Okpebholo doubles monthly gratuity payment to N400m, releases additional N1bn

AGHEDO IYOBOR / IGIEBOR CONFIDENCE

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has appr oved a doubling of the state's monthly gratuity allocation from N200 million to N400 million and an additional release of N1 billion to accelerate the payment of outstanding gratuity arrears owed to retired local government and primary school workers.

The twin financial interventions are aimed at clearing the backlog of unpaid gratuities, particularly entitlements owed to retirees in the 2012 batch, many of whom have waited several years to receive their benefits.

The governor announced the increase in the monthly allocation while addressing pensioners' unions and stakeholders in Benin City on Monday, assuring that his administration remained committed to improving the welfare of retirees and ensuring prompt payment of pensions and gratuities.

He said the increase to N400 million monthly would fast-track the liquidation of inherited gratuity arrears and bring relief to pensioners who had waited for years to receive their entitlements.

Okpebholo also assured the pensioners that other issues raised, including harmonisation of pensions and regular pension increments, would be addressed in phases.

The additional N1 billion intervention was disclosed by the Chairman of the Edo State Local Government Service Commission, Kabiru Adjoto, during a meeting with representatives of the Nigerian Union of Pensioners (NUP), Local Government Pensioners Association, National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) and the Local Government Pension Bureau.

CONTINUES ON PG 2

The Nigerian OBSERVER

That The People May Know

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Okpebholo emerges Silverbird Governor of the Year 2026

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

In recognition of his leadership, security interventions and development initiatives, Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has been named one of the recipients of the 2026 Silverbird Governors of the Year Award.

The governor accepted the prestigious recognition on Tuesday when he received a delegation from the Silverbird Group at Government House, Benin City.

The delegation was led by Mr Andy Bello, Business Manager of Silverbird Communications, who presented an invitation letter on behalf of the group's Executive Management and Editorial Board.

Bello said Okpebholo was selected in recognition of his leadership qualities, achievements and contributions to society, stressing that the award celebrates individuals whose leadership has made a meaningful difference in their areas of responsibility.

He explained that the recognition transcends political offices, titles and positions, focusing instead on excellence, achievement and service to humanity.

Particularly highlighting the administration's efforts to tackle insecurity and other criminal activities, Bello said the governor's achievements in restoring safety and confidence across the state were remarkable.

According to him, the improvement in the security situation within a relatively short period of the administration's tenure distinguished Edo as an emerging model of effective governance.

He recalled that residents previously lived in fear of cult-related killings, kidnappings and other violent crimes, particularly around the notorious July 7 period.

"The primary purpose of your role as our governor is the security of lives and property. What we have recorded in your administration in barely two years, in terms of safety of lives and property, is remarkable.

"What we are experiencing today in Edo State is unfathomable. Before now, when it got to July 7, everyone would be panicking because of cult killings and kidnapping.

"Within the shortest period of your administration, Edo State has never been more secure," Bello said.



Chief Executive of Silverbird Communications, Senator Ben Bruce



Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo

EDSG moves to establish Edo Computer Village

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has pledged his administration's support for the establishment of a modern computer and telecommunications market, including a proposed Edo Computer Village, to boost commercial activities and create opportunities for operators in the sector.

The governor gave the assurance on Tuesday at Government House, Benin City, while receiving members of the Telecom and Laptop Dealers Union, Edo State, led by its Chairman, Akhile Ighalo Rodney.

Okpebholo, who said he understood the challenges of business operators, having started out as an entrepreneur, commended the union for seeking a structured relationship with the state government and urged its members to remain focused on building their businesses.

"I am part of you because I started the way you are today. One thing is to have something doing; another thing is to be focused," he said.

Recalling the growth of the Computer Village in Lagos from a small association into a major telecommunications and computer trading hub, the governor expressed optimism that Edo traders could replicate the success.

On the union's request for land, Okpebholo said the government would consider providing a suitable location for the proposed market.

He explained that a purpose-built market would reduce the cost of shop rentals, improve security and enable government to monitor commercial activities and identify criminal elements.

CONTINUES ON PG 2

Atiku's son's defection to APC, significant political chess game ahead 2027 -Afegbua —Pg 2

28 states back state Police as constitutional amendment moves to Tinubu —Pg 3

Reps invite CBN Governor over unpaid pension arrears —Pg 5

Trump to Rwanda and South Africa from US trade deal —Pg 9

NEWS

Idaiye urges Assembly staff to promote love, mutual respect

BENIN CITY

The Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. (Prince) Yekini Idaiye, has urged members and staff of the Assembly to promote love, mutual respect and cordial relationships, irrespective of age or official position.

Prince Idaiye made the call during the Assembly's monthly prayer session held at the Assembly Complex in Benin City.

He urged staff to respect the elderly and maintain cordial relationships with their colleagues and superiors, stressing the importance of mutual understanding and cooperation in the workplace.

The Speaker appreciated the staff for their support and reaffirmed his open-door policy, encouraging them to approach him with any official or personal concerns for prompt attention.

He also cautioned them against allowing fear and life's challenges to undermine their commitment to duty, urging them to demonstrate courage, confidence and professionalism in the discharge of their responsibilities.

According to him, boldness is essential to improving productivity and enhancing legislative efficiency.

The prayer session, attended by members and staff of the Assembly, was anchored by Pastor Okonofua Peter, while Rev. Chris Igbinijesu and Pastor Patrick Idubor offered prayers for the Speaker, members and leadership of the House.

Delivering a sermon titled "Fear Not," Rev. Mrs. Ekhator Fadeke admonished members and staff not to allow fear, anxiety and worry to dictate their lives.

She urged them to remain strong and confident in God's promises, irrespective of the challenges they might encounter.

Atiku's son's defection to APC, significant political chess game ahead 2027 -Afegbua

BENIN CITY

Edo State Commissioner for Information, Prince Kassim Afegbua, has described the defection of Abba Atiku Abubakar, son of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, to the All Progressives Congress (APC) as a significant political development ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Afegbua, in a statement, said Abba's decision to join the ruling party and support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's re-election bid could be interpreted as a vote of confidence in the President's leadership and reform agenda.

Abba recently visited the APC national headquarters in Abuja, where he formally declared his support for the party. He also reportedly donated 10 campaign buses to strengthen mobilisation efforts ahead of President Tinubu's re-election campaign.

According to Afegbua, the development represents a setback for Atiku Abubakar's presidential ambition, arguing that his son's decision to support his father's political rival sends a significant political message ahead of the 2027 elections.

He said the development raises questions about the former Vice President's political aspirations, urging Nigerians to carefully consider its implications.

The Commissioner described Abba's decision as an act of political maturity, arguing that it demonstrated his willingness to place national interest above family ties and personal political considerations.

Afegbua also maintained that President Tinubu deserves another term to consolidate the gains of his administration's reforms, which he said had received commendation from financial experts, industry stakeholders and international institutions.

Specifically, he cited the removal of the petrol subsidy, arguing that the policy had helped curb alleged leakages in the petroleum sector while creating opportunities for economic growth.

Quoting Abba, the Commissioner said: "We need to give Mr. President more years to finish the good work he has started."

He maintained that another four-year term would provide the Tinubu administration with an opportunity to consolidate its ongoing reforms and translate them into greater prosperity for Nigerians.

Afegbua, who is also a member of the 2027 Presidential Campaign Committee, called on Nigerians to support President Tinubu's re-election bid, describing Abba's defection as a significant endorsement of the President's leadership ahead of the general elections.



SOLIDARITY VISIT:
Gov. Monday Okpebholo of Edo State (middle) while receiving members of the Telecom and Laptop Dealers Union, Edo State, in Government House, Benin City, yesterday.

Poverty fight: Edo empowers market women with cash, equipment

Kebonkwu Ruth

BENIN CITY

The Edo State Government has empowered petty traders in two major markets in Oredo Local Government Area with cash and working equipment as part of efforts to reduce poverty and boost small businesses.

The empowerment, organised by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, saw beneficiaries receive wheelbarrows, wet and dry grinding machines, and cash support to expand their trades.

The empowerment, organised by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, saw beneficiaries receive wheelbarrows, wet and dry grinding machines, and cash support to expand their trades.

The initiative is targeted at low-income traders who depend on petty trading for their daily survival, to help them grow their businesses and become self-reliant.

Speaking at the distribution, the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Bisi Idaomi, described the programme as one of the most fulfilling parts of public service because of its direct impact on ordinary people.

Idaomi said she would embark on such empowerment every day if given the opportunity, adding that giving vulnerable residents tools and resources remains a practical way to fight poverty and improve household welfare.

... Okpebholo doubles monthly gratuity payment to N400m, releases additional N1bn

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

Adjoto described the latest approval as another demonstration of the state government's commitment to the welfare of retired workers who dedicated several years of their lives to public service.

He recalled that the government commenced the payment of gratuities to retirees in the 2012 batch earlier this year, noting that the additional funding would provide further support for the exercise and enable the Pension Bureau to reach more outstanding beneficiaries.

According to him, the intervention would also contribute to the gradual reduction of the backlog of unpaid gratuities accumulated over the years.

The commission chairman observed that the outstanding liabilities could have been addressed much earlier if previous administrations had adopted a structured payment arrangement that allowed gratuities to be settled in instalments.

He, however, acknowledged that much work remained to be done, assuring pensioners that the government would sustain the payment process until a substantial portion of the outstanding arrears had been cleared, subject to the availability of funds.

Adjoto reiterated that the government recognised the sacrifices and contributions of retired workers and remained committed to ensuring that their years of service were adequately rewarded through the settlement of their legitimate entitlements.

Meanwhile, representatives of the pensioners and organised labour commended Governor Okpebholo for the increased monthly allocation and additional financial commitment.

Speaking on behalf of the pensioners and organised labour, Claudette Ehanire of the Nigerian Union of Pensioners and Jude Ahabue, Secretary of NULGE, described the intervention as a welcome development and a demonstration of empathy and responsive governance.

They said the government's decision would go a long way in alleviating the hardship faced by retirees and their families.

The union representatives, however, appealed for increased financial releases in subsequent phases to accelerate the payment process and ensure that more beneficiaries received their entitlements without further delays.

They stressed that timely settlement of gratuity arrears would provide much-needed financial relief to retired workers who had continued to grapple with the consequences of delayed payments.

The interventions are expected to strengthen the state's ongoing gratuity payment programme and accelerate efforts to addres

...EDSG moves to establish Edo Computer Village

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

"We should be able to do that so that you can pay less rent and be highly protected," he said.

The governor reaffirmed his administration's commitment to creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive.

He also attributed the relative stability of the naira under President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms to improved prospects for operators in the telecommunications and computer industry, which relies heavily on imported products.

According to him, a more stable exchange rate would ease foreign exchange pressures and enable dealers to plan their businesses more effectively.

He urged members of the union to support President Tinubu's re-election, arguing that the continuation of the economic reforms would create further opportunities for businesses.

Earlier, Rodney appealed to the state government to establish modern telecommunications and laptop markets across the three senatorial districts of Edo State.

He said the union was seeking government-allocated land in strategic locations, which members would develop and manage, to address high shop rental costs, strengthen security and provide a more conducive business environment.

The chairman also requested the appointment of special advisers from the industry to facilitate engagement between government and operators, as well as the establishment of a sustainable partnership framework to address challenges confronting the sector.

He expressed the union's readiness to partner with the state government in attracting investments, creating jobs and increasing the contribution of the telecommunications and computer industry to Edo's economy.

Those present at the meeting included the Deputy Governor, Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Edo State APC Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe; Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Yakubu Musa, JP; and other government officials.

NEWS

28 states back state police as constitutional amendment moves to Tinubu

Caroline Ameh

ABUJA

The push to establish State Police in Nigeria has advanced, with 28 State Houses of Assembly approving the proposed constitutional amendment, clearing the required two-thirds threshold for the bill to proceed to President Bola Tinubu for assent.

The Clerk to the National Assembly, Kamoru Ogunlana, confirmed that the approvals had been received and verified, signalling the commencement of the process to transmit the amendment to the President.

The proposed legislation seeks to establish State Police Services as part of efforts to restructure Nigeria's policing system and strengthen responses to security challenges across the country.

Ogunlana said the bill was forwarded to the 36 State Houses of Assembly on September 16, with a 30-day period given to the state legislatures to consider and communicate their decisions.

With 28 states now having approved the proposal, the required constitutional threshold has been met.

The Clerk, however, said his office would continue to receive outstanding reports from other states until the bill is formally transmitted to Tinubu for assent.

The development represents a major step in the long-running debate over decentralising policing in Nigeria, where security responsibilities are largely concentrated in the federal government through the Nigeria Police Force.

The proposed State Police framework is intended to give states a formal policing structure to address security concerns within their respective jurisdictions.

Its proponents have maintained that decentralised policing could bring law enforcement closer to communities and strengthen local responses to crime and insecurity.

The next stage will involve the completion of the National Assembly's transmission process and presidential consideration of the constitutional amendment.



LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE:
Atedo Peterside, founder of Sterling Bank Plc (second left), Prof. Akinwumi Adesina, former President of African Development Bank (third left) and former Director General of Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Arunma Oteh, at the Oxford Global Think Tank Leadership Conference in Abuja on Tuesday.

Former AfDB President seeks $10bn AI fund for Africa

ABUJA

Prof. Akinwumi Adesina, the Executive Chairman, Global Africa Investment Summit and former President of African Development Bank, has proposed a 10 billion dollars Africa Artificial Intelligence (AI) Frontier Technology Fund.

He said this on Tuesday in Abuja at the Oxford Global Think Tank Leadership Conference organised by the Oxford Global Think Tank with the theme: "Leadership for a Prosperous Future."

Adesina said the fund would serve as a platform to mobilise 50 billion dollars over the next 10 years for Africa's scientific, technological and industrial transformation.

He said present AI decisions would determine which countries developed the technologies of the future and which economies captured the greatest share of the wealth they created.

He warned that Africa risked becoming a market for technologies developed elsewhere if it failed to act strategically and deliberately.

He said Africa should approach the AI revolution as a continent determined not to follow or borrow but to lead.

Adesina mentioned five priorities for Africa's AI leadership, covering investment in people, infrastructure, innovation, financing and political leadership.

He said the proposed fund would provide catalytic financing for research, critical infrastructure, frontier technologies and promising African technology enterprises.

He explained that the ambition would draw from four sources, including African governments, multilateral institutions, private investors and philanthropic partners.

"It will involve $10 billion in catalytic capital, mobilising $50 billion over 10 years to build Africa's scientific, technological and industrial future

"This is not simply a proposal to raise money for AI projects. It is a proposal to build a continental financing platform capable of transforming Africa's position in the global economy,"

Hardest economic reforms over, second term will be harvest — *Shettima*

...As Okpebholo, Akpabio rally APC support for Tinubu's re-election

Kebonkwu Ruth

CALABAR

Vice President Kashim Shettima has declared that the toughest phase of President Bola Tinubu's economic reforms is over, assuring Nigerians that a second term in 2027 will bring prosperity.

Shettima spoke on Monday at the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential campaign rally in Calabar, Cross River State, where he solicited support for the re-election of Tinubu, Governor Bassey Otu and other APC candidates.

In a statement by his Senior Special Assistant on Media and Communications, Stanley Nkwocha, the Vice President said the administration had already done the most difficult job of resetting the economy.

"We are confident of this promise to deliver for this nation because we have already done the most difficult job of economic reset. None of the other options available has the capacity to move the needle of the economy. We have rescued the economy, and the road ahead is one of harvest," he said.

"This second term is one of harvest, for you and all Nigerians."

Shettima asked voters to renew the mandate of Tinubu and himself, as well as another term for Otu and his deputy, Peter Odey.

"I therefore stand before you today to ask you, once again, to renew the mandate of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and myself as Vice President. And another term for Senator Bassey Edet Otu and Hon. Peter Odey as Governor and Deputy Governor of Cross River State, respectively," he added.

He said the APC's appeal for another term was anchored on progress, prosperity, opportunities and the dignity of Nigerians, adding that political authority belongs to the people and those seeking re-election must present their records for scrutiny.

Shettima identified Cross River as a major beneficiary of the Tinubu administration's infrastructure agenda, citing the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway as a project that would transform the state.

He said the highway would ease movement of people and goods, expand tourism, attract investors and create thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

"Our vision is for Cross River to become a major beneficiary of this economic revolution," he said.

On other projects, Shettima said the Federal Government had approved and supported the Bakassi Deep Sea Port, which he said would become an international maritime gateway, attract shipping companies, stimulate industrial development and create jobs.

He also cited the proposed Gulf of Guinea Commission Secretariat in Calabar as another opportunity to boost the state's international profile, tourism and commercial activities.

The Vice President further assured the state of the Federal Government's commitment to resolving the dispute over 46 oil wells, saying it would strengthen Cross River's maritime identity and expand its opportunities in the blue economy.

On education, Shettima said Cross River had benefited from the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), describing it as an intervention to ease the financial burden on parents and improve access to higher education.

He said the administration would continue to prioritise education through initiatives such as Project HOPE Education, which focuses on foundational learning, teacher development, school management and accountability.

Shettima acknowledged the economic difficulties facing households, saying government remained committed to addressing citizens' concerns and correcting policies that failed to meet expectations.

Extend NELFUND to private universities, Kola Daisi VC urges FG

Aghedo Iyobor

IBADAN

The Vice-Chancellor of KolaDaisi University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Prof. Olajumoke Morenikeji, has called on the Federal Government to extend the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) scheme to students in private universities.

Morenikeji made the call on Monday while addressing journalists ahead of the university's 10th anniversary and sixth convocation ceremony scheduled for October 26 to November 5, 2026, at the institution's premises in Ibadan.

She said students in private institutions are also Nigerians and should not be excluded from government-supported educational financing because of the ownership status of their universities.

Attending a private university, she argued, does not necessarily mean a student's parents are wealthy, noting that some families opted for private institutions because their children could not secure admission into public universities.

"I want to urge the Federal Government to look beyond the ownership of institutions and consider the circumstances of students when formulating policies designed to improve access to higher education," she said.

Extending educational loans to eligible students in private universities, she added, would provide more Nigerians with opportunities to pursue their academic ambitions irrespective of the institutions they attend.

"NELFUND should be made available to private institutions. Some of these students are not coming from wealthy backgrounds. Attending private institutions does not mean their parents are rich. I want to appeal to the Federal Government to shift ground. The children in private institutions are also Nigerians," she said.

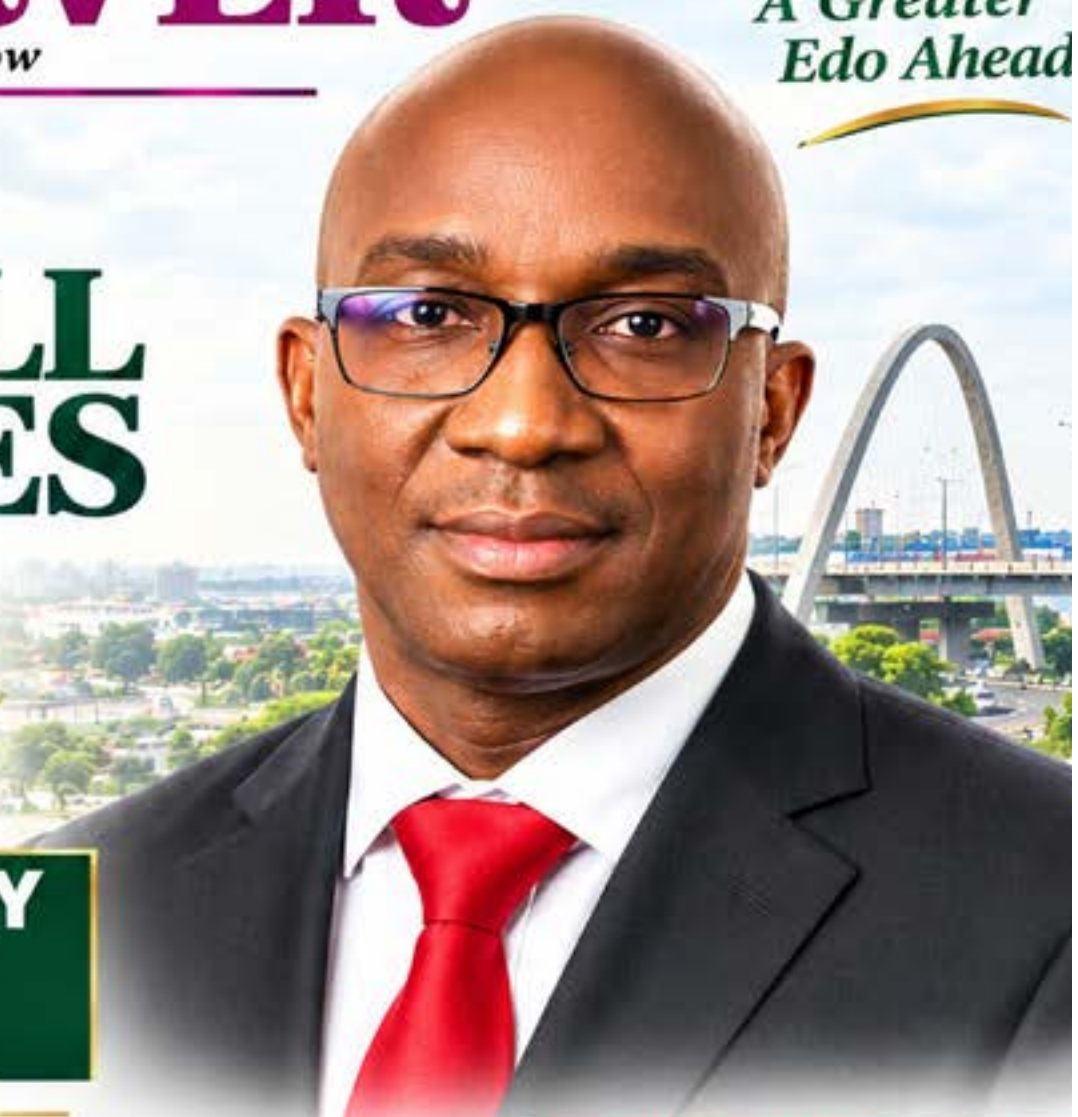
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Two Years of Progress, A Greater Edo Ahead

SPECIAL EDITION

INVITATION TO PLACE GOODWILL MESSAGES IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 2ND Years ANNIVERSARY OF GOVERNOR MONDAY OKPEBHOLO'S ADMINISTRATION

EDO STATE



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

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

Let's celebrate the journey, recognise the milestones and share the goodwill!

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TOGETHER FOR A GREATER EDO STATE

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

Thank you for your continued patronage and support.

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NEWS

Reps invite CBN gov over unpaid pension arrears

ABUJA

The House of Representatives has resolved to invite the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Olayemi Cardoso, to explain alleged breaches of pension agreements and the non-payment of benefits to retired employees of the apex bank.

The resolution followed the adoption of a motion on Tuesday titled, "Need to investigate the Central Bank of Nigeria for alleged breach of approved pension agreements, non-implementation of harmonisation policy and exclusion of pensioners from general pension increases."

The motion was moved by the member representing Igabi Federal Constituency of Kaduna State, Hussaini Jallo.

Presenting the motion, Jallo expressed concern over alleged non-compliance with contractual agreements governing the pension entitlements and welfare of retired CBN employees.

He said the alleged non-implementation and faulty execution of the harmonisation policy might have resulted in disparities in pension benefits and the accumulation of unpaid arrears, leaving affected pensioners in financial hardship.

"The House is concerned that the alleged non-implementation and faulty execution of the harmonisation policy may have led to disparities in pension benefits and the accumulation of unpaid arrears, ultimately denying rightful entitlements and imposing severe financial hardship on affected pensioners who depend on these funds for their livelihood," he said.

The lawmaker also raised concerns over allegations that some pensioners had been excluded from general pension increases on the grounds of additional or extra-statutory demands that might not be consistent with applicable laws, binding agreements or approved pension policies.

Jallo further disclosed that the number of CBN pensioners had declined from 5,104 in 2011 to approximately 3,000, representing a reduction of more than 2,100.

He said the figures translated to an average loss of 140 pensioners annually, adding that the mortality rate was likely to increase as the surviving retirees advanced in age.

The lawmaker warned that prolonged delays in pension payments could expose elderly and vulnerable retirees to poverty, ill health and avoidable loss of life.

FG begins N50,000 relief payments to vulnerable Nigerians

ABUJA

The Federal Government has commenced the disbursement of N50,000 cash relief to vulnerable Nigerians under its National Emergency Relief and Stabilisation Intervention.

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Dr Bernard Doro, announced the commencement of the programme in an October 30 statement sighted on Tuesday by our Correspondent, describing it as a presidential initiative to provide immediate financial relief to vulnerable Nigerians.

Doro said the intervention was designed to cushion the effects of rising food prices and the high cost of essential goods on households.

"Under this intervention, eligible beneficiaries will receive N50,000 monthly, providing direct assistance to help meet essential needs and ease the burden of living costs," he said.

He added that the initiative would be reviewed regularly in response to changes in the cost of living, with beneficiaries to be notified before any adjustments.

The minister said the ministry was working with licensed digital financial service providers to ensure the funds were delivered securely and transparently.

"Beneficiaries will receive an SMS from one of these providers asking for their consent. This message is genuine. Once consent is given, payment is made directly to the beneficiary's account/mobile wallet," he stated.

The approved providers and their USSD codes are ALAT by Wema (*945*23#), MoMo PSB (*671*0#), NairaGram (*726*00#), OPay (*955*20#) and Moniepoint (*557*327#).

Meanwhile, the Youth Economic Intervention and De-radicalisation Programme (YEIDEP), in a Facebook post, on Tuesday said payments under NERSI were ongoing, with beneficiaries receiving notifications through their registered phone numbers.

The programme also advised those who had not received text messages but whose eligibility status showed "NOT SELECTED" to remain patient and wait for the next batch.

"Those who have not received an SMS but checked their status and saw 'NOT SELECTED' should remain patient and wait for the next batch," the post stated.

However, the post did not guarantee that everyone whose status showed "NOT SELECTED" would receive the grant in a subsequent batch.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY SUMMIT:
From left: Minister of Power, Chief Olasunkanmi Tegbe; President, Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) Dr Ifeanyi Okoye, during the 2nd Edition of MAN Energy Security Energy Efficiency Summit in Lagos on Tuesday.

Why bandits say they can't stop killing – Gumi

KADUNA

Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ahmad Gumi, has said some bandits he interacted with expressed dissatisfaction with the continued bloodshed in the country, claiming they felt compelled to sustain attacks because of killings in their communities.

Gumi said the armed men viewed the violence as a cycle of revenge and retaliation.

He added that some believed they could be killed if they abandoned their activities.

The cleric disclosed this during an interview on PAPShow, published on October 29, with clips of the interview going viral on social media on Tuesday.

According to him, one of the bandits he spoke with admitted that the bloodshed had become excessive, although members of the group believed they had been forced into continued violence.

"One of the bandits was telling us the bloodshed is too much," Gumi said.

He added, "They, too, are not happy. And they say they are forced to do it."

Explaining the grievances expressed by the armed men, Gumi said they complained that military operations initially presented as efforts to tackle cattle rustling had resulted in the killing of women and children in their communities.

He recalled asking why the military killed women and children during the operations.

"But why did they kill their women and children? Why are they killing their women and children? Why are the vigilantes arresting them and killing them? Why?" he quoted the bandits as asking.

Gumi said the armed men considered the violence a cycle of revenge arising from attacks on their communities.

"So, they feel it's a field of blood, revenge, attack and counterattack," he said.

He argued that the continued killings made dialogue necessary, saying religious leaders had a responsibility to encourage both sides to embrace negotiations.

"So, we, as clergy, our own duty is to look at how to stop it. Let's stop the bloodshed. Let's come to the table," he said.

When the interviewer asked why the bandits could not simply stop their activities, Gumi said they feared being killed if they surrendered or abandoned violence.

"Because they thought they were killed. So, we need to reaffirm to them, to put confidence in them that they will not be killed," he said.

The cleric also alleged that the proliferation of weapons among armed groups was being fuelled by financial support and an arms race between rival factions.

Asked whether some individuals were sponsoring the bandits, he said, "It's possible now. You know, it's possible now."

He explained that money received by the groups was sometimes used to acquire more weapons because different factions competed to possess superior firepower.

CHANGE OF NAME

I formerly known as **Dr. SOLOMON SEFFIA IWHIWHU**. now wish to be known and addressed as **Dr. SOLOMON SEFFIA WILLIAMS**. All former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that **EFEOMO FRANCISCA DAVIDOKOCHU** and **EFEOMO FRANCISCA. DAVID - OKOCHU** are one and the same person henceforth I now wish to be known and addressed as **EFEOMO FRANCISCA DAVID - OKOCHU**. All former documents remain valid concerned authorities and the general public should please take note.

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME

The general public is hereby notified that my correct name is **IKPONMWOSA PRINCE ENOSAKHARE**. and not **IKPONMWOSA ENOSAKHARE PRINCE** as was wrongly arranged on my (B.V.N) henceforth now wish to be known and Addressed as **IKPONMWOSA PRINCE ENOSAKHARE**. All former documents remain valid concern authorities and the general public should please take note.

EFCC vows crackdown on sponsors of illegal mining

ILORIN

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has vowed to intensify its crackdown on illegal mining by targeting financiers, mineral buyers, compromised public officials and other members of criminal networks benefiting from the theft of Nigeria's mineral resources.

The EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, said illegal mining was sustained by sophisticated syndicates involving local and international players, warning that arresting miners at excavation sites alone would not address the problem.

Olukoyede spoke on Tuesday while delivering a keynote address at a public lecture and capacity-building workshop organised by the Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies and the Human and Environmental Development Agenda in Ilorin, Kwara State.

He explained that the networks behind illegal mining comprised individuals who provided funding, facilitated transportation and documentation, purchased illegally extracted minerals and protected the operations.

"Therefore, dealing with illegal mining involves breaking an impregnable chain of fraudulent actors: young men carrying shovels, their financiers, buyers of the minerals, compromised officials facilitating the operation, beneficiaries from the proceeds and other actors," the EFCC chairman stated.

He added that the commission's enforcement strategy would focus on tracing the proceeds of illegal mining and identifying those who financed and benefited from the operations.

The anti-graft agency's chairman disclosed that the commission recorded 52 illegal mining cases between October 2023 and July 2026 and secured the forfeiture of 102 tonnes of solid minerals.

He clarified that the EFCC was not the regulatory authority for the mining sector and had no responsibility for issuing mining licences, explaining that its intervention covered suspected corruption, fraud, money laundering, illicit financial flows and proceeds of criminal activities.

According to him, financial investigations remained crucial because illegally extracted minerals eventually generated proceeds that moved through bank accounts, businesses, payments and asset acquisitions.

Olukoyede also linked illegal mining to Nigeria's security challenges, warning that unregulated mineral extraction and trading created opportunities for criminal networks to engage in extortion, smuggling, violence and territorial disputes.

NEWS

INEC flags 268 records over AI photos, irregularities

ABUJA

The Independent National Electoral Commission has flagged 268 records in its preliminary Register of Voters for suspected artificial intelligence-generated photographs and other irregularities, as it begins a process to clean up the database ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The commission's Director of Information and Communication Technology, Lawrence Bayode, disclosed this on Sunday, explaining that the Automated Biometric Identification System had identified the questionable records for further examination.

"What we are currently doing now is looking at all these 268 records that ABIS already flagged as AI-generated or even something of irregularities," he said.

Bayode explained that some individuals allegedly exploited a special registration option designed for persons with disabilities who have incomplete fingers or no fingers to create questionable voter profiles.

He said the option, known as special registration, was among the loopholes allegedly exploited by those responsible for the irregularities detected by the system.

The ICT director said the commission had commenced the process of removing the affected records from the preliminary register.

"Those that we have seen, we are cleaning up," Bayode said.

He, however, clarified that photographs enhanced with artificial intelligence would not automatically lead to the exclusion of affected voters, distinguishing between genuine photographs improved with AI applications and images generated entirely by artificial intelligence.

"Those that we know it is the AI on the phone that helped enhance their pictures, we can't exclude such people because it was the AI on the phone that does that.

"Such people will still be on the register but those AI-generated, those photographs, all these will be removed. We are already looking at them," he said.

The development followed the publication of INEC's preliminary Register of Voters on its website on October 26, which triggered public outrage after screenshots circulated on social media showing suspicious photographs attached to voter records, particularly in parts of Edo State.

The controversy also generated concerns over alleged duplicate registrations, the appearance of names of deceased persons and complaints by some registered voters that their details were missing from the online register.

The concerns attracted reactions from political leaders, civil society figures and other Nigerians, who questioned the credibility of the registration process and demanded explanations from the electoral commission.

The Nigeria Democratic Congress vice-presidential candidate, Rabiu Kwankwaso, called for a thorough, transparent and independent investigation into the alleged irregularities.



STAKEHOLDERS CONFERENCE:
From left: Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Dr Muttaqha Darma; Speaker, House of Representatives, Rep. Tajudeen Abass and the Chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Housing and Habitat, Rep. Abdulmumin Jibrin, during a stakeholders conference on the proposed National Real Estate Regulatory Authority (NRERA) organized by the committee, in Abuja on Monday

Lagos APC assembly candidate pledges welfare support for PWDs

LAGOS

An All Progressives Congress candidate for the Lagos State House of Assembly, Gbenga Abiola, has pledged to introduce welfare programmes for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable residents of Agege if elected.

Abiola, who is seeking to replace the Speaker of the House, Mudashiru Obasa, as the representative of Agege Constituency I, made the pledge during an engagement with the Association of Persons Living with Disabilities, Agege Chapter, on Monday.

At the meeting, he outlined proposed inclusive empowerment and social welfare programmes aimed at addressing the needs of vulnerable residents, particularly persons with disabilities.

Abiola said, "A society cannot claim to be making meaningful progress when its most vulnerable members are left behind.

"Our programmes must be inclusive,o compassionate, and deliberately structured to reach those who need support the most.

"The proposed Automated Food Bank is designed to provide an organised food-support system, with persons living with disabilities receiving priority attention alongside elderly residents and other vulnerable households."

He said he also planned to establish a walk-in superstore where qualified vulnerable residents of Agege could access essential food items and household necessities.

According to him, the proposed facility would operate through an organised support arrangement to ensure that beneficiaries could obtain necessary household supplies.

Abiola said the interventions were informed by the belief that meaningful representation must accommodate people facing difficult economic and social circumstances.

He added that persons with disabilities must never be treated as an afterthought in governance, empowerment and community development.

The candidate reaffirmed his vision of a constituency where social protection, economic opportunities, accessibility and human dignity would remain key pillars of representation.

He said inclusive representation meant ensuring that every resident counted, mattered and received attention, irrespective of their social or economic circumstances.

Speaking on behalf of the association, its Agege Chapter Chairman, Alhaja Sekinat Abolaji, appreciated Abiola's continued engagement, previous empowerment efforts and commitment to the welfare of members.

Abolaji declared the association's support for the candidate, acknowledging his interest in addressing the needs and welfare of persons with disabilities.

She said the meeting attracted representatives from different ethnic groups, networks and sections of the disability community, providing an opportunity for meaningful interaction and exchange of ideas.

According to her, the forum also provided an opportunity to discuss programmes aimed at addressing the peculiar needs and challenges confronting vulnerable residents.

She said the meeting demonstrated the importance of listening to communities, understanding their challenges and developing interventions that responded to their actual needs.

5,350 C'River entrepreneurs benefit from MSME interventions

CALABAR

No fewer than 5,350 micro, small and medium enterprises and local entrepreneurs across Cross River State have benefited from direct cash grants, skills acquisition and capacity-building programmes under ongoing state and Federal Government interventions.

A statement made available to PUNCH Online on Monday stated that the Director-General of the Cross River State Micro Enterprise Development Agency, Great Ogban, disclosed this during the Manufacturing and MSME Town Hall Meeting held on Sunday at the Dome, Calabar Municipality Garden, Calabar.

Ogban said the interventions were deliberately structured to reach businesses across the state's three senatorial districts and stimulate grassroots economic growth.

"More than 5,350 Cross Riverians have benefited from various enterprise-development and empowerment interventions under the current administration. SMEDAN has trained 2,500 participants across the state's three senatorial districts, while another 2,000 persons have benefited from a separate intervention, with 500 of them accessing grants of ₦500,000 each," Ogban said.

Assessing the impact of the financial assistance, the MEDA chief executive said beneficiaries were making judicious use of the support to expand their businesses.

"The outcome of the grant programme is encouraging, as beneficiaries are actively applying the skills and financial support received to expand their businesses," he said.

Ogban also said local businesses had accessed low-interest financial facilities and other interventions aimed at reducing the cost of doing business in the state.

"Cross River businesses have benefited from a ₦200 million MSME intervention, alongside access to single-digit interest loans and ₦50,000 grants facilitated through SMEDAN and the Bank of Industry," he said.

He commended Governor Bassey Otu for providing 1,000 free Corporate Affairs Commission business registration opportunities, saying the initiative had reduced the cost and administrative burden associated with formalising businesses in the state.

Oyo doctors suspend strike, return to work after one week

IBADAN

The Association of Medical and Dental Officers (AMDO), Oyo State chapter, has suspended its industrial action and resumed duty.

The doctors, who had been on strike since Oct. 26, returned to their duty posts on Monday.

Doctors at Ring Road State Hospital, Government Chest Hospital, Jericho Specialist Hospital and Oni Memorial Children Hospital, among others, have resumed work.

The resumption followed the suspension of the one-week industrial action embarked upon by the association.

It would be recalled that the association embarked on the strike over demands, including an improved welfare package for members, payment of outstanding allowances and recruitment of more medical officers, among others.

The AMDO General Secretary, Dr Abdulazeez Gbadamosi, said in a statement on Monday that the suspension followed its emergency congress held on Sunday.

He said the "Executive Council appreciated members for their strict compliance with the strike and the confidence reposed in its leadership."

He also thanked the elders who, he said, "contributed to the mediation and partial restoration of industrial harmony."

FEATURE



The generation that scrolls: Social media, mental health, and Nigerian youths

MONALISA OSAWE

At 1am in Ekpoma, a 19-year-old girl named Blessing is still awake. She is not reading. She is scrolling. Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X. She sees her mate in Canada posting snow, her mate in Lagos posting new wig, her mate in Benin posting boyfriend's car. She looks at her own life: no wig, no car, small room, school fees unpaid. She feels poor, ugly, left behind. She drops phone, cries, sleeps by 3am, wakes by 6am to go to school, tired, angry, with headache.

Multiply Blessing by 40 million, and you have Nigerian youth mental health crisis that nobody talks about.

Nigeria is youngest country in Africa, with over 70 percent under 30. This should be blessing. But we have turned blessing to burden because we have not understood what this generation faces. This generation does not face hunger alone, they face comparison, pressure, and loneliness amplified by phone in their hand.

Social media came to Nigeria as blessing. It gave voice, business, connection. Today, Nigeria has over 109 million internet users, mostly youths. Youths sell clothes on Instagram, learn tailoring on YouTube, find scholarship on Twitter. But same social media has become source of anxiety, depression, fraud, and immorality that is destroying many.

First, the pressure of fake life. On social media, everybody is rich, fine, happy. Nobody posts failure. So young people think their mates are all succeeding except them. A boy in Uromi sees his secondary school mate posting Benz in Lagos. He does not know Benz is rented for content. He thinks mate is rich. He feels like failure. So he wants to make quick money. He enters Yahoo Yahoo, or goes into hookup, or steals. The fake life pressure is pushing youths into crime.

Girls face worse. On TikTok, beauty standard is white skin, big hips, big breast, foreign hair. Filters make ordinary girl look ugly to herself. So she bleaches, buys fake hips, goes into debt to buy hair of N200,000, just to look like Instagram girl. When she cannot afford, she feels worthless. Many young girls now have low self-esteem, not because they are ugly, but because phone tells them they are ugly.

Second, addiction and sleep loss. Many Nigerian youths spend over 8 hours daily on phone, mostly scrolling, not learning. A study by NOI Polls found 60 percent of youths check phone first thing in morning and last thing at night. This addiction affects brain, sleep, and studies. A student who scrolls till 2am cannot concentrate in class by 8am. So performance drops, he carries over courses, he becomes frustrated, he drops out.

Third, fraud and exploitation. Social media is now hunting ground. Yahoo boys use Instagram to scam, hookup girls use TikTok to find clients, traffickers use Facebook to lure girls to Libya, drug dealers use Snapchat to sell drugs. Many youths have been scammed of school fees through fake giveaway, many girls have been raped after meeting stranger from Facebook, many boys have been initiated into cult through WhatsApp group. Parents have no idea what children do online because parents themselves are not digitally literate.

Fourth, mental health crisis. Nigeria has less than 300 psychiatrists for 230 million people. Mental health is taboo, people say na spiritual. But depression, anxiety, and suicide are rising among youths. According to Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, cases of depression among youths increased by over 40 percent between 2020 and 2024, linked to social media and economic pressure. Every month, we hear of student who commits suicide because of failed exam, or because boyfriend broke up on WhatsApp, or because he lost money in betting. Betting, which is promoted heavily on social media, is another trap. Many youths have lost school fees to Bet9ja and SportyBet advertised by their favorite musician.

Fifth, loss of values and skills. This generation can scroll, but cannot converse. They can make TikTok video, but cannot write application letter. They know how to do Instagram live, but cannot do face-to-face interview. Social media has reduced attention span to 15 seconds. A youth cannot read book for 1 hour, but can watch 100 videos of 15 seconds each. This affects employability. Employers complain that graduates cannot write, cannot speak, cannot think critically, because they grew up scrolling, not reading.

What must we do? We must not ban social media. Ban does not work. We must teach youths to use it, not be used by it.

First, we need digital literacy in schools. From JSS 1, children should be taught what is real and fake online, how algorithm manipulates, how to protect privacy, how to use internet for learning not just slaying. Teachers should be trained to use YouTube and Telegram for teaching, not just blackboard. Parents should be taught to monitor children without invading privacy.

Second, we need mental health support that is youth-friendly. Universities, polytechnics, and colleges should have counseling units with trained counselors, not just old men who preach. NYSC orientation should have mental health sessions. Government and private sector should fund toll-free helplines like Mentally Aware Nigeria Initiative where youths can call and talk without stigma. Religious leaders should stop calling depression spiritual attack and encourage professional help.

Third, we need to regulate content and protect youths. National Broadcasting Commission and National Information Technology Development Agency should enforce that platforms remove harmful content, like videos promoting ritual, drug, or fraud, and that betting companies do not target underage. Influencers who promote fake life and fraud should be called out. Real success stories of youths who work hard, farm, build, should be promoted, not just slay queens and Yahoo boys.

Fourth, we need to provide alternative to scrolling. Youths scroll because they are idle. If youth has job, skill, or sport, he scrolls less. Government should build more sports facilities, skill centres, and youth hubs with free internet for learning, not just for TikTok. In Benin City, after renovation of Ogbe Stadium, many youths now go there to train in evening, reducing time for crime. That model should be replicated in all local governments.

Fifth, we need family and community. Before, child was raised by community, elders told stories, taught values. Today, child is raised by phone. Parents are busy hustling, no time to talk. We must bring back family conversation. Parents should eat with children without phone, talk, listen. Community should have youth mentorship where successful adults mentor 5 youths each, teaching them life skills.

Finally, youths themselves must take responsibility. Phone is tool. You can use cutlass to farm or to kill. Same with phone. Youth must ask: is my phone making me better or bitter? Does scrolling increase my skill or my sorrow? Blessing in Ekpoma can use same phone to learn makeup professionally on YouTube and make money, or to compare herself and cry. Choice is hers, but she needs guidance.

Nigeria's youth population can be greatest asset if we invest in their minds, not just their data. A generation that scrolls can also be generation that codes, that creates, that solves.

At 1am, Blessing should be sleeping, dreaming of future she will build, not crying because of picture she saw online. We must help her, and 40 million like her, to put phone down, look up, and build.

The future is not in phone. Future is in what they do with phone.

NEWS

FOREIGN



THERE ARE FEARS THAT THE DEATH TOLL WILL RISE FURTHER AS A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE STILL UNDER THE RUBBLE

Russian bombing kills 29 people at Ukraine aid centre, Kyiv says

At least 29 people were killed after Russian bombs hit an aid distribution centre, in an attack that Ukraine's leader has called "utterly horrific".

Another 10 people were injured and 48 were reported missing after at least nine 3,000kg aerial bombs hit the village of Komyshuvakha in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, regional head Mykhailo Semikin said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said that after the first strike on the local school "used for humanitarian needs", there was a second attack on the place where people were sheltering.

He posted a video showing a huge crater left after Monday's attack, and rescuer teams searching through the rubble.

The Russian military has not publicly commented.

On Tuesday, regional head Mykhailo Semikin said the death toll had risen to 29 people and that search and rescue operations were ongoing.

"The scale of the tragedy is horrific," he wrote on Telegram.

Zelensky initially put the death toll at 18, but Ukraine's state emergencies service DSNS later said 24 people, including two rescuers and four police officers, were confirmed to have been killed.

In his video address late on Monday, Zelensky said 26 people were now known to have died.

He earlier said that "the Russians could not have been unaware that the local residents who remained in Komyshuvakha received humanitarian aid there every week" on Monday.

"This is yet another proof that Russia does not want any de-escalation."

He said that after a recent successful joint Russian-Ukrainian operation to evacuate civilians from the Russia-occupied southern city of Oleshky during a temporary ceasefire brokered by US First Lady Melania Trump, "there was a moment when the next steps could show that peace is possible".

"With such killings, Russia is sending the exact opposite signal - Russia is counting on further killings," Zelensky said.

Jet may have broken apart before Florida crash, officials say, as family named among victims

Investigators believe parts of a private jet which crashed in Florida and killed all nine on board may have broken off in the air.

The Learjet 60 was bound for the Bahamas from Austin, Texas when it nosedived into a multi-lane highway and exploded on impact.

A tech entrepreneur and his young family, as well as the 20-year-old copilot, were among those who died on Sunday.

The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said weather conditions would be a major focus of the investigation, but that it was struggling to access the wreckage due to a huge crater on the road which was formed by the jet in Palm Beach.

The plane crashed on Military Trail, a six-lane road that features businesses and restaurants, at around 12:50 local time.

"The biggest obstacle that we're going to have is recovering the major wreckage from the impacted crater on the roadway," lead investigator Tim Monville said at a news conference on Monday.

The NTSB said the crater, near the entrance to a mobile home park, was partially filled with water because of severe storms. Heavy rainfall and thunderstorms had been reported in the area at the time of the crash.

Debris was scattered across sports fields, businesses and homes in the area.

"We do have some evidence that there was some breakup of the aircraft before impact," the NTSB's Tom Chapman said.

"We may find parts of the aircraft some distance away from the actual impact site."

Officials are also trying to find out whether a cockpit voice recorder was on board at the time of the crash and if it can be recovered.

Flight analysis indicates that the jet was plummeting hundreds of feet per second before crashing.

In air traffic control audio recordings, someone in the cockpit can be heard reporting "moderate turbulence" and that the crew was "managing the ice".

They can then be heard saying the plane was "picking up precipitation" and "we need to climb". Moments later, the same voice said the plane was descending at a rate of 10,000ft (3,048m) per minute.

An emergency was declared and they can be heard yelling "we are in an overspeed condition descending 20,000ft per minute", before saying, "we are going to crash into the ground".

Seven passengers died on board the flight - named in a joint statement as tech entrepreneur Adam Robinson, his wife Helen Sharp, and their two children - Emma, four, and Charlie, two - as well as Rachael Reed, Charmi Fehr and Anita Maria Cetina.

The pilot was named in media reports as Jeffery Gregory, while Nathalia Filgueiras, 20, who earned her pilot's licence when she was 17, was reported to be the copilot.

One man in a car on the ground sustaized a leg injury.

Robinson and Sharp's family described them as "devoted parents" and said their children were "the light of their lives".

"Helen and Adam were the love affair that will last forever. Their warmth, generosity and gift for making people feel welcome touched so many lives," the statement reads.

On his LinkedIn page, Robinson described himself as the founder and CEO of RB2B and Retention.com, and the CEO of Moltsets. Helen Sharp was an artist, according to media reports.

Robinson previously worked at global financial services business Lehman Brothers and the banking group Barclays. The BBC has contacted the companies for a statement.

The joint statement also named Anita Maria Cetina and said she "cared for Emma and Charlie with tenderness and devotion, and she was truly part of the family".

It added: "She showed us a legacy of unconditional love and devotion."

Rachel Reed and Charmi Fehr were described in the joint family statement as "full of joy and adventure".

"They loved their people fiercely, fully and without hesitation. From the moment they met, they were all in on each other and the life they were building."

Nathalia Filgueiras received her pilot's licence when she was in high school

Nathalia Filgueiras's mother, Camila Corteleti, confirmed to US media that her daughter had died in the fireball.

Americans head to the polls for elections that could define Trump's closing chapter

With two years of his presidency remaining, Donald Trump, who has dominated American politics over the past decade and transformed it in remarkable ways, is facing potentially pivotal elections.

And the midterm elections on Tuesday that will decide control of Congress come at a difficult moment for his Republican Party.

Voters overwhelmingly say they are most concerned about the cost of living. Food and fuel prices have soared in part due to the president's aggressive tariffs and unpopular war with Iran, so it will be top of mind as many head to the polls.

Trump, who has faced record low approval ratings in recent months, has been campaigning hard, headlining dozens of rallies across the country.

He made his closing pitch on Monday in front the Reflecting Pool in Washington DC, which has been the subject of a controversial renovation. Looking back at the midterms campaign, he said Republicans "gave this a very strong shot".

But ahead of the vote, high prices are a concern for voters on all sides - which helps explain why he has been campaigning in previously safe Republican territory, appearing in Iowa and Kansas during a final weekend blitz.

His party has also poured hundreds of millions of dollars of campaign advertising into these traditionally safe contests, such as the Senate race in Kansas.

"When they start spending hard American dollars on political advertising in a state that they should be winning, that's how you know that they think they're in trouble," Carrie Dann, the managing editor of the Cook Political Report, which analyses campaigns and elections, told the BBC.

"The spending [in Kansas] is going to be far more than Republicans ever anticipated," she added. That points to a party that is approaching these elections on the defensive.

At many of his rallies, Trump has also made a plea to voters. "In this election, I'm asking you to pretend, please, that I'm on the ballot," he said last month. "Just pretend."

Of course, he is not on the ballot. But this plea - which he made again in Iowa on Sunday - gets to the heart of a critical question: Is he still an electoral asset for his Republican Party?

The answer to that is not as simple as it once was.

Trump returned to the White House as a formidable force following his crushing 2024 election win - and had the healthy approval ratings to match. Before that, during the previous midterm elections in 2022, his endorsement was courted by Republicans who saw it as vital to success.

Now, with the war with Iran dragging on and hitting many Americans in the pocket, his approval ratings have sunk. The price of a gallon of diesel - which was $3.75 before the war started in February - hit a record high of $6.52 in September.

Supreme Court rejects Trump's request to stop California counting disputed votes

The US Supreme Court has rejected a last-minute request by the Trump administration asking it to intervene in California's midterm election vote count.

The justice department wanted 20,000 ballots to be set aside that it alleged may have been issued to non-US citizens in the state.

Two lower courts had already rejected the request. State election officials had questioned the federal government's claims - saying the process used to identify alleged non-citizens was inaccurate.

The Monday ruling comes on the eve of the midterms, which will determine which political party controls the US Congress for the last two years of President Donald Trump's second term.

The Supreme Court announced its decision in a one-line order, saying it was denying the justice department's request for an injunction.

"The application for injunction pending appeal presented to Justice Kagan and by her referred to the Court is denied," it reads.

Its means rulings made in lower courts will stand and essentially ends the Trump administration's bid to disqualify the ballots.

California is the most populous state in America with some 23 million people on its voting register. As of Sunday night, more than six million mail-in ballots had already been received, according to the California secretary of state's office.

The justice department sent letters to the California secretary of state and Los Angeles County Registrar last month, demanding they set aside the ballots of 20,000 registered voters whom the Trump administration "believe" are "likely" non-citizens, according to court documents.

About a week later, armed officials from the Department of Homeland Security delivered letters to county officials and employees across California threatening criminal charges if they didn't sequester those ballots.

In a 22-page brief reviewed by the BBC, the justice department maintained that ballots cast by non-citizens could "debase or dilute valid votes".

FOREIGN NEWS

Trump to remove Rwanda and South Africa from US trade deal

President Donald Trump has notified Congress of his intention to remove South Africa and Rwanda from a preferential trade programme, from 1 January 2027.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) allows eligible African countries to export thousands of products to the US duty-free.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement that an annual review had found that both countries were engaging in practices inconsistent with the programme's eligibility requirements.

He added that the Trump administration had additionally notified the two countries of the decision.

The Trump administration cited barriers to US trade and investment, as well as concerns over national security and foreign policy interests in the region.

For South Africa, the US pointed to corruption.

In a letter to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, Trump said Pretoria's actions on international security and its relations and cooperation with governments of concern to Washington risked undermining US national security and foreign policy interests.

He also accused South Africa of maintaining significant barriers to American trade and investment, including restrictions affecting agricultural market access, regulatory requirements, investment protections and intellectual property.

"The Trump administration is working to ensure our African partners take the necessary steps to meet the eligibility criteria," Greer said.

South Africa's Trade Minister Parks Tau described the decision as "unfortunate", saying Washington was raising new issues that had not featured in trade negotiations between the two countries, which began in 2025.

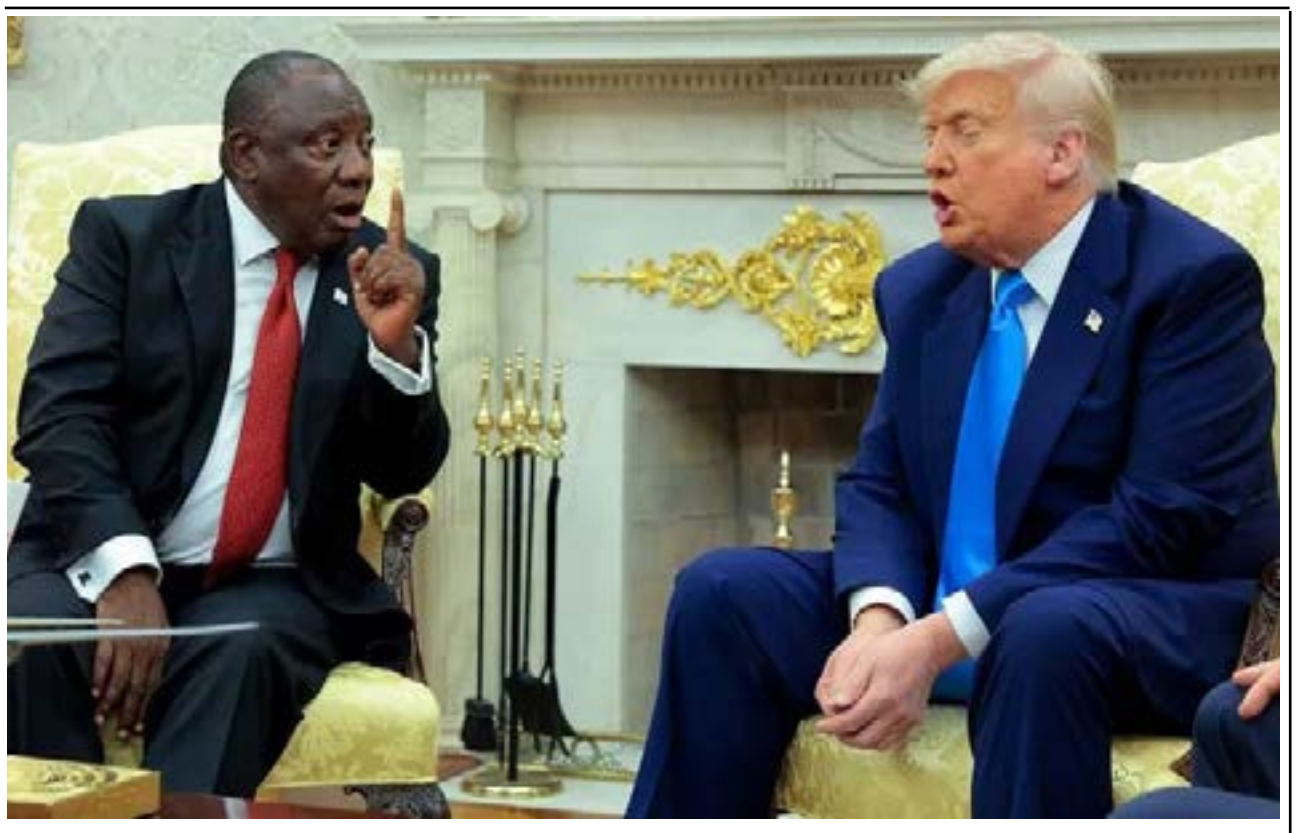
"We will continue to accelerate the diversification of South Africa's export markets to protect jobs," Tau said.

South African white genocide does not exist, new ambassador to US tells BBC

Is there a genocide of white South Africans as Trump claims?WW

South Africa has also sought to put the potential impact of losing Agoa benefits into perspective, arguing that the country's broader trade relationship with the US extends well beyond the programme.

Government figures show that about 89% of South African exports to the US entered under ordinary World Trade Organization most-favoured-nation terms in 2025, while around 10% benefited from Agoa, down from 28% in 2024.



PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP(RIGHT) IN A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Uganda arrest former deputy army chief over 'subversive activities'

Ugandan authorities have arrested former deputy military chief Peter Elwelu over allegations of planning to destabilize parts of the country, according to the military.

Peter Elwelu, a three-star general who served as the deputy chief of defence forces between 2021 and 2024, was taken into custody Monday, according to military spokesperson Col. Chris Magezi.

Elwelu was "on the run over involvement in subversive activities and plans to destabilize" a remote part of eastern Uganda where he was born and raised, Magezi said. "The security forces recently recovered 15 guns in his possession, military fatigues, and two pickup trucks."

Elwelu could not be reached for comment. He was being held by military authorities at an unknown location. The government has yet to substantiate the allegations against him. His wife told local media that her husband was innocent, the BBC reported.

Ahead of Elwelu's arrest, Ugandan military chief Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba accused him of engaging in treacherous activities after his retirement from active duty last year. Kainerugaba said he had ordered the search party to capture Elwelu alive.

Last week, Kainerugaba announced he had stripped Elwelu of his lieutenant general rank. The defence chief had then revealed on X the arrest of 20 former soldiers linked to Elwelu.

Elwelu, a previous commander of the land forces, once disagreed with Kainerugaba over military operations, leading to an urgent meeting mediated by President Yoweri Museveni.

Kainerugaba is Museveni's son and seen as his likely successor. Just months after Museveni was sworn in in May of this year for a seventh consecutive term, Kainerugaba launched a presidential bid for 2031, the next scheduled elections in this East African country that has never had a peaceful transfer of power.

Displaced Ethiopians await registration in Kenya after fleeing clashes

Thousands of displaced Ethiopians were expected to be registered in the Kenyan border city of Moyale on Monday, after they fled tensions between the leaders of Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regions.

The people have received temporary international protection status from UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency. They were waiting to be processed at Al-huda primary school.

Fighting in southern Ethiopia has caused some 50,000 to flee over the border to Kenya as of October 29, according to the UN.

The figure represents a sharp jump from the 36,000 recorded two days before. The number could quickly change given the situation on the ground, according to Fatima Mohammed-Cole, the UNHCR representative for Kenya.

An estimated 50,000 people have fled violence in Ethiopia to seek safety in Kenya, many of them women and children. UNHCR is on the ground, working with partners to provide urgent assistance. People fleeing violence need protection and safety.

The unrest was sparked on October 20 after a Somali regional flag was hoisted on the Ethiopian side of Moyale, a city jointly administered between Somali and Oromia. Several people have died in clashes, sources told AFP on Saturday.

Many of those who had fled were women and children, Mohammed-Cole said.

"While some are staying with relatives and host communities, others have sought shelter in temporary locations like schools and churches," she added.

UNHCR has sent an emergency team to the region and is working with the Kenyan government, alongside other humanitarian organisations such as the Red Cross, to provide aid to those displaced.

Indian tourist killed after two helicopters collide near Everest base camp

An Indian tourist has died after two helicopters collided while attempting to land near the base camp of Mount Everest, two officials have confirmed to the BBC.

Verified footage of the crash showed the helicopter blades of the two aircraft clipping each other as they came into land at around 08:15 local time (02:30 GMT) in Pheriche, approximately 12km (7 miles) south of Mount Everest Base Camp.

Helicopter company Fishtail Air named the man killed in the crash as Vasanth Kumar Balaramudu.

The helicopter company said one of its vehicles was involved in the collision and that another passenger and the helicopter's captain had been injured.

The injured passengers and crew members on board were rescued and taken to Kathmandu, Fishtail Air added in a statement.

The injured passenger was a tourist from New Zealand, an official of Solukhumbu district, Bhupendra Thapa, told BBC Nepal.

The other helicopter involved was operated by Air Dynasty and had been carrying cargo, the company said.

It was operated by one crew member who sustained no injuries, it added.

A spokesman for Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority, Gyanendra Bhul, said: "It appears the accident happened when two helicopters... attempted to land at the same spot."

In the video footage of the incident, the weather conditions look clear and no strong wind effects are visible. One helicopter appears to be making a more rapid descent than the other.

Helicopters are widely used for transport in the Himalayan nation due to its challenging terrain. But its rapidly changing weather conditions and high altitude often make aviation operations hazardous.

Four charged with attempted murder after South African farmer shot and tortured

Donovan Marx's family and officals have welcomed the swift arrests of suspects linked to the farm attack.

Four people have been charged with attempted murder in South Africa over a brutal attack on a cattle farmer, who was assaulted and tortured in what has been described as a "senseless and barbaric" act.

Donovan Marx, 50, was attacked during a house robbery on his farm in Ventersdorp, a small town in South Africa's North West province, last Wednesday.

Marx was ambushed as he returned home, shot and stabbed and had his ears cut off in the horrific ordeal, police said.

Five people were arrested over the weekend but only four appeared in court on Tuesday.

The suspects, aged between 26 and 56, were charged with attempted murder, robbery and illegal possession of firearms and ammunition.

The fifth suspect has since turned state witness, the North West police chief confirmed on Tuesday.

The horrific attack has caused widespread outrage in a country which is used to high levels of violence.

Police last week explained how the attack on Mark happened.

A group of masked men armed with guns approached a worker at Mark's house as he was mowing the lawn, they said in a statement.

The attackers then demanded to know where Marx was before tying the worker's hands and feet with cable ties.

When Marx returned home, police said two of the suspects allegedly approached him and shot him in the upper body.

"They [then] dragged him inside the house, tied his hands and feet with cable ties, and allegedly stabbed him."

The suspects then ransacked the house and took three firearms from a safe before escaping with Marx's van.

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President Bola Tinubu fulfils $100K promise to Super Falcons for 10th WAFCON victory

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has fulfilled his $100,000 promise to Nigeria's Senior Female National Team, the Super Falcons, following their historic victory at the 2025 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON), where Nigeria clinched a record-extending 10th continental title.

The players have begun receiving payments of about ₦140 million, representing the naira equivalent of the $100,000 reward promised by the President after the team staged a remarkable comeback to defeat hosts Morocco 3-2 in the final in July 2025.

The Super Falcons, who were trailing 2-0, produced a spirited second-half performance to stun the hosts and reclaim the African crown, further cementing their status as the continent's most successful women's national team.

Team captain, Rasheedat Ajibade, expressed gratitude to President Tinubu for fulfilling his promise, describing the gesture as a welcome recognition of the team's achievement and contribution to Nigerian sports.

The payment is another demonstration of President Tinubu's commitment to rewarding sporting excellence and motivating Nigerian athletes to achieve greater success on the international stage.

Since assuming office, President Tinubu has been a breath of fresh air for Nigerian sports, with his support extending beyond the Super Falcons to other national teams.

The President had similarly promised and delivered $100,000 rewards to members of D'Tigress following their triumph at the 2025 FIBA Women's AfroBasket, where Nigeria secured a fifth consecutive continental title.

Technocrats, Mallam Shehu Dikko and Hon. Bukola Olopade, who lead the National Sports Commission, have continued to drive a renewed approach to sports administration, with emphasis on athlete welfare, international exposure and the delivery of major sporting events.

These two technocrats have also overseen Nigeria, via the National Sports Commission, host about 30 international sporting competitions, reinforcing the country's growing profile as a destination for major sports events.

The Commission commends President Tinubu for his consistent support for Nigerian athletes and for demonstrating that sporting excellence deserves tangible recognition.

The President's commitment has strengthened confidence among athletes and sports administrators while encouraging a culture of reward, accountability and national pride.

13 days to go: Abuja is ready to run

It's 13 days to the PremiumTrust Bank Abuja City International half Marathon, and Nigeria's capital is about to show the world what it is made of. The clock is ticking, the streets are being prepared, and the medals are waiting as the capital gears up for one of its biggest days.

Organized by Nilayo Sports Management Limited, the race has grown into one of Nigeria's biggest and most respected road races. Elite athletes, recreational runners, fitness lovers, corporate teams and families from across Nigeria and beyond are all coming to run in the Federal Capital Territory.

It is not just about the race. It is about athletics, fitness, entertainment and sports tourism, and what Abuja represents to the world. What started as a marathon is now a movement. A movement for healthy living. A movement for youth engagement. A movement for national unity. Every year, thousands of people take to the streets of Abuja not just to run, but to be part of something bigger than themselves. This year will be no different, only bigger.

The Managing Director/CEO of Nilayo Sports Management Limited, Mrs. Yetunde Olopade, has assured that this year's edition will build on past successes and meet international standards.

"We are focused on athlete welfare, world-class logistics, medical support, security and a memorable experience for runners, volunteers, spectators and partners. This year's race will be bigger, better and more immersive for everyone."

With improved route management, entertainment zones along the course, better medical and security arrangements and a richer spectator experience, the 2026 edition promises to deliver a day of competition and celebration that promotes healthy living, youth engagement and sports tourism in the nation's capital.

On race day, Abuja will come alive. From the early morning start to the final finish, the streets will be filled with energy, music, colour and cheers. Hotels will be full. Businesses will thrive. The city's hospitality, tourism and creative sectors will feel the impact. It is a day when Abuja shows the world its beauty, its organization and its spirit.

Lagos goes gaga as Diouf, Adebayor, Appiah, others, headline African Legends Squad for Legends Game

Africa is set for a football spectacle as some of Africa's biggest football legends battle celebrated Super Eagles icons for the Legends Football Game on Sunday, November 8, at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan, Lagos.

Headlining the African Legends squad are former African Footballer of the Year Emmanuel Adebayor, Senegal's El-Hadji Diouf, Ivorian legend Didier Zokora and Ghana ex captain Stephen Appiah, whose illustrious careers left an enduring mark on the global game.

The star-studded African contingent is expected to feature alongside other celebrated names, including Ghana's John Paintsil and Anthony Baffoe, Senegal's Khalilou Fadiga, Burkina Faso's Aristide Bancé, Cameroon's Rigobert Song and Alexandre Song, Zimbabwe's Peter Ndlovu and Benjani Mwaruwari, as well as South Africa's Brian Baloyi.

They will take on Super Eagles legends from Nigeria's iconic 1994 and 1996 squads in a special encounter celebrating three decades since Nigeria became the kings of African football.

The game is presented by Toptier Sports Management in partnership with Afreximbank and CANEX, bringing together football icons whose achievements have inspired generations of fans across the continent.



Emmanuel Adebayor

Plateau United Technical Manager disappointed over home draw with Warrior Wolves

Plateau United technical adviser, Gbenga Ogunbote, has expressed disappointment following his side's 1-1 draw against Warri Wolves in their Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) Matchday 11 encounter.

The match, played at the New Jos Stadium on Sunday, saw Emmanuel Aribogha giving Warri Wolves the lead in the 24th minute before Samuel Ayanrinde restored parity for the hosts in the 60th minute.

Speaking after the match, Ogunbote blamed anxiety and poor decision-making among his players for their inability to secure maximum points.

He described the result as another disappointing home draw for the Jos-based club.

Plateau United currently sit sixth on the NPFL table with 16 points from 11 matches. They will face Nasarawa United in their next league fixture.



Nnamdi pledges ₦550,000 for men's javelin at Athletic Heat Anniversary Meet

Nigerian national record holder and Olympian Chinecherem Prosper Nnamdi has pledged ₦550,000 in prize money for the men's javelin throw at the Athletic Heat 10th Anniversary Meet, strengthening efforts to reward performance and promote athletics development in Nigeria.

The competition is scheduled for Saturday, November 7, 2026, at the Yaba College of Technology Sports Complex in Lagos, with the sponsorship set to reward the top eight finishers in the men's javelin event.

Nnamdi, one of Nigeria's leading javelin throwers, has enjoyed an impressive career on the international stage, winning medals at major championships and setting new standards for the country in the discipline.

He won bronze at the 2021 World Athletics U20 Championships in Nairobi, Kenya, becoming the first Nigerian athlete to win a medal in a field event at the championships since Esther Aghatise in 2002.

He subsequently claimed gold at the 2023 African Games in Accra, Ghana, and silver at the 2024 African Athletics Championships in Douala, Cameroon, before representing Nigeria at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

On April 17, 2026, Nnamdi further cemented his place in Nigerian athletics history by setting a national record of 84.68 metres at the Tom Jones Memorial in Florida, United States.

His collegiate career has also yielded significant success. While competing for the Baylor Bears, he won three Big 12 Outdoor Javelin titles between 2022 and 2024 before transferring to the Texas A&M Aggies, where he secured the 2026 SEC Outdoor Javelin title.

Under the sponsorship arrangement, the winner will receive ₦200,000, while the second-place finisher will earn ₦100,000 and the bronze medallist ₦75,000.

SPORTS

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FIFA Women's U-17 World Cup Semi-Final: Brazil are vulnerable in their defence line – *Moses Odubela*

As many permutations, analyses, predictions and forecasts spread ahead of Wednesday's semi-final clash between Nigeria and Brazil at the 2026 FIFA Women's U17 World, the South Americans' defence has been rated as 'vulnerable.'

This is the position of Lagos-based youth football expert, Moses Odubela (aka Mozaino1), who tipped the Flamingos for victory and move on to their first ever appearance in the competition's final.

However, Odubela did not hesitate to warn Coach Akeem Busari and his players that victory will not come easy for them, considering that any team in rge semi-final of a global football championship cannot be considered as a pushover.

The tactician and school teacher then took a swipe at Nigeria's football administrators, who he opined have not encouraged the country's large array of very capable coaches that are grooming talents at the grassroots.

Odubela declared in a chat with Sports247: "It is quite disheartening that the kind of leaders we have hardly give grassroots coaches the attention and support they deserve. They only show up to celebrate victories without recognising the hardwork, sacrifices and dedication that go into achieving those successes.

"Well, regarding Wednesday's encounter with Brazil, I believe Nigeria has a realistic chance of reaching the final. Brazil are a formidable opponent and their 2-1 comeback victory over China demonstrates their quality.

"However, the Flamingos have equally displayed resilience, character and an impressive fighting spirit throughout the competition. My advice to the coach and his technical crew is to approach the game with tactical discipline and maintain defensive concentration.

"The girls should look to exploit the spaces behind the Brazilian defence, as their backline has shown some vulnerabilities. Most importantly, the coach should encourage the players to express themselves confidently on the pitch and play without fear. Aluta continua, victoria acerta!"



U-17 WOMEN WCUP: NIGR V BRAZIL

Enugu Rangers CEO Amobi Ezeaku joins FIFA international transfer course in Miami

The General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of Rangers International, Amobi Ezeaku, has arrived at the FIFA offices in Miami, Florida, United States, to participate in an international football administration programme bringing together professionals from different parts of the world.

Ezeaku is attending the FIFA International Player Transfer Course alongside football administrators, legal practitioners and other stakeholders involved in the global transfer system.

The programme, which runs from November 3 to 6, 2026, provides an opportunity for participants to deepen their understanding of the regulatory, legal and operational processes that govern international player movements.

For the Rangers chief, however, the latest engagement represents another step in a professional journey that has increasingly combined football management with specialised legal and administrative education.

The FIFA International Player Transfer Course is a four-day educational programme organised by the governing body's Legal and Compliance Division. The 2026 edition is its fourth, following previous programmes in Zurich and Miami.

It is specifically designed for club and football association officials who manage international transfers or intend to work in that area. FIFA's Academic Board selects up to 30 participants for the programme.

The course focuses on the practical demands of the international transfer market, where more than 20,000 professional players move between approximately 5,000 clubs in different countries every year.

Participants are expected to study the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (RSTP), player registration, employment contracts and the rules governing Third-Party Ownership and Third-Party Influence.

Other areas include the responsibilities of football agents, the structure and execution of transfer agreements, and the operation of FIFA's Transfer Matching System (TMS), which facilitates the processing and registration of international transfers.



CAF Awards 2026: Akekoromowei, Adegbuyi lead Nigerian contingent in young player nominees

Nigerian forwards Janet Akekoromowei and Oluwakemi Adegbuyi have been nominated for the Women's Young Player of the Year award at the 2026 CAF Awards.

The duo are among 10 promising African footballers shortlisted for the prestigious individual award, following their impressive performances in women's football.

Akekoromowei and Adegbuyi will represent Nigeria in the race for the award, which recognises the continent's most outstanding young female football talent.

The nominees, as unveiled by the Confederation of African Football (CAF), include:

CAF competition tickets

1. Romaine Gandonou
2. Maéva Nyadjou
3. Grace-Ruth Sery
4. N'Sira Ouédraogo
5. Rose Kadzere
6. Fautina Azraf
7. Janet Akekoromowei
8. Oluwakemi Adegbuyi
9. Adji Ndiaye
10. Winfrida Gerald

The nomination of the two Nigerian forwards further highlights the country's growing influence in women's football and the emergence of promising young talents.

The 2026 CAF Awards will celebrate outstanding performances across African football, with the Young Player of the Year category expected to attract significant attention.

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