Okpebholo leads APC leaders, officials in thanksgiving for two years in office

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, on Sunday led members of his administration and leaders of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to a thanksgiving service at the Living Faith Church, popularly known as Winners' Chapel, Benin City, to mark the second anniversary of his administration.

The governor was accompanied by his deputy, Dennis Idahosa; the Deputy State Chairman of the APC, Sylvester Aigboboh; and other senior government officials and party leaders.

In a colourful procession, Governor Okpebholo, his deputy and other party leaders danced towards the altar, offering praises and thanksgiving to God for the achievements recorded by the administration in the past two years.

The service also provided an opportunity for the governor to renew his administration's commitment to policies and projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the people of Edo State.

Speaking on the theme, "Unlocking the Supernatural," drawn from Isaiah 8:18, the officiating minister, Pastor Emmanuel Ibiwoye, described the achievements of the Okpebholo administration over the past two years as evidence of God's hand at work in the state.

He said the decision to mark the second anniversary of the administration in the house of God demonstrated the governor's recognition of God's supremacy, urging him to remain focused and not grow weary in

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The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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A Decade of Royal Majesty: Tinubu salutes Oba Ewuare II's quest for Benin artefacts

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has paid glowing tribute to the Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, commending his sustained advocacy for the return of Benin artefacts looted from the ancient kingdom over a century ago, as well as his efforts to promote peace and national unity.

The President, represented by the Minister of Regional Development, Abubakar Momoh, gave the commendation at the grand reception marking the 10th coronation anniversary of Oba Ewuare II and the commissioning of the Festival Hall at the Oba's Palace in Benin City.

President Tinubu described the Benin Kingdom as a remarkable symbol of historical heritage, organised governance, diplomacy and cultural excellence, noting that its rich history remains alive through its traditional institution, language, festivals and the enduring achievements of its people.

He observed that the monarch's experience as a diplomat who represented Nigeria abroad had brought valuable international exposure and diplomatic understanding to bear on his leadership of the ancient kingdom.

"Your experience as a diplomat who served Nigeria abroad has been brought to bear in leading the kingdom. Your advocacy for the return of Benin artefacts is commendable," the President said.

Tinubu also applauded the Oba's position against human trafficking, describing it as evidence of the capacity of traditional institutions to address contemporary social challenges while remaining firmly rooted in their cultural values and historical responsibilities.

He called for greater cooperation between relevant government institutions and the Palace to facilitate the full recovery and return of the looted Benin artefacts.

The President also made reference to the historical significance of the name Ewuare, commonly interpreted as "the troubles are over", recalling the transformative reforms associated with the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great in the history of the Benin Kingdom.

In his remarks, Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, congratulated Oba Ewuare II on the milestone, describing his ten years on the throne as a period of renewed commitment to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Benin people.

The governor said the anniversary provided an opportunity not only to celebrate the monarch's years on the throne but also to reflect on the responsibility of safeguarding the values, traditions and heritage bequeathed to the present generation by their forefathers.

"This anniversary is not merely a celebration of time spent on the throne; it is also an opportunity to reflect on the enduring responsibility of preserving the values, traditions and heritage given to us by our forefathers," Okpebholo said.

He prayed that the Oba's reign would continue to be characterised by peace, wisdom, unity and progress, while expressing the hope that the relationship between the Palace, the Edo State Government and the people would continue to grow in mutual respect and cooperation.

Speaking on the Museum of West African Arts, the governor announced that the facility would henceforth be known as the Benin Royal Palace Museum of West African Arts.

He explained that the inclusion of the Royal Palace in the museum's name was significant because the Palace remained

CONTINUES ON PG 2»

Edo moves to remove pre - 2017 workers from Contributory Pension Scheme

Matthew Okagha

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has approved the removal of Permanent Secretaries and all civil/public servants appointed into the State Public Service before January 1, 2017, from the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), in a major policy development with significant implications for workers' retirement benefits.

The development was communicated in a circular dated November 20, 2026, issued by the Office of the Head of Service, Edo State, and signed by the Head of Service, Dr A.O. Okungbowa.

The circular, titled "Executive Approval for the Removal of Civil/Public Servants Appointed Before 1st January, 2017 from the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS)," disclosed that Governor Monday Okpebholo had granted executive approval for the proposed removal of the affected categories of public servants from the scheme.

According to the circular, the decision covers Permanent Secretaries and all civil/public servants appointed into the Edo State Public Service before January 1, 2017.

However, the government explained that the implementation of the approval requires legislative intervention because

CONTINUES ON PG 2»



THANKSGIVING:
L-R Governor Monday Okpebholo, his Deputy, Hon. Dennis Idahosa and Deputy State Chairman of the All Progressive Congress (APC) Sylvester Aigboboh at the thanksgiving service to mark Governor Okpebholo's two years in office, held at Winners Chapel, Sapele road Benin City Edo State.

EDSG hands over compendium of laws to Chief Judge —Pg 2

ASUP downs tools in Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti polytechnics over allowances —Pg 7

Russia-bound ship attacked in Gulf of Finland —Pg 09

Barcelona scored three goals in 10 minutes as they returned to the top of La Liga ... —Pg12

NEWS



GRAND RECEPTION/ COMMISSIONING:
L-R Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar and His Royal Majesty (HRM), Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Ewuare II at the Grand reception/ Commissioning of Festival Hall Oba Palace to celebrate the 10th year coronation anniversary of the Oba of Benin.



L-R The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, His Royal Majesty (HRM), Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Ewuare II, Governor Monday Okpebholo and the representative of President Tinubu, Minister of Regional Development Abubakar Momoh at the commissioning of Festival Hall at the premises of the palace of the Oba of Benin.

EDSG hands over compendium of laws to Chief Judge

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government (EDSG) has handed over the Edo State 2026 Compendium of Laws to the Chief Judge of Edo State, Justice Daniel Okungbowa, in a landmark development aimed at strengthening the administration of justice and improving access to the state's legal framework.

The handover ceremony, held at the conference hall of the Edo State High Court in Benin City, marks the end of decades of reliance on inherited Bendel State laws of 1976, despite the creation of Edo State more than three decades ago.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chairman of the Edo State Law Reform Commission, Osikhena-Boih Donald, said the compendium would simplify access to the state's laws for legal practitioners, legislators, the executive arm of government and other stakeholders.

He explained that the continued application of the old Bendel State laws had created difficulties for legal practitioners, particularly lawyers appearing before courts, who often had to navigate several volumes of legislation to identify laws applicable to Edo State.

"Lawyers find it difficult to make presentations in courts as they will have to go through the languages of all the laws of Bendel State to be able to navigate what is applicable to Edo State. This has made it a difficult task and situation for the legal profession, for members of the Bench and the Bar," he said.

Donald noted that the new compendium would make it easier for lawyers to identify relevant laws and enable the legislature to determine existing legislation, identify laws requiring amendments and prioritise areas for new legislation.

He added that the compendium would also assist the executive arm of government in effectively discharging its responsibilities, stressing that the existence and implementation of appropriate laws were essential to maintaining peace and order in the state.

Receiving the compendium, the Chief Judge, Justice Daniel Okungbowa, commended the state government and the Law Reform Commission for the initiative, describing it as a significant achievement in the state's legal development.

He observed that practitioners had hitherto relied on seven volumes of Bendel State laws but expressed satisfaction that the new Edo State compendium had been expanded to eight volumes.

...Tinubu salutes Oba Ewuare II's quest for Benin artefacts

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

the custodian of the kingdom's history, traditions and cultural heritage.

"Our history must not only be preserved; it must be properly documented, celebrated and transmitted to generations yet unborn," the governor declared.

Okpebholo reaffirmed the Edo State Government's commitment to completing the museum project and handing it over to the Palace, stressing that the preservation of Benin's cultural heritage should be regarded as a collective responsibility that transcends political administrations.

According to him, the museum would also serve as a major attraction for tourists, promote academic and historical research, and create economic opportunities for the state and its people.

In his response, an elated Oba Ewuare II expressed appreciation to dignitaries from the Federal and Edo State Governments, members of the diplomatic corps, his Queens and subjects for honouring the Palace with their presence at the celebration.

The activities marking the 10th coronation anniversary commenced on October 3 and culminated in the grand reception and commissioning of the Festival Hall.

The monarch specially acknowledged the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, for making the journey to Benin City after attending another engagement in Ibadan, describing his presence as a demonstration of friendship and solidarity.

"This is not a time for speech making but a time for merriment and rejoicing to the glory of God," the Oba said.

Other prominent dignitaries at the occasion included the Emir of Kagara, Alhaji Ahmad Gunna; Deputy Governor of Edo State, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Norwegian Ambassador to Nigeria, Svein Bæra; Minister of Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musawa; Edo State APC Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe; and the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Yakubu Musa.

Edo's continued development depends on Tinubu's second term — *Okpebholo*

Richard Eweka

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has declared that the continued development of the state is tied to President Bola Tinubu securing a second term in office, insisting that sustained federal support is critical to the progress of his administration.

The governor made the declaration on Friday at the inauguration of the Edo State chapter of the PBAT Door-to-Door Campaign Movement, a political support group established to mobilise votes for President Tinubu's re-election in the 2027 general election.

Okpebholo attributed the achievements recorded by his administration in the last two years to the support and cooperation it has received from the Federal Government, stressing that Tinubu's continued stay in office would enable his government to sustain its development programmes.

"I am working because President Tinubu is behind me. For the work to continue, he must remain in office in 2027. A vote for Tinubu is a vote against kidnapping, cultism and criminality in Edo State," he said.

The governor pledged to deliver 2.5 million votes from Edo State for President Tinubu in the January 16, 2027 election, calling on party members and residents to support the target.

"For me to continue to develop this state, President Tinubu must remain in Aso Rock," he added.

He described the door-to-door campaign movement as an avenue for taking the administration's achievements directly to the people, promising to visit communities and households to explain what the President had accomplished.

"Expect me in your neighbourhood. I will visit you in your house and show you what our President has done in the last three and a half years," he said.

The Grand Patron of the movement, High Chief Government Oweizide Ekpemupolo, popularly known as Tompolo, who was represented by Engr. Kestin Pondi, said President Tinubu deserved another term to complete his development agenda.

Pondi disclosed that Tompolo had donated 25 campaign vehicles, alongside speakers, generators and amplifiers, to facilitate the movement's mobilisation activities across the state.

"We are in Edo State today to inaugurate the Edo chapter of the PBAT Door-to-Door Campaign Movement. The 25 vehicles will move from street to street and market to market to tell people what President Tinubu has done for Nigeria," he said.

...Okpebholo leads APC leaders, officials in ...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

pursuing his SHINE development agenda for Edo State.

Pastor Ibiwoye assured the governor of the church's continued prayers and called on residents to sustain prayers for the administration, including from their individual homes.

"This governor is a believer. This governor has time for God. He loves his people, especially the masses, and he cares about their wellbeing," the pastor said.

He added that Governor Okpebholo was committed to making life more comfortable and convenient for the people, noting that many residents had benefited from his interventions and empowerment initiatives.

"As a church, we will join His Excellency to sing and dance and give God thanks for what He has done in the first two years of the Okpebholo administration in Edo State," he said.

Also speaking, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Religious Matters, Apostle Sule Faraday, attributed the governor's commitment to good governance to the prayers of Christians and other people of faith in the state.

...Edo moves to remove pre- 2017 workers

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

the Contributory Pension Scheme is established and regulated by law.

Consequently, the Office of the Head of Service had formally approached the Ministry of Justice to prepare an Amendment Bill to modify the relevant provisions of the existing pension legislation and give legal effect to the Governor's approval.

The circular further disclosed that the Ministry of Justice had completed the drafting of the Amendment Bill and transmitted it to the Office of the Head of Service.

It added that a team of Permanent Secretaries was currently reviewing the draft legislation to ensure that its provisions adequately reflected the intention and substance of the executive approval granted by the Governor.

Following the review, the bill will be returned to the Ministry of Justice for the necessary onward transmission to the Edo State House of Assembly for consideration and passage into law.

The Head of Service described the process as being at an advanced stage of preparation, assuring affected workers that further developments and appropriate implementation guidelines would be communicated in due course.

NEWS

Igbinedion don advocates fiscal reforms, direct LG allocations to drive Nigeria's development

OKADA

The need for comprehensive fiscal reforms, equitable resource distribution and stronger financial accountability across the three tiers of government has been identified as critical to addressing Nigeria's persistent development challenges.

This formed the central message of the 28th Inaugural Lecture of Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, delivered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Research), Professor Blessing Ose Oligbi.

The lecture, titled, "Deficit Paradox: Fiscal Decentralisation and Development in Nigeria's Federation," was delivered on Thursday at the university's Main Auditorium.

Examining the relationship between fiscal decentralisation and national development, Oligbi, a Professor of Public Sector and Development Economics, interrogated the paradox of a resource-rich country whose enormous public expenditure has not translated into commensurate development outcomes.

She argued that fiscal decentralisation should bring government closer to the people by ensuring that public resources are efficiently mobilised, allocated and deployed to meet citizens' needs.

However, she observed that despite successive government budgets and substantial public spending, Nigeria continues to experience significant development deficits, raising questions about the effectiveness of its fiscal structure and public financial management.

According to her, fiscal decentralisation promises economic stability and greater financial responsibility at the sub-national level, but the reality reveals persistent dependence by states on federal allocations and excessive recurrent expenditure.

She cautioned that development spending without corresponding devolution of revenue-generating capacity and financial discipline could weaken sub-national governments rather than strengthen their capacity to deliver development.

As part of her recommendations, Oligbi called for strict enforcement of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, transparency in public finance management and the full implementation of direct allocation of funds to local governments.

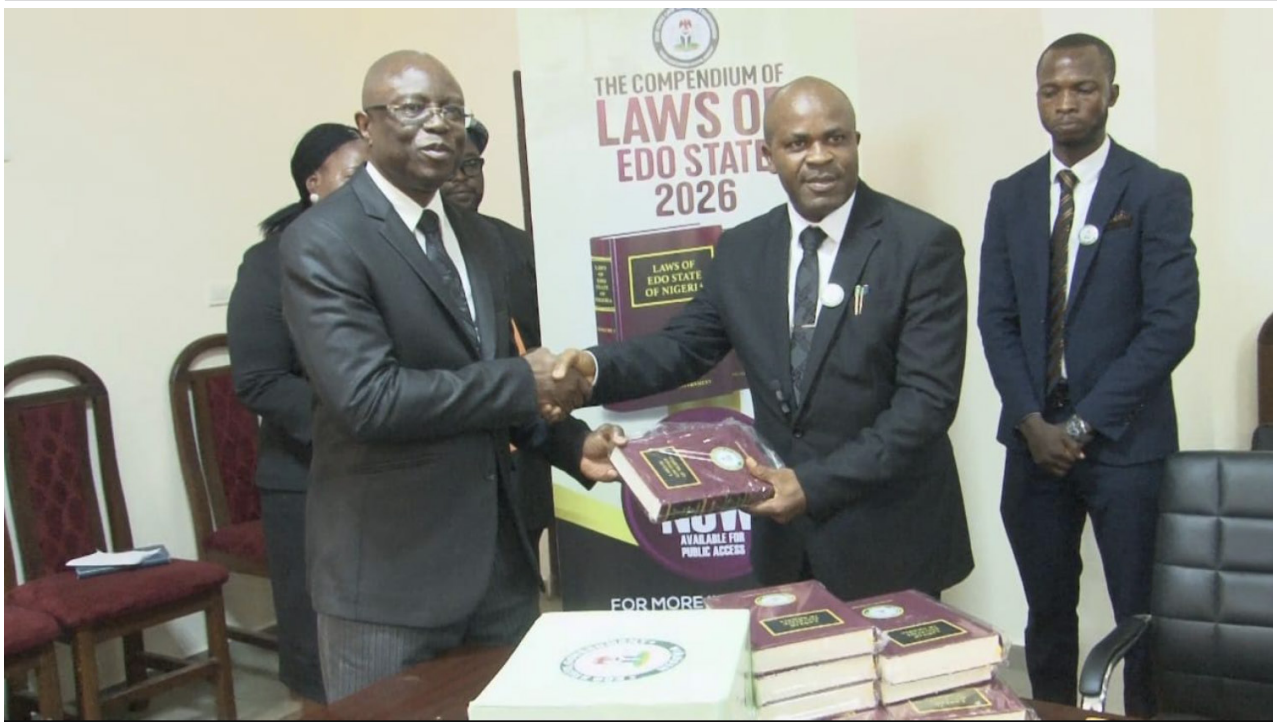
She specifically urged governments to publish clear timetables for the payment of local government allocations directly to councils and ensure that open fiscal data covering every state and local government area are made publicly accessible.

For state governments, she advocated broadening their revenue bases through lawful and equitable means, enforcing existing fiscal responsibility laws, restricting borrowing to properly appraised projects and publishing comprehensive debt profiles to strengthen public accountability.

The inaugural lecturer maintained that effective fiscal decentralisation must go beyond the distribution of financial resources to include the institutional capacity, revenue autonomy and accountability mechanisms required to translate public funds into tangible development.

Earlier, the Chairman of the occasion and Vice-Chancellor of the university, Professor Lawrence Ikechukwu Ezemonye, described the subject as particularly timely and relevant to Nigeria's economic realities.

He noted that the relationship between fiscal policies, resource distribution among the tiers of government and grassroots development remained a critical national concern.



2026 COMPENDIUM OF LAWS:
Chief Judge of Edo State, Justice Daniel Okungbowa (L) receiving the Edo State 2026 Compendium of Laws from Chairman of the Law Reform Commission, Osikhena-Boih Donald.

NTI, UBEC to train 3,700 basic education teachers nationwide

KADUNA

The National Teachers' Institute (NTI), Kaduna, in collaboration with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), will train 3,700 basic education teachers and education managers on structured pedagogy strategies.

The five-day nationwide training programme is scheduled to commence on Monday across the country.

The Head of Public Relations and Protocol of NTI, Mallam Yusha'u Ahmed, disclosed this in a statement issued in Kaduna.

Ahmed said the training was designed to strengthen teachers' capacity to plan and deliver well-sequenced lessons and improve classroom teaching and learning.

He said participants would also be equipped with skills to guide learners through classroom practice and use formative assessment to identify learning gaps.

According to him, the training will further enable teachers to adapt instructional approaches to address the diverse learning needs of pupils.

Ahmed explained that the first tranche of the programme would accommodate 2,000 basic education teachers and education managers drawn from the 19 Northern states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

He added that the second tranche would cover 1,700 basic education teachers from the 17 Southern states of the federa-

Commission urges journalists to uphold responsible data privacy, ethical practices

ABUJA

The Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC) has urged journalists to prioritise data protection, safeguard confidential sources and uphold responsible data processing in their professional practice.

The National Commissioner of NDPC, Dr Vincent Olatunji, made the call at a sensitisation and awareness training on data protection and privacy for members of the Nigeria Information Technology Reporters Association (NITRA) in Abuja.

Olatunji said journalists were strategic partners in promoting public awareness of data protection, noting that their reports had helped showcase Nigeria's progress in the global privacy ecosystem.

"The number of people, professionals in this ecosystem, are very limited, and we need more people to fully understand what we are doing within the data privacy ecosystem in Nigeria.

"This is also important for journalists to also have additional knowledge and additional qualifications for them to practice as data privacy officers.

"There is no way they create stories around what they don't really understand; so it is really important for us to deepen their knowledge on data privacy," he said.

He urged journalists to explore opportunities in the data protection ecosystem through professional training and certification as Data Protection Officers (DPOs), noting that the career path could complement their journalism practice.

He recalled that Nigeria just won the Excellence in Accountability Award at the 48th Global Privacy Assembly in Brussels, attributing the achievement partly to media contributions and the country's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

The commissioner said that the model involved licensing Data Protection Compliance Organisations (DPCOs) to support compliance activities.

According to him, Nigeria has about 10,000 certified DPOs, while the country's data privacy ecosystem has generated more than 27,000 jobs, with the potential to create over 500,000 jobs.

FCC orders cancellation of NWRI recruitment

ABUJA

The Federal Character Commission (FCC) has directed the cancellation of the recruitment of 58 staff members by the National Water Resources Institute (NWRI), Kaduna, over non-compliance with the Federal Character Principle.

FCC Spokesperson, Mr Ademola Lawrence, disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja on Friday.

Lawrence explained that the cancellation followed a review of a report submitted by the commission's monitoring officials, which established that the exercise failed to comply with the prescribed federal character balancing index.

He said that the commission was committed to ensuring equitable representation of all states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

He described the breach as a serious violation of the principles of fairness, equity and inclusiveness that underpin the federal character principle.

He insisted that recruitment into public institutions must reflect Nigeria's diversity and not create imbalances that undermine the constitutional imperative of fair and equitable representation.

The spokesman added that the Federal Character Principle, as enshrined in Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), was a constitutional requirement and not a mere administrative formality.

He noted that the provision placed a clear responsibility on public institutions to ensure fairness and balanced representation in appointments, recruitment and the distribution of opportunities across the country.

"The commission has directed the NWRI to cancel the entire recruitment exercise and commence the process afresh, with strict adherence to the prescribed federal character balancing index and all applicable requirements.

"The commission will not compromise its constitutional responsibility or overlook practices that undermine equitable

Ex-Presidenial adviser, Alkali, celebrates Jonathan at 69

ABUJA

A former Special Adviser to the President on Political Affairs, Prof. Rufa'i Alkali, has congratulated former President Goodluck Jonathan on his 69th birthday, describing him as a global icon of democracy and peace.

Alkali, in a statement issued in Abuja on Saturday, praised the former Nigerian leader's statesmanship, humility and sacrifice during critical moments in the nation's history.

He noted that Jonathan's decision to prioritise national unity over personal political ambition secured Nigeria's democracy and earned him lasting international respect.

"At a critical moment in our nation's history, you chose peace over power, unity over division and Nigeria over personal political ambition," Alkali, who served under Jonathan's administration, remarked.

He recalled Jonathan's famous 2015 declaration that his ambition was not worth the blood of any Nigerian, describing it as a defining moment that saved the country.

NEWS

State Police: Amadi alleges constitutional breach, heads to court

ABUJA

The Director of Abuja School of Social and Political Thoughts, Dr. Sam Amadi, says the organisation will challenge the constitutional amendment establishing state police, alleging procedural violations by the House of Representatives.

Amadi, a constitutional lawyer, told journalists in Abuja on Thursday that the School would return to court on Dec. 10 to seek a declaration invalidating the amendment.

He alleged that while the Senate complied with the constitutional voting procedure, the House of Representatives failed to follow the prescribed process.

"The senate voted properly; the House did not vote properly. As a constitutional lawyer and teacher, I know that although the National Assembly has the right to make laws, it cannot make laws except in accordance with the constitution," he said.

He cited a Supreme Court decision invalidating an appropriation law in spite of presidential assent, following a failure to secure the required concurrence between the two chambers of the national assembly.

"The constitution has told you how you can amend it. You cannot amend the constitution except as the constitution has prescribed. Otherwise, you are taking over the power of the people," he said.

Amadi explained that the School had instituted legal proceedings, but the matter had twice failed to come up for hearing because of the court's busy schedule and the priority given to pre-election cases.

According to him, the organisation intends to amend its prayers on Dec. 10 to specifically seek an order invalidating the amendment, which has now received the necessary legislative approvals and presidential assent.

Amadi said the organisation was also pursuing a separate case seeking a general judicial pronouncement compelling the national assembly to comply with constitutional procedures in future amendments.

He criticised opposition political parties and elected representatives for failing to challenge the process in court in spite of their responsibility to defend constitutional provisions.

"I blame the opposition and those elected to represent their constituencies who stay silent because they do not want to be targetted," he said.

Amadi, however, clarified that the legal challenge was not opposition to the establishment of state police, noting that the School had participated in discussions on police decentralisation for several years.

He said he was "not a fan of state police or federal police", arguing that the fundamental challenge was the politicisation of policing in the country.

"Neither the president nor the governor should control police operations. Policing should be a professional responsibility, not an instrument of political authority," he said.

He advocated a policing structure comprising federal, state and local government formations, with clearly defined responsibilities and operational independence.

Amadi also cautioned against rushing the implementation of state police, citing unresolved questions surrounding funding, recruitment, training, infrastructure and the future of existing federal police personnel.

He said the division of responsibilities between federal and state police formations would also require careful consideration to avoid institutional conflicts.



PRAYERS:
R-L Deputy Governor of Edo State, Dennis Idahosa, Governor Monday Okpebholo and other members of his cabinet receiving prayers at winners Chapel Church, Sapele road to mark the second year anniversary.

2027: Group says political differences must never become justification for violence

ABUJA

The Tinubu Movement for Sustainable Governance Foundation (TMS), a political pressure group, has said that political differences must never become a justification for violence ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Malam Kashifu Abdullahi, Founder, Chairman of the Board of Trustees (BoT) and National Coordinator of TMS, said this on Friday in Abuja at the opening of the foundation's National Secretariat.

He also unveiled the foundation's plans to transform into a sustainable national institution, dedicated to policy education, youth entrepreneurship, civic engagement and the documentation of President Bola Tinubu's governance legacy.

He explained that the new national secretariat would serve as a centre for research, civic engagement, youth empowerment and the documentation of policies and institutions shaping Nigeria's development.

"Today, we are not merely opening an office, we are opening a new chapter in our responsibility to Nigeria," said the foundation's National Coordinator, who is also known as Tinubu Must Stay.

He reaffirmed the foundation's guiding philosophy, which he said was "Continuity of Policies, Stability of Institutions and Sustainability of Development."

He expressed concern over reports of political intimidation, attacks on political gatherings and inflammatory public rhetoric.

He also condemned political thuggery and violence, irrespective of the individuals or political organisations involved, and urged security agencies to investigate reported incidents impartially.

"Political differences must never become a justification for violence. No political ambition is worth the life of an innocent Nigerian," he warned.

He called on political parties, civil society organisations, the media and security institutions to promote peaceful democratic participation, accurate information and respect for opposing political views.

Abdullahi also urged TMS members to reject intimidation, misinformation and other conduct capable of undermining national stability.

He maintained that TMS was determined to evolve beyond its immediate political identity into an institution capable of contributing to national development long after the 2027 general elections.

He explained that although the movement openly supports President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, it would encourage evidence-based assessment of government policies, including their implementation, challenges and socioeconomic consequences.

He acknowledged that the Tinubu-led administration's economic reforms, particularly changes to petrol subsidies, foreign exchange management and fiscal policies, had generated differing public reactions.

Anambra City Boy Movement threatens mass defection over leadership crisis

ANAMBRA

The City Boy Movement (CBM), Anambra State Chapter, has threatened mass defection from the All Progressives Congress (APC) over an unresolved leadership crisis.

The State Secretary of CBM, Dr Wilson Ekwerekwu, issued the warning in a protest letter addressed to the movement's national leadership and made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Friday.

Ekwerekwu, who is also the Leader of the Coalition of Igbo Youth Leaders in South-East Nigeria, called for urgent intervention over the alleged imposition of parallel executives in the state ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He warned that failure to resolve the crisis could prompt him and other aggrieved members to reconsider their membership of the movement and allegiance to the APC.

"Aggrieved CBM executives and political followers sharing these concerns are equally considering their continued participation in the movement and allegiance to the APC," he said.

Ekwerekwu urged the national leadership to clarify the recognised leadership structure in Anambra and explain the basis for introducing new executives without adequate consultation with existing state leaders.

He also called for an urgent reconciliation involving affected executives and a framework to promote inclusion and prevent parallel leadership arrangements.

Other demands included clear communication on the movement's strategic direction, mobilisation plans and expectations of state executives ahead of the 2027 elections.

"Let me be unequivocal: this situation cannot continue indefinitely," he said.

Ekwerekwu said members joined the movement with commitment, political networks and grassroots mobilisation capacity, rather than merely seeking leadership positions.

"We are asking for leadership, not favours; consultation, not imposition; and inclusion, not exclusion," he said.

FCT traders, artisans back Tinubu's 2027 re-election bid

ABUJA

The Amalgamation of Market Associations in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) says the re-election of President Bola Tinubu is in the interest of FCT residents and Nigerians generally.

The Chairman, Chief Raphael Okorie stated this while speaking with newsmen on Saturday in Abuja.

Okorie said the group, with over 300,000 members across the territory, would work with Mr Nyesom Wike, the FCT Minister, to ensure Tinubu's victory in the 2027 presidential election.

He assured that with unity of purpose, traders and artisans in the FCT would deliver no fewer than 200,000 votes to support the president's re-election bid.

According to him, the decision to support Tinubu's re-election stems from experience, based on what their eyes have seen and what their pockets have felt.

"We are not politicians. We are people who wake up before dawn, open our shops, light our fire and carry our wares to the market.

"The mobilisation will begin immediately. We will go from person to person and house to house. We will make sure every member collects a Permanent Voter Card (PVC) and we will make sure every member comes out to vote.

Petroleum authority, NLNG, prioritise increased gas supply to reduce cooking gas prices

BONNY

The Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) says increased domestic gas supply and improved distribution would help reduce cooking gas prices and strengthen Nigeria's energy security.

The Authority Chief Executive (ACE), Mr. Rabiu A. Umar, said this during his visit to the Nigeria LNG Ltd. (NLNG) plant and Train 7 project site in Bonny on Saturday.

Umar said gas penetration, energy security and operational efficiency were among the authority's major priorities.

He stated that the priorities aligned with President Bola Tinubu's agenda to deepen gas utilisation, improve access to natural gas and expand infrastructure across the country.

The chief executive said the authority was committed to ensuring adequate availability of cooking gas and natural gas, particularly in underserved areas, through infrastructure development and increased supply.

He cited the ongoing Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) gas pipeline project as part of efforts to expand gas infrastructure and extend supply to more locations.

The ACE said cooking gas prices had started declining by between N300 and N400 per kilogramme following increased supply and interventions to address distribution challenges.

NEWS

Ekpeson urges youths to fight drug abuse, promote peace during festive season

AGENEBODE

Lamai Cassius

The Executive Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Council and Chairman of ALGON, Edo State, Rt. Hon. Sunny Ekpetika Ekpeson, has urged members of the National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) to stand firm in the fight against drug abuse, which is destroying the dreams of many young people in the local government.

Hon. Ekpeson stated this when the NYCN, Etsako East chapter, paid him a courtesy visit in his office at the council secretariat, Agenebode.

While appreciating them for the visit, he urged them to always be honest in whatever they do and to live in peace within themselves and their communities, as they are the leaders of tomorrow.

He specially appealed to them, who are the strength and future of Etsako East, to take ownership of the security of their respective communities before, during and after the festive season.

"Do not allow yourselves to be used as instruments of violence, cultism, drug abuse or any act that can destroy the peace we are enjoying. Instead, be vigilant, be your brother's keeper, report any suspicious movement to the appropriate authorities, and work hand in hand with our traditional rulers, security agencies and community leaders to ensure that everyone celebrates in peace," he said.

"As we welcome our sons and daughters home for the festivities, let us show love, unity and responsibility. Celebrate with moderation, respect the law, protect lives and property, and ensure that no community within the local government records any ugly incident. The peace of our land is in our hands, and I am confident that our youths will rise to this responsibility and make us proud," he concluded.

The Chairman assured them of his support, promising that his office will always remain open for positive collaboration, and encouraged them to keep working with his administration to move Etsako East forward.

Earlier in his speech, the Coordinator, Com. Abdul-Rahman Ozekhome, said they were in the office to officially congratulate the Chairman on his outstanding victory in the last Local Government Election and his inauguration as the substantive Executive Chairman of Etsako East.

Com. Ozekhome told the Chairman that the Youth Council has planned a grassroots campaign to enlighten and rescue the youths of Etsako East from the deadly grip of illicit drugs, a menace that has sadly affected many young people across the three zones of the local government, from Okpella to Ibie and Agenebode.

According to him, "For the NYCN, this fight is personal, as we are ready to take the message of hope to every street, school and community."

Other members of the delegation were the Patron, Elder Peter Odiaka; the Secretary of the Council, Com. Amb. Abass Egbezemogie Yunusah, among others.

The highpoint of the visit was the presentation of a beautiful picture portrait of the Chairman.



INAUGURATION:
From left: Leader, Tinubu Movement for Sustainable Governance Foundation (TMSGF), Baba Alhassan Dantata; member of the TMSGF, Sulaiman Hashim; Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)/Chairman Board of Trustees and National Coordinator of TMSGF, Kashifu Abdullahi; another member of TMSGF, Suleiman Hashim and a member of the Board of Trustees, Tinubu Movement for Sustainable Governance Foundation (TMSGF), Sanusi Musa, during the inauguration of the TMSGF Headquarters in Abuja, at the weekend.

How my wife left government house, says Kano governor

KANO

Kano State Governor, Abba Yusuf, has narrated how his wife, Zainab, allegedly left the Government House and subsequently filed for divorce at an Abuja court.

Yusuf gave the account in an interview with the BBC Hausa service aired on Sunday, where he spoke about the breakdown of his marriage to Zainab, a niece of his former political mentor and ex-governor of Kano State, Rabiu Kwankwaso.

The governor said the couple had been married for about 20 years and had children together before the relationship deteriorated.

"This woman, Zainab, is the daughter of his (Kwankwaso's) elder brother. He previously married her off to someone, though that marriage did not last long. After that, God brought us together, and I married her. We got married about 20 years ago, and we have children.

"Many things happened, to the point where her belongings were packed and she was taken away from my house, and through it all, I remained patient and did not speak out," Yusuf said.

He added that he had assured their children that their mother would return home.

The governor, however, said she was surprised when she allegedly encouraged to take the matter to court in Abuja rather than Kano.

"Suddenly, she dragged me to court, a court in Abuja, not even in Kano," he said.

Yusuf described the situation as unpleasant, adding that he had evidence and detailed information about how his wife was taken away but would not disclose the circumstances publicly.

Asked why he decided to speak about the matter, the governor denied politicising the family dispute.

"I am not the one who politicised it. If this was done to you, how would you feel?" he asked.

He further explained: "To have your wife's belongings packed without your knowledge, for her to be taken away and kept elsewhere without your knowledge, taken to someone else's house without your knowledge, and then suddenly you hear that she is the one who has sued you in court."

The governor said the matter was still being examined and expressed hope that a resolution could be reached.

The interview comes amid the divorce proceedings between Yusuf and Zainab at the Upper Area Court in the Gudu District of Abuja.

The case, marked CV/97/26, was adjourned until December 15 after the Kano State Commissioner for Information, Sanusi Bature, who represented the governor, requested more time to brief his principal on the court processes.

Zainab reportedly filed the suit seeking the dissolution of their marriage, which began in 2006 and produced six children.

Olumole assures NIMC of support for NIN registration in Akoko-Edo

IGARRA

Lamai Cassius

The Executive Chairman of Akoko-Edo Local Government Council, Hon. Robert Akande Olumole, has expressed his administration's commitment and support to the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) team carrying out its registration exercise in the local government.

The Chairman stated this when the Edo State team of NIMC paid him a courtesy visit in his office at Igarra, as part of its two-day ward-based National Identification Number (NIN) registration and sensitisation exercise across the ten wards of the local government area.

Hon. Olumole appreciated the NIMC team for bringing the initiative to Akoko-Edo and assured them of the council's support in every possible way to ensure the successful implementation of the exercise across all the ten wards.

Speaking during the visit, the leader of the team, Mrs. Izevbigie Fatima, explained that the exercise is aimed at bringing NIN registration closer to the grassroots and creating awareness among residents about the importance of obtaining their National Identification Number.

She further emphasised that NIN registration is now open to children, with no age barrier, encouraging parents and guardians to take advantage of the exercise to register their children.

The NIMC leader expressed appreciation to the Chairman for the warm reception and his commitment towards ensuring the success of the registration and sensitisation programme in the local government council.

Other members of the team are Ogbodo Sunday, Eraga Uchenna and Agboebina Christian.

Council boss commissions six classrooms, others, at Othame primary school

AGENEBODE

Lamai Cassius

The Executive Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Council, Rt. Hon. Sunny Ekpetika Ekpeson, has commissioned six fully furnished classrooms, a Headmaster's office and four modern toilet facilities at Usagbe Primary School, Othame community.

The Chairman, who was represented by the Secretary to the Local Government, Dr. Samuel Oshiole Enaboakpe, said the project was part of his administration's commitment to rebuilding basic education and restoring dignity to learning across Etsako East.

The Chairman recalled that the old school building was blown off by wind, leaving pupils to learn under very harsh and unsafe conditions.

"Today, that sad story has changed. The Chairman heard the cry of this community and acted swiftly. What we are commissioning today is not just classrooms, but hope restored to the children of Othame," he said.

He disclosed that the six classrooms were fully furnished with desks, chairs, whiteboards and other learning materials, while the Headmaster's office and the four modern toilet facilities were built to standard to ensure effective administration, comfort and hygiene for pupils and teachers.

He commended the Executive Governor of Edo State, His Excellency, Senator Monday Okpebholo, for his unwavering support to local governments and for creating an enabling environment for grassroots development across the State.

He said the achievement at Othame was a clear reflection of the Governor's vision for practical governance and people-oriented leadership.

He urged the pupils to take their studies seriously and charged parents, teachers and the community to take ownership of the facilities and protect them from vandalism.

In their separate remarks, the Village Head of Othame, Chief Aba Omogbemhe, and the Headmistress of Usagbe Primary School, Mrs. Kate Aigbotsua, expressed profound gratitude to the Chairman for coming to their rescue, describing the intervention as timely and the first of its kind in the history of the community.

They noted that before the intervention, pupils were exposed to rain and sun, and prayed for God's continued guidance for the Chairman and the Governor.

They stressed that this is not just blocks and cement, but a solid and beautiful gift that will give our pupils a better and comfortable environment to learn, and give our teachers a better and dignified place to teach and mould the leaders of tomorrow.

NEWS

Tinubu pledges 50,000 hostel beds in federal tertiary institutions

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has pledged to provide 50,000 additional hostel bed spaces across Federal tertiary institutions by the end of 2027 to address accommodation shortages in Nigerian universities.

He made the pledge during the commissioning of Block E of the College of Medicine Students' Hostel, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, on Saturday.

The president, who was represented by the Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, said the project was part of the N400 billion Student Hostels Programme, to be implemented through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund and private-sector partnerships.

Tinubu said, "My administration will deliver 50,000 new bed spaces across federal tertiary institutions by the end of 2027, through our N400 billion Student Hostels Programme. Our purpose is to give more students safe, decent accommodation that supports their education.

"The newly commissioned facility would accommodate 192 medical and dental students in 48 rooms across four floors, with each room designed for four occupants. The rooms have private toilets, showers and kitchenettes, alongside four reading rooms."

The president stressed that the college previously faced a shortage of 490 beds, representing 44.5 per cent of its accommodation requirement, following a 2020 directive by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria requiring clinical students to reside within the University College Hospital premises.

He noted that the shortage exposed students to security challenges and affected the institution's ability to utilise its admission quota fully.

Tinubu also said more than 36 universities had benefited from the Renewed Hope Energising Education Programme, with power installations ranging from 2.5 to 12 megawatts.

The president added that 20 Compressed Natural Gas conversion centres had been completed, while another 40 were expected by the end of 2028.

"Reliable power supports laboratories, libraries, hostels and the clinical facilities on which medical education depends," he said.

Earlier, the university's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Olapegba, described the commissioning as another milestone in efforts to improve accommodation for medical students.

He recalled that Blocks C and D, named after Philip Ozuah and T.Y. Danjuma, respectively, had also been commissioned as part of the initiative.

Olapegba thanked the Chagoury brothers — Gilbert and Ronald– for their contribution, saying, "Our expectation is that the improved learning environment will contribute to producing healthcare professionals distinguished by competence, integrity and a strong sense of national responsibility."

In his address, the Provost, College of Medicine, Prof. Temidayo Ogundiran, said the college accounted for about one-third of the university's institutional footprint, while its researchers generated approximately 80 per cent of the institution's grant income.

The provost commended the Federal Government's N110bn Special High Impact Intervention Project, launched in April 2025 to rehabilitate 18 medical schools across the six geopolitical zones through TETFund.

Ogundiran appealed for government support to construct a 1,000-seat student auditorium, expand the college's administrative building and complete hostel Blocks A and B.

The varsity don also disclosed that the college spent about N18 million monthly on diesel and electricity bills, describing the cost as unsustainable.

"The college currently spends about N18m monthly on diesel and as payment to IBEDC for electric power supply. This expenditure is unsustainable and is placing severe pressure on our operations."



GROUND OPENING:
Vice President Kashim Shettima (M), cutting a tape, during the ground opening of the Ashley International Furniture Showroom in Lagos on Friday. With him are: Gov. Usman Ahmed Ododo of Kogi State (2nd L); Gov. Babajide Sanwo Olu of Lagos State (R) and others.

Ekpeson presents motorcycle to corps members, says Communication is backbone of development

AGENEBODE

Lamai Cassius

The Executive Chairman of Etsako East Local Government Council and Chairman of ALGON, Edo State, Rt. Hon. Sunny Ekpetika Ekpeson, has said that effective communication remains the backbone of development, and that no corps member serving in Etsako East should be hindered by the challenge of movement.

Rt. Hon. Ekpeson stated this during the presentation of a new motorcycle to corps members serving in the local government at the council secretariat, Agenebode. He stressed that his administration remains firmly committed to supporting everyone contributing to the growth and progress of Etsako East.

The Chairman, who was represented by the former Chief of Staff to the Chairman, High Chief Emma Bello, urged the corps members to make use of the motorcycle judiciously and for the purpose it was given.

"I urge you to use this motorcycle well by maintaining it as your personal property so that others coming after you can as well use it. Don't destroy it because you have only one year to serve in the local government," he warned.

He said the motorcycle will ease their movement to places they wish to go, helping the corps members to reach their colleagues, share information faster, and carry out their duties with greater ease and confidence.

Speaking during the presentation, the Corps Liaison Officer (CLO), Mr. Simon John, together with the CDS President, Miss Kikene Miracle, and other corps members, could not hide their joy as they poured encomiums on the Chairman.

They described the gesture as thoughtful, timely and truly life-changing, saying it will greatly boost their mobility, strengthen their coordination, and inspire them to serve Etsako East with even greater passion and dedication.

They said the Chairman does not just lead with words, but with action, compassion and an unwavering commitment to the welfare of those serving his people.

Benue APC crisis: Alia, Akume attend peace meeting in Abuja

MAKURDI

Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia, has met with key stakeholders of the All Progressives Congress in Abuja as part of efforts to reconcile and strengthen unity within the party in the state.

Alia disclosed this in a statement on Saturday, saying the meeting was convened by the North-Central Presidential Reconciliation Committee, chaired by former Katsina State Governor, Senator Ibrahim Shema.

The meeting, which lasted about two hours, was attended by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia, Senator George Akume and others.

The governor thanked Shema and members of the committee for bringing the party leaders together, noting that reconciliation required willingness among members to listen, speak frankly and work together despite their differences.

"I thank Sen. Shema and his committee for bringing us together. Reconciliation takes a willingness to listen, to speak frankly and to keep working together even where differences remain," he said.

Alia reaffirmed his commitment to engaging with APC leaders and stakeholders to promote unity within the party, while ensuring that peace, security and development remained central to his administration.

"My commitment is clear. I will continue to engage with our leaders and stakeholders in the interest of a united APC, while keeping the peace, security and development of Benue State at the centre of my work," he added.

He said the responsibility entrusted to the government by the people of Benue should guide the actions of political leaders and stakeholders.

"The people of Benue entrusted us with the responsibility to serve, and that responsibility must continue to guide us," the governor said.

The meeting comes amid a prolonged leadership crisis in the Benue APC, which has divided the party into factions loyal to Alia and Akume. The disagreement, which dates back to shortly after Alia assumed office in 2023, has centred on control of the party's structures and the influence of key stakeholders in the state.

The crisis has led to the emergence of parallel party executives, disagreements over party congresses and repeated reconciliation efforts. In November, Alia blamed the divisions on his refusal to allow some party chieftains access to state funds for personal interests, while Akume's loyalists have accused the governor of sidelining established party leaders.

Previous peace efforts have also encountered disagreements, including a May reconciliation meeting over automatic tickets for elected APC officials.

Don't take sides, Bishop Okonkwo tells Fountain of Life Church members

LAGOS

The founder of The Redeemed Evangelical Mission, Bishop Mike Okonkwo, on Sunday took the pulpit at The Fountain of Life Church, Ilupeju, Lagos, where he urged members not to take sides in the ongoing leadership crisis involving Pastor Jimmy Odukoya and his sister, Tolu.

Okonkwo, who made a surprise appearance at the church, said he was prompted by the Holy Spirit to visit and bless the congregation amid the controversy that has rocked the church in the past two weeks.

"I have not slept since 1.30 am. The Holy Spirit said to me, son, go to the Fountain and bless them. That's why I am here," he said.

Recalling the death of the church's founder, Pastor Taiwo Odukoya, Okonkwo described the period as traumatic, saying the late cleric's legacy must be preserved.

He said, "And the only thing is that his legacy must continue. And I told you that day that Fountain will never die."

The bishop, who said the church had been battered by social media discussions in the past one or two weeks, noted that he could not separate himself from the church because of the covenant he believed God had established.

"You can't separate me from Fountain. It's not possible. Because it is a covenant that God himself created by himself. So what happens to Fountain affects me," he said.

Preaching on the topic, "The Glory of the Church", Okonkwo urged members to remember that the church belonged to God and was not a human institution or political party.

He referenced biblical passages, including Jonah 2:8, 2 Corinthians 2:14, 1 Peter 1:18, Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14, to emphasise the price paid for the redemption of the church.

Addressing the leadership dispute, he told members not to identify with either of the two sides but to remain committed to God.

"You are not for Tolu or for Jimmy. You are for God. None of them died for you," he said.

He also warned members against becoming instruments of division in the church.

"We must be careful so that none of us will be an instrument of destroying the church of Christ," he said.

ASUP embarks on strike in Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti polytechnics over allowances

By Kebonkwu Ruth

IBADAN

The Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics, ASUP, Zone C, has ordered its members in state-owned polytechnics in Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Ekiti states to embark on an industrial strike over unpaid academic allowances.

The union said the strike took effect from Monday, November 16, 2026, after a 15-day ultimatum issued to the state governments expired.

The Zonal Coordinator, Adekunle Masopa, disclosed this on Thursday at a press conference at the ASUP Secretariat, The Polytechnic, Ibadan.

He said the action was over the failure to implement the Consolidated Academic Tools Allowance, CATA, and Earned Academic Allowance, EAA.

Masopa said while the Federal Government had started paying CATA and EAA to academic staff in federal institutions on the CONPCASS salary structure, state governments in the zone, except Ondo State, had failed to do the same.

According to the union, the Federal Government concluded the renegotiation of the 2009/2010 agreement with ASUP in April 2026 under the Yayale Ahmed-led committee.

The negotiation produced the 2025/2026 FGN/ASUP Agreement, with implementation to take effect from January 1, 2026.

"However, our members in state-owned polytechnics and colleges of technology have not been considered after 10 months despite performing the same duties and facing the same economic hardship," Masopa said.

He said the union wrote to all the state governors on August 10, requesting implementation of the agreement, and sent a reminder on September 21.

Following the lack of response, he said ASUP resolved at its 118th National Executive Council meeting held in Abuja between October 23 and 24, 2026, to issue a 15-day ultimatum to defaulting state governments.

The ultimatum elapsed on Tuesday, November 10, 2026.

ASUP commended the Ondo State Government for being the first and only state in the zone to implement the 2025/2026 agreement, while it criticised the governments of Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Ekiti for their silence.

The union listed its core demands as the immediate implementation of CATA and EAA for academic staff in state-owned polytechnics, colleges of technology and monotechnics, and payment of accrued arrears from January 1, 2026, to date.



TRAINING:
Cross Section of participants, during the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Oyo State Council and Tiktok training for 150 journalists in Ibadan on Friday.

Nigerian Army honours 14 armour corps retired generals

BAUCHI

The Nigerian Army has honoured Lt.-Gen. AB Ibrahim and 13 other senior officers who retired from service.

Ibrahim and 13 other officers, including seven Major Generals and six Brigadier Generals exited the army on Saturday during a pulling-out parade at the Nigerian Army Armoured Corps (NAAC), Obienu Barracks, Bauchi.

The army honoured the retired officers in recognition of their distinguished services, sacrifices and invaluable contributions to the Nigerian Army and the nation.

The officers are Major Generals MS Ahmed; OC Ajunwa, JO Ochai, IS Ali, SG Muhammed and IM Jallo.

Others are Brigadier Generals S Ahmadu; VO Ita, UM Aliyu, AG Nura, T Isa, EB Barkins and AM Usman.

The army authorities described the pulling-out parade as a military tradition symbolising honour, institutional appreciation and continuity.

It said the event also celebrated the enduring legacies of the retiring officers and their contributions to the growth and operational development of the corps.

Also Ibrahim said the ceremony was solemn and symbolic in upholding long lasting military tradition, and strengthening esprit de corps in the army.

He said the armoured corps had provided opportunities for the retired officers to served the army and the country with dedication, commitment, loyalty and professionalism during their service years.

"NAAC is not just a branch of the Nigerian Army but a way of life. It teaches leadership, sharpness, toughness and ability to make difficult decisions," he said.

Ibrahim enjoined serving officers to be disciplined, professional, curious and committed by embracing innovations, values and code of ethics.

Moniepoint MfB transaction volume hits 1trn daily —CEO

ABUJA

Babatunde Olofin, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Moniepoint Microfinance Bank says transaction volume of the bank has hit one trillion naira daily.

Olofin said this at the unveiling of the bank's North Central office in Abuja on Friday.

He said the bank also served a customer base of about 21 million and provided more than one million jobs in the country.

"Moniepoint is proudly Nigerian, owned by Nigeria and managed by Nigerians.

"With our solid technologies and tailored-made products for businesses in Nigeria and retail customers as well, we are the bank to reckon with," he said.

The CEO said that the bank might be considering upgrade to a full-fledged commercial bank if the business required so.

Fielding questions from newsmen, Edidiong Uwemakpan, the Vice-President Corporate Affairs of the bank, said the bank had been supporting agricultural activities to impact households.

"Moniepoint has always been hyper local and if you look at how we scaled our business, we understood how much Nigerians wanted to be able to interact with humans.

"From the very beginning, we built this distribution network of people that can be trusted, I think this is just an extension of our hyper-local strategy, getting closer to people," she said.

NAN reports that the bank's new office is located at Daresaleem Street, Wuse 2, Abuja.

3.1m Nigerians jostle for 10-100 Dangote Refinery shares

Kebonkwu Ruth

LAGOS

More than 3.1 million Nigerians applied for between 10 and 100 shares in the Dangote Refinery Initial Public Offering, IPO, making small investors the biggest group in the offer.

The breakdown of the subscription shows that 3,189,232 applicants fell in the 10-100 share category, representing 84.4 per cent of the total 3,779,362 subscribers.

Despite being more than four-fifths of all applicants, the group accounted for just 62,259,260 shares, representing 0.56 per cent of the total 11.15 billion shares subscribed for.

At the offer price of N525 per share, their investment ranged from N5,250 to N52,500.

The next largest group comprised 404,884 applicants who subscribed for between 101 and 1,000 shares. They represented 10.7 per cent of subscribers and accounted for 178,452,970 shares.

Another 158,780 applicants, representing 4.2 per cent, fell within the 1,001 to 10,000 share range, with subscriptions totalling 563,661,520 shares.

In total, investors applied for 11,146,145,336 shares valued at about N5.852 trillion, almost three times the N2.15 trillion the company set out to raise from 4.1 billion shares.

A total of 5.196 billion shares were allotted, representing 46.62 per cent of the shares subscribed for.

The allotment summary shows 100 per cent allotment for applicants from 10 shares up to 10 million shares.

Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals FZE had offered the shares to give ordinary Nigerians and Africans a stake in Africa's largest refinery.

The refinery, located in Lekki, Lagos, can process 650,000 barrels of crude oil per day.

NGO, PFN launch initiative to empower 100,000 entrepreneurs

LAGOS

The Faith Economic Empowerment Programme (FEEP), in collaboration with the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), has unveiled an investment and empowerment initiative targeting at least 100,000 entrepreneurs across different sectors.

NAN reports that the initiative inaugurated in Lagos on Saturday was designed to promote self-reliance, wealth creation, job generation and national economic growth.

It aims to harness the economic potential and resources within the Christian community while connecting Nigerian entrepreneurs with international business partners, investment opportunities and funding support.

Under its pilot scheme in Lagos, the foundation plans to recruit 20 participants from every participating church for specialised business training and capacity development.

The programme is designed to identify individuals with business interests and entrepreneurial passion and equip them with skills to establish and manage sustainable enterprises.

According to the organisers, selected participants will receive training from professional business portfolio managers in bookkeeping, business management, investment development and mortgage-related opportunities.

The trainees will also undergo certification and due diligence processes before being connected to potential international grants, business partners and other investment opportunities.

The initiative is expected to help participants establish businesses and create additional employment opportunities.

The event, attended by church leaders, diaspora partners, investment managers and business mentors, had the theme: "Unlocking the Economic Power of the Church."

Speaking at the event, the guest speaker, Dr Olumide Emmanuel, urged the Church to move beyond religious activities and embrace practical Christianity.

Olumide said this would enable churches to address the social and economic challenges confronting their members.

He urged churches to embrace collective responsibility by pooling their resources towards wealth creation, employment generation and improved living conditions.

"Let us practise our faith and move from religion to a more practical Christianity by being one another's keeper," he said.

He called for a shift from denominational divisions towards the collective values and resource-sharing practices of the early Church.

NEWS

FOREIGN

Three killed and dozens missing after fire at Indonesian factory

At least three people have been killed and 36 are still missing after a fire at a confectionary factory in western Java on Saturday.

Firefighters were still tackling some flames on Sunday, while rescuers searched for the missing in parts of the damaged building where workers were believed to be trapped.

Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency said on Sunday 15 survivors had been located, and four others taken to hospital and a local clinic with undisclosed injuries.

The factory is in Serang district, Banten province, about 50km (31km) west of Jakarta. Authorities have not yet determined the fire's cause.

Banten Governor, Andra Soni, told media about 60 people were believed to be inside the factory when it caught fire on Saturday evening.

"All members of the joint SAR team are making every effort to locate the missing victims while prioritising the safety of personnel on the ground," the rescue agency said.

Relatives of the missing workers had gathered outside the factory waiting for updates, according to local broadcasts cited by AFP.

Firefighters had been called to the building at 16:30 local time (09:30 GMT) on Saturday - but it was already engulfed in flames, broadcaster Kompas TV reported, citing fire official Tubugas Machfudz.

"When we arrived (on location)... a large area was already on fire. So we could not determine whether the company's protection system was functioning properly or not," he said.

The factory is owned by PT Fonusa Agung Mulia, according to search and rescue authorities.

On LinkedIn the company describes itself as a subsidiary of UNIFAM, one of Indonesia's largest food and beverage companies.



FIREFIGHTERS AT FACTORY:
Fire at a confectionary factory in Western Java

Zelensky says Crimean Bridge strikes 'fair response' as he meets UK's Streeting

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has justified Kyiv's repeated attacks on a critical bridge linking Russia to occupied Crimea, calling it a "fair response" to 109 separate Russian attacks on bridges in Ukraine.

In comments to the BBC in Kyiv, Zelensky said the intense attacks on Ukraine by Russia that have followed the strikes on the Crimean Bridge were only a "signal that Vladimir Putin does not want to stop. He wants a reason to escalate".

He rejected the claim by the Russian president that the bridge - which links Russia to the peninsula it illegally annexed from Ukraine - was "exclusively civilian" in use.

"There are facts, not just the words of Putin. We can see," he said.

The Ukrainian president pointed to images online of tanks and other Russian military hardware using the route from Russia into occupied Crimea as a supply line and for logistics.

"If Putin used the internet, he could see that."

The Ukrainian president added that Russia had carried out attacks with missiles and drones on bridges in Ukraine.

This week's combined missile-and-drone strikes by Ukrainian forces destroyed the central road section of the Crimean Bridge, collapsing part of it together with one of the two support arches into the sea and rendering the structure unusable for road traffic.

Russian attacks on Ukraine continued on Friday evening and overnight: a seven-year-old boy was killed in missile and drone strikes on Zelensky's hometown of Kryvyi Rih in the central Dnipropetrovsk region. Local officials say he had been in a playground at the time.

A 20-year-old female medic was also killed. A local official added that when rescuers rushed to the scene, the same site was targeted again with jet powered drones. Another 58 people were injured in the city.

Ukraine's state emergency service DSNS said 11 people were also injured in the north-eastern Kharkiv region, and one person in Rivne, in the north-west.

Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Zelensky was speaking ahead of a meeting in Kyiv with UK Defence Secretary Wes Streeting, who told the Ukrainian president he was here to show that Europe was united in its support.

"The more Putin tries to divide us, the more resolute we become," Streeting said.

He said that Russian missiles hitting Poland on Friday, during military exercises of the so-called Coalition of the Willing, was an "outrageous provocation".

The timing, Streeting said, seemed "more than a coincidence".

Asked by the BBC about Nato's response, he said the best way was to "do more for Ukraine" to defend itself against Putin who he called a "cold-blooded killer".

Streeting's description of Putin chimed with the comments made earlier by Zelensky, who described the Kremlin leader a "killer". This was done in response to US President Donald Trump referring this week to Putin as his "friend".

Streeting's visit to Kyiv came after European leaders meeting in Berlin on Thursday alongside US envoys said they were ready for negotiations with Moscow on ending the war in Ukraine.

ANC fights to keep control of South Africa's key cities after election setback

The party that has dominated South Africa for more than 30 years is in a race against time to secure power-sharing deals in most of the country's cities after a massive drop in its support in this month's local elections.

The African National Congress (ANC) suffered its worst result since it came to power in 1994 when South Africa transitioned from the racist apartheid system to democracy.

It won a majority in just one of the country's nine provinces, Limpopo, down from six in the last elections. It won the most votes in just two of the country's eight cities, compared with six in 2021.

At the national level, the ANC is sharing power with its long-time rival, the Democratic Alliance (DA), but while there is still no official announcement, it appears that ANC party officials do not want to replicate this at the local level.

Parties have until 27 November to negotiate and form local governments.

What happened in the local election?

While the ANC saw a massive decline in its support, it still got more votes than any other party, 31%, down from the 46% in the last local election.

But in the country's economic powerhouse, Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg and Pretoria, the picture is different. The pro-business DA got the most votes in both cities, as well as the province's other main region, Ekurhuleni.

Nationally, the party got 25% of the vote, up from 22% five years ago.

It also retained its majority in its power base of Cape Town, and got the most votes in Nelson Mandela Bay, where Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) is located.

The left-leaning uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) Party, led by former President Jacob Zuma, came third, with 10% of the vote. This is a repeat of its performance in the 2024 national election, when it came in third and became the official opposition after the DA joined the coalition government.

It emerged as the biggest party in KwaZulu-Natal province, which includes the port city of Durban, securing 34% of the vote. However, this leaves it reliant on agreeing a coalition with other parties.

The only party to secure an overall majority in a city was the DA in Cape Town.

Why is the ANC apparently choosing smaller parties over the DA?

The DA and ANC have had an uneasy alliance since they entered a coalition, along with eight other political parties, in 2024.

The two, long-standing rivals due to their opposing policies, were forced into an agreement after the ANC lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since the end of apartheid. This became known as the Government of National Unity (GNU).

Despite this, the two parties have continued to disagree on key issues, and both sides have threatened to rip up their power-sharing deal.

Ahead of the local elections, analysts predicted that the two parties could team up at municipal level, mirroring the national arrangement.

The ANC seems to have rejected this, with state broadcaster SABC reporting that most of the party's top leaders see an agreement with the DA as a last resort.

Instead, the party has been courting smaller parties to try and form councils in South Africa's cities.

In Gauteng, numerous reports point to an arrangement between the party and the anti-immigrant ActionSA, which emerged as the third largest party in the province with 17%, leaving it as a potential kingmaker.

The DA has also been trying to reach arrangements with smaller parties, and the ANC, but looks set to assume the opposition benches at least in Gauteng.

ActionSA is unlikely to work with the DA as they cannot agree on the mayoral candidates in Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Does this signal a breakdown in the relationship between the ANC and DA nationally?

It's too early to tell. Neither the ANC nor DA have spoken publicly about the future of their arrangement on a national level amid the ongoing coalition talks but the ANC's reluctance to partner with the DA in key cities points to continued strain between the two.

While the GNU has remained intact since it was formed in 2024, there have been those in the ANC who have been angered by what they view as the DA's dual role as opposition and partner in the coalition government and have pushed for the arrangement to end.

A party insider told the Daily Maverick on Sunday that a nationwide agreement to work with the DA at municipal level "was overwhelmingly rejected" at a meeting held by ANC members.

While some experts predict that the DA may have to consider its position in the coalition government given the ANC's stance, political analyst Andre Duvenhage told the BBC there was a possibility that "a lot of asymmetrical coalitions" could emerge - parties working together in one area and being in opposition elsewhere.

Around 700,000 displaced by volatile conflict in southern Ethiopia

British NGO Islamic Relief says fighting sparked by a dispute over who controls the southern town of Moyale on Ethiopia's border with Kenya has seen around 700,000 people displaced from their homes.

It said on Thursday that clashes between members of the Oromo and Ethiopian Somali communities began in late October.

Fighting involving heavy weaponry has now reportedly spread up to 300 kilometres from the town along the Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopian border.

"This is a volatile conflict driven by two ethnic groups competing for land and wealth in the borders of Ethiopia," said Kedir Musema Hameza, the head of Islamic Relief's Ethiopia programme.

The NGO said there has been widespread destruction of homes, businesses, and petrol stations, as well as disruption of essential services, including health, water, and sanitation.

It said access to the locations has been challenging and warns of a deepening humanitarian crisis.

Approximately 50,000 people have fled into Kenya placing additional pressure on local services and host communities.

The government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who hails from the Oromia region, has not commented on the violence.

The borders between the country's regions, set by the 1995 constitution, have been a frequent source of conflict in Ethiopia which currently faces multiple internal conflicts.

Just weeks ago, fighting erupted in Tigray, hundreds of kilometres to the north, when rebels and government forces clashed.

There have also been long-running insurgencies in the most populous regions of Amhara and Oromia that have displaced hundreds of thousands.

Mexican drug lord on FBI's 10 most wanted list arrested in shoot-out

A Mexican drug lord who was on the FBI's 10 most wanted list has been arrested following a shoot-out with Mexican authorities.

Fausto Isidro "Chapo Isidro" Meza Flores and seven others were detained by Mexican special forces in Guasave, Sinaloa on Friday, Mexico's defence secretariat said.

Seven suspects were killed in the operation, as were four members of the Mexican army who were travelling to reinforce security in Guasave, the secretariat added.

Meza Flores was wanted in Mexico on organised crime charges, while he has been accused of "flooding the US with fentanyl, cocaine, heroin and other deadly drugs" by the FBI. The US is seeking his extradition.

Mexico has stepped up efforts to tackle drug-related crime after coming under pressure from US President Donald Trump since he returned to the White House.

Meza Flores, the leader of the Meza Flores Organisation, also known as the Guasave Cartel, is thought to have been active in the drug trafficking trade since the 1990s but managed to evade authorities till now by maintaining a relatively low profile.

Using US intelligence on his whereabouts, Mexican special forces descended on his location using "stealth and surprise", establishing a perimeter to prevent him from escaping and reinforcements arriving, Mexico's defence secretariat said.

However, they "came under attack from gunfire and explosives" before entering the property and arresting Meza Flores, the secretariat continued.

Videos circulating online appear to show helicopters firing streams of bullets towards the ground in Guasave. Others appear to show people at a baseball stadium fleeing as they hear shooting sounds.

Eight people in total were arrested, including Meza Flores' second-in-command, who is also his cousin, and his brother-in-law, who is the group's financial operator, the secretariat added.

Authorities also said they had seized multiple weapons during the operation, including a grenade launcher, as well as drugs and cash.

The US Consulate General in the city of Hermosillo said it was "monitoring reports of ongoing security operations, armed clashes, road blockades, and vehicle fires that occurred overnight in Ahome, Guamúchil, Guasave, and Navolato" following the arrest of Meza-Flores.

It advised US citizens to remain alert for potential violence in the area and for residents to remain sheltered in place.

When Meza Flores was added to the FBI's most-wanted list in 2025, he was accused of "heinous crimes" including kidnapping, extortion and torture.

Then-acting FBI director Brian Driscoll said Meza Flores and his organisation had also unleashed a "scourge of illicit drugs" into the US via its southern border with Mexico.

He was initially charged with drug trafficking in the US in 2012 before being charged again in 2019.

The 44-year-old is alleged to have conspired to manufacture and distribute large quantities of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and marijuana between 2005 and 2019.

A number of vehicles were pictured burning on a highway near Los Mochis, Sinaloa, after Fausto Isidro "Chapo Idisro" Meza Flores was arrested

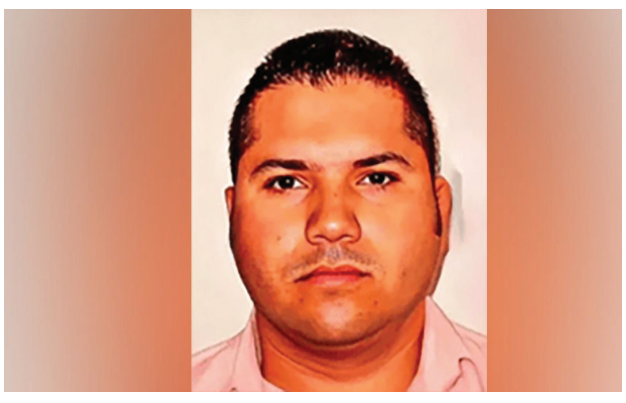
Meza Flores was originally a high-ranking member of the Beltrán Leyva Organization, but a split between rival factions led to a surge of violence and prompted him to establish his own cartel by 2013.

His organisation has also engaged in what US officials described as an "extremely violent turf war" with the Sinaloa Cartel, one of the most powerful drug trafficking gangs, which operates in the same region.

Meza Flores was added to the FBI's most-wanted list after Mexican authorities reportedly linked his cartel to 20 million fentanyl pills they seized in 2024.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has taken a tougher stance on the country's cartels in a bid to resist US intervention on Mexican soil. Mexico has welcomed closer collaboration but resisted US boots on the ground.

Trump made stemming the flow of drugs into the US across its southern border one of his key election pledges.



MEZA FLORES



SPARTA II SHIP:
Finland says work is continuing on the Sparta II ship on Sunday

Russia-bound ship attacked in Gulf of Finland

A Russian cargo vessel bound for the country's Baltic exclave Kaliningrad has been hit by a drone attack in the eastern Gulf of Finland, Russian and Finnish authorities say.

The ship - the Sparta II - caught on fire after the strike on Saturday morning, before drifting into Finnish waters. Finnish defence forces said Ukraine was likely behind the attack. Kyiv has yet to comment.

"War is spilling over into our immediate vicinity," Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo said. "Ukraine has the right to fight back against the aggressor."

Kaliningrad Governor Alexei Besprozvannykh said two drones had been used, based on preliminary information, and there was "no threat" to the territory's supplies.

The Sparta II was sanctioned by the US in 2022 and Ukraine earlier this year, and is run by a Russian company, according to the Ukrainian and US governments.

The company says on its website that it was established within the structure of Russia's defence ministry in 2011 and since 2015 has been operating within the military construction complex.

Finland's coast guard said it had been alerted to the attack at around 08:50 local time (06:50 GMT) on Saturday and that the cargo vessel had been located approximately 50km west of the island of Suursaari in the Gulf of Finland.

This prompted "temporary aviation and maritime restrictions" around the area, Finnish border officials said.

Shortly after the incident, Finland's defence ministry said a Russian helicopter was suspected of violating the country's airspace, potentially linked to "rescue or tracking operations".

A Russian rescue vessel approached the ship and was told by the crew that they did not need to be evacuated, Kaliningrad's governor wrote on Telegram, adding: "The crew is currently carrying out the necessary work and plans to continue on its way."

The Finnish Border Guard later said the crew had been evacuated to another Russian vessel that was now already en route to Russia. The Russian rescue vessel had remained at the location of the stricken ship.

It added that no environmental damage had been detected and that there was no danger to maritime traffic or people.

Kaliningrad is a Russian exclave that sits between Poland and Lithuania.

Defence Minister Antti Häkkänen said that the Finnish Border Guard were responsible for the investigation into the attack and were co-operating with other relevant authorities.

Nato has also been informed, the defence ministry said.

The Baltic Sea has become a flashpoint in the Russia-Ukraine war, triggered when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Ukraine has recently ramped up its long-range attacks against Russia beyond the front lines.

Earlier this month, a Ukrainian drone strike hit a Russian warship in the Gulf of Finland.

South Korea education minister resigns over exam cheating scandal

South Korea's Education Minister Choi Kyo-jin has resigned over an exam cheating scandal that shocked the nation.

He said he took full responsibility for the confusion caused by last-minute measures aimed at stopping AI-assisted cheating during Thursday's annual college entrance exam, known as Suneung.

A week ago, the top scorer in the national tax accountancy exam admitted using a mini-camera, mobile phone and AI tools. This prompted officials to act urgently to detect hidden devices, including sending emergency alerts to every single mobile phone in the country.

The Suneung takes up to nine hours to complete, and it plays a big role in career trajectories of millions of South Koreans.

"As the minister in charge, I believe I cannot escape criticism that we failed to prepare in advance," Choi was quoted as saying on Sunday by South Korea's Yonhap's news agency.

"Now that the exam has concluded, I feel a deep sense of responsibility and am offering my resignation," the minister added.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung - who has been calling for an overhaul of the current exam system - later accepted Choi's resignation.

The education ministry earlier said 111 candidates had been found with unauthorised smart devices during this year's Suneung, which was taken by about 500,000 students.

Concerns over academic dishonesty during the fiercely competitive exam had been brewing in recent weeks, after reports of candidates cheating with the help of AI devices.

These fears came to a boil last weekend, when Han Wonseok, the top tax accountancy exam scorer in April, admitted to cheating.

His confession came amid speculation over his unusually high score, with just one out of 160 questions wrong.

"I used a microcamera to photograph the test questions and sent them to an AI, then checked my answers on my smartphone to commit the cheating," the 34-year-old said in a video message.

This prompted the authorities to introduce urgent measures, with just days ahead of the Suneung.

This included sending nationwide emergency alerts on the exam day.

Three alerts were sent between 08:00 and 15:00 local time on Thursday, causing phones across the country to blare out in unison - even if they were on silent mode, and even if they belonged to tourists using data roaming.

The phones did not ring out if they were switched off or on airplane mode.

It was the first time that South Korea used its national disaster alert system to catch exam cheaters.

Candidates also had to cover up the buttons on their shirts and jackets to block any hidden cameras, and authorities conducted inspections of eyewear.

All this made even honest test takers paranoid.

Ahead of the Suneung, one high school senior told the Korea Times he was worried his horn-rimmed spectacles would be mistaken for smart glasses.

Another told Yonhap he usually wore glasses but made an effort to put on contact lenses for the Suneung to avoid raising suspicions.

SOUTH - SOUTH

Edo hits 2.8m voters ahead of 2027

KEBONKWU RUTH

BENIN CITY

The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, says Edo State now has 2.8 million registered voters ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The Edo State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Obo Effanga, disclosed this on Friday in Benin City.

He said the final figure would be released after the commission's national headquarters completes its clean-up exercise of the register.

INEC had earlier announced that 131,165 new voters were registered in Edo during the Continuous Voter Registration exercise, which ran from August 2025 to July 2026.

Giving an update on Permanent Voter Cards, PVCs, Effanga said 23,401 cards had been collected across the state since distribution began on October 9.

He said the figure comprised 6,319 old PVCs, 5,128 newly produced cards and 11,954 cards relating to voter transfers.

"The state currently has 2.8 million registered voters after the last registration exercise. However, the final figure would be released after the recent clean-up exercise by the national body," Effanga said.

He said PVCs for voters who registered in the first and second phases of the exercise were available for collection at INEC offices across the state's 18 local government areas.

On preparations for the forthcoming elections, Effanga said INEC would conduct a mock accreditation exercise on November 28 in 384 polling units across the state.

He explained that two polling units were selected from each of the state's 192 registration areas, also known as wards, for the exercise.

He said the exercise would test the commission's electoral technology and assess the readiness of its personnel ahead of the elections.

He added that the state office had submitted the list of proposed polling units to INEC headquarters for approval.

Effanga said the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, BVAS, would be deployed during the exercise to demonstrate voter accreditation, result capture and transmission to the INEC Result Viewing Portal, IReV.

He said INEC did not have enough permanent staff to cover the state's 4,519 polling units, making the recruitment of ad hoc personnel necessary.



INAUGURATION:
Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo addressing the All Progressives Congress APC supporters during the inauguration of the Edo State chapter of the PBAT Door-to-Door Campaign Movement in Benin city at the weekend.

Oborevwori mourns Bayelsa boat mishap victims, commiserates with Diri, bereaved families

AJUWA VICTOR

ASABA

Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has expressed deep sorrow over the boat mishap in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, which claimed lives and left several passengers missing.

Governor Oborevwori, in a condolence message to his Bayelsa State counterpart, Senator Douye Diri, extended his sympathies to the government and people of Bayelsa State, particularly the families of those who lost their loved ones in the tragedy.

The governor, in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Festus Ahon, described the incident as heartbreaking, especially as the victims were travelling to attend a burial ceremony in Ukubie community.

He said the tragedy was a painful loss not only to the affected families but also to the people of Bayelsa State and Niger Delta, assuring them of the solidarity and prayers of the government and people of Delta State.

Oborevwori said: "I am deeply saddened by the tragic boat accident in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. On behalf of the government and people of Delta State, I extend my heartfelt condolences to my brother governor, Senator Douye Diri, the government and people of Bayelsa State, and, most importantly, the families who lost their loved ones.

"This is a painful tragedy, made even more distressing by the fact that the victims were travelling to attend a burial ceremony. No family should have to endure such a devastating loss under these circumstances.

FIFA president hails Warri stadium remodelling

AJUWA VICTOR

WARRI

FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, applauded the Delta State Government's investment in the remodelling of the Warri City Stadium, describing the transformation as a significant commitment to football development and expressed optimism about the facility's potential to host major football events.

Infantino spoke during an inspection visit to the remodelled stadium in Warri, where he was accompanied by FIFA Secretary-General, Mattias Grafström, commended Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, for the investment, while expressing gratitude to the governor and other stakeholders for the warm reception accorded the FIFA delegation.

The FIFA President, who said he was delighted by the atmosphere and enthusiasm surrounding football in the state, noted that Nigeria, particularly Delta State, had a special place in the global football community because of its rich reservoir of talent and passion for the game.

Infantino particularly praised the recent triumph of Nigeria's U-17 women's national team at the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in Morocco, describing the achievement as a source of pride not only for Nigeria but also for Africa and the global football community.

The FIFA chief described the investment in the Warri City Stadium as fantastic, noting that modern sporting infrastructure was essential to nurturing talent, expanding participation and creating opportunities for future generations of footballers.

Expressing his personal excitement about the facility, Infantino said he looked forward to returning to the stadium to play football once the remaining work had been completed.

Oborevwori, Diri, Ododo, Kefas, Okowa, others celebrates Orodje

AJUWA VICTOR

DELTA

Orerokpe, the traditional headquarters of Okpe Kingdom in Delta State, was agog as governors, traditional rulers, political leaders and other prominent Nigerians gathered to celebrate the 20th coronation anniversary of the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom, His Royal Majesty, Major General Felix Mujakperuo (Rtd.), Orhue I.

The colourful ceremony, which held at the monarch's palace, was attended by Delta State Governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori; Bayelsa State Governor and Chairman of the occasion, Senator Douye Diri; Kogi State Governor, Alhaji Ahmed Usman Ododo; Taraba State Governor, Dr Agbu Kefas; and former Delta State Governor, Senator Ifeanyi Okowa.

Also present were the Deputy Governor of Delta State, Sir Monday Onyeme, a representative of the Chief of Army Staff, captains of industry, political leaders, traditional rulers from different parts of the country and other distinguished guests.

Congratulating the monarch on the milestone, Governor Oborevwori said the Orodje had distinguished himself both in military service and on the traditional throne.

He commended the monarch for his commitment to peace, stability and development in Okpe Kingdom, adding that his leadership had continued to strengthen the traditional institution and promote unity among his people.

The governor also acknowledged the support of the people and other stakeholders in the kingdom's development, urging Okpe's sons and daughters to remain united behind the monarch and contribute to its continued growth.

In his remarks, Governor Diri, who chaired the occasion, described traditional rulers as important pillars of society whose influence extends beyond their immediate communities.

He said the traditional institution deserved recognition and respect because of its role in maintaining peace, resolving disputes and promoting harmony at the grassroots.

Diri commended the Orodje for providing purposeful leadership in Okpe Kingdom, noting that the peace and stability maintained in traditional domains also created an enabling environment for government to implement development programmes.

In his address, the Orodje expressed gratitude to God for sustaining him for the last 20 years on the throne, while appreciating the people of Okpe Kingdom for their loyalty, confidence and support.

Reflecting on the history and standing of the kingdom, the monarch described Okpe as the largest kingdom in the Urhobo nation, with not less than 200 towns and settlements.

He decried that the Okpe language was gradually going into extinction, which according to him, required urgent and deliberate attention.

He called on parents to make the language part of everyday communication in their homes, particularly by encouraging their children to speak it, warning that failure to pass it on to younger generations could threaten an important aspect of the kingdom's cultural identity.

The anniversary celebration also provided an opportunity for the people of Okpe to showcase their rich cultural heritage. Traditional dances, colourful displays and other cultural performances added splendour to the occasion, reflecting the customs and identity of the kingdom.

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10 X 4	340,000	365,500	273,500	294,013	177,400	190,705	370,000	397,750	295,600	317,770
HALF PAGE	295,600	317,770	236,500	254,238	147,800	158,885	340,000	365,500	273,450	293,959
10 X 3	221,700	238,328	147,800	158,885	118,300	127,173	266,000	285,950	251,300	270,148
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Bassey confirms fresh contract talks with Fulham

Super Eagles defender Calvin Bassey has confirmed that he is in negotiations with Fulham over a new contract.

The centre-back's current deal with the London club is set to expire next summer, although Fulham have the option to extend it by a further season.

Bassey has attracted interest from Premier League giants Manchester United, with the club's new head coach, Mauricio Pochettino, reportedly an admirer of the Nigerian international.

Fulham Boss Arbeloa Hails Bassey's Impressive Display Against Man City

However, the 26-year-old could commit his long-term future to Fulham, having expressed his desire to remain at Craven Cottage.

Speaking to TNT Sports, Bassey confirmed that discussions over a new deal were ongoing.

"Of course [a new contract is something we want to get done quickly]. We are negotiating; we are still talking. It's an amazing place to be, and hopefully we will see what happens with the negotiations.

"It's nice to be here and hopefully we will see what happens with the negotiations," he said.



Barcelona scored three goals in 10 minutes as they returned to the top of La Liga...

Villarreal scored twice in the opening seven minutes through Tajon Buchanan and a rifled effort from Tani Oluwaseyi to leave the home fans stunned.

It is the first time the Blaugrana have conceded twice in the opening seven minutes of a league match since November 1981, against Real Zaragoza.

After 23 minutes, Oluwaseyi fouled Lamine Yamal in the box and a penalty was given after a video assistant referee (VAR) review, but the Spain international dragged it wide from the spot.

Gerard Martin headed over from close range just before the break as Barcelona struggled to make the most of their chances.

But Barca came out with more attacking intent in the second half and Martin made amends, heading home from Pedri's cross to reduce the deficit.

Fermin Lopez slotted home from Lamine Yamal's pass across the box to equalise for Hansi Flick's side on the hour mark.

Eric Garcia's cross was turned into his own net by Villarreal defender Pau Navarro as Barca went ahead for the first time in the match after 67 minutes.

Navarro's afternoon got even worse when he was shown a second yellow card for a foul on Barca captain Raphinha in stoppage time.

Villarreal manager Inigo Perez has now managed six matches against Barca without winning (drawn one, lost five).

Barca are three points clear of rivals Real Madrid and face Sabah in the Champions League on Wednesday.



Former Liverpool midfielder Vladimir Smicer says he understands the pressure Florian Wirtz is facing



Since Wirtz joined the Reds last summer he has scored nine goals - while netting eight times for Germany in that time.

"I don't want to say he is the same story as me. I was a little bit in the same position as him," Smicer told BBC Radio Merseyside. "I was a creative player, people expected me to score the goals and create the chances. I understand why he is under pressure, his price tag was high, so that is why fans expect big things. "I think you need to learn, you need to know how the game is played here.

"It is completely different from Europe.

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