projects must not escape scrutiny.

Ultimately, the objective is to ensure that public resources serve public interests and that government investments translate into visible development.

RE-ENERGISING THE CIVIL SERVICE

The effectiveness of any administration depends substantially on the efficiency of its workforce.

Governor Okpebholo's approach recognises the importance of a motivated, disciplined and responsive civil service in delivering the dividends of democracy.

Timely payment of salaries, attention to pension obligations, staff development and improved supervision are important components of building an efficient public service.

Beyond these responsibilities, the administration must continue to strengthen institutional capacity and create an environment in which public servants are encouraged to demonstrate professionalism, commitment and productivity.

A functional civil service is indispensable to sustainable development.

GOVERNANCE BEYOND BENIN CITY

One important measure of responsible leadership is the ability to extend development beyond the state capital.

Edo State is much bigger than Benin City. Its development aspirations encompass Uromi, Auchi, Ekpoma, Igarra, Agenebode and hundreds of other communities across the three senatorial districts.

The Governor's engagement with local government authorities, traditional institutions and community stakeholders reflects the importance of grassroots participation in governance.

After all, development becomes meaningful when communities are recognised, their concerns are heard and their needs receive appropriate attention.

The ultimate expectation is an equitable spread of government presence and development across the state.

GOVERNMENT THAT TOUCHES LIVES

The real test of governance is not the number of official statements issued or ceremonies attended. It is the difference government makes in the everyday lives of its citizens.

For the teacher, it is an improved learning environment. For the market woman, it is a safer and more organised marketplace. For the young graduate, it is access to opportunities, skills acquisition and a pathway to economic independence.

For the ordinary citizen, it is the assurance that government is attentive to their concerns and committed to addressing them.

These are the practical indicators by which any administration should be assessed.

TWO YEARS ON: THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Two years may not be sufficient to address every developmental challenge confronting Edo State, but it provides a reasonable period to assess direction, priorities and the foundations being laid for the future.

Governor Okpebholo has placed practical governance, executive visibility, supervision and accountability at the centre of his administration's philosophy.

The greater challenge now is to consolidate these principles, sustain the momentum and ensure that the benefits of government policies and projects reach more people.

Ultimately, governance is not measured by promises made but by commitments fulfilled; not by the frequency of announcements but by the durability of results.

For Edo State, the message of the Okpebholo administration at two is clear: government must show up, public resources must deliver value, institutions must work and the people must remain at the centre of governance.

That is the difference between governing by words and governing by work.

> *Timely payment of salaries, attention to pension obligations, staff development and improved supervision are important components of building an efficient public service.*

FEATURE

...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY...ANNIVERSARY

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: Okpebholo prioritises workers' welfare, strengthens public service



MATTHEW OKAGHA/
RICHARD EWEKA

Human development and workers' welfare have remained important components of the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo as it consolidates its development agenda in Edo State.

Recognising that an efficient public service is indispensable to effective governance, the Okpebholo administration has pursued policies aimed at improving workers' welfare, strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing productivity across the state civil service.

One of the notable interventions is the regular payment of workers' salaries, with the administration sustaining a practice of paying salaries on or before the 26th of every month. This has provided greater financial predictability for civil servants and their families.

The administration has also sustained the payment of the 13th-month salary, introduced in December 2024, as part of efforts to improve workers' financial well-being and reward their contributions to public service.

In another significant intervention, the state government increased the minimum wage from N70,000 to N75,000, reflecting its commitment to improving workers' earnings amid prevailing economic challenges.

The resolution of outstanding promotion arrears and the timely processing of promotions have equally featured in the administration's efforts to address longstanding concerns within the civil service.

Beyond remuneration, the government has taken steps to strengthen the workforce through the recruitment and regularisation of thousands of personnel, helping to address manpower gaps and improve service delivery across ministries, departments and agencies.

Building an efficient civil service

The administration's human resource development agenda also places emphasis on capacity building, professionalism and institutional efficiency.

Through the Edo Public Service Reform Programme (EDO-PREP), the government is strengthening the capacity and performance of public servants, with a focus on accountability, improved work ethics and efficient service delivery.

The adoption of EdoCloud and other digital governance initiatives is another step towards modernising public administration, reducing unnecessary paperwork and promoting a more efficient and transparent system of government.

> *The well-being of workers, the dignity of pensioners, the development of professional skills and the efficiency of public institutions are equally important indicators of development.*

The administration has also approved the provision of 20 new vehicles for permanent secretaries to strengthen administrative coordination and facilitate the discharge of their official responsibilities.

These interventions formed part of a broader effort to reposition the civil service as an effective instrument for implementing government policies and programmes.

Attention to pensioners' welfare

The welfare agenda extends beyond serving public officers to include retired workers who devoted years of service to the state.

In a major intervention, the government doubled its monthly allocation for gratuity payments from N200 million to N400 million, thereby increasing the resources available for settling outstanding obligations to retirees.

The administration also approved an additional N1 billion to address outstanding gratuities, with particular attention to retirees from 2012 in the local government and primary school sectors.

The commencement of payments to the 2012 gratuity beneficiaries earlier in 2026 represents an important step towards addressing a longstanding concern among affected pensioners.

For many retirees who have waited for years to receive their entitlements, these interventions offer renewed hope and demonstrate the importance of giving attention to the welfare of those who served the state.

Human development as a development priority

The Okpebholo administration's approach to human development reflects the understanding that government achievements should not be measured exclusively by roads, bridges and physical structures.

The well-being of workers, the dignity of pensioners, the development of professional skills and the efficiency of public institutions are equally important indicators of development.

As the administration moves into the next phase of its mandate, sustaining these welfare interventions, expanding opportunities for human capacity development and ensuring that public servants remain motivated will be critical to achieving its broader SHINE Agenda.

Ultimately, a motivated workforce is an important asset in building an efficient government, while a society that cares for its workers and retirees lays a stronger foundation for inclusive and sustainable development.

FOREIGN

NEWS



Republicans vote to block Hegseth impeachment from reaching full vote

Haitian PM praises El Salvador after joint strike on alleged home of gang leader

Haiti's Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé has praised "the commitment of the Salvadorean forces in the fight against gangs" after a joint strike on a house allegedly used by the leader of the 400 Mawozo gang.

El Salvador's President, Nayib Bukele, had earlier announced that a joint task force had "destroyed" what he described as "the house of Lanmò San Jou and the 400 Mawozo gang's headquarters".

A small contingent of Salvadorean troops has been in Haiti since January 2025 as part of a multinational force deployed to suppress gang violence.

Last month, Bukele sent an extra 2,000 soldiers to rescue four Salvadoreans who have been missing since they were ambushed on 18 October.

Bukele's post on X was accompanied by video of several helicopters firing on a large complex.

As the helicopters circle above, dozens of people can be seen running out of the property, fleeing the strikes.

Writing in Creole, Bukele said "we kept our promise", adding that the alleged gang members "ran away without even trying to fight".

Local media reported that as many as 20 people were killed in the strike, which they said was carried out in the early hours of Sunday.

They also reported that Lanmò San Jou, whose real name is Wilson Joseph, was not at the property at the time of the attack.

Posting on X on Monday, Fils-Aimé thanked the Salvadorean military's commitment "in the fight against gangs" and said the two nations would keep working together, along with the UN-backed Gang Suppression Force (GSF), to "regain control of the territory and restore state authority".

"THE GANGS WILL GET NO SLEEP!" he added.

While he did not provide any further details about the joint operation or the number of casualties, Fils-Aimé posted a still from the video shared by Bukele showing a helicopter firing a projectile at the compound.

The BBC said it had not been able to verify the video posted by Bukele, nor whether the property is indeed the headquarters of the 400 Mawozo, Haiti's largest criminal gang, which is infamous for carrying out kidnappings for ransom.

The attack on the alleged gang headquarters seemingly came after a user on X had urged Bukele to attack the complex.

"Where is that house? Give us the exact address, and we'll destroy it," the Salvadorean president replied to the post, which has now been taken down, apparently for violating X's rules.

Bukele has threatened Haitian gangs before.

Following the kidnapping of four Salvadorean air force technicians on 18 October, he addressed "the gang leaders and gang members holding our four compatriots hostage in Haiti" directly.

"We have already finished with the gangs in El Salvador, and we can finish with you too," he wrote in Creole, referring to his crackdown on gang violence in his own country.

The four abducted Salvadoreans were working as part of the GSF, made up of troops from several nations.

Bukele's decision to send thousands of additional troops to Haiti since their abduction has raised concerns with critics who say they are not all working within the command structure of the GSF.

It has also raised questions about the operational legitimacy and legality of their actions in the Caribbean nation.

Amnesty International has urged both countries to "ensure all operations conducted by Salvadorean forces in Haiti comply with international human rights law".

Kennedys sue to block Trump's arch, arguing it would cast shadow on JFK's grave

The family of former US President John F Kennedy has sued to block construction of a triumphal arch that President Donald Trump plans to build in the nation's capital.

Nine members of the political dynasty argue the 250ft (76m) structure would block the view of Kennedy's grave, as well as the graves of thousands of veterans buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Last week, a US judge temporarily halted the project on the heels of a vote allowing construction to proceed.

The White House said it was "unfortunate" to see that some members of the Kennedy family had joined litigation against an arch "intended to honor our heroes who rest in Arlington Cemetery".

"The judiciary should not be abused to politicize a structure designed to unite our nation," White House spokesman Davis R Ingle said in a statement to the BBC.

"We will continue making the case for this beautiful and fitting monument and are confident we will be fully vindicated as this litigation proceeds," he added.

Last week the project won approval from the National Capital Planning Commission.

But US District Judge Tanya Chutkan then ruled there should be a 14-day pause before any work can start on the arch as litigation plays out.

The Kennedy family filed its complaint under a joint lawsuit brought by the state of Virginia and Washington DC seeking to block construction, arguing that the arch will damage "historically significant sightlines" if erected at the gateway of the cemetery.

The plaintiffs include seven children of Robert and Ethel Kennedy, as well as their grandson - former Democrat congressman Joe Kennedy - and Ted Kennedy's son Edward Kennedy Jr.

It does not include Trump cabinet official Robert F Kennedy Jr, who leads the Department of Health and Human Services.

Their motion moves to intervene in two other lawsuits filed by conservationists and veterans seeking to halt the construction.

They say the arch would be a "permanent denigration" of the gravesites and that the Kennedy offspring "would never again be able to appreciate both sites as they always have before, and as the Kennedy family always intended".

The Kennedy family argues the structure "will permanently cast shadows over and damage historically significant sightlines to the existing gravesites and memorials established in the Kennedy family's honor" at the cemetery.

US house blocks bid to impeach defence secretary Pete Hegseth, for now

An effort to impeach US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, accusing him of waging war on Iran without congressional authorisation, has failed on Capitol Hill.

A majority of the House of Representatives voted to refer impeachment articles to a committee - essentially killing the effort introduced by dissident Republican congressman Thomas Massie of Kentucky, for now.

In his first news briefing from the Pentagon in six months, Hegseth called the impeachment effort a "farce" and "sabotage".

The bid to find the cabinet secretary guilty of misconduct and ultimately remove him from office was seen as a long shot as it could have required a number of other Republicans to defy President Donald Trump.

However, that calculation could change in January when the Democratic Party assumes control of both chambers of Congress, following its successes in the US midterm elections. For now, Trump's Republican Party remains in control.

After Tuesday's vote, the most senior Democrat in the House, Hakeem Jeffries, said: "This is not the end of it. It's just the beginning."

The question on which lawmakers were voting on Tuesday was whether or not to refer the resolution to the House Judiciary Committee, which is led by Republicans. The alternative would have been to allow the resolution to proceed in the House itself.

All Republicans other than Massie voted to refer the resolution to the committee, meaning that the congressman's effort failed in a 211-204 vote.

The move to send the measure to the panel effectively kills the effort, as there is only a short period of time left in this Congress.

More than a dozen members missed the ballot. They included 11 Democrats, several of whom blamed traffic issues for their absences.

Several members of the party criticised their fellow lawmakers for missing the vote.

"You should show up and do your job," said Democratic Senator-elect Abdul El-Sayed during an interview with CNN, making a direct address to those who did not vote. The Michigan lawmaker recently won a US Senate race in Michigan, having criticised US ties to Israel and the war in Iran on the campaign trail.

Meanwhile Trump celebrated Tuesday's outcome in a post on Truth Social, saying the effort "has miserably FAILED".

"Again, Victories in Venezuela and Iran, the Best Recruitment Numbers in the History of the Military (Long waiting lists to get in!), and Spirit like rarely seen before, led to the EXONERATION of a Great American Patriot," Trump said, referring to Hegseth.

After the vote, Massie said he "wasn't surprised" but "was disappointed", according to BBC's US media partner CBS.

"My diagnosis of Congress is these people know what to do," he added. "They just can't bring themselves to do it, even when it would benefit them politically."

Three Iran-backed suspects plotted attacks including RAF Fairford incident, US says

The US removed all its bombers from the UK's RAF Fairford base last month after a major incident in September that police described as "suspicious"

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) has announced charges against three Iran-backed operatives that it alleges were involved in a string of plots in the US and Europe.

The DOJ said Iranian agents most recently "orchestrated a terrorist plot at an air force base in the United Kingdom", saying they were involved in the major incident in September near RAF Fairford in the UK, where US armed forces were stationed.

One man, a dual Iranian-Iraqi national, is accused of communicating with contacts in the UK from a prison in New York where he is awaiting trial on previous charges. The other two are accused of doing the same from Iran.

Iran has strongly denied any involvement in the RAF Fairford incident.

Seven men have been arrested in the UK over the incident, which came to light when suspicious vans were reported near the RAF base.

Iranian Mohsen Mohajeri, Iraqi national Mohammad Ali al-Hassani and dual Iranian-Iraqi citizen Mohammad Baqer Saad Dawood al-Saadi were charged in an indictment unsealed on Tuesday, the DOJ said.

It accuses the trio of planning attacks in Europe that were carried out under the name of a purportedly new group with the pseudonym Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamiya (The Islamic Movement of the People of the Right Hand - HAYI).

"Of the 18 terrorist attacks in the spring of 2026 for which HAYI claimed responsibility in Europe, seven took place in the UK," the DOJ statement said. It added that the attacks involved "arsons, explosives, and in one instance, a near-fatal stabbing in London of two Jewish men, including a dual US-British citizen".

NEWS

FOREIGN

US army suspected of spying for Russia arrested in UK

A soldier in the US Army has been arrested on suspicion of spying for Russia, British counter-terror police have said

The 41-year-old senior serviceman was arrested near Gloucester on Tuesday.

Counter Terrorism Policing London said the man had been arrested under section one and section three of the National Security Act 2023.

Section one of the Act relates to obtaining or disclosing protected information, while section three relates to assisting a foreign intelligence service.

As part of the investigation, officers are carrying out searches at two locations in Gloucestershire.

The soldier was based at Imjin Barracks in Innsworth, Gloucestershire. The barracks serve as the headquarters of Nato's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), a strategic operational base for the alliance.

Counter Terrorism Policing said it was not linked to any other ongoing investigations.

FBI director Kash Patel said in a statement: "This important arrest involves allegations of espionage, which is of the utmost concern to the United States and our allies."

He added: "While this investigation is continuing, I want to send a clear message – this FBI has no tolerance for anyone who breaks their oath to the United States and whose actions endanger our national security and that of our partners."

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Vicki Evans, from Counter Terrorism Policing London, described the arrest as "significant".

"The allegations are serious and our investigation is very much ongoing," she said.

The unnamed soldier is currently in custody at a London police station.

He has been detained under the National Security Act 2023, allowing police to hold him without charge for up to 14 days.

Brig Gen Sean Stinchon, commanding general of US Army Counterintelligence Command, said: "The alleged conduct of a senior soldier, entrusted with sensitive information, is a sobering reminder that insider threats are real and persistent.

"I encourage anyone who thinks they've witnessed something suspicious to report it to their local counterintelligence office."

Hundreds of Italian schools hit by threats in suspected bomb hoax

Some 300 schools across Italy have received bomb threats, according to Education Minister Giuseppe Valditara, who described the incidents as probably a "cyber-attack, not a genuine risk".

Valditara told Italian TV that there was a clear strategy behind the rash of threats in Italy and elsewhere in Europe which had targeted flights, supermarkets and even hospitals.

The emails were sent to schools in Rome, Naples, Vicenza, Florence, Pisa, Trieste and many other Italian cities, and a number of buildings were evacuated as a precaution.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has called a meeting of top ministers and intelligence chiefs.

Meloni said the government was monitoring closely the "numerous reports of bomb threats at educational institutions" although checks so far had not indicated any evidence of "concrete danger".

"These reports appear rather linked to a strategy intended to cause alarm and concern," she said on Facebook.

Italian airports along with airlines elsewhere in Europe were hit by a series of bomb hoaxes last week that prompted a series of scares, evacuations and widespread disruption. Although a number of threats were claimed by an extremist misogynistic group, it later denied any link to the false warnings.

Italian reports said 280 school head teachers had received threats in recent days.

Although many schools were initially evacuated on Wednesday, the alarm was quickly lifted, according to reports from a number of regions, and pupils were allowed to return to class.

In a statement, the head of the central Umbria region Stefania Proietti said "checks conducted so far in Umbrian schools have proved negative, and law enforcement is working rapidly and carefully to verify each report".

In a separate incident, more than 300 schools in Northern Ireland were sent emails which police said they were treating as a hoax. Messages sent to number of schools in Scotland were also being treated by police as a hoax. It is unclear whether any of the incidents are connected.

Kenya discharges last Ebola patient in major milestone towards virus-free status

Kenya has discharged its last Ebola patient - the seventh to recover from the virus - marking a major milestone in efforts to contain the disease in the East African nation, which now begins a 42-day countdown to officially being declared Ebola-free.

It had confirmed its first ever case of Ebola early in October when a Kenyan businessman died within days of arriving in the capital, Nairobi.

He had contracted the virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than 5,000 people have died in an ongoing outbreak that began in May. His mother also subsequently died.

Kenya's health minister said 135 identified contacts of the infected patients had also completed their 21 days in isolation.

"Today with the discharge of the last patient we can confirm and tell the world that seven patients have recovered - and all contacts have completed their follow-up monitoring," Aden Duale said.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) described it as an important achievement in the regional response to the outbreak.

"This is an encouraging moment for Kenya and for Africa. We must sustain surveillance and vigilance until the outbreak is officially declared over," Africa CDC chief Jean Kaseya posted on X.

Kenya has reported no new confirmed cases since 20 October.

All the Kenyan cases were linked to the man who had travelled from DR Congo through Uganda, with health officials reporting no evidence of wider community transmission.

Those who have recovered following treatment included four healthcare workers.

Five patients were discharged on 3 November, followed by a sixth three days later, before the final patient was cleared on Wednesday.

Under World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, 42 days must pass after the last patient tests negative and is discharged, or the last Ebola victim is safely buried, before an outbreak can be declared over.

The Ebola virus spreads through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or vomit. The incubation period ranges from two to 21 days, meaning those exposed to the virus may not become ill for several weeks.

Duale said the government would maintain heightened surveillance at border crossings, airports, health facilities and communities throughout the countdown.

Emergency response teams will remain on alert across the country, while the health authorities will continue monitoring travellers arriving from affected countries.

Kenyans returning from Ebola-affected areas are required to complete electronic health declarations before travelling, undergo screening on arrival and spend 21 days in quarantine under the supervision of health teams.

The minister also urged countries that had imposed travel and visa restrictions to reconsider them - adding that Kenya had no intention of serving as a quarantine centre for another country.

In May, a Kenyan court suspended US plans to open an Ebola quarantine facility for American citizens.

Kenya has maintained that there is no need to restrict domestic travel, trade or public gatherings.



Kenya has reported no new confirmed cases of Ebola since 20 October 2026

Gold miners expelled by Guinea start leaving assembly site in Mali

Hundreds of gold miners have started departing a location in Mali where they gathered after being expelled by neighboring Guinea.

Trucks and buses are being used to transport the miners.

At the site, itself a gold mine, men waited to leave, some with their luggage, while others board vehicles that have come to collect them.

On November 7, Mali's authorities said they had received around 160,000 people expelled from Guinea since the start of the operations. They also reported six deaths and voiced concern over what they described as a "humanitarian emergency".

More than 1,200 people in Guinea's key gold-producing region have been arrested amid a crackdown on illegal mining, according to a government statement.

The arrests come after a ban on unregulated and clandestine mining in the northeastern gold-producing region of Siguiri took effect on November 2.

The 1,263 people arrested for alleged gold panning included citizens of Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo, Niger, Ivory Coast and Ghana, according to a joint statement from the ministries of defence and security, dated Saturday.

The crackdown on illegal gold mining has led to an unprecedented influx of people from the Guinean border region.

Guinea is rich in mineral resources, particularly gold and bauxite. Authorities are trying to curb environmental challenges resulting from artisanal gold mining, including land degradation and the pollution of waterways.

UN seeks $2 million for Nigerians fleeing insecurity

Tens of thousands have fled across the border from Nigeria to Niger and Benin to escape violence and insecurity this year, the United Nations has said.

Northern Nigeria faces rising religious intolerance and violence by jihadists and criminal bandit gangs, as well as farmer-herder clashes.

The UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) said in a statement on Thursday that more than 66,000 had fled across the borders by mid-October, three times the number in the same period last year.

The agency is struggling to get help to those in need and has appealed for $2 million not only to help those who have fled but also tens of thousands still in Nigeria.

UNHCR spokesperson in Geneva Eujin Byun said relief efforts were being further hampered as 34,000 people had not yet registered, "leaving them at heightened risk and struggling to access essential assistance".

Jihadist violence in northern Nigeria has spilled across into Niger, Chad and Cameroon, prompting a regional military coalition to fight the militant groups.

Opinion

A REPORTER'S DIARY:

Footprints of a Promise Keeper at Osadebe Avenue



EUBALDUS ENAHORO

Two years into the administration of Governor Monday Okpebholo, the footprints of governance are becoming increasingly visible across Edo State. From security and healthcare to infrastructure, natural resources, agriculture and education, the administration's SHINE Agenda has provided the framework for its development drive.

Across Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), as well as the 18 local government areas, the five pillars of the agenda—Security, Health, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and Education—continue to feature prominently in government policies and programmes.

At Osadebe Avenue, the seat of government, the story is that of an administration that promised a change in the state's development narrative and has since embarked on interventions across critical sectors.

One area receiving attention is the civil service, which the governor appears to recognise as a major instrument for translating government policies into tangible results.

To restore career progression and professionalism, the administration halted the appointment of non-career personnel and consultants as Permanent Secretaries, insisting on merit-based progression. The Civil Service Commission was also reconstituted to address the backlog of promotions and restore confidence in the process.

Other welfare measures include prompt payment of salaries on or before the 26th of every month, monthly payment of N300 million towards gratuities and the release of N1 billion to settle outstanding arrears dating back to 2012.

The administration has also absorbed 1,000 cleaners previously engaged through outsourced arrangements into the civil service at a minimum monthly wage of N75,000. In addition, 2,000 personnel were recruited across the health, education and agriculture sectors.

These measures reflect the administration's position that effective governance requires a motivated and professionally managed workforce.

Governor Okpebholo has repeatedly acknowledged the support and financial interventions of the Federal Government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, while emphasising the need for judicious utilisation of public funds.

In December 2024, the governor visited Akwa Ibom State at the invitation of the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, to understudy its development strides. During the visit, he expressed confidence that Edo could achieve similar milestones.

"I am more than confident and convinced that what we plan to achieve with the mandate given us by Edo people is doable. Akpabio did it in Akwa Ibom and we will do it in Edo," he declared.

That statement remains a useful reference point in assessing the administration's development ambitions.

The protection of lives and property is a fundamental responsibility of government. Governor Okpebholo has placed security at the centre of his administration's development philosophy, recognising that economic activities cannot thrive where residents live in fear.

As Chief Security Officer of the state, he has committed resources and logistical support to security agencies to strengthen their operational capacity.

The administration declared a determined campaign against cultism and criminal activities, while a Special Tactical Team was deployed across the state to support security operations, rescue kidnapped victims and dislodge criminal gangs.

In Uromi and surrounding communities, operations were intensified against kidnappers and other criminal elements. The government also signed the Cultism Prohibition Law, prescribing severe penalties for cultists and their sponsors.

To strengthen field operations, the administration procured Toyota Hilux vehicles for security agencies and acquired 1,000 motorcycles to facilitate bush combing and the pursuit of criminals.

The Public Safety Response Team was constituted to assist in enforcing public safety measures, while the Edo State Security Corps was reconstituted. The validation of members and an arms mop-up exercise reportedly resulted in the recovery of more than 1,000 illegal firearms.

In Edo Central, particularly Uromi and its environs, a mobile police base was established and 10 patrol vehicles handed over to security agencies. A police post at Ojo-Uwelu in Egor Local Government Area was also reconstructed.

The administration believes that sustained investment in security will protect citizens and create a more conducive environment for investment, commerce and employment.

Healthcare delivery is another important pillar of the SHINE Agenda.

One significant intervention was the state government's support for the establishment of the National Obstetric Fistula Centre in Benin City, intended to serve the South-South geopolitical zone.

The Federal Government and Edo State Government signed an MoU for the centre in February 2025. As part of the arrangement, the state provided land for its permanent site, with the Federal Government reporting 22 hectares in the agreement.

The administration has also sought to expand access to healthcare through the enrolment of more than 300 vulnerable persons in the Edo State Health Insurance Commission's Equity Plan.

Other interventions include the digitalisation of statewide health insurance data transmission and the launch of the commission's Customer Service and Support Policy.

State-owned health facilities have received attention through upgrades intended to improve service delivery. The Oredo Primary Healthcare Centre was completed, while transformers and air conditioners were procured for the Edo Specialist Hospital.

Ultrasound machines were distributed to hospitals across the 18 local government areas, while 220 laptops and tablets were provided to 220 Primary Healthcare Centres to improve data management. A bus and a Hilux vehicle were also procured to strengthen the monitoring of primary healthcare projects.

At the Edo Specialist Hospital, Benin City, the Chief Medical Director, Dr. Anthonia Inibokun Njoku, disclosed that the governor approved the em-



Senator Monday Okpebholo

ployment of 126 contract staff to strengthen the hospital's workforce.

These interventions are expected to improve access to medical services, strengthen primary healthcare and enhance the capacity of health institutions to respond to residents' needs.

Infrastructure remains one of the most visible areas of the administration's development programme.

Upon assumption of office, Governor Okpebholo embarked on the construction of two flyover bridges at Ramat Park and Adesuwa Junction in Benin City. The projects are intended to ease traffic congestion, improve urban mobility and stimulate commercial activities.

The Ramat Park Flyover has been completed, while the Adesuwa Flyover remains under construction. Other major road construction and rehabilitation projects are also progressing across the state.

Beyond road construction, the administration has embarked on the development of a new Government Reserved Area (GRA), expected to expand the state's urban development profile and create investment opportunities.

The government has also procured payloaders, trucks and compressors for the Edo State Waste Management Agency to improve sanitation operations. Tractors, bulldozers and other earth-moving equipment have equally been acquired for the 18 local government areas to strengthen their capacity to undertake developmental projects

The transportation sector has also witnessed significant interventions.

In October 2026, 50 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses were launched for public transportation across the state. The initiative is expected to provide residents with more affordable and accessible transport services.

At the same event, a N1 billion empowerment scheme was inaugurated for 5,000 beneficiaries, with the programme designed to support small businesses and livelihood activities.

Another development is the resuscitation of the Edo Transport Service, popularly known as New Edo Line, through the procurement of 100 brand-new Hiace buses for inter-state transportation.

These interventions are expected to improve mobility, facilitate commercial activities and create employment opportunities.

In the energy sector, the passage and implementation of the Edo State Electricity Regulatory Commission Law have provided a framework for the state to participate more actively in electricity generation, transmission and distribution.

The administration has also signed an MoU with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited and other investors for a proposed $300 million condensate refinery in Oredo Local Government Area.

Another MoU was signed with a Chinese firm for the proposed establishment of an airline in the state. Similarly, an agreement was signed for a proposed $500 million, 100-megawatt hydropower plant at Ikpoba and Ojirami dams.

If fully realised, these investments could expand Edo's industrial and economic opportunities, strengthen energy supply and make the state more attractive to investors. Their actual impact, however, will depend on implementation and delivery.

The administration has also made investments in the information and communication sector, particularly in the revitalisation of the Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS).

The Ihievbe substation of EBS, which had reportedly remained inactive for nearly a decade, was restored to operation. The government has also undertaken interventions aimed at upgrading the broadcasting organisation's technical capacity.

According to the Managing Director of EBS, Dr. Festus Alenkhe, Governor Okpebholo has invested more than half a billion naira in broadcasting equipment purchased from China.

The government has reportedly provided two 150KVA Perkins generators, high-performance Mac computers, broadcasting and streaming software, a professional quadcopter drone with a 4K ultra-high-definition video camera, a 10KVA television transmitter, audio interfaces and mixers.

These investments are intended to improve content production, strengthen technical operations and expand the station's reach. The installation and operational status of the equipment will, however, be important measures of the success of the intervention.

The administration has also upgraded the state's network infrastructure from a one-gigabit to a 10-gigabit fibre network, providing improved connectivity for Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

The enhanced network is expected to support video conferencing, large file sharing, Voice over Internet Protocol calls and other digital services required for efficient government operations.

In partnership with Cisco Networking Academy and other stakeholders, the government is also training staff of the Information Communication Technology Agency to manage and maintain the network infrastructure.

Other institutional interventions include the renovation of the offices of the Governor, Deputy Governor, Secretary to the State Government and Head of Service. The government has also rehabilitated four Court of Appeal complexes and judges' quarters.

Beyond major urban projects, the administration has extended development interventions to rural communities through the Community and Social Development Agency (CSDA).

These include the construction of town halls in Owan East Local Government Area and 20 other communities across the three senatorial districts.

The government has also provided all-in-one solar streetlights in Iyekogba and 30 other communities.

In the electricity sector, 500KVA transformers and rural electrification projects have been provided in Uwessan, Esan Central Local Government Area, and 25 other communities across the three senatorial districts.

Other projects include the construction of markets and lock-up stores in Auchi and other locations, as well as boreholes and water reticulation facilities at Uzenema in Esan North-East and other selected communities.

These community-based projects are intended to bring development closer to the people, particularly residents of rural settlements who often have limited access to basic infrastructure.

Edo Central Senatorial District has also featured in the administration's development agenda, with projects proposed to improve infrastructure, stimulate economic activities and create new opportunities.

Among them are the proposed Udomi Teaching Hospital, a holiday resort, a golf course, a film village for practitioners in the movie industry and a multipurpose hall.

The projects are expected to enhance the district's tourism potential, attract private investment and create opportunities for young people and other residents.

During a project-monitoring visit to Edo Central, Governor Okpebholo disclosed that these projects, alongside other interventions across the state, were being funded with Edo State Government resources and supported by the Federal Government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The administration believes that combining infrastructure, tourism, healthcare and commercial development will reposition the district and expand its economic prospects.

As the Okpebholo administration marks its second anniversary, the footprints at Osadebe Avenue tell the story of an ambitious development agenda supported by investments in infrastructure, security, healthcare, transportation, public service and institutional renewal.

For a governor who promised to reproduce in Edo the development model he admired in Akwa Ibom, the past two years have provided an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to that ambition.

However, the real test of governance is not merely the announcement, commissioning or construction of projects. It lies in their completion, functionality, maintenance and measurable impact on the lives of ordinary citizens.

The roads must remain motorable, hospitals must provide quality healthcare, the security architecture must sustain peace, buses must remain operational, and investments in energy and industry must translate into employment and economic prosperity.

Equally important is the need to keep the civil service motivated and ensure that government policies are implemented with transparency, accountability and efficiency.

For the people of Edo State, expectations remain high. The SHINE Agenda has raised hopes, and the administration's responsibility is to sustain the momentum, consolidate its achievements and ensure that development reaches every community.

Two years may represent only the beginning of a longer journey, but the footprints already made at Osadebe Avenue provide a basis for measuring the administration's promises against its performance.

For Governor Monday Okpebholo, the challenge ahead is to ensure that the footprints of today become enduring landmarks of development tomorrow.

Eubaldus Enahoro is a former Editor of The NIGERIAN OBSERVER newspaper.

FEATURE

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Okpebholo's two years: Edo records major gains in road infrastructure

MATTHEW OKAGHA/
RICHARD EWEKA

Flyovers, urban road renewal and rural connectivity headline administration's infrastructure drive

BENIN CITY

Road infrastructure has emerged as one of the defining features of Governor Monday Okpebholo's two-year administration, with several construction and rehabilitation projects undertaken across Edo State as part of efforts to improve transportation, stimulate economic activities and open up communities.

Since assuming office, the governor has placed road construction, rehabilitation, drainage and urban renewal at the centre of his development agenda, recognising that good road networks are fundamental to economic growth, social integration and improved living conditions.

One of the administration's early interventions was the award of 28 road projects covering approximately 255 kilometres across the state. The programme was subsequently expanded, with the Ministry of Works disclosing in October 2026 that contracts had been awarded for more than 60 roads.

A major highlight of the infrastructure programme is the construction of flyovers at Ramat Park and Adesuwa Junction along Sapele Road in Benin City. The projects represent a significant milestone in the state's urban transportation development, particularly against the background of increasing vehicular movement and persistent traffic congestion within the Benin metropolis.

The Ramat Park Flyover has been completed, while construction work on the Adesuwa Junction project is progressing. Both projects are designed to ease traffic congestion, improve vehicular movement and enhance connectivity along some of the city's busiest transportation corridors.

Beyond the flyovers, the administration has embarked on the rehabilitation and construction of several strategic roads in Benin City and other parts of the state.

Among the projects listed as completed by the Ministry of Works are sections of the Benin-Auchi Road, from Obadan Junction to Iruekpen, Prince Harrison Road, Prince Jimoh Momodu Road, Palace Road, Versity Road, Okpagha-Amufi Road, Iyoha Street, Isikhuemwen Street and adjoining roads in Akho-Irrua.

Other roads receiving attention include Benin-Sapele Road, Old Sapele Road, Evbukhu, Amagba, Ohoghobi, Oghehe, Uhie Road, Okhabere, Charismatic Renewal Road, Ugbiyoko and Oghede Upper Ekenhuan Road.

The Benin-Sapele Road intervention is particularly important because of the strategic commercial value of the corridor, which connects communities and facilitates the movement of people and goods. The use of concrete pavement in some sections is also intended to improve road durability.

The administration has equally recognised the relationship between road infrastructure, drainage and environmental protection. Its intervention at Obaseki Street, Ikpoba Hill, through a gully reclamation project, is aimed at addressing erosion and environmental challenges that have affected residents.

Another important dimension of the infrastructure programme is the extension of development to rural communities. The government has supported local government councils with road construction equipment, including graders, excavators and rollers, to strengthen their capacity to construct, rehabilitate and maintain roads at the grassroots.

This intervention is expected to improve access to farms, markets, schools, healthcare facilities and other essential services, while reducing the difficulties associated with transportation in rural communities. For farmers and traders, improved road connectivity can make a significant difference in moving agricultural produce to markets, reducing transportation costs and expanding commercial opportunities. It also provides communities with better access to social and economic services.

To ensure that public investments translate into durable infrastructure, the Ministry of Works has emphasised project monitoring, quality assurance and timely delivery. In October 2026, contractors handling ongoing projects were directed to submit updated work programmes to accelerate construction and ensure compliance with approved specifications.

> *The government has supported local government councils with road construction equipment, including graders, excavators and rollers, to strengthen their capacity to construct, rehabilitate and maintain roads at the grassroots.*

The ministry also stressed that defects identified before the formal handover of completed projects would have to be corrected by the contractors at no additional cost to government.

The overall significance of the road construction programme goes beyond the physical appearance of roads and bridges. Improved transportation networks are expected to stimulate economic activities, encourage investment, create employment opportunities and strengthen connectivity among communities across the three senatorial districts.

Nevertheless, the administration faces the continuing responsibility of ensuring the completion of ongoing projects, maintaining those already delivered and sustaining the momentum of infrastructure development.

Two years into Governor Okpebholo's administration, road infrastructure remains a prominent pillar of its development agenda. From the Ramat Park Flyover to the expanding network of urban and rural roads, the government is pursuing an ambitious programme aimed at addressing infrastructure deficits and improving the quality of life of Edo people.

Ultimately, the success of this drive will be measured not simply by the number of contracts awarded or roads listed, but by the quality of projects delivered, communities connected and the lasting impact on the people.

GOVERNCE

Governor Okpebholo records gains in security, infrastructure, health, education, sports after two years in office.





Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, marks two years in office on Thursday, November 12, with reported achievements in security, infrastructure, healthcare, education, agriculture, sports, transportation and economic empowerment.

Since assuming office in 2024, Okpebholo has pursued his administration's SHINE Agenda, focusing on Security, Healthcare, Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and Education.

The government crashed cult-related killings to almost zero and recruited and trained 2,500 Edo State Security Corps personnel. In addition it has engaged 1,000 forest guards to strengthen security, particularly in forest communities. It has also provided more than 100 patrol vehicles and 600 motorcycles to security agencies.

The administration has strengthened the legal framework against kidnapping and cultism, including the establishment of a Special Criminal Court to accelerate the prosecution of offenders. More than 500 cult members have also publicly renounced their membership under the government's rehabilitation and amnesty programme.

The government commenced road projects covering more than 600 kilometres, alongside drainage, erosion control and urban renewal works. The Ramat Park Flyover is awaiting commissioning, while construction continues on the Adesuwa Junction Flyover.

Other projects include Sapele Road, Palace Road in Uteh, Ogheghe, Temboga and Old Sapele roads, as well as erosion control works at Ekenwan Army Barracks and Obaseki Street, Ikpoba Hill. The administration has also distributed 54 heavy-duty construction machines to the state's 18 local government areas.

About 70 primary healthcare centres have been upgraded, while the Anegbette and Obayantor General Hospitals have reopened after years of closure. More than 2,000 healthcare workers have been recruited, while diagnostic equipment has been provided across the state's 18 local government areas. Construction continues on the 150-bed Edo Specialist Hospital at Udomi and a general hospital at Iguobazuwa. More than 600,000 residents are enrolled in the state health insurance scheme.

The government has absorbed 5,000 contract teachers into permanent employment and approved another 3,000 appointments. It has upgraded 65 public schools, while more than 15,000 students have benefited from NELFUND. Okpebholo received the 2025 New Telegraph Governor of the Year (Education) award and the NECO Award of Excellence.

The administration acquired 36 tractors, cultivated about 1,000 hectares and constructed five warehouses. Through LIFE-ND, 630 agripreneurs received grants and starter packs, while more than 4,500 beneficiaries have benefited from the programme.

Team Edo won the second Niger Delta Games, ending a 24-year wait for regional supremacy, while finishing third at the 2025 National Youth Games.

The government approved N1 billion in interest-free loans for traders and identified more than 54,000 women for empowerment programmes. It also distributed grants to women and youth-led businesses and renovated skills acquisition centres in Uromi and Igarra.

The administration acquired 100 New Edo Line buses, introduced 50 luxury CNG buses and distributed 200 commercial minibuses. It also secured a 10 per cent equity stake in the 100MW Ologbo Power Plant.

Other achievements include restoring the Edo State Customary Court of Appeal, maintaining the N75,000 minimum wage and securing a $1 million Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge award for Benin City.

As the administration enters its third year, Okpebholo has pledged to complete ongoing projects, strengthen security and expand development across al l 18 local government areas.

He acknowledged that challenges remain but reaffirmed his commitment to practical governance, accountability and improved living conditions for Edo residents.

Signed:

Dr. Patrick Akhere Ebojele
The Chief Press Secretary to Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State.
Thursday, November 12,2026

The Nigerian OBSERVER

FridaySermon

Why cursing and insulting your leaders will never cure the Nation!

Imam Muhammad Yusuf Babangida

In the Name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

All praise is due to Allah, and may His blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, and all his Companions.

Dear brothers and sisters! Indeed, change begins in the mirror, not in the marketplace of malice. When we unleash our tongues in anger, cursing and insulting those placed in authority over us, we pierce the spiritual fabric of our own society. We demand righteousness from the throne while cultivating rebellion in our hearts.

Islam offers a profound psychological and spiritual truth: Our leaders are but a reflection of our collective state. If we sow the seeds of venom, mockery, and hatred, we cannot expect to harvest the fruits of justice, mercy, and benevolence. How can a vessel poured full of public curses overflow with political blessings?

The great legendary Islamic scholar, Imam Hasan al-Basri captured this divine law beautifully, he said:

"Indeed, the leaders are a torment from Allah. Allah inflicts them upon whoever He wills. So do not face the torment of Allah with anger and swords, but face it with humility, submission, and repentance."

When we insult those in power, we treat a systemic spiritual ailment with emotional poison. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) explicitly warned against this destructive outlet, guiding us toward a higher psychological and spiritual discipline. He said:

"Do not insult your leaders, do not deceive them, and do not hate them. Fear Allah and be patient, for indeed the matter is close at hand." [Sunan Ibn Majah]

Fellow Nigerians! Wallahi, this is not a call to blind compliance or cowardice; it is a clarion call to spiritual intelligence. Cursing a leader changes nothing in their heart, but it corrupts everything in yours. It replaces constructive civic duty with lazy, toxic venting.

And from a psychological perspective, human behaviour thrives on feedback loops. When a populace unifies only in hatred and vitriol, a leader's psychological defenses kick in. They do not soften; they harden. They do not listen; they build walls.

If an entire community pours curses upon a leader, that leader emotionally detaches from the community. You cannot abuse a shepherd daily and expect him to guard the flock with love. By shifting our energy from insult to sincere voting, Du'a and supplication, we actively participate in changing the spiritual atmosphere of our nation.

Consider the deep insight of the great sage and Imam of Islam, Fudail Ibn Iyad, who understood the profound leverage of a sincere prayer over a bitter curse, he said:

"If I had a single supplication that was guaranteed to be answered, I would make it for none other than the leader."

When asked why, he replied:

"If I make the supplication for myself, its benefit does not go beyond me. But if I make it for the leader, he is rectified, and through his rectification, the wellbeing of the servants and the land is achieved."

Let us stop burning our energy in the fires of gossip, social media rage, and futile condemnation.

The next time frustration rises in your chest, channel that raw emotion into a secret, sincere Du'a:

"Ya Allah, guide our leaders, soften their hearts toward the weak, and grant them righteous advisors."

Look at your household, your business, and your own character. Are you a just leader to those under your care? Rectify your small kingdom, and Allah will rectify the greater one for you!

Refuse to participate in the casual slaughter of reputations. A tongue stained with foul language can never be the vehicle for societal reformation.

The equation is simple: If you want leaders who fear Allah and show mercy, become a people who fear Allah and show mercy. Clear the airwaves of curses, and fill the heavens with prayers.

Respected brothers and sisters! The state of a nation is rarely birthed in the halls of parliament; it is mirrored there. We look at our leaders and see a reflection of our collective choices, our public morality, and our private spiritual decay. Yet, the modern tongue has weaponised itself with curses, insults, and venomous rhetoric directed at those who govern. We drag their names through the mud of social media, invoke ruin upon their families, and then look up at the sky wondering why rain does not bring blessings, why the economy chokes, and why justice feels like a ghost.

How do you expect a vessel to pour pure water when you constantly contaminate the well? How do you expect a leader to find the courage, wisdom, and sincerity to do good for you when your collective spiritual frequency sends nothing but malice, hatred, and destruction on their way?

We live in a universe governed by divine laws, and one of the most foundational principles is that malice yields no mercy. When you curse a leader, you are asking Allah to remove His Mercy and Rahmah from them. Consider the profound psychological and spiritual consequence of that request: if Allah removes His Mercy and guidance from a leader, who do you think takes their place? Ash-Shaitan (Satan)!

By cursing your leaders, you are actively praying for their further misguidance. You are asking for them to become blinder, harsher, and more corrupt. You are cutting off the very pipeline of divine intervention that could turn their hearts toward justice. A heart stripped of Allah's mercy and rahmah, cannot extend mercy to its people. Your insults do not reform them; they deform them further, and you pay the price of that deformity.

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) did not leave us to wander in political emotionalism. He provided a psychological and spiritual framework for dealing with unjust authority.

Furthermore, the classical Islamic scholars understood that the weapon of the Muslim believer against systemic failure is not anarchy of the tongue, but alignment of the soul.

This is high-level spiritual intelligence. It bypasses the emotional gratification of venting anger and targets the root of the problem. It understands that a leader's heart is between two fingers of the Most Merciful, Allah; it is easier to change their heart through sincere prayer than to break their power through toxic rebellion.

No doubt, psychologically, cursing your leaders is an act of spiritual laziness. It is a defense mechanism that allows a population to externalise all guilt. It is comforting to believe that all societal filth—bribery, deceit, lack of neighbourly compassion, cutting corners, and moral compromise—belongs exclusively to the presidential villa or the legislative chambers.

But a leader is not an alien dropped from outer space. They are born from our neighbourhoods, raised in our schools, fed by our markets, and cultured by our social norms. They are the fruit of our tree. If the fruit is bitter, injecting poison into the branches via insults will not make the next harvest sweet. You must heal the soil.

The Qur'an states this with shattering clarity:

"And thus We make some of the wrongdoers allies of others for what they used to earn." [Qur'an, 6:129]

Islamic scholars of exegesis (Mufassirun) note that this means an unjust population will inevitably be granted an unjust leader. If you want the leaders to do good for you, you must first ask yourself: Am I doing good to those under my authority? Am I just to my spouse? Am I fair to my children? Am I fair to my employees? Am I fair to my neighbours? Am I honest in my business?

Stop funding the economy of outrage. Every curse you utter is a brick you lay in the fortress of your own oppression. You cannot insult someone into loving you, and you cannot curse a leader into serving you.

Change your strategy. Turn your viral rants into secret nighttime prayers. Trade your mocking memes for tears of repentance, the Tawbah. When you look at the shortcomings of your leaders, let it be a mirror that forces you to fix your own shortcomings.

> If you want the sky to clear, stop muddying the earth. If you expect them to do good for you, start by wishing good for them.

If you want the sky to clear, stop muddying the earth. If you expect them to do good for you, start by wishing good for them—not because they necessarily deserve it, but because your children, your country, and your own soul desperately need the blessings, mercy and rahmah that come when a leader is guided by Allah Almighty.

Dear brothers and sisters! Wallahi, sincerely speaking, cursing and insulting your leaders will never cure your nation because the state of a leadership is merely a reflection of the collective spiritual and psychological state of its people.

The external world is a mirror of the internal realm. When a nation falls into the trap of endless cursing, vilification, and emotional reactivity against its leaders, it misdiagnoses its own disease, ensures the continuation of its suffering, and actively blocks the descending mercy and rahmah of Allah.

An ancient and profound maxim in Islamic history, often attributed to the early generations (Salafus-Salih), states:

"As you are, so will be your leaders."

"As you are, so will be your leaders" is a profound spiritual law of cause and effect. It shifts the gaze from the palace of the leader to the heart of the citizen, reminding us that leadership is not an isolated anomaly, but a mirror reflection of the collective soul.

Dear servants of Allah! We often look at our societies and weep at the corruption, the injustice, and the weakness of those who govern. We raise our hands in anger, demanding change from the top down. But Islam demands that we look within, from the bottom up.

There is an unyielding, immutable cosmic law woven into the fabric of creation: The leader is not a detached entity; the leader is merely a shadow cast by the people. If the object is crooked, the shadow can never be straight.

If we cheat in our markets, in our business transactions, in our marital ralationships, in the training and tarbiyyah of our children, how can we expect leaders who do not plunder our treasuries? If we oppress our wives, our children, and our workers in the privacy of our homes, how can we demand leaders who uphold human rights on the world stage? If we abandon the Fajr prayer in the warmth of our beds, how can we expect victory to be granted to our nations?

Wallahi, wallahi, wallahi, like it or leave it, change does not begin in parliament or the presidential villa. Change begins on your prayer mat. It begins in your honesty at work. It begins in the purification of your heart. Be the nation you wish to see led.

During the caliphate of Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA), a man approached him with a critical, condescending tone. He asked:

"O Ali! Why is it that the affairs of the Muslim believers were peaceful and prosperous during the times of Abubakar and Umar, but now during your caliphate, there is chaos, rebellion, and division?"

Ali (RA), endowed with deep spiritual intelligence and psychological clarity, looked at the man and delivered a shattering truth. He replied calmly: "Because Abubakar and Umar ruled over people like me. And today, I rule over people like you."

The message here was instant and devastating. Abubakar and Umar were giants, but they led an army of giants—companions who feared Allah in the dark, who wept out of piety, who prioritised their neighbours over themselves. Ali was a giant, but he was leading a generation that had begun to compromise, bicker, and chase the material world. The leadership had adjusted to match the spiritual density of the populace.

Stop waiting for a saviour. Stop expecting a Salahuddin Al-Ayyubi to emerge from the heavens while today masses refuse to even pray in congregation.

Wallahi, tyrant leaders do not drop from the sky; they grow from the soil of a negligent society. If a people are corrupt, Allah allows a corrupt hand to hold the whip.

Allah explicitly states in the Qur'an:

"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." [Qur'an, 13:11]

This is an activational reminder. Do not point fingers at the throne. Point the finger at your own chest. Your personal righteousness is a political act. Your hidden repentance alters national destiny.

If you want leaders like Abubakar, become a citizen like those who stood behind him. When the foundation becomes pure gold, the crown cannot remain made of iron. Fix the root, and Allah will fix the branch for you!

Respected brothers and sisters! When the Sahabah (companions) and the early righteous predecessors (Salafus-Salih) faced tyrannical leaders like Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf, the spiritual giants of the time did not gather to launch verbal assaults, insults, or curses. Instead, Imam Hasan al-Basri issued a timeless psychological and spiritual diagnosis. He said:

"The leader is a sword with which Allah takes vengeance. If you are oppressed, do not meet His sword with your anger and curses, but meet it with repentance, humility, and submission. For if you curse the sword, it will only cut deeper."

A leader does not emerge from a vacuum. They are grown from the very soil of the society they govern. If a society suffers from widespread dishonesty in daily trade, corruption in personal relationships, negligence of spiritual duties, and a lack of empathy for the vulnerable, the leadership will naturally manifest those exact traits on a macro-scale. Insulting the leader is like breaking a mirror because you do not like the reflection of your own face.

From a psychological perspective, cursing and insulting those in power is a form of emotional venting that creates a dangerous illusion of action.

COLUMN

Nevada Pierre: The destiny child



I have come to appreciate that life is a curious journey, full of twists, disappointments and astonishing reversals. Its vicissitudes are rarely predictable. In my reflection on human relationships and the unpredictable nature of destiny, I have discovered that sometimes, people whose actions appear calculated to frustrate our progress inadvertently propel us towards opportunities we might never have encountered.

What initially looks like a closed door may eventually become the entrance to a wider corridor; what feels like rejection may turn out to be redirection. Indeed, adversity can become an unlikely midwife of achievement.

Although nobody can always control the conduct of those who oppose them, the response to such opposition can make a significant difference. Resilience, patience, courage and an unwavering sense of purpose can transform a painful experience into a defining moment.

It is against this backdrop that the recent story of three-year-old Black American, Nevada Pierre, a remarkably gifted young footballer in the United States, becomes particularly fascinating. His exceptional football skills, displayed in videos that have circulated widely on social media, have attracted considerable public attention.

His story became a subject of widespread discussion following a disagreement involving his parents and other parents at a youth football match in Winter Park, Florida, on 24 October 2026. The little skillful Nevada was allegedly dominant and was in possession of the ball and had scored several goals in the tournament.

According to Nevada's parents, the disagreement arose because their exceptionally gifted son was being unfairly treated for his outstanding performance on the pitch. They alleged that other parents were uncomfortable with his dominance during the tournament, particularly his ability to retain possession of the ball and score several goals.

In the aftermath of the disagreement, the aggrieved parents reportedly summoned the police. The police however, reportedly treated the matter as a civil disagreement and no arrests were made. This raises a pertinent question: Would the police have been called if Nevada were a white child?

The incident quickly travelled far beyond the football pitch and became an international talking point.

What makes the development particularly intriguing is the extraordinary wave of attention and goodwill that followed. A little boy whose football journey had attracted attention through a distressing public incident suddenly found himself at the centre of an international conversation.

A fundraising campaign established to support his development attracted thousands of donors and, according to reports available in early November, had raised more than $65,000 (N87.6 million). He also received encouraging offers, including a scholarship opportunity at a football academy and an invitation connected with a training experience in Spain.

Unverified reports say that humongous sum of $3 million (N4.04 billion) has so far been raised for the little football star! Here lies the irony. An incident that could have remained a local disagreement became an international talking point. The attention brought scrutiny, but it also brought supporters, potential mentors and opportunities.

The development offers a powerful illustration of how an unwelcome experience can sometimes open doors that were previously nowhere in sight. What begins as an obstacle may eventually become a stepping stone.

This phenomenon raises important questions about envy, resentment and unhealthy competition, which have continued to undermine human relationships across different professional and social environments. Some individuals find it difficult to celebrate the accomplishments of others.

They become uncomfortable when a colleague excels, when a neighbour prospers, when a student outperforms expectations or when a young person displays exceptional promise. Rather than draw inspiration from another person's achievement, they resort to belittlement, gossip, obstruction, exclusion and other forms of unhealthy rivalry.

Such an attitude is particularly unfortunate because nobody diminishes his or her own worth by acknowledging another person's excellence. Unfortunately, some people interpret another person's progress as a threat to their relevance.

They would rather pull someone down than make a conscious effort to rise. This disposition remains one of the greatest impediments to individual fulfilment and collective progress.

The danger is that those who become targets of such hostility may gradually internalise the negativity surrounding them. They may begin to doubt their abilities, abandon their ambitions or allow bitterness to consume them. This is why the response to opposition matters.

Nobody should permit those who oppose them to become the authors of their destiny. There is a need to distinguish constructive criticism from destructive hostility, accept correction where it is deserved and refuse to become prisoners of other people's prejudices.

The Nevada experience also provides an opportunity to reflect on the changing place of football in society.

Growing up in many Nigerian neighbourhoods, mothers and guardians were often reluctant to allow their children to spend long hours playing football. Some were concerned about injuries, neglected chores, schoolwork and the rough company associated with street football. More particularly, girls were often discouraged or expressly forbidden from gathering to play the game. The football pitch was largely regarded as the preserve of boys, while girls were expected to remain spectators.

How dramatically the world has changed! Football has evolved from a neighbourhood pastime into a powerful global industry, a cultural phenomenon and an instrument of social integration and mobility. Today, the game creates employment, inspires communities, strengthens national identities and offers talented young people opportunities beyond the boundaries of their birthplaces. Its leading practitioners have become millionaires, billionaires, global celebrities and influential ambassadors.

It is remarkable that a game some parents once considered a distraction has become a legitimate pathway to wealth, recognition and international relevance.

The transformation also reinforces an important principle: talent has no gender. Women and girls have demonstrated extraordinary abilities in football, and their accomplishments deserve equal recognition, encouragement and investment. Looking back at the restrictions imposed on girls during earlier generations, it becomes evident how limiting some traditional social attitudes were. A society that suppresses the gifts of half its population inevitably deprives itself of enormous possibilities.

Nevertheless, football's commercial glamour should never overshadow its fundamental values. At its best, the game teaches discipline, teamwork, respect, patience, courage and fair play. It provides children with opportunities to learn how to win without arrogance and lose without despair. It teaches them that individual brilliance must be balanced with collective responsibility.

In Nevada's case, it is important to remember that, despite his extraordinary ability, he is still a three-year-old child whose emotional development, safety, education and happiness must take precedence over public excitement about his football potential. The adults surrounding this young footballer have a responsibility that goes beyond managing donations, social-media attention and invitations. His talent deserves encouragement, but his childhood deserves protection.

His parents, coaches and other stakeholders must create an environment in which he can play, learn and develop without being burdened by the expectations of strangers. Money and publicity may create opportunities, but they can also expose a child to pressures he is too young to understand. His welfare must remain paramount.

Parents and guardians must also recognise that every child possesses a unique combination of abilities, interests and developmental needs. Children's gifts should never become instruments of adult rivalry.

Where a child demonstrates exceptional ability, the appropriate response is to provide a safe, age-appropriate environment in which other children can also participate, improve and enjoy themselves. Excellence and inclusion should complement each other rather than become competing interests.

For those experiencing opposition, rejection or deliberate attempts to frustrate their progress, Nevada's experience offers a useful metaphor. The person who blocks one opportunity may unknowingly direct another individual towards a more rewarding one.

A rejection that wounds someone today may compel that person to discover abilities hitherto neglected. A closed door may encourage the search for another mentor, a different environment or an opportunity to develop a new skill. Sometimes, a setback exposes the limitations of an environment that was never capable of nurturing an individual's potential in the first place.

However, there is a need to avoid romanticising suffering. Nobody should endure abuse, tolerate discrimination or remain in a harmful environment simply in the hope that a miracle will eventually happen. Where injustice occurs, appropriate remedies should be sought, fair treatment demanded and individual rights protected.

Faith in a better tomorrow should never become an excuse for passivity. The lesson is not that wrongdoing is acceptable because it might produce an unexpected benefit; rather, it is that wrongdoing should not be allowed to have the final say in anyone's life.

Equally encouraging is the generous response of members of the public to Nevada's experience. At a time when social media is frequently associated with abuse, mockery and misinformation, it is refreshing to see thousands of people demonstrate compassion through encouragement and financial contributions.

Their actions remind humanity that an enormous capacity for kindness still exists. Such generosity, however, must be accompanied by transparency, prudent stewardship and adequate safeguards for the child. Public goodwill is a gift, and every gift of that nature carries responsibility.

Beyond the football pitch in Florida, there is a lesson that applies to virtually every sphere of human endeavour. Whether in academia, business, politics, professional practice or personal relationships, opposition should not automatically translate into defeat.

Rather than expend precious energy responding to every provocation, individuals should concentrate on improving their abilities, remaining teachable and pursuing their aspirations. Where necessary, there must be the courage to change environments, seek wise counsel and explore legitimate opportunities elsewhere.

Sometimes, the individual who shuts one door may unknowingly direct another person towards someone who will open a different one. Sometimes, the opposition that appears to be an individual's undoing becomes the occasion for renewal. And sometimes, what begins as a painful chapter eventually becomes the story that introduces someone to people who recognise, appreciate and support their potential.

Ultimately, life's vicissitudes, however unpredictable, need not diminish human aspirations. Although nobody can always choose what happens to them, everyone can make a conscious effort to determine whether adversity makes them smaller or wiser.

Society must therefore resist the temptation to be consumed by envy, whether as victims or perpetrators. Talent should be celebrated, childhood protected, excellence encouraged and opportunities created for others to shine.

For, in the final analysis, another person's attempt to dim an individual's light does not make that light any less brilliant. The determination to keep shining, regardless of the opposition



NEWS

Senate probes telecom firms over failed calls, airtime deductions

ABUJA

The Senate on Wednesday ordered an investigation into alleged arbitrary airtime deductions by telecommunications operators for failed, dropped and prematurely terminated calls, giving its Committee on Communications four weeks to establish the financial losses suffered by subscribers.

The resolution followed a motion on consumer protection in the telecommunications sector, which highlighted persistent complaints by Nigerians over deductions for calls that fail to connect, terminate abruptly or are disrupted by poor network services.

The motion was sponsored by the Chief Whip of the Senate, Senator Tahir Monguno, and presented by the Deputy Senate Leader. It was seconded by Senator Ned Nwoko, representing Delta North, who described the problem as one affecting virtually every telecommunications subscriber in the country.

Supporting the motion, Nwoko said the proposed investigation was necessary to protect consumers from avoidable financial losses arising from poor service delivery by network operators.

"This is a well-thought-out motion. It is very straightforward. It is all about consumer protection. We need to make this particular motion at this critical time because a lot of the time, everybody is involved in the use of calls, making calls across the country, and we all experience the same technical issues," he said.

However, during consideration of the prayers, the Deputy Minority Leader proposed that the Senate adopt only Prayer Six, arguing that it sufficiently captured the issues raised in the preceding five prayers.

The amendment, which was seconded by Senator Benios Yaro, representing Adamawa South, was subsequently put to a voice vote by the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, and adopted.

Reading the resolution, Akpabio said the Committee on Communications had been directed to invite the Nigerian Communications Commission and relevant telecommunications operators to investigate complaints concerning failed calls, dropped calls, unterminated calls and inflated charges.

The committee is also expected to establish the financial losses incurred by subscribers and submit its findings, alongside recommendations for further legislative and regulatory action, within four weeks.

The consolidated resolution brings under one investigation several proposals seeking an inquiry into the billing practices of MTN Nigeria, Globacom, Airtel and T2 Mobile; the establishment of an accessible complaints and redress mechanism; automatic refunds for verifiably failed calls; independent technical audits of billing systems; and stricter enforcement of quality-of-service standards.

Speaking after the adoption, Akpabio urged the Committee on Communications, chaired by Senator Bill Bills, to commence work immediately, describing the four-week deadline as lengthy but necessary.

He warned that the Senate could take over the investigation as a Committee of the Whole if the committee failed to submit a satisfactory report within the stipulated period.

"I think we should; we have given them a timeline of four weeks. Four weeks is too long, but we can allow it. If in four weeks they don't satisfy us, then we have to take it as a Committee of the Whole and invite all the operators, in addition to the Minister overseeing the NCC and also the Executive Vice Chairman of NCC, to ask these pertinent questions," he said.



REUNION:
ICC class of 1976 old boys during their golden jubilee celebration at the school premises last weekend in Benin city

ICC class of 1976 returns home in golden jubilee celebration

Matthew Okagha

BENIN CITY

It was a homecoming filled with nostalgia, laughter, warm embraces and cherished memories as members of the Class of 1976 of Immaculate Conception College (ICC), Benin City, returned to their alma mater on Saturday, November 7, 2026, to celebrate 50 years since their graduation.

The visit to the school premises along 3rd East Circular Road, Benin City, was one of the highlights of a three-day programme marking the Golden Jubilee of the old boys, many of whom were setting foot on the grounds of their alma mater for the first time in five decades.

For the Class of 1976, it was more than a school visit. It was a journey down memory lane, a reunion with old friends and a joyful opportunity to reconnect with an institution that helped shape their lives.

As they gathered within the familiar surroundings, memories of their youthful days came flooding back. Old school songs, familiar names, shared experiences and stories of their days as students transformed the occasion into an emotional celebration of friendship, brotherhood and enduring school ties.

But beyond the nostalgia, the old boys came bearing gifts for the younger generation.

In a gesture of commitment to the sporting development of the school, they presented four table tennis boards, alongside balls and bats. They also engaged the services of a table tennis coach who will train interested students intensively for six months.

Chairman of the organising committee, Nedo Osayande, said the gesture was inspired by the desire to see ICC produce outstanding table tennis players capable of representing the school at local, national and international competitions.

He expressed the hope that the initiative would provide the students with the necessary foundation, coaching and encouragement to develop their talents and bring honour to their alma mater.

The presentation was followed by exhibition matches involving some of the old boys, who demonstrated that their passion for the game had not diminished with age.

There was also an exciting exhibition encounter featuring the school's table tennis champion, Master Emmanuel Azeta, who faced two members of the Class of 1976 in separate turns.

The matches provided an entertaining blend of youthful energy and veteran experience, attracting interest from the gathering and adding a sporting dimension to the memorable homecoming.

Welcoming the old boys, the school's Vice Principal, Rev. Fr. Ferdinand Ezebuogu, himself an alumnus, expressed delight at their return and commended them for rekindling sporting activities in the college.

He said the school authorities and students were excited to receive the distinguished visitors, noting that their presence and contribution would serve as a source of inspiration to the younger generation.

Nigeria records 1.69m barrels daily oil output in october

ABUJA

Nigeria's crude oil and condensate production rose by 5.7 per cent year-on-year to an average of 1.69 million barrels per day in October 2026, despite a 1.7 per cent decline from the previous month.

Figures released by the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission on Wednesday showed that the country produced an average of 1,687,710 barrels per day in October, compared with 1,597,199 barrels per day recorded in October 2025.

The increase represents an additional 90,511 barrels per day, indicating an improvement in production compared with the corresponding period last year.

However, the October output was lower than the 1.72 million barrels per day recorded in September, reflecting a month-on-month decline of about 29,000 barrels per day.

The report read, "Nigeria produced a daily average of 1,687,710 million barrels of crude oil and condensate in the month of October 2026. Data from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission also shows that single day production hit a peak of 1.79 million barrels while the lowest for the month under review stood at 1.60 million bopd."

Ebonyi council boss begins construction of ultramodern school block

Maxwell Okechukwu

ABAKALIKI

The Executive Chairman of Abakaliki Local Government Area, Hon. Chidebere Onyemaechi Alo, has commenced the construction of an ultramodern school block at Ekeru Inyimegu community, reaffirming his administration's commitment to educational development and improved learning facilities for the younger generation.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, the Chairman assured members of the community that the project would be completed within the shortest possible time, expressing optimism that the facility would be delivered within a few weeks.

He noted that construction activities had already commenced, with work progressing at the project site, and assured the people of his determination to ensure timely delivery.

The initiative is expected to serve as an example for other local government chairmen across the 13 local government areas of Ebonyi State, demonstrating the importance of purposeful leadership, commitment to public service and the translation of campaign promises into tangible development projects.

Hon. Alo's administration, since assuming office, has demonstrated its resolve to align with the development agenda of the Ebonyi State Governor, Rt. Hon. Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru, particularly the principles of the People's Charter of Needs, which emphasises people-oriented governance and the delivery of meaningful development to the grassroots.

The Chairman further assured that his administration would not be limited to making promises but would prioritise practical actions and projects capable of improving the living conditions of residents.

He reiterated his commitment to providing quality leadership, executing people-centred projects and delivering measurable results that would positively impact the lives of the people of Abakaliki Local Government Area.

Kano proposes N332bn for education in 2027

KANO

The Kano State Government has proposed allocating 30 per cent of its ₦1.107 trillion 2027 budget to the education sector, making it the highest-funded sector in the fiscal plan.

Governor Abba Yusuf disclosed this on Wednesday while presenting the budget estimates to the state House of Assembly.

Yusuf said the allocation reflected the administration's continued commitment to improving access to quality education, strengthening institutions and investing in human capital development.

"This substantial allocation to education demonstrates our determination to consolidate the gains recorded in the sector and sustain reforms that improve learning outcomes across the state," Yusuf said.





Sports




2026 CAF awards: Kojo Williams blames player of the year snub on Nigeria's recent poor performance

Former Nigeria Football Association (NFA) chairman, Kojo Williams, has attributed the absence of Nigerian players from the men's and women's African Player of the Year nomination lists to the country's disappointing performances over the past year, insisting that the Confederation of African Football (CAF) cannot be blamed for the omission.

Nigeria's national teams have endured a difficult period, with the Super Eagles failing to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup despite finishing third at the last Africa Cup of Nations.

The Super Falcons have also struggled to maintain their dominance, missing out on qualification for the FIFA Women's World Cup and failing to finish among the top three teams at the Women's Africa Cup of Nations.

CAF recently unveiled a 10-man shortlist for the Men's African Player of the Year award, featuring some of the continent's outstanding performers, including Yoane Wissa, Ismael Saibari, Achraf Hakimi, Ismaïla Sarr and Amad Diallo.

However, the absence of Nigerian players, particularly Galatasaray striker Victor Osimhen, generated discussions among football followers.

Speaking on ThePlayzone podcast, Williams said Nigeria's omission did not come as a surprise to him, arguing that the country's performances over the assessment period did not warrant representation among the nominees.

"It won't be fair to me to say that I am surprised, but it all has to do with our performances, what we've done in the last one year," he said.

"So if we're not doing the right thing, of course, they won't pick us. Did we qualify for the World Cup? We didn't win the AFCON. You cannot fault that."

Osimhen's absence from the men's shortlist was particularly notable, considering his contributions to Nigeria at the 2025 AFCON, where he scored four goals, and his role in helping Galatasaray retain their Turkish Super Lig title.

Despite acknowledging the striker's impressive performances, Williams suggested that factors beyond individual quality and achievements could sometimes influence the selection process for the prestigious continental award.

"You know sometimes they play politics. Yes, Victor did well in Europe, but you had the other guys from other teams like PSG, and maybe the league he's playing in," he said.

Williams, however, maintained that Osimhen remained an outstanding footballer, pointing to his previous success in winning the African Player of the Year award.

"Yes, he won African Footballer of the Year when he was playing for Napoli. He's a great player," he added.

Nigeria boasts an impressive history at the CAF Awards, having produced several winners of the men's African Player of the Year prize.

NPFL: NFF suspends referee Jimoh, assistant Zakari indefinitely over Kwara United goal

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Refereeing Development Committee has suspended referee Abdulrasheed Jimoh and assistant referee Adamu Zakari indefinitely following a controversial decision during Sunday's Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) encounter between Kwara United and Rangers.

The officials were sanctioned over what the committee described as the cancellation of a "validly scored goal" by Kwara United during the match.

The decision has prompted disciplinary action against both officials, who will remain suspended indefinitely as the NFF reviews the incident.

The suspension underscores the federation's position on officiating standards and the need for match officials to uphold the laws of the game in domestic competitions.





SAFETY SHOOTERS:

Safety Shooters survive Tojemarine scare as day 5 produces exciting results

Defending champions Safety Shooters had to dig deep to secure a 35-32 victory over Tojemarine Sport Club in the final men's match of Day 5 of the 2026 Ardova Handball Premier League in Lagos on Wednesday.

Former Champion Tojemarine, playing in front of their fans, gave the champions a tough challenge in a tense encounter at the NIS Indoor Sports Hall, Surulere, but Safety Shooters held on in the closing minutes to claim the three points and maintain their title defence.

Other matches in the men's category saw U&H Abia recording the biggest victory of the day after defeating Osun United 37-26, while Correction Boys also enjoyed a comfortable 34-22 win over Benue Buffaloes.

NAF Rockets secured a 31-24 victory against DE Defenders, while Rima Strikers edged COAS Shooters 22-19 in a closely contested encounter. Three times champion Niger United were awarded a 10-0 victory over Kano Pillars.

In the women's category, SOOF produced the most emphatic result, thrashing Omo Ogiefo 40-22 at the NIS Indoor Sports Hall.

Defender Babes began their campaign for the day with a 32-28 victory over Imo Grasshoppers, while Rivers Queens defeated Ekiti Queens 27-23. Plateau Peacocks also recorded a convincing 32-19 win against Funad Academy.

Safety Babes rounded off the women's fixtures with a 34-21 victory over Rima Queens, completing a successful day for the Safety teams following the hard-fought win by their male counterparts.

Matches on Wednesday were played simultaneously at the NIS Indoor Sports Hall, Surulere, and Rowe Park Sports Centre, Yaba. Matches continues on Thursday at both centers.

Special Eagles target world cup semifinals in Mexico, says Opukiri Ere

The President of the Nigeria Amputee Football Federation, Opukiri Jones Ere, has expressed confidence in the readiness of the Special Eagles ahead of the 2026 Amputee Football World Cup in Mexico, declaring that the team is well-prepared to compete against the world's best.

Ere revealed that the team had spent two months in camp, describing the extended preparation period as a significant advantage in improving the players' understanding, teamwork and confidence ahead of the global tournament.

He noted that the lengthy camping programme was uncommon in Nigerian football and had provided the players with enough time to develop a strong bond and understanding on the pitch.

"As you know, we have been in camp for the past two months. Not many teams have the opportunity to stay together for two months. We have trained, played together and built a strong relationship. I can tell you for free that this team is in good shape," Ere said.

The federation president also highlighted the team's encouraging performances in friendly matches against able-bodied players, recalling that the Special Eagles lost their first encounter 4-2, drew the second 2-2 and secured a 2-0 victory in their third match last Friday.

According to Ere, the results reflect the team's growing attacking creativity and tactical development as preparations intensify.

He further disclosed that the squad features six professional amputee footballers based in Turkey, alongside home-based players, providing a combination of international exposure and domestic experience.

Ere also appreciated the support of the National Sports Commission (NSC), assuring Nigerians that the players remained determined to overcome challenges and deliver an impressive performance at the World Cup.

"We want Nigerians to know that we have special people representing the country through amputee football. We are not giving up because of our physical conditions. We are going to compete at the World Cup, and our target is to reach the semi-finals or final. We want to make Nigeria proud and return home with our fair share of success," he stated.

Meanwhile, head coach of the Special Eagles, Gbenga Dosunmu, has also expressed satisfaction with the team's preparations, describing the two-month camping programme as unprecedented in the history of amputee football in Nigeria.

Dosunmu said the players were highly motivated and focused on making a strong impression at the tournament, stressing that reaching the semi-finals remained their immediate target.

Nigeria have been drawn in a challenging group alongside Turkey, Spain and Egypt for the 2026 Amputee Football World Cup in Mexico.

Despite acknowledging the quality of their group opponents, the coach expressed confidence in his players' ability to rise to the occasion.

He pointed to the presence of six Nigerian professionals playing amputee football in Turkey as a major boost to the squad's strength and experience.





Sports




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

President Tinubu, senate shower victorious Flamingos with bountiful rewards

His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR on Wednesday rewarded the triumphant Nigeria U17 girls, Flamingos, with the sum of N100 Million naira each, with the monies going into Federal Government Savings Bond. They will be presented with certificates for the amount which will generate monthly returns and will still be intact after five years.

The Head Coach was rewarded with the sum of N100 Million in cash, while the assistant coaches and other members of the technical and administrative crew were rewarded with N50 Million each.

Delivering the goodies to the team, on behalf of the President, the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, CON praised the fighting spirit of the young ladies and applauded them for overcoming the setback of a defeat in their first match to win the remaining six matches and become the first African team to win the FIFA U17 Women's World Cup competition.

In his remarks, Chairman of the National Sports Commission, Mallam Shehu Dikko, noted that women have been bringing a lot of laurels to the nation in the past one year, and praised the present Government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the huge investment in grassroots sports development that has spurred recent successes.

Present at the occasion as well were the wife of the Vice President of the Federal Republic, Hajiya Nana Shettima; wives of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives; Director General of the National Sports Commission, Hon. Bukola Olopade; Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Customs Service, Mr. Adewale Adeniyi; top officials of the National Sports Commission and the Nigeria Football Federation; sports and football stakeholders and; aides of the President and the First Lady.

An hour after meeting with the First Lady, the players and officials were hosted by the Senate of the Federal Republic, with the Senate President, His Excellency Chief Godswill Akpabio, GCON handing the entire team the sum of N100 Million for their historic accomplishment.



AFCON qualifiers: Ifeanyi Udeze warns Super Eagles against underrating Tanzania

Former Nigerian international Ifeanyi Udeze has cautioned the Super Eagles against underestimating Tanzania ahead of their 2027 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) Group L double-header.

Nigeria will host the Taifa Stars in the first leg on Friday, November 13, at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium in Uyo before travelling for the return fixture on November 17.

After two matches in the qualifying campaign, the Super Eagles occupy second position in Group L with three points, while Tanzania sit at the bottom of the standings with just one point.

Speaking ahead of Friday's encounter, Udeze warned that the East Africans would pose a difficult challenge for Nigeria, urging the players to approach the match with the seriousness it deserves.

"It won't be easy against Tanzania. It will be tough and I hope they will not underrate Tanzania," Udeze said.

The former defender, who won bronze medals with Nigeria at the 2002 and 2004 AFCON tournaments, also expressed disappointment over the delayed arrival of some Super Eagles players in camp.

Udeze questioned the commitment of the players yet to report for international duty, stressing that their late arrival could affect preparations for an important qualifying fixture.

"What is painful to me is that some players are yet to arrive camp. With such an attitude, how are we sure they are taking this game seriously?

"I just wish them all the best and hope they get the three points," he added.

Meanwhile, Nigeria will be without key forward Victor Osimhen and winger Samuel Chukwueze, who are both sidelined by injuries.

Hull City defender Semi Ajayi is also a doubt for the encounter after sustaining a knock during last weekend's Premier League clash with Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium, where he was substituted.

The injury concerns present an additional challenge for head coach Eric Chelle as he prepares his squad for the two meetings against Tanzania.



Iyoba Girls College, Ohonre Grammar School dominate opening day of Patreli partners secondary schools Girls cricket competition

The Edo State Cricket Association's Patreli Partners Secondary Schools Girls Competition got off to an exciting start on Wednesday, November 11, 2026, with Iyoba Girls College and Ohonre Grammar School emerging as the standout teams on an action-packed opening day in Benin City.

The competition, organised by the Edo State Cricket Association in collaboration with Patreli Partners, featured six schools divided into two groups, with matches played simultaneously at the Centre of Excellence, Iyoba Girls College, and the High Performance Centre, Edo Boys High School.

At the Centre of Excellence, host school Iyoba Girls College recorded two victories to finish as Group A winners, while Benin Technical College secured the runners-up position. Iyoba opened their campaign with a 13-run victory over Benin Technical College, posting 46 runs for nine wickets before restricting their opponents to 33 runs all out in 9.2 overs.

Benin Technical College bounced back in their second match with a convincing nine-wicket victory over Idia College, chasing down a target of 20 runs in just 2.1 overs after dismissing their opponents for 19. Iyoba subsequently completed their perfect day with another nine-wicket victory over Idia College, reaching their target of 24 runs in 3.2 overs after Idia had posted 23 runs for eight wickets.

At the High Performance Centre, Ohonre Grammar School dominated Group B with two victories to finish as group winners, while Ujoelen Secondary School, Ekpoma, secured the runners-up position. Emotan College, meanwhile, failed to record a victory. Ohonre began with a nine-wicket win over Emotan College, successfully chasing a target of 25 runs after restricting their opponents to 24. They followed that with an impressive performance against Ujoelen, who had posted 47 runs before being bowled out in 9.2 overs. Ohonre responded with an aggressive batting display, reaching the target in just 6.3 overs without losing a wicket to secure another nine-wicket victory.

Ujoelen Grammar School rounded off the day's fixtures with a 10-wicket victory over Emotan College. After Emotan posted 31 runs, Ujoelen comfortably reached the target of 32 in 5.1 overs without losing a wicket, securing their first win of the competition.

With the group stage concluded, the semi-final pairings have been confirmed for Thursday, November 12, at the Centre of Excellence, Iyoba Girls College. Group A winners Iyoba Girls College will face Group B runners-up Ujoelen Secondary School in the first semi-final at 12 noon, while Group B winners Ohonre Grammar School will take on Group A runners-up Benin Technical College at 2:15pm.

The competition will reach its climax on Friday, November 13, with the third-place match scheduled for 10am, followed by the final at 12:30pm. The closing ceremony and awards presentation will take place at 2:30pm.

The competition provides an opportunity to promote girls' cricket at the secondary school level while encouraging participation and developing young talents across Edo State.



SPORTS

The Nigerian OBSERVER
That The People May Know

Ex-FIFA GS joins historic celebration as Africa welcomes first youth Olympic games

Former FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samba Diouf Samoura joined the final procession of Olympic Flame bearers in Dakar ahead of the official opening ceremony of the 2026 Youth Olympic Games, marking a significant moment in Senegal's preparations to host the first Olympic event on African soil.

Samoura participated in the final leg of the relay alongside international personalities, including Senegalese social media star Khaby Lame, actor Omar Sy, wrestling champion Modou Lô and other prominent figures from sports, entertainment and public life.

The final procession, held in a celebratory atmosphere in Dakar, brought together athletes, artists and residents to celebrate the Olympic spirit and the role of African youth in shaping the continent's future.

The Olympic Flame, which originated in Athens, travelled across Senegal for 47 days, covering more than 3,650 kilometres from Dakar to Ziguinchor and back to the capital.

The nationwide relay passed through Thiès, Saint-Louis, Matam, Kaolack, Tambacounda, Kédougou and Kolda, among other locations, covering all 14 regions of the country.

Approximately 450 torchbearers participated in more than 30 stages of the relay, which also featured sporting, cultural and educational activities designed to engage young people and local communities.

The Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games represent a historic breakthrough for Africa, as Senegal becomes the first African country to host an Olympic event.

The Games mark a new chapter in the history of the Olympic movement, providing a global platform to showcase Africa's sporting potential, cultural diversity and youthful population.

Organisers expect approximately 2,700 athletes to compete across around 20 sporting disciplines, with the event being celebrated under the motto, "Africa welcomes, Dakar celebrates."

The hosting of the Games is also expected to strengthen Africa's position in international sport while creating opportunities for young athletes to demonstrate their talents on a global stage.

Samoura's participation in the final torch relay reflects her long-standing contribution to international sports administration and development.

A Senegalese national, she spent more than two decades working with the United Nations, holding senior positions in humanitarian affairs and development across several continents.

In 2016, she made history when she was appointed FIFA Secretary General, becoming the first woman and the first African to occupy the position. She served in the role until 2023, overseeing the federation's administration and contributing to the organisation of several FIFA World Cups.

During her tenure, she also supported initiatives aimed at expanding football development, particularly women's football, while promoting improved governance and modernisation within the global football governing body.

Following her departure from FIFA, Samoura has continued her involvement in international sports and development initiatives. She is currently a member of the FIA Senate and serves on the boards of organisations including Seed Project and African Collaborations Group (ACG).

Her participation in the final Olympic Flame relay symbolised the connection between her experience in global sports administration and Africa's growing ambitions on the international sporting stage.

"To carry the flame is to carry a dream, and to pass it on is to pass on its energy," Samoura said.

The final Olympic Flame relay preceded the opening ceremony of the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, which took place on October 31 at the Abdoulaye Wade Stadium in Diamniadio.

The ceremony was attended by Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Kirsty Coventry, Dakar 2026 Organising Committee President Mamadou Diagna Ndiaye and sports ministers representing African countries.

The ceremony officially launched the first Youth Olympic Games to be staged on the African continent, placing Senegal at the centre of a historic moment for African sport.

For Samoura and other prominent personalities who participated in the Flame relay, the occasion represented more than a ceremonial celebration. It underscored the power of sport to unite communities, inspire young people and strengthen Africa's presence on the global sporting stage.



Flamingos leading scorer Oluebube Umejiaku shoots for goal

Only the free-scoring Samba Girls of Brazil stand between the Flamingos and a place in a first-ever U17 Women's World Cup final.

Wednesday night in Rabat, Nigeria will have a chance to slug it out with the South Americans, while the other semifinal will be an all-Asian contest between Japan and defending champions North Korea.

Both Nigeria and Brazil left it late before they progressed to the last-four.

Skipper Azezat Oduntan put away a penalty a minute to fulltime before the Flamingos could see off a spirited Venezuela, while Brazil were stretched by China before they eventually triumphed 2-1.

Coach Akeem Busari has praised the character and resilience of the Nigerian girls after they lost their first game under his watch to Poland in their opening game at this World Cup.

They have since racked up four straight wins including an eye-popping 3-0 win over defending world champions North Korea.

Nigeria have featured in all eight U17 World Cups with their best-ever performance being a third-place finish in 2022.

They have what it takes to improve on this outing going by the quality of the talent they have paraded in Morocco.

Sixteen-year-old striker Kemi Adegbuyi is certainly destined for greatness after what she has already achieved at the WAFU B CAF Champions League qualifiers as well as the NWFL.

She makes up for her lack of size with her mastery of the ball and quickness.

The stocky Oluebube Umiajiaku is the team's leading scorer with three goals and like Adegbuyi she has already proved her mettle internationally at WAFU Champions League qualifying tournament. The girls have further been boosted with the return of five players, who featured at the recent U20 World Cup in Poland – goalkeeper Jane Ijirigho, Tosin Rafiu, Precious Oscar, Queen Joseph and Favour Nkwocha.

These players are the future of the Super falcons and their emergence could not have come at a more apt time than now when the 10-time Africans desperately need young players and new energy.

Will it be a rematch between the Flamingos and defending champions North Korea in the World Cup final Saturday?

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