EFCC to appeal ruling on nine properties linked to Malami –Olukoyede

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has said it will appeal a Federal High Court ruling that dismissed its application for the final forfeiture of nine properties linked to former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami.

EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, disclosed this on

CONTINUES ON P2

The Daily Monitor

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FG doesn't know value of its assets, says MOFI MD

P2

Tinubu charges NLNG to turn gas flaring into economic benefit

P4

Presidential Campaign list stands, but there will be adjustments —Presidency

P5

Rising fuel imports forcing greater export focus despite strong local supply capacity, says Dangote Refinery

P5

Atiku playing politics with petrol subsidy –Presidency

- Says Ex-VP suffering from lack of basic understanding of his newfound policy prescription

Vice President Kashim Shettima, receiving a delegation from the Kingdom of Thailand led by its Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow at the Presidential Villa, Abuja...on Wednesday

The Presidency, on Wednesday, again criticised former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, accusing him of being confused over petrol subsidy policy and playing politics with Nigeria's future.

In a statement issued by Bayo Onanuga, presidential spokesperson, said Atiku's recent U-turn on subsidy removal raises a fundamental question as to whether he is seriously proposing an economic policy or simply playing politics with the temporary discomfort Nigerians face.

Recall that Atiku, the presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), on August 19, 2026 declared that he would restore the petrol subsidy if elected president in 2027.

Speaking during an interview with an ADC media group, Atiku said President Bola Tinubu's administration had failed to account for the funds saved from the removal of petrol subsidy.

The comment sparked widespread outrage on social media, with critics saying it contradicted the policy manifesto Atiku proposed ahead of the 2023 elections, when he reportedly vowed to remove the

CONTINUES ON P2

Show Nigerians how subsidy savings were spent, Atiku challenges FG

Former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar has challenged the Federal Government to account for the savings from the removal of the petrol subsidy, asking it to show Nigerians how the funds have been spent.

In a statement issued on Wednesday by Phrank Shaibu, his senior special assistant on public communication, Atiku, presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), said the administration of President Bola Tinubu and its supporters were attempting to di-

CONTINUES ON P2

Atiku playing politics with petrol subsidy –Presidency

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

petrol subsidy if elected.

Reacting to the former vice-president, Tinubu said Atiku's proposal showed "serious ignorance of governance and the economy", noting that before he assumed office, some states struggled to pay salaries and pensions.

To defend his principal, Paul Ibe, one of Atiku's media aides, said the former vice-president would restore petrol subsidy if elected but would phase it out later.

Speaking during a programme on AIT, Ibe said the temporary intervention would give Nigerians and businesses room to recover, stimulate economic activity and improve productivity.

Atiku, however, distanced himself from Ibe's remark on Tuesday, saying the aide did not speak on his authority and that his position on petrol subsidy remained unchanged.

But the Presidency on Wednesday said the contradictory remarks from Atiku's camp on subsidy removal have created deep confusion, noting that Nigerians deserve clear policy, not trial and error.

"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.

rification 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," Onanuga said.

Atiku 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."

The full text of the statement, titled ATIKU CONFUSED ON PETROL SUBSIDY; THIRD U-TURN IN ONE WEEK SHOWS HE IS SIMPLY PLAYING POLITICS, reads:

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.

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 has not 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 is 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.

The former vice-president should be honest with Nigerians: either he has a coherent, costed, and workable petroleum policy, or he is simply playing politics with a policy that has significantly restored fiscal health to the three tiers of government and stabilised the macroeconomic environment.

The economy is too serious for policy somersaults, incoherence, destructive populism and election gimmicks.

Atiku says his subsidy will follow the barrel of crude. Is he aware that refined petrol only constitutes 45 per cent of the by-products of a refined barrel of crude? A barrel yields other products, such as aviation fuel, kerosene, and diesel, which were deregulated many years ago.

Diesel, which the Obasanjo-Atiku administration deregulated in 2004, accounts for roughly 25% of the barrel. Jet Fuel and Kerosene make up about 9% of the barrel. Kerosene and jet fuel were deregulated in 2009, and subsidies removed in 2016.

About 10% to 15% of the barrel creates base ingredients for synthetic rubber, nylon, polyester, and plastics used in everyday goods like toothbrushes, cups, and packaging.

Asphalt makes up about 2% to 4% of the barrel. Hydrocarbon Gas Liquids (HGL), like propane and butane, make up about 4%. Lubricants and Waxes constitute about 1% to 2%. Petroleum coke and sulfur form the solid residue left from refining.

Show Nigerians how subsidy savings were spent, Atiku challenges FG

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

vert attention from questions over the management of public resources by reviving old allegations against him.

Atiku said the government had removed the subsidy and asked Nigerians to endure the resulting hardship on the promise that the savings would be channelled into development.

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

He said petrol, transportation and food costs had increased while the purchasing power of Nigerian workers had been severely weakened.

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

The former vice-president also questioned the continued provision of fiscal incentives, waivers, tax credits and concessions to what he described as powerful economic interests.

He said the government could not remove relief from poor Nigerians, benefit from increased revenues and at the same time portray interventions aimed at easing hardship as economically irresponsible.

"So, our question remains brutally simple: WHERE IS THE PEOPLE'S MONEY?" Atiku asked.

Atiku also challenged the Tinubu administration and its supporters to investigate him if they had evidence of wrongdoing instead of recycling allegations concerning his time in government.

The ADC presidential candidate said the national assembly had investigated the power projects during his tenure as vice-president, but he was never invited to answer allegations of wrongdoing.

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

Atiku acknowledged that he chaired the national council on privatisation as vice-president but said he disagreed with the concept of the power project and did not oversee its implementation.

"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," he said.

"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."

EFCC to appeal ruling on nine properties linked to Malami

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Wednesday while speaking at the 43rd Cambridge International Symposium on Economic Crime at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

The 2026 symposium, themed "Asset Recovery and the Rule of Law – Taking the Profit Out of Crime," brought together law enforcement officials, judges, prosecutors and experts from various countries to examine strategies for recovering proceeds of crime.

Olukoyede said the commission had traced 57 properties to Malami and secured final forfeiture orders over 48 of them.

He said the commission was considering an appeal against the court's decision concerning the remaining nine properties located in Kebbi and Kaduna states.

"Sometimes last year, I opened investigations upon reasonable suspicion of criminal abuse of office by the immediate past Attorney-General of Nigeria.

"We discovered that within eight years of his being in office, we were able to trace about 57 such properties to him. We've been able to forfeit about 48.

"Even the nine that were left for him, I'm considering filing an appeal so that we can take everything away from him. And we're going to do that," he said.

The development followed a July 15 ruling of the Federal High Court in Abuja, which ordered the final forfeiture of 48 properties linked to the former AGF.

The properties had earlier been placed under an interim forfeiture order in January.

In the ruling, Justice Joyce Abdulmalik held that the EFCC had established sufficient grounds for the final forfeiture of the 48 properties, which the commission had alleged were proceeds of unlawful activities.

However, the judge dismissed the application concerning nine other properties in Kebbi and Kaduna states, holding that the EFCC had not established that they were acquired through unlawful means.

Olukoyede said the commission's recourse to civil forfeiture had strengthened its ability to recover assets suspected to be proceeds of crime without having to wait for the conclusion of criminal trials.

He identified effective asset tracing, credible intelligence and judicial support as critical to the success of non-conviction-based asset forfeiture.

The EFCC chairman also disclosed that the commission would reward whistleblowers with between 2.5 per cent and five per cent of recovered assets where information supplied by them leads to the recovery of stolen Nigerian assets.

rs of the public, particularly those with information on assets allegedly moved outside Nigeria, to provide credible intelligence to the commission.

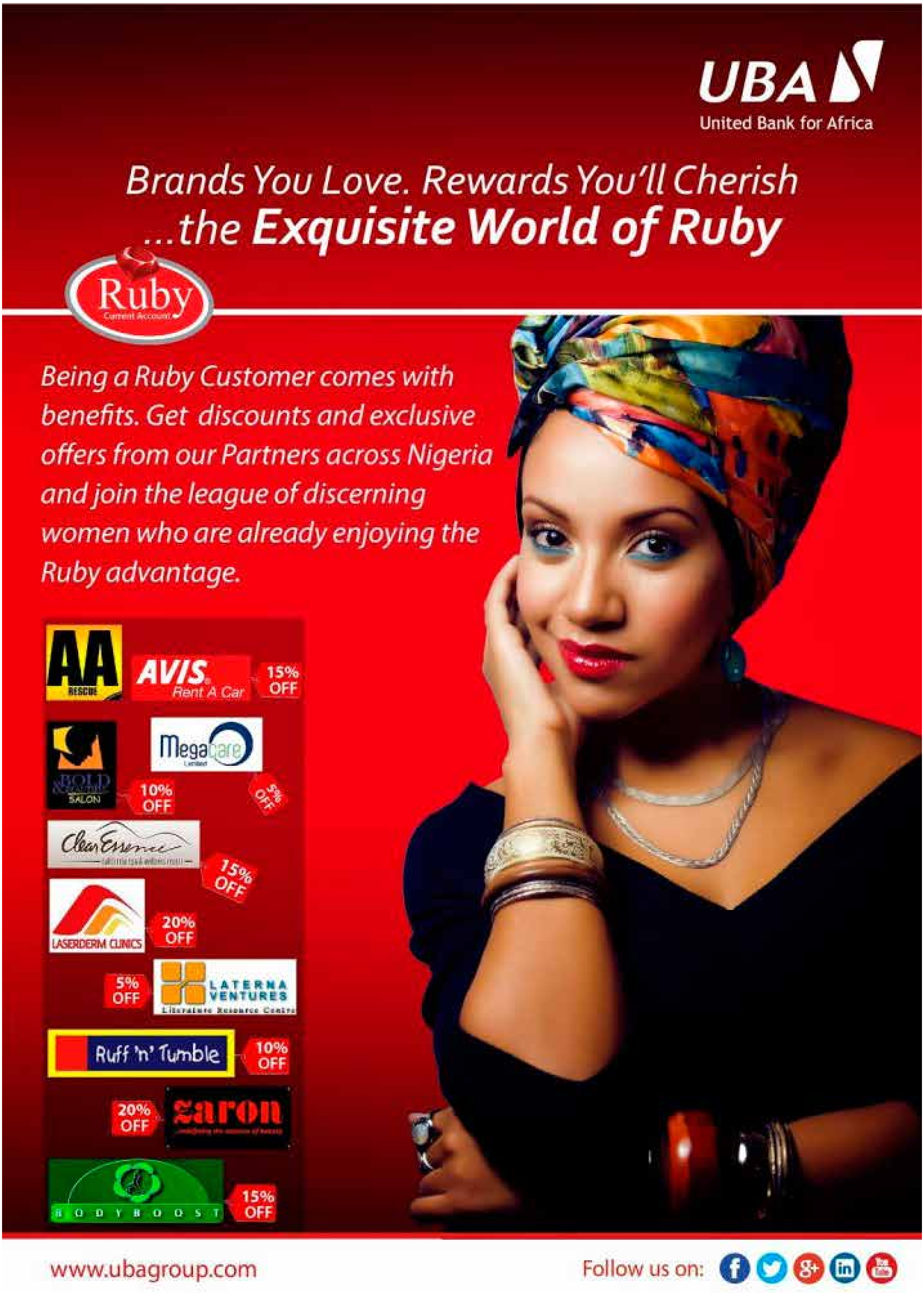
According to Olukoyede, the incentive is intended to encourage citizens to support efforts to trace and recover illicitly acquired Nigerian assets.

"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.

"You can never tell, if you give me any information, some of you here may leave this place a multi-millionaire in dollars before the end of this month."

Olukoyede said credible intelligence from members of the public remained essential to effective asset tracing and recovery, particularly where suspected illicit assets had been transferred across borders.



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Tinubu charges NLNG to turn gas flaring into economic benefit

President Bola Tinubu, on Wednesday, charged the management of the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited to maximise the country's gas reserves by reducing gas flaring and converting the resource into economic benefits for Nigerians.

Tinubu gave the charge when he received members of the NLNG Board, led by its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Adeleye Falade, at the State House, Abuja on Wednesday.

The President's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, disclosed this in a statement issued titled, 'President Tinubu Urges NLNG Board to Convert Gas Flaring Into Economic Benefit for Nigeria.'

Tinubu said: "My major concern is the domestic utilisation, where you must be able to take out the flaring and convert potential environmental liability to what could be strategically and economically beneficial to the consumers in the country.

"Yes, you are doing great to really want the revenue up and taking advantage of international interests so that Nigeria might be deriving benefits, but help us back home."

He commended the NLNG management for increasing the company's capacity and ensuring good returns on investment.

"I enjoy the teamwork and the way the NLNG is going, and you all, as team leaders, are giving value to what was the initial objective of the company.

"If any other incentive is needed to stimulate growth and expand your capacity, I will be willing to do that," he said.

The President said Nigeria's natural resources would have little value unless they were harnessed to serve the economy and improve the lives of citizens.

He said, "We look straight far into the future, and I believe that this country has what it takes; but whatever asset that we have in the ground is nothing unless it's brought up to service the economy, the people, and realisation of a good return on investment.

"I think that is the primary focus. But think of the people, the need for domestication of some of these energy requirements and pricing mechanisms so that the ordinary man will feel it."

Speaking earlier, Falade told the President that the NLNG Board was at the State House to brief him on the company's operations since he assumed office as Managing Director in April.

He disclosed that the NLNG had generated more than $150bn since inception, with its shareholders, including the Federal Government, receiving about $47bn in dividends.

Nigeria holds a 49 per cent stake in the company.

Falade said the NLNG had previously operated at about 60 per cent capacity because of inadequate crude oil production, resulting in only four of its six available trains being operational.

He told the President that all LPG production, commonly known as cooking gas, was currently concentrated on the domestic market.

The NLNG chief also said increased oil production following developments in the oil and gas sector had enabled the company to raise its capacity to five trains, with further improvements expected.

He said the company was keen to inaugurate Train Seven, which would increase its capacity by 35 per cent, adding that the NLNG currently holds a five per cent share of the global LNG market.

Falade also said shareholders had commended the stability in Nigeria's fiscal environment, which he said was attracting more investment.

He also commended security agencies and industry regulators for the stability currently being experienced in the sector.

Falade informed the President that the Bonny-Bodo Road and Bridge project, financed by the NLNG, had been completed and was awaiting official commissioning.

Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri during a courtesy visit to the family of late Nigerian Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha, in Abuja, ahead of the 30th anniversary of the creation of Bayelsa State slated for October 1, 2026.

We've disbursed N600bn in cash transfers to support vulnerable Nigerians —Minister

The Federal Government has disbursed more than ₦600 billion in cash transfers to vulnerable Nigerians over the past three years, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Reduction, Bernard Doro has said.

Doro disclosed this during an interview on Channels Television's Politics Today on Wednesday, saying the intervention had reached slightly more than 10 million households.

"We've done over 600 billion in cash transfers to be able to support vulnerable Nigerians within three years. We have reached slightly over 10 million households," he said.

The minister's comments came after the Federal Government launched its $1 billion Renewed Hope Social Protection Programme, aimed at moving vulnerable Nigerians beyond temporary relief towards sustainable economic empowerment.

The programme, unveiled by First Lady Oluremi Tinubu, includes the Household Prosperity and Empowerment Social Protection Project (HOPE-SP), which seeks to establish a coordinated social protection system focused on helping households move out of poverty.

Doro said the new programme would adopt a different approach to poverty reduction by deliberately tracking households and measuring their progress towards economic self-reliance.

"We have a system where we want to deliberately track poverty," he said.

According to the minister, the programme is expected to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian interventions, social protection and poverty reduction, while placing households at the centre of government support.

Presidential Campaign list stands, but there will be adjustments – Presidency

The Presidency has dismissed reports that the All Progressives Congress (APC) has withdrawn its Presidential Campaign Council list for the 2027 election, saying the structure remains in place but will undergo some adjustments.

Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Media and Public Communication, Sunday Dare, gave the clarification on Wednesday during an interview on Channels Television's Sunrise Daily.

His comments came amid controversy over the composition of the council, particularly the inclusion of some party leaders and the absence of others, which had sparked reports that the list was being reconsidered.

According to Dare, however, the list remains valid because the campaign structure is not yet complete, with several subcommittees still to be constituted.

"As it is with every other list, there's a room for subcommittees. Those subcommittees have not been formed, and so many other names will come into that subcommittee," he said.

Dare also pointed to a statement issued by the APC on the matter, insisting that the party had not withdrawn the list.

"So that list has not been withdrawn. The APC has issued a statement to that effect yesterday, that list stands. But of course, there will be adjustments. The list is not cast in stone, just like every other list."

The campaign council, which was announced over the weekend, has President Tinubu as chairman, while Vice-President Kashim Shettima and APC National Chairman Nentawe Yilwatda were named vice chairmen.

Former Zamfara State Governor and Senator, Abdul'aziz Yari, was appointed Director-General, with Imo State Governor Hope Uzodimma named secretary.

Pressed on whether the changes amounted to a review of the council, Dare drew a distinction between the two terms, saying the expected changes would only be made where necessary.

"Not a review, just adjustments where necessary," he said.

Explaining his choice of words, the presidential aide said a review would imply a much broader overhaul of the existing structure.

Rising fuel imports forcing greater export focus despite strong local supply capacity, says Dangote Refinery

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

The refinery noted that while it remains fully committed to supporting Nigeria's energy security and ensuring uninterrupted fuel availability across the country, the volume of imported PMS entering the market has created uncertainty in domestic demand planning and inventory management.

According to market data available to the refinery, imported PMS accounted for approximately 43 percent of the fuel supplied into the Nigerian market in July, a development that raises questions about the necessity of continued large-scale imports when substantial local refining capacity exists.

Since commencing operations, Dangote Refinery has consistently maintained sufficient inventory levels and reserved product volumes to guarantee steady supply to the Nigerian market. This commitment has required significant investment in storage, logistics, and working capital, all aimed at protecting Nigerians from supply disruptions and market volatility.

However, the refinery stated that the absence of transparency regarding the actual volume of imported products expected into the country makes effective production and inventory planning increasingly challenging. Maintaining large stock positions without clear visibility into import volumes imposes substantial carrying costs on the refinery and ultimately undermines efficient market operations.

"As a responsible energy provider, we have always endeavoured to keep adequate reserves to satisfy local demand at all times. However, in an environment where significant volumes of imported PMS continue to enter the market through licences issued by the regulator, and where there is limited visibility on future import volumes, it becomes commercially unsustainable to continue holding excess inventory indefinitely."

Tinubu, Jonathan, Diri, Dickson, others eulogise Walson-Jack

WARIYAI DANIELS, YENAGOA

President Bola Tinubu, former President Goodluck Jonathan, Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, and his predecessor, Senator Seriake Dickson, among others, yesterday, poured encomiums on the outgoing Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Walson-Jack.

They spoke at the presentation of two books, "I Planted: A Memoir of Purposeful Service," and "Beyond the Mandate: A Memoir on Leadership, Legacy and Labour of Public Service," authored by Walson-Jack at the Abuja Continental Hotel on Tuesday.

President Tinubu, who was represented by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Dr. Kingsley Udeh, described the outgoing HOSF as a remarkable and distinguished public servant that repositioned the federal bureaucracy, making it more effective and efficient.

Tinubu said: "We gather for the presentation of her two books, but in reality, we are here to celebrate something much greater. We celebrate a life of selfless service, a career of exceptional leadership, and a service to humanity.

"Mrs. Walson-Jack occupies a particularly distinguished place in our public administration history. She has served at both the state and federal levels and has risen to Nigeria's topmost bureaucrat as the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

"Very few public servants have had the breadth of experience, responsibility, and perspective that her journey presents. What makes today's occasion even more remarkable is that while carrying the enormous responsibilities of her office, she has found the time and discipline to reflect, write, and document her experience.

The President eulogised Walson-Jack as a public servant that understood the responsibility of her office as the Head of Service.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan, who attended the event with his wife, Dame Patience Jonathan, equally praised the Bayelsa-born top bureaucrat, recalling her courage in moving from a much older civil service in Rivers State to that of Bayelsa that had just been created in 1996.

He also recalled the challenge she faced moving from the state to the federal civil service and how she was downgraded to the position of Assistant Director despite being Permanent Secretary and Solicitor-General of Bayelsa at the time.

While congratulating Walson-Jack on her retirement and commending her husband for being a pillar of support, Jonathan thanked Tinubu for appointing her on merit.

The Chief Presenter of the books and Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, paid glowing tribute to Mrs. Walson-Jack, describing her as a woman of courage, exceptional intellect and discipline.

The Bayelsa governor, in company of his wife, Dr. Gloria Diri, also expressed appreciation to President Tinubu for appointing a daughter of the state in August 2024.

Diri recounted his working relationship with the celebrant during her time as Deputy Chief of Staff to former Governor Dickson while he was Principal Executive Secretary.

"In that capacity, I saw first-hand the discipline, the intellect, and the quiet strength she brought to governance in Bayelsa State. She was the calm in the storm, the memory of the administration, and the conscience that reminded us that every decision must serve the people.

"As she exits the Federal Civil Service after thirty-four years of unexampled and meritorious service spanning Rivers State, Bayelsa State, and the Federal Civil Service, we do not mark an end. We mark a transition from active service to enduring legacy."

In his remarks, Senator Seriake Dickson thumbed up Walson-Jack, describing her as "a great servant of our people."

The immediate past Governor of Bayelsa State recalled how their paths crossed when Jonathan appointed him Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice while Walson-Jack was the ministry's Permanent Secretary and Solicitor-General of the state.

SMBLF leaders reject FG national livestock pilot scheme plans in Middle Belt land

GABRIEL UDEH, KADUNA

Southern and Middle Belt Leaders Forum (SMBLF) has raised an alarm over what it described as audacious attempt by the Federal Government to take over lands belonging to ethnic communities in the Middle Belt under a spurious "pilot scheme" being introduced in the name of a New National Livestock Policy.

The proposed targeted areas include Nasarawa, Plateau, Benue, Southern Kaduna, Taraba and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), according to statement issued Wednesday and made available to newsmen in Kaduna.

The statement signed by leaders of the four Nigeria's ethnic nationalities, includes HRM Oba Oladipo Olaitan, Leader of Afenifere and Chairman of SMBLF, Dr. Bitrus Pogu President of Middle Belt Forum, Senator John Azuta-Mbata

President-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, and H.E Ambassador Godknows Igali, National Chairman, PANDEF.

SMBLF noted with dismay that "It is striking that this experiment is being concentrated almost entirely in the Middle Belt, despite the vast expanses of sparsely populated and unused land available in many parts of the far North, where Fulani Emirs dominate most of the lands".

'The scheme is being presented as a pilot, but if it is not firmly opposed by the communities whose lands are being short-changed, it will inevitably be expanded to other parts of the country, including the Southern States.

"Let us be clear: The SMBLF is not opposed to modern livestock production, ranching or the development of the livestock value chain. What we reject is the opaque, coercive and discriminatory manner in which this policy is being pursued to the exclusive advantage of nomadic Fulani herdsmen.

"The SMBLF stands firmly with the MBF, which has already rejected the scheme. We also call on communities and governments of the Southern State to stand ready to reject the policy.

"The Federal Government must be reminded that the Land Use Act of 1978 is not a licence for arbitrary land grabbing. It vests rural land in Local Governments, recognises customary rights of occupancy, and allows revocation only for overriding public interest.

"The Act also protects agricultural land, including fallow land, as continuing community property. Ranching is an economic enterprise that is privately driven. Government cannot disguise compulsory land acquisition for specific economic actors as public interest", the forum explained.

The forum stated 'SMBLF deeply suspect that the true aim of this policy is the creation of permanent settlement zones for nomadic Fulani herdsmen, whose violent activities over the years have contributed to the capture and occupation of thousands of square kilometres of land across the Middle Belt and even parts of Southern states".

SMBLF noted that "Apart from the genocide they have been accused of carrying out in the Middle Belt, they have rendered millions homeless. They cannot be handed the lands of their victims as a reward for their heinous crimes".

"It is also a matter of record that some of these nomadic pastoralists are not Nigerian citizens. Any policy that ignores these realities while allocating vast ancestral lands to them under state protection is unacceptable to the indigenous people of the Middle Belt and the South.

Benin-Asaba gridlock: Umahi urges concessionaire to write FG for contract termination

TITUS AKHIGBE, BENIN

The Minister of Works, David Umahi, has appealed to the concessionaire handling the Benin-Asaba road to immediately write to the Federal Government through the Ministry of Works to enable it to terminate their contract.

The minister also ordered the concessionaire to urgently remove all the blockages on the Benin-Asaba road to allow free flow of traffic.

Umahi made the appeal and issued the directive on Wednesday in Benin at a stakeholders' engagement in Government House, Benin.

According to him, we are therefore pleading with you to give us written approval to proceed in this manner, we believe this is the way forward.

"Therefore, our directive going forward is that you should be removed from the site of this project, within the limits of our rights. You have added no value to the project," he said.

He stressed that the Federal Ministry of Works should write to the Independent Engineer to request measurements of all the works that have been carried out, excluding what we describe as negative work.

"When you remove asphalt contrary to the contract and contrary to the specifications, that is negative work.

"It will not be recognised as part of the value of work done. In fact, the cost of rectifying the damage must also be established.

"Now, we want to plead with you, as the clients acting in the interest of the public, we do not believe that you currently have the capacity to reinstate the road.

"We have not stopped you from working, but if you continue doing what you are currently doing, we are not convinced that you will be able to avert the potential for public disorder in that area," he added.

The minister, while suggesting ways to remedy the current hardship caused by the concessionaire, directed that the affected sections should then be reconstructed under the supervision of the Independent Engineer.

He also directed that the concessionaire is required to provide a technical design for proper stormwater canalisation, adding that this is very important.

He further warned that it should restore all the asphalt, redirect any water that has been channelled onto the carriageway, and restore free flow of traffic along the carriageway.

Responding, Head of Legal and Compliance of the Benin Asaba Expressway Concession Company (BAECC), Mr Peterson Fabian, ap-

2027: N605/Ltr is our starting price for petrol, says Accord Party presidential candidate

Presidential Candidate of the Accord Party, Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim, has said Nigerians should not have to pay more than ₦605 per litre for petrol under an Accord administration, arguing that the price could eventually fall to as low as ₦200 per litre if Nigeria gets its production costs and exchange rate right.

Hashim said the proposed price would represent a starting sustainable price, not an artificially subsidised price, and insisted that the reduction would not 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 was not 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 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 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 government is necessarily making a loss whenever Nigerians receive petroleum products below an international benchmark.

"A country does not subsidise itself simply because it chooses to use its own resources to provide affordable energy to its citizens."

Hashim called for an independent forensic audit of Nigeria's petroleum cost structure, covering crude production, contracting, procurement, refining, transportation, storage, insurance, pipeline operations and distribution.

He said the audit should establish the actual cost of producing and delivering every litre of petrol to the Nigerian market.

Northern Senators condemn Borgu attack, demand immediate release of abductees

Serving senators from the North, under the aegis of the Northern Senators' Forum, have condemned in the strongest terms the recent terrorist attacks in Borgu Local Government Area of Niger State, which led to the abduction of worshippers and residents in several communities.

The attacks have also drawn condemnation from both state and federal authorities following reports of killings and mass abductions in the affected communities.

Suspected terrorists reportedly invaded Dekara, Gidan-Zana, Kpenya, Sabon Gida and Masata on August 21, 2026, abducting an unspecified number of residents.

A survivor alleged that members of the Lakurawa group carried out the attacks and killed some residents. However, authorities said the exact number of people abducted and casualties was still being verified.

The Northern Senators' Forum, in a statement signed by its Chairman, Senator Abdulaziz Musa Yar'Adua (Katsina Central), urged security agencies to intensify efforts to track down the attackers and secure the immediate release of the abducted victims.

The senators described the attacks, particularly the abduction of worshippers from Kpenya Mosque after Juma'at prayers and residents of villages in Gidan-Zana and Kpenya in the Dekara District of Borgu LGA, as barbaric and unacceptable.

"Targeting innocent worshippers in a mosque and defenceless rural communities is not only cowardly but an attack on our shared humanity and faith.

"Reports of landmines being planted and further abductions to serve as bargaining chips are deeply troubling and unacceptable.

"We, therefore, call on the Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police Force, the Department of State Services and all relevant security agencies to intensify ongoing rescue operations and ensure the immediate and safe release of all those abducted. The Northern Senators' Forum stands in full solidarity with the people of Niger State," they said.

Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri during a courtesy visit to the family of late Nigerian Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha, in Abuja, ahead of the 30th anniversary of the creation of Bayelsa State slated for October 1, 2026.

Atiku wants to return Nigeria to 'corrupt' subsidy era, says Kebbi APC chieftain

An All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain and petroleum marketer in Kebbi State, Aminullah Mustapha, has condemned the statement by the African Democratic Congress (ADC) presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, promising to reintroduce fuel subsidy if elected president.

Mustapha described the proposal as an attempt to revive a system he said had been characterised by corruption and abuse, arguing that returning to the subsidy regime would not serve the best interests of Nigerians.

He stated this in a statement issued to newsmen in Birnin Kebbi.

The former ADC House of Representatives aspirant, who has experience in the petroleum business, said the subsidy regime was plagued by the diversion and misuse of public funds.

"During the subsidy regime, a lot of funds allocated to oil marketers were not going to the designated areas. Funds were allocated to bogus marketers to transport oil tankers, but they ended up collecting the money without transporting any oil," he alleged.

He further alleged that some petroleum tankers paid for under the subsidy arrangement ended up in neighbouring Niger Republic and Benin Republic, allowing other countries to benefit from funds meant to subsidise fuel for Nigerians.

"Some oil tankers which were paid for under the subsidy regime ended up in neighbouring countries such as Niger and Benin Republic. This means other countries were benefiting from the subsidy that was meant for Nigerians," Mustapha said.

"There are allegations that some depot owners were paid for imported petroleum products but failed to bring the products into the country. In some cases, they allegedly received payment before the imported products arrived in Nigeria," he stressed.

The APC chieftain maintained that President Bola Tinubu demonstrated courage by removing the fuel subsidy, describing the decision as necessary to address what he called longstanding corruption and inefficiencies in the system.

"President Tinubu was courageous and honest with Nigerians by removing the subsidy. Many Nigerian leaders, including Atiku Abubakar, know that the subsidy regime was marred by corruption, but because of political desperation, they do not want to tell Nigerians the truth," he said.

Mustapha urged Nigerians to be wary of proposals that could return the country to what he described as a wasteful and corruption-prone subsidy regime, saying the focus should instead be on policies that would strengthen the economy and improve the welfare of citizens.

Troops arrest suspected terrorists, recover arms, ammunition in Zamfara

Troops of 1 Brigade Nigerian Army, deployed at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Kaura Namoda, have arrested two suspected terrorists during a night fighting patrol conducted in Kaura Namoda Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

A statement by Acting Assistant Director, Army Public Relations, 1 Brigade Nigerian Army Gusau, Yusuf Mohammed, on Wednesday, noted that the operation, conducted in the early hours of Tuesday, further demonstrated the Brigade's sustained efforts "to deny criminal elements freedom of action within its Area of Responsibility".

According to the Army, at about 0150 hours on Monday, troops of 1 Brigade Combat Team 2, operating from FOB Kaura Namoda, had encountered and apprehended two suspected terrorists during the patrol. The suspects were indegenes of Ilela Village in Maradun Local Government Area of Zamfara State.

Items recovered from the suspects include one AK-47 rifle, one locally fabricated Dane gun, two rifle magazines, 55 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, 18 cartridges for the Dane gun, one motorcycle, two Baofeng radio sets and one mobile phone.

Troops also recovered two MP3 players, one camouflage vest, two jungle hats, one handbag and the sum of N44,500.00 in cash.

Preliminary examination of the suspects' mobile phone revealed photographs and video materials considered potentially incriminating and of intelligence value. The contents are currently being subjected to further verification and exploitation by the appropriate authorities to establish their relevance and possible links to terrorist activities within the area.

The successful operation underscores the effectiveness of the Brigade's aggressive fighting patrols, intelligence-led operations and sustained presence across vulnerable locations within its Area of Responsibility.

The interception of the suspects and recovery of weapons, ammunition, communication equipment and other military-related items represent another operational setback for criminal elements operating within the axis.

Acting Commander 1 Brigade Nigerian Army, Col J Umaru, commended the troops for their vigilance, courage and professionalism.

He charged personnel to sustain the tempo of offensive operations, remain resolute and continue to deny terrorists and other criminal elements the freedom to operate within the Brigade's Area of Responsibility.

The Acting Commander further reaffirmed the Brigade's commitment to protecting lives and property while supporting the restoration of lasting peace and security across Zamfara State.

Nasarwa: Gov Sule swears in Babashehu, Iyimoga, others as commissioners

FRANCIS NANSAK, LAFIA

Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State has sworn in six commissioners that were recently screened by the state assembly, among which the former Keffi Chairman, Hon Mohammed Babashehu and Mohammed Iyimoga would be heading newly created ministries.

The newly formed ministries are the Ministry for NGO and Disaster Management and Ministry for Agriculture and Security to be headed by the newly sworn commissioners respectively.

While Alhaji Muhammad Habeeb Nagogo was sworn in as commissioner for the Ministry of Tertiary and Technical Education

Hon Yakubu Kwanta, who was heading the Ministry of Youth and Sport Development, is now the commissioner of Works and Housing while Jibril Abdullahi replaces him.

Others are Ahmed Yakubu Mohammed ,Budget and Economic Planning, Adamu Rabecca Kpadji, Women Affairs, Social Development, and Humanitarian Affairs.

And Nawani Aboki is to head Information, Culture, and Tourism, while Ashefo Daniel Paul, Ph.D becomes new commissioner for Lands, Survey, and Physical Planning

Osun: Anatomy of victory

WOLE OLAOYE

Water can run uphill if there's adequate propulsion; let no one see impossibility where potentialities are hiding in plain sight. Yes, a rose by any other name will still smell as sweet, but we all know that its timeless symmetry, vibrant colours, and cultural symbolism are contributory factors that make it the flower of choice. Apply that to politics and you will begin to understand how an immensely underrated Nurudeen Jackson Ademola Adeleke danced his way back into power in the 2026 Osun State gubernatorial elections.

What was supposed to signal the end of the world — considering the violent rhetoric and brigandage that attended the campaigns — turned out to be a universal beaming of the world's attention on a tiny part of Nigeria witnessing not the predicted bloodbath but the celebration of a very public love affair between a politician and his people.

I had no dog in the fight; therefore, I was able to enjoy the entire drama dispassionately from the reassuring safety of my pad, hundreds of kilometres away. However, technology bridged the distance. It was possible for any interested person to follow events in Osun on polling day live and directly.

Dancing to Victory

Adeleke's victory has now gone down as historic, demonstrating, as it did, that free and fair elections are possible in Nigeria and that the masses of the people are not a mere unthinking throng.

Adeleke had a solid support base at the grassroots. He had strategically executed landmark projects in the three senatorial districts, irrespective of party leanings. He was a "people's man".

He had been criticised for his dancing habit by the opposition, but that very 'weakness' turned out to be one of his major strengths, as it bonded him to the electorate more than anything else could, to the extent that his rallies wore the toga of massive street parties.

His victory was an eclipse that dimmed the sun of mythical 'federal might' – and will be studied by media professionals for many years to come. Among the hundreds of analyses that followed the announcement of the results, I single out the brilliant disquisition of Lolu Akinwunmi, a marketing guru and Group CEO of Prima Garnet Africa who is, likewise, not a politician. I commend his masterful post-mortem (edited at my discretion) to all my readers.

Akinwunmi asked: How did a man derisively labelled the 'Dancing Governor' turn that very characterisation into one of the most distinctive assets of his political brand?"

Branding

For years, Adeleke's dancing has been mocked. Some people find it irritating. Others consider it unbecoming of the serious business of governing a state. (I confess that sometimes I also find the endless dancing rather unusual.)

But perhaps we have been looking at it only from one perspective. From a branding point of view, the dancing has become an enormously powerful distinctive asset. Adeleke has never really been positioned as the cerebral, policy-wonk politician who mesmerises audiences with complex economic and political theories. Perhaps he understands this.

Rather than pretend to be what he is not, he has built his public personality around qualities that come more naturally to him: warmth, accessibility, informality, entertainment, humour and an ability to connect with ordinary people. And, of course, dancing. What started almost as a caricature has gradually become a recognisable part of the brand.

There is an important lesson here: Sometimes the marketplace gives a brand a positioning it did not deliberately create. The smart brand asks whether that perception can be owned, shaped and converted into an advantage. And in this case Adeleke's distinctiveness also made a difference.

One of the great challenges in branding is simply being remembered. Adeleke has little difficulty with that. Put 20 Nigerian governors in a room and ask the average Nigerian to describe something distinctive about each one. Many may struggle. Mention Adeleke and somebody will probably start dancing!

That is mental availability at work. You may like the dancing or dislike it, but you recognise the man and remember the brand. Great brands build distinctive assets: colours, sounds, symbols, characters, slogans, shapes and behaviours that make them immediately recognisable. For Adeleke, dancing has become one of those assets.

Plus the man has demonstrated a key attribute of branding: he has remained consistent. Adeleke does not dance occasionally. He dances consistently… In branding, consistency builds memory. Do something once and people may notice it. Do it repeatedly and distinctively over time, and people begin to associate it with you. Eventually, the behaviour becomes part of the brand.

Social Marketing

How about the social marketing dimension? Strictly speaking, political marketing and social marketing are not the same discipline. But political campaigns employ many of the behavioural principles familiar to social marketing.

Social marketing is essentially the application of marketing principles to influence behaviour for individual or societal benefit. And politics, ultimately, also seeks behaviour. Will people listen to you? Will they identify with you? Will they believe you? Will they come to your rally? Will they advocate for you? And, ultimately, will they go out and vote for you?

Adeleke's political communication appears to understand something important: human beings do not respond only to rational arguments. We also respond to emotion, familiarity, identity, symbolism, belonging and personal connection.

His dancing communicates something without requiring a speech. It says, 'I am one of you.' Whether deliberately designed by political strategists or simply arising naturally from his personality, it has become communication…

Wole Olaoye

Sometimes in life, everything fails, even telecom

OKOH AIHE

I love writing about telecoms with relish; if only to enjoy the little pomposity that I am one of those journalists who wrote the industry into existence. You know the story started somewhere and we like everyone to understand our circumstantial intervention to make things happen.

I was on the way to Edo State last weekend, August 21, 2026, to be specific, to pay my last homage to Uncle Benson, full name Benson Omonzokpea Okoh, the last of my father's generation, who went to join his siblings and ancestors in that final place where home is eternal and harbours the kind of peace that cannot be disturbed by human wickedness.

He was 103 years, 12 years short of that of his father, Pa Okoh Akhimien (aka Okoh Alowa), who died at the beautiful age of 115 in the early 70s.

Uncle Benson made his choices very early in life and that paid off. He was the second of his siblings who worked for the white man, the first being Pa Michael Ojeabulu Okoh, who went home much earlier before his younger sibling. When you worked for the government in those days, it was assumed in my part of the country that you were working for the white man as you earned the much coveted monthly salary.

I cannot be specific about the number of telephone lines that were available in Nigeria in 1963 but I am certain as the coming of tomorrow that there were no phones at Ugbegun and hardly any in the whole of Esan land. But that hardly diminished the enthusiasm of Esan people to establish their heritage with pride.

Since there were no phones, that very year, 1963, Uncle Benson had to go all the way to Uromi to execute a message as directed by his elder brother, who was a teacher. Chief Dan Ose Okoh (SAN) made an emotional recall.

"In 1963, I fondly remember my Uncle coming from school to Ivue, Uromi, to honour my father's request directing him to take me to Pilgrim Baptist Grammar School, Ewohimi, to sit for the Entrance Examination. He rode my father's bicycle while I sat on the pole from Uromi to Ugbegun and thence to Ewohimi where I passed the examination and he painstakingly took me back to Uromi on the Bicycle with the good news of a fruitful trip. He was the first in the Okoh Dynasty to attend a Technical College," Dan wrote.

He had a good heart. Just one act of obedience and goodwill. Today, Dan Ose Okoh is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). His son, Hon. Justice Ehinon Anthony Okoh, is a High Court Judge in Edo State. Uncle Benson made this happen for being there for his nephew. He served Nigeria well and retired with satisfaction, decency and a good sense of humour.

We are far from their world now. Today the world is more connected but there is more chaos, visited upon us by those who promised to bring the moon down to the earth once elected. What would seem little problems in other parts of the world graduate into monsters and the people are indeterminately helpless.

Sometimes, you find yourself in a situation in life where everything fails around you, even telecommunications. I was a victim of the transportation dread that traumatised Edo State over the weekend, and permit me to tell a story here which is the lived experience of so many Nigerians and businesses everyday.

Edo State becomes only the denouement of a horror drama which begins in other parts of the country, being a transportation hub and a transit point to other parts of the country.

My journey began on Friday morning of August 21, 2026, by 6.30am. That journey would not end until 7pm in the evening; that is over 12 hours, more time than it would take to fly from Lagos to New York, which is 12 hours, and half the time to fly from Abuja to Heathrow in London, which is 6 hours. All the time you are confused and helpless, wasting away on the road and, if you are foul-mouthed, causing everybody you could hold responsible.

The road between Abuja and Edo State is bad, very bad. There are scratches of work going on but such effort cannot do anything in the next 10 years to complete the work within which period the people and infrastructure may have been completely pauperised. The guy who took us on the trip knew the road and the terrains very well. At some point between Okene and Okpella, there is a security checkpoint less than a kilometre from each other because of the dangerous nature of the road. Those soldiers and policemen, may God bless them for their efforts to give hope to the absolutely terrified. At a particular time of the day, our driver told us, the soldiers would go on patrol with their motor bikes.

There are secrets of the road you may never know except you are a permanent denizen. Looking at us clutching our dear phones which seem to distract us from the travails around us, the driver told us by experience, that Glo remains the best network on that stretch of the road for reliable communications.

However, what happened last weekend was beyond telecommunications or even the possibility of sustained communications on the road. I had been told that some travellers have spent three days at Ewu and that I needed to confirm before setting out for the journey. For me, this was extreme exaggeration, a hyperbole without reasonable conclusion.

Until we got to Ewu. I found out suddenly that hopelessness and helplessness could carry the similitude of a solid state. Immovable. You could see a line of trailers snaking into kilometres with smaller vehicles trying to win a dangerous war against them, and the very bad roads providing dangerous ammunition for disorder and victory for the devil.

You see businesses ruined, commodities destroyed in capsized vehicles, you see life grinding to meaninglessness and you cannot do anything about it. Sometimes, you think you feel you can almost see death but can't feel the taste. Sandwiched between trailers, you are asking, what happens now if the whole thing overturns? And there were many of such development on the way.

I had my phones but couldn't make any calls. I couldn't call for any help because that is not what the system needs. Somewhere along the Bypass in Benin, a more bizarre scene was playing out. Travellers spent hours and days trying to either make it into or out of Benin on the Benin-Agbor road. A friend who came to see me had said he would quickly drop his friends at Agbor on Saturday evening and head to Benin by 7 pm on a journey of 2 hours. By the time I sent him a text by 1am at night to thank him for a much appreciated honour to my Uncle, he couln't respond because he was on a very dangerous patch at the Bypass. He didn't get to his destination until 3am in the morning.

Okoh Aihe

ASUU declares indefinite strike at IBB University

Members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of the Lapai branch of the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University (IBBU) in Niger State have begun an indefinite strike over the alleged non-implementation of key provisions of the 2025 federal government-ASUU agreement by the state government.

The union announced the decision on Monday following an emergency congress and a press conference held at the university premises in Lapai.

The ASUU-IBBU Chairman, Galadima Bala, said the industrial action became necessary after several engagements and appeals failed to resolve the issues surrounding the agreement's implementation.

Mr Bala said the agreement, reached with the participation of state governments and public universities, should be implemented fully to ensure industrial harmony and stability in the university system.

According to him, about 16 state-owned universities across the country have already commenced implementation of the agreement, including institutions in Bauchi, Gombe, Benue, Yobe, Osun, Ekiti and Kano states.

He noted that Nasarawa State University had also commenced implementation, warning that Niger State risked falling behind other states if it failed to address the union's concerns.

The union expressed concern over the continued departure of academic staff from universities where the agreement had not been implemented, citing a union claim that Kaduna State University had lost more than 200 lecturers. The university has disputed the claim.

ASUU-IBBU warned that continued neglect of the education sector could have far-reaching implications for the state's development and security.

The union, therefore, urged the Niger State Government to urgently address its grievances and take concrete steps towards implementing the outstanding provisions of the agreement.

It, however, said it remained open to genuine and meaningful dialogue with the government.

The union said the strike would be suspended once there was demonstrable commitment and concrete action towards resolving the issues.

ASUU-IBBU also appealed to its members to remain calm, disciplined and law-abiding throughout the industrial action, while expressing regret over the inconvenience the strike may cause students, parents and other stakeholders.

The Comptroller–General of Customs (CGC), Adewale Adeniyi, receiving members of the national volleyball team who returned from Egypt with medals after their impressive outing at the championship at the Nigeria Customs Service Headquarters, Abuja.

Bandits kidnap traditional ruler in Kwara

Armed bandits have reportedly invaded Igbesi community in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, abducting the traditional ruler, Oba Moses Oyinloye Iwedunmoye I, the Kabiyesi Onigbesi of Igbesi land.

Igbesi is a community within Oke-Onigbin town in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara South Senatorial District.

The attack reportedly occurred around 11pm on Saturday, August 22, 2026, when the armed men stormed the community.

A local source said the monarch was taken to an unknown location alongside some other residents during the attack.

"As of the time of filing this report, the exact number of victims and the whereabouts of the abducted monarch remained unclear," the source said.

However, the Kwara State Police Command has confirmed the abduction of the traditional ruler.

The state Commissioner of Police, Ojo Adekimi, who confirmed the development in a chat with Channels Television, said no other person was kidnapped.

The police commissioner said efforts were underway to rescue the monarch.

Oba Moses Oyinloye

Kano community rejects bribe, reports drug trafficking network – Agency

A state agency has praised residents of the Bajallabe community in Kano metropolis after reportedly rejecting a ₦10 million bribe and exposing an alleged drug trafficking network in the neighbourhood.

The state's Multi-Agency Task Force on Drug Abuse and Illicit Substances' spokesperson, Lamara Garba, in a statement, said the incident happened on Tuesday when community members noticed a Volkswagen Golf vehicle loaded with suspected illicit substances, alongside a motorcycle, near a residential building.

Suspicious of the vehicle's contents, residents approached the driver for clarification. In a desperate bid to evade scrutiny, Garba said the suspect allegedly offered a ₦10 million inducement to community representatives and local vigilantes.

He said the offer was swiftly rejected, with the residents insisting on turning the case over to the proper authorities.

"To avert potential violence as tension escalated at the scene, the local vigilante chairman alerted both the task force and the Rijiyar Zaki Police Division. Police personnel arrived promptly, secured the vehicle and motorcycle, and took the suspects into custody for preliminary investigation.

"Confirming the development, the Chairman of the Multi-Agency Task Force, Muhyi Magaji, lauded the residents and vigilantes for their integrity and civic responsibility.

"Their refusal to compromise despite a massive financial offer demonstrates that communities play a pivotal role in eradicating drug trafficking," Magaji stated.

He added that, in compliance with a recently signed Executive Order by Governor Abba Yusuf, the property where the substances were discovered will be sealed immediately pending further action.

The agency said it had sent samples of the confiscated materials for forensic laboratory examination to ascertain their exact chemical composition.

The Kano State Government established the Multi-Agency Task Force on Drug Abuse and Illicit Substances as an inter-agency coalition comprising security outfits, regulatory bodies, and civil society groups.

The task force is mandated to interdict, raid, and dismantle major distribution hubs, warehouses, and open markets used for illegal drug sales across the 44 local government areas of Kano State.

It is also mandated to implement strict anti-drug laws, including the immediate confiscation and sealing of properties or structures utilised for storing, packaging, or selling illicit substances.

The agency urged residents across the state to emulate the Bajallabe community by reporting suspicious activities to law enforcement rather than taking the law into their own hands.

NSCDC parades two suspects over 800-metre electricity cable vandalism in Yobe

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Yobe State Command, has paraded two suspects arrested over the alleged vandalism of 800 metres of high-tension aluminium electricity cables along the Damaturu-Kallalawa road in the state.

The suspects were arrested by the Nigerian Army and subsequently handed over to the NSCDC for further investigation and prosecution.

Parading the suspects at the NSCDC state headquarters in Damaturu, the Commandant, Hassan Owuna, told Channels Television that the suspects would be charged to court after investigations are concluded.

Owuna said the arrest was made possible through collaboration among security agencies operating in the state.

"With the three Cs of Cooperation, Coordination and Collaboration, with the sister agencies, the Nigerian Army arrested two persons in connection to vandalizing of electricity cables along Damaturu-Kallalawa axis.

The commandant also disclosed that the NSCDC had earlier arrested two persons in connection with the possession of 3kg of tramadol during his first week in office, adding that the suspects were handed over to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for further prosecution.

"In the first week of my assumption of office as the Commandant, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps Yobe state, we arrested 2 persons in connection with 3kg of tramadol and handed them over to the NDLEA for upward prosecution," he said.Owuna attributed the vandalism of critical national assets partly to illicit drug use among youths and greed.

He urged parents and members of the public to monitor their children and wards closely to help curb criminal activities in the state.

Gov Diri calls for greater unity in Christianity as CAN inaugurates new leadership in Bayelsa

WARIYAI DANIELS, YENAGOA

Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, has advocated greater unity in the body of Christ to enable it fulfill its divine purpose in the state and the country at large.

Governor Diri made the call at the inauguration ceremony of the new State Executive Council of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bayelsa Chapter, at the Redeemed Glory Family Church, Agudama-Epie, in Yenagoa.

Speaking at the event through his Deputy, Dr. Peter Akpe, the Bayelsa helmsman pointed out that there is great strength in unity, stressing that as long as the body of Christ is united, there is practically nothing it cannot achieve in the service of God and humanity.

According to him, the level of unity God requires in the contemporary Church is lacking, as there is too much bickering, greed and strong liking for personal aggrandisement within the body of Christ.

He emphasized that for unity to thrive, there must be sacrifice, love and acceptance of one another regardless of denominational differences to enable the church to continually make impact in society.

Governor Diri, who acknowledged the longstanding relationship between the Church and government, however, insisted it was necessary for the pulpit to preach the real gospel by standing boldly to speak truth to power without cowering in fear.

His words: "There is much strength in unity. As long as the body of Christ is united, there is nothing we cannot achieve. The devil knows this, and that is why he fights the unity of the Church to make it impossible for the Church to achieve its purpose.

"Unity comes with a sacrifice. Somebody must let go for unity to stand. There is too much bickering in the Church, and the noise in our politics has practically overflowed into the Church.

"The tenets we propagate in society as a Church are vital to its perception. Therefore, preach the real gospel to the people around you. Take a non-partisan approach to boldly tell leaders the truth."

While congratulating the outgone Revd Father Joseph Opelema-led state CAN Executive Council and the newly inaugurated leadership, he expressed confidence that the new Exco would foster greater relationships within the body of Christ in Bayelsa.

Inaugurating the new State Executive Council of CAN, Reverend Father Victor Ofili commended the Bayelsa State chapter of CAN for the existing unity and for meeting its financial obligations at the national level.

Gov Otti reaffirms merit-based leadership, ethical governance

EMEKA OKAFOR, UMUAHIA

Abia State Governor, Dr. Alex Otti, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to merit-based leadership, ethical governance, and effective public service delivery.

Governor Otti spoke on Tuesday night, during the Abia State Leadership Academy Executive Leadership Series for political appointees and senior public servants.

The event was held at the Michael Okpara Auditorium, Umuahia, as part of activities marking the 35th anniversary of the creation of Abia State.

The programme, themed "Strengthening Government Ethical Leadership and Public Service Delivery," focused on leadership development, institutional reforms, accountability, and preparing a new generation of leaders capable of sustaining the State's development beyond the present administration.

Governor Otti said the Leadership Academy and executive education programmes were designed to build people and institutions, rather than dependence on individuals.

Recalling his interaction with Rwandan President Paul Kagame, Gov. Otti said the key lesson was that good leadership should deliberately develop people who can eventually surpass their mentors.

"It is the essence of this Leadership Academy, the essence of this executive education that we are having today. That is how we want to build our own leadership," Gov. Otti said.

The Governor stressed that merit, competence and integrity will remain central to his administration's recruitment and appointment policies. He noted that government positions and opportunities should be earned through open competition rather than political connections.

He cited examples to include admissions into Abia State University, particularly professional courses such as Medicine and Law; the recruitment of the first batch of 5,394 new teachers and another 4,074 teachers now collecting their appointment letters; as well as the appointment of Permanent Secretaries.

"I believe that the good thing about good governance is that once people test it, then it becomes difficult to take them back to where they are coming from.

"We had started, last week, interviewing those that had applied, were screened through computer-based testing, passed and then the oral interviews.

"Since we came in 2023, we made the appointment of Permanent Secretaries competitive. No longer, 'this is somebody's friend, this is somebody's wife', No," Gov. Otti stated.

The State Chief Executive said he has also set up a 25-year development plan for the State, which was legislated upon, and cannot be discarded by future administrations unless such laws are repealed by the State House of Assembly.

The Governor further emphasised the importance of accurate data, proper planning and effective supervision in governance. He announced that the Abia State Bureau of Statistics will soon be established to improve data availability for planning and budgeting. He thanked the guest speaker, Chief Osita Chidoka, for his thought-provoking lecture.

In his opening remarks, the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Emmanuel Meribeole called on political appointees and senior public servants to uphold competence, integrity, accountability and transparency in the discharge of their responsibilities. He stressed that public office is a position of trust and that government decisions directly affect the lives of citizens.

Dr. Meribeole stated that the executive session of the Abia Leadership Academy is one of the activities marking the 35th anniversary of Abia State. He added that sustainable development requires strong institutions, ethical leadership and a competent public service, and urged political appointees and career civil servants to work together as one government towards achieving Governor Alex Otti's vision of a better Abia.

Ondo enrolls 300,000 residents into Health Insurance Scheme

ADETOKUNBO ABIOLA, AKURE

In his avowed commitment to strengthening the policy of inclusiveness and improvement in the healthcare service delivery system, the administration of Dr. Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa, the Ondo State Governor, has enrolled more than 300,000 residents into the state's health insurance scheme.

The information came to light when the governor launched the Safe Delivery Initiative 'Ibi Irorun' Pregnancy kits on Monday, August 24th, 2026, at the Basic Healthcare Centre at Arakale, Akure.

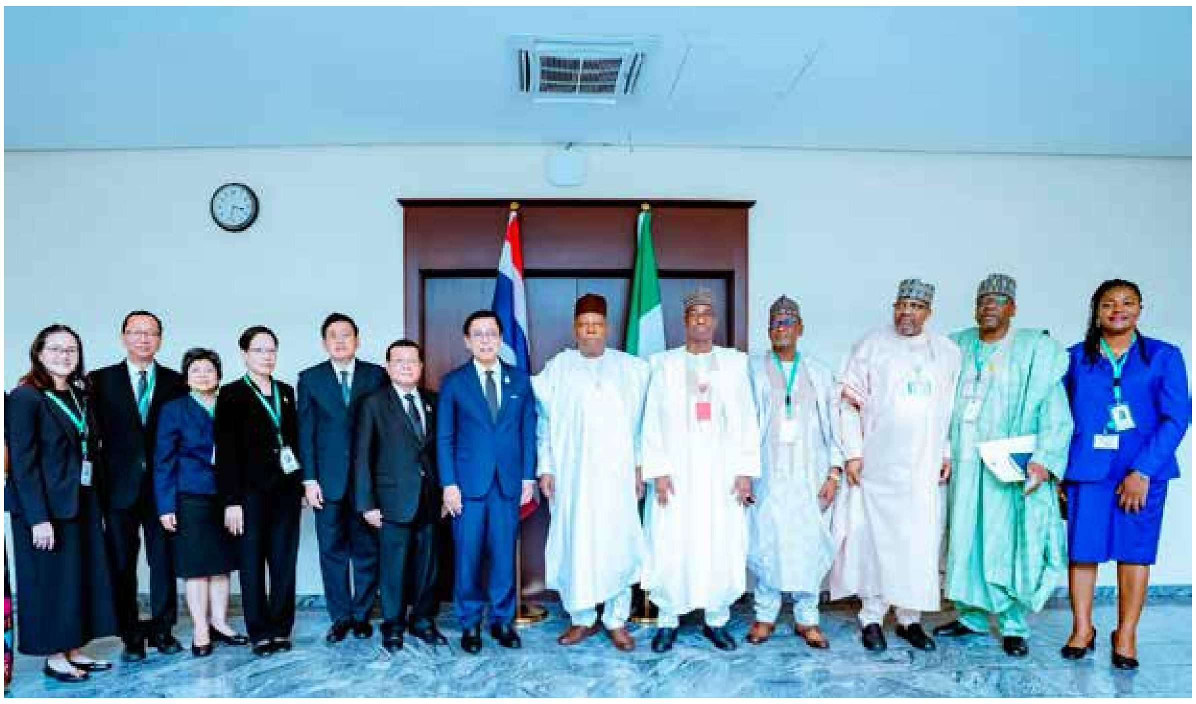
Aiyeditiwa said the health insurance initiative was because his government prioritised basic healthcare for vulnerable residents and took steps to reduce excessive out-of-pocket medical expenses.

The governor stated that more than 102 primary healthcare centres had been completed and equipped, while 60 others were undergoing revitalisation, adding that his government had continued to support health workers to motivate them to provide quality services to residents.

The governor said the Safe Delivery Initiative 'Ibi Irorun' Pregnancy kits was part of efforts to promote safer childbirth and reduce the financial burden of delivery on pregnant women and their families.

He said the programme was also part of his administration's commitment to improving healthcare delivery and ensuring that residents, most especially pregnant women, had access to quality and affordable medical services.

The governor, who was represented at the occasion by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Prof. Simidele Odimayo, said his administration had implemented more than 10 empowerment programmes targeting women, youths and elderly residents, while also complementing them with the execution of many road construction projects across the state.



Vice President Kashim Shettima, receiving a delegation from the Kingdom of Thailand led by its Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, H.E. Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow at the Presidential Villa, Abuja...on Wednesday

Osun ALGON welcomes new CP Zungura, pledges robust security collaboration

MIKE DIKE, OSOGBO

The Osun State chapter of the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) has welcomed the newly deployed Commissioner of Police in the state, CP Ibrahim D. Zungura, pledging continued collaboration with the Police Command and other security agencies to strengthen security across the state.

The association, in a statement personally signed and made available to newsmen on Wednesday by its State Chairman, Hon. Samuel Idowu Abiodun, also commended officers and men of the Osun State Police Command for their discipline, dedication, commitment, effectiveness and professionalism in the discharge of their duties.

Abiodun, who is also the Executive Chairman of Ifedayo Local Government, Oke-Ila Orangun, said the association was ready to work closely with the new police leadership to improve the security architecture of local government areas and the state at large.

He described CP Zungura as an officer with a verifiable track record, expressing confidence that his experience would contribute significantly to the maintenance of peace and security in Osun.

"We are ever ready to partner the police and all other security operatives to scale up the security architectures of our various councils and the state at large," he said.

The ALGON chairman stressed that security remained a fundamental objective of any purposeful, responsible and responsive government, noting that local governments had a critical role to play in supporting security agencies in protecting residents and public infrastructure.

Delta Govt approves construction of male, female hostels for DOU Asaba

NOSA AKENZUA, ASABA

The Delta State Government has approved the construction of male and female hostels at the Dennis Osadebay University (DOU), Asaba, as part of efforts to strengthen infrastructure and improve students' welfare in the institution.

Commissioner for Higher Education, Prof. Nyerhovwo Tonukari, disclosed this on Monday during a supervisory visit to the university, where he assessed its development, challenges and immediate needs.

Tonukari, who was accompanied by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mrs Felicia Ronu-Orugboh, also charged the university management to intensify sensitisation among students on the Federal Government's Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) scheme.

He said the process for the award of contracts for the construction of the two hostels would commence shortly, stressing that the project was part of the state government's commitment to providing conducive learning and living environments for students in its tertiary institutions.

The commissioner congratulated the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Samuel Ovuete Aghalino, and Registrar, Mrs Florence Nweke, on their appointments.

He also disclosed that Governor Sheriff Oborevwori had approved the constitution of a new Governing Council for the university.

Tonukari urged the university to leverage its agricultural potential by developing a flagship project capable of attracting national and international recognition.

He challenged the management to identify the institution's areas of comparative advantage, particularly in agriculture, and transform them into distinctive programmes and projects that could enhance the university's visibility while contributing to the socio-economic development of Delta State.

On student welfare, the commissioner directed the management to embark on aggressive awareness campaigns on the NELFUND student loan scheme, noting that DOU was among the institutions whose students could benefit from the programme.

According to him, the scheme provides financial assistance to eligible students towards tuition fees, in addition to a monthly stipend of N20,000, thereby reducing the financial burden on students and helping to prevent them from dropping out of school.

Tonukari described access to the scheme as an important opportunity for Nigerian students, urging the university authorities to ensure that eligible students were adequately informed about the application procedures and benefits.

NBM Ikoyi zone puts smiles on faces, reaches out to children, 1,120 needy in Lagos

BY TITUS AKHIGBE, BENIN

For the children and caregivers at the Modupe Cole Child Care and Treatment Home in Lagos, Saturday, August 15, 2026, was more than an ordinary day. It was a day when strangers arrived with food, financial assistance and, most importantly, a message that they had not been forgotten.

The gesture, organised by the Ikoyi Zone of the NBM of Africa, saw the organisation make a substantial donation to the home before extending its humanitarian intervention to the wider Orile, Ajegunle community, where 1,120 food relief packs were distributed to less privileged residents.

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 National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Kano Operations Office, in collaboration with the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), Kano State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and other stakeholders, receiving 173 Nigerian migrants returning from Sudan.

PFN South-South to partner new CAN chair on food security in Bayelsa

BY WARIYAI DANIELS, YENAGOA

The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) South-South Zonal Directorate of Agriculture and Empowerment has congratulated Rev. Abili Samuel Abili on his appointment as the new Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bayelsa State chapter.

In a congratulatory message signed by the Zonal Director, Apostle Dr. Kiyaramo G. Timiebi, the Directorate described Rev. Abili's emergence as "a divine placement at a critical time for the Church and society in Bayelsa State."

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) is the umbrella body for all Christian denominations in Nigeria. Its core mandate is to unify the Body of Christ across denominational lines for effective witness and service. Speak on moral, social, and national issues with a voice of truth, justice, fairness, and equity.

It engages government, traditional institutions, and other faiths to promote peace, religious harmony, and good governance, defending the rights and welfare of Christians while promoting human dignity and the common good.

Apostle Dr. Timiebi noted that Rev. Abili comes into office at a time when the Church is expected to provide strong moral leadership.

"We have observed the exemplary leadership of your predecessor, Rev. Fr. Joseph Opelema, particularly in his efforts to unify the Body of Christ in Bayelsa State and his forthrightness in speaking truth to power. We trust that you will build upon this foundation," the statement read.

Defence Intelligence College tour: Delta CP urges stronger inter-agency intelligence sharing

NOSA AKENZUA, ASABA

The Commissioner of Police, Delta State Command, CP Yemi Oyeniyi, has called for stronger collaboration, timely intelligence sharing and coordinated operations among security and intelligence agencies to effectively tackle emerging security threats in the country.

Oyeniyi made the call on Tuesday, August 25, when participants of the Advanced Defence Intelligence Officers Course (ADIOC) 16/2026 of the Defence Intelligence College, Karu-Abuja, visited the Delta State Police Command, Asaba, as part of their Nigeria Study Tour.

The 20 participants and senior staff of the Defence Intelligence College were led by the Commandant, Commodore Usman Bugaje, and received by the Commissioner of Police alongside members of the Command Management Team.

Speaking on the theme, "Strengthening National Resilience Through Integrated, Multi-Agency Coordination and Regional Security Cooperation," the CP stressed that the increasingly complex nature of contemporary security challenges required security agencies to move beyond isolated operations and embrace deeper cooperation.

He emphasised the importance of prompt intelligence sharing, joint planning and coordinated responses, noting that effective inter-agency cooperation remained critical to preventing and responding to threats to national security.

The Delta Police Commissioner also highlighted some of the Command's recent operational achievements, drawing practical examples from its activities to demonstrate how intelligence-led policing and collaboration with sister security agencies have contributed to crime prevention and improved security across the state.

The presentation was followed by an interactive session during which the participants raised questions on policing, intelligence gathering, crime prevention and security operations.

The questions were addressed by CP Oyeniyi and senior officers of the Command, who provided insights into the operational realities of policing and the importance of intelligence in supporting effective security responses.

The study tour ended with the Delta State Police Command reaffirming its commitment to sustained collaboration with other security and intelligence agencies in safeguarding lives and property and strengthening security across the state.

The Daily Monitor

...Monitoring the present, shaping the future

ADVERT RATES

	COLOUR			BLACK & WHITE		
SIZES	RATE	VAT	TOTAL	RATE	VAT	TOTAL
F/PAGE	550,000.00	27,500.00	577,500.00	442,402.65	22,120.13	464,522.78
H/PAGE	303,439,60	15,171.98	318,611.58	229,476.11	11,473.81	240,949.92
Q/PAGE	163,431.45	8,171.57	171,603.02	124,895.04	6,244.75	131,139.79
14" x 5	341,320.00	17,056.00	358,386.00	258,000.40	12,900.02	270,900.42
14" x 4	273,056.00	13.652.80	286,708,80	206,400.32	10,320.02	216,720.34
14" x 2	136,528.00	6,826.40	143,354.40	103,200.16	5,160.01	108,360.17
FPS 6"x3	873,388.02	43,669.40	917,057.42	873,388.02	43,669.40	917,057.42
FPS 6"x2	582,257,82	29,113.39	611,381.20	582,267.81	29,113.40	611,381.20
BPS 6"x3	861,432.81	43,071.64	904,504.45	861,432.81	43,071.64	904,504.45
BPS 6"x2	565,621.87	28,281.09	593,902.96	565,621.87	28,281.09	593,902.96
ROP 2"x6	198,096.61	9,904.83	208,001.44	198,096.61	9,904.83	208,001.44
FPS 2"x6	582,257.82	29,112.89	611,370.71	582,257.82	29,112.89	611,370,71
BPS 2"x6	565,621.87	28,281.09	593,902.96	565,621.87	28,281.09	593,902.96
BPS 2"x2	349,354.69	17,467.73	366,822.42	349,354.69	17,467.73	966,822.42
13" x 5	316,940.00	15,847.00	332,787.00	239,571.80	11,978.59	251,550.39
13" x 2	126,776.00	6,338.80	133,114.80	95,828.72	4,791.44	100.620.16
11" x 5	268,180.00	13,409.00	281,589.00	202,714.50	10,135.73	212,850.33
11" x 4	214,544.00	10,727.20	225,271.20	162,171.68	8,103.58	170,280.26
11" x 2	107,272.00	5,363.60	112,635.60	81,085.84	4,054.29	85,140.13
10" x 6	292,560.00	14,628.00	307,188.00	221,143.20	11,057.16	232,200.36
10" x 5	243,800.00	12,190.00	255,990.00	184,286.00	9,214.30	193,500.30
10" x 4	195,040.00	9,752.00	204,792.00	17,428.80	7,371.44	154,800.24
10" x 3	146,280.00	7,314.00	153,594.00	110,571.60	5,528.58	166,100.18
10" x 2	97,520.00	4,876.00	102,396.00	73,714.40	3,685.72	77,400.12
9" x 6	263,304.00	13,165.20	276,469.20	199,028.88	9,951.44	208,980.32
9" x 5	219,420.00	10,971.00	230,391.00	165,857.40	8,292.87	174,150.27
9" x 4	175,536.00	8,776.80	184,312.80	132,685.92	6,634.30	139,320.22
9" x 3	131,652.00	6,582.60	138,234.60	99,514.44	4,975.72	104,490.16
8" x 6	234,048.00	11,702.40	245,750.40	175,914.56	8,845.73	185,760.29
8" x 5	195,040.00	9,752.00	204,792.00	17,428.80	7,371.44	154,800.24
8" x 4	156,040,00	7,801.60	163,833.60	117,943.04	5,897.15	123,840.19
8" x 3	117,024.00	5,851.20	122,875.20	88,457.28	4,422.86	92,880.14
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7" x 4	136,528.00	6,826.40	143,354.40	103,200.16	5,160.01	108,306.17
7" x 2	68,264.00	3,413.20	71,677.20	51,600.08	2,580.00	54,180.08
6" x 4	97,520.00	4,876.00	102,396.00	73,714.40	3,685.72	77,400.12
6" x 3	87,750.00	4,388.40	92,156.40	66,342.96	3,317.15	69,660.11
6" x 2	58,512.00	2,925.60	61,437.60	44,228.64	2.211.43	45,440.07
5" x 5	121,900.00	6,095.00	127,995.00	92,143.00	,607.15	96,750.15
5" x 4	97,520.00	4,876.00	102,396.00	73,714.40	3,685.72	77,400.12
5" x 3	73,140.00	3,657.00	76,797.00	55,285.80	2,764.29	58,050.09
5" x 2	48,760.00	2,430.00	51,198.00	36,857.20	1,842.86	38,700.06
4" x 2	39,008.00	1,950.40	40,958.40	29,485.76	1,474.29	30,960.05
3" x 3	43,884.00	2,194.20	46,078.20	33,171.48	1,658.57	34,830.05
3" x 2	29,256.00	1,462.80	30.718.80	22,114.32	1,105,72	23,220.04
2" x 5	48,760.00	2,438.00	51,198.00	36,857.20	1,842.86	38,700.06
2" x 2	19,504.00	975.20	20,479.20	14,742.88	737.14	15,480.02
1" x 2	9,752.00	487.50	10,239.60	7,371.44	368.57	7,740.01
1" x 1	4,876.00	243.80	5,119.80	3,685.72	184,284	3,870.01

POLITICAL

SIZES	COLOUR	BLACK & WHITE
F/PAGE	675,675.00	510,974.00
H/PAGE	350,475.00	265,045.00
Q/PAGE	100,765.00	144,255.00
PHOTO SPLASH	165,250.00	120,050.00

SPECIAL POSITION

SIZES	COLOUR	BLACK & WHITE
FULL WRAP	20,000,000.00	
EARPIECE 2x2	300,952.55	
CENTER SPREAD	1,564,061.75	
DOUBLE SPREAD	1,395,076.76	874,810.85
HALF DOUBLE SPREAD	705,210.97	450,451.98

COMPUTER & IT EDUCATIONAL, PROPERTY, VACANCY, HOME DECOR

SIZES	COLOUR	BLACK & WHITE
F/PAGE	676,264,17	757,667.79
H/PAGE	206,232,41	216,232.41
Q/PAGE	154,153,75	113,151.35
10"x 2		57,833.73
8" x 2		46,766.03
7" x 2		40,483.39
6" x 2		34,696.60
5" x 2		20,916.22
4" x 2		23,130.84
3" x 2		17,347.40
2" x 6		34,37.18
2" x 2		11,565.50
1" x 2		5,784.35
1" x 1		2,831.68

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CLASSIFIED ADVERT		3,000.00
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	HANDLING CHARGE FOR 1ST 50,000 COPIES	71,662.60

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Economy

Indorama to invest $3bn next 5 years in petrochemical, fertilizer in Africa

BY WARIYAI DANIELS, YENAGOA

Indorama Eleme Petrochemicals Limited, IEPL, says it is investigating $3-billion in its petrochemical and fertiliser plants in a 5-year expansion plan.

The plan, according to the company, is to make it Africa's largest petrochemical and fertiliser hub.

Managing Director of IEPL, Mr. Manish Mundra made the disclosure in Port Harcourt, while presenting his keynote address at 7th Mid/Downstream Oil and Gas Conference which opened on Tuesday.

The conference, organised by the Centre For Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Engineering (CGRP), University of Port Harcourt in conjunction with the Nigerian Society of Chemical Engineers (NSChE) has as its theme, "Repositioning Nigeria's Petrochemicals Sector for Industrial Growth, Innovations, and Sustainable Development".

Represented by the Head, Fertiliser Manufacture, Indorama Eleme Fertiliser and Chemicals Limited, Mr Upendra Singh, the IEPL boss noted that Nigeria holds Africa's largest gas reserve and second-largest oil reserve.

He said while the country's refining capacity is expanding rapidly, yet the country still imports the bulk of its plastic, fertilizers, specialty chemicals and related products.

He said repositioning the sector means converting hydrocarbon endowments into diversified high-value industrial output.

The Indorama MD said Nigeria has what he described as "the field sack advantage", but said it is underused.

He urged the government and stakeholders in the sector to look into the issues of thin downstream base, innovation gap, and sustainability imperative to harness the huge benefits of the oil and gas sectors.

Mundra stated; "Nigeria again has the resource, large resource base for oil and gas, which is exported as LNG or converted into polymers, fertilizers, and downstream products. Past 5 years have changed the arithmetic of the choice.

"For this, we need to have the policy reform, like PIA 2021 and subsidy deregulation, which are resetting the investment signals across the value chain as new downstream landscape, large-scale refining and petrochemical capacities are coming up, pushing Nigeria from import dependence toward the next export state status".

He said increasing population growth, agriculture, construction, and packaging keep lifting African demand for polymers and fertilizers, including the Middle East crisis, urging Nigeria to capitalise on it.

"We need to capitalize on this. Middle East crisis and logistic challenges will make Africa more attractive for the West.

Heirs Insurance rallies 1,000 retirees on financial wellbeing

Heirs Insurance Group says it has hosted over 1,000 retirees at its inaugural Heirs Insurance Retirees Meet-up in Lagos.

The company in a statement on Tuesday said that the event provided a platform for retirees to learn, network and participate in wellness and recreational activities.

It said the programme reaffirmed its commitment to retirees' wellbeing and financial inclusion.

The event featured expert-led sessions, complimentary health screenings, financial guidance and interactive engagements.

According to the company, the activities were designed to help retirees manage their finances, maintain healthy lifestyles and navigate life after active employment.

It added that participants also shared experiences and built social networks within a supportive community.

The group also launched the Heirs Insurance Rewards Programme for its annuitants, offering discounts from selected health and lifestyle partners.

Speaking at the event, Mr Ifesinachi Okpagu, Chief Marketing Officer, Heirs Insurance Group, said retirees spent decades contributing to nation building but were often overlooked in discussions on financial wellbeing and healthcare.

Okpagu said the initiative was designed to extend the company's relationship with retirees beyond monthly annuity payments.

Through the Heirs Insurance Retirees Meet-up and our growing Retirees Club, we are intentionally creating a platform that brings retirees together, celebrates them and gives them access to the information, support and community they need to thrive in retirement," he said.

He said the Heirs Insurance Retirees Club was a growing community for retirees and pre-retirees.

According to him, the platform provides practical retirement information, exclusive events.

L-R: Head SME Banking, Union Bank of Nigeria, Mrs. Gloria Omereonye; Executive Director, Corporate Bank and Business Banking – Lagos and Southwest, Union Bank of Nigeria, Mr. Taiwo Shote, and Chief Brand & Marketing Officer, Union Bank of Nigeria, Mrs. Olufunmilola Aluko, during the Bank's Entrepreneurs' Day Sales Fair held at its Head Office, The Stallion Plaza, 36 Marina, Lagos Island... Tuesday, August 24, 2026.

MTN exploring banking licence to grow lending business, plans to build AI data centre in Nigeria

MTN Group, Africa's largest telecommunications operator, says it is exploring banking licences in some of its markets as it considers using its own balance sheet to expand lending.

Ralph Mupita, group chief executive officer of MTN, announced on Tuesday while speaking with journalists.

Mupita said the proposed move would allow the company to take deposits and eventually provide loans directly to customers in markets where it has a large customer base and significant funds held in mobile money wallets.

"We're beginning to explore, where it makes sense and where there are large customer bases and significant floats in wallets, whether it may make sense to have some sort of banking licence that enables us to take deposits," he said.

Although MTN currently offers loans to customers through partnerships with banks and other financial institutions, Mupita said the company is considering a gradual shift towards balance-sheet lending in selected markets while retaining its existing partnerships.

He said the plan would not be implemented across all of MTN's markets, adding that the company would assess the opportunity based on the size of its customer base and mobile money deposits in each market.

According to the CEO, lending has become one of the fastest-growing segments of MTN's fintech business, alongside payments and e-commerce.

"The big growth now, which will be the growth of the future, is actually lending," Mupita said.

He said moving towards balance-sheet lending would expose the group to additional risks, making a gradual approach necessary.

Mupita said the expansion into lending is part of MTN's broader strategy to grow its financial technology business and reduce its reliance on traditional telecommunications revenue.

The group CEO also said the company plans to develop artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled data centres in South Africa and Nigeria through Africa Data Hub Holding, a venture with an undisclosed United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed investor to develop AI-ready data centre infrastructure across key African markets.

He said MTN would be a minority investor in the venture, while its partner, which has experience building data centres in the UAE and other Gulf countries, would provide most of the capital and technical expertise.

Mupita added that the initial phase is expected to target about 150 megawatts of capacity across South Africa and Nigeria, with future expansion to be driven by demand.

Universal Insurance takes NAICOM to court over licence cancellation

Universal Insurance Plc has asked the federal high court in Lagos to stop further action on the cancellation of its operating licence by the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM).

The insurer said the court has directed NAICOM and other respondents to show cause why an interim order staying further action on the cancellation should not be granted.

Universal disclosed this in a notice filed with the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) on Tuesday.

The case, filed as FHC/LAG/CS/1179/2026, also concerns the appointment of a receiver/manager following the cancellation of the company's licence.

Universal described the cancellation as "purported" and asked the court to intervene in the matter.

The court directed the respondents not to take any steps that may "create a fait accompli" or otherwise render the proceedings nugatory pending the determination of the application.

A fait accompli is an action or decision that has already been taken or made and cannot be changed, leaving parties involved with no choice but to accept it.

The matter has been adjourned until September 3 for the respondents to show cause.

NAICOM had cancelled Universal Insurance's certificate of registration effective August 14 after the insurer failed to meet the minimum capital requirement for its licence category.

The commission also appointed Ogbonna Chukwumerije, a partner at Pinheiro LP, as receiver/provisional liquidator to oversee the insurer's affairs.

Universal had been pursuing a proposed N7.12 billion investment by FPNG Co-Nvest Limited through a private placement.

Crude imports by domestic refineries jump 151.5% in July — NMDPRA

Crude oil imports by domestic refineries rose by 151.5 per cent to 5.13 million barrels in July 2026, from 2.04 million barrels recorded in June, according to data from the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority, NMDPRA.

The increase came amid a sharp decline in domestic crude supply to refineries during the month.

The NMDPRA's July 2026 Midstream and Downstream Statistics showed that domestic refineries received a total of 17.88 million barrels of crude in July, comprising 12.75 million barrels supplied locally and 5.13 million barrels imported.

Imported crude therefore accounted for 28.7 per cent of total crude receipts by domestic refineries in July, while domestic supplies accounted for 71.3 per cent.

The 5.13 million barrels imported in July represented a significant increase from the 2.04 million barrels recorded in June. It was also higher than the 2.08 million barrels imported in May and 0.41 million barrels in April.

However, July's import volume remained below the 9.43 million barrels recorded in March, the highest monthly volume so far in 2026.

The data showed that crude imports stood at 0.71 million barrels in January before rising to 4.25 million barrels in February and peaking at 9.43 million barrels in March.

Imports subsequently fell to 0.41 million barrels in April before recovering to 2.08 million barrels in May, 2.04 million barrels in June and 5.13 million barrels in July.

The report also showed that domestic crude supply to refineries declined by 25.4 per cent month-on-month, from 17.08 million barrels in June to 12.75 million barrels in July.

The decline in domestic supply was partly offset by increased imports, although total crude receipts still fell by 6.5 per cent, from 19.12 million barrels in June to 17.88 million barrels in July.

In January, domestic refineries received 8.83 million barrels of domestic crude and 0.71 million barrels of imported crude, bringing total receipts to 9.54 million barrels.

The figure rose to 13.13 million barrels in February, comprising 8.88 million barrels of domestic crude and 4.25 million barrels of imports.

March recorded the highest total crude receipts at 20.92 million barrels, with domestic supply contributing 11.49 million barrels and imports 9.43 million barrels.

Total receipts stood at 18.37 million barrels in April, comprising 17.96 million barrels of domestic crude and 0.41 million barrels of imports.

In May, refineries received 17.92 million barrels, comprising 15.84 million barrels of domestic crude and 2.08 million barrels of imports.

June recorded 19.12 million barrels, made up of 17.08 million barrels of domestic crude and 2.04 million barrels of imports.

The NMDPRA data also showed that the Dangote Refinery operated at an average capacity utilisation of 71.09 per cent in July.

The refinery produced an average of 25.9 million litres of Premium Motor Spirit, PMS, 19.1 million litres of Automotive Gas Oil, AGO, and 15.6 million litres of Aviation Turbine Kerosene, ATK, per day.

Its average domestic receipts stood at 25.8 million litres per day for PMS, 15.7 million litres for AGO and 1.9 million litres for ATK.

As of July 31, the refinery was also exporting an average of 3.4 million litres of PMS, 11 million litres of AGO and 11.6 million litres of ATK per day.

Its closing stock at the end of July stood at 446.1 million litres of PMS, 162.3 million litres of AGO and 217.4 million litres of ATK.

FG launches renewable management company to oversee publicly funded energy assets

The Federal Government has launched the Renewable Asset Management Company (RAMCO) to manage and sustain publicly funded renewable energy assets.

RAMCO was launched on Wednesday by Abubakar Aliyu, managing director of the Rural Electrification Agency (REA).

Highlighting the importance of RAMCO at the launch, Aliyu said only three of seven solar hybrid power projects deployed by the agency under the first phase of its Energising Education Programme were found to be in good or usable condition.

He said the assessment showed that some of the projects had deteriorated, not because of engineering failures, but because there was no adequate system for maintaining the assets after commissioning.

"Of the seven, only three were in good or usable condition," Aliyu said.

"Not because of engineering failure, but because we had not adequately institutionalised what happens after the commissioning of the project."

Aliyu said since 2017, the REA has deployed 82 megawatts (MW) of solar hybrid generation across 22 federal universities and three teaching hospitals through the Energising Education Programme.

He said another 150MW is either under construction or in the pipeline through the Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-Up (DARES) programme, the National Public Sector Solarisation Initiative and a project being conducted by TETFund under the ministry of education.

Aliyu said the assessment of the existing projects exposed gaps in maintenance, revenue collection and asset management.

"There was no sustainable maintenance regime, no dependable revenue mechanism, and critically, no institution whose primary responsibility was to preserve those assets throughout their economic lives," he said.

Aliyu said the gaps informed the establishment of RAMCO, which he described as the agency's "institutional answer" to the problem.

He said RAMCO will reduce reliance on repeated government appropriations for the maintenance and renewal of publicly funded renewable energy projects.

"RAMCO is certainly not another request for treasury funding. Its purpose is precisely the opposite," Aliyu said.

"To move the long-term sustainability burden away from repeated public appropriation and onto a commercially sustainable platform capable over time of attracting private capital."

He said the company would professionally manage publicly financed renewable energy assets, contract competent operators, meter electricity consumption, collect revenue and ensure funds are available to replace components when they reach the end of their useful lives.

"If a battery or inverter requires replacement in year 8, we should not return to Ministry of Finance, and we should be able to have an economic value to replace that battery or inverter," he said.

"The money should already be there, and the planning has to start today."

Aliyu said beneficiary institutions, including universities and teaching hospitals, would be expected to contribute to the sustainability of the projects by paying for the electricity they consume.

"Government has funded this asset. REA has built them. Beneficiary institution must contribute to sustaining them by paying for the electricity they consume," he said.

The MD said the proposed tariff should not be viewed as an additional burden on the institutions, arguing that beneficiaries would otherwise spend money on diesel or electricity from other sources.

"Reliable electricity, just as the Minister of Power mentioned, is not free," Aliyu said.

"The question is whether we pay repeatedly for diesel and fuel infrastructure or we pay a predictable tariff that keeps a cleaner, more reliable system operating for 20 years. That is the RAMCO impact."

Aliyu said RAMCO is not designed to extract profit from public institutions or become another avenue for treasury funding.

"The tariff, therefore, should reflect what is required to operate, maintain, renew the system over its economic life," he added.

The MD said the platform is intended to reduce reliance on repeated government appropriations by creating a commercially sustainable structure capable of attracting private capital.

Aliyu further said REA would conclude the valuation and technical assessment of the assets already deployed and work with MOFI, InfraCorp and the ministry of finance to transfer the assets from REA's books to RAMCO's balance sheet.

The agency will also complete the onboarding of long-term operation and maintenance partners for the completed phases of the Energising Education Programme.

"We will report our progress publicly. If we have delivered, Nigerians will know. If we have fallen short, they will know that too," he said.

Aliyu said the new model was intended to prevent the government from repeatedly spending money to rebuild infrastructure that had already been delivered.

"A trillion-dollar economy cannot be built on infrastructure that must repeatedly be built and rebuilt again," the MD said.

UBA discloses delay in release of H1'26 financial statements

United Bank for Africa Plc, has informed shareholders and the investing public of a potential delay in the publication of its Audited Financial Statements (AFS) for the first half 2026, H1 '26, ended 30 June, as required by the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) listing rules.

This was disclosed by the Bank in a statement signed by Bili A. Odum , the Group's company secretary/legal counsel.

According to the statement, the Group's Audited Accounts and Financial Statements for the first half 2026, H1'26, was considered and approved by the Board of Directors of United Bank for Africa Plc at its meeting held on August 13, 2026.

"However, the approval of the Central Bank of Nigeria is required before the release of the results, Odun added.

" In this regard, the United Bank for Africa Plc has requested and obtained approval of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) for an extension of time to file the Results on or before September 30, 2026, subject to obtaining the requisite regulatory approvals for the publication of its Audited Financial Statements (AFS).

"The Bank's insiders are hereby reminded that the previously declared Closed Period in respect of transactions in the Bank's securities remains in effect until twenty-four (24) hours after the publication of the Results," the statement noted.

Nigeria, Thailand move to deepen ties in technology, agriculture, renewable energy

Nigeria and Thailand are set to deepen bilateral cooperation in technology, agriculture, commerce and renewable energy, with both countries exploring new areas of partnership and investment.

The move was highlighted on Wednesday when Vice President Kashim Shettima received a delegation from Thailand led by its Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, H.E. Yousef Hassan Khalawi, at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Nigeria is seeking a strategic review of its existing bilateral partnerships with Thailand, with particular emphasis on leveraging the Asian country's comparative advantage in deploying intermediate technology in agriculture and other related sectors.

Thailand, meanwhile, is proposing a new Thailand-Africa Initiative designed to strengthen its ties with key African countries through greater people-to-people interaction, economic relations and cooperation, particularly in agriculture.

The development was disclosed in a statement by the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media & Communications (Office of the Vice President), Stanley Nkwocha.

Representing President Bola Tinubu at the meeting, Shettima acknowledged the cordial relationship between Nigeria and Thailand but said the partnership needed to move beyond traditional areas of trade.

"I believe that our relationship should go beyond transactions in crude oil, rice production and so on. So, there is a need for us to review our bilateral relationship at a strategic level.

"Nigeria is a large market. There are enormous opportunities for partnership and investment in agriculture, ICT, renewable energy, and solid minerals, and we have a young population and workforce," the Vice President noted.

Shettima urged the Thai government and its business community to deepen their engagement with Nigeria, highlighting the country's strategic position in Africa, large population, young workforce and abundant natural resources.

Earlier, Khalawi, who is making his first trip to Africa, commended the ongoing transformation in Nigeria under the Tinubu administration.

He described Nigeria as a strategic partner for Thailand, an influential voice in the Global South and an emerging leader in e-commerce.

According to him, Thailand is seeking to establish a new framework of engagement with Africa through the proposed Thailand-Africa Initiative, with the aim of expanding economic ties, business partnerships and people-to-people relations.

2027: Wadada project is my project, I'll be happiest handing over Nasarawa to him -Gov Sule

BY FRANCIS NANSAK, LAFIA

In a bold and assuring remark of confidence, Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State has declared full ownership of the "Wadada Project," describing it as his personal project ahead of the 2027 elections.

The Governor statement further boosted the chances of Senator Ahmed Wadada Aliyu and brought more confidence to supporters of APC against a malicious social media circulation alleging that the National Working Committee of the party rejected the Nasarawa State APC governorship candidate.

Governor Abdullahi Sule, who recently hosted stakeholders of the support group led by Gamji Mada, and Commissioner of Youth and Sport Development, Honourable Yakubu Kwanta, at the Government House in Lafia, made the bold declaration.

The Governor reiterated that "If anybody calls it the Wadada Project, indeed, this is my project. The reason is that I will be the happiest human being on earth the day I hand over the leadership of this state to Wadada," he stated.

Governor Sule emphasized the need for unity of purpose, noting the difference between electoral and political value.

"There are people who have electoral value and there are people who have political value. We need the mixture," he added.

He further called on the Campaign Council and the Wadada Project team to work together rather than operate separately.

"I don't want the Campaign Council of Wadada to place a period on the Wadada Project, or the Wadada Project to place a period on the Campaign Council. I want both of them to synergize and fuse together so that we will have a very strong group" He advised.

Senator Ahmed Wadada Aliyu, the APC governorship flag bearer, is the current representative of Nasarawa West in the National Assembly. He secured the party's ticket after a wide consultation with stakeholders in the state leading to the governor's endorsement and overwhelming election during that last primaries.

Osun: Plank dealers applaud Oyebamiji for fulfilling promise despite election defeat

BY MIKE DIKE, OSOGBO

Members of the Ifelodun Plank Dealers Association, Alekuwodo, Osogbo, have commended the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate in the August 15, 2026 Osun State governorship election, Asiwaju Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji, for fulfilling his promise to reconstruct damaged culverts, retaining walls and drainage facilities in the market.

The traders, who expressed their appreciation during a celebration at the market, said Oyebamiji's intervention had helped to protect their businesses and structures from the threat of flooding and erosion.

The Chairman and Secretary of the association, Pa Joseph Olabode and Mr Olatunde, respectively, said the damaged drainage and retaining walls had previously caused serious flooding in the area, resulting in damage to shops, goods and other structures.

They described Oyebamiji's decision to execute the project despite losing the governorship election as a demonstration of integrity and commitment to the welfare of the people.

The traders said they had raised the need for urgent intervention when Oyebamiji visited the market during the electioneering campaign, adding that he subsequently kept his promise.

"We, members of the Ifelodun Plank Dealers Association, wish to sincerely thank and appreciate our very own APC governorship candidate in the August 15, 2026 governorship election in Osun State, Asiwaju Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji, aka AMBO, for keeping to his promise.

"He has assisted us by erecting the drainage walls to safeguard our shopping complex from total collapse. For those who did not know how this place was before, the damaged drainage and retaining walls had put our complex at risk.

"We thank Asiwaju Oyebamiji for coming to our aid at the critical time we needed assistance," they said.

According to the traders, the intervention became particularly important during the rainy season, when floodwaters threatened their businesses and livelihoods.

"We are grateful to Oyebamiji because when the rains came and our shops were threatened by flooding and erosion, he remembered us. We specifically requested this when he came to visit us during the electioneering. He promised to build it, and today, he has built it.

"Even after what happened in the election, he still fulfilled his promise without delay. This is a promise made and a promise kept. This is what defines a man of integrity and honour," the association said.

They added that the newly reconstructed drainage and culverts would allow water to flow freely and reduce the risk of flooding and erosion around the market.

"This act will indeed save our businesses, our goods and our means of livelihood. With this intervention, water can flow easily through the waterway without hindrance, and the threat of flooding has been greatly reduced," the traders said.

The association further described the project as an example of people-oriented leadership, saying that Oyebamiji had demonstrated that public service should not be limited to periods of political campaigns or the holding of public office.

"With this intervention, Oyebamiji has shown us that true leadership is about service to the people, not just about position. The drainage walls and culverts he built for us have given us peace of mind and protected our complex from destruction," they added.

The plank dealers prayed for continued success in Oyebamiji's career and expressed their appreciation for what they described as his timely intervention in addressing a problem that had posed a serious threat to their businesses.

Fubara appreciates Rivers people's support despite political developments

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has thanked the people of the state for their continued support, saying the large crowds witnessed at project commissioning ceremonies across the state are a demonstration of their confidence in his administration.

Fubara spoke on Wednesday during the commissioning of the 14.5-kilometre Agba-Ndele-Abua/Odual Road and river-crossing bridge, which connects communities in Emohua and Obua/Odual Local Government Areas.

The governor said the turnout at the various commissioning ceremonies had been overwhelming, adding that he would ordinarily have expected the people to distance themselves from his administration in view of the political developments in the state.

According to him, their continued presence and support, despite the circumstances, showed genuine love for his leadership.

Fubara pledged to continue appreciating and reciprocating the people's support until the final day of his tenure.

He also said the infrastructure projects being delivered by his administration would give APC candidates an advantage when they campaign in the state ahead of the 2027 elections.

The governor explained that the impact of the projects would give the party tangible achievements to highlight when seeking the people's support.

According to him, "what we have done here today will make it easy for our candidate who will be representing us in the forthcoming election. When he comes here to campaign, especially in Emohua, he will tell them my party did this and my party did that. So, it is going to be easy for us to win elections here."

On the project, Fubara clarified that the road and bridge were not awarded at the same time, noting that the bridge was initiated before the immediate past administration.

He said he decided to complete the bridge because of his belief that government is a continuum and that projects capable of improving the lives of the people should be completed irrespective of the administration that initiated them.

2027: Fityanul-Islam backs Uba Sani, says they'll repay him at polls

GABRIEL UDEH, KADUNA

The leadership of "Fityanul-Islam" in Kaduna State has pledged full support for Governor Uba Sani, saying the group will "repay his kind gestures at the polls" in recognition of his inclusive approach to governance and religious affairs.

The pledge was made on Tuesday during the annual Maulid Nabiyyi celebration at Murtala Muhammed Square in Kaduna.

Chairman of Fityanul-Islam, Sheikh Rabiu Abdullahu Zaria, commended the governor for proposing the Kaduna State Religious Commission, which he said will benefit adherents of all religions and the various sects within them.

According to Sheikh Rabiu, Governor Sani has consistently supported religious activities since assuming office and has never turned down any request from Fityanul-Islam.

"Adherents of the two major religions have never had a more supportive Governor like him," the cleric said.

He added that the group would reciprocate the support at the ballot.

"We will not vote for someone who hates us, someone who will prevent us from celebrating Maulid, or someone who will arrest our Qur'anic pupils," Sheikh Rabiu said.

The Islamic leader further prayed for the governor's political future, expressing confidence that Sani would complete his first term successfully, secure a second term, and later attain a higher office.

"God willing, the Governor will complete his first term victoriously, will secure a second term and will ascend to a higher position afterwards," he said.

"Next May, we will all be gathered here at Murtala Muhammed Square to celebrate your victory at the polls," he added.

In his remarks, Governor Uba Sani said the essence of the Maulid celebration is for people to reflect on and emulate the character of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

"We are all gathered here today to emulate the prophet and his lifestyle. We are all aware that he embraced everyone, irrespective of religion and ethnicity. This is the significance of this gathering," he said.

The governor noted that if Nigerians adopt the teachings and lifestyle of the Prophet, the country will enjoy lasting peace.

He recalled that when the Prophet migrated from Makkah to Madina, he governed inclusively, relating with Muslims and Christians alike.

"As leaders today, the only thing that we can do is to emulate the teachings and lifestyle of the prophet," Sani said.

He commended Fityanul-Islam for organizing the gathering and reaffirmed his administration's commitment to working with the group to sustain peace.

"Today, Kaduna State has achieved a modest peace and tranquillity in the whole of Nigeria because we embraced everyone, irrespective of religion and tribe," the governor said.

2027: If ADC can't perform, don't vote for us, Amaechi tells Nigerians

The vice-presidential candidate of the African Democratic Party (ADP), Rotimi Amaechi, has asked Nigerians to choose capacity when making their choice in the 2027 general election, saying they should not vote for the party if it cannot perform.

Amaechi said this during a panel session at the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) 2026 Annual General Conference taking place in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital.

"ADC provides a different kind of leadership completely. If we can't perform, don't vote for us," the former Rivers State governor told the gathering on Monday.

His comment came months before the 2027 general elections, with calls for the opposition to present a united front to unseat the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Last year, the opposition met in Ibadan, Oyo State, where they agreed to field a single candidate for the presidential election. However, the opposition has failed to pick a flagbearer for next year's poll.

At the NBA Conference, Amaechi explained that a coalition became difficult due to the inability of candidates to reach a consensus.

"Coalition as it is today is difficult to achieve. If it is possible, I am sure that Vice President Atiku Abubakar would be willing to participate. But the difficulty in it is that everybody has ambition; nobody wants to give up. There are very few politicians who are in love with Nigeria. What the politicians are doing is to just come in and milk the country dry," he said.

The former minister, however, defended his record in public office, saying the projects done by his administration in Rivers State are still visible.

Amaechi, who represented the ADC presidential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, asked Nigerians to shun ethnicity and assess candidates based on their track record.

"A coalition should be based on performance," he said.

"Assess us by our last performance and choose; not just vote because you are from Ikwerre or Omoku and choose your candidate," the ADC vice-presidential candidate said.

2027: Tonukari hails Akpowowo, Erhimedafe on APC Assembly tickets

BY NOSA AKENZUA, ASABA

Delta State Commissioner for Higher Education, Prof. Nyerhovwo Tonukari, has congratulated Olorogun Barr. Arthur Akpowowo and Hon. Felix Ejovwoke Erhimedafe on their emergence as the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidates for the 2027 Delta State House of Assembly elections.

Akpowowo secured the APC ticket to contest the Ethiope East State Constituency seat, while Erhimedafe emerged as the party's candidate for Abraka State Constituency.

In a statement on Monday, Tonukari described their victories as a reflection of their grassroots acceptance, commitment to public service and demonstrated leadership qualities.

He urged APC members, leaders and stakeholders across the two constituencies to close ranks and work collectively for the success of the candidates in the 2027 general elections.

According to him, the emergence of Akpowowo and Erhimedafe offers the people of Ethiope East and Abraka an opportunity to elect representatives capable of providing effective legislation and advancing development in their constituencies.

The commissioner wished both candidates success in the general election and called on voters in the constituencies to support the APC at the polls.

2027: CISLAC warns against politicisation of religion

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) has warned against the growing politicisation and weaponisation of religion in Nigeria's electoral process.

It cautioned political actors and religious leaders against exploiting faith to manipulate voters, suppress critical thinking and divert attention from issues of governance and development.

In a statement signed by its Executive Director, Auwal Musa Rafsanjani, CISLAC said the increasing use of religious platforms to mobilise political support poses a danger to Nigeria's democracy, national cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

It said political campaigns should be centred on critical development priorities, including healthcare, education, infrastructure, poverty reduction, employment, security and accountability, rather than religious sentiments and partisan endorsements.

The organisation expressed particular concern over reports of large gatherings of religious leaders in parts of the North to endorse political figures and parties, including reported instances linked to political activities in Plateau and Jigawa States.

According to CISLAC, such practices risk reducing religious authority to an instrument of political patronage and electoral mobilisation.

"Religious leadership is a position of trust and moral guidance, not a commercial platform for vote canvassing or the promotion of political violence and intimidation," CISLAC said.

The organisation urged religious leaders to resist attempts by politicians to exploit their influence and instead use their platforms to demand accountability, justice, competent leadership and improved welfare for citizens.

CISLAC also condemned the alleged intimidation of residents in Kuje Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, where individuals were reportedly threatened with eviction if they failed to vote for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The organisation described such alleged threats as a serious assault on citizens' constitutional rights to freely choose their political representatives, participate in elections and reside peacefully in their communities.

"No political party, candidate or individual has the right to demand exclusive political loyalty from citizens under the threat of expulsion, intimidation or violence," CISLAC stated.

Rafsanjani called on the Federal Government, state governments, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agencies and other relevant regulatory authorities to take decisive measures against the use of religious institutions and leaders for electoral manipulation, inducement, intimidation and the dissemination of falsehoods.

CISLAC further urged political parties and candidates to embrace issue-based campaigns and subject themselves to scrutiny on their records, policies, competence and capacity to deliver good governance.

The organisation also appealed to citizens to reject attempts to use religion or ethnicity as a substitute for political accountability, stressing that religious sentiments should not blind voters to the pressing socioeconomic challenges confronting their communities.

CISLAC warned that the continued commercialisation and weaponisation of religion for electoral gain could deepen divisions, undermine democratic institutions and threaten peaceful coexistence across the country.

It reaffirmed its commitment to monitoring electoral developments and advocating for a democratic culture rooted in competence, transparency, accountability and the genuine interests of the Nigerian people.

Accord Party FCT raises concern over alleged threat against Kuje residents

Accord Party has called on the Inspector-General of police to investigate statements by Kuje Council Chairman Danjuma Shekwolo allegedly threatening residents to either support the All Progressives Congress (APC) or leave the council.

The Party, during a press briefing at the FCT state secretariat, alleged that the Chairman of Kuje was captured in a viral video threatening residents ahead of the 2027 General elections.

According to the FCT Chairman, Vaniah Agbon, the Accord Party considered the statement unacceptable and deeply troubling, as Kuje Area Council is not a private estate of the Chairman or the ruling APC.

"If the video and the statements attributed to him are authentic, the Accord Party considers them unacceptable and deeply troubling.

"Kuje Area Council is not the private property of any individual or political party. It belongs to all its residents. An elected public officer is sworn to serve every citizen, regardless of political affiliation, ethnicity, religion, origin or voting preference.

"No public officer has the constitutional authority to compel citizens to support a particular political party or make political loyalty a condition for living peacefully in an Area Council. Nigerians have constitutional rights to freedom of movement and residence, political participation and ownership of property, subject only to lawful restrictions". Vaniah stated.

"The suggestion that citizens must either support the APC or "leave the Area Council" is therefore deeply disturbing. Equally concerning is any suggestion that those who vote against the incumbent political establishment may face reprisals.

"Elections are not war. Opposition is not treason. Political disagreement is not a crime. Voting against an incumbent is not an act of hostility against government.

"The Executive Chairman must remember that his oath of office is a solemn commitment to serve the people impartially and within the Constitution and laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

Vaniah demanded that the Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Disu, among others, investigate the video and establish its authenticity and determine if the statements constitute any breach of laws

"In view of the seriousness of this matter, the Accord Party calls on the Inspector-General of Police and relevant security agencies to thoroughly investigate the video and establish its authenticity, context and circumstances.

"Invite the Executive Chairman of Kuje Area Council for questioning regarding the statements attributed to him.

"Determine whether the statements constitute any breach of applicable laws.

"Assess their potential security implications, particularly regarding intimidation, political suppression and possible conflict.

"Take appropriate lawful action if any offence is established, regardless of the individual's political status or affiliation.

Israel's seizure of Unrwa training college in East Jerusalem

Israeli security forces have seized and closed a training college run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (Unrwa), the last of its facilities that was still operating in occupied East Jerusalem.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has condemned the incursion of the Qalandia Training Centre, the latest move to threaten Unrwa after Israel passed laws against it.

His spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said that under international law, all UN premises "are inviolable and immune from any form of interference."

Israel's far-right National Security Minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, joined the large raid on Tuesday and released a video of himself in the chair of the director of the Unrwa institute.

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had given the directive for the evacuation of the Unrwa compound, accusing the agency of involvement in the deadly Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, which it strongly denies.

The Qalandia Training Centre, which was set up in 1952, trained some 340 Palestinians a year in valuable vocational skills including carpentry, car mechanics and plumbing.

Although the site is in East Jerusalem, its location between Qalandia and Kfar Aqab is behind Israel's separation barrier, which made it accessible to young people from refugee camps across the West Bank.

Staff have been expelled from the college. The Israeli authorities say equipment is being removed from the site, and they intend to turn part of it into a school.

In a statement, Unrwa said it "unequivocally condemns this unauthorised and deeply concerning incursion into the Qalandia Training Centre".

"The entry of armed security forces into a United Nations facility, without the authorisation or consent of the United Nations, is unacceptable."

Israeli legislation, which came into force last year, banned Unrwa from carrying out missions or operating within what Israel deemed to be its territory. This includes East Jerusalem, which was captured by Israel from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East War and later annexed in a move that is not recognised by most countries.

Prince Harry and Meghan land in UK days after announcing move

Prince Harry, Meghan and their children Archie and Lilibet are believed to have flown into the country privately from California, and landed in Birmingham shortly before midday.

A spokesman for the Duke and Duchess of Sussex said "this is not something we would comment on".

There did not appear to be a police presence as Harry and his family left the airport, a source told the BBC.

Last week, it was reported that the couple would be relocating to the UK in August. They will not return to official duties but will live in Britain as non-working royals.

It is thought the family will base themselves at a private property outside of London in the Cotswolds area.

Archie and Lilibet have been enrolled in school and the new term is due to start next week.

Though not confirming the family's arrival in the UK, a spokesman for the Sussexes did say their chickens were staying in California, but they were bringing their dogs Mia and Pula with them.

The chickens, which the couple rescued, have regularly featured on Meghan's Instagram account and also appeared in her Netflix programme.

SWNS A private plane taxis along the tarmac at Birmingham Airport. Picture taken from a side angle, with the planes windows and one wing visible. It is a white aircraft with navy blue wings and tailSWNS

A private plane - said to be the one the family travelled on - arriving into Birmingham on Wednesday lunchtime

The Sussexes left the UK and stepped back from their royal duties in early 2020, before settling in California in March that year.

King Charles was told of the move earlier this month. The family visited the King at his Highgrove home in July this year, but it is understood the move was not discussed.

Before that visit, Prince Harry and Meghan had not been in the UK together since they attended the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022.

The Prince and Princess of Wales have also been informed of their plans.

Trump says 'something may come out of' CIA head's unannounced visit to Moscow

Donald Trump has said "something may come out of" Tuesday's unannounced meeting between the head of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and figures from Russia's intelligence services.

There has been speculation over why John Ratcliffe went to Moscow on Tuesday, arriving on board a military plane and leaving hours later.

The US president did not disclose what was discussed during the unconventional talks, but described the meeting as "semi-routine", adding that Washington "would like to see the war in Ukraine end".

The last comparable meeting taking place in the months leading up to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The Kremlin said Ratcliffe had not met Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"There were contacts with the intelligence services," Kremlin press secretary Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"There were no meetings with the president of Russia. That's all I can say on the subject. Naturally, President Putin is briefed immediately about everything," he added.

Peskov made the comments in response to a question at his daily press briefing from a reporter at the Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta, who asked if Vladimir Putin was informed about the CIA chief meetings and "at what level" they were held.

Putin's spokesman was also asked by the BBC's Russia Editor Steve Rosenberg what was the topic of the CIA talks.

"I have nothing to add to what I've already said on the subject," Peskov replied.

On Wednesday morning, Trump spoke with conservative talk show host Glenn Beck who asked about "speculation that is crazy" surrounding the visit.

Trump responded, calling the visit "semi-routine". He said he hated "to disappoint people", but that none of the rumours surrounding the visit were accurate.

It was too early to say what impact this meeting would have over repairing bilateral US-Russian relations, he said, telling reporters: "How much this will impact the overall process of recovering our bilateral relations from the profound crisis they're currently in, it is premature to say."

Meta to pay up to $18bn to settle claims its platforms harm children

Social media giant Meta has agreed to a significant settlement with US states and territories to resolve claims that Facebook and Instagram harmed children.

If approved by a California judge, Meta will pay a maximum of $18bn (£13.3bn) to 48 states, plus the District of Columbia and three US territories, marking the company's largest payment over child safety litigation to date.

Meta will also implement a host of changes to the platforms aimed at better protecting children online, which the states had demanded, including default daily time limits and night-time blocks.

"This is a major moment to clean up an industry that has been hurting our kids", California Attorney General Rob Bonta said.

Meta has denied any wrongdoing as part of the settlement and said Wednesday that the payment it has agreed to "will be distributed in annual instalments over a 10-year period."

While the settlement includes almost the entire US, the initial lawsuit was filed in 2023 by 29 states accusing the company of numerous violations of federal and state child privacy laws.

One of the states that is not part of the settlement is New Mexico. Last month, a federal judge there made an historic ruling against Meta, finding it to be a "public nuisance" on par with air pollution and ordering it to pay combined fines of almost $1bn.

As a jury trial kicked off last week in an Oakland, California federal courthouse, state lawyers argued the tech company knew that millions of 11 and 12 year-old users were on Instagram and Facebook over the years, yet "did little to keep them off" the platforms.

Although the trial had only gone on for five days, state lawyers relied heavily on information found in millions of internal Meta documents provided in the case. They included internal research, employee emails, and chat logs that went all the way up to chief executive Mark Zuckerberg.

One piece of internal research on Instagram stated: "Teens have an addict's narrative about use." Still, the states argued, Meta targeted young users.

"The trial did not go well for Meta", Bonta said on Wednesday.

Meta maintained throughout the brief trial that it had worked extensively over the years to make its platforms safer for its youngest users, pouring resources into testing and research, and building new features.

"We're always working on teen safety", head of Instagram Adam Mosseri said during just an hour of court testimony on Tuesday.

The case was settled and court adjourned before he could reappear before a jury.

Prior to Mosseri's testimony, a former researcher at Meta, George Volichenko, appeared and with lawyers went over various internal communications he had been a part of regarding Meta's work on safety.

Volichenko said he struggled to understand when he was at the company in 2022 why the team he worked on wasn't given more freedom to better test and implement new safety features. One of those was "quiet mode," which muted notifications for teen users during the night. His team knew such a feature would be much more widely adopted if Meta turned it on by default.

He recalled his manager telling him he "shouldn't worry too much about the adoption figures being low, because the team exists partially to protect the company against the upcoming lawsuits."

As part of the Wednesday settlement, however, a feature called "night mode," which blocks notifications between midnight and 6am, will now be on by default - meaning they will be turned on automatically. The settings are also designed to only be turned off by a parent or guardian.


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Enugu City Marathon: Organisers announce prize money for elite, local runners

Organisers of the 2026 Enugu City Marathon, has hinted that the race will transform Coal City into a global arena of sport, culture, and commerce, with more at stake than ever before.

The Organizers announced a competitive prize purse for both elite international athletes and Nigerian runners, setting the stage for a thrilling contest across the 42km and 10km races.

Enugu City International Marathon Prize Money for Men and Women:

In the 42km Elite, the first position will go home with $15,000, 2nd Position, $10,000, 3rd Position, $5,000, 4th Position: $3,000 and the 5th Position will get $2,000

In the 42km Nigeria the first position will earn 3,000,000, nd, 2,000,000,3rd, 1,500,000,4th 1,000,000 and 5th 500,000

The 10km Marathon Nigeria, 1st: 1,000,000,2nd: 750,000 3rd: 500,000,4th: 300,000 and 5th will go home with 200,000.

The announcement reinforces the marathon's dual mission: to attract world-class talent to Enugu while investing directly in Nigerian athletes and grassroots running.

Technical operations have been finalized. The race course has been measured and certified. Medical, security, and logistics teams have completed briefings. Digital timing systems and broadcast infrastructure are in place to deliver live coverage to audiences across Nigeria and beyond.

Media partners including Arise TV, Channels TV, and AIT are on ground, with the International Conference Center serving as the official World Press Center for the event.

"Year one was our introduction to the world. Year two is our standard," said the Local Organizing Committee. "With this prize structure, Enugu is ready to host world-class competition and reward the talent of our own."

The Enugu City International Marathon is more than a race. It is an economic driver and a platform for city branding.

Hotels across Enugu are at full capacity. Restaurants, transport services, vendors, and small businesses are experiencing increased activity ahead of race weekend. The event is creating jobs and opportunities for residents.

Beyond the economy, the marathon is a statement of identity. When the world watches Enugu run, the world learns Enugu's name, as a safe, vibrant, and capable host city open for tourism, investment, and talent.

On Saturday, the stories of Enugu will run the streets. The entrepreneur training before dawn. The corps member running to support a community project. The coach returning to the road with his grandchildren. The elite athletes chasing personal bests and a share of the prize money.

They will be joined by thousands of volunteers, medical personnel, students, and spectators who bring the energy of the city to life along the route.

Residents and visitors are encouraged to visit the Marathon Expo, take their place along the race route, and tune in to the live broadcast.

3 Days to go! The athletes are ready, the city is ready and the world is watching.

Barcelona make big push for Osimhen

Barcelona are said to have stepped up a renewed interest in Victor Osimhen after it looks like they will not get Atletico Madrid star Julian Alvarez.

According to report, after not achieving their desired result in the Julian Alvarez transfer, the Spanish club Barcelona have made Osimhen a priority and are expected to take action soon.

Report says that Barcelona sporting director, Deco, has renewed the pursuit of Osimhen, who was on Barcelona's shortlist during the summer as a fallback solution.

Osimhen is considered a more accessible target than Julián Álvarez and represents a credible option to address the team's lack of offensive solutions.

Barcelona sporting management is actively working to complete the signing of a striker before the deadline.

Euromatch emerge as new sponsor of NPFL

Nigeria Premier Football League, NPFL, has named Euromatch as the new sponsor of the League, even as league body also unveiled a new logo, as part of efforts to reposition the country's top-flight competition and usher in a new phase of commercial development.

The sponsor's identity was unveiled on Wednesday at the Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja, during an event attended by key stakeholders in Nigerian football and representatives of the league's new commercial partner, Euromatch.

With NPFL partnering Euromatch, it has become the official sponsor of the league.

It is expected that sponsor ensure a significant development in the league's commercial drive and seeks to strengthen its financial base, brand visibility and overall appeal.

The unveiling of the new logo is expected to provide the NPFL with a refreshed visual identity while complementing ongoing efforts to improve the organisation and marketing of the competition.

The partnership with Euromatch also represents another step in the league's quest to attract stronger corporate backing and create a more commercially sustainable platform for Nigerian professional football.

Falconets settled down in Poland, step up preparations ahead FIFA U20 Women's World Cup

Nigeria's U20 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 28th August and South Korea on 1st September. 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 PR and New Caledonia, with the Falconets set to face Spain on 7th September, China PR on 10th September and New Caledonia on 13th September.

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.

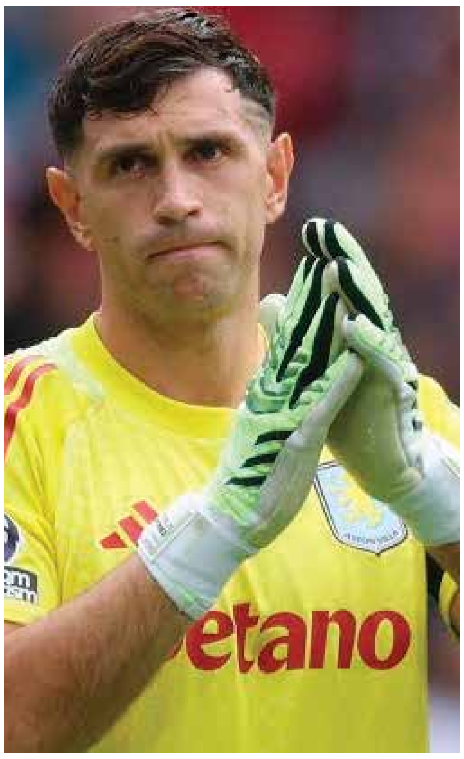
Emi Martinez offered to Chelsea

Aston Villa goalkeeper Emi Martinez has been offered to Chelsea.

That's according to The Athletic, who claim that the goalkeeper's representatives are trying to force through a late move in the window.

Villa have already replaced Martinez through Zion Suzuki and the 33-year-old's future is very much uncertain.

Robert Sanchez started Chelsea's 3-2 win over Fulham but has received criticism for his performance.



Bouaddi becomes most expensive EPL teenager with Man City move

Manchester City have officially signed Ayyoub Bouaddi from Lille in a record-breaking £86m deal.

City will pay a fixed fee of £81.3m plus £4.3m in add-ons for the midfielder.

Bouaddi has signed a five-year contract that will keep him at City until the summer of 2031.

The 18-year-old is now the most expensive teenage signing in Premier League history.

Bouaddi has surpassed the £58.9m deal that Manchester United agreed with Lille for Leny Yoro in 2024.

The Morocco international was one of the breakout stars of the 2026 World Cup in North America.

City are working to rebuild their midfield following the exits of Rodri, Bernardo Silva and Tijjani Reijnders.

Williams sisters given US Open doubles wildcard

Serena and Venus Williams will play doubles together at the US Open in their first Grand Slam outing as a pairing for four years.

The American greats, two-time winners of the women's doubles title in New York, were handed a wildcard entry by the United States Tennis Association,USTA.

The last time the Williams sisters teamed up at a slam was at the 2022 US Open in what was Serena's final tournament before she "evolved away" from tennis.

Serena made her return to the sport in doubles at Queen's in June before being given the final Wimbledon women's singles wildcard.

The 44-year-old lost 6-3 6-7 (6-8) 6-3 to Australia's Maya Joint and sustained a knee injury that ruled her out of the women's doubles, where she was due to play with Venus.

Venus, 46, has played singles and doubles sporadically on the WTA Tour in recent years.

The pair reunited at August's Cincinnati Open, losing in three sets to Marta Kostyuk and Peyton Stearns.

Serena played in the US Open mixed doubles competition alongside Carlos Alcaraz in New York on Tuesday, winning their opening match but losing in the quarter-finals.

Venus has also been given a wildcard for the singles, which begins on Sunday, 30 August.

Serena and Venus have won 14 major doubles trophies together, with their last coming at Wimbledon in 2016.

This will be only their third appearance together at a Grand Slam since then, after they also teamed up at the French Open in 2018 and the US Open four years ago.

They won the second of their Grand Slam doubles titles together in New York in 1999, and repeated the feat 10 years later.

The pair, who have never lost a major doubles final together, will begin their tournament on either Thursday, 3 September or Friday, 4 September.

UEFA Champions League 2026/27 draw holds today

Europe's biggest clubs will discover their opponents for the 2026/27 UEFA Champions League phase on Thursday, August 27, when the draw takes place in Monaco.

A total of 36 clubs will be involved in the league phase under the competition's new format, with each team set to play eight matches against different opponents.

Unlike the old group-stage system, the Champions League now operates with one league table involving all 36 teams.

Each club will play eight matches against eight different opponents, with four games at home and four away.

Teams will be drawn against two clubs from each of the four pots.

A computerized system will then determine the fixtures while ensuring that UEFA's draw regulations are followed.

Twenty-nine clubs qualified automatically based on their performances last season, while the remaining places are being decided through the qualifying rounds.

South South Chess Tourney set for Uyo with N3.5m prize money

Chess enthusiasts across the South-South region and beyond are set for another major gathering as the 2026 South-South Chess Championship is scheduled to take place from September 3 to 6, 2026, at the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium in Uyo.

The championship, hosted by the South-South Chess Zone in collaboration with the Nigerian Chess Federation (NCF), is expected to attract some of the region's finest players as they battle for honours for a total prize purse of 3.5 million with a star prize of 1 million for the overall winner.

The FIDE-rated championship would be played over seven rounds, with each game having a time control of 90 minutes plus a 30-second increment from move one.

It would feature three major categories — Open, Under-12 and Female — with cash prizes extending to several positions. The Open category offers 1 million to the winner, 250,000 for the runner-up and 150,000 for third place, while prizes continue down to the 15th position.

In the Under-12 category, the winner will receive 250,000, with 180,000 and 120,000 going to the second- and third-place finishers respectively. The Female category will also offer attractive cash rewards, with the champion taking home 150,000.

Additional awards have been provided for outstanding individual performances, including Best Junior, Best Veteran and Best Indigenous Player, with each award carrying a cash prize of 50,000.

With the tournament offering a significant financial incentive and an opportunity for players to improve their competitive standing, organisers are expecting a strong turnout from chess players across the South-South geopolitical zone and other parts of Nigeria.

The hosting of the championship in Uyo further reinforces Akwa Ibom's growing profile as a destination for major sporting competitions. The state has in recent years continued to attract national and regional sporting events, with the Godswill Akpabio International Stadium serving as one of its flagship sporting facilities.

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Viewpoint

Hello! Be wise as the campaigns begin

PROMISE ADIELE

Barring any divine intervention, and never ruling out the unpredictability of the cosmic regime, the 2027 general elections in Nigeria will be held. The inevitability is choking. Still, I reckon with two major mantras that presuppose the omnipotence of God in the affairs of men: "man proposes, God disposes" and its twin brother, "with God all things are possible". As religious and highly spiritual people, Nigerians like to outsource their responsibilities to the supernatural realm, believing that God will suddenly become unrighteous to take up their responsibilities even if He has bestowed on them innate powers to carry out the responsibilities. Such an attitude stoops at the door of irresponsibility. It is therefore nauseating to hear Nigerians complain of economic woes, insecurity, noxious government anti-people policies, inflation, high-level corruption, rascality in the corridors of power and dilapidated infrastructure, yet call upon God to intervene with the 2027 elections staring them in the face. God will not vote. He has given us the power to vote. Osun people did it. It is possible.

As if calling on God to take up their responsibilities is not enough, many Nigerians hold on to another mantra of defeated consciences "it is well". When people say "it is well", it is a subtle way of capitulating and accepting helplessness in the face of immediate challenges. For context, "it is well" is a rehash of the events in the Biblical book of 2 Kings 4:26, when the Shunammite woman responded to a question by Gehazi, Elisha's servant, if all was well with her family. The woman had responded, "it is well". It underscored her helplessness in her immediate circumstance. A semblance of the phrase is "it is well with my soul" which is a refrain in a popular Christian hymn. The author of the hymn, Horatio Spafford, wrote it after the tragic death of his four daughters in a shipwreck. It came on the heels of a serious financial setback. In response to these tragedies, he declared, "it is well with my soul". Both the Shunammite woman and Horatio Spafford were helpless and broken when they made their declarations; therefore, it was apt under their given circumstances. Are Nigerians helpless going into the 2027 elections? Absolutely not!

On the 19th of August 2026, political campaigns commenced across the country towards the 2027 general elections. All the political gladiators rose to the challenge and rolled out one form of promise or another. It is the usual political ritual that precedes elections. Some of the speeches by the politicians are insults couched in political jargon, trite expressions that have accumulated massive moss over the years. Since some politicians did not hold power, it is therefore difficult to judge them by all their promises before the 2023 elections. This leaves us with one option – to critically examine the promises made by the

politicians in power and the extent to which these promises have been fulfilled.

It is the duty of responsible citizens to hold government at all levels accountable irrespective of religion, ethnicity and other nebulous considerations. They campaigned and asked Nigerians to vote for them based on some promises. After four years, Nigerians must hold the Presidency, Senators, House of Representatives members, Governors, House of Assembly members and even LGA heads accountable. That is the true meaning of democracy. Doing otherwise or attacking those who do undermines the country's democratic potential. It is tantamount to engaging the reverse gear to guaranteed collective perdition. Many politicians who won the 2023 elections are smarting up for a mandate renewal after frolicking in irresponsible behaviour and neglecting the electorate for four years. Before listening to these politicians once again, every Nigerian must be wise and ask vital questions – what has this person done to deserve a second term? What have Mr President, the Senators, House of Representatives members, Governors, House of Assembly members, LGA heads done to deserve a second term?

Let us start with Mr President. He occupies a unique position that aggregates the interests of all Nigerians under one umbrella. Before the 2023 election, he specifically promised to provide uninterrupted electricity across the country. In an event that was captured on video, he urged Nigerians not to vote for him if he failed to provide constant electricity for everyone. Alas, Mr President failed woefully to fulfil his promise. Instead of providing electricity for Nigerians as he promised, he removed his official residence, Aso Rock, from the national grid and spent a whopping 17 billion naira to install solar panels at the villa. Between providing electricity for Nigerians and constructing the Lagos-Calabar coastal road estimated at $13 billion, which is more important? Funny enough, during the campaigns towards the 2023 elections, Mr President never promised Nigerians to build any Lagos-Calabar coastal road. So he failed to keep the promise he made and embraced a project he never mentioned to Nigerians. The campaigns are here again, be wise.

I remember watching Mr President make promises on different occasions that he would immediately curb insecurity in the country. In fact, during Goodluck Jonathan's administration, Mr President advised him to resign due to the growing insecurity and abduction of the Chibok girls. The statistics of kidnapping, abduction, death, burning, and general insecurity across the country in the last three years are staggering. More than any time in the history of this country, perhaps except during the civil war, Nigeria has suffocated beyond measure under the crushing weight of terrorism and banditry. The roads are not safe; the farms are not safe, and the cities are barely safe. Many Nigerians, including military officers, have lost their lives to terrorists and bandits. These military officers were murdered under gruesome circumstances. The US had to intervene at some point, and that underscores our helplessness and the incompetence of the Commander-In-Chief. Another election campaign season is here, be wise.

During the campaigns towards the 2023 elections, Mr President promised to provide over 1 million jobs for the youths through the digital economy. While there is no official figure indicating the number of jobs created or lost since then, SBM Intelligence records show that nearly 50% of Nigerian households suffered a major economic shock like job loss or business failure in the last three years. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that about 4.7 million Nigerians were classified as unemployed at the end of 2023, when the current administration came to power. The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) disclosed that at least 6,000 jobs were lost in Nigeria at the end of 2023 due to multinational companies exiting the country. More than 90% of Nigerians work in the informal sector, they do not have any clearly defined official employment with government oversight. That is quite damning. The country has suffered brain drain more than ever before since 2023. Lecturers, medical doctors, tech experts, engineers, and other professionals exit the country regularly in search of greener pastures. The campaigns are here again, be wise.

In the last three years Nigerians have been regaled with tales of illusory economic reforms following the removal of oil subsidy. The attendant economic hardship in the country has been devastating. However, the political class, those who identify with power at the centre, are insulated from the economic crucible while the masses stew in inflation, hardship, and starvation. The naira is almost useless against the dollar, yet Mr President was quite critical and vocal against Goodluck Jonathan when the naira was 250 to 1 US dollar. The purchasing power of the naira has weakened over time while salaries and wages have remained static. From all indications, the promise of economic revival and the famed reform are inscrutable political rhetoric meant to hoodwink and mislead Nigerians. The economic prospects of the country diminish every day, and Nigerians grovel in different agonizing shapes and sizes while struggling to eke out a living. The campaigns are here, be wise.

Discussing Nigeria's corruption index over the last three years would violate my sensibilities, and I am not about to do that. Embezzlement of public funds, cover-ups, appointment and re-appointment of corrupt persons to official positions including the just constituted presidential campaign council, and fake government agencies have caught Nigerians unawares. Those with fat files in the EFCC but who identify with the government are given a soft landing. Following the conclusion of the 2023 elections and the roles played by the judges, the judiciary emerged as the most corrupt sector in Nigeria in that year. From all available data, the current government does not have any existential or moral justification to ask Nigerians for votes in 2027. Nigerians must bestir, get some sense and not succumb to deceptive rhetoric to entrench incompetent human principalities in power. Nigerians must be encouraged by the events of the just-concluded Osun governorship election. It was done in Osun, it can be done across the country, even at the centre. To dislodge incompetence across power corridors in the country is a collective responsibility that must be carried out.

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