CDHR Demands Freedom For Kidnapped Borno Students After 103 Days

JOY ANIGBOGU
LAGOS

The Committee for Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) has asked the Federal Government to deploy the same strategy used in securing the release of the abducted Oriire school children in Oyo State in securing the freedom of over 42 children of Mussa Primary and Junior Secondary School kidnapped on May 15.

Comrade Yinka Folarin, President of CDHR, who spoke with *Daily Independent*, noted that the presidency should have deployed maximum force like it did in the case of Oyo to the case of Borno, stressing that President Tinubu's administration must double down its effort if truly

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US Halts Immigrant Visa Applications Worldwide

US immigrant visa applications have been paused by the Trump administration as the state department moves to tighten restrictions and limit access to applicants who they deem could end up relying on US assistance, a state department official confirmed to UK *The Guardian* Tuesday.

According to the newspaper, the agency launched the initiative at all embassies and consulates in early August, according to the official and visa appointments had to be adjusted to accommodate "in-depth training", according to the official. The state department has been working on updated guid-

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DAILY INDEPENDENT

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Tight Money, Low Appetite Cap Bank Credit At N59.7trn

BAMIDELE OGUNWUSI
LAGOS

Deposit money banks' credit to the Nigerian economy rose marginally to N59.7 trillion in the first quarter of 2026, as restrictive monetary conditions, elevated funding costs and weak private sector demand continued to constrain lending growth.

According to the Central Bank of Nigeria's latest Quarterly Statistical Bulletin, aggregate bank credit increased by just one percent year-on-year and four percent quarter-on-quarter in Q1 2026, underscoring the cautious approach adopted by lenders amid a high-interest-rate environment.

The subdued expansion reflects the impact of the CBN's tight monetary policy stance, which has made the cost of funds relatively high while encouraging banks to be more selective in creating

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Olakunle Osoba, Deputy Managing Director, Nigeria Liquified Natural Gas (NLNG) (left); Adeleye Falade, Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, NLNG (second left); President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (middle); Mohammed Idris, Minister of Information and National Orientation (second right), and Matthieu Boayer, Managing Director, Total Energy, during President Tinubu's audience with NLNG at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, on Wednesday. PHOTO: STATE HOUSE

FG Launches RAMCO To Drive N3trn Renewable Energy Push

● Unveils $1bn Social Protection Scheme For Vulnerable Households

CHIDI UGWU
ABUJA

The Federal Government has launched a new company to tackle one of the most persistent weaknesses in Nigeria's public infrastructure system — the failure to keep completed projects operational — with the Renewable Asset Management Company (RAMCO) expected to mobilise about N3 trillion in fresh investment into the renewable energy sector.

The initiative marks a shift in government's approach to renewable energy from simply funding and commissioning projects to ensuring that the assets continue to generate electricity, earn revenue and attract further capital throughout their economic lives.

Minister of Power, Joseph Tegbe, who unveiled RAMCO at a stakeholders' event in Abuja on Wednesday, said the company was designed to address the longstanding gap between infrastructure delivery and infrastructure management.

According to him, Nigeria had historically concentrated on constructing public infrastructure while paying

CONTINUES ON P29

News

NEWSROOM
charlesokoh126@yahoo.com
+234-8111813017
ADVERT
independentadvert2020@gmail.com;

Tope Adaramola, Executive Secretary/CEO, Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB) (left); Funke Adenusi, Deputy President, NCRIB (second left); Ekeoma Ezeibe, President, NCRIB (third left); Umesh Rathod, Managing Director/CEO, Prestige Assurance Plc (third right); Abhinandan Singh, Executive Director, Operations (second right), and Patricia Nkem Jibrin-Yaro, Assistant General Manager II, Technical, both of Prestige Assurance Plc, during the NCRIB members' evening, August edition sponsored by Prestige Assurance Plc, in Lagos, on Wednesday. PHOTO: KINGSTON DANIEL

Alia Reiterates Govt's Resolve To Strengthen Education, Accelerate Development

TOR VANDE-ACKA
MAKURDI

Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia, has stated the resolve of the government to strengthen education, with plans to recruit more teachers and consolidate on the gains recorded by his administration in the last three years.

Governor Alia, who made the pledge while engaging members of the All Progressives Congress (APC), and other stakeholders during the ongoing thank-you tour, also pledged to accelerate people-oriented development projects across the state.

He assured the people of the state in a statement made available to newsmen in Makurdi on Wednesday, by the State Publicity Secretary of the APC, Benedict Yawe, that his administration would sustain investments in human capital development and infrastructure.

Alia observed that after recruiting 9,700 primary school teachers, his administration was already planning to employ more teachers for both primary and secondary schools to address manpower needs and improve the quality of education.

He further stated that government would continue to prioritise projects that directly affect the lives of the people, stressing that the achievements recorded so far by his administration, represented part of the administration's broader development agenda for Benue.

Alia also called for unity among the people, urging them to place the collective interest of Benue above political differences and work together for peace, stability and development.

The governor commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his support to Benue and urged the people to sustain cooperation with the Federal Government to enable both administrations to continue delivering development to the state.

In his remarks on the occasion, the Chairman, Buruku Local Government, Raymond Zege, assured the governor of his people's continued support, pledging that Buruku would back his re-election in 2027.

Meanwhile, the Chairman, Tarka Local Government, Raphael Yenge, expressed appreciation for the projects executed across Gboko and Tarka, assuring him of massive support from the people of the area.

Elder Atsenda Ishwa, who spoke for the people of Gboko, and Elder Iortyer, representing Tarka, commended Governor Alia for the achievements recorded and the legacy projects, appealed for additional interventions.

The APC State Chairman, Chief Benjamin Omale, thanked the people of the area, for their sustained support for the party and the Alia administration, urging them to intensify mobilisation for the success of the APC in 2027.

The State Publicity Secretary of the APC, Benedict Yawe, noted that the engagements, that were attended by political office holders, traditional rulers, religious leaders, women and youth leaders and other stakeholders, reinforces the connection of the administration with the grassroots.

Under Accord Party Govt, Petrol Price Will Be N650 — Olawepo-Hashim

JOY ANIGBOGU
LAGOS

Presidential candidate of the Accord Party, Dr. Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim, has said Nigerians shouldn't have to pay more than ₦605 per litre for petrol under an Accord administration.

According to him, the price could eventually fall to as low as □200 per litre if Nigeria gets its production costs and exchange rate right.

Hashim, in a statement on Wednesday, said the proposed price would represent a starting sustainable price, not an artificially subsidised price, and insisted that the reduction wouldn't come at the expense of government revenue or Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) revenues; ₦605 per litre is our starting sustainable price for petrol. Nobody will buy petrol above ₦610 under our government. It could be as low as ₦200."

He said the key to achieving the price wouldn't be another opaque subsidy regime but a fundamental correction of what he described as Nigeria's distorted petroleum cost and accounting structure.

Hashim, who has consistently opposed the removal of petroleum subsidy, described the previous justification for subsidy removal as "accounting magic", arguing that Nigeria must first establish the genuine cost of producing, refining, transporting and distributing petrol before declaring that the government is subsidising consumers.

"Any time you sell a product above its legitimate cost of production, refining, transportation and insurance, you cannot call the difference between that price and an international benchmark a subsidy loss. That is the opportunity cost."

According to him, Nigeria has often approached petroleum pricing by comparing the domestic value of crude or refined products with international market prices, rather than determining what it actually costs Nigeria to produce and deliver the product to Nigerian consumers.

He said this creates a misleading impression that the government is necessarily making a loss whenever Nigerians receive petroleum products below an international benchmark.

"A country doesn't subsidise itself simply because it chooses to use its own resources to provide affordable energy to its citizens."

PENGASSAN Visits NUPRC, Promises Collaboration To Unlock 3mmbopd

CHIDI UGWU
ABUJA

The new leadership of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (PENGASSAN), has promised to work closely with the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) to unlock 3 million barrels per day by 2030.

According to a statement signed by Eniola Akinkuotu, Head, Media and Corporate Communications of the NUPRC, the new President of PENGASSAN, Comrade Bosun Olabiyi-Agoro, said this in Abuja on Wednesday, August 26, 2026 when he visited the corporate headquarters of the NUPRC.

"The President of Nigeria has an ambition which he runs through the CCE which is to make sure that by 2030 we are able to produce 3 million barrels per day. All of us have to work to make that happen. It will be our happiness to make sure that that target is actually attained," the PENGASSAN President said.

"We can assure you that we are here to collaborate. We will be very reasonable," he added.

In her remarks, the Commission Chief Executive, NUPRC, Mrs. Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan, said the President Bola Tinubu-led Federal Government had been working assiduously to increase production as evidenced by the latest executive order which is targeted at deep offshore investments.

She noted that production had risen from a low of 1.1mmbopd a few years ago to an estimated 1.755mmbopd in 2026.

Eyesan, however, said industrial stability remains critical to hitting higher production targets.

She, therefore, sought PENGASSAN's support.

Abdullahi Commends Remi Tinubu Over Food Support For Vulnerable Nigerians

SUZAN EDEH,
BAUCHI

Former First Lady of Bauchi State, Hajiya Hadiza Muhammad Abdullahi, has commended the First Lady of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, for using the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI) to provide food support to vulnerable Nigerians across the country.

Abdullahi gave the commendation in Bauchi during an interview with journalists at the formal presentation of food items under the Renewed Hope Initiative's Food Outreach Scheme.

She said the intervention would provide relief to persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, while helping to support their families and improve their overall wellbeing.

According to her, the food outreach scheme was designed to complement the federal government's efforts to address food insecurity and other socio-economic challenges confronting vulnerable Nigerians.

Hadiza expressed appreciation to the First Lady for extending the intervention to 29 states, including Bauchi, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

She also commended the two donors who supported the programme, expressing gratitude for their generosity and sustained commitment to improving the welfare of vulnerable Nigerians.

The former First Lady praised Senator Oluremi Tinubu for her commitment to ensuring that the Renewed Hope Initiative reaches Nigerians facing difficult circumstances.

She described the food outreach as a significant intervention that would provide immediate support to families in need and complement the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

"Our goal at the Renewed Hope Initiative is to complement the Renewed Hope Agenda by supporting Nigerians to strive and achieve their aspirations irrespective of their circumstances or status," she said.

Nigeria Prize For Literature: Eze, Ifowodo, Oburumu In Race For $100,000

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH

The field has narrowed and the race for the 2026 The Nigeria Prize for Literature has reached a decisive stage, as the Advisory Board announces the three shortlisted poetry titles in contention for the prestigious prize.

Following the long list of 11 titles announced in July from the initial pool of 223 submissions, the shortlist of three works has emerged, bringing their authors one step closer to the coveted $100,000 prize money.

According to the Advisory Board, "James Ngwu Eze, in Unbind Me Now, uses language that is fluid and aesthetically captivating. This collection decries the sociopolitical dysfunction of the nation and the world at large, interrogating the human condition, and charting a path for redemption. Ogaga Ifowodo, in Why Does God Need A Gun?, depicts religious and political violence in Nigeria, couched in a rich allegorical style.

Delivered with the tripartite structure of body, mind and spirit, Ifowodo interrogates those forces that emblematise the world's challenging ethos. Tares Oburumu's Flora's Love Colony is written in a densely poetic style on Nigeria's troubled history. It challenges mainstream narrative and is an inspiring socio-historical collection, captured in lucid imagery and evocative language."

The shortlist marks the culmination of an intensive judging process that has placed the works under close scrutiny for their language, form, originality, craftsmanship and lasting literary value.

20-Year-Old Arrested For Allegedly Macheting Father To Death In Abatete

GLORIA ANAEZE L
ONITSHA

A 20-year-old man, identified as Pascal Ogbogu, has been arrested for allegedly murdering his 56-year-old father with a machete in Abatete, Idemili North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

The incident reportedly occurred in the evening of Tuesday, August 25, 2026, when the suspect allegedly attacked his father and fled the scene.

Following a distress call, operatives of the Eziowelle Police Division, working with family members and members of the Abatete Vigilante, swiftly mobilised to the scene. They reportedly found the deceased lying lifeless in a pool of blood, with a deep machete wound to the throat.

The body was subsequently evacuated to a mortuary for preservation and autopsy.

The suspect, who reportedly fled immediately after the alleged attack, was apprehended in the early hours of Wednesday, August 26, through a coordinated effort by the Police and members of the Abatete Vigilante.

His arrest was reportedly aided by timely information and cooperation from community members, who assisted security operatives in tracking and locating him.

The Commissioner of Police, Anambra State Command, CP Nnanna Oji Ama, commended the family members, community residents, Police operatives and Vigilante personnel for their prompt response and cooperation.

CP Ama said effective community participation, timely information sharing and strong collaboration between security agencies and local communities remained critical to successful policing and the protection of lives and property.

News

Return Of Subsidy: Advisors Did Former VP Atiku No Favour — Sen. Arise

YAQOUB POPOOLA
ADO-EKITI

Sen. Ayo Arise, former Senator and chieftain of the All-Progressives Congress, has said the current administration deserves credit for ensuring regular payment of salaries without recourse to loans, arguing that the stability has improved the purchasing power of Nigerians.

Speaking during an interview on Tuesday, Sen. Arise said the achievement is often taken for granted because it is happening in real time without interruption.

"I would imagine that the former VP's advisors have not done him any favour. They've not done him by explaining that, look, when you have the government now having sufficient funds without any form of interruption to pay salaries as I told you," he said.

The former lawmaker representing Ekiti North Senatorial District noted that in the past, delays in salary payment had ripple effects on families and the economy.

"Without running to the federal government to ask for any sort of loans, you know, to pay salaries. Some of this is being taken for granted. It's not because it's happening without happening in real time and so nobody's complaining," he added.

Taraba Council Boss Inspects Kashimbila Site for Proposed Naval Base

JANET NYAJON AUDU

The proposed establishment of a Naval Base in Kashimbila, Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, has received renewed attention following an on-site assessment by the Chairman of Takum Local Government Council, Hon. Bako Benjamin.

Benjamin, on Wednesday, led a team of officials to inspect the designated location, as part of ongoing efforts to facilitate the take-off of the security facility.

The inspection was conducted in collaboration with officials of the Taraba Geographic Information Service (TAGIS) and a military delegation led by Brigadier General E. Bawa, who took the team through the proposed site and highlighted the strategic significance of the project.

According to the military delegation, the proposed naval facility is expected to strengthen security operations within Kashimbila and surrounding communities while contributing to broader security efforts across Takum and Southern Taraba.

Falana Asks FG To Implement NHIA Act, Ensure Health Cover For Nigerians

KENNETH ATAVTI
ABUJA

Chief Femi Falana, Constitutional lawyer, Human rights activists and Senior Advocate of Nigeria, SAN, has asked the Federal Government to fully implement the National Health Insurance Authority, NHIA, Act, 2022, to guarantee health insurance coverage for Nigerians.

Falana said the law, which provides for mandatory health insurance, should be enforced to protect citizens, particularly vulnerable groups and workers in the entertainment industry, from the financial burden of healthcare.

He spoke on Wednesday, at the launch of a N1 billion insurance trust fund initiative for players in the entertainment industry.

The initiative, launched by Groove Tyme Entertainment in collaboration with Meristem, Leadway Assurance and other stakeholders, is aimed at providing insurance protection for artists and other vulnerable groups in the sector.

The event also featured the presentation of certificates to members of the initiative's Board of Trustees.

Falana, who commended the initiative, said Nigeria had historically relied on the African extended family system to provide support for vulnerable members of society, but argued that the system had been weakened by social and economic changes.

"There's what we call the African extended family system whereby nobody was left in a state of despair," he said.

The lawyer said developed countries had established social insurance systems to protect citizens against hardship and called for similar measures to be effectively implemented in Nigeria.

He recalled that the National Health Insurance Scheme, established in 1999, had provided coverage to only a fraction of Nigeria's population.

According to him, the situation prompted the enactment of the NHIA Act in 2022, which provides for mandatory health insurance coverage.

Falana said the law should now be fully implemented to ensure that Nigerians, including entertainers, could access healthcare without being forced to depend on charity.

"So, what we are therefore going to do, we are going to ask for the rights of the artists that are going to be covered by this programme," he said.

Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, Minister of Interior (left); Kingsley Udeh, Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology (middle), and Vice President Kashim Shettima during the meeting of the National Addressing Council (NAC), chaired by vice president, in Abuja, on Monday.

30 Years After, Ekiti Still Locked, Afe Babalola Tasks FG On ABUAD Road

YAQOUB POPOOLA
ADO-EKITI

Aare Afe Babalola, the founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, has made a fresh appeal to the Federal Government to urgently rehabilitate the road leading to ABUAD, lamenting that 30 years after its creation, Ekiti State remains "locked" in terms of access and infrastructure.

In a statement made available to journalists on Tuesday, Aare Babalola said despite collective efforts to build Ekiti into a showpiece among Nigerian states, the state is still "land-locked, motorway-locked, rail-way-locked, industry-locked, power-locked, and airport-locked."

He, however, commended the Ekiti State Governor, Mr. Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji, for his efforts in securing the commencement of commercial flights into the Ekiti Agro-Allied International Cargo Airport on December 10, 2025.

"At the inaugural commercial flight into the Ekiti Agro-Allied International Cargo Airport on December 10, 2025, Governor Oyebanji publicly acknowledged my altruistic gesture of committing my hard-earned $1.6 million and N356,795,039.18 towards the completion of the airport," Aare Babalola said.

He explained that his intervention included the direct donation of Navigational Aids (CVOR/DME) and Control Tower equipment worth $1.6 million, as well as the construction of a 100-car capacity car park opposite the terminal building at a cost of N356,795,039.18.

Aare Babalola drew attention to the deplorable state of the Ado-Ijan-Ilumoba-Ikole Road, which he described as a Federal Government Road first constructed by the Colonial Masters over 100 years ago.

"At that time, it was the only link between Lagos-Abeokuta-Ibadan-Ilesa-Ado-Ekiti-Ikare and Lokoja as there was no Abuja then," he noted. "Between Ilesa-Ado-Ekiti-Ikare in particular, the road has remained long and winding because it was constructed with hoes and cutlasses which made it a mere expansion of foot paths. And so, up till now, nobody cares about the road."

According to him, the neglect has made the road impassable over the years, forcing ABUAD to spend "billions of Naira" on its repair and maintenance, including the old Ureje Bridge, between 2010 and 2019 as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility.

Imo NYSC Coordinator Urges Corps Members To Remain Committed At PPAs, Host Communities

APATA OYENIRAN

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Imo State Coordinator, Mrs. Doris Erumwunse, has urged the 2026 Batch 'B' Stream II Corps Members to remain focused and committed to their assignments as they commence the Primary Assignment, which is the next phase of the national service.

Addressing the Corps Members at the official closing ceremony of the 2026 Batch 'B' Stream II orientation course, the State Coordinator informed them that being diligent in their assigned duties during their Primary Assignment would make them stand out, gain trust, and create opportunities for success and leadership positions during their service year and beyond.

To achieve such a standard, the Corps Members, as "Brand Ambassadors" of the Scheme, were encouraged to be disciplined, loyal, and resourceful, while upholding other laudable virtues instilled in them during the course of the orientation.

Mrs. Erumwunse also encouraged the Corps Members to quickly settle down in their host communities, integrate, respect the traditions and culture of the people, and contribute immensely to the development of the communities through the Community Development Service (CDS) projects.

She noted that the people are readily available to warmly receive them as they commence their Primary Assignment in all the nooks and crannies of the State.

The Corps Members, aside from developing their host communities, were advised on the need to invest in themselves by vigorously pursuing the Post-Camp Skills Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) trainings.

She emphasised that this would help them remain empowered and financially independent.

Speaking further, Mrs. Erumwunse implored the Corps Members to obey the rules guiding the service year, avoid unauthorised and night journeys, and use social media responsibly to sustain the good image of the noble Scheme.

At 35, Speaker Guwor Says Delta's Greatest Asset Is Its People, Peace, Unity

GODDY UMUKORO
ASABA

As Delta State marks 35 years of its creation, the Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Dennis Guwor, says the state's proudest achievement is not just roads and bridges, but the peace, unity and human capital that have sustained development over three and a half decades.

In an interview to mark the August 27, 2026 anniversary, Guwor reflected on Delta's journey since 1991, describing the transformation of Asaba from a small community to a major metropolitan capital as one of the defining moments of the state.

"When Delta State was created, Asaba was not the metropolitan capital that we know today. But over the years, it has expanded tremendously and has developed into a major urban centre", Guwor said in a press statement made available to newsmen by his Chief Press Secretary, Nkem Nwaeke.

The Speaker, who is the chairman, Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures in Nigeria, identified some milestones that shaped the state most: the construction of the Bomadi Bridge which opened up riverine communities, the development of Airport and major flyovers, the expansion of roads, establishment of four universities, construction of a world class secretariat for workers, amongst others.

"The Bomadi Bridge represented inclusion. When you connect a community by road, you are connecting that community to economic opportunities, healthcare, education and government services", Guwor stated.

He also highlighted the establishment of new state-owned universities and other higher institutions in the state, noting that "when you establish a university, you are developing human beings who will drive development for decades".

News

Lagos Lawmaker, Yishawu, Launches Two-Year Free Health Insurance Scheme For Constituents

CHIBUIKE CHUKWU

Residents of Eti-Osa Constituency II in Lagos State have received a two-year free health insurance coverage under the Ilera Eko Standard Jaara Health Insurance Scheme, sponsored by the lawmaker representing the constituency, Gbolahan Yishawu.

The programme, which is expected to cover 5,000 residents, was launched on Wednesday at the Y-Arena Multipurpose Centre, Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos, with a large turnout of beneficiaries and residents of the constituency.

Speaking on the initiative, Yishawu said he introduced the programme to educate residents on the benefits of health insurance, particularly as many could not afford the rising cost of healthcare.

According to him, the initiative is aimed at sensitising residents to the benefits of health insurance and providing them with access to healthcare without the burden of paying huge medical bills.

"Many people cannot afford healthcare and have to look for someone to bear the cost. With this healthcare insurance, what they are supposed to pay huge amounts of money for will be drastically reduced, and in some cases, they may not have to pay at all.

Guinness Open For More Records 428 Winners After First Month Of Weekly Live Draws

Guinness Nigeria's Open For More National Consumer Promotion (NCP) has recorded 428 winners after four weeks of its weekly live draws. The promotion, which kicked off with its first live draw on July 31, has seen 107 consumers emerge as winners every Friday. Seven consumers win N1 million each, while another 100 consumers receive N100,000 each.

The weekly draws take place every Friday at 3:00 pm on the Guinness Nigeria Instagram page, where consumers can watch the selection of winners live. With four draws now completed, 28 consumers have so far won the N1 million prize, while 400 others have won N100,000, bringing the total number of winners to 428.

The draws are conducted under the supervision of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) to ensure a transparent and credible process. At the latest draw, FCCPC was represented by Odion Oyelowo, Senior Standards Officer, and Omolola Allison, Assistant Chief Scientist Officer.

Kefas Moves To Strengthen Military Presence, Security Operations In Taraba

JANET NYAJON AUDU

Taraba State Governor, Agbu Kefas, has assured the Nigerian Army of the state government's readiness to deepen its partnership with the military as part of efforts to consolidate peace and strengthen security operations across the state and the North-East.

Kefas gave the assurance in Jalingo on Wednesday when he received the General Officer Commanding (GOC), Major General, Chinedu Ralph Nnebeife, of the newly established 10 Division of the Nigerian Army, stressing that effective security remains fundamental to the state's development agenda.

The governor said the state government was prepared to provide the necessary institutional and logistical support to enable the new military formation commence operations effectively and discharge its responsibilities.

As part of measures to facilitate the division's take-off, Kefas disclosed that the state had made temporary accommodation available for personnel of the formation while construction work continues on its permanent barracks.

He said the decision was part of the administration's broader commitment to creating the right conditions for security agencies to operate effectively in the state.

According to the governor, the presence of the new Army division would enhance the capacity of security forces to respond to threats and provide greater protection for communities in Taraba and neighbouring states.

He emphasised that the government would continue to cooperate with the Armed Forces and other security agencies, particularly in areas requiring coordinated responses to security challenges.

"Security is key to peace and development," Kefas said, adding that his administration would continue to support measures aimed at protecting lives and property and creating a stable environment for economic activities.

The governor's position reflects the administration's belief that sustained security is essential to attracting investment, expanding economic opportunities and improving the welfare of residents.

FG Commissions 100 Electric Buses For Civil Servants

CHIBUZOR EMEJOR
ABUJA

The Federal Government through the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation has commissioned 100 Renewed Hope Mass Transit Electric Buses dedicated to Federal Civil Servants nationwide, in a major intervention to ease transportation costs and boost productivity in the Public Service.

The commissioning ceremony held in Abuja on Wednesday featured the handover of the first batch of 37 locally assembled electric buses, with the remaining 63 expected to be deployed in phases.

In her remarks,Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack,

Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, described the commissioning as her "parting gift" to the Service as her tenure comes to an end in 24 hours.

"To God be all the glory. I could not have asked for a more fitting note on which to close this chapter of service than receiving and handing over the keys to something that will keep moving, keep working, long after I have gone home," she said.

She noted that the intervention was a practical demonstration of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu.

"Transport is about far more than moving people. For many civil servants, the daily commute shakes their finances, their safety, their punctuality, and ultimately their productivity.

"An intervention that makes transportation safer, more reliable, and more affordable is therefore not a peripheral welfare gesture. It is an investment in a more productive Civil Service."

Walson-Jack revealed that the acquisition of these buses was funded through the Renewed Hope Infrastructure Development Fund.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, Senator John Owan Enoh, said the buses align with Mr. President's vision of pairing economic reforms with direct welfare relief.

"What we are launching today is more than buses. It is about welfare. It is about productivity.

Ndagi Alhassan, Team Lead and Registrar/CEO, Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (left), and Pastor Umo Eno, Governor, Akwa Ibom State, during a stakeholders' engagement on ARISE 2.0, the state's economic development plan and a review of projects scheduled for commissioning in September 2026, held at Government House, where the governor received awards from the Body of Heads of Nursing Services Department and Principals of Schools in Federal Health Institutions (BOHNAPFHI), and the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives, in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, on Tuesday.

NIMASA Strengthens Enforcement Of Cabotage Compliance

ANDREW UTULU

The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) has announced enhanced enforcement of the statutory requirements for indigenous participation in Nigeria's Cabotage trade and maritime activities.

This disclosure was contained in a marine notice issued pursuant to the Agency's statutory mandate of implementing applicable laws including the NIMASA Act 2007 and the Coastal and Inland Shipping (Cabotage) Act 2003, in addition to the Cabotage regulations and implementing guidelines.

Under the enhanced enforcement regime, all persons and entities requiring vessels for Cabotage operations are required to use vessels that meet applicable Nigerian ownership, registration, manning and construction requirements and are duly registered in the Special Register for Vessels and Ship Owning Companies Engaged in Cabotage.

The Agency further requires all vessels, owners, operators, charterers, managers and other stakeholders engaged in Cabotage activities to maintain valid statutory certificates, licenses, registrations and other required documentation.

Cabotage vessels must, as applicable, be wholly owned by Nigerian citizens, duly registered in the relevant Special Register, manned by Nigerian citizens and built in Nigeria.

Deployment of vessels that do not meet these requirements may only be considered where the requisite Nigerian capacity is unavailable and the statutory conditions have been established and verified by NIMASA.

The Agency will continue to monitor compliance with the Cabotage Act, its regulations and applicable guidelines, in a bid to entrench maritime governance and ensure that jobs meant for Nigerians are not outsourced.

The Marine Notice, which takes immediate effect, further reinforces NIMASA's commitment to promoting indigenous participation in local and international shipping trade, developing local maritime capacity and ensuring that Cabotage operations contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's maritime and economic development.

Sanwo-Olu Mourns *Eagle Online* Publisher, Oladipo

VICTORIA OJUGBANA

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has expressed grief over the passing of the Publisher of The Eagle Online, Dotun Oladipo, describing the death as shocking, painful, and heartbreaking.

In a statement issued on Wednesday by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Gboyega Akosile, Governor Sanwo-Olu extended his condolences to his immediate and extended families, the management and staff of Premium Eagle Media Limited, publishers of The Eagle Online, following the sudden death of the organisation's Managing Editor and Chief Executive Officer.

He also sent a message of condolence to the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP), and the Nigeria Guild of Editors (NGE) on the loss of Oladipo, whom he described as a cerebral and prolific writer.

Governor Sanwo-Olu noted that although the death of Oladipo, the immediate past President of GOCOP, was a rude shock to his family, friends, colleagues, and associates, they should accept it as the will of God.

He stated: "The death of one of Nigeria's prolific journalists, writers and media entrepreneurs, Dotun Oladipo, is a significant loss to the media industry and Nigeria, as well as his family and friends. He will be sorely missed. He made numerous positive impacts in his lifetime, contributing meaningfully to the growth and development of journalism, especially with his pioneering work in online journalism in Nigeria.

"Dotun's sudden death is shocking and painful, but we should find solace in the modest achievements of the late publisher. Death is inevitable, as we all will die. Our purpose in life is not to live forever, but to create something that will outlive us, bearing in mind that it is not the length of life that matters, but the depth of life.

"Dotun Oladipo led an exemplary life. He was a dutiful husband and a good father to his children. Most importantly, he touched countless lives through his profession as a journalist, rising to become Publisher, Managing Editor, and Chief Executive Officer of a media organisation.

"I have met Dotun personally during some of my media interactions with journalists. He was brilliant, calm and always presented his case in a very interesting and professional manner. I remember his presentation of the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers' case about three years ago. You can't but listen to him."

Oladipo

News

$16bn Power Allegation: Atiku Asks Tinubu Admin To Probe Him

SAMUEL OGIDAN
ABUJA

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) has challenged the Tinubu administration and its supporters to produce concrete evidence of any wrongdoing against him and submit such evidence to the appropriate authorities for investigation, rather than repeatedly reviving old allegations whenever questions are raised about the management of Nigeria's public resources.

Atiku's challenge followed renewed allegations surrounding the power sector, privatisation and public assets, which he described as an attempt to divert public attention from a more pressing question confronting the Federal Government: what has happened to the money saved by government following the removal of petrol subsidy?

Atiku, in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja by his Senior Special Assistant on Public Communication, Phrank Shaibu, said Nigerians should not allow the resurrection of allegations dating back nearly two decades to distract from the economic hardship currently confronting millions of citizens.

He said the $16 billion power-sector allegation, among other claims repeatedly associated with the privatisation and management of public assets, should be subjected to proper investigation if there is credible evidence of wrongdoing.

"The National Assembly investigated the power projects. I was never invited to answer any allegation of wrongdoing.

"Yes, I chaired the National Council on Privatisation as vice president. But on the power project, I disagreed with its concept and did not preside over its implementation. The responsible minister did. The same applies to the Aluminium Smelter matter.

"I have repeatedly asked to be investigated. I left office in 2007 and have spent much of the period since then opposing governments in power. If there is evidence that I stole public money, why has no government produced it before a court?

"It is still not too late. Investigate me. Invite me. Produce the evidence. Prosecute me if you have a case. But propaganda cannot substitute for evidence," he said.

Atiku said the renewed focus on old allegations had intensified because of his persistent demand for transparency and accountability over the revenues generated by the removal of petrol subsidy.

According to him, Nigerians were asked to endure unprecedented economic hardship on the assurance that the removal of subsidy would free substantial resources for infrastructure, social investment and economic development.

"They removed subsidy from the poor and promised that the sacrifice would free resources for development. Nigerians accepted extraordinary pain on that promise.

"Today, petrol is more expensive, transportation is more expensive, food is more expensive and the purchasing power of the Nigerian worker has been devastated.

"Meanwhile, government revenues have increased, while fiscal incentives, waivers, tax credits and concessions continue to be available to powerful economic interests.

"So our question remains brutally simple: Where is the people's money?

"You cannot take relief away from the poor, celebrate the resulting revenue and then tell the same impoverished citizens that government intervention on their behalf is economically irresponsible while interventions benefiting powerful interests are called incentives.

"That hypocrisy is precisely what we are challenging," he said.

The former vice president maintained that the scale of the resources generated following subsidy removal makes the issue too important to be dismissed through political accusations or social-media exchanges.

Olayide Akau–Bognet, Chief Nursing Officer (left); Adetomiwa Bankole, Consultant, Obstetrics and Gynaecology (second left); Akinbiyi Oke, Chief Executive Officer (third left); Moyo Awotile, patient (third right); Adeyemi Adeyinka, Group Head, Medical Services, Avon HMO (second right), and Temidire Oke, Senior Nursing Manager, during the fibroid documentary screening at AVON Medical, Surulere, Lagos, on Tuesday.

Atiku Confused Over Subsidy Policy, Playing Politics — Presidency

JOY ANIGBOGU; INNOCENT OWEH

The presidency has slammed former Vice President Atiku Abubakar over what it described as third U-turn in one week regarding his position on subsidy removal.

Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, in a statement on Wednesday, noted that the latest comments by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar on petrol subsidy raise a fundamental question.

"Is he seriously proposing an economic policy, or is he simply playing politics with the temporary discomfort Nigerians face?

"Within a week, Nigerians have heard three different explanations of what an Atiku administration would do about petrol subsidy. The confusion has now become impossible to ignore.

"First, Atiku's spokesperson, Paul Ibe, said Atiku would restore petrol subsidy if elected president and later phase it out. Ibe described it as a temporary intervention intended to give Nigerians and businesses room to recover."

The statement added, "Then came a clarification from another senior aide, Phrank Shaibu, who said Ibe's statement was an "unauthorised and misleading characterisation" of Atiku's position. According to Shaibu, Atiku would not set a predetermined date for ending the subsidy. Instead, it would remain until domestic refining expands, supply stabilises, competition deepens, and the market can deliver affordable prices without government support.

"But just hours later, Atiku himself intervened and effectively overruled that clarification. He insisted that his position "has not changed" and that he would restore what he called a "targeted subsidy" if elected president. He also said, "I will restore targeted subsidy and put purchasing power back in the hands of Nigerians.

"This is not merely a matter of semantics. It is a serious policy contradiction.

"If Atiku's position hasn't changed, why did one of his principal aides say the subsidy would be temporary and phased out? Why did another senior aide have to publicly disown that explanation and introduce a completely different framework based on market conditions? And why did Atiku then step in to reaffirm the original position?

"Nigerians deserve clarity, not policy by trial and error. More fundamentally, Atiku's argument appears to misunderstand the dynamics of the petroleum market. Petrol does not become cheap simply because government orders a subsidy or because competition is expected to emerge. Several factors, including international crude oil prices, exchange rates, refining costs, transportation, distribution, and other market costs, influence pump prices.

"Competition can improve efficiency and margins, but it cannot magically insulate Nigeria from global crude oil prices or other input costs.

"There's also a troubling oversimplification in Atiku's argument that "when fuel rises, transport rises. When transport rises, food rises. When food rises, families suffer." Of course, energy and transportation costs affect food prices. But petrol prices alone have never caused food inflation. Nigerians experienced rising food prices even during the years when petrol subsidy was in place.

"Agricultural productivity, insecurity, exchange rates, logistics, storage, flooding, input costs, money supply and supply constraints also matter. A serious economic programme must address these factors, as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been doing for the past three years, rather than reduce the entire cost-of-living crisis to petrol prices.

"We therefore urge Atiku to stop shifting positions and explain precisely what he means by "targeted subsidy": how much will it cost, who will benefit, how will beneficiaries be identified, how will it be funded, and what objective economic conditions will determine its eventual termination?

"Nigerians cannot afford another opaque and potentially costly subsidy regime dressed up in new language."

Delta @ 35: Oborevwori Declares Dawn Of A Shining Era

Delta State governor, Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori, has congratulated Deltans as the state marks its 35th creation anniversary, assuring citizens that the state has entered a new era of sustainable growth, development and prosperity.

The governor, in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Festus Ahon, in Asaba, described the anniversary as a significant milestone in the history of Delta State, noting that the journey of the past 35 years had been defined by resilience, unity and the collective efforts of its people.

Oborevwori commended past leaders, traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil servants, private sector players and all Deltans for their contributions to the growth and development of the state since its creation on August 27, 1991.

He said his administration remained committed to building on the achievements of previous governments through people-oriented policies, infrastructural renewal, economic expansion and inclusive governance.

According to the governor, the ongoing transformation across the state was a reflection of his administration's commitment to delivering the dividends of democracy and creating opportunities for all Deltans.

He urged citizens to remain united and continue to support government's development agenda, assuring that Delta's best years were ahead.

"Today, as we celebrate 35 years of our dear state, we are reminded of the sacrifices, dedication and vision of those who have contributed to making Delta what it is today. The shining era of Delta State is here, and together we will build a future of greater possibilities," he said.

The governor wished Deltans at home and abroad a happy anniversary celebration, while calling for renewed commitment to peace, unity and collective responsibility in advancing the state.

ADC Demands Arrest Of Kuje Council Chairman

SAMUEL OGIDAN
ABUJA

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has called for the immediate arrest and prosecution of the Chairman of Kuje Area Council, Mr. Samuel Danjuma Shekwolo, over his reported directive that residents must support or vote for the All Progressives Congress (APC) or leave the council.

The opposition party described the reported statement as a serious threat to citizens' constitutional rights and an apparent attempt to use political power to intimidate residents and restrict their freedom to choose the political party of their choice.

ADC, in a statement on Wednesday in Abuja by its National Publicity Secretary, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, called on the Inspector-General of Police and the Department of State Services (DSS) to investigate the matter and, where the reported statement is established, prosecute the council chairman in accordance with the law.

The party also demanded that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu personally clarify his reported July 29, 2026, statement that "all is fair in politics," arguing that the remark could be interpreted by some political actors as a licence for intimidation, voter suppression or other unlawful conduct.

The ADC further linked the Kuje controversy to allegations involving APC Senator Francis Fadahunsi during the recent Osun State governorship election, where the senator was reported to have made threatening remarks concerning opposition voters.

The party said the two incidents should not be treated as isolated political statements but as matters requiring urgent attention ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Editors Mourn Oladipo, Say He Was A Gentleman, Great Journalist

The Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), on Wednesday, said it received with profound sadness the news of the passing of Dr. Samson Dotun Oladipo, who it described as a gentleman, distinguished journalist, former newspaper editor, and publisher of Eagles Online.

In a statement by Eze Anaba, President, and Onuoha Ukeh, General Secretary, NGE said in a career spanning several decades, "Dr. Oladipo distinguished himself through professionalism, courage, intellectual depth and an unwavering commitment to the principles of journalism and nation building. His contributions to journalism and the media industry left an indelible mark."

It said that as a former publisher of an online publication, Dr. Oladipo was deeply committed to the growth and development of the Nigerian media and the digital landscape.

"He was a committed member of the NGE, whose contributions added impetus to the growth of the elite media professional body. His membership of NGE reflected his strong belief in professional solidarity and the importance of promoting ethical, credible and responsible journalism.

"Dr. Oladipo was not merely a media practitioner but also a respected colleague, mentor and contributor to the continuing evolution of the Nigerian media landscape.

"His death is a great loss to his family, colleagues, the journalism profession and the wider media community. He leaves behind a legacy of hard work, professional excellence, courage and service that will continue to inspire those who knew and worked with him.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to his immediate family, colleagues, friends and associates.

"At this difficult moment, our thoughts and prayers are with his family. We pray that God will grant the family the strength and fortitude to bear this painful loss as well as grant the departed journalist eternal rest.

EFCC Recovered Over $500m In Cash, Assets In Three Years — Olukoyede

TITILOPE JOSEPH
LAGOS

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has recovered cash and assets valued at more than $500 million for the Federal Government within the past three years, the commission's Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, has disclosed.

Olukoyede made the disclosure on Wednesday while speaking at the Cambridge International Symposium on Economic Crime in the United Kingdom, where he highlighted Nigeria's use of non-conviction-based asset forfeiture in tackling the proceeds of financial crimes.

According to him, the EFCC has been able to secure the forfeiture of both cash and properties worth over half a billion dollars since he assumed office.

"Within three years of my assumption of office, we've been able to forfeit both cash and assets worth over half a billion dollars to the government," he said.

Olukoyede explained that Nigerian law allows the EFCC to approach the court for the forfeiture of assets suspected to be proceeds of crime without necessarily waiting for a criminal conviction.

He said the framework was comparable to provisions in countries including Australia and Canada.

The EFCC chairman explained that the process involves applying to the High Court for an order based on reasonable suspicion that an asset is connected to the proceeds of crime.

"You apply ex parte to the High Court upon a probable suspicion of the proceeds of crime," he said.

Giving examples of recent cases, Olukoyede disclosed that the commission secured the forfeiture of an aircraft allegedly linked to an individual who was involved in a monitoring committee for a power project and was accused of receiving a $30 million bribe.

He said the aircraft was forfeited about three months ago and had since been added to the Presidential Air Fleet.

According to him, the forfeiture order was obtained within two months of the commission approaching the court.

Olukoyede also disclosed that the EFCC had secured the forfeiture of a property comprising about 753 housing units from a former governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

"That property contains about 753 housing units we forfeited from an erstwhile governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria. We have criminal charges against him [in] about three courts," he said.

The EFCC chairman further revealed that investigators had traced 57 properties allegedly linked to former Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, in connection with an investigation into suspected abuse of office.

He said the investigation was commenced last year following what he described as reasonable suspicion of criminal abuse of office.

"Sometime last year, I opened investigations upon reasonable suspicion of criminal abuse of office by the immediate past attorney-general of Nigeria," he said.

Olukoyede said investigations into the former AGF's tenure led to the tracing of about 57 properties, with 48 of them subsequently forfeited, according to him.

He also cited the forfeiture of a private university allegedly linked to a director in the Federal Ministry of Health, saying the official voluntarily surrendered the property after an EFCC investigation.

According to the EFCC chairman, the commission's ability to obtain non-conviction-based forfeiture orders is strengthened by effective asset tracing, judicial cooperation and access to reliable intelligence.

He said the EFCC had invested heavily in developing the capacity of its investigators, with many receiving training at institutions outside Nigeria.

"We also have some of the best investigators around the world," Olukoyede said.

He stressed that an efficient and proactive judiciary remained crucial to the successful implementation of asset forfeiture laws, while credible intelligence was also necessary for investigators to identify and trace illicit assets.

Olukoyede also advocated stronger protection and incentives for whistleblowers who provide information capable of helping the government recover assets allegedly taken out of Nigeria.

He said individuals with credible information about stolen Nigerian assets located abroad could benefit from the EFCC's whistleblower incentive arrangement.

"The citizens must be encouraged with your whistleblower protection," he said.

"If any of you is privy to where Nigerian asset is stolen or taken to anywhere in the world, we have an incentive for you. Between 2.5 and 5 percent is going to go back to you upon recovery."

He said the incentive was intended to encourage members of the public to provide useful information that could assist the EFCC in tracing and recovering assets linked to financial crimes.

Gloria Omereonye, Head, SME Banking, Union Bank of Nigeria (left); Taiwo Shote, Executive Director, Corporate Bank and Business Banking, Lagos and South-West, Union Bank of Nigeria (middle), and Olufunmilola Aluko, Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, Union Bank of Nigeria, during the bank's Entrepreneurs' Day Sales Fair, held at its head office in Lagos, on Tuesday.

Dangote Refinery Condemns Fuel Imports As Foreign PMS Hits 43% In July

BAMIDELE OGUNWUSI
LAGOS

The management of Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals (DPRP) has raised concerns over the continued issuance of petroleum product import licences despite the refinery's capacity to meet and surpass Nigeria's domestic Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) requirements.

The refinery said the sustained influx of imported petrol was creating uncertainty in domestic demand forecasting, production planning and inventory management, even as it remains committed to ensuring uninterrupted fuel supply across the country.

According to market data available to the refinery, imported PMS accounted for approximately 43 percent of total petrol supplied to the Nigerian market in July, raising questions over the need for continued large-scale imports amid growing domestic refining capacity.

Dangote Refinery said it had consistently maintained adequate inventories and reserved product volumes since commencing operations, requiring substantial investments in storage facilities, logistics and working capital to shield consumers from supply disruptions and market volatility.

However, the company said the lack of transparency over the actual volume of imported petrol expected into the country was making effective production and inventory planning increasingly difficult.

It noted that holding large volumes of unsold products for prolonged periods imposes significant storage and financing costs, making the practice commercially unsustainable in an environment where imported PMS continues to compete with locally refined products.

The refinery explained that when surplus products cannot be immediately absorbed by the domestic market, they have to be exported to regional and international markets.

It said the recent increase in its export volumes should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of inadequate domestic supply, but rather as a practical response to market uncertainty created by continued imports.

"As a responsible energy provider, we have always endeavoured to keep adequate reserves to satisfy local demand at all times," the refinery said, stressing that limited visibility on future import volumes makes it difficult to maintain excess inventory indefinitely.

Dangote Refinery maintained that it remains ready and capable of meeting and exceeding Nigeria's petroleum product requirements, while continuing to invest heavily in supply reliability.

The company warned that any future supply shortfalls arising from market distortions caused by excessive imports or poor demand visibility should not automatically be attributed to the refinery, which it said had demonstrated both the capacity and commitment to serve the Nigerian market.

DPRP consequently called for greater transparency, improved market coordination and policies that would encourage domestic refining, strengthen energy security and conserve the country's foreign exchange.

CONTINUED FROM P1

US Halts Immigrant Visa Applications Worldwide

ance and training since early this year, "to ensure all consular officers are fully equipped to evaluate every visa applicant comprehensively and consistently", they added.

The *Financial Times* reports that applicants with interviews already scheduled were sent emails that their appointments had been canceled and that they would be informed of a new date and time.

Agency officials claim this will ensure visa applicants will not end up relying on US public benefits. But it's part of a slate of strategies the Trump administration has employed to crack down on both lawful and undocumented immigration and create a more selective process for who can gain entry into the system.

This week the Trump administration also announced plans to revoke visas from asylum seekers who initially entered the country for tourism or business. Up to 200,000 people currently seeking asylum could be impacted, marking what would end up being the largest mass pulling of visas in the history of the US. The action is being taken in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security.

Under Trump, visa applicants have also faced new restrictions, including review of their social media histories and added costs for processing, the Associated Press reported.

The pause on new visas and training programme follows an attempt by Trump to block applications on a similar "public charge" basis, which included a block on applications from 75 countries selected by the administration, which was recently overturned by a federal judge.

"The court made clear that immigration laws cannot be used to justify discrimination," Joanna Cuevas Ingram, senior staff attorney at the National Immigration Law Center said in a statement last week. "We are determined to ensure every person and family this ban harmed receives appropriate relief and will continue to hold this administration accountable to its obligations under the law."

In February, a federal judge overturned the president's attempt to suspend the US refugee system entirely. Federal agents, under Trump, have been allowed to block asylum seekers from entering the US, a move that human rights advocates said undermines international asylum laws.

The latest attempt to restrict access will cause immediate obstacles for those who have lawfully abided by an already challenging process, according to immigration law experts.

Many applicants impacted by the pause likely "spent thousands of dollars and disrupted their lives to attend scheduled interviews, only to have their appointments cancelled at the last minute", Brian Simmons, an attorney at immigration law firm Fragomen in Washington told FT. It's unclear when those appointments will be rescheduled.

CDHR Demands Freedom For Kidnapped Borno Students After 103 Days

CONTINUED FROM P1

he wants to claim seriousness in the war against insecurity.

He said, "I believe that when the right to life is under threat, other fundamental human rights, social, economic, cultural, are equally under serious threat. It's a very sad situation in Borno that the same attention given to Oyo hasn't been given to them in Borno. It's as if we're not in the same country.

"However, it may be understandable that probably they're looking at it as being a business as usual in the North. And a little bit strange in the case of the South-West. But we're all equal before the law. The right of a child in the North is the same right of a child in the South. I had expected that by now the presidency should have deployed maximum forces like it was done in the case of Oyo to the case of Borno.

"To say that persons in authority are also complicit may not be out of place. Because we keep losing our military despite the millions and billions of naira being budgeted and the interventions coming year on year. We claim to be winning the war. Even when we're losing many of our citizens. There appears to be a disconnect at a point. And that's where we're getting it wrong.

"Some people appear to be profiting from all of this issue of insecurity. I would say that President Tinubu's administration must double its effort if truly he wants to claim seriousness in the war against insecurity. He must double effort in ensuring that the safety of the people is achieved. From Plateau to Borno to Niger, even to the South-West. It's a sad one that we can't be claiming to be winning the war. The indices are very much there that we haven't achieved so much as far as the counter-terrorism is concerned under the present administration.

"There should be justification for the whole budget thing. I won't support negotiating with the terrorists. But at this stage, whatever formula that will guarantee the return and safety of those children should be applied," Folarin added.

Metro

Kidnappers Strike Again In Edo Community, Abduct Six Teenagers, Farmer

OSCAR OKHIFO
ETSAKO

Itsukwi, a small agrarian community in Ward 9 of Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State, has again been thrown into fear and despair following the abduction of six teenage boys and a farmer by suspected kidnappers.

The victims, all teenage boys and a full-grown man, were seized on Monday in two separate incidents.

While Mr. Alfred Kupa reportedly ran into the armed men on his way to his farm, the six teenagers were rounded up while heading into the forest to retrieve sawn wood for a timber contractor resident in the community.

The latest attack triggered a massive search operation involving the police, the military, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), local vigilantes and community youths.

Chairman of the Itsukwi Homeland Security, Malam Bashir Kasim, said the local police were notified and officers were mobilised to the community before launching a joint operation into the surrounding forests.

During the search, operatives reportedly discovered bloodstained dry leaves and two expended AK-47 shell casings deep inside the bush.

"We came to a point where we saw dry leaves splashed with blood and two expended AK-47 bullet shells. It is left to be seen who was shot or whether the person is dead or alive," an eyewitness told Daily Independent.

Security operatives on rescue mission.

The search continued on Tuesday with reinforcement from the military, NSCDC personnel, vigilante groups and local youths led by Malam Kasim.

Residents said a police helicopter was also deployed to support the operation, but no rescue had been made as of the time of filing this report.

President of the Itsukwi Youths, Mr. Sule Abako, disclosed that the kidnappers later contacted the victims' families and demanded N60 million for their release.

"I was with Afatiafu Salufu, Alfred's elder brother, when they called. Alfred spoke briefly with his brother before the kidnappers took over. The man who spoke was obviously Fulani from the way he spoke. He told us to hurry because one of the captives is injured and bleeding profusely. We did not even bargain before they cut the call and switched off the line," Abako said.

The Councillor representing Ward 9, Hon. Usman Igbasekhe, confirmed that he had briefed the Chairman of Etsako East Local Government, Hon. Sunny Akiotu Ekpetika, who promised swift intervention.

Itsukwi is one of several communities in Ivieland, including Okpekpe, Imiakebu and Imiegba, that have suffered repeated attacks by armed kidnappers over the past three years.

Residents say persistent insecurity has forced many farmers to abandon their farmlands, while families have sold homes, livestock and cash crops to raise ransom payments.

In April this year, gunmen abducted housewife Mrs. Jenny Igbeh and 80-year-old Pa Michael Arekheyemhe from Itsukwi before kidnapping more residents in neighbouring Imiakebu.

After more than three weeks in captivity, relatives reportedly paid N11 million for the victims' release.

According to Mrs. Igbeh, the elderly man was executed after he became too weak to continue walking.

"They shot him twice, covered him with leaves and marched the rest of us away," she recounted after regaining freedom.

A community search team later combed the forest for Pa Michael's remains, but his body has never been recovered.

Lamenting the recurring attacks, Malam Kasim appealed to Governor Monday Okpebholo and the Etsako East Council Chairman to urgently restore security to Ivieland.

Sale Of Hospital Equipment: Nasarawa Gov. Orders Arrest, Prosecution Of Perpetrators

MICHAEL DAVID
LAFIA

Abdullahi Sule, the governor of Nasarawa State, has ordered the Ministry of Health to immediately investigate and arrest the management of the General Hospital Umuahia Development Area of Toto Local Government area of Nasarawa State over sale of the hospital equipment worth millions of naira donated by a member representing Umuahia -Ugya Constituency.

The governor gave the instruction during an inauguration of the newly appointed cabinets advisers and others at government house in Lafia the state capital.

Sule, said that he was informed that the management of the General Hospital Umuahia development area have sold hospital equipment donated by Ibrahim Sa'at Abdullahi, a member representing Umuahia -Ugya Constituency in the state's Assembly

The items allegedly sold by they management include mattresses, all ceiling fans, standing fans, and others.

The governor expressed concerned over the criminal attitude of the officials; describing as unfortunate and uncalled for.

The governor, said, "Few days back, he returned there and discovered that the officials of the hospital had actually sold those items.

"This is a terrible thing that will happen if you have people who do not mean well for Nasarawa State. I have already instructed the Commissioner for Health to investigate and fire the hell out of all those people who are responsible for this.

"Quickly take them and prosecute them. Because their own corruption is of the highest limit. It's a corruption of lack of sympathy and lack of consideration even for people who are sick.

"I'm waiting for the honorable commissioner, and I expect that report by the end of this week," he stated.

The governor charged the newly inaugurated cabinets, advisers and permanent secretaries and others to be prudent and transparency while discharging their official duty.

You must uphold the principles of fairness, transparency, professionalism, and accountability in all your deliberations," he advised.

Lagos CP Leads Walkathon, Warns Youths Against Thuggery

TITILOPE JOSEPH
LAGOS

The Lagos State Police Command has cautioned youths against allowing themselves to be used for political thuggery, electoral violence, cultism, drug abuse and other social vices as the country approaches another electoral season.

The Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Command, CP Tijani Fatai, gave the warning on Wednesday while leading a youth sensitisation walkathon organised to commemorate the 2026 International Youth Day.

The exercise began at the Lagos State Police Command headquarters in Ikeja and proceeded through Ipodo to Computer Village. Police personnel were joined by youths, members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), National Association of Students and other youth groups, as well as traders and community leaders.

Fatai said the initiative was designed to remind young people of their responsibilities as key stakeholders in society and encourage them to play constructive roles in the development of their communities.

He warned the youths against becoming tools for violence during election campaigns, stressing that young people make up a significant proportion of those involved in political campaigns and electoral activities.

He said the emerging electoral season should not follow the pattern of previous election periods often characterised by violence and other social challenges

"We are getting into the electoral process and campaigns are beginning. From experience, most of the time, violence and other menaces are associated with campaigns and political processes.

"We don't want business as usual. We want our youths to know that they need to contribute meaningfully and positively to the electoral process, and not negatively," he said.

The commissioner urged participants to take the message of peaceful political participation back to their communities and sensitise other youths who were not part of the walkathon.

He also advised young people to concentrate on building a better future rather than allowing themselves to be manipulated by politicians for personal or political interests.

The Chairman, Lagos State Youth Council, Engr. Ibrahim Adigun, also called on youths to remain vigilant and resist efforts by politicians to recruit them for electoral violence.

Eagle Online Founder, Dotun Oladipo, Dies At 56

ISAAC ASABOR

Dotun Oladipo, founder and managing editor of Eagle Online, has died at the age of 56. Oladipo reportedly took ill suddenly in his office on Tuesday and died a few hours later at a hospital in Lagos, where he had driven himself after falling ill.

His death was confirmed by the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP), where he previously served as president.

The current GOCOP president, Danlami Nmodu, announced Oladipo's death on the guild's WhatsApp platform late Tuesday.

"It has just been confirmed that Emeritus President, Mr. Dotun Oladipo, died today," Nmodu wrote. "May his soul rest in peace. Amen."

Oladipo was also the founding president of the Innovative Media Partners Cooperative Multipurpose Society (IMPCMS).

Confirming his death on Wednesday, Nkanu Egbe, General Secretary of IMPCMS, described his passing as a profound loss to the cooperative and the Nigerian journalism profession.

"It is with profound sorrow that I announce the sudden death of our President, Mr. Dotun Oladipo, who passed away on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, in Lagos, at the age of 56," the statement said.

According to Egbe, Oladipo led the cooperative with dedication while pursuing a distinguished journalism career that spanned nearly three decades.

"His passing is a devastating loss not only to IMPCMS but to Nigerian journalism as a whole," he said.

The cooperative said its Executive Committee would release further information on funeral arrangements, condolence visits and interim leadership arrangements in due course.

It also urged members to remember Oladipo's family and the cooperative in their prayers during the period of mourning.

Oladipo, who was the Chief Executive Officer of Premium Eagle Media Limited, had a long career in journalism before establishing Eagle Online.

He previously served as Politics Editor at PUNCH Newspapers and also worked at Nigerian Tribune, Nigerian Compass and The Sun.

His career in journalism spanned almost three decades, during which he became a prominent figure in Nigeria's evolving online publishing industry.

NBM Ikoyi Zone Puts Smiles On Faces, Reaches Out To Children, 1,120 Needy In Lagos

FRANCIS ONOIRIBHOLO
BENIN

The Ikoyi Zone of the NBM of Africa has donated the sum of N1 million, and food items to Modupe Cole Child Care and Treatment Home in Lagos.

The organisation also extended its humanitarian intervention to the wider Orile, Ajegunle Community, where 1,120 food relief packs were also distributed to less privileged residents.

·Members of NBM Ikoyi Zone presenting the items to the home.

At the Modupe Cole Centre, the Ikoyi Zone donated 50 bags of rice, 30 bags of spaghetti, 50 crates of eggs, 50 cartons of Indomie noodles and a gallon of King's vegetable oil.

The group also presented a cash donation of N1 million to support the centre's operations and the care of children and other vulnerable persons under its responsibility.

The intervention, according to the organisers, was made possible through the contributions and commitment of members of the Ikoyi Zone, who resolved to translate their concern for humanity into practical assistance for people facing difficult circumstances.

But the humanitarian mission did not end at the centre. After the visit, the team moved to Orile, Ajegunle, where it embarked on a wider community outreach aimed at putting food on the tables of residents who needed help.

For the community intervention, the zone procured 75 bags of rice, 56 bags of spaghetti and 94 cartons of Power Oil, which were packaged into relief packs and distributed directly to residents.

In all, 1,120 individual food relief packages were handed out to less privileged members of the community, turning what could have been another difficult day for many families into one marked by relief, dignity and hope.

The Ikoyi Zone described the outreach as a demonstration of the organisation's commitment to humanity, expressing gratitude to its members worldwide for their generosity and support.

The gesture also underscored the power of collective giving, as contributions from members were transformed into food for vulnerable families and support for children in need of care.

Our View

Teacher Education In Nigeria: Matters Arising

Recently, the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, announced that the government would waive the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination for candidates seeking admission into Colleges of Education and only require them to obtain credits in four Ordinary Level subjects.

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Quote Of The Day

"If they continue with this random and incessant arrest of our leaders, we will have no choice but to declare war. They are using the EFCC to harass anyone who refuses to join their party. Let me say it clearly: no amount of intimidation, no amount of blackmail, and no amount of 'file-opening' will make me join the APC. We will meet them on the field in 2027."

– Governor Bala Mohamed of Bauchi State.

Issues, Not Incumbency, Will Decide 2027 Election — Mohammed

Zakari Mohammed, a former House of Representatives member, is the African Democratic Congress (ADC) gubernatorial candidate in Kwara State for the 2027 election. In this interview, he speaks on his plans for the state and how ADC would capture the centre, among other issues. **CHIBUIKE CHUKWU** brings the excerpts

Your party ADC has had shambolic outings lately in the recent off-cycle elections; how do you think these would rub off on the party in the elections next year?

You see, Nigerians forget too easily. You remember when we formed the APC and we had off-season elections before the main election. People wrote All Progressives Congress (APC) off. But when it came to the general election, APC won. So, for me, off-season elections might not be the definition or the determination of the strength of our party.

But such off-cycle poor performance is not one, it's not two...

(Cuts in) It doesn't matter. Go back and look at the records at the build-up to 2015. What happened to APC? So, for me, Nigerians will vote next year based on issues. Let's reflect back and that will guide our judgment.

But does the ADC have a chance generally? And I'm not talking about Kwara State now. Are they nationally? I mean realistically, where are the numbers that ADC will depend on? And I'd like you to let us know where the figures for ADC will come

Let me tell you, look at Nigeria, look at the demographic for instance, look at the North. How many candidates do we have from the North? In 2023, the current president had 23.4% of the votes coming from the North because of the Muslim-Muslim Ticket. Would he annex the same votes this time around? It's difficult, because even the Muslim-Muslim Ticket itself, by expectation, I think, isn't working. It is no longer going to be a factor. The question is, has it satisfied the reason they went for it? That will be for the voters to answer. So, if you now come to the other parts of the zones, everybody will have his day. And let me tell you, Nigerians are in pain now because of the economic realities. How much does the salary we earn or what the people earn can fetch them? What did the same amount achieve for them some two or three years ago before the subsidy removal? What does it do now? So for me, it's about the people deciding, and the realities are knocking in on them, and prices of goods have gone up. In Nigeria, when the price of goods goes up, it might be very difficult for it to come down.

Given your explanations and if you are to vote today, or do the mathematics, who do you think could win next year's election?

Obviously I think we'll win, there are no two ways about it because we have a candidate that

Mohammed

is very well experienced and is ready to bring this to bear in the country.

By what margin do you think your party can win the election?

The margin is going to be significant. And let me tell you, forget about the politics of incumbency because for you to run through a second term, especially with the fact that elections or votes are counting now, it's going to be very difficult to win re-election, particularly with the hardship in the country now. So I think we are very well positioned to win because of the realities on ground. Subsidy removal, for instance, you know what pain it has brought to Nigeria, what is the value of the Naira, what is happening with food, what is happening with insecurity, these are questions that are begging for answers and will count at the election.

> **In 2023, the president had 23.4% of the votes coming from the North because of Muslim-Muslim Ticket**

And you think that Tinubu's team might not be able to surmount that conversation before the election?

Where is the time for them to even say what they haven't been able to say to convince Nigerians in almost four years now? We have maybe less than six months to the election now. So, what happens? What magic will happen for them, even in the area of security? I'm from Baruten, which of course shares a border with Borgu Game Reserve and all that. I mean, even though the kidnapped people there were released on time, another hundred have been taken from somewhere in Babanla. A whole hundred plus and insecurity is escalating. In Kwara South, too, you know that there are abductions that are taking place there. There are kidnappings and all that. So for me, I believe that insecurity is also going to be a factor, it's going to be in the conversation. Like I mentioned earlier, subsidy is also going to be in the conversation. The monies that we earn, what did it buy three years ago? What would it buy now? So, those are the questions. And I'm happy that the campaigns are moving to issues; the campaigns are dwelling on issues of national importance, rather than the usual 'you poke me, you break my leg'. Issues are the things that are being addressed now. Remember somebody said, 'I can return the subsidy and this is how I'm going to do it'. Another person said, no and gave his reasons. So, Nigerians will look at all these and decide. Somebody told us what he would do in his first four years, like when you tell your son that 'I will buy you an iPhone if you pass an exam'. There's a president who told us that if he does not give us light in his first term, he should not be voted in the second term. Do you have 24 hours of light now? I'm sure you're using diesel here. So, it's simple. It's a referendum and Nigerian people will decide who they would entrust their confidence in. That's about leadership and it will happen in every part of Nigeria. As for people thinking that some of you will sit somewhere to write results, it's going to be very difficult. It's going to be very, very difficult. Why? I have news for them. It would be bad for those who intend to do that. Every vote will count in 2027 because we cannot afford to go back to the ugly past. By the design we have in our party, our elections will be done on polling units. Nigerians are tired of going to courts.

So you mean this time, ADC is resolute and ready to challenge?

CONTINUED ON P10

Politics

CONTINUED FROM P9

2027: Why I'm The Most Qualified To Lead Kwara — Mohammed

Mohammed

Very, very resolute and you know what, there are people even in the ruling party that we interact with. They are our friends. We know what they tell us at all times. I have lost elections before. Towards the build-up to elections, we know what we hear. Before elections and inside of you, if you want to go and vote, especially, you will know whether you will lose or you will win. Even months before that, you will know. We know we are going to win this time.

If there are going to be surprises by Atiku and his team, which state do you think will largely give him that push?

The northern states. I am very sure the northern states will rally around Atiku for so many reasons. Atiku will win the northwest. He will win the northeast.

Even with Shettima also in the election?

The truth of the matter is that Shettima is on the ballot, but not on the ballot. I'm sorry to poke my mouth into it. As vice president, what was his impact on this government? He is a brilliant man, but was he allowed to work? I'm not speaking for him. But was he allowed to work? So, you can be president and not be president. And north central will be a buy and buy game. For Southwest, you can say, okay, the incumbent will have an upper hand, but he will lose some states. He will lose a state like Oyo, he will lose Osun. Lagos will be a battleground. Quote me that he will lose Oyo. Quote me that he will lose Osun. He is going to have a battle in Lagos. Some people say they intimidate people. Even if they do, what is very important is that this election that is coming is about issues, and it's about a referendum. If exactly Nigerians are satisfied with what he's doing, then they can decide to go with him. But those who are serving in government will tell you that they don't want anything to happen to him. They want him to come back. A friend of mine who belongs to the ruling party said, 'look, my eyes are blind. The tears they are seeing, I'm not seeing it'. I said, okay, maybe because I'm in the opposition.

You are vying to be the governor of Kwara State. The question is, what is your agenda for the state and what are you going to do differently from what we are seeing in the state? This question is very paramount given that the APC in Kwara has said that those of you in the opposition don't have any different ideas; that you have got no better idea. So what are you going to do differently?

See, I don't need anybody to tell me how Kwara operates because the truth of the matter is that Kwara is a state that is beautifully located in the gateway between the north and the south. We have not exploited that location. Secondly, unfortunately, Kwara used to be a state of harmony where a lot of things can happen. The answer can also be seen in the space between Bauchi and Kaiama in Kwara, what are we doing with the land? Fortunately every part of Kwara has one particular crop that they do for the other; what are we doing about that? Why are we not taking advantage of the agricultural potential of the state? First and foremost is security. How do we stamp out insecurity or at least reduce it to an insignificant level? Why have we not taken advantage of technology as it is done elsewhere? We should be getting drones, know where these bad people are located. Through that, we can then assist the conventional forces on how they can get them. Of course, I am also not forgetting intensifying intelligence gathering too as it is very, very key because if you see something, you say something. I believe that the political will has to be there so that you will be able to combat. No meaningful development will take place with fear.

As far as I'm concerned, I believe that I'm the most qualified to lead Kwara

There are a lot of political alignments in Kwara State. Now, there seems to be a wave towards Bukola Saraki political dynasty. Do you think this in some way might injure your own opportunity? What are your chances?

Let's see. The election in 2027 will be about individuals, not even about the party. Unfortunately, Kwara is now a crawling giant. The state was created in 1967, but what do we have on the ground? Do we have those things deserving of a state that has stayed that long? The answer is between me and you, and it depends on the evaluator. So, we say that let Kwara funds stay in Kwara so that we can catch up with the rest of the states that were created at the same time.

We have Kale Kawu of the PDP and of course the speaker Danladi who is vying under the APC. Are you not bothered about, especially, the popularity of the speaker ahead of the election?

It would be unfair to me for you to ask me the question about who is popular amongst all of us. It would be very unfair. It's like giving me an expo. And I think that that is a job you can do with your eagle eye as a journalist. But all I'm sure is that I believe I'm the most qualified in terms of having executive and legislative experience. As far as I'm concerned, Kwara is looking for a leader, not somebody who would be guided. Kwara needs a leader who can try to at least translate the potentials of the state so that we can have development. As far as I'm concerned, I don't think I have enemies in my politics. And everybody is a friend as far as we can collaborate and be able to ensure that we have a state that is viable.

So many people believe the contest will be between you and the speaker on who can galvanise Kwara North votes. They say you have split the vote of Kwara North by your entry into the contest

Yes people may say that, but they're forgetting the fact that some of us have stayed at least in kwara. I schooled there. I worked in Kwara, and of course, I had political appointments in Kwara. I've stayed my life in Kwara, coming from there to Abuja to be in the House of Representatives. I was a commissioner. I was an SA. I administered football; I was a Commissioner for Sports. People are just looking at it from geographical extraction but it's not everybody that comes from your geography that will vote for you. No. It's far from it. It's possible somebody who you think is from your village might decide to vote for somebody else. So it depends. As far as I'm concerned, I believe that I'm the most qualified because I was in the legislature. I was an executive. So I'm better placed to see the issues openly rather than fighting people's fights.

Are you saying you can outplay your master this time around because Saraki taught you politics....?

(Cuts in) No. You won't call him a master. As far as I'm concerned, politics itself is very, very dynamic. Politics is not about individuals. It would be unfair to even him to make that reference. I think the whole thing is about your approach to people and how you will be able to relay the importance of politics to the people. How can you convince them? What interaction will you do with them? So it will be unfair to even himself if you are dragging him into this because he's not on the ballot. Yeah, he has somebody on the ballot. But what I'm looking at is that Kwarans will be the deciders eventually on who they want based on what is promised to them and the records. I mean Kwarans will have the decision to make because there are options before them. They will evaluate which out of these options can take the state out of the many challenges we have?

So you mean that on the ballot today for Kwara Government House, Zakari is the best candidate?

I am the best candidate, not because I'm saying it. Go and look at the record. Go and look at the experiences we have. Who out of them has been in the executive and is in the legislature? Maybe the speaker is in the legislature now but has he done executive? No. My brother who is in the PDP has he? Yeah, he might have worked as a civil servant, but was he superintending over a particular agency? No. Has he gone to the parliament? No. And you know Kwara needs an exposed governor. What I mean by exposed is not about traveling or visiting places, No. I mean exposed to the arrangements of governance. I mean what and what that can be done to make governance better. And we have a lot of brilliant minds from Kwara who are everywhere in the world. You get them together. What is important is that we put the strongest legs forward. Somebody came here sometimes and told you that we don't have capable people in Kwara; that is not true. You mentioned two ministers here. I have several other people to mention in terms of capacity. So I think that is not correct.

You have a PhD?

I have that but for me, it's not about even having the letters. It's about experience. It's about the exposure. It's about the touch with your hands on the deck. That's the truth.

DAILY INDEPENDENT
THE MOST READ NEWSPAPER AMONG THE POLITICAL AND BUSINESS ELITE

Our View

VISION
To be Nigeria's First Truly Independent National Quality Newspaper

OUR MISSION
To produce a quality, vibrant and viable newspaper that will inform and form the nation's present and aspiring political, business, economic and cultural leadership; challenge and inspire the nation's journalists to advance and defend the public good; and deliver superior value to all stakeholders.

EDITORIAL POLICY
We shall be independent on all matters, but shall never be neutral on any matter, especially those concerning the well-being of Nigerians.

Teacher Education In Nigeria: **Matters Arising**

Recently, the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, announced that the government would waive the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination for candidates seeking admission into Colleges of Education and only require them to obtain credits in four Ordinary Level subjects.

The new policy, according to the minister, will encourage teacher education and generally expand access to tertiary education.

We observe with much discomfort that candidates with lower Ordinary Level certificate and UTME grades have traditionally been admitted into Colleges of Education to be trained as teachers of children, the greatest assets of our nation. Upon completion of a three-year course, they are awarded Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).

Even candidates admitted to study education at the Bachelor's degree level in the universities usually come with low gradesin the UTME. Those with higher scores are admitted to study "lucrative" courses, like medicine, engineering, accounting, law, architecture, business administration, etc.

Consequently, besides the removal of the hassles of sitting for UTME by College of Education applicants, it is not exactly clear how the new policy will achieve its stated goals.

Every year, about 90 per cent of UTME applicants choose universities while less than five (5) per cent apply to Colleges of Education, leaving hundreds of thousands of spaces vacant in the latter after every admission cycle. Indeed, we recall the lament of two former JAMB registrars about "rats and cockroaches" taking up a large chunk of space in polytechnics and Colleges of Education!

The new policy may further sink the education and future of Nigerian children into the abyss of mediocrity. Those with low academic performance should not handle the education of future leaders.

Nigeria has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world; hence, a critical mass of incompetent teachers will further compound the already sorry state of education.

The best way for the minister and the government to encourage students to come into the teaching profession is to significantly increase the remuneration and improve the conditions of service of teachers.

In the totem pole of compensation in Nigeria, the teaching profession is probably at the bottom. On the one hand, every administration parrots the importance of teacher education, while on the other hand, it places the conditions of service of teachers at the lowest rung of the public remuneration ladder. Elsewhere in developed climes, teachers could rub shoulders with other elite professions.

We assert that if the government enhances the terms of employment of teachers throughout the country, many intelligent and bright Nigerians will be attracted to the profession. Indeed, there can be no other way to achieve this laudable objective.

The government may also revisit the policy direction of the Obasanjo administration while Dr. Oby Ezekwesili was Minister of Education. The laudable plan, which regrettably could not be implemented before the change of government, was to convert polytechnics and Colleges of Education into campuses of contiguous universities.

It is important for our education policymakers to understand that good education, nurtured by competent teachers, is the only pathway to economic development and Nigeria's greatness. This is because the nation's future development depends on the quality of the personnel that will run every aspect of the system.

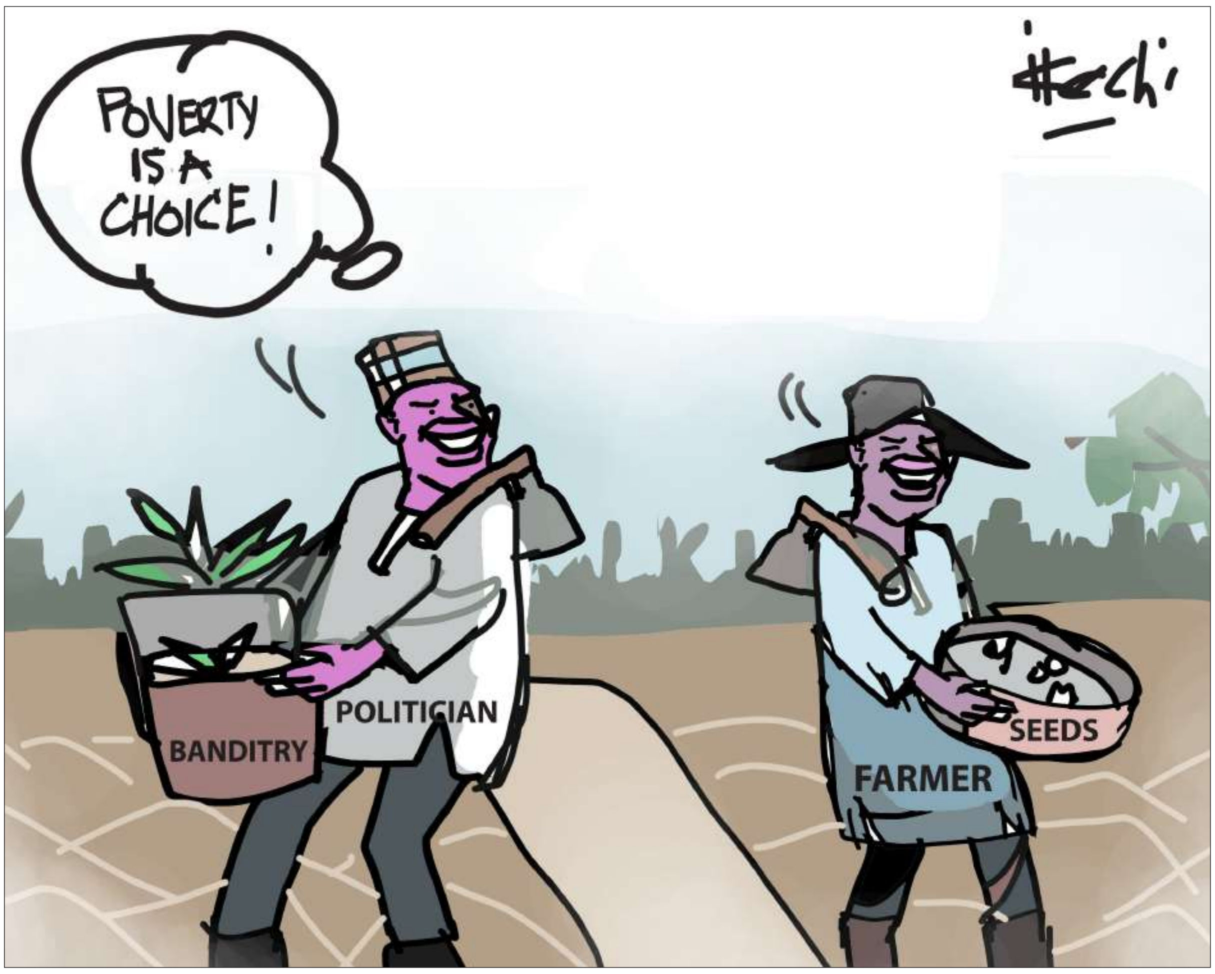
At this juncture, it may be necessary for our lawmakers to take a look at and reverse Sections 65(2)(a), 106(c), 131(d) and 177(d) of the Nigerian Constitution, which provide that "A person shall be qualified for election (into any elective office) if he has been educated up to at least School Certificate level or its equivalent."

This retrogressive and limiting provision may have informed the thinking that a good education is not necessary either for teachers or for those who will hold the reins as leaders of the Nigerian polity and managers of its economic resources.

It may also explain the reign of mediocrity in practically every aspect of the Nigerian national life, which unfortunately includes the education sector that has the responsibility for training those who will eventually inherit and run the country.

We wonder how a president, governor, or local government chairman with no more than an Ordinary Level school certificate, will relate with and lead subordinates with higher degrees or certificates, especially in disciplines like quantum physics, digital technology, investment banking, war strategies and biotechnology. Besides, higher education expands the human mind and widens its horizon.

The Minister of Education should take a second look at the policy with a view to raising the bar of teacher training as well as expanding access to tertiary education. Teaching should be regarded as one of the most prestigious professions.



Your Views

Articles should be a maximum of 750 words and sent to: **opinion@independentnig.com and densityshow@yahoo.com**

UMORU ILEONIKHENA

Nigeria's Economic Crossroads

Nigeria's economic crisis has entered a defining phase. Three years after President Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed office and introduced sweeping reforms, the country is recording signs of macroeconomic stabilisation. Yet, millions of households continue to grapple with food insecurity, declining purchasing power, unemployment, widening inequality and a persistently high cost of living.

The central question is no longer whether Nigeria requires economic reforms—it clearly does. The more pressing question is whether these reforms are delivering an economy in which ordinary Nigerians can meaningfully live, work, invest and prosper.

The concern raised by human rights lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Femi Falana, that Nigeria risks becoming overly dependent on the policy prescriptions of international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, warrants serious national reflection. However, such a debate must be grounded in verifiable evidence rather than political sentiment.

The IMF itself acknowledges that Nigeria has made progress in restoring macroeconomic stability following recent reforms, while also noting that conditions remain difficult for many citizens. Its June 2026 Article IV assessment estimated that poverty had reached 63 per cent at the national poverty line, with about 27 million Nigerians facing food insecurity in late 2025.

This paradox—improving macroeconomic indicators alongside worsening household welfare—lies at the heart of Nigeria's current economic dilemma.

When Macroeconomic Stability Does Not Translate Into Household Prosperity

The Tinubu administration inherited an economy burdened by structural distortions: costly fuel subsidies, multiple exchange rates, weak fiscal revenues, inadequate infrastructure, declining productivity and a significant public debt burden.

In that context, the removal of petrol subsidies and the liberalisation of the foreign exchange market were not inherently misguided policies. The challenge has been the pace, sequencing and social impact of their implementation.

When fuel prices rise sharply in an economy heavily dependent on road transport, the effects are immediate and far-reaching. Transportation costs increase, agricultural logistics become more expensive, manufacturers face higher production costs, traders adjust prices upward, and households are forced to allocate a larger share of their income to basic survival.

A similar dynamic applies to exchange rate depreciation. While a weaker naira can, in theory, enhance export competitiveness, in an import-dependent economy it also increases the cost of essential goods such as medicines, machinery, raw materials and food inputs.

For this reason, the success of economic reform cannot be assessed solely through foreign reserves, fiscal balances or investor confidence.

It must also be measured by the price of food in markets, the real value of wages, the quality and quantity of jobs created, and the ability of households to afford education, healthcare and decent housing.

Recent data indicate that Nigeria's real GDP grew by 3.89 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, compared with 3.13 per cent in the same period of 2025. The non-oil sector accounted for more than 96 per cent of real GDP.

These figures are encouraging, but growth that does not improve living standards can become unequal or "jobless" growth.

The World Bank's April 2026 Nigeria Development Update reinforces this concern, noting that while macroeconomic conditions have improved, household incomes have not fully recovered and poverty levels remain elevated.

Poverty: The Most Disturbing Indicator

Poverty remains the clearest measure of economic performance. The World Bank estimates that Nigeria's poverty rate reached about 63 per cent in 2025, with millions more falling into poverty during the year. This should command greater urgency than any positive macroeconomic headline. A country may grow while its citizens become poorer if income growth lags behind rising costs. The core challenge is persistent poverty amid growth, with large segments of the population excluded from its benefits.

Inflation and the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Inflation remains a major pressure point. Headline inflation stood at 15.91 per cent in June 2026 after CPI rebasing, while food inflation was 17.52 per cent year-on-year. Even when inflation slows, prices remain high, meaning households still struggle to afford essentials. What matters most is not just inflation rates, but whether incomes can still buy basic goods. This requires policies that expand production, reduce logistics costs, stabilise energy supply and improve productivity.

Unemployment and the Youth Question

Unemployment remains a critical challenge in a young population. Youth joblessness is both an economic and security risk, increasing vulnerability to migration, crime and social instability. Nigeria needs a clear employment strategy focused on agriculture, manufacturing, construction, technology, energy, mining and the creative sector.

The World Bank also warns that Nigeria's human capital gaps could significantly reduce future earnings, highlighting the urgency of investment in education, skills and health.

Economic hardship is unevenly distributed. Inflation affects low–income households far more severely than wealthier groups

Inequality: The Invisible Divider

Economic hardship is unevenly distributed. Inflation affects low-income households far more severely than wealthier groups. Policy must therefore consider who benefits, who bears the burden, and who is protected. Growth must be inclusive, not just numerical.

The Debt Trap

Nigeria's debt is becoming increasingly burdensome. While borrowing can support development, it becomes dangerous when used mainly for consumption and debt servicing. President Tinubu has acknowledged that rising debt service is crowding out spending on infrastructure, health and education. Debt servicing is projected to consume nearly half of government revenue. This leaves little fiscal space for development. The concern is not debt itself, but the risk of leaving future generations with liabilities but no productive assets.

Is Nigeria Truly Broke?

Nigeria is not resource-poor; it is efficiency-poor. The country has oil, gas, minerals, arable land, a large market and a young population. The problem is weak productivity, governance and resource management. Borrowing alone cannot solve this.

The Way Forward

First, reforms must be people-centred, with clear social impact tracking.

Second, domestic production, especially agriculture, must be expanded.

Third, electricity must be prioritised as a foundation for industrial growth. Fourth, industrial policy should focus on job creation and local production. Fifth, borrowing must be tied to productive, measurable returns. Sixth, social protection should be better targeted and linked to skills and employment. Seventh, investment in education and healthcare must increase. Finally, public financial management must improve to reduce waste and corruption.

Beyond IMF or Anti–IMF Narratives

The debate should not be reduced to support or rejection of the IMF. Nigeria must adopt policies that reflect its realities while drawing selectively from global best practices. The goal is economic sovereignty based on evidence.

The 2027 Test

As elections approach, citizens will judge policy by outcomes, not rhetoric. Key questions include: job creation, poverty reduction, purchasing power, debt levels and service delivery in key sectors. Nigeria needs a credible path to recovery. Stabilisation alone is not enough. The real test is whether economic reforms improve the daily lives of citizens. Ultimately, success will be measured not by macroeconomic indicators alone, but by whether Nigerians can live with dignity, afford basic needs, and access meaningful opportunities.

**Ileonikhena writes from Edo State via* abduumoru@gmail.com

PIUS EBONG

Tax Reform: Who Bears The Burden?

Nigeria's latest tax reforms arrive at a time when the economy is already under severe strain. Inflation is high, purchasing power is weak, small businesses are barely staying afloat, and millions of Nigerians—especially young people—are without jobs.

While the government insists that the new tax law is necessary to broaden the revenue base and stabilise public finances, a critical question remains unanswered: who bears the real burden of these reforms?

For small businesses and the jobless population, the answer is becoming painfully clear.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the Nigerian economy. They account for over 80 per cent of employment and serve as the survival engine for millions of households. In theory, the new tax law offers some relief. Companies with annual turnover of N25 million or less remain exempt from company income tax and tertiary education tax. Digitalisation of tax administration is also expected to reduce harassment and improve efficiency. But beyond these headline benefits lies a harsher reality.

The expansion of the tax net has shifted the focus squarely onto the informal sector—petty traders, artisans, transport operators and micro-entrepreneurs who operate largely at subsistence level. These are not businesses accumulating excess profits; they are Nigerians struggling to survive in a harsh economy. Bringing them aggressively into the tax system, without commensurate social support, amounts to taxing poverty rather than prosperity.

The Value Added Tax regime further compounds the problem. Although VAT has remained at 7.5 per cent, its impact on small businesses is significant. Rising VAT on raw materials, logistics and basic inputs increases operating costs. In an economy where consumers are already overstretched, most SMEs cannot pass these costs on. The result is shrinking margins, reduced hiring and, in many cases, outright closure.

Equally troubling is the persistence of multiple taxation. Despite repeated promises of harmonisation, small businesses still face overlapping levies from federal, state and local governments. For many operators, tax compliance is no longer about growth or civic duty—it is about survival.

The tax law may not directly target the unemployed, but its indirect effects deepen youth unemployment and economic frustration

The consequences for Nigeria's jobless population are severe. When small businesses struggle, hiring freezes follow. When costs rise, casualisation replaces stable employment. When enterprises collapse, jobs disappear entirely. The tax law may not directly target the unemployed, but its indirect effects deepen youth unemployment and economic frustration.

Supporters of the reform argue that increased revenue will fund infrastructure, social programmes and job-creation initiatives. In principle, this is sound. In practice, public trust is low. Nigerians see higher taxes but little evidence of improved public services, unemployment benefits or meaningful safety nets. Without transparency and visible impact, taxation becomes a source of resentment rather than national development.

Taiwo Oyedele, Minister of Finance

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the new tax regime is its perceived imbalance. While small businesses are closely monitored, large corporations and politically connected entities often escape full accountability. A tax system that appears lenient on the powerful but strict on the vulnerable cannot command public legitimacy.

Nigeria does not suffer from a lack of tax laws; it suffers from weak implementation, poor equity and limited social returns. Any tax reform that ignores unemployment, inflation and business fragility risks worsening inequality and social tension.

If the government is serious about inclusive growth, tax reforms must be matched with concrete measures: genuine tax harmonisation, targeted SME support, incentives for labour-intensive industries, and visible investment in job creation and social protection. Otherwise, the new tax law will be remembered not as a tool for national recovery, but as another policy that asked the weakest to carry the heaviest load.

In the end, taxation should build a nation—not break its people.

**Pius, a public affairs commentator, writes from Calabar, Cross River State*

MTN Group Posts $7.18bn H1 Revenue

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH

MTN Group has reported record margins for the first half of 2026, with service revenue, earnings and capital spend all showing strong growth.

In the six months to June 2026, and in constant-currency terms, MTN Group's service revenue grew 17.5 percent to R115 billion, (equivalent to roughly $7.18 billion)

Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, excluding once-off items, expanded by almost a quarter to R56 billion (approximately $3.50 billion).

The Group committed almost R20 billion, around $1.25 billion, in capital expenditure during the half to expand its mobile network, connect more homes and modernise IT infrastructure across the business.

MTN also announced a share buyback programme covering approximately 31 million ordinary shares for an aggregate consideration of up to about $374.5 million.

The programme forms part of the shareholder remuneration framework unveiled alongside the Group's Ambition 2030 strategy, under which MTN commits to delivering between 40 percent and 60 percent of equity free cash flow to shareholders through dividends or buybacks.

The Group also advanced its planned acquisition of the remaining shares in tower company IHS Holdings, a deal it says is accretive to revenue, profit after tax and adjusted headline earnings per share on a pro forma basis.

The transaction has cleared approval from several regulators, including Nigeria's Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, and MTN expects it to close in the second half of 2026.

"The Group's overall perfor-

CONTINUES ON P.14 →

CRUDE OIL Prices

WTI CRUDE	51.59	–1.00	–1.90%
BRENT CRUDE	60.48	–1.20	–1.95%
MARS US ·2 days	55.29	–1.00	–1.78%
OPEC BASKET	59.48	+1.24	+2.13%
URALS	59.32	+0.52	+0.88%
LOUISIANA LIGHT	59.22	+0.33	+0.56%
BONNY LIGHT ·	61.65	–0.73	–1.17%
MEXICAN BASKET ·	52.40	+0.79	+1.53%
NATURAL GAS ·	2.945	+0.132	+4.69%

- How Companies Can Predict, Prevent Cyber-Attacks With Generative AI – 20
- How Renewable Financing Could Rewire Nigeria's Power Market – 18

Bamidele Ogunwusi +2348033136240 bamidele.ogunwusi@independentnig.com

COMMODITIES

BRENT	US$92.22	COFFEE	US$341.8
GOLD	US$4,696	SUGAR	US$17.66
COCOA	US$ 5,929	N. GAS	US$2.778

CURRENCIES

	CBN	Parallel Market
USD	1346	1410
POUND	1837	1900
EURO	1572	1605

RATES

MPR	26.5 %
INFLATION	15.43 %

MARKETS

FMDQ – NIBOR		
0/N	22.2143	-0.07 ▼
1M	22.4786	0.16 ▲
3M	22.9500	0.52 ▲
6M	23.1357	0.50 ▲

NSE	
ASI	239,085.17
CAP	₦153.37trn

Qatar Airways Debuts Starlink-Connected Airline

Qatar Airways says it has become the first airline to operate Starlink-equipped Boeing 787-9 aircraft globally. The carrier has also completed Starlink rollout across its Boeing 787-8 subfleet in seven months, bringing the total number of its Starlink-equipped widebody aircraft to 150.

Qatar Airways says it remains on track to complete the Starlink rollout across its Boeing 787 fleet by the end of 2026. The airline now operates the world's first and largest Starlink-equipped Boeing 777, Airbus A350 and Boeing 787 fleets.

By building a Starlink-connected journey at a scale unmatched by any other widebody operator, Qatar Airways says it is bringing passengers closer to a future where travelling no longer means stepping away from the digital world, offering on-board Wi-Fi speeds of up to 500 Mbps.

Since launching Starlink connectivity onboard in October 2024, the company claims that more than 23 million passengers have connected to what it calls the fastest Wi-Fi in the sky across over 86,000 of its flights.

What it describes as the fastest and most ambitious Starlink widebody installation programme in aviation history has now surpassed 83% completion. There are up to 323 Starlink-flights operating daily.

According to some estimates, about 40 airlines have committed to high-speed in-flight Wi-Fi powered by SpaceX's low-Earth-orbit constellation. Reports suggest that 16 airlines have actually installed such systems so far. They include Dubai carrier Emirates, which In April completed the first installation of next-generation Starlink Wi-Fi on its flagship Airbus A380.

High OMO Yields Raise Stakes For Nigeria's Equity Market

BAMIDELE OGUNWUSI
LAGOS

The return of high fixed-income yields is forcing investors to rethink where they put their money, with the Central Bank of Nigeria's reopening of Open Market Operations (OMO) securities to individuals, companies and non-bank financial institutions creating a compelling alternative to equities.

At the latest OMO auction, investors submitted a staggering N4.93 trillion for just N600 billion on offer, with the securities clearing around 20 per cent Treasury Bills are also offering attractive returns, with the 364-day stop rate rising to 17.59 per cent at the August auction, despite N4.19 trillion in subscriptions for N500 billion available.

The development raises a critical question: why take equity-market risk when fixed-income instruments can deliver returns approaching per cent?

The question has gained urgency following the recent correction on the Nigerian Exchange. The NGX All-Share Index fell for 10 consecutive sessions after hitting a record high on August 10, surrendering part of its earlier gains.

Yet, analysts say the resurgence of fixed-income yields does not make equities irrelevant. Rather, it raises the return threshold stocks must meet to remain attractive.

Stocks with weak earnings growth, low dividend yields or limited prospects for capital appreciation could struggle to compete. But the calculation is different for income-generating listed funds, particularly Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and infrastructure funds, which combine periodic distributions with potential capital gains.

MREIF currently ranks among the highest-yielding listed securities, with a reported dividend yield of 18.33 per cent , while Coronation Infrastructure Fund (CNIF) stands at 11.73 per cent.

Among the core REITs, UH REIT offers 7.93 per cent, SFS REIT 6.76 per cent and UPDC REIT 5.25 per cent. Only a handful of conventional equities, including GTCO at 9.99% and Zenith Bank at 8.20 per cent , rank alongside them on a yield basis.

The total-return argument becomes even stronger when capital appreciation is considered.

MREIF has remained at N100 year-to-date, while CNIF has gained 54.3%. UH REIT has risen 35 per cent, while UPDC REIT has surged per cent. SFS REIT, however, has remained flat at N418.75.

The performance shows that income and capital appreciation can produce markedly different outcomes.

MREIF Series II distributed N8.61 per unit in the first half of 2026. At N100, this represents an 8.6 per cent six-month yield. CNIF distributed N8.985 per unit, equivalent to about 5.8 per cent at its N154.30 price, while its unit price has risen sharply.

UH REIT distributed N5.55, yielding about 7.9 per cent at N70, alongside a 35 per cent year-to-date price gain. SFS REIT's N28.30 annual distribution translates to about 6.8 per cent at N418.75, while UPDC REIT's N0.40 first-half distribution yields about 2.9 per cent at N13.65, even as its price has more than doubled.

REITs allow investors to gain exposure to income-generating real estate without directly buying or managing properties. Infrastructure funds similarly provide access to infrastructure-related assets while allowing investors to earn distributions.

Nigeria's listed market now includes UPDC REIT, UH REIT, SFS REIT, MREIF, NREIT and CNIF, offering investors a broader range of income-oriented assets.

The implication is clear: the near-20% OMO yield has raised the hurdle for equities, but not every listed security faces the same challenge.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (middle), flanked by Temi Popoola, Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Exchange Group (NGX) (left), and Umaru Kwairanga, Chairman, NGX, during the president's audience with board and management of Nigerian Exchange Group at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, recently. PHOTO: STATE HOUSE

Business

Ogun Waterside Backs Dangote Deep Seaport, Pledges Peaceful Investment Climate

ANDREW UTULU
LAGOS

Ogun Waterside Local Government has pledged its full support for the proposed Dangote Deep Seaport, describing the project as a transformative investment that would accelerate industrialisation, create employment and reposition the coastal council as a major logistics and maritime hub in Nigeria.

The commitment was made during a high-level stakeholders' meeting convened by the Executive Chairman of Ogun Waterside Local Government, Hon. AbdulGaniyu Adetoye Odunnoiki, at the council's secretariat.

The meeting brought together representatives of Dangote Group, traditional rulers from Ode Omi and Irokun Kingdoms, community leaders and senior government officials to strengthen collaboration ahead of the project's development.

Odunnoiki commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Ogun State Governor Dapo Abiodun for approving the Free Trade Zone in Ode Omi and Irokun as the location for the Dangote Deep Seaport, describing the decision as a defining moment for the economic future of Ogun Waterside.

"This engagement is about strengthening mutual understanding, fostering peaceful coexistence and creating a sustainable framework for community development and industrial collaboration," he said.

"The Dangote Deep Seaport will not only transform our local economy but also create opportunities for our people and future generations."

The council chairman urged residents and traditional institutions across the local government to embrace unity and maintain peace, stressing that sustainable development can only thrive in a stable environment.

He also assured investors that the local government would continue to provide an enabling environment while safeguarding the rights, culture and welfare of host communities.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Sulaimon Ibrahim, who represented Dangote Group, reaffirmed the company's commitment to responsible investment and meaningful engagement with host communities.

He said the success of the deep seaport would be built on transparency, partnership and shared prosperity.

"Our commitment goes beyond infrastructure," Ibrahim said.

"We will honour every agreement reached with the host communities and ensure that all persons affected during the planning process are compensated in line with established enumeration and industry standards. Sustainable operations can only flourish in an atmosphere of peace and mutual trust."

The meeting also highlighted expectations for broad based local participation in the project. Member representing Ogun Waterside Constituency at the Ogun State House of Assembly, Hon. Samsideen Adekunle Lawal, urged Dangote Group to prioritise the employment of qualified indigenes across both technical and management positions while maintaining continuous dialogue with traditional institutions and community stakeholders.

Following extensive deliberations, participants unanimously adopted a communiqué committing all parties to transparency, regular communication and peaceful collaboration throughout the implementation of the project.

They also agreed that further town hall engagements would be held as development progresses.

Yomi Otubela, President, National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), and Founder/CEO, Lagooz Schools (left); Temilade Adu, Corporate Communications Manager, Rite Foods Limited (second left); Tulope Medebem, President, Experiential Marketers Association of Nigeria (second right), and Goddie Ofose, Editor–in–Chief/Publisher, The Industry Newspaper, during The Industry's Top 50 Companies of Impact 2026 Award ceremony, where Rita Foods received award in Lagos, recently.

Rite Foods Named Among Nigeria's Top 50 Companies Of Impact 2026

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH

Rite Foods Limited, Nigeria's leading indigenous food and beverage company has been recognised among the Top 50 Nigerian Companies of Impact for 2026 at this year's Industry Newspaper Awards.

The recognition celebrates organisations making significant contributions to Nigeria's economic and social development through innovation, sustainability, job creation, and measurable impact.

Rite Foods was recognised for its role in advancing the food and beverage industry through investments in modern manufacturing infrastructure, technology, product innovation, and sustainable business practices.

The company's selection also reflects its contribution to local value creation, employment, community development, environmental sustainability, and the broader growth of Nigeria's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector.

Over the years, Rite Foods has built a distinctive portfolio of consumer brands, including Bigi Carbonated Soft Drinks, Bigi Premium Drinking Water, Sosa Fruit Drinks, Fearless Energy Drink, Rite Spicy Beef Sausage, Bigi Beef Sausage, and Bigi Flex Sausage.

Through continuous product development, the company has introduced new flavours and packaging solutions designed to respond to changing consumer preferences while maintaining its focus on quality and accessibility.

According to Goddie Ofose, Editor-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer of Industry Newspaper, the award recognises organisations that are contributing meaningfully to the transformation of Nigeria's economic landscape.

"The Top 50 Companies of Impact recognition is designed to celebrate organisations whose activities demonstrate tangible economic, social, and environmental value. Rite Foods distinguished itself through its commitment to innovation, sustainability, environmental preservation, and community development."

Ofose specifically highlighted the company's environmental initiatives, including its Waste-Is-Naira (W.I.N.) programme and Riteonthebeach project, which focus on plastic waste recovery and environmental awareness.

He noted that the initiatives demonstrate how corporate sustainability programmes can extend beyond internal operations to address environmental challenges within communities.

The company's energy strategy was also cited as an important part of its sustainability efforts. According to Ofose, 95 per cent of Rite Foods' energy consumption is derived from cleaner energy sources, including natural gas and solar power, while diesel accounts for approximately five per cent of its energy mix.

MTN Group Posts $7.18bn H1 Revenue

CONTINUED FROM 13

mance in the period reflects strong conversion of the commercial momentum we see across our markets into growth in earnings, cash flow and returns. We are encouraged by the record margins delivered in the period as well as the strong cash upstreaming from operations," said MTN Group President and CEO Ralph Mupita.

MTN's fintech business continued its expansion, with 70.8 million active Mobile Money users driving demand for secure, convenient services and lifting the value of MTN fintech transactions by more than a third to $330 billion.

Transaction volumes rose 17 percent to 13 billion, active agents grew to 1.4 million, and active fintech merchants increased by more than 18 percent to 2.3 million, with advanced services leading overall fintech revenue growth.

As at 30 June 2026, MTN served 317.7 million customers across 19 markets, of whom more than 179 million were active data users, lifting network traffic by nearly 23 percent to 14.3 petabytes.

In South Africa, a highly competitive market marked by constrained consumer liquidity, MTN recorded a marginal decline in subscribers to 39.5 million, of whom 28.2 million were prepaid customers.

Service revenue in the unit grew 1.5 percent overall, with second-quarter growth accelerating to 2.3 percent from 0.7 percent in the first quarter.

FDX By GITEX Set To Unveil Blueprint For Africa's Inclusive Financial Future

Africa's rapidly evolving banking and financial sector is entering its next phase of development, amplified by a projected $1.5 trillion digital payments economy by 2030.

As technology redraws the boundaries of financial access, GITEX NIGERIA presents FDX by GITEX, a new platform to modernise critical infrastructure, accelerate financial inclusion, and connect capital, policy, and digital innovation to expand access and opportunity across Africa.

Held under the patronage of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GITEX NIGERIA is West Africa's largest tech, AI, and startup show, taking place across Abuja and Lagos from 31 August–3 September 2026.

Supported by the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy in collaboration with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), the upcoming second edition is endorsed by the Lagos State Government and organised by KAOUN International, the global organiser of GITEX events.

Held at the Landmark Centre, Lagos (3 September), FDX by GITEX convenes the forces shaping Africa's financial future to turn innovation into tangible economic outcomes.

Aligning sovereign finance with entrepreneurial momentum, the platform hosts regulators, institutional investors, enterprises, and high-growth startups to stimulate investment, broaden financial participation, drive regulatory reform, and advance digital assets, capital markets, cross-border finance, and cross-sector collaboration.

Dr Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, Deputy Governor of Lagos State, said: "As the commercial and innovation engine of West Africa, Lagos is committed to building a modern, tech-driven financial ecosystem that leaves no one behind. FDX at GITEX NIGERIA represents a pivotal platform to shape forward-looking policy and accelerate bold financial innovations.

"By aligning future banking and finance policy with cutting-edge digital infrastructure, we can deepen financial inclusion, unlock seamless cross-border trade, and catalyse sustainable economic value. Forward-thinking financial policies shall empower the entrepreneurial ambitions of Lagosians and drive the digital transformation of Nigeria's US$1 trillion economy ambition."

Beyond policy and digital infrastructure, Nigeria's next phase of growth depends on mobilising institutional capital and directing investment towards high-impact opportunities. FDX by GITEX brings this imperative to the forefront, connecting public-sector ambition with the capital and partnerships needed to drive economic transformation.

Ahead of his keynote address in Lagos, Dr Armstrong Ume Takang, Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), Nigeria, said: "Unlocking Nigeria's $1 trillion economic ambition requires moving beyond policy intent to the effective mobilisation of institutional capital.

EnterpriseNow

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From The Archives

The Trouble With Nigeria's Aviation Industry

'It remains a conundrum among aviation enthusiasts that Africa is still far behind other continents and captures just 3% of the global air travel ecosystem, in spite of the fact that it is the abode of 15% of the global population and comprises 20% of the planet's landmass (IATA, 2020).'

SIAKA MOMOH

The Nigerian aviation industry is troubled. Highly troubled. Owners of airlines are feeling the heat. Patrons of airlines are feeling the heat too.

The other day, the CEO of United Nigeria Airlines, Dr. Obiora Okonkwo, in a media interactive session with Aviation Correspondents in Lagos, said the high cost of flight operations had made it difficult for airlines to operate profitably in Nigeria, noting that high cost of aviation fuel and foreign exchange has become very challenging for Nigerian carriers.

So for those who do air travels business, for students, that is Nigerians studying outside our shores, and their parents, who have to pay school fees, it is a hell of headache for them finding their ways round air travels challenges. The challenge is not even limited to the ones listed above – there is also energy challenge – 26 percent rise in energy cost in the UK for instance, and spike in other parts of Europe!

Talking about challenges, one needs to cite Dr Obiora Okonkwo, who said at the press briefing in question that "it is important that we refer to this exchange rate in all these discussions because 99 per cent of aviation component is foreign exchange denominated; even the reason for the increase in fuel is because of foreign exchange because the product is imported".

He explained: "But you cannot deal with safety in isolation from efficient operation, which has to come with proper financing of your operation. Because it is only when you are properly financed that you will be able to have the resources for spare parts, maintenance as at when due. And the only thing now that covers that aspect is only sales of tickets. And how much these tickets are sold is very, very important. And you see, aviation is a chain, there are a whole lot of players in that chain business. But the cashiers in that whole chain are the operators."

Challenges of Airline Operations

Two academics –Waribugo Sylva and Chiedu Florence Amah, of the Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, have done a fine-tooth comb research on this aviation issue. They titled it 'Challenges of Airlines Operations in Sub-Saharan Africa: AnEmpirical Investigation of the Nigerian Civil Aviation Sector'.

Findings:

Exploratory Factor Analysis led to the retention of 27 items, representing five factors - Descriptive analysis reveals these challenges, as follows (in order of importance or severity): Infrastructural, Financial, Corporate Governance and Managerial, Policy and Regulatory, and Safety, Security and Environmental challenges.

The dons stressed that managers and policy makers need to pay the most attention to infrastructural challenge, followed by financial challenge, Corporate Governance and Managerial, and Policy and Regulatory, while safety, security and environmental challenge should not be traded-off even if it is the least challenge. They pointed out the study's limitations and suggested generation of more items and investigations of hypothesized models on the nexus between these five factors and organizational performance, or other criterion variables.

Pedigree of Aviation Industry

According to the dons: The civil aviation industry plays a key role in the upstream and downstream sectors of the global economy. It reduces the cost of trade and facilitates tourism and the smooth operations of supply chains across continents (OECD, 2020). Aside its role in fostering the flow of goods, people, capital, technology and ideas (IATA, 2020), the airline industry is also praised for its complementarity and substitutability with other forms of transportation, thereby promoting integration and rapid development on a planetary scale.

Specifically, the industry transports more than one-thirds of the total value of goods and services. Also, for the past 10 years, the sector has enabled governments to annually generate over $111 billion as tax income. Moreover, the aviation industry contributes $3.5 trillion (4.1%) to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports 87.7 million jobs around the world (ATAG, 2020).

Unexplored Opportunities

Following the above, scholars and governments of developing countries acknowledge the need to exploit the enormous opportunities that the airline industry offers. With air transportation, land-locked countries of Africa and South America need not link third party countries to import components and parts to drive their extractive industries, or export their goods (most of which are perishable) for increased foreign exchange earnings. Taking Nigeria as an example, the aviation industry serves as a great catalyst of socio-economic transformation. Aviation recorded the fastest growth in the transportation sub-sector at the close of 2019, with a 0.14% GDP contribution which amounted to N198.62 billion (NBS, 2019).

Thin and Fragmented Routes

Despite the enormous benefits of the airline sector - such as the promotion of trade, tourism, innovation and the creation of employment – its growth and development in Africa, and indeed Nigeria, is far behind other countries.

Al-Kwifi, Frankwick and Ahmed noted that "over 800 airports are distributed across the African continent, yet only one-tenth receive scheduled services. Apart from the few routes that link the major cities of the continent, most intra-African routes are thin and fragmented markets". This seems to be a contradiction as the landlocked nature of most of the countries in Africa and high population of the continent offer advantage for the growth of the industry.

CONTINUES ON P.16

Editor's Note

Despite the enormous benefits of the airline sector - such as the promotion of trade, tourism, innovation and the creation of employment – its growth and development in Africa, and indeed Nigeria, is far behind other countries.

Read the rest of the story and more in our package for you this week.

Please send your comments to Siaka MOMOH via siakamomoh@yahoo.com/whatsapp 234 806 139 6410.

Enterprise Issues

With Siaka Momoh

Menace Of Social Miscreants

Thrice, I was forced to have contact with these social miscreants called 'area boys' in Lagos. You need to pray you never have anything to do with them. My first encounter was on Lagos Island, by the Public Affairs Section of the US Consul-General's Office on Broad street where my car broke down.

It was getting late, about 8 pm. One of them, who perhaps must have spent the better part of his life doing the 'area boy' thing because from all considerations, he looked a spent force, came to me to ask what was the matter. I told him nothing was the matter since I considered him inconsequential. He left and somehow, the car responded but only took me as far as the Bank Of Industry, on Broad Street then, where I struck a deal with the security men on duty, who kept watch over it until the following day when my mechanic fixed it.

The second experience was also on Lagos Island, but this time on Marina. I had a flat tyre and so had to pull the car out of the busy Marina Street to a point I thought was an automobile workshop which however turned out to be one of their hot spots along the road. One of them immediately showed up to offer help. I obliged. All he needed to do was to replace the flat tyre with the spare. This was something I could do on my own but I was neatly dressed up for an appointment in Lagos Business School and did not want my nice suit smeared. But there was another strong point I could not ignore: Area Boys consider it their right to offer such service as long as you are in their territory. To resist is to draw their attack.

But as soon as he commenced changing the tyre, others dashed in from various directions and offered to join the one I had contracted for the job.They were eight in all – eight men to replace one flat tyre! I sensed it was a systematic plan to mob me and pilfer valuables from the car. I politely told them I needed only one hand and that hand had been hired. They grumbled and stayed off, but hung around. I paid the one I contracted N100 on completion of the job, and he announced to them "It's only N100 card that chairman gave me o, you had better ask him to raise you before he lives…". Before they could react, I jumped into my car and sped off.

Only recently, I had another encounter with them, by Hassan Bus-stop along Oshodi/Apapa Expressway. I had had enough experience dealing with them so it was easy dismissing them this time around. But this encounter led me to discovering the nuisance they constitute to traders in the second-hand electricity generators market located in Hasan Bus-Stop. You cannot take delivery of generators from this market without paying commissions to them – they collect commissions on sales made by someone else. This practice, I gather, obtains in similar markets across Lagos. Commercial drivers in Lagos pay these fees grudgingly.

This social miscreant's menace is a global phenomenon. Let us draw from an experience in Skopje. Skopje is the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. As largest city in the country, it is a political, economic, and cultural center of Macedonia. It lies on the upper course of the Vardar River and is located on a major north-south Balkan route between Belgrade and Athens.

The first impression of a visitor to Skopje is invariably the same: it is a new and modern city. It is a trading center for the cotton, tobacco, grains, and livestock produced in the surrounding region. The city also has manufacturing facilities for iron and steel, electrical machinery, chemicals, textiles, carpets, and foods. This is one good side any tourist will love to be associated with. The testimony of a tourist recorded in Skopje Travel Guide titled Street Safety: Ghettos are the same all around the world, tells the story.

The tourist in question, had an experience in a particular area-near the Turkish Bazaar, a poorest neighbourhood in Skopje. While on a familiarity walk, he strolled into the neighbourhood, oblivious to the neighbourhood's reputation as a combat zone where he had a close shave with death. He encountered three of the ugliest, nastiest, thuggish Albanians known to mankind. Without hesitation, one demanded money from him in English. Speaking fluent Italian, he responded, "Non parlo inglese." And as luck would have it, a shop proprietor was kind enough to translate for the thugs. "Give me your money." The punk spoke, only this time he brandished a knife. One thing saved his life, he could speak little Albanian, their language and he let them know he was in Kosovo for three months 'fighting' their course.

CONTINUES ON P.16

MSME Digest With Kola Owolabi

There Is Big Fortune Waiting For You In The Market!!! (2)

Don't Wait for the Perfect Start: Learn from the False Start

Have you ever watched a 100-metre, 200-metre or 400-metre race closely? If you have, you will notice something interesting about the beginning of the race. Before the runners are allowed to go, there is intense concentration. Every athlete is positioned in the starting blocks, muscles tensed, eyes fixed ahead, waiting for the starting gun.

Then suddenly, BANG!

They shoot out of the blocks.

But sometimes, one of the athletes moves a fraction of a second too early. The race is stopped. It is called a false start.

Now, here is an interesting lesson for entrepreneurs.

Experienced athletes understand that the beginning of a race is extremely important. You cannot afford to sleep at the starting blocks and expect to catch everybody later. In a short-distance race, the athlete who gets out of the blocks fastest has a significant advantage. If he gets the early momentum and maintains it, the others may never catch up.

This is exactly how it works in business.

Your idea may be excellent, but if you are too slow in taking it to the market, somebody else may get there before you.

Many entrepreneurs spend months, or even years, perfecting an idea. They want the perfect product, the perfect packaging, the perfect office, the perfect website, the perfect business plan, the perfect funding and the perfect economic environment.

Meanwhile, somebody with an idea that is only 70 percent ready has already entered the market.

And guess what?

The market begins teaching that person what customers actually want.

That is why I believe entrepreneurs should learn the lesson of the false start.

A false start, properly understood, is not necessarily failure. It can be an early attempt that gives you information. You discover what works, what does not work, what customers like, what they reject and what needs to be changed.

The wise entrepreneur does not necessarily wait until everything is perfect. He gets moving, observes the market and adjusts.

Think about some of the world's most successful companies. Apple, Microsoft and Amazon did not become dominant by sitting permanently in the starting blocks waiting for certainty. They entered markets, learned, improved, innovated and continued to move.

More recently, OpenAI, through ChatGPT, moved very quickly into the public generative-AI market. That early visibility and adoption created enormous momentum, while many competitors subsequently entered a race that was already underway.

The lesson is not that the first company to market always wins. It doesn't. Sometimes the pioneer fails and a later entrant becomes the winner.

The lesson is that speed creates opportunity.

There is another important point here. Athletes do not deliberately want to be disqualified. The objective is to get the fastest legitimate start possible. Entrepreneurs should think the same way.

I am not suggesting that you rush blindly into the market without research, planning or consideration of risk. That would be reckless. Rather, I am saying that your research and planning should help you enter the market intelligently and quickly, not become an excuse for endless delay.

If you have developed a prototype, test it.

If you have developed a service, offer it to a small group of customers.

If you have written an app, put it in the hands of users.

If you have invented something, demonstrate it to potential buyers.

If you have a business idea, start talking to prospective customers.

Let the market become your laboratory.

This is because ideas are validated in the market, not in brainstorming sessions.

You can sit in an air-conditioned office for six months and debate whether customers will buy your product. Or you can put a simple version of the product in front of ten potential customers and get answers in a few days.

The market may tell you something your feasibility study did not anticipate.

It may tell you that your price is wrong.

It may tell you that your packaging needs improvement.

It may reveal an entirely different customer segment.

It may even show you that the problem you thought you were solving is not the real problem—but that there is another, much bigger problem customers desperately want solved.

That information is gold.

The entrepreneur who enters the market early begins accumulating this knowledge while the entrepreneur who is still "preparing" is accumulating paperwork.

Remember the sprinter.

When the gun goes off, there is no more time to adjust your starting position. The race has begun.

In entrepreneurship, the market is already running.

Your competitors are running.

Your potential customers are making choices.

Technology is changing.

New opportunities are emerging.

So, if you have a viable idea, do not remain permanently in the starting blocks.

Prepare intelligently. Start small if necessary. Test the market. Learn from your mistakes. Improve the product. Adjust your strategy. Then accelerate.

You may not win because you started first, but you certainly cannot win a race you never properly start.

Don't delay your market approach for anything. Your big idea deserves a chance in the marketplace.

And remember: the market, not your brainstorming session is the ultimate validator of your idea.

• Kola Owolabi is a Fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants of Nigeria. His company, David Solomon Consulting, a foremost business plan preparation consulting firm, operates out of Igbesa, near Crawford University, Ogun State. He can be reached at 08023203198 (WhatsApp line)

The Trouble With Nigeria's Aviation Industry

CONTINUED FROM 15

It remains a conundrum among aviation enthusiasts that Africa is still far behind other continents and captures just 3% of the global air travel ecosystem, in spite of the fact that it is the abode of 15% of the global population and comprises 20% of the planet's landmass (IATA,2020).

Challenges of the Nigerian Airline Industry

They have the following to say on the encumbrances of the Nigerian aviation industry: Generally, the performance of the Nigerian Air transport system is sub-optimal. Uhuegho (2014) investigated the effects of economic deregulation on domestic airlines and found that most Nigerian Airlines perform poorly compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world. A review of literature shows that the challenges faced by the civil aviation industry in Nigeria could be grouped into: Infrastructural, Financial, Policy and Regulatory, Corporate Governance, Managerial, safety, security, and environmental challenges…

Lacks Commercial Simulator Facility,etc

Furthermore, the industry lacks commercial simulator facility, thus warranting airlines to spend not less than 16 million USD annually to conduct recurrent simulator training for pilots. The industry also lacks

Standard Maintenance Repairs and Overhaul (MRO) hanger. The absence of an MRO is also responsible for the rapid rate of deterioration of the carriers, which lifespans are cut-short to an average of 10 years. Worse still, the country has some of the oldest fleets on the planet, with more than 70% of all aircrafts above 10 years of age.

Higher Maintenance Costs

This scenario translates to higher maintenance costs, increased fuel consumption, more pollution, increased downtime and low safety/reliability. Another nagging issue that constitutes a bottleneck to the smooth operation of the airline industry is inadequate provision of power (Adebukola & Fagbemi. Government's negligence to provide reliable power via the national grid makes the airport authorities resort to alternative power (e.g. diesel powered generating sets), which is very costly and non-sustainable. The cost burden arising from this scenario is transferred to passengers in the form of increased airfares. This increase in airfare leads to sparse demand.

Inadequate Number and Sizes of Aircrafts

Another infrastructural challenge is the inadequate number and sizes of aircrafts. According to Adebukola and Fagbemi, many Nigerian airlines have only few aircrafts on their fleet. Apart from the major air traffic routes, there are several others that offer reasonable traffic potential. However, due to the small number of aircraft on their fleet, most operators prefer to stick to the more populated routes thereby limiting the available options to travelers.

This ultimately translates to reduced quality of service. Although market potentials exist along several under-utilized air corridors, the smallness of airlines does not permit them to explore these potential routes. Airlines may not be able to break even given the low load factors that are likely to exist on such routes.

Moreover, the small fleet size of most of the carriers makes them powerless to bargain for favourable rates with fuel suppliers. Small size of carriers also constrains capacity to compete on regional and international routes. Nigeria's domestic airlines are therefore not strong players in the international and regional markets.

Menace Of Social Miscreants

CONTINUED FROM 15

Again, the issue of street children (yes, they start as street children) is one of the fast growing social problems in Ethiopia. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that there are more than 150-thousand street children in the country. Reports say economic problems have made many of them assume responsibilities normally reserved for adults, that large number of them are forced to work on the streets to satisfy their basic needs and support their families.

It is clear that these social miscreants are everywhere. It is a naughty social problem that governments must rise up to combat.

NGX 57% Rally: Domestic Capital Takes Centre Stage As Foreign Investors Stay On The Sidelines

BAMIDELE OGUNWUSI

Nigeria's equities market has delivered one of its strongest performances in recent years, with the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) All-Share Index surging 57 per cent in the first seven months of 2026. Yet, beneath the headline-grabbing rally lies a striking development: the market's spectacular rise has been powered less by foreign capital and more by the growing strength of domestic investors.

That distinction, according to Coronation Asset Management, could prove more important than the headline return itself as investors assess whether Nigeria's equity market has entered a new era of sustainable growth or merely experienced another powerful re-rating.

Speaking at the H1 2026 Capital Market Review and Outlook for the second half of the year, Managing Director of Coronation Asset Management, Aigbovbioise Aig-Imoukhuede, said the market's performance reflected stronger domestic participation, improving macroeconomic conditions and rising investor confidence rather than a significant return of foreign portfolio investors.

By the end of July, the NGX All-Share Index had gained 57 per cent, while total market capitalisation jumped by N58.9 trillion to N158.2 trillion. According to Bloomberg data cited by Aig-Imoukhuede, the performance placed Nigeria among the world's strongest-performing equity markets in dollar terms.

But while the numbers are impressive, they raise an important question for investors: how much further can the market run after such a dramatic repricing, and what will ultimately determine whether the gains translate into a durable bull market?

"These numbers are certainly worth celebrating," Aig-Imoukhuede said, noting that the rally reflected a strengthening domestic capital base, improving macroeconomic stability and growing opportunities for long-term investors.

The changing composition of market participation, however, represents perhaps the most significant feature of the 2026 rally.

Foreign investors, traditionally an important source of liquidity for Nigerian equities, have become a much smaller component of market activity. By June, foreign investors accounted for only 12.1 per cent of total NGX transaction value, compared with 27 per cent a year earlier.

At face value, the decline could be interpreted as a warning sign. But Coronation argues that it tells a more nuanced story.

Aig-Imoukhuede said the decline in foreign participation did not amount to a complete withdrawal of international investors. Instead, the size and influence of domestic investors expanded much faster.

Foreign investors' portfolio value increased modestly from N1.13 trillion to N1.16 trillion during the first half of the year, while domestic participation expanded by a remarkable 129.1 per cent.

"What changed was the scale of domestic participation, which expanded at a far more significant pace of 129.1 per cent," he said.

This shift has important implications for the structure and resilience of the Nigerian capital market.

For years, Nigeria's equity market has been vulnerable to the movements of international portfolio investors. Foreign funds can provide substantial liquidity during periods of optimism, but they can also exit rapidly when currency, inflation, political or global risk increases.

The emergence of domestic capital as the principal driver of the current rally therefore represents more than a statistical change. It could signal a gradual maturation of the market.

Aig-Imoukhuede rejected the argument that greater reliance on domestic investors represents a weakness.

"If anything, this is a sign of market maturity. Markets become more resilient when they are supported by savings rather than speculation," he said.

Domestic institutional investors, particularly pension funds, have played a growing role following changes to investment thresholds by the National

Jude Chiemeka, NGX Boss

Pension Commission (PenCom). At the same time, the resurgence in retail participation has broadened the investor base and provided additional momentum for equities.

The development is significant because Nigeria is beginning to demonstrate that its domestic savings pool can generate meaningful demand for financial assets even when international investors remain cautious.

Foreign portfolio investors were, in fact, net sellers of Nigerian equities during the first six months of the year despite the market's remarkable appreciation.

Aig-Imoukhuede said part of that positioning was understandable because Nigerian fixed-income instruments remained highly attractive. Short-dated government securities were offering yields close to 20 per cent, creating a compelling alternative for investors seeking high returns with shorter duration and, potentially, lower equity-market volatility.

"From a pure risk-adjusted perspective, that allocation decision was understandable," he said.

The implication is that the foreign investor question is not simply whether international capital likes Nigeria. It is whether Nigerian equities can become sufficiently attractive relative to government securities and other global opportunities to justify the additional risks associated with equities and currency exposure.

That is likely to become an increasingly important issue in the second half of the year.

The first half of 2026 demonstrated the ability of domestic investors to drive the market higher. The next phase may depend on whether foreign investors begin to return.

Aig-Imoukhuede believes the second half could provide a re-entry window for international capital as developments around market classification, foreign-exchange liquidity, external reserves and corporate earnings improve.

Nigeria's potential reclassification by global index providers could be particularly important.

For years, Nigeria's equity market has been vulnerable to the movements of international portfolio investors. Foreign funds can provide substantial liquidity during periods of optimism, but they can also exit rapidly when currency, inflation, political or global risk increases

He noted that FTSE Russell was reviewing Nigeria's position within its Frontier Market Index framework, while S&P Dow Jones Indices had placed the country on a watchlist for possible reclassification from standalone to frontier-market status.

Although neither development guarantees a change in classification, any positive outcome could have a meaningful impact on international capital flows, particularly passive investment linked to global indices.

The broader significance is that Nigeria needs foreign capital not merely to sustain the rally, but to deepen liquidity, broaden market participation and strengthen the country's integration into global capital markets.

"Global capital follows confidence, but domestic capital trades on it," Aig-Imoukhuede said.

Confidence, however, will ultimately be tested by Nigeria's macroeconomic fundamentals.

The foreign-exchange market remains central to the investment decision. While improved FX liquidity, a stronger naira and continued reserve accumulation have strengthened Nigeria's external position, international investors remain highly sensitive to the sustainability of exchange-rate stability.

For a foreign investor, a strong return in naira terms can quickly be eroded by currency depreciation. Consequently, the sustainability of the naira and the quality of foreign-exchange inflows are likely to be as important as corporate earnings in determining whether foreign investors return in scale.

The outlook for corporate profitability is another critical factor.

Aig-Imoukhuede pointed to banking-sector recapitalisation, stronger corporate earnings and continuing economic reforms as developments capable of strengthening Nigeria's investment proposition within the frontier-market universe.

But the easy gains may already have been made.

After a 57 per cent increase in the All-Share Index and significant re-rating across several large-cap stocks, investors are unlikely to continue rewarding equities indiscriminately.

The market's first-half performance was also relatively narrow, raising concerns about whether sufficient breadth exists to sustain the rally. For the gains to become structural, more sectors and companies will need to participate, supported by improving earnings and stronger fundamentals.

The June market decline provides an important illustration.

Rather than interpreting the first sequential monthly decline during the period as evidence of deteriorating investor confidence, Aig-Imoukhuede attributed it largely to profit-taking by domestic investors after the exceptional gains of the first half.

"Domestic investors were prudently locking in gains after a historic first half," he said.

That behaviour may become more pronounced if valuations continue to rise faster than earnings.

Consequently, the second half of 2026 is likely to be characterised less by broad-based buying and more by stock selection, valuation discipline and a closer examination of corporate fundamentals.

Investors, Coronation said, should focus on companies with strong earnings momentum, sound corporate governance, sufficient liquidity and clear prospects of benefiting from renewed international participation.

The equity-market outlook will also be influenced by monetary policy.

The Central Bank of Nigeria has retained its Monetary Policy Rate at 26.5 per cent for two consecutive meetings following the 50-basis-point reduction from 27 per cent in February.

Coronation expects the MPR to remain broadly around current levels through the end of the year.

"At Coronation Research, our base case remains that the MPR will broadly hold at current levels through year-end. We are not forecasting a dramatic policy pivot. We are forecasting disciplined, data-dependent stability," Aig-Imoukhuede said.

That stability could be more valuable to investors than an aggressive rate-cutting cycle.

Headline inflation stood at 15.43 per cent in July, but inflationary pressures remain vulnerable to food supply constraints, logistics costs, agricultural cycles and exchange-rate movements. These structural pressures limit the extent to which monetary policy alone can drive inflation lower.

For investors, relatively high interest rates will continue to create competition between fixed-income securities and equities. The short end of the yield curve could remain attractive, particularly for investors seeking high risk-adjusted returns without taking on the full volatility of equities.

At the same time, Coronation sees opportunities in quality credit, infrastructure debt and selected fixed-income instruments, particularly as investors consider extending duration.

The broader investment opportunity extends beyond financial markets.

Aig-Imoukhuede identified infrastructure financing, especially in energy and transport, as an area requiring substantial long-term capital. This highlights the central challenge facing Nigeria's capital market: transforming abundant investment opportunities into investable, transparent and credible assets.

Ultimately, the sustainability of the NGX rally will depend on more than liquidity.

Nigeria must strengthen the institutions, governance structures, transparency and investor-protection mechanisms required to retain capital once it arrives.

Capital can move into a market quickly, but trust takes considerably longer to build.

This is why the 57 per cent rally should be viewed not simply as a market success, but as a test of Nigeria's ability to convert a powerful domestic investment cycle into a deeper and more internationally relevant capital market.

The first seven months have demonstrated that domestic capital is capable of carrying the market even when foreign investors remain cautious. The next seven months will reveal whether that domestic strength can be complemented by renewed international participation.

For now, Nigeria's equities market has proved that it does not need foreign investors to rally. The bigger challenge is proving that it can attract them back—and keep them.

As Aig-Imoukhuede put it, the objective should go beyond delivering spectacular market returns to building a capital market that is "deeper, more trusted, more liquid and more globally relevant."

That is ultimately the real test of the 2026 rally.

If Nigeria can sustain macroeconomic stability, deepen domestic savings, strengthen corporate earnings, improve FX liquidity and reinforce market institutions, the current surge could mark the beginning of a more durable transformation.

If not, the 57 per cent gain could remain a remarkable chapter in market performance—but not necessarily the foundation of a new investment era.

Power

How Renewable Financing Could Rewire Nigeria's Power Market

CHIDI UGWU
ABUJA

Nigeria's electricity challenge has often been presented as a problem of generation: build more power plants, add more megawatts and strengthen the grid.

But a new development in the renewable energy space suggests that the more consequential battle may be taking place elsewhere — in the financing, distribution and commercial systems required to turn electricity projects into sustainable businesses.

The Rural Electrification Agency's (REA) N50 billion project-financing partnership with Alpha Morgan Bank is therefore significant not merely because of the amount involved, but because of what it could unlock across Nigeria's emerging distributed renewable energy market.

Under the arrangement, Alpha Morgan Bank will provide financing and financial advisory support to eligible renewable energy developers participating in REA programmes, including the Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-up (DARES) Project. REA, in turn, will facilitate approvals, grant agreements and project verification. The facility provides for revolving loans of up to N10 billion per eligible developer, with Alpha Morgan expected to provide as much as 70 per cent of counterpart funding, subject to its credit assessment.

For a sector where access to affordable and timely capital remains one of the major constraints, the arrangement could help address a familiar problem: projects can be technically viable and have grant support, yet still struggle to move from approval to construction because developers need upfront financing.

REA Managing Director, Engr. Abba Aliyu, has described access to finance as critical to the successful delivery and scale-up of decentralised renewable energy projects. He also stressed that the opportunity extends beyond conventional project finance into asset management, operations and maintenance, revenue collection, local manufacturing, productive use of energy and financial inclusion.

That broader ecosystem is perhaps the most important part of the story. A solar mini-grid, for instance, is not simply a collection of panels and batteries. It requires financing, construction, metering, billing, maintenance, customer management and revenue collection. Around it can develop businesses using electricity for irrigation, refrigeration, agro-processing, welding, telecommunications, retail and other productive activities.

This is where renewable energy can begin to move from being an electricity-access intervention to an economic-development platform. There is already evidence that such a model can attract serious institutional capital.

Renewable energy

In April, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Norfund announced up to $83.2 million in financing for five renewable energy service companies in Nigeria.

The projects are expected to support 315 solar hybrid mini-grids and connect about 2.9 million people, while creating opportunities for economic activity, small businesses and local value chains. IFC Regional Vice President for Africa, Ethiopis Tafara, said access to electricity is fundamental to jobs and economic growth.

The financing is also being deployed alongside the DARES programme, demonstrating that public grants, development finance and private capital can work together rather than operate as separate interventions.

IFC project disclosures provide further evidence of the potential scale. PriVida Power, for example, is being supported to develop up to 75 mini-grids across 10 states, while StarTimes Energy's programme involves as many as 95 mini-grids and 200,000 solar home systems.

The significance of domestic bank participation, therefore, lies in its potential to complement international development finance with local capital.

Nigeria needs this combination because the financing requirement remains enormous. REA has put the additional investment requirement for improving electricity access and reliability at about $23 billion, making a N50 billion facility important but clearly insufficient on its own.

The challenge now is to ensure that financing does not stop at announcements. Developers need predictable approvals, bankable projects, appropriate risk allocation, reliable payment mechanisms and clear regulatory rules. Financial institutions, meanwhile, need confidence that renewable energy projects can generate sustainable cash flows.

That is where another development in the electricity market becomes relevant.

The Nigerian Independent System Operator (NISO) and the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc (NBET) are strengthening cooperation to improve market efficiency, transparency and investor confidence. NISO Managing Director, Engr. Abdu Bello Mohammed, said both institutions have complementary responsibilities and must work together to address liquidity challenges.

NBET Managing Director, Dr. Akinola Odeyemi, identified market settlement, revenue alignment, coordination and broader market-development strategies as areas requiring closer cooperation.

Taken together, these developments point to a wider shift in Nigeria's electricity sector: financing renewable projects on one side while improving the commercial architecture of the electricity market on the other.

The opportunity is substantial. If banks become more comfortable financing distributed energy, developers can scale faster. If projects are properly operated and revenues efficiently collected, assets can remain productive long after construction. If electricity is paired with productive-use equipment, rural communities can generate new economic activity. And if local manufacturers increasingly participate in the supply chain, more of the value created by the energy transition can remain within Nigeria.

The N50 billion partnership should therefore be judged not only by how much money is eventually disbursed, but by how effectively it helps build an investable renewable-energy ecosystem.

Nigeria does not need another cycle of isolated power projects. It needs an ecosystem in which finance, regulation, technology, operations and productive economic activity reinforce one another.

That is the larger promise behind the N50 billion — and potentially its most valuable legacy.

PHED Rolls Out Whistleblower Hotline As It Battles Extortion Of Customers

CHIDI UGWU
ABUJA

The Port Harcourt Electricity Distribution Company (PHED) has launched a fresh campaign against extortion, directing customers to steer clear of unofficial payment channels and warning that the company will not be held liable for losses arising from non-compliance with its guidelines.

In a statement issued via its official X handle, @PHEDconnect, and tagged "War Against Extortion," the company urged customers to use only its recognised platforms — payment.phed.com.ng and the PHEDConnect mobile app — for bill payments, warning against remitting funds to personal accounts under any guise.

PHED listed four key directives for customers: making payments strictly through official channels; refusing to pay for meter acquisition into any personal account, and instead visiting map.phed.com.ng or any of its offices; declining requests to pay for account opening beyond the required security deposit; and always insisting on official receipts as proof of payment for any electricity-related transaction.

The company set up a whistleblower hotline, 08114646572, for customers to report suspected cases of extortion, and appealed to subscribers to adhere strictly to the guidelines "for their safety."

The campaign comes against the backdrop of persistent extortion complaints trailing PHED's operations across its franchise area covering Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross River and Akwa Ibom states.

Data from the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) showed PHED led all electricity distribution companies in customer complaints in the last quarter of 2024, with 54,683 cases — the highest among the country's 11 DisCos.

The company has previously had to publicly warn against unauthorised charges tied to transformer repairs, illegal network connections, and — as recently as this year — unofficial fees allegedly demanded from residents during its ongoing prepaid meter installation exercise, with reports of households being charged between N10,000 and N30,000 outside approved channels.

While the awareness drive signals PHED's intent to clean up middlemen exploiting customers at the point of service delivery, the disclaimer accompanying the guidelines — that the company "will not be held liable for any loss arising from failure to comply" — shifts a significant burden of vigilance onto consumers already grappling with erratic supply and billing disputes in the region.

AbujaBusiness

Nicholas Uwerunonye
+2348182042961

Why Abuja's Property Boom Is Facing Flooding Challenges

NICHOLAS UWERUNONYE

Abuja's commercial boom is colliding with a basic engineering reality: the city's drainage cannot keep pace with its own success.

Last Tuesday's floods — which swamped Wuse 2, Gudu, Mabushi, Lugbe, Nyanya and nearly a dozen other districts — were triggered by heavy rain. But developers, insurers and investors are beginning to price a far more uncomfortable truth: the damage was worsened by decisions made on paper years ago.

The numbers matter to those who build, buy and insure property across the FCT. As residential and commercial projects absorb green areas and encroach on natural waterways, less stormwater is absorbed by soil and vegetation.

More runoff is channelled into drainage systems that were never designed for the volume. The result, residents say, is visible: floodwater rising to window level in Mabushi, the Gaduwa—Durumi bridge submerged mid-afternoon, the Delight Event Centre in Gudu under water.

For the business community, this is no longer a weather story. It is a risk story. Insurers are watching closely. Properties in flood-prone districts — Mabushi, Lugbe, Wuye, parts of Gwarinpa — face climbing premiums or outright exclu,o4sions as claims data hardens.

A district with inadequate drainage is a district with an actuarial problem. Buyers who purchased on the strength of Abuja's growth narrative may find resale values vulnerable where flooding

recurs.

Developers face a growing compliance burden. The FCT Emergency Management Department says a case involving a developer allegedly blocking a water channel in Mabushi has already been reported to authorities.

With the Department of Development Control and the FCT Fire Service now pulled into a cross-agency flood-preparedness review, expect closer scrutiny of where and how new projects drain their land. The message to the sector is unspoken but clear: build responsibly, or build with the regulator watching.

The city itself bears the largest tab. Emergency management, road repairs, business interruption and the drag on investor confidence all carry costs that land on public and private balance sheets alike.

Authorities say preparations based on NiMet and NIHSA early warnings are underway — sensitisations, community visits, and drainage assessment of designated at-risk areas. But residents and environmental observers argue that prevention demands more than publicity: stronger enforcement of planning regulations, protection of waterways and green areas, and a drainage infrastructure budget that matches the pace of construction.

This is where the story deepens into a genuine business dilemma. Around the same time floodwater was entering buildings in Mabushi, a very different piece of Abuja news was being announced: Exclusive Shelters and Urban Shelters Infrastructure Limited launched Phase Two of the Dei-Dei Ultra-Modern Market, a commercial expansion pitched as the next chapter of Abuja's growth.

The juxtaposition is uncomfortable but unavoidable. Abuja is simultaneously selling its commercial future while struggling to contain the hydrological consequences of its commercial present.

The tension between converting green space and protecting waterways is not merely an environmental complaint. It is a measurable business risk — one that affects borrowing costs, insurance terms, property values and, ultimately, the credibility of Abuja's growth story itself.

The developers, insurers and buyers who adjust to this reality first will be the ones who see their assets stay dry. Those who ignore it may find their next rainy season very expensive. Until the drainage catches up with the concrete, every sunny day in Abuja carries a silent premium the market has only begun to price.

Exclusive Shelters, Urban Shelters Launch Phase Two Of Dei-Dei Ultra-Modern Market

NICHOLAS UWERUNONYE

Exclusive Shelters has partnered with Urban Shelters Infrastructure Limited to launch Phase Two of the Dei-Dei Ultra-Modern Market, a commercial development aimed at expanding real estate investment opportunities in the Federal Capital Territory.

The expansion follows the success of the first phase, which the companies said attracted significant investor interest and delivered returns that positioned the market as one of Abuja's emerging commercial destinations. Financial details of the new phase — project value, capital raised, investor thresholds and projected yields — were not disclosed.

Announcing the partnership, the Managing Director of Exclusive Shelters, Ahmad Bello Kawuwa, described the collaboration as a validation of the company's delivery record. "Urban Shelters has built and delivered projects for decades, and they don't put their name next to just anyone. They looked at the market, looked at who is actually delivering, and they came to us," he said.

His counterpart at Urban Shelters Infrastructure Limited, Rilwan Aliyu, framed the agreement as the start of a long-term relationship that will reshape collaboration within Nigeria's real estate industry. "Our signing today marks the beginning of a great relationship, not just signing documents but the beginning of a partnership that will last for many years to come," Aliyu said.

Neither company provided details on funding sources, construction timelines, or the specific investment structure being offered to prospective buyers and investors. The joint announcement also made no reference to flood risk, drainage provision, or the FCT's regulatory scrutiny of commercial developments near waterways.

That omission arrives as parts of Abuja — including Wuse 2, Mabushi, Lugbe and Gudu — grapple with the aftermath of heavy flooding that residents and environmental observers attribute in part to the conversion of green areas and obstruction of natural drainage channels. Authorities have said a case involving a developer allegedly blocking a water channel in Mabushi has already been reported.

The expansion therefore raises questions the developers have not yet answered: whether Phase Two accounts for the city's drainage capacity, whether the project has undergone flood-impact assessment, and how it will be affected by growing enforcement of planning regulations aimed at protecting waterways and green areas.

The answer matters beyond compliance. As floods recur in Abuja's commercial districts, insurers are reassessing risk, property values in affected areas are coming under pressure, and investor confidence in developments built with inadequate drainage is increasingly a business exposure rather than a purely environmental concern.

The companies' promotional framing — casting the launch as the next phase of Abuja's commercial growth and Africa's real estate excellence — was not independently verified. Neither firm disclosed occupancy or returns figures from Phase One beyond describing them as "impressive."

Dei-Dei Ultra-Modern Market is being positioned as one of the FCT's emerging commercial destinations. With the partnership announced and construction details still undisclosed, the market's investors — and the city that hosts it — will be watching whether the build-out stays dry as Abuja's commercial expansion outpaces its flood-resilience infrastructure.

Abuja's Transport Crackdown: How Wike's Terminal-Only Policy Reshaping The City's Commercial Transit Economy

NICHOLAS UWERUNONYE

The Federal Capital Territory's transport sector is undergoing a decisive regulatory shift, as FCT Minister Nyesom Wike announces an uncompromising crackdown on commercial vehicles operating outside designated bus and taxi terminals across Abuja.

Speaking recently after inspecting ongoing capital projects, Wike declared that vehicles found loading passengers at unauthorised locations would be impounded and auctioned—a move designed to rewrite the operational rules governing the city's public transportation market.

The minister's message was unequivocal, signalling a firm departure from what he described as failed soft-touch enforcement.

With the Mabushi and central business district terminals reportedly fully operational, the administration argues that the infrastructure for orderly transit already exists; the missing piece is compliance.

"We don't think that we should enforce, or people should obey rules, until you use force," Wike stated. "The bus and taxi terminals are accredited places for people to load. They will not agree, but I can tell you, they must agree. We will impound their vehicle, we will sanction it and we'll auction it."

For transport operators and industry stakeholders, the implications are immediate and material.

The policy recasts the terminals as mandatory hubs—concentrating passenger flows, centralising operations, and creating new commercial dynamics for those who operate inside the accredited zones.

Wike framed the initiative as a structural solution to roadside congestion, security concerns, and persistent traffic violations that have long burdened the capital's mobility ecosystem.

Yet the minister also acknowledged the enforcement challenge ahead, arguing that restoring order demands firmness against repeat offenders.

His characteristically blunt framing — that one must "source for an element of insanity" to bring discipline to a chaotic environment — underscored the administration's resolve. With enforcement set to begin immediately and no reversal on the table, operators face a clear choice: adapt to the terminal-based model or risk losing their vehicles entirely. For Abuja's commercial transport market, the era of roadside flexibility has ended.

Justus Adejumoh,
+2348056801034,
justusadejumoh@gmail.com

How Companies Can Predict, Prevent Cyber-Attacks With Generative AI

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH

The speed at which cyber threats are evolving is unprecedented. As a result, companies need to implement state-of-the-art technology to protect their data and systems.

In cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI have become game-changing technologies with capabilities beyond conventional methods. By enabling organizations to anticipate threats, model potential attacks, and develop customized defense plans, these technologies transform the way cybersecurity issues are handled.

AI excels at real-time threat identification by examining enormous volumes of data to find abnormalities suggestive of cyber threats. It uses machine learning algorithms to identify minor patterns or behaviors that depart from the norm, unlike traditional systems that depend on predetermined rules. AI, for example, may help monitor system logs and network traffic to find signs of compromise that human analysts might miss.

This means that organizations can mitigate risks before they become a serious concern because of this proactive approach, which makes it possible to detect sophisticated attacks like zero-day vulnerabilities early.

Generative AI further enhances this skill by creating artificial data for AI model training. By modeling different attack scenarios, generative AI guarantees that security systems are resilient and responsive to new threats. To assess the effectiveness of defenses against malware or phishing attempts, for instance, it can produce genuine adversarial scenarios. By giving companies a thorough grasp of vulnerabilities, these simulations help them improve their cybersecurity posture.

Importantly, generative AI dramatically increases the efficacy of incident response, a crucial aspect of cybersecurity. Manual intervention is a common component of traditional response techniques, which can cause delays in mitigation attempts. Important procedures like evaluating security events and ranking issues according to their seriousness are automated by generative AI. By speeding up reaction times, this automation lessens the effect of cyberattacks.

Additionally, generative AI can model intricate attack scenarios to prepare IT teams for actual events. Constructing immersive training environments using synthetic data improves decision-making abilities and gives security professionals the know-how to manage crises successfully. For instance, teams can practice containment tactics and recovery procedures using generative AI to mimic ransomware attacks.

If we consider the rate at which new types of cyber threats are emerging, it is interesting to note that fraud and phishing are still two of the most common cyber threats companies deal with nowadays. Generative AI-powered deep learning models provide sophisticated ways to identify these risks.

By examining user behavior, transaction patterns, and email content, these models can accurately detect fraudulent activity. For example, by identifying minute language clues or irregularities in sender metadata that conventional filters might overlook, generative AI might identify phishing efforts.

Furthermore, generative AI can mimic phishing campaigns to assess staff awareness and enhance training initiatives. Businesses can improve their human defenses against social engineering assaults by exposing staff members to realistic phishing scenarios. In addition to lowering risks, this proactive strategy promotes a cybersecurity-aware culture.

Another area where AI shows its transformational potential is in predictive threat intelligence. AI makes remarkably accurate predictions about future threats by examining historical data on vulnerabilities and attack trends. Organizations can use this capacity to rank risks according to their potential impact and likelihood of exploitation. AI, for instance, can predict patterns in the evolution of malware or spot new attack methods aimed at specific sectors.

Generative AI further enhances predictive intelligence, mimicking novel attack strategies that opponents may use. By creating defenses before attacks arise, these simulations help companies stay ahead of cybercriminals. A dynamic defense plan that adjusts to the constantly shifting threat scenario combines predictive intelligence with generative simulations.

Although there is no denying the advantages of AI and generative AI in cybersecurity, there are ethical issues that need to be resolved when they are used. For example, using synthetic data to train models may unintentionally reveal private information if not handled properly. Furthermore, hackers might use generative AI to produce advanced malware or initiate attacks through deepfakes.

Organisations must set explicit rules for the appropriate use of these technologies in to strike a balance between security and ethics. This entails putting measures in place to prevent misuse and ensuring privacy laws are followed while working with synthetic data. By offering specialized knowledge of secure implementation procedures, experienced third-party IT companies can assist businesses in navigating these obstacles.

Many organizations lack the specialized knowledge needed to harness AI and generative AI. Third-party IT companies fill this gap by providing specialized solutions for incorporating these technologies into cybersecurity frameworks. They create unique machine learning models, use generative AI to mimic attack situations, automate security procedures, offer training courses, and offer ethical advice. Businesses can successfully mitigate risks and realize the revolutionary potential of AI by utilizing these specialists. Through immersive training settings, this cooperation improves employee readiness and guarantees regulatory compliance.

By facilitating real-time threat identification, augmenting incident response, and increasing phishing detection, artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI are redefining cybersecurity. Proactive defense tactics against changing threats are made possible by these technologies. However, to prevent misuse, ethical concerns are essential.

Professional IT companies offer priceless assistance in safely utilizing these technologies. Businesses can protect digital assets and maintain an advantage in a complicated threat environment by collaborating with these companies. The future of cybersecurity lies in embracing innovation responsibly and with the right expertise at hand; organizations can achieve resilience against even the most sophisticated attacks.

Google Launches Gemini 3.7 Flash With Lower Pricing For Coding, AI Agents

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH

Google has launched Gemini 3.7 Flash, a new AI model focused on coding, software development and business workflows, with the company cutting its introductory price to encourage wider use.

The model arrives only three weeks after Gemini 3.6 Flash. Google says the latest version improves coding, web development, document processing and the use of software tools.

It is also being added to Gemini Spark, Google's AI agent service for subscribers in supported markets.

Google is pricing Gemini 3.7 Flash at $0.75 per million input tokens and $3.75 per million output tokens until the end of 2026. The company says that is half the original price of Gemini 3.6 Flash.

The lower price is part of Google's initiative to make AI agents more practical for developers and businesses that need models to handle several tasks with limited human input.

Google said the model performs better than its predecessor on coding tasks such as debugging, resolving issues and producing production-ready code.

On FrontierCode 1.1 Main, Gemini 3.7 Flash recorded 43.6%, compared with 34.4% for Gemini 3.6 Flash. Its score on DeepSWE v1.1 also rose to 65.3% from 49.0%.

The improvements extend beyond coding, as the model can produce more complete web applications with fewer prompts and better follows reference designs when generating user interfaces.

It recorded an Elo score of 1,588 on Arena.ai's WebDev Arena, compared with 1,538 for Gemini 3.6 Flash.

For knowledge-heavy work, Google reported profits in areas such as finance, law and biosciences. The model scored 34% on the GDP.pdf benchmark, up from 22% for Gemini 3.6 Flash.

It also performed better on AutomationBench, reaching 30.4% compared with 17% for the previous model.

The release comes as Google faces strong competition from OpenAI and Anthropic in the AI market. The company has been releasing updates to its smaller Flash models at a faster pace while its next flagship Pro model remains highly anticipated.

Google had previously said Gemini 3.5 Pro was being tested with partners and would arrive "soon".

The company's AI strategy has also faced internal changes. Google recently announced a leadership restructuring at Google DeepMind, with Demis Hassabis moving aside from his leadership role in favour of Koray Kavukcuoglu.

Two of Gemini's original technical co-leads have also left to establish a new company.

Google co-founder Sergey Brin has urged AI staff to focus heavily on Gemini as the company tries to strengthen its position in the market. Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai has also defended Google's AI strategy against claims that the company is falling behind its competitors.

For developers, Gemini 3.7 Flash is available through the Gemini API, Google AI Studio and Android Studio. Enterprises can access it through Google's enterprise AI platforms.

Google said the model also includes updated safeguards covering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear misuse, as well as cyber-related risks.

FG Calls For Increased Investments In Innovation Hubs To Boost Digital Growth

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH
LAGOS

The Federal Government has urged increased investment in Nigeria's technology hubs and innovation spaces, branding them vital drivers for nurturing local talent and sustaining the national digital economy.

Speaking at a workshop in Abuja, Dr. Bosun Tijani, minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, warned that economic diversification is impossible without directly strengthening these foundational support systems.

Dr. Tijani noted that while high-profile tech startups often capture public attention, the underlying innovation hubs and grass-roots communities that make their success possible are frequently overlooked. He highlighted hub managers and physical co-working spaces as vital anchor points where young talent, creators, and entrepreneurs can collaborate, build networks, and turn original concepts into viable businesses.

Ultimately, the Minister stressed that investing in these foundational hubs provides the ideal environment for young Nigerians to craft local solutions to societal challenges while creating meaningful employment opportunities across the country.

The Minister, who drew from his previous experience managing a technology hub, said Nigeria's growing technology ecosystem was partly driven by the emergence of spaces that provide entrepreneurs with access to knowledge, mentorship, networks and other forms of support.

He noted that the country's increasing number of successful technology companies demonstrated the enormous potential of Nigeria's innovation ecosystem, but warned that this potential could not be fully realised without stronger support structures for ecosystem builders.

Tijani stressed that government's investment in digital infrastructure must be matched with adequate investment in the people and institutions capable of transforming infrastructure into economic opportunities.

He highlighted ongoing Federal Government efforts to expand digital infrastructure through investments in fibre-optic connectivity, telecommunications infrastructure and satellite technology to extend digital access to underserved and hard-to-reach communities.

He added that government was also strengthening other components of the digital ecosystem, including digital identity and cloud infrastructure, through new policies and strategic interventions.

The Minister, however, maintained that infrastructure alone would not deliver the desired economic transformation if innovation hubs across the country lacked the resources and capacity required to attract and retain skilled personnel.

Panelists at The Borderless Experience 2026, organised by Condia in Lagos recently.

NITDA, Budget Office Set Up Joint Committee For Nigeria's Sovereign Cloud Initiative

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH
LAGOS

The National Information Technology Development Agency NITDA), has partnered with the Budget Office of the Federation, to inaugurate the Joint Technical Committee on the National Sovereign Cloud Initiative, JTC-NSCI.

The committee will address key fiscal, expenditure, procurement, financing and investment considerations required for the effective implementation of the initiative.

The committee is chaired by the Director-General of the Budget Office of the Federation, Tanimu Yakubu, while NITDA Director-General, Kashifu Inuwa CCIE, serves as Co-Chair.

Speaking at the inauguration, Inuwa highlighted the strategic importance of developing trusted domestic cloud and digital infrastructure capable of supporting government, regulated sectors and critical national workloads, while creating an enabling environment for private-sector investment and innovation.

"The implementation of the NSCI requires more than technology and regulation. It requires alignment between Government's digital infrastructure priorities and the fiscal, procurement, financing and investment mechanisms necessary to support them sustainably," Inuwa said.

NITDA said the JTC-NSCI will provide a focused inter-agency platform for examining issues including government ICT and cloud expenditure, total cost of ownership, utilisation of existing infrastructure, budget and procurement alignment, infrastructure financing, investment mobilisation and the fiscal implications of cloud adoption.

The committee brings together key institutions responsible for public finance, procurement, investment, infrastructure, connectivity, power, cybersecurity, data governance and regulated sectors to ensure these cross-cutting issues are addressed in a coordinated manner.

The establishment of the JTC complements the broader governance and implementation arrangements for the National Sovereign Cloud Initiative and marks another step towards translating Nigeria's sovereign cloud policy and regulatory framework into coordinated, sustainable and investment-ready implementation.

Meanwhile, the National Sovereign Cloud Initiative has moved from policy development to implementation in August, with the Federal Government putting regulatory and investment frameworks in place.

Recently, NITDA signed three key regulatory instruments under the initiative: the National Cloud Computing Guideline, the National Cloud Technical Guideline and the National Digital Infrastructure Assurance Framework (NDIAF).

The agency also presented the National Cloud Investment Strategy, which sets out a structured national approach to cloud adoption, digital sovereignty, infrastructure assurance and investment.

WhatsApp To Return Text-Based Status Feature

The recent WhatsApp update, which saw the text-based status replaced with the new image-based status feature, suffered a major boomerang effect with users castigating the move. In an attempt to placate its users, the Facebook-owned company announced that it would be bringing back the text-based status feature.

The revived text status feature appeared in WhatsApp's latest Android beta version 2.17.95 last week. According to a report by Gadgets.com, the revived version will be available for all android devices in the coming week.

WhatsApp users will once again be able to set a text status in the 'about' section of the app alongside its image-based status feature which will continue to exist.

The contacts tab will not be making a reappearance. However, users will only be able to view others' status by opening their contact when starting a new chat thread or looking at group information.

"We heard from our users that people missed the ability to set a persistent text-only update in their profile, so we've integrated this feature into the 'About' section in profile settings. Now, the update will appear next to profile names anytime you view contacts, such as when creating a new chat or looking at Group info," explained WhatsApp.

"At the same time, we're continuing to build on the new Status feature that gives people fun and engaging ways to share photos, videos and GIFs with their friends and family throughout their day."

Xiaomi Launches REDMI 17 With Massive 7500mAh Battery In Nigeria

JUSTUS ADEJUMOH
LAGOS

Xiaomi is putting battery life at the centre of its latest push in Nigeria's competitive smartphone market, with the upcoming Redmi 17 built around a 7,500mAh battery and 45W Turbo Charging as the company seeks to appeal to consumers who spend long hours on their phones.

The device is being positioned as an entry-level smartphone for students and young professionals, a segment where battery endurance can be particularly important for users relying on smartphones for communication, entertainment, work and online learning.

The Redmi 17 is scheduled to launch in Nigeria on September 1, 2026, marking Xiaomi's latest attempt to strengthen its position in the country's entry-level smartphone segment.

The 7,500mAh capacity places the Redmi 17 well above the 5,000mAh battery that has become common across much of the smartphone market. Battery capacity has increasingly become a competitive feature in 2026, with Chinese smartphone manufacturers pushing capacities beyond 7,000mAh.

For Xiaomi, however, the strategy is not simply to put a larger battery inside the phone. The company is pairing the capacity with 45W Turbo Charging, designed to reduce the time users need to remain connected to a charger.

Xiaomi's Africa specifications for the Redmi 17 say the 7,500mAh battery can provide up to 91 hours of music playback, while 35 minutes of charging is marketed as enough to provide a full day's use under its stated test conditions. The phone also supports 22.5W wired reverse charging, allowing it to supply power to compatible devices.

That combination could become an important selling point in Nigeria, where consumers often balance heavy smartphone use with concerns about charging access and electricity availability.

The battery focus is being supported by other hardware features. The Redmi 17 comes with a 6.9-inch display with an adaptive refresh rate of up to 120Hz, Corning Gorilla Glass 7i protection and a MediaTek Helio G91-Ultra processor. It also features a 50MP AI dual-camera system and dynamic RGB lighting.

Insurance & Pension

Chris Ebong, +2348060130283 christopher.ebong@independentnig.com

38% Pension Drop: No Panic As PenCom Says Real Contributions Rose 38.2%

The National Pension Commission (PenCom) has moved to dispel concerns over an apparent 38.1 per cent plunge in pension contributions in the first quarter of 2026, saying the decline was largely a statistical distortion caused by exceptional Federal Government remittances that inflated the preceding quarter's figures.

The commission's clarification provides a more positive picture of the health of Nigeria's Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), showing that regular pension inflows actually strengthened during the quarter despite the sharp contraction suggested by the headline figures.

According to PenCom, total pension contributions fell from N903.70 billion in the fourth quarter of 2025 to N559.42 billion in Q1 2026, representing a decline of N344.28 billion, or 38.1 per cent.

On the surface, the figures could suggest a significant deterioration in the capacity of employers and workers to sustain pension savings. But PenCom said such an interpretation would be misleading because the Q4 2025 figure contained N499.15 billion in extraordinary government payments that were not part of normal quarterly contribution flows.

Once the exceptional inflows are removed, pension contributions for Q4 2025 stood at N404.55 billion. Compared with that adjusted figure, the N559.42 billion recorded in Q1 represents an increase of N154.87 billion, translating into a robust 38.2 per cent growth.

The adjustment therefore turns what appears to be a major contraction into evidence of continued expansion in the underlying pension contribution base.

"While headline figures suggest a decline in contributions relative to Q4 2025, an adjusted analysis indicates that pension contributions recorded robust growth in Q1, driven by stronger underlying contribution inflows rather than one-off Federal Government-funded remittance," PenCom stated.

The explanation is significant for the pension industry because quarterly contribution figures are an important indicator of the strength of the CPS, the ability of workers and employers to build retirement savings and the capacity of pension funds to generate long-term capital for the economy.

The extraordinary Q4 remittances, according to the commission, consisted of several government obligations that had accumulated over time.

A major component was the N379.96 billion payment relating to pension increases arising from the 15 per cent, 33 per cent and consequential adjustments implemented in 2007, 2010, 2019 and 2024.

The Federal Government also paid N107.72 billion to settle a 2.5 per cent shortfall in employer pension contributions covering the period from April 2017 to December 2021.

An additional N11.47 billion represented accrued rights credited to the Retirement Savings Accounts of eligible staff of treasury-funded agencies.

These payments, while important in settling outstanding pension obligations, were not recurring contributions and therefore created an unusually high base in Q4.

Consequently, comparing the N559.42 billion contributed in Q1 directly with the exceptional N903.70 billion recorded in Q4 would exaggerate the extent of any deterioration in the pension system.

The adjusted numbers, instead, point to a pension market that continued to attract stronger regular inflows at the beginning of the year.

Omolola Oloworaran, Pencom DG

The composition of the Q1 contributions also showed a relatively balanced contribution between the public and private sectors. The public sector accounted for 50.9 per cent of the N559.42 billion, while the private sector contributed 49.1 per cent.

The near-even distribution underscores the growing importance of both sectors to the sustainability and expansion of Nigeria's pension savings pool.

But while the latest figures offer reassurance about contribution growth, PenCom's broader challenge remains ensuring that money deducted from workers' salaries actually reaches their Retirement Savings Accounts promptly.

Late remittances, under-remittance and outright failure by employers to remit pension deductions remain among the persistent weaknesses confronting the CPS.

In the first quarter, the commission recovered N1.18 billion from 15 defaulting employers. The recovery comprised N450 million in outstanding pension contributions and N729 million in penalties.

The figures demonstrate that PenCom is increasingly relying on enforcement to compel employers to comply with their statutory obligations.

Beyond financial recoveries, the regulator has also strengthened collaboration with the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) to pursue unresolved pension compliance cases.

A stronger contribution base therefore has the potential to deepen the domestic capital market, reduce dependence on short-term funding and provide stable financing for productive investments

PenCom disclosed that six employers had already been interrogated under the strengthened collaboration, signalling a tougher regulatory posture toward organisations that fail to remit pension contributions as required.

For workers, the significance of enforcement goes beyond regulatory compliance. Every month of delayed or missing contributions potentially reduces the amount available for retirement and, over time, can undermine the financial security that the CPS is designed to provide.

For the broader economy, pension contribution growth has an even wider implication.

Nigeria's pension funds constitute one of the country's most important sources of long-term domestic capital. Consistent contributions provide pension fund administrators with investible resources that can be channelled into government securities, corporate debt, equities, infrastructure and other approved assets.

A stronger contribution base therefore has the potential to deepen the domestic capital market, reduce dependence on short-term funding and provide stable financing for productive investments.

This makes the sustainability of regular contributions particularly important at a time when Nigeria needs greater domestic capital mobilisation to finance infrastructure, businesses and economic expansion.

The Q1 performance also comes against the backdrop of renewed debate over the adequacy of Nigeria's statutory pension contribution rate.

Under the existing framework, employers are required to contribute a minimum of 10 per cent of workers' monthly emoluments, while employees contribute eight per cent, bringing the mandatory combined contribution to 18 per cent.

PenCom has advocated a review of the rate as part of efforts to strengthen retirement savings and ensure that pension benefits are adequate when workers exit the labour force.

The proposal, however, has generated concerns within the organised private sector.

Businesses are already dealing with high operating costs, energy expenses, financing costs, taxation and other pressures. An increase in the employer contribution rate could add to the cost of employing labour and potentially affect business expansion, profitability and hiring decisions.

The debate therefore presents policymakers with a delicate balancing act: ensuring that Nigerians accumulate sufficient retirement savings without imposing additional burdens that could weaken businesses and employment.

The Q1 contribution figures provide an important backdrop to that debate.

They show that even without extraordinary government payments, the pension system was capable of generating significant growth in regular contributions. That resilience could strengthen the case for deeper reforms aimed at widening coverage and improving compliance rather than relying solely on higher statutory contribution rates.

Nigeria still has a large informal workforce outside the formal CPS, while some workers within the formal economy remain exposed to delayed or incomplete remittances.

Expanding pension coverage among self-employed workers, micro businesses and other informal-sector participants could significantly increase the size of the pension pool over time.

Similarly, stronger enforcement against defaulting employers would ensure that growth in registered contributors translates into actual growth in pension assets.

The regulator's recovery of N1.18 billion in Q1 demonstrates both the scale of the compliance problem and the financial value of enforcement.

Ultimately, however, the sustainability of Nigeria's pension system will depend on more than quarterly contribution figures.

It will require consistent remittances, stronger employer compliance, wider coverage, effective regulation and investment strategies capable of protecting and growing workers' savings over decades.

The latest PenCom clarification is therefore more than an attempt to correct a misleading headline statistic. It offers a useful assessment of the underlying direction of the pension industry.

Rather than shrinking by 38.1 per cent, regular pension contributions increased by 38.2 per cent when the exceptional government payments are stripped from the comparison.

That distinction matters.

For a pension system designed to accumulate savings gradually over the course of workers' careers, the most important measure is not the size of an unusually large one-off government remittance, but the strength and consistency of ordinary contributions.

The Q1 figures suggest that this underlying engine remained firmly on an upward path.

The task now is to sustain that momentum by closing compliance gaps, expanding participation and ensuring that every naira deducted from workers' earnings is promptly credited to their retirement savings.

For millions of Nigerian workers whose financial security after retirement depends on the CPS, that consistency will ultimately matter far more than any single quarterly headline.

Titilope Joseph,
+234-802-288-1490
hi_titilope@yahoo.com

Solicitor & Advocate

Nigeria Needs Constitutional Reform, Not Privatisation —Adebayo

International lawyer and 2023 presidential candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Adewole Adebayo, has called for constitutional reforms to reshape the relationship between the Federal Government and states, including an end to the concept of federal roads. He also rejected the privatisation of government-owned assets, advocating instead liberalisation that would allow private operators to compete along with public enterprises. Adebayo spoke during a leadership conversation organised by the African Leadership Group (ALG), founded by Pastor Ituah Ighodalo, Senior Pastor of Trinity House. In this interview, he speaks on federalism, constitutional reform, public assets, Nigeria's future, intergenerational justice, opposition collaboration and the role of young Nigerians in the 2027 elections.

You have called for changes to Nigeria's federal structure. What is your position on federal roads?

All this issue of federal roads, I will eliminate it. There should be no federal road. Any road that is in the state belongs to the state.

What we can do together is create a fund where the Federal Government will contribute and the state will contribute, and we build the roads so that we can have federal roads and state roads.

Look at America. The highways are in the states. They are controlled by state troopers, but the Federal Government made a plan.

When they realised after the Second World War that America did not have enough highways, they decided to create a highway system and got the states to contribute to it. They were taking money from people buying gasoline at filling stations and using it to create the highway system. That can be done here.

With respect to the issues raised concerning federalism, I think we can take care of that.

The important thing is that our Constitution can be amended by our people working together, realising that there is no Nigerian who is inferior to another.

You oppose privatisation but support liberalisation. What is the difference?

You cannot sell refineries. I was against President Obasanjo, and we still debate where we meet from time to time. I don't believe that you should sell government property to anybody.

What I believe is that you should liberalise the sector, open the sector so that anybody who wants to set up a refinery can set up his own refinery. But don't sell government refineries to people.

Liberalise education so that if you want to set up a university, you can set it up, but don't sell University of Lagos to private hands.

Don't sell Nigeria Airways to private hands. Liberalise aviation so that anybody, government or individual, who wants to set up an airline can set up an airline.

I do not believe in privatisation of anything. I believe in liberalisation of the sector. If I have a state enterprise and it is struggling competing with the private enterprise, if the private enterprise is better, so be it. People are better served. That's what our government will do.

What happened was that they just sold the patrimony of Nigerians. There was no reason for you to sell NICON Hilton to an individual. There are enough lands for any private person who knows how to run hotels to go and get another brand of his own. You can even have up to five new hotels in one city.

That policy was not good, and most of the enterprises they sold are dead.

You have also argued that Nigeria's refineries can still work. Why?

The refineries can work, and I have profiled them. They are one of the youngest refineries in the world.

The refinery in Louisiana is over 100 years old. The one in Pennsylvania is even about 90-something years old, and they are still working.

A refinery is modular. If the catalytic cracking unit is not working, you remove it and put another one. If you have a piping issue, you change it. It is 19th-century technology. It is not rocket science. All these things can work, but the idea is that the government wants it to work.

You have described the 2027 election as an issue of intergenerational justice. What do you mean by that?


Adebayo

It is important, therefore, that in our conceptualisation of the 2027 election, we should not look at whether the things favour us personally now. There is an intergenerational justice issue in Nigeria.

What we need to know is that we are developing Nigerians for the future, and that our politics should be progressive and should look at the challenges facing us.

I am now president of Nigeria when our population is inching towards 200 million. But my governance plan, my manifesto, is planning for Nigerians when we become the third-largest country after China and India, where our population is 250 million. That is the framework you find in that book, Farewell to Poverty. That's the governance document of the SDP. So please let us realise that Adewole Adebayo is not about the present.

You have proposed cooperation among progressive opposition parties. What would that look like?

With respect to parties coming together, progressive political parties and socially conscious political parties, we are working together. It's not as if all of us are going to become one political party in one day. It is just that we collaborate and work with one another.

If you have a good candidate for AAC in a place and it's very good, we can cooperate. We know that if he comes in, it's good for us.

If another party is very strong in Kano, why do I have to go and compete with them in Kano?

We work like that, and we can form a kind of alliance where we meet in the National Assembly.

Many countries of the world are setting up their armies just to protect themselves from their neighbours. Here we are surrounded by our friends who are related to us in ethnicity and all of that.

It won't be a conspiracy against the people. It will be a progressive alliance for the people.

What would make such an alliance different from previous political arrangements?

If the alliance works over time, then you can continue to work on the same platform. But it is very important that Nigerians realise that it's not about ambition. It is about trying to fine-tune our ideology.

The greatest problem facing opposition political parties now is that we are not winning elections. That's not the big problem. The big problem is when we start winning elections and we start behaving like these bad political parties. That will be the shame.

That's why we are careful in selecting people. We just don't select somebody because you can win elections.

We try our best to select people who it may be hard for them to win, but once they win, service will be delivered to the people, and we will never go back to the past. We start to move forward.

That's the whole organising philosophy of what we are doing.

You have described young Nigerians as the owners of government. Why?

The young people of Nigeria are the owners of the government. There is no education I want to give now that Professor Grange is going to get benefit from. Maybe even her children are already there. Maybe only grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

It's important, therefore, that we think about the future.

What is your message to Nigerians who have become discouraged about the country?

Nigeria is the best country anybody can have. If you are given Nigeria to govern and you don't make a success out of it, you can't succeed anywhere else.

If you come out of Nigeria and you cannot make a success out of your life, then you have failed your own destiny because this country has all the natural resources, the best geographical location you can get, the best neighbours we can have that they don't hate us.

Many countries of the world are setting up their armies just to protect themselves from their neighbours.

Here we are surrounded by our friends who are related to us in ethnicity and all of that.

We have a young population that is capable of running any modern system.

Therefore, don't be afraid. Just believe in Nigeria, and don't let us have suspicion of one another.

Every ethnicity in Nigeria, I know them. I've interacted with them. Every religious group, nobody is trying to kill anybody. Nobody is trying to kill you. Just be relaxed.

Let us just adhere to the Constitution, and if the Constitution is not good enough, let us assemble patriots and amend the Constitution. America also amended its own. A country is a living being. Don't give up on your country.

What should Nigerians look for when choosing leaders in 2027?

Go out, select your political party. I recommend SDP to you, but there are others you can also consider. But make sure that what impels you towards politics is not personal gain, it's not ethnic gain, it's not religious gain. It is a search for leaders.

If you identify them in your community, even if they are not interested in politics, go and talk to them. Say you have good quality of leadership. Come and lead us.

Give your money to people who don't have money, but who have talent to run for office. Don't expect anything in return.

Give Nigeria a chance. We will reap the benefits, and not only us. We, whether we like it or not, happen to be the best hopes of the black race.

You have spoken about your experiences as a black lawyer practising abroad. How did those experiences shape your view of Nigeria?

When I started practising law in America, going to court, the person I'm going to court to defend will walk through the machine. The police will stop me, thinking I'm the client. The white man, my client, will say, "No, no, that's my attorney."

People used to compliment me when I started winning cases and doing things, and the compliment became like an insult because they didn't expect a black man to be able to accomplish that.

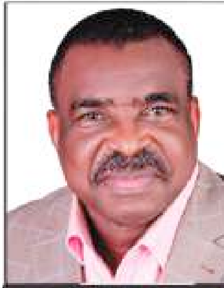
After some time, there was a gentleman called Jackson Momi, who is an adviser at the New York Bar. One day he saw how we performed.

I saw in one of the editorials somebody called him and said they were born in America and wanted to become a lawyer. He was giving a speech and said, "If you are from Nigeria, you don't ask me whether I can do well in America. You will do very well. You can do well at the New York Bar." And I felt encouraged.

At the same time, at the California Bar, another place where I practised, in Singapore, all over the world, in Australia, the entire bar, if you go and study some cases that have my name on them, they're very proud.

So you need a black man to say, "If all fails, I'll go to Nigeria."

That is the kind of country we need to build now, and God will make it happen.

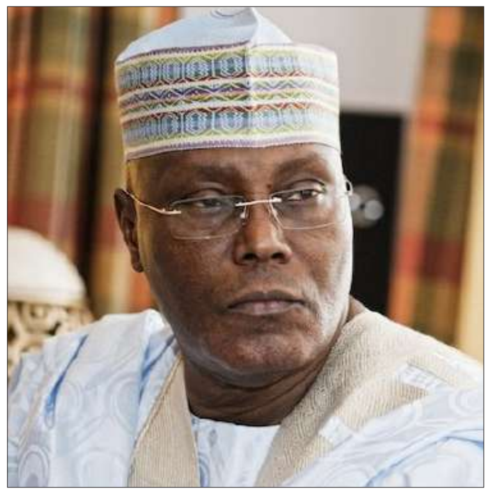


Magnus Onyibe
LEADING From The STREETS
Onyibe@magnum.ng +234 904 558 9038

2027 Party Election Campaign Season Is Here, But Should It Equate To Anomie? (2)


Tinubu


Obi


Atiku

Following that public spat between former allies, which ultimately resulted in the political annihilation of the godson, I coined the expression in the article I referenced earlier: "If you Fubara me, I will Wike you."

In much the same vein, the aftermath of what can best be described as an ongoing war of attrition between former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, the ADC's 2027 presidential candidate, and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu can be given a similarly playful political twist.

The rivalry between the two dates back to the 2023 presidential election, when both men pursued their respective ambitions to succeed the late President Muhammadu Buhari as the occupant of Aso Rock Villa, Nigeria's seat of presidential power.

Now, as the 2027 electoral season unfolds, the long-standing feud between Atiku and Tinubu appears to be intensifying, both through increasingly combative exchanges and through legal action in the courts. Against that backdrop, a fitting political quip might be: "If you Atiku (attack) me, I will Tinubu (attack) you."

Without mincing words, my coinage for the renewed war of words between the ADC aspirant for Aso Rock Villa in 2027 and its present occupant is intended to introduce some comic relief into an already tension-soaked political atmosphere—one that is likely to become even more charged as election day, January 25 next year, approaches.

If nothing else, my recollection of past political "catfights" is intended to remind political actors that elections come and go, while the principal actors of each political era eventually leave the stage—and, ultimately, this world.

There is therefore no justification for turning elections into a do-or-die affair, as some past leaders have done, with the notable exceptions of the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua and former President Goodluck Jonathan.

As the 2027 general elections enter the final stretch, marked by the mandatory 150-day countdown to when Nigerians will cast their first ballots for presidential, senatorial and House of Representatives candidates, President Tinubu's principal challenger, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, has thrown down the gauntlet with a bombshell announcement that he would reverse the consequential policy of petrol subsidy removal.

That declaration has shifted the focus of the campaign from a potentially prolonged courtroom battle—which Atiku triggered by suing Tinubu over an allegation concerning the authenticity of his NYSC certificate—to a more issues-based contest.

Yet, remarkably, none of the three leading contenders—Tinubu, Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, representing the APC, ADC and Nigeria Democratic Congress, respectively—has, at this stage, presented Nigerians with a comprehensive manifesto.

Nor had any of them constituted a formal campaign council until the APC unveiled a 75-member council a few days ago. President Tinubu has also had to respond directly to his ADC challenger following Atiku's bombshell declaration that he would repeal the petrol subsidy removal policy if elected president.

There is no doubt that what initially appeared to be an unpopular declaration—"petrol subsidy is gone"—which Tinubu made in his inaugural address on May 29, 2023, has become something of an albatross around his administration's neck.

This is largely because a critical mass of Nigerians has attributed much of the hardship they have experienced over the past three years to the removal of the petrol subsidy.

Yet, President Tinubu, despite the policy's unpopularity throughout the more than three years of his administration, has remained metaphorically steadfast, refusing to reverse course.

Perhaps recognising the political vulnerability created by the policy, the African Democratic Congress (ADC) presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, has chosen to capitalise on the economic hardship associated with subsidy removal by promising Nigerians that, if elected president in 2027, he would reverse the policy and restore a form of petrol subsidy.

The proposal was made during an interview with the BBC Hausa Service, and it appeared to resonate with a significant segment of Nigerians, particularly the talakawas—the downtrodden and economically disadvantaged population across Northern Nigeria, where poverty remains endemic and distressingly high.

His choice of a mass-media platform with such extensive reach among the talakawas appears strategically calculated. The BBC Hausa Service provides access to a significant political constituency that Atiku is seeking to mobilise in pursuit of his presidential ambition.

While many Nigerians at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder readily connected with the message because they perceive petrol subsidy removal as a major source of the economic hardship crushing them—even though the Tinubu administration continues to insist that the pain is temporary—another segment of the population, particularly those more conversant with economic policy and development, has pushed back against the proposal to reverse the subsidy-removal regime.

Perhaps in response to this resistance, Atiku's initial promise to reverse fuel subsidy removal has subsequently been softened into a commitment to modify the policy if elected president in 2027.

The adjustment in messaging may have been facilitated by the fact that the original campaign message was delivered in Hausa rather than English, leaving room for nuance and interpretation. Consequently, it has become possible for his campaign to argue that he did not necessarily promise to restore the old subsidy regime but rather to reform or modify the way the subsidy-removal policy is implemented.

Presumably, the ADC presidential candidate, following a series of brainstorming sessions with his campaign team, arrived at the decision to make the reversal or modification of the nearly four-decade-old subsidy regime a central plank of his campaign.

That regime, which has been associated with enormous government expenditure, is cited as one of the factors contributing to Nigeria's economic difficulties. During the final years of the subsidy regime, a staggering sum estimated at more than N4 trillion was reportedly expended on subsidising petrol.

As stated earlier, Atiku probably arrived at this strategy because of the palpable unpopularity of subsidy removal among a significant segment of the electorate.

However, after testing the waters and gauging public reaction to his dramatic departure from his position during the 2023 presidential campaign—when he supported the removal of the subsidy—and apparently realising that the proposal was not as universally popular as he may have anticipated, the campaign began recalibrating its message.

This may also have followed President Tinubu's criticism of his ADC challenger, whom he described as economically uninformed.

The campaign subsequently sought to clarify that what Waziri Adamawa actually meant was not that he would restore the old petrol subsidy regime, but that he would retain the subsidy-removal policy while modifying its implementation. It further sought to emphasise that Atiku's principal concern was how the funds saved from subsidy removal have been utilised.

That swift recalibration of his position is politically deft. Hopefully, we will see more such adjustments in the coming days and months as politicians settle into the 2027 general-election campaign season.

After all, in politics, words matter—and during an election campaign, a slip of the tongue can have significant consequences for a candidate's chances at the polls.

In keeping with the conventional wisdom that "there is nothing new under the sun," it is worthwhile to compare Waziri Adamawa's 2027 presidential strategy with those adopted by presidential candidates in other parts of the world.

Consider the United States, for instance. In the run-up to the election that returned Donald J. Trump to the White House—making him the "45th to 47th President"—Trump sought strategic advice on identifying the issues that would most powerfully resonate with American voters.

Steve Bannon, a prominent strategist and podcaster associated with Trump, was among those who helped shape that thinking. One of the key messages was that a tougher immigration policy and stronger measures to keep undocumented immigrants out of the United States would appeal to a significant segment of the American electorate.

The strategy ultimately proved highly effective. Trump successfully tapped into voters' frustrations and aspirations through his familiar "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) message, helping propel him back into the White House with a decisive victory over his Democratic opponent, Kamala Harris.

A broadly similar approach is now being attempted in Nigeria by the ADC presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, with his proposal to reverse or modify the removal of the petrol subsidy. However, unlike Trump's immigration message, the strategy does not appear, at least for now, to have struck the bull's-eye.

One possible explanation is that, although the removal of the petrol subsidy by the Tinubu administration has caused considerable hardship for millions of Nigerians, a segment of the population has also come to accept the reform as a necessary component of broader economic restructuring.

This includes reforms associated with the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which have contributed to creating the investment environment that has enabled the Dangote Refinery to emerge as a major player in Nigeria's petroleum industry. The refinery is potentially an important component of the transition from a consumption-driven economy to a production-oriented one.

Consequently, a significant number of Nigerians, particularly supporters of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), appear prepared to endure what the government describes as temporary economic hardship in the expectation that the reforms will eventually produce broader prosperity and are therefore willing to give the incumbent a second term.

Consider what might have happened to Nigeria's fuel supply without the Dangote Refinery at a time of major global disruptions. The Russia-Ukraine war, tensions involving the United States, Israel and Iran, and the possibility of disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz could have created even greater pressure on petroleum supplies.

Beyond Afrobeats, Nollywood and Nigeria's sporting achievements, the emergence of Nigeria as an exporter of refined petroleum products rather than merely crude oil represents a potentially significant economic development.

Even Saudi Arabia, home to Saudi Aramco and one of the world's largest oil industries, has reportedly sourced aviation fuel from the Dangote Refinery. Beyond other African countries, countries as far away as Japan have also reportedly sourced petroleum products from Nigeria.

The question, therefore, is: should Nigeria jeopardise such an emerging reputation and opportunity on the altar of political expediency?

That reality, however, does not invalidate the ADC presidential candidate's decision to build a substantial part of his campaign around petrol subsidy removal, which has clearly become something of an albatross around the Tinubu administration's neck.

For Atiku and his campaign team, the promise to reverse the policy appears to be a potentially powerful electoral proposition because subsidy removal remains one of the biggest sources of public anger against the Tinubu administration.

Thus, Atiku Abubakar's proposal to lift what many suffering Nigerians perceive as the burden imposed by Tinubu's 2023 subsidy-removal decision initially looked like a masterstroke—a political slam dunk capable of attracting voters to him like butterflies to nectar.

But unless the ADC presidential candidate can convincingly explain how his proposed alternative would work better than the current policy, scepticism is likely to persist.

This is particularly important because the subsidy regime is not a new phenomenon. Government intervention in the pricing of petroleum products dates back decades and was progressively institutionalised and strengthened by successive administrations. Over time, the subsidy system became deeply embedded in Nigeria's economic and administrative structure, making it extremely difficult for successive occupants of Aso Rock—military and civilian alike—to dismantle it.

President Tinubu eventually broke with that tradition when he announced the removal of the petrol subsidy on May 29, 2023.

For decades, subsidising Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) at the pump benefited not only Nigerians but also consumers and businesses in neighbouring countries. Cheap Nigerian petrol was routinely smuggled across borders, where motorists in other West African countries could purchase it at significantly lower prices than would otherwise have been possible.

One notable consequence of subsidy removal has been the sharp decline in the economic incentive for PMS smuggling, since the price differential that made the illicit trade so lucrative has largely disappeared.

Because smuggling provided income and employment to a significant number of people, albeit through an illegal component of the shadow economy, Atiku's proposal could naturally appeal to those whose livelihoods were linked to that activity.

But the more important question is: How large is that constituency?

Even when those operating within the shadow economy are combined with the so-called talakawas, it is questionable whether they constitute a sufficiently large bloc to determine the outcome of a presidential election.

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Magnus Onyibe, an entrepreneur, public policy analyst, author, democracy advocate, development strategist, an alumnus of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Massachusetts, USA, a Commonwealth Institute scholar, and a former commissioner in the Delta State government, sent this piece from Lagos.

VICTORIA OJUGBANA
+234-81-351-03972

'We Will Always Love You', World Mourns Dolly Parton

In Britain, the King's Guard band played Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" in front of Buckingham Palace. In the United States, the Empire State Building lit up in pink. In Japan, producer Seiji Kameda remembered a singer whose voice "shone like the sun".

Fans across continents, from prime ministers to pop stars, sent out messages of grief and affection after the news came through that the country music legend, songwriter and actress had died on Tuesday aged 80.

Many paid tribute to an artist they said, had a rare ability to appeal to audiences across a wide range of political persuasions, age groups, genders and cultures.

"Your songs taught us to fall in love and how to express," Uganda's exiled opposition leader Bobi Wine wrote on X. "We will always love you," the rapper-turned-politician added.

British pop icon Elton John called her a "giant of an artist" who had the kindest heart.

"It is hard to imagine living in a world without Dolly," Paul McCartney wrote. Her songwriting, singing and philanthropy were unrivalled in the world of country music, he added.

Britain's Royal Family took to social media to say it was "Remembering the late, great Dolly, who brought joy, comfort and inspiration to so many."

In a message on its X account, it remembered her charitable work, including her Imagination Library that had given free books to millions of children. It signed off with "We will always love you," echoing Wine's tribute to one of her best-loved songs.

She only played once in Japan, in 1979. But Kameda, a prominent music producer and bassist for the rock band Tokyo Jihen, said he had been captivated by Parton's voice since his first year of junior high school.

"Her voice ... will endure forever. Rest in peace," he wrote on X.

Politicians praised her contributions to society as well as her music.

"I was a huge fan of what Dolly did around literacy around the world," British Prime Minister Andy Burnham told reporters.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Parton made an enormous difference through promoting education and funding hospitals, and that there would be many broken hearts across his country.

"She lived loudly, and she lived a great life, and she'll be much missed," he told reporters.

Prince Harry, Megan Arrive In UK As They Make Fresh Start In Britain

Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, arrived in the United Kingdom on Wednesday, as they make a fresh start in Britain after six years in the United States, UK. media reported.

The news comes less than a week after the couple surprised fans and critics alike with plans to return to Britain. Their arrival was reported by news organizations including the BBC and the Daily Telegraph, with the newspaper reporting that their plane landed at Birmingham International Airport around noon.

Flight tracking websites showed a private charter flight from Van Nuys, California, arrived at the airport at 11:56 a.m.

The couple's children, Prince Archie, 7, and Princess Lilibet, 5, have already enrolled at British schools and will start classes in September. The family plans to live at a private, non-royal residence outside of London, but haven't said exactly where that will be.

Prince Harry's representative declined to comment.

Harry and Meghan gave up their royal duties and moved to California more than six years ago, saying they wanted to earn their own living. They later signed lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify.

Relations with the rest of the royal family quickly soured as the couple said palace staff had been insensitive to Meghan's mental health and leveled charges of racism and media manipulation at members of the royal family.

WHO Declares Ebola Outbreak Over In Uganda, As Cases Rise In Congo

The outbreak of the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola in Uganda is over but it is not under control in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo, a World Health Organization (WHO) official told a briefing on Wednesday.

The all-clear for Uganda follows a declaration on July 28 from the Ugandan government that it was free of the disease, which caused 20 cases and two deaths in the country.

But Dr. Marie Roseline Belizaire, director of emergency preparedness for the WHO African region, told a WHO regional meeting that cases in Democratic Republic of Congo continued to rise despite some progress. The outbreak there is the second-deadliest in history, and outpacing containment efforts.

According to the Congolese government, as of Tuesday there have been more than 2,700 deaths and more than 5,600 cases.

"Transmission remains very active," said Belizaire. "We have slowed the acceleration, but we have not yet bent this curve."

She said there are improvements in contact tracing and testing, and also that analyses of the Bundibugyo virus have not shown any signs of mutation despite the rapid spread.

While she described that as good news, she also flagged an immediate $30 million funding gap for logistical operations to deliver medical and personal protective equipment in the worst-hit areas of Congo.

"Without this immediate investment, we risk stalling the momentum we have built," she said.

A survivor being transported to a safer place in a JCB following a flash flood at Trishuli in Nuwakot District, Nepal, on Wednesday

Hundreds Missing, 95 Bodies Recovered As Devastating Flood Hits Nepal-Tibet Border

A huge wall of mud and rock collapsed into a river on the Himalayan border of Nepal and China's Tibet on Wednesday, triggering catastrophic flooding on the Nepali side that killed scores of people and left hundreds of tourists missing.

In a still-unfolding disaster, verified videos showed dozens of people swept away at the border, with authorities on both sides fearing far higher casualties and massive destruction.

Houses, roads and power projects were swept away in Nepal, while officials in Tibet said they feared "major casualties", with some people missing in the county of Gyirong after a mudslide hit a border land crossing.

"It was a huge gush of mud coming straight towards us. As it got closer, it kept rising higher and higher. When I saw it enter our home, I tried to grab my wife's hand and take her to the terrace. But she was swept away by the mud," said Keshav Prasad Baral, a 68-year-old survivor, who was being treated at a small hospital.

"Four or five hours later, a helicopter came to rescue me. My wife is still somewhere beneath the mud. She's gone."

Another survivor described being saved by clinging to a mango tree as he watched the house where he had been working disappear.

Initial reports from Nepali officials suggested an earthquake in the area could have caused the lower part of a glacier to collapse and trigger the floods.

Some 95 bodies have been recovered and are yet to be identified, the office of Nepal's prime minister said, adding that 484 tourists were missing, of whom 391 were foreigners and 93 Nepalis.

The missing foreign travellers included more than 100 Indians, three U.S. citizens and 12 British nationals, Nepal's tourism ministry said. How many local people were also missing was not clear.

The region lies on a popular route to Kailash Manasarovar in Tibet, a site visited annually by hundreds of Hindu pilgrims from India and elsewhere, particularly at this time of year.

China's state broadcaster said three people were killed and 265 others remain missing in Gyirong, the first casualty figures provided for the Chinese side of the border. It said the toll was still being verified and rescue efforts were ongoing.

South Korea separately said that eight of its nationals working on a hydropower plant were missing.

Security footage captured on the Chinese side of the Nepal-Tibet border showed many people fleeing before a torrent of rock, mud and water destroyed buildings, vehicles and took many lives.

US Senate Democrats Urge Israel To Rein In West Bank Violence

United States (US) Senate Democrats on Wednesday urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to rein in a "surge" of violence by West Bank settlers and mass arrests of Palestinians by Israeli security forces in the occupied territory.

In the letter to Netanyahu, seen by Reuters and signed by 45 of the Senate's 47-member Democratic caucus, the lawmakers noted increasing levels of "fatal violence by settlers."

They also appealed to Israel's leader to step up investigations into the deaths of nine American citizens they said have been killed by settlers or security forces in the West Bank since 2022.

The "significant surge" of violence in recent weeks has resulted in "a large-scale response by Israeli security forces, mass arrests of Palestinians, and reported attacks by settlers on mosques," the letter stated.

The letter marks the latest sign of growing friction between Democrats in Congress and the Israeli government over its handling of the West Bank, with many in the party also calling for curbs on U.S. military aid to Israel over its conduct of the war in Gaza.

It was drafted by Senator Adam Schiff of California, Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York – long one of Israel's most prominent supporters in Congress – and Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey.

Last week, an Israeli man guarding a group of Jewish settlers walked onto Palestinian land and opened fire toward civilians, killing a 17-year-old and a 70-year-old man, officials said.

The senators urged Netanyahu to issue clear instructions to Israeli police and military to prevent and intervene in violent West Bank confrontations "regardless of the perpetrators."

Rights groups have repeatedly documented how Israeli forces are slow to respond to settler violence in Palestinian communities – or stand by as attacks are carried out.

Israeli officials have said authorities including the president and prime minister have repeatedly condemned violence against Palestinians.

The letter also called on the Israeli government to stop approving additional settlements and construction of "illegal outposts in the West Bank" and to take steps to remove existing outposts.

Democrats in Congress and many of the party's candidates running in this year's midterm elections have become increasingly critical of Netanyahu and his government in the wake of Israel's war in Gaza.

Fire In Hospital Nursery Kills 14 Newborns In Pakistan's Capital

A fire triggered by an exploding air conditioner killed 14 newborns in a hospital nursery in Pakistan's capital on Wednesday, officials said.

One baby of the 15 who were in the nursery at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences was rescued, the hospital said.

Television footage showed rescue workers using ladders to reach the third-floor nursery through broken windows. Grieving parents and relatives gathered at the hospital, some weeping while others demanded answers about how the fire began and whether the nursery had adequate firefighting equipment.

The government has opened an investigation, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered Health Secretary Aslam Ghauri, the Health Ministry's highest civil servant, to be removed from office.

A woman who identified herself as Mrs. Mohammad Sami said she gave birth three days earlier and her baby was receiving intensive care in the nursery when the fire broke out.

"I don't know what to say or whom to blame," she said through tears. "I have lost my child."

The fire was confined to the nursery at the institute, which is one of Islamabad's largest public hospitals. The rest of the facility was unaffected with no other injuries reported, according to hospital officials and witnesses. The blaze was later extinguished, Islamabad Chief Commissioner Suhail Ashraf said.

It was among Pakistan's deadliest recent tragedies involving children. In June, 14 schoolchildren were killed when the roof of a tutoring center under construction collapsed in the eastern city of Lahore.

Health Minister Mustafa Kamal, who confirmed the death toll, told the Geo News channel that he was traveling from Karachi to Islamabad to oversee the investigation.

Dr. Aneeza Jalil, a hospital spokesperson, said a doctor rescued one baby. She said the bodies of six babies had been handed over to their families, while the remaining bodies would be released soon.

The Islamabad district magistrate appointed a fact-finding committee and asked it to submit a report within 24 hours. The panel will investigate the cause of the fire and its spread, determine whether adequate fire-safety measures were in place, and evaluate the emergency response, according to a government order.

News

Rivers: Our Legacy Projects Will Give APC Edge In 2027 Elections — Fubara

ITODE AKARI
PORT HARCOURT

Rivers State Governor, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has said the legacy projects executed by his administration will give the All-Progressives Congress (APC) an edge in the 2027 general elections, as candidates of the party will rely on the projects to demonstrate its performance to voters.

Fubara stated this on Wednesday during the commissioning of the 14.5-kilometre Agba-Ndele Road and bridge linking communities in Emohua and Abua/Odual Local Government Areas of the state.

The governor in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary Onwuka Nzeshi, said the project, alongside several others commissioned recently, would provide APC candidates with tangible achievements to showcase during electioneering campaigns, particularly in their engagement with voters at the grassroots.

He said the impact of the projects would make it easier for APC candidates to convince residents that the party had delivered on its promises.

"I believe that what we have done here today will make it easy for our candidate that will be representing us in the forthcoming elections.

"When he comes here to campaign, especially in Emohua, he will tell them: my party did this and my party did that. So, it will be easy for us to win election here," he said.

Fubara said the Agba-Ndele Road and bridge demonstrated his administration's commitment to extending development to rural communities and ensuring that government projects translated into tangible benefits for the people.

According to him, the intervention became necessary because of the deplorable condition of the old Abua Road, which had subjected commuters to prolonged travel time and other difficulties.

"Like I'll always say, I'm not interested in just doing anything, I'm interested in doing something that can add value and change the life of our people," he said.

"I can beat my chest this afternoon to say, the value of this project cannot be overrated. It is something that had come at the right time, when our people from Abua, our people from this other side of Ahoada are having difficulties on the old Abua road. So, with this project, I think that part of the problems they are having there will be solved."

The governor disclosed that the bridge was initiated by an earlier administration and was neither started by his administration nor that of his immediate predecessor.

He, however, said his administration decided to complete the project because of its importance to the people, stressing that governance should be viewed as a relay race in which successive administrations build on beneficial projects inherited from their predecessors.

Northern Senators' Forum Demands Immediate Release Of Abducted Worshippers

SOLA SHITTU,
ABUJA

The Northern Senators' Forum (NSF) has condemned the deadly attack on Kpenya Mosque and neighbouring communities in Dekara District, Borgu Local Government Area of Niger State, describing the incident as a barbaric assault on innocent worshippers and rural residents.

The forum also called on security agencies to intensify rescue operations and secure the immediate and safe release of hundreds of people reportedly abducted during the attack.

Chairman of the NSF, Senator Abdulaziz Musa Yar'Adua, in a statement on Wednesday, expressed shock and sadness over the incident, which occurred on Friday, August 22, 2026.

The attack reportedly targeted Kpenya Mosque, as well as the villages of Gidan-Zana and Kpenya, with scores of residents and worshippers allegedly taken hostage by the attackers.

Yar'Adua commiserated with the government and people of Niger State, particularly families of those abducted and those reportedly killed in the assault.

He prayed for the repose of the souls of the victims and urged their families to find the strength to cope with the tragedy.

The NSF chairman described the targeting of worshippers in a mosque and residents of rural communities as "not only cowardly but an attack on our shared humanity and faith."

He expressed particular concern over reports that the attackers had planted landmines in the affected areas and abducted additional residents as potential bargaining chips.

According to him, such developments were "deeply troubling and unacceptable," stressing that the situation required an immediate and coordinated response from the nation's security establishment.

The forum called on the Armed Forces, Nigeria Police Force, Department of State Services and other relevant security agencies to intensify ongoing operations aimed at rescuing the abducted persons.

It urged the security agencies to ensure that the rescue effort prioritises the safety of the victims, particularly given reports of landmines allegedly planted around the affected communities.

Beyond the immediate rescue operation, the NSF called on the Federal Government to provide urgent relief and medical assistance to victims and affected communities.

It also demanded enhanced security reinforcement for Borgu Local Government Area and other vulnerable border communities in Niger State.

The forum said the incident had exposed the need for a comprehensive review of the security architecture in Niger State and the wider North-Central region.

Malami Inaugurates Campaign Council, Unveils DG, 600 Members In Kebbi

HARUNA USMAN
BIRNIN KEBBI

Former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, on Wednesday formally unveiled the Director-General and inaugurated more than 600 members of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) Campaign Council in Kebbi State, charging them to build a united, inclusive and disciplined political movement capable of reaching every community across the state.

Speaking at the inauguration, Malami described the constitution of the Campaign Council far more than the announcement of appointments, stressing that it represents the establishment of a coordinated grassroots structure dedicated to advancing the collective aspirations of all ADC candidates in Kebbi State.

He said the Council brings together men and women from different communities, local government areas, senatorial districts and backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of Kebbi State and the ADC's commitment to ensuring that every section of the state has a voice and a stake in its political future.

Malami particularly acknowledged the party's senatorial candidates - Gen. Aminu Bande for Kebbi Central, Garba Maidoki for Kebbi South, and Chiroman Kabi, Mera, for Kebbi North - alongside candidates contesting for the House of Representatives, state House of Assembly and other elective positions under the ADC platform.

According to him, the Campaign Council must operate as a single political family rather than as competing structures serving individual ambitions.

"This Campaign Council represents our collective ADC campaign." It is not about one candidate or one elective position. From the governorship to the Senate, House of Representatives and state House of Assembly, we must work as one political family," Malami said.

He warned members against tribalism, sectionalism and internal rivalry, describing them as forces capable of weakening any serious political movement.

Malami maintained that no tribe, senatorial district, local government, ward or community should feel excluded from the campaign, just as no genuine member of the ADC should be marginalised because of previous political preferences or support for another aspirant.

Emu-Ebendo People Laments Herdsmen's Persistent Attacks

KOFA KINGSLEY,
UGHELLI

The people of Emu-Ebendo Community in Ndokwa West Local Government Area of Delta State have raised an alarm over persistent attacks by suspected herdsmen on its people, destruction of farmlands and crops, calling on security agencies to address the urgent security situation in the community.

The agrarian community alleged that heavily armed herders have taken over large portions of their bushes and farmlands, thereby creating an atmosphere of fear and insecurity in the community and other neighboring communities.

Following their inability to access their farmland, the Emu-Edendo people thronged the Ebendo corridor of the Ughelli/Asaba road to protest in their numbers and to draw immediate government's intervention to worsening insecurity crisis facing the community.

The protesters, carrying cardboard papers with various inscriptions in a peaceful protest along the Ughelli-Asaba expressway, displayed placards detailing their ordeals, alleged attacks and growing fears over their safety and means of livelihood,

Leading Light Global Equips Women, Youths With Business Skills In Lagos

The Convener of Leading Light Global Business Growth Training, Charis Collins Ibadin, has urged women to acquire valuable skills and continuously improve themselves to strengthen their families and achieve financial independence.

Ibadin made the call during a three-day free vocational training programme organised by Leading Light Global in Badore, Ajah, Lagos, where more than 60 women and youths from Badore and neighbouring communities participated in various business and vocational training sessions.

Speaking during the programme, held under the theme "Business Growth Training free Masterclass," Ibadin stressed the importance of equipping women with practical skills that can complement their existing businesses and create additional sources of income.

She emphasised the need for effective customer service and communication, teaching participants how to identify the right customers, retain them, obtain useful feedback and manage challenges that may arise in business.

According to her, acquiring skills should not be viewed as a one-time activity, noting that the organisation's master-classes would continue to provide participants with opportunities for learning, mentorship and business development.

Ibadin also encouraged women to support their husbands and families physically, spiritually and emotionally, stressing that stronger families contribute to stronger communities.

GOCOP Mourns Ex-President, Describes Oladipo's Death As Loss To Nigerian Media Community

VICTORIA OJUGBANA
LAGOS

The Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP) has expressed sadness over the death of its former President, Dotun Oladipo, publisher of The Eagle Online, which occurred on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at the age of 56.

Kemi Yesufu, Publicity Secretary, GOCOP, in a statement made available to journalists on Wednesday, described Oladipo's death as a loss to GOCOP and the wider Nigerian media community.

The group noted that the deceased was President of GOCOP from 2017 to 2021 and one of the publishers who helped shape the Guild in its early years.

According to the statement, "Oladipo came into online publishing with years of experience in the traditional media. He had worked as a journalist and editor before moving into digital publishing and bringing that experience to The Eagle Online."

The statement noted that at a time when online news publishing was still developing in Nigeria, "Oladipo was among those who saw the need for publishers to come together, share ideas and build a stronger professional community.

2027: Oyo Acting Gov, APM Chairman, Campaign Council Seek Synergy

KAZEEM AWOJOODU
IBADAN

The campaign council of the Allied Peoples Movement (APM) in Oyo State, alongside the party's leadership, has called for greater synergy, inclusiveness and reconciliation among candidates ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The call was made at a strategic meeting convened by the apex campaign council and attended by the APM governorship candidate, senatorial, House of Representatives and state House of Assembly candidates, as well as leaders of the party and the campaign council.

The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation among candidates, resolving internal concerns and developing a coordinated strategy to secure victory for all APM candidates across Oyo State.

Speaking at the meeting, the acting governor of Oyo State, Barrister Bayo Lawal, urged the candidates and party leaders to remain united and work collectively towards the success of the party in the 2027 elections.

He stressed the importance of presenting a common front, maintaining discipline and taking the campaign to the grassroots, noting that victory would depend largely on the ability of the candidates and party structures to work together.

"The task ahead requires unity, commitment and genuine teamwork. If we are determined to win, every candidate must support one another and ensure that our message gets to the people across all the wards and local governments of Oyo State," he said.

The Director General of the Campaign Council, Dr. Nureni Aderemi Adeniran, stressed that the council's mandate was not limited to the governorship race but also included delivering all APM candidates contesting the National Assembly and atate House of Assembly elections.

Adeniran added that part of his mandate was to mobilise and deliver votes for Governor Seyi Makinde's presidential ambition in Oyo State, urging all candidates and party members to work together towards achieving the objective.

Adewale Arikawe, Group Chief Executive Officer, SIAT Group (left); Marie Vandebeeck, representative of SIAT's Founding Family (second left); Felix Nwabuko, former Group Chief Executive Officer, SIAT NV/Institutional Adviser, Presco Plc (second right), and Rasheed Sarumi, Group Chief Executive Officer, Saroafrica– SIAT Group/Chairman, Presco Plc, during an event hosted by SIAT Group in Lagos, to celebrate the group's legacy, leadership and the people who have shaped its journey.

Why I Renamed Obingwa General Hospital Chima Ubani Hospital — Otti

UCHE NWOSU
UMUAHIA

Abia State governor, Dr Alex Otti, has explained why he named the newly completed 80-bed Obingwa General Hospital near Aba after the late human rights and pro democracy activist, Chima Ubani, saying it was an honour to encourage courage and justice.

Otti explained that the renaming was a tribute for his courage, compassion and lifelong commitment to justice, democracy and the welfare of ordinary Nigerians, saying the late human rights activist actually fought for a better society.

Speaking at the commissioning of the newly remodeled, digitally equipped hospital, Mgboko, Obingwa LGA, the Abia governor recalled Chima Ubani's role as a pro-democracy campaigner, Students' Union President at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), and Executive Director of the Civil Liberties Organisation, describing him as "a mentor of the masses and one who died in pursuit of the very ideals that he lived for."

He affirmed that the honour was intended not only to preserve Ubani's memory, but also to inspire present and future generations to live lives of courage, service and integrity, even as he assured that his administration would continue to support the family of the late activist and collaborate with medical professionals and other stakeholders to strengthen healthcare delivery in Abia.

On the newly commissioned hospital, the governor maintained that the provision of healthcare would remain central to his administration's developmental agenda and observed that investments in the sector are aimed at restoring confidence in public health institutions as well as save lives, particularly those of mothers and newborn babies.

According to him, the new facility would expand access to quality medical services for hundreds of thousands of residents in Obingwa and neighbouring communities, stressing that its strategic location would also serve people from Aba, Osisioma and other adjoining areas.

The governor expressed satisfaction with the hospital's modern features, which include a healing garden, technology-driven data management, real-time inter-facility collaboration, technology-assisted laboratory and scan analysis, a well-equipped theatre and eye care units, observation rooms, and a renewable energy system designed to support uninterrupted power supply.

Umahi Writes Off Benin-Asaba Expressway Concession Company As Not Worthy

FRANCIS ONOIRIBHOLO
BENIN

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, on Tuesday, discredited the Benin-Asaba Expressway Concession Company (BAECC) over poor handling of the project, saying the firm lacked the technical know-how to embark on road construction.

He was particularly angered that the firm removed existing asphalt on the road and did not construct side drains before embarking on the construction of the main road.

Umahi who expressed his disappointment in Benin City when he paid on-the-spot assessment on the road following public outcry on the bad situation of the Benin-Asaba Highway, however accused the contractor of manipulating the system to secure the contract he could not handle.

Motorists were trapped on the highway for several days now due to several failed sections of the road.

It would be recalled that the Benin-Asaba highway was concessioned to BAECC in 2025 to turn the road to a 10-lane highway.

The firm had, in October last year, said it would complete construction of the 10-lane highway within set time.

But Umahi said the concessionaire would have been arrested for destroying public property.

He accused the concessionaire of manipulating the process to get the job.

According to him, "I commend Governor Monday Okpebholo for his intervention in lots of federal roads across the state. He is not saying this is a federal or state road. I apologise to commuters plying this road. The NDDC is willing to intervene. I am disappointed with the concessionaire. I take full responsibility for their misdeed and destruction of public assets.

"Ministry of Work does not allow removal of asphalt. We begged them not to remove it. The concessionaire should have been arrested for destroying public property. This road wss not like this when it was handed over. I am instructing the ministry to arrest any concessionaire that removes asphalt from existing roads."

Addressing the Chief Executive Officer of BAECC, Samuel Daramola, Umahi said, "You manipulated the process to get the job. You have no knowledge of road construction. You don't know what you are doing. You have no technical staff or competence.

NOA Urges Muslims To Emulate Virtues Of Prophet Muhammad

GODDY UMUKORO
ASABA

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has called on Nigerians to emulate the virtues of Prophet Muhammad as Muslims commemorate the 2026 Eid-el-Maulud.

In a statement dated August 24, 2026, the Director General of the NOA, Mallam Lanre Issa-Onilu, urged Muslims and all Nigerians to use the occasion to reflect on the prophet's exemplary life and the values that promote responsible and patriotic citizenship.

According to him, Prophet Muhammad demonstrated virtues of tolerance, peace, love, fairness, compassion and respect for constituted authority, values which, if embraced by Nigerians, would strengthen national unity and contribute to the country's development.

The NOA director general stressed that Nigeria needs citizens who are patriotic, selfless and committed to placing the national interest above personal considerations.

He called on Nigerians to work together in the spirit of unity, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, saying collective responsibility remained essential to building a prosperous nation for present and future generations.

Mallam Issa-Onilu also urged Muslim faithful to use the Maulud celebration to pray for Nigeria's economic recovery, peace and stability, as well as hitch-free general elections, reaffirming the Agency's commitment to promoting positive values, national consciousness and responsible citizenship among Nigerians.

The statement was signed by Paul Odenyi, Deputy Director, Communication and Media, National Orientation Agency.

2027: Why Tinubu Deserves Second Term — Epe Council Chair

The Chairman of Epe Local Government Council Area of Lagos State, Princess Surah Animashaun, has endorsed President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for a second term, citing what she described as his administration's achievements in security, education, infrastructure and the economy.

Princess Animashaun announced the endorsement while chatting with newsmen at her secretariat, Ita-Marun, Epe, Lagos State, urging Nigerians to support the president's re-election bid in the 2027 general election.

The chairperson said the Tinubu administration had demonstrated its commitment to improving national security by recruiting 50,000 police officers, forest guards and additional military and paramilitary personnel, and by allocating N5.4 trillion to the security sector in the 2026 budget.

According to her, these measures had strengthened efforts to tackle insecurity and restore peace in parts of the country affected by violent crime and insurgency.

Princess Animashaun also credited the administration with expanding access to higher education through the Student Loan Scheme, saying the initiative had provided financial support to thousands of students, particularly those from low-income families.

She further commended the Federal Government's investment in infrastructure, noting that ongoing projects across the country had improved living standards, created jobs and supported economic growth.

Ex-Oyo SSG, AbdulWaheed Olajide, Dies

KAZEEM AWOJOODU
IBADAN

A former Secretary to the Oyo State Government, Alhaji Abdul Waheed Akintola Olajide, is dead.

Olajide served during the administration of the immediate past governor of the state, Senator Abiola Ajimobi.

He died on Tuesday, as confirmed by the family in a statement made available to journalists on Wednesday.

The statement said, "It is with gratitude to Almighty Allah for a life well lived, and with submission to His will, that we announce the passing of our beloved husband, father, grandfather, uncle, brother and cousin, Alhaji Abdul Waheed Akintola Olajide, who returned to his Creator today, August 25, 2026.

"May Allah grant the entire family and all his loved ones the strength, patience and comfort to bear this loss."

The family announced that the Janazah prayer will be held today, Wednesday, at 11:00 am, at the MAN Centre, Oke Ado, Ibadan.

News

Pate, Oduwole, Salako, Enoh, Others To Grace 8th Pharma Manufacturers Expo

KAZEEM AWOJOODU
IBADAN

Nigeria's Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Professor Muhammad Ali Pate, and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, are expected to lead top government officials, policymakers and key industry stakeholders to the 8th Nigeria Pharma Manufacturers Expo (NPME 2026).

This is as Nigeria intensifies efforts to strengthen local pharmaceutical production and achieve greater health sovereignty.

The two-day exhibition, scheduled for September 28 and 29, 2026, in Lagos, will focus on strategies for reducing Nigeria's dependence on imported medicines, promoting domestic manufacturing and positioning the country as a major pharmaceutical production hub in Africa.

The expo, organised by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Group of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (PMG-MAN), in partnership with GPE Expo Pvt. Ltd., will be held alongside the Nigeria Lab Expo under the theme, 'Regional Manufacturing: Advancing Africa's Pharma & Lifescience Sovereignty through Localisation'.

Other dignitaries expected at the event include the Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, Senator John Owan Enoh; Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako; Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Professor Moji Christianah Adeyeye; Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN), Pharm. Ibrahim Babashehu Ahmed; the Special Adviser to the President on Health and the Director General of the African Medicines Agency (AMA), among other senior officials.

The expo is expected to attract healthcare investors, pharmaceutical manufacturers, policymakers, regulatory authorities, technology providers, cleanroom specialists and industrial machinery manufacturers from across five continents.

Timothy Oladimeji, Country Manager, inDrive Nigeria (left); Louisa Eseke, daughter of 'Super Mum' Driver (second left); Akinyemi Oluwaseun Omotayo (aka Asherkine), content creator (third left); Felicity Eseke, 'Super Mum' Driver (third right); Catherine Akindele Senior Driver Operations Manager, inDrive Nigeria (second right), and Ayomide Ishola, Regional Content Manager, inDrive Nigeria, during a car presentation to the 'Super Mum' driver in Lagos, on Tuesday.

Tinubu Hails Hausa Nation As Pillar Of Nigeria's Unity

AHMAD TIJJANI ABDUL
KANO

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has described the Hausa people as one of the strongest pillars of Nigeria's unity, praising their enduring contributions to national integration, commerce and cultural development.

In a message marking this year's Hausa Day, celebrated at the historic Daura Palace in Katsina State, the president said the Hausa Nation has played a defining role in shaping Nigeria's progress through its rich heritage and shared values.

Tinubu noted that the Hausa language had grown beyond its ethnic roots to become a powerful medium of communication and trade across Africa and other parts of the world.

"The Hausa people are great pillars that play a vital role in the unity and progress of Nigeria. The Hausa language, without doubt, has flourished and has become a major language of unity and commerce across the world," the president said.

He congratulated the global Hausa community on the occasion of Hausa Day and commended efforts to preserve and promote the language.

The president described the Hausa Day as an invaluable cultural asset that continues to connect millions of people across borders.

The annual celebration at the Daura Palace brings together traditional leaders, scholars, cultural enthusiasts and dignitaries to honour the history, language and enduring legacy of the Hausa civilisation.

Igbo Delegates Assembly Applauds Gov Mutfwang For Rewriting Civil War History

SUZAN EDEH

Igbo Delegates Assembly (IDA), the umbrella body of Ndigbo in Northern Nigeria, has officially commended Plateau State governor, Senator Caleb Mutfwang, for taking bold steps to correct historical narratives surrounding the 1966–1970 Nigerian Civil War.

The commendation was contained in a communiqué issued following the Assembly's third quarterly meeting held in Kaduna from August 21 to August 22, 2026.

The document was jointly signed by IDA President General, Chief Ken Okeugo, and Secretary General, Hon. Donatus Nwugo.

According to the Assembly, Governor Mutfwang's rejection of the "erroneous attribution of blame" to the Igbo for the civil war had lifted a huge moral burden from Ndigbo and reassured Igbo residents of their security in the North.

The IDA called on other northern governors to emulate Mutfwang's initiative to help heal historical wounds.

The meeting drew high-profile attendance, including members of the IDA Executive Committee, presidents of Igbo communities from the 19 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), alongside representatives of Ndieze Igbo in the northern region.

In the communiqué, the Assembly praised Igbo residents in the North for their high turnout in the voters' registration exercise, framing it as a testament to their desire for an equitable Nigeria.

Looking ahead to the 2027 general elections, the IDA stated that it would adopt a "measured approach" to assess its political options particularly for the presidency, free from ethnic and religious sentiments.

The group also advised Ndigbo living in the North to maintain peaceful coexistence with host communities, urging members to exercise caution in public utterances to avoid unnecessary political tensions.

Addressing internal cultural matters, the IDA firmly rejected the nomenclature "Onyendu" for Igbo traditional rulers in Northern Nigeria, labeling recent interventions by the South East Traditional Rulers Council as a "distraction."

The Assembly insisted that matters regarding Igbo traditional institutions in the North are strictly within the purview of the local Igbo communities and their host traditional institutions.

Consequently, the IDA maintained that the 'Eze' title must be preserved to keep Igbo leaders on equal footing with other non-indigenous traditional heads, such as the Sarkin Hausawa and Oba Yoruba.

The Assembly concluded by expressing gratitude to the Kaduna State Government, led by Governor Uba Sani, for providing a peaceful and conducive environment for the quarterly meeting and fostering a rancour-free atmosphere for Igbo residents in the state.

Benue To Upgrade Agric Training Centre Into Full-Fledged Tertiary Institution

TOR VANDE-ACKA
MAKURDI

Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue State has revealed plans by the state government to convert the Agricultural Training Centre in Mbatie, Buruku Local Government Area of the state, to a full-fledged tertiary institution.

The Chief Press Secretary to the governor, Sir Tersoo Kula, who disclosed this in a statement made available to newsmen in Makurdi on Wednesday, observed that the proposed institution, when fully operational, would train agricultural extension workers in the state.

According to him, the governor revealed the plan while addressing traditional rulers, political leaders and other stakeholders in Buruku during the ongoing town hall and statewide thank-you tour of the 11 federal constituencies in the state.

Kula explained that the institution would also be expected to strengthen agricultural extension services by producing skilled personnel capable of embracing modern farming techniques, government policies and agricultural innovations and transmitting same to farmers, particularly those in rural communities.

Furthermore, the CPS noted that the view of the governor is that competent extension workers were critical to improving farm productivity, as they would help farmers adopt better production methods, make effective use of agricultural inputs and gain access to relevant technical knowledge.

"To fast track the initiative, Governor Alia directed the Commissioner for Works, Mr Kuma Aii Iyenge, and that of Education, Dr. Margaret Ijaguwa Adamu, to immediately commence the necessary processes for the upgrade and ensure that the project was completed within the shortest possible time.

"The governor also urged Benue residents, particularly those in Buruku, to expand their participation in agriculture, stressing that the sector has the potential to create jobs, increase household incomes and strengthen the state's economy," Kula stated.

Earlier ib his welcome address, Chairman of Buruku LGA, Raymond Aondoakura, commended the fovernor's interventions in the area and appealed to the state government to establish a science secondary school in the local government.

2027: Ododo Tasks Appointees On Grassroots Mobilisation

JOY ANIGBOGU

Governor Ahmed Usman Ododo of Kogi State has charged political appointees across the state to return to their respective constituencies and commence aggressive grassroots mobilisation ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The governor also declared that the All Progressives Congress (APC) must work towards securing a 100 percent victory in Kogi State.

Ododo gave the charge on Tuesday during a crucial strategic meeting with political office holders at the Glass House, Government House, Lokoja, where he stressed the need for greater coordination, unity, teamwork and direct engagement with the people ahead of 2027.

The meeting brought together political appointees across the state with the governor making it clear that the responsibility of securing the confidence of the electorate cannot be left to a few individuals. He charged every appointee to see the assignment as a collective political responsibility requiring personal commitment and sustained presence at the grassroots.

He urged the appointees to immediately relocate and reconnect with their people, engage community leaders, youths, women and other stakeholders, listen to their concerns and effectively communicate the achievements of his administration and that of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Uzodimma Mourns Oladipo

Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State has expressed deep sadness at sudden death of Mr. Dotun Oladipo, the Publisher of The Eagle Online and former President of the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP), describing his passing as shocking and unexpected.

Oladipo reportedly passed on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at a hospital where he was said to have personally driven himself to immediately he fell ill at his office. He was 56.

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary/Special Adviser on Media, Oguwike Nwachuku, Uzodimma said that Oladipo's death has left a big vacuum in the two elite media bodies where he was a leading light- The Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and The Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP).

The Governor said the reactions and responses from Oladipo's colleagues since the news of his death broke, were a testament of his commitment to the ideals of responsible media practice and service to the society, stressing that the deceased will be sorely missed as a humble, innovative, diligent, energetic, and detribalised journalist as most of his colleagues have attested to.

News

Tight Money, Low Appetite Cap Bank Credit At N59.7trn

CONTINUED FROM P1

risk assets.

The oil and gas sector retained its position as the largest beneficiary of bank credit, accounting for 24.1 percent of total lending, or N16.2 trillion. However, despite its dominant position, credit to the sector declined by 13 percent year-on-year.

The contraction in lending to oil and gas came against the backdrop of persistent operational, funding and market uncertainties in the sector, even as higher international crude prices could improve earnings prospects for producers and related businesses.

Finance and insurance ranked second, accounting for 16.4 percent of total bank credit, with lending to the sector rising 16.7 percent year-on-year and 6.1 percent quarter-on-quarter to N9.8 trillion.

The increased exposure to financial institutions is notable given the prevailing high-interest-rate environment. Stronger earnings prospects and increased demand for financial services appear to have supported credit expansion in the sector, making it one of the more attractive destinations for bank lending.

Trade and general commerce recorded an even stronger increase, with credit disbursements surging 70.8 percent year-on-year and 36.9 percent quarter-on-quarter to N6.3 trillion.

The sharp expansion in lending to the sector is likely to have been driven by rising working-capital requirements as businesses seek additional funding to cope with increased operating costs, inventory needs and expanding economic activity.

Agriculture also recorded significant growth in bank credit. Lending to the sector rose 21.9 percent year-on-year and 7.1 percent quarter-on-quarter to N3.9 trillion.

Despite the increase, agriculture accounted for only about 6.5 percent of total bank credit, highlighting the relatively limited flow of formal bank financing into one of the country's most important sectors.

The credit pattern underscores the uneven transmission of monetary conditions across the economy, with banks increasingly directing funds towards sectors perceived to offer stronger returns or lower credit risks, while maintaining a cautious stance towards more vulnerable segments of the private sector.

The outlook for lending could remain challenging in the near term as inflationary and external risks continue to complicate the monetary policy environment.

Heightened uncertainty in the Middle East, for instance, has introduced fresh upside risks to global crude oil prices. Any sustained increase in international oil prices could feed into domestic energy and transportation costs, with potential consequences for inflation and household purchasing power.

The recent increase in petrol prices at the Dangote Petroleum Refinery underscores the potential domestic transmission of higher international oil prices. The refinery raised its petrol gantry price by N20 to N1,185 per litre, following a series of earlier price reductions.

Such developments could reinforce inflationary pressures and make it more difficult for the CBN's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to accelerate monetary easing.

Analysts therefore expect the MPC to maintain a cautious and measured approach to policy adjustments, with inflation expectations likely to remain a greater priority than stimulating credit-driven economic growth in the immediate term.

For banks, this would mean that elevated funding costs are likely to persist, limiting the appetite of businesses and households to borrow while simultaneously encouraging lenders to maintain stringent credit standards.

The combination of expensive credit and subdued borrowing appetite could therefore keep private sector credit growth relatively weak despite improvements in selected sectors.

Banks are also expected to continue strengthening their risk-management frameworks as they seek to protect asset quality in an environment of high interest rates and economic uncertainty.

While the increase in lending to trade, agriculture and financial services suggests that credit demand remains resilient in some segments, the overall growth of just one percent year-on-year indicates that the broader economy has yet to experience a significant credit expansion.

The challenge for monetary authorities will be to achieve a delicate balance between bringing inflation under control and creating conditions that allow banks to lend more actively to productive sectors.

For the banking industry, the immediate priority is likely to remain capital preservation, asset-quality protection and selective credit creation until funding costs moderate and confidence in the macroeconomic outlook strengthens.

Consequently, Nigeria's credit market may remain characterised by cautious lending, elevated borrowing costs and increased scrutiny of borrowers, even as stronger activity in sectors such as trade, agriculture and finance provides pockets of growth.

Unless monetary conditions ease significantly and inflation expectations become firmly anchored, a broad-based acceleration in bank credit appears unlikely in the near term.

FG Launches RAMCO To Drive N3trn Renewable Energy Push

CONTINUED FROM P1

insufficient attention to maintenance, resulting in the deterioration of assets and the need for government to repeatedly provide funds for replacement.

Tegbe said RAMCO would introduce professional management, stronger governance, maintenance discipline and measurable performance standards into the management of publicly financed renewable energy assets.

"RAMCO, therefore, provides the opportunity for us to protect what we build, optimise what we already own, and ensure that every naira invested in energy infrastructure produces sustained service," he said.

The minister said renewable energy was increasingly becoming a central component of Nigeria's electricity strategy, alongside grid power, embedded generation, interconnected and isolated mini-grids, distributed renewable systems and energy storage.

He said the Federal Ministry of Power would support RAMCO as part of wider efforts to improve grid stability, address sector liquidity challenges, optimise existing assets and attract private capital into power infrastructure.

But the real test, Tegbe noted, would not be the volume of assets eventually transferred to RAMCO.

Rather, he said, the company's performance would be judged by the number of assets that remain operational, the reliability of electricity delivered, the amount of additional investment attracted and the level of confidence Nigerians develop in publicly funded infrastructure.

The intervention comes against the backdrop of concerns over the condition of some renewable energy projects delivered by government in previous years.

The Managing Director of the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), Abba Aliyu, disclosed that Nigeria had committed about N263 billion to solar-hybrid generation under the Energising Education Programme (EEP), covering 22 federal universities and three teaching hospitals.

Since the programme began in 2017, he said, about 82MW of solar-hybrid generation had been deployed, while more than 150MW was either under construction or in the pipeline through EEP phases, the Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-up (DARES), the National Public Sector Solarisation Initiative, TETFund projects and the Desert to Power programme.

But an assessment of seven sites delivered under the first phase of EEP exposed the scale of the maintenance challenge.

Aliyu said only three of the seven assessed facilities were found to be in good or usable condition.

The deterioration, he explained, was linked largely to the absence of sustainable maintenance arrangements, reliable revenue mechanisms and clearly designated institutions responsible for managing the assets throughout their economic lives.

It is this gap that RAMCO is intended to close.

Aliyu said the company had been incorporated under the Companies and Allied Matters Act, with Federal Government interests to be held through the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI) and the company governed by a professional board.

RAMCO will manage publicly financed renewable energy assets, appoint competent operators, oversee metering, billing and revenue collection, establish reserves for major equipment replacement and publish performance information.

The model is intended to ensure that government does not have to return to the Treasury whenever major equipment reaches the end of its useful life.

"If a battery or inverter requires replacement in year eight, we should not return to the Treasury in year eight looking for emergency funding. The money should already be there," Aliyu said.

He stressed that RAMCO was not conceived as another channel for extracting money from public institutions or relying indefinitely on government appropriations.

Instead, the company is expected to create commercially sustainable renewable energy portfolios that can eventually attract private investors, banks, pension funds, insurance companies and other institutional capital.

A major component of the model will be payment by beneficiary institutions for electricity supplied by renewable energy projects.

Aliyu called on universities, teaching hospitals and other beneficiaries to recognise payment for power as part of the mechanism required to keep the assets functional.

He cited the renewable energy project at Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, commissioned in 2019, as an example of the potential economic benefits of properly managed renewable infrastructure.

The plant serves more than 9,500 staff and students and, according to Aliyu, has generated about N1.8 billion in combined savings from avoided diesel purchases and electricity bills over five years.

The project has also prevented an estimated 2,367 tons of carbon emissions.

Aliyu argued that a sustainability tariff should therefore not be viewed simply as an additional financial burden on beneficiary institutions.

"So a sustainability tariff is not simply a new expense. It is the redirection of part of what an institution would otherwise spend on expensive and unreliable power towards preserving the asset providing reliable electricity," he said.

The government is also betting that RAMCO can help stimulate domestic manufacturing.

Aliyu disclosed that REA had entered joint-development arrangements with seven Nigerian manufacturers covering solar panels, battery energy storage systems, inverters, street lighting and solar asset recycling.

He said a professionally managed renewable energy portfolio approaching 200MW could provide manufacturers with predictable demand, helping to reduce foreign exchange pressures while creating skilled employment.

The arrangement could also open a larger market for Nigerian energy service companies, which RAMCO plans to engage as professional operators under defined standards for electricity delivery, revenue collection and asset availability.

The REA boss said the agency was targeting another 70 to 80 public institutions for renewable energy deployment within the next three years.

He said the sustainability framework was also relevant beyond renewable generation, pointing to REA's investment of about N135 billion between 2012 and 2024 in grid-extension infrastructure, including 3,766 transformers and approximately 9,556 kilometres of network.

Meanwhile, the government has set a timetable for transferring the initial assets to RAMCO.

Aliyu said REA would complete the valuation and technical assessment of the initial portfolio between the launch and the end of November, after which the assets would be transferred and long-term operations and maintenance partners onboarded for EEP Phase II sites.

The agency will also engage beneficiary institutions, the National Universities Commission, the Ministries of Education and Health and the Budget Office to develop workable tariff and payment arrangements.

The Minister of Education, Tunji Alausa, supported the initiative, saying renewable energy projects had helped provide more consistent electricity in some universities.

However, he disclosed that poor maintenance had resulted in damage to about 30 percent of facilities.

The Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Iziaq Salako, also commended the initiative, while the Managing Director of Infracorp, Lazarus Angbazo, said Nigeria needed to move beyond measuring success by the number of projects completed.

According to Angbazo, REA and its partners can continue to build renewable infrastructure, but RAMCO must ensure that the infrastructure continues working and delivering value.

FG Unveils $1bn Social Protection Scheme For Vulnerable Households

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has unveiled a $1 billion social protection initiative targeting vulnerable Nigerians mostly prone to poverty.

According to the proponents, the programme drifts away from dependence on temporary palliatives to sustainable pathways of economic empowerment and self-reliance.

The initiative is embedded under the Household Prosperity and Empowerment Social Protection Project (HOPE-SP).

It was unveiled at the State House Banquet Hall, Abuja, on Wednesday alongside four other initiatives designed to strengthen the country's humanitarian response and poverty reduction architecture.

First Lady Senator Oluremi Tinubu, who delivered the keynote address at the event themed, 'From Palliatives to Pathways', said the initiatives represented an important step towards improving the lives of vulnerable individuals, families and communities across the country.

Other initiatives unveiled were the One-Humanitarian-One Poverty Response System (OHOPRS), the Emergency Cash Transfer Programme, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction Ministerial Blueprint and the Humanity First Magazine.

The First Lady said although the five initiatives perform different functions, they share the common objective of improving the wellbeing of Nigerians, particularly those facing economic and social vulnerabilities.

She said the programmes were particularly significant against the backdrop of the far-reaching economic reforms being implemented by the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to strengthen the economy and establish a foundation for sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

According to her, while the reforms continue to take effect, the government and other stakeholders must recognise that many Nigerian families still face challenges and require support.

"Under the leadership of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, our nation is implementing far-reaching reforms to strengthen the economy, lay a solid foundation for sustainable growth, and shared prosperity.

"As these reforms continue to take effect, we must recognize that, given the size of our population and available resources, many families still face challenges and require our collective support", she said.

Mrs. Tinubu described HOPE-SP as an important intervention designed to strengthen the process of identifying vulnerable households, understanding their peculiar needs and providing appropriate assistance.

She explained that rather than merely providing temporary relief, the programme would combine immediate stabilisation assistance with interventions capable of putting affected households on a path towards recovery and economic independence.

Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Atiku Bagudu, said effective social protection required a whole-of-government approach involving the federal, states and local governments as well as other stakeholders.

Bagudu said the administration's ambition to build a $1 trillion economy by 2030 must be accompanied by deliberate efforts to ensure that prosperity and economic opportunities reach Nigerians at the grassroots.

Sport

Peter Edema
+2348050498540
peter.edema@independentnig.com

Tit Bits

UEFA Set To Drop FIFA Tourney Boycott Threat

UEFA is set to drop its threat of boycotting FIFA competitions, having received assurances there will be no repeat of Gianni Infantino's plan to sell off stakes in the World Cup to private investors, BBC Sport has been told.

The matter will be discussed at a meeting of UEFA's executive committee in Monaco on Thursday.

Earlier this month, European football's governing body said that despite Infantino's plan being aborted following widespread condemnation, the conditions required to prevent a boycott had "not been met".

"Assurances have to be made that such attempts to disfigure the game in this way will never be made again," UEFA insisted.

Man City Complete £86m Bouaddi Deal

Manchester City have signed midfielder Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille in a £85.6m deal to make the Morocco international the Premier League's most expensive teenager.

The 18-year-old joins on a five-year contract, subject to international clearance, with City paying £81.4m upfront plus £4.2m in add-ons.

Enzo Maresca's side moved to sign Bouaddi after selling central midfielders Rodri to FC Barcelona in a £65m deal and Tijjani Reinders to Al-Qadsiah for £52m.

He impressed at this summer's World Cup - starting five of Morocco's six matches in their run to the quarterfinals - after becoming a key member of Lille's side in Ligue 1.

Sterling Charged With Dangerous Driving

Raheem Sterling will appear in court next month to face charges of dangerous driving and possessing nitrous oxide for wrongful inhalation after crashing his car into motorway barriers in May.

The former England winger, who most recently played for Feyenoord in the Dutch Eredivisie, crashed his Lamborghini into barriers on the M3 in Hampshire on the morning of Thursday, May 28.

The 31-year-old was arrested and then released on bail pending further enquiries.

FIFA U20 Women's World Cup: Falconets Settle Down In Trzebnica

Falconets on arrival in the city of Trzebnica, Poland on Tuesday

AYO BADA
LAGOS

Nigeria's Under-20 Women's National Team, the Falconets, have settled into their training camp in Trzebnica, Poland and wasted no time in stepping up preparations for the 2026 FIFA U20 Women's World Cup.

The two-time FIFA U20 Women's World Cup silver-medallists commenced training on Wednesday at the Stadion Miejski, Fair Play Arena, with the technical crew and players displaying zeal, intensity and dedication from the outset.

Following their arrival in Poland on Tuesday, the Falconets immediately resumed their training programme, focusing on tactical organisation, technical execution, physical conditioning and team cohesion as they continue to build towards the championship.

As part of their final preparations, the Falconets will play two international friendly matches against Poland on Friday, August 28 and South Korea on Tuesday, September 1. The matches will provide valuable opportunities for the players to acclimatise further to the conditions in Poland, test themselves against different styles of play, sharpen their tactical understanding and gain experience against quality opposition on the world stage.

The friendly game against the host nation on Friday will take place at the Municipal Stadium in Brzeg, and commence at 12noon local time. The clash with the Koreans is scheduled for the Remes Resort & Spa Football Stadium, and will kick off at 4pm local time.

The friendly fixtures will also enable the technical crew to assess the team's progress and make necessary adjustments ahead of the World Cup, while helping the players adapt to the pace, intensity and demands of international competition.

The duo of captain Joy Igbokwe and defender Faridat Abdulwahab, who were eventually not granted visas, have been replaced by Vivian Kachi and Alaba Olabiyi.

Head Coach Moses Aduku and his technical crew have continued to demand maximum commitment from the players as the team fine-tunes its approach ahead of the tournament.

Nigeria will compete in Group F alongside Spain, China Peoples Republic and New Caledonia, with the Falconets set to face Spain on Monday, September 7, China PR on Thursday, September 10 and New Caledonia on Sunday, September 13.

The team will continue its training programme in Trzebnica in the coming days, with preparations intensifying as the players work towards making a strong statement at the global championship.

Nigeria, runners-up at the 2010 and 2014 editions, will be aiming to go a step further in Poland and secure the country's first-ever FIFA U20 Women's World Cup title.

Ahead NPBL Playoffs: 7-Foot Greek Giant, Okekuoyen Joins Rivers Hoopers

AYO BADA
LAGOS

In a key move ahead of the 2026 Nigeria Premier Basketball League (NPBL) Playoffs, Rivers Hoopers have announced 7-foot enforcer, Nikolaos Okekuoyen, as their latest signing as they continue the chase for domestic glory.

The 29-year-old center arrives in Nigeria following a standout 2025–26 campaign in Cyprus Division A with Digenis Akritas Morphou, where he posted double-double averages of 13.7 points and 10.2 rebounds (which ranked among the top interior marks in the Cypriot league) alongside 1.2 assists in 31.3 minutes per contest, shooting 43.9% from the field in 11 games.

The addition of the 285-pound big man introduces a potent combination of European top-flight experience, physical interior defense, and deep sense of family heritage.

Born in Athens to Nigerian parents, and having spent his early developmental years in Greece, Okekuoyen's basketball journey carries notable pedigree having played at Filathlitikos—the same Athens club that cultivated Miami Heat superstar and two-time NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo.

Okekuoyen later refined his skill set through the U.S. prep circuit at SPIRE Institute and Ridgeview Prep before entering the 2020 NBA Draft pool as an early entrant. He established a professional career spanning six seasons across Europe, where his resume includes top-tier experience in the Greek Basket League (HEBA A1) with Ionikos Nikaias BC, as well as extended, productive runs in the Greek HEBA A2 division featuring for AO Agrinio, Kavala, AE Psychiko, GS Eleftheroupoli, and Trikala BC.

While his arrival in Port Harcourt marks his first professional stint on the African continent, his addition represents a significant structural upgrade for the Hoopers to match the demands of the playoffs, owing to his reputation for being a formidable force in the key both offensively and defensively.

Beyond the tactical advantages, playing for the KingsMen will help bridge Okekuoyen's European professional background with his ancestral roots, while continuing a quest for excellence shared by both parties as they aim for another successful championship run.

The 2026 NPBL Playoffs get underway on Saturday, August 29, at the Basketball Stadium on Niger Street, with the top eight teams (four each) from the Atlantic and Savannah Conferences going head-to-head for Nigeria's biggest domestic basketball prize.

Lagos To Promote Youth Development, National Unity With Eko 2026

VICTORIA OJUGBANA
LAGOS

Lagos State government has expressed its readiness to host the maiden National Intermediate Games, 'Eko 2026', with organisers staying that the event would promote youth development, national unity and grassroots sports.

Chairman of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), Sam Egube, stated this during a media briefing on Eko 2026, held at the Alausa, Ikeja, on Tuesday.

Egube noted that Eko 2026, scheduled to hold from October 1 to 15, would bring about 15,000 young athletes aged between 15 and 18 to Lagos, with more than 50,000 athletes, young people and other participants expected to interact with the state during the event.

He said that the games go beyond competition for medals, as they are designed to promote national unity, inclusion and the discovery of young talents capable of representing Nigeria at national, continental and international levels.

The LOC chairman described Lagos as Nigeria's economic powerhouse and a gateway to the world, adding that youth development remains central to the state's development agenda.

Egube said: "Without developing the youth, without amplifying the youth, we will not have a great Lagos."

While urging the media to use the games to project Nigeria's successes, talents and potential, he noted that 28 sporting disciplines will be contested across several venues, including the Teslim Balogun Stadium, National Stadium, Yaba College of Technology, University of Lagos (UNILAG) and other sporting facilities across the state.

According to him, the event would also create opportunities for small businesses, hospitality, transportation and other sectors of the Lagos economy, while exposing young participants to the possibilities available in the state.

He added that Lagos' experience in hosting major international events, including the E1 Grand Prix, had demonstrated the state's capacity to successfully stage high-profile competitions.

Some members of the LOC during the Media Parley

Nigeria Unveils Junior Swimmers For Zone 2 Championship In Senegal

AYO BADA
LAGOS

The Nigeria Aquatics Federation (NAqF) has unveiled a 15-member junior team for the 2026 Africa Aquatics Zone 2 Junior Swimming Championship, scheduled for Dakar, Senegal, from August 28 to 30, 2026.

The delegation comprises 11 female and four male swimmers, with the federation strategically using the championship as a testing and preparation ground for the selected junior team ahead of the 2026 Youth Olympic Games, scheduled for October 30 to November 12.

The Dakar championship is part of a structured competition programme designed to expose the young swimmers to high-level competition while assessing their readiness for the Youth Olympic Games.

The team will depart Nigeria in batches, with some athletes scheduled to leave on Tuesday, August 25, while the final batches will depart on Wednesday and Thursday.

The swimmers are India Brown, Omolola Akinsanmi, Atinuke Alfred-Olajide, Boluwatife Alfred-Olajide, Oluwatofunmi Ibidapo, Aviva Hibbert, Kristabel Chisa Oldeide, Ivanna Itoandon, Toluwalase Agarau, Tireniolu Olutodimu Nedd, Olutise Temilolu Nedd, Aidan Dumuje-Abili, Demilade Ayemowa, Oluwatimilehin Olaiya and Udoh Daniel Emediong, while Christopher Ezemegwalu will serve as coach.

Beyond the Dakar championship, the federation has mapped out a busy competition calendar for the junior swimmers, with the "Swim to the Future" competition scheduled for September providing another opportunity for the athletes to compete and sharpen their skills.

The athletes will then feature at the National Intermediate Games 'Eko 2026' in October, giving them another important competitive platform ahead of the Youth Olympic Games.

The federation said the back-to-back competitions mean the athletes will be competing virtually every month from August through October, a strategy aimed at keeping them physically and mentally prepared while improving their confidence and competitive experience.

NAqF said the structured programme is expected to put the young swimmers in good shape and help produce a new generation capable of changing the face of swimming in Nigeria.

UCL Draws: English Quintet Know Foes Today

This year's UEFA Champions League (UCL) league phase draw takes place today as qualified teams look forward to who stands on their ways to glory.

There is considerable Premier League interest surrounding today's UCL draw, with at least one of Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Aston Villa and Liverpool set to face a blockbuster league phase fixture.

All five sides will fly the flag for England in this season's competition, with last season's impressive showing from English clubs securing an additional place.

Today's league phase draw is scheduled for 5pm (UK time). Match dates and kick-off times will be confirmed by Saturday at the latest, with the opening league phase fixtures to be played on Monday, September 8.

As has been the case since the competition introduced its new league phase format, every club will face two opponents from pot one, two from pot two, two from pot three and two from pot four. This guarantees some mouth-watering encounters from the outset.

After two years of PSG dominance, teams are ready to strip them of their continental crown in what will be the 72nd edition of this great tournament in all its forms.

How Does Qualifying Phase Work?

Twenty-nine teams earlier already directly qualified for the league phase. The remaining seven spots were decided in a qualifying phase that ended with the play-offs this week, with clubs participating according to the coefficient ranking of their respective federations. All knockout rounds are played over two legs.

Teams Earlier Qualified

The following 32 teams had already qualified for the UCL proper:

England - (Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Aston Villa, Liverpool)

Spain – (Real Madrid, FC Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Villarreal, Real Betis)

Italy - (Inter Milan, Napoli, AS Roma, Como)

Germany - (Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, RB Leipzig, VfB Stuttgart)

France - (Paris Saint-Germain, RC Lens, LOSC Lille)

Netherlands - (PSV Eindhoven, Feyenoord)

Portugal - (FC Porto, Sporting CP)

Belgium – (Club Brugge)

Turkey - (Galatasaray)

Ukraine - (Shakhtar Donetsk)

Czechia - (Slavia Prague)

Norway - (Bodo/Glimt)

Austria - (LASK)

Azerbaijan - (Sabah Baku)

How Does The Draw Work?

The draw for the Champions League main phase will take place on Thursday, (today) August 27th, at 18:00 CET in Monaco and can be streamed on UEFA.com.

For the draw, the 36 teams that qualify for the tournament are placed into four pots of nine teams, with one being the highest-ranked and four being the lowest. The pot placements are based on UEFA's club coefficient ranking from the five-season period ending at the conclusion of 2025/26.

The draw determines each side's eight fixtures for the league phase, with every team drawing two teams from each of the four pots. However, they cannot face a team from the same country as themselves.

Pot 1

PSG; Bayern Munich; Real Madrid; Liverpool; Inter; Manchester City; Arsenal; Barcelona; Atletico Madrid

Pot 2

Dortmund; Roma; Sporting; Aston Villa; Porto; Manchester United; Club Brugge; Real Betis; PSV

Pot 3

Feyenoord; Lille; Napoli; RB Leipzig; Villarreal; Shakhtar Donetsk; Galatasaray; Winner of Fenerbahce vs Lyon

Pot 3 or 4: Bodo/Glimt; Winner of Dinamo Zagreb vs Viking; LASK; Slavia Prague

Pot 4

Winner of Slovan Bratislava vs Celje; Stuttgart; Winner of Levski Sofia vs AEK Athens; Como; Lens; Sabah

Format Of The UCL

The teams who finish in the top eight of the league phase after the eight Match-days qualify for the UEFA Champions League's Round of 16.

Those between ninth and 24th will enter the play-off knockout round. The 12 teams ranked between 25th and 36th will exit the competition when the league phase is concluded.

League Phase Match Days

Matchday 1: September 8th-10th, 2026
Matchday 2: October 13th-14th, 2026
Matchday 3: November 20th-21st, 2026
Matchday 4: November 3rd-4th, 2026
Matchday 5: November 24th-25th, 2026
Matchday 6: December 8th-9th, 2026
Matchday 7: January 19th-20th, 2027
Matchday 8: January 27th, 2027

Dates For Knockout Round Matches

Knockout play-offs: February 16th-17th and 23rd-24th, 2027

Round of 16: March 9th-10th and 16th-17th, 2027

Quarterfinals: April 6th-7th and 13th-14th, 2027

Semifinals: April 27th-28th and May 4th-5th, 2027

Venue/ Date For Final

The Estadio Metropolitano, home of Atletico Madrid, will host the final of the 2026/27 UCL on Saturday, June 5th, 2027, where the winner will be crowned.

This will be the second time this stadium hosts the UCL final. The first was in 2019, when Liverpool beat Tottenham 2-0 in an all-English decider.

Aston Villa Close To Sealing Move For Chelsea's Nicolas Jackson

According to an update from French journalist Santi Aouna, Aston Villa submitted a bid worth €70 million to Chelsea, hoping to seal a deal for Nicolas Jackson in the final days of the ongoing transfer window. The Villans are keen on reinforcing their offensive unit by signing a striker, and they have their sights set on the 25-year-old out-of-favour Chelsea forward.

Per Santi Aouna, while an agreement between Chelsea and Aston Villa is close, the 2025/26 UEFA Europa League winners have yet to receive an approval from the player.

A report by French outlet Foot Mercato has shed more light, revealing that Atletico Madrid also wanted to sign Jackson, albeit on loan, an arrangement Chelsea did not prefer.

Nicolas Jackson has experienced a mixed spell since his July 2023 arrival at Chelsea from Villarreal for □37 million. While the 25-year-old was impressive in his first two seasons with the West London club, his situation changed after they signed Joao Pedro and Liam Delap last summer. He subsequently spent the 2025/26 season with Bayern Munich on a season-long loan deal.

The Senegalese international was a backup option for Die Roten, recording 11 goals and 4 assists in 1,320 minutes of game time. His tally is proof that he is a capable striker, even in a secondary role, making him an attractive prospect for his prospective suitors. Jackson has not completed a permanent move to Bayern Munich, and he will never play again for Chelsea, with the West London club eager to part ways with him after signing Danny Welbeck this year.

Nicolas Jackson has been on Aston Villa's wish list for several months. The continued interest is logical, as the Villans are worried about Ollie Watkins's long-term future. The veteran English centre-forward is a target for Al-Hilal, and recent reports have claimed that he wants to move to the Saudi Pro League.

The situation has become tense over the past week, with Unai Emery's comments when pressed on the Englishman's absence from the matchday squad for the game between Aston Villa and Brighton & Hove Albion in the Premier League opener stoking the fires of widespread speculation. So, the 2025/26 UEFA Europa League winners have been pushing to sign Jackson.

Meanwhile, the report by Foot Mercato corroborates recent suggestions of Chelsea's price, revealing that the West London club wanted €75 million to part ways with Jackson. With Aston Villa coming close to that mark, all that now remains is to convince the Senegalese international to move to Birmingham.

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Thinker's Corner

A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame. A little less than his share of the credit

— Arnold H. Glasow

Soyombo Opeyemi
The Pathfinder
densityshow@yahoo.com; 08089470148

Adolf Hitler: Between Strong Men And Strong Institutions

Adolf Hitler was a contradiction of some sort. But for some experiences in life, one should have thought it impossible for a man or woman to lead successfully a double life. Here was Hitler, a father figure to his staff, solicitous for their welfare and treating his comrades (the old brigade) with kindness, sometimes making excuses for their failings. Yet at the same time, *"a man whose honourable facade hid a criminal lust for power... a mass murderer... genocidal murderer!"* Hitler was a weird racist, megalomaniac supremacist and psychopath.

The book, *Hitler's Last Secretary,* is about the dual personality of Adolf Hitler, author's own (official) relationship with the Fuhrer, the hermit life of Hitler with his staff during the war years and the fall of Germany.

From the Wolf's Lair (Fuhrer's headquarters) in East Prussia, to Berghof in Munich and finally the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, the author, Traudl Junge, narrates the life and times of the most brutal dictator of the 20th century.

Hitler thought of himself as a genius and would not have children because "I think the offspring of men of genius usually have a very hard time of it. People expect them to be just like their famous progenitor, and won't forgive them for being only average. And in fact most of them are feeble-minded."

At one time in the 261-page book, one of Hitler's staff members, Marlene von Exner, was discovered to have "Jewish blood in her maternal line." There had been uncertainty about the origins of her grandmother - she had been a foundling. But "In view of the good Nazi attitude of the whole family, Hitler thought nothing much of this" until the sudden discovery. He there and then told Frau von Exner, "I'm really extremely sorry for you, but you will understand that I have no alternative to dismissing you from my service. I can't possibly make an exception for myself personally and break my own laws just because it would be to my advantage. But when you are

Adolf Hitler

George Bush Jnr

Vladimir Putin

Sani Abacha

back in Vienna I will have your whole family Aryanized, and pay you your salary for the next six months. I would also like to invite you to be my guest at the Berghof again before you leave me."

At another time, Eva Braun, Hitler's mistress, had seen a statue she liked in the Foreign Office and would want the Fuhrer to buy it for her so it could be "by the pool in my garden."

"Hitler took her hand. 'But I don't know whose it is. It's probably state property, in which case I can't buy it and put it in a private garden.'"

As the Allied forces closed in on the Fuhrer's bunker in Berlin, Frau Goebbels, wife of the Minister of Propaganda made up her mind: "I would rather have my (six) children die than live in disgrace, jeered at. Our children have no place in Germany as it will be after the war."

And so, one after the other in the bunker at Reich Chancellery in Berlin, it was a tale of suicide through poison. Hitler had decreed he would not fall into the hands of the enemy. He would take his own life and his body must be cremated so that no one could find it.

At the dining table, he said to the few staff members left with him in the bunker: "The best way (to die) is to shoot yourself in the mouth. Your skull is shattered and you don't notice anything. Death is instantaneous." Frau Braun, however, preferred to be

From the Wolf's Lair (Fuhrer's headquarters) in East Prussia, to Berghof in Munich and finally the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, the author, Traudl Junge, narrates the life and times of the most brutal dictator of the 20th century... Hitler thought of himself as a genius and would not have children...

"a beautiful corpse" and would take poison - "a little brass capsule containing a phial of cyanide." Himler had given Hitler ten of those capsules. Frau Christian and Frau Junge asked Hitler for the capsules too. "...and when we left him after the meal he personally gave each of us one, saying, 'I am very sorry that I can't give you a better farewell present.'"

Hitler marries Eva Braun... Traudl Junge types Hitler's last political testament and private will. And that of Goebbels... the end of the Third Reich in a matter of days. Frau Junge decides to live...

Notwithstanding his self-description as a "genius", Adolf Hitler might have been afflicted with the spirit of destruction. His notion of Germany being the "master race" that must subjugate other "inferior" races could be a product of a warped mind. Destroy million of others in a doomed expansionist campaign and then get destroyed. But for his affliction with the spirit of destruction, stone age mentality and mind disorders, how on earth would Hitler, who had long planned to commit suicide rather than fall into the hands of the Allied forces, announce a new government to succeed him only hours to suicide, when all the major cities of Germany were in ruins with the tanks of the Red Army at the very entrance of the Reich Chancellery where he was holed up in a bunker, awaiting the moment of suicide? Was the new government to function in the air when the Soviet Military Administration in Germany was only a few weeks away from being formed by the occupying forces?

Hitler's Last Secretary is most illuminating, affecting and instructive as well. Only God knows what course a man's life will take. On page 131 is the picture of little Traudl Humps (now Junge) at age seven in 1927. Hitler, the Fuhrer, would not come to power until six years later. Traudl never dreamt she would one day work in the Reich Chancellery. She had trained to be a ballet dancer or ballerina and passed her exams. Working for Hitler was completely by accident or a question of fate.

In this part of the world, our parents determine our course up to the secondary school or varsity level at best. Thereafter you are on your own, to chart a course that suits you or have one determined for you by fate - in which you, most often, get what you never planned for or dreamt of.

The Denazification Commission exonerates Traudl Junge as a "youthful fellow traveller" and fate again places her in a position to write this invaluable book.

Traudl Junge breathed her last in 2002 at age 82 shortly after the publication of the German version of her book.

It is better to have strong institutions than strong men...

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