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President of Sierra Leone and Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr Julius Maada Bio, flanked by Governor of Lagos State, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu (left) and Chairman, Heirs Holdings and Co-Chair of the West Africa Integration and Investment Summit (WAIIS 2026), Mr Tony Elumelu, at the meeting of private sector leaders, hosted by Mr Elumelu at his residence in Lagos, yesterday.



Immediate past governor of Bauchi State, Mohammed Abdullahi Abubakar (left); Deputy Governor, Bauchi State, Mohammed Auwal Jatau; Minister of Health & Social Welfare, Prof. Mohammed Ali Pate; Minister of Finance & Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Prof. Taiwo Oyedele; MD & CEO, NSIA, Aminu Umar-Sadiq and MD & CEO, MedServe, Dr Tolulope Adewole, at the recently concluded commissioning of the MedServe Diagnostic Centre in Bauchi State, Nigeria.

Panorama

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SPOTLIGHT

Africa pays \$75b yearly for risk premiums, says UNECA

By Helen Oji
AFRICA pays approximately \$75 billion a year in excess interest rate payments because of persistent risk premiums, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Hanan Morsy has said.
Morsy, who spoke yesterday at the launch of the African Credit Rating Agency (AFRA), noted that the burden was diverting scarce resources away from development priorities, including health, education and infrastructure.
She said concerns had persisted across African countries that sovereign risk assessments did not always adequately reflect the fundamentals of their

U.S. proposes \$70,000 fee for foreign students seeking work authorisation

THE United States Department of Homeland Security has proposed that international students pay at least \$70,000 in training fees if they want to work in the country, according to a government notice posted online on Wednesday, as part of the Trump administration's wider crack-down on foreign visa holders.
Under the proposal, nonimmigrant students with F-1 visas would be required to pay \$70,000 to a certified institution for on-the-job training, known as Optional Practical Training (OPT), and \$30,000 for any additional work training.
DHS said the new rules were meant "to combat fraud, strengthen the integrity of the immigration system, and protect U.S. workers."
Under the OPT system, foreign students can engage in work training for up to 20 hours per week while school is in session, as well as for a limited time after graduation, with an additional allowance for those with degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

... DAY 4547

OUR GIRLS STILL MISSING

Tope Templer Olaiya,
News Editor

 @TopeTempler



economies.
"When perceptions of risk do not fully reflect the realities of a country's economy, governments pay more to borrow while investment becomes

harder to attract," she said.
Morsy said ratings also shape policy responses and choices, recalling that during the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about possible rating down-

grades discouraged some eligible countries from requesting temporary debt service suspension under the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative.

Russian lab worker's death sparks plague scare, biosecurity concerns

By Ijeoma Nwanosike
GLOBAL concern is mounting over the death of a 28-year-old female worker at the Anti-Plague Research Institute of Siberia and the Far East in Shelekhov, Irkutsk, Russia, amid conflicting accounts over the cause of her death.
Russia's infectious disease agency, Rospotrebnadzor, said the woman was diagnosed with "pneumonia of unknown origin," while reports in Russian media identified her as Daria Shipilova and claimed that she died from pneumonic plague after re-

portedly dropping a test tube containing live samples of *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium that causes plague.
According to the reports, Shipilova was taken to hospital on September 29 and died two days later. Nearly 200 people who may have had contact with her are reportedly being monitored for possible signs of infection.
The reports have raised concerns among experts, some of whom warned that the lack of publicly available information bore similarities to the early stages of the COVID-19

pandemic, when uncertainty and limited information fuelled international concern.
The development has also drawn the attention of United States authorities, with the White House and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reportedly monitoring the situation. U.S. and European officials have also raised concerns over Russia's history of limited transparency regarding its biosecurity and biological defence programmes, prompting calls for greater openness and data sharing.



Abuja Bureau Chief of The Guardian, Dr Bridget Onochie (left); wife of late General Manager, Northern Region, The Guardian, Mrs Chiamaka Nwanne; Head, Politics (North), Leo Sobechi and Editor, Energy and Power, The Guardian, Kingsley Jeremiah; during a condolence visit to the family of the late GM in Abuja, yesterday.
PHOTO: LUCY LADIDI ATEKO

Equity financing tops as Africa startups raise \$2.2b in nine months

By Adeyemi Adepotun
STARTUPS in Nigeria and indeed, Africa have raised \$2.2 billion between January and September 2026, a slight dip of four per cent compared to the same period last year.
Africa: The Big Deal, however, in the September analysis, observed that beneath the flat headline number lies a striking shift: equity funding surged by 23 per cent year-on-year, while debt financing fell sharply by 33 per cent. According to it, equity financing has reclaimed its dominance in Africa's start-up ecosystem.

In the first nine months of 2026, equity deals totaled \$1.5 billion, marking the strongest January-September performance since 2022. This figure outpaces 2023 (\$1.4 billion), 2024 (\$1 billion), and 2025 (\$1.2 billion), and is more than double the pre-"funding heatwave" levels of 2019 and 2020.
According to it, Q3 alone was a standout quarter, with \$580 million in equity raised, 2.5 times more than Q3 2025. The headline deal was Moove's \$250 million Series C in August, but even without it, equity funding would still be up

40 per cent year-on-year. Other notable raises included Jumia (\$50m), Yellow Card (\$40 million), Paymob (\$35 million), Odyssey Energy Solutions (\$27 million), and Moment (\$22 million Series A).
Debt financing, which had been one of the defining trends of the past three years, slowed significantly in 2026. Start-ups raised \$669 million in debt so far, down from \$1 billion in the same period last year. Debt now accounts for 31 per cent of total funding, compared to 45 per cent in 2025.

RANDOM FACTS

- Laughing for 15 minutes has the same health benefits as getting two extra hours of sleep.
- Negaholic: Somebody addicted to negativity, even when they are happy.
- A man can reduce his chances of getting prostate cancer by having at least four orgasms a week.
- A word that describes someone who has a balance of introvert and extrovert in their personality: -Ambivert.
- In the U.S., staged wrestling is called pro wrestling while real wrestling is called amateur wrestling.

TODAY'S QUOTE


You cannot enslave a mind that knows itself, that values itself, that understands itself.

Nature is very unforgiving. If you destroy nature, nature will destroy you.

WANGARI MAATHAI

The revolution is not an apple that falls when ripe. You have to make it fall.

I would rather die standing up than to live life on my knees.

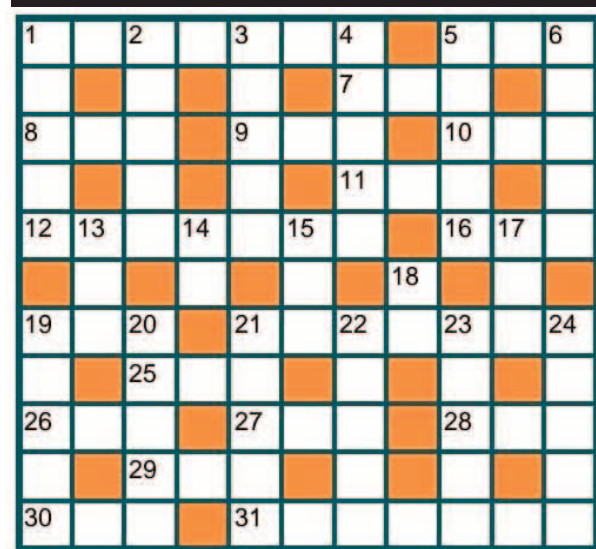
Silence is argument carried out by other means.

CHE GUEVARA

TODAY IN HISTORY

- World Space Week
- 2024 - Nigeria
Former Rivers governor and FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, was dealt a humiliating blow in his ongoing political war with Governor Siminalayi Fubara, after the newly inaugurated chairman of Obio/Akpor Local Council, Chijioke Ihunwo, ordered removal of Wike's name from an administrative building in the council secretariat. Wike blamed Fubara for violence in the state for disregarding court order.
- 2020 - Nigeria
World Trade Organisation confirmed Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Yoo Myung-hee of Korea as the two final candidates for position of Director-General.
- 2018 - Worldwide
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a special report, warning that "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" would need to be made to prevent global warming by more than 1.5 degrees Celsius over the upcoming century.
- 2016 - USA
In the wake of Hurricane Matthew, the death toll rose to nearly 900.
- 2015 - Switzerland
President Sepp Blatter was suspended from FIFA for 90 days, along with senior officials Michel Platini and Jerome Valcke, during a major corruption scandal.
- 2014 - USA
Thomas Eric Duncan, a Liberian citizen visiting his family in Dallas and the first person in the United States to be diagnosed with Ebola, died.
- 2005 - Pakistan
The 7.6 Mw Kashmir earthquake in Pakistan left 87,351 people dead, 75,266 injured, and 2.8 million homeless. The earthquake was also felt in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, India and the Xinjiang region in China.
- 2004 - Kenya
Wangari Maathai, Kenyan environmentalist and political activist became the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize
- 1973 - Israel
Yom Kippur War: Israel lost more than 150 tanks in a failed attack on Egyptian-occupied positions.
- 1967 - Bolivia
Guerrilla leader Che Guevara and his men were captured in Bolivia leading to his execution the next day. The Argentine Marxist revolutionary, physician, author, diplomat and military theorist was a major figure of Cuban Revolution, his stylized visage has become a countercultural symbol of rebellion and global insignia in popular culture.

CROSS WORD PUZZLE



• ACROSS

1. LGA in Kaduna State, (7).
5. Question somebody, (3).
7. Young goat, (3).
8. President Trump's country, (3).
9. Seed as vegetable, (3).
10. Printed point, (3).
11. Female mammal, (3).
12. Group of Seychelles islands, (7).
16. Narrow beam of light, (3).
19. Port of London Authority, abbr., (3).
21. Gov. Ahmadu Fintiri's State, (7).
25. Relatively, abbr., (3).
26. Nig. Ports Authority. Abbr., (3).
27. Assistance, (3).
28. Excited activity, (3).
29. Cover with turf, (3).
30. Anger, (3).
31. Separate part or group, (7).

• DOWN

1. LGA in Kaduna State, (5).
2. Impressive in appearance, (5).
3. Republic, abbr., (5).
4. Commercial motorcycles, (5).
5. Something that adds, (5).
6. A kitten, (5).
13. Laughing out loud, abbr., (3).
14. Advertisement, (2).
15. Empty of something, (3).
17. Aircraftwoman, abbr., (3).
18. British Museum, abbr., (2).
19. Area in Lagos Mainland, (5).
20. Late Police IG, (5).
21. Market in Ikeja, Lagos, (5).
22. Become confused, (5).
23. Not asleep, (5).
24. In connection with, (5).

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Check page 30 for solution to the puzzle

News

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Atiku-Obi split will give Tinubu 2027 victory, Duke warns

From Kehinde Olatunji (Lagos) and Andrew Oota (Abuja)

PRESIDENTIAL candidate of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), Donald Duke, has predicted that President Bola Tinubu will be re-elected in 2027 if leading opposition candidates fail to unite.

This was as the Atiku Abubakar 2027 Presidential Campaign cautioned the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) against tilting the electoral process in favour of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), warning that the credibility of the 2027 general elections would depend largely on the commission's neutrality and transparency.

IMF tasks govts as global debt nears 100% of GDP

Onanuga claims Nigeria's debt under Tinubu below 36% of GDP

By Isaac Chibuike

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that global public debt is on course to exceed 100 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), urging governments to stop delaying policy action as high energy prices and rising borrowing costs put further pressure on economies.

But President Bola Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, defended Nigeria's debt position, saying it remains relatively low at about 35 per cent of its GDP.

"Another stubborn fact for those whose stock in trade is to denigrate Nigeria and the Tinubu presidency and raise baseless alarms about our sovereign debt," Onanuga posted on X yesterday.

Giving the warning in Singapore yesterday ahead of the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok, Thailand, next week, IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, said global public debt was approaching its highest level since the aftermath of World War II, while the world economy faced three major pressures: the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), persistently high energy prices and record public debt.

"You have the tools; now acquire the wisdom to use them," Georgieva told policymakers.

She said oil prices remained around \$100 per barrel despite a fragile recovery in supplies from the Gulf, while a global shortage of refining capacity added another \$100 per barrel in refining margins, pushing diesel and other refined products to record highs. Natural gas supplies from the Gulf also remain severely disrupted, while shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is under threat.

- Atiku campaign alleges INEC bias towards APC as ADC vows to bar rigging
- 84% of Nigerians willing to vote, 61% fear violence

Meanwhile, the National Chairman of African Democratic Congress (ADC), David Mark, declared that the party would not allow itself to be rigged out in the coming elections.

A new survey by Yiaga Africa has found that 84 per cent of Nigerians are likely or very likely to vote in the next general elections, although fears of violence, distrust in electoral institutions and vote buying could undermine turnout.

Duke said the split opposition vote between Atiku of the Africa Democratic Congress (ADC) and Obi of Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) could

put Tinubu at a vantage position in January's presidential ballot.

He spoke yesterday on *Channels Television's* 'Morning Brief' while discussing the chances of opposition candidates in the 2027 presidential election.

The former governor of Cross River State said the opposition would struggle to defeat the ruling party if major contenders continued to pursue separate presidential bids.

"We don't understand what we're doing. In the United States, which is the system we've largely just copied verbatim from, they have two major parties. If you fragment

the Democrats, for instance, into two or three other parties, the Republicans will remain in office forever. That's what we're doing," he said.

According to Duke, divisions among major opposition figures in 2023 spread votes among different candidates.

THE Atiku campaign council also urged the electoral body to ensure that eligible Nigerians who register as voters are able to collect their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), stressing that registration figures would be meaningless without corresponding PVC collection.

Making its position known

yesterday in a statement signed by its Director of Media and Publicity, Kola Ologbondiyan, in reaction to INEC's World Press Conference held on Tuesday, the council said its presidential candidate remains prepared to participate in the 2027 election, provided INEC guarantees a credible election devoid of violence or manipulation.

Ologbondiyan said the commission must demonstrate its independence by resisting any attempt by the ruling party to influence its decisions or operations.

According to him, the publication of impressive voter registration figures would serve little purpose if registered voters are subsequently unable to

obtain their PVCs.

"Reading out figures of registration is nothing; what matters is the number of cards actually collected by Nigerians. What gives a citizen power on election day is not that his name is in a register somewhere, but that he has his PVC in his hand."

FG vows to arrest non-performing road contractors

- BPP urges CSOs to move from contract monitoring to tracking delivery
- Engineers urge Tinubu to tackle insecurity, rising costs affecting construction industry

From Sodiq Omolayo and Andrew Oota, Abuja

THE Federal Government has stated that performing contractors handling the five legacy projects of the Bola Tinubu administration will be arrested and prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as well as the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC).

Relatively, the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) urged Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to move beyond monitoring the award of public contracts to tracking whether such contracts ultimately delivered the projects and services promised to Nigerians.

Meanwhile, the Construction and Civil Engineering Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (CCESSA) has appealed to President Tinubu to urgently intervene in insecurity, rising cost of living and the challenges affecting the construction industry.

Minister of Works, David Umahi, during a press conference in Abuja yesterday, emphasised that the affected contractors who collected Federal Government funds as mobilisation and failed to deliver in equal sums would not be allowed to sabotage the government.

The minister said the negligence was as result of contractors deciding to prioritise state-owned projects over federal projects despite sufficient mobilisation.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng



Osun State Governor Ademola Adeleke (left), Abia State Governor Alex Otti and Vice President Kashim Shettima during the Nigeria-Ethiopia Nutrition Leadership Exchange Forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, yesterday.

U.S. urges UN-AU synergy as 3.6m Nigerians suffer in IDP camps

- Asylum seekers hit 140,927
- Sympathy for insecurity victims not enough, Nwawuba, CISLAC tell lawmakers

From Joel Oladele, Abuja

THE United States (U.S.) believes coordination and partnership between the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) can help achieve peace, security and prosperity in Africa.

This was as the Federal Government disclosed that 3,679,757 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were living in various camps and host communities across the country as of September 1, 2026.

However, the Executive Secretary of the National Assembly Library Trust Fund (NALTF), Henry Nwawuba, said lawmakers can no longer respond to victims of insecurity with sympathy without taking concrete legislative action.

The position was echoed by the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), which called for urgent reforms to Nigeria's policing system, including stronger safeguards if state police becomes a reality.

U.S. Representative for UN

Management and Reform, Amb. Jeffrey Bartos, presented Washington's position on Tuesday at a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting on UN and AU cooperation.

The envoy said ongoing peace operations in some of the most fragile parts of Africa demanded doctrines, policies and directives to be of synergistic interaction.

Commending the political dialogue on Sudan by the UN, AU, European Union (EU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Arab League, the U.S. called for an immediate end to the violence and a humanitarian truce.

"We continue to consider all ways to support these efforts, including through an expansion of the Darfur arms embargo to cover all of Sudan," Bartos announced.

The U.S. condemned the terrorist attacks in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, stressing the necessity of AU-UN alliance to address "a multitude of challenges" in West

Africa and the Sahel.

Bartos reminded the UN that the international community had a vested interest in countering terrorism and the threat it poses to the global community. He cited UNSCR 2719, which backs UN financing of Security Council authorised AU-led peace operations, saying the framework could be a useful tool in ensuring security and stability in Africa.

Noting that deployments under the resolution will reinforce the AU-UN collaboration, Bartos said such peacekeeping missions "should be small, time-bound, and have clear objectives."

FEDERAL Commissioner/CEO of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMIDP), Aliyu Ahmed, disclosed the refugee figure at the recent National Multi-Stakeholder Policy Dialogue in Abuja, organised by CISLAC/Transparency International Nigeria (TIN), with support from the

Government of Ireland.

The dialogue was themed 'Strengthening Human Rights-Centred and Gender-Responsive Approaches to SGBV in Defence and Security Operations in Nigeria'.

Aliyu, who was represented by his Special Adviser, Dahiru Bobbo, also disclosed that Nigeria was hosting 140,927 refugees and asylum seekers from Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Congo and Sudan. He reiterated the government's commitment to protecting all vulnerable groups within its jurisdiction.

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Shettima seeks nutrition law to aid accountability, interventions

From Terhemba Daka, Abuja

VICE President Kashim Shettima has called for the accelerated development of a National Food and Nutrition Bill to protect funding for nutrition programmes, strengthen accountability and ensure continuity of interventions beyond successive administrations.

NAFDAC advocates stronger African cooperation on food safety

LASCOPA introduces toll-free line, urges consumers to report fake, poor services

By Shakirah Adunola

NATIONAL Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has called for stronger cooperation among African food regulators to address cross-border food safety threats and support safer intra-African trade.

The Director General of NAFDAC, Prof. Mojisola Christianah Adeyeye, made the call at the Third African Food Regulatory Authorities Forum (AFRAF), held in Cairo, Egypt.

Adeyeye led a five-member Nigerian delegation to the three-day forum, hosted by the National Food Safety Authority of Egypt in partnership with Africa's Regional Economic Communities, African food competent authorities and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).

Forum laments collapse of 180 textile factories

Says imports account for 90 per cent of domestic demand

From Sodiq Omolayo, Abuja

COTTON, Textile and Garment Development Forum (CTGDF) has called on the Federal Government to urgently intervene in the textile industry, saying about 180 textile factories have shut down operations as a result of the sector's prolonged decline.

Coordinator of the forum, Anibe Achimugu, made the demand in a statement yesterday to mark the 2026 World Cotton Day.

According to him, the government must move to preserve viable industrial assets, recover legitimate public loans and operationalise the proposed Cotton, Textile and Garment Development Board (CTGDB).

He added Nigeria's cotton and textile sector had suffered a severe decline, with national cotton production now estimated at 13,000 metric tonnes, while imports account for approximately 90 per cent of domestic textile demand.

*Nigeria, Ethiopia deepen cooperation on food security, trade, investment, aviation

He disclosed that Nigeria's \$26 million commitment to the Child Nutrition Fund had attracted matching support, effectively unlocking \$52 million for nutrition interventions.

Shettima, who spoke in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, said the proposed legislation would provide a stronger legal framework for Nigeria's nutrition response and reinforce collaboration among the Federal, State and Local Governments in tackling malnutrition.

He said the legislation would complement the Federal Government's Nutrition 774 Initiative, which places local governments at the centre of planning, financing and accountability for nutrition interventions.

The Vice President spoke yesterday at the Nigeria-Ethiopia Nutrition Leadership Exchange Forum, convened to share experiences and deepen cooperation on strategies for reducing child malnutrition.

Shettima said Nigeria's National Policy on Food and Nutrition 2026-2035 had established targets to reduce the country's stunting rate to 32 per cent by 2029, 28 per cent by 2032 and 25 per cent by 2035.

He said the presence of nutrition committees in 32 State Houses of Assembly had created an opportunity to strengthen the legislative architecture for sustained investment in nutrition.

According to him, nutrition committees have also been established in more

than 450 local government areas, while the Federal Government is working with states to strengthen implementation and delivery capacity.

Shettima said the Nutrition 774 Initiative was designed to provide a common framework for all three tiers of government, with governors and local government chairmen expected to lead implementation in their respective jurisdictions.

He added that 21 states had contributed \$6.3 million since 2023 towards supplies for the prevention

and treatment of malnutrition.

Shettima also announced plans for a Presidential Nutrition Investment Fund to provide catalytic financing for interventions, while the Nutrition Financing Subcommittee was working to mobilise additional domestic resources.

The Vice President said the government was also strengthening systems for linking public expenditure to measurable nutrition outcomes through scorecards, improved monitoring and stronger domestic financing.



Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Henry Odein Ajumogobia (SAN), (left); former Governor of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode Fayemi; President, Export-Import Bank of the United States, Kimberly Reed; Ajum Managing Director, Prime Atlantic, Ayo Otuyalo; Senior Counselor to the President for International Engagement and E.W. Richardson Fellow, Dr James Jay Carafano; Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr Jumoke Oduwole and her counterpart in Ministry of Power, Joseph Tegbe, during the Nigeria's Moment: A Transatlantic Strategic Partnership Dialogue, hosted by the American Business Council Nigeria in partnership with the Heritage Foundation in Ikoyi, Lagos, yesterday.

Obident Movement, Yoruba Ronu reject, warn against INEC's AI plan

From Seye Olumide (Lagos) and John Akubo (Abuja)

OBIDENT Movement has rejected the Independent National Electoral Commission's plan to deploy Artificial Intelligence in the 2027 election results process.

The group demanded that INEC suspends the plan until it published a clear and independently auditable framework governing the technology.

In a statement signed by its

Media and Communications Director, Onyeka Dike, the movement said Nigerians should not be subjected to an untested electoral technology.

The group said its concerns were heightened by INEC's disclosure that its AI governance framework was still being finalised.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Joash Amupitan, recently announced the establishment of an AI division within the commission's ICT depart-

ment.

He said AI auditing tools would be integrated into the results verification process, with human oversight.

The Obident Movement, however, said INEC should first establish clear rules on how the technology would operate.

It also demanded that every result remain traceable to the polling unit and verifiable by political parties, observers, journalists and citizens.

The group called on INEC to

publish Forms EC8A, EC8B, EC8C, EC8D and EC8E on the IReV portal as part of measures to strengthen transparency.

It also criticised Amupitan's warning to media organisations against announcing or declaring results not officially released by INEC.

The movement said the warning required greater clarification, particularly as INEC expands its use of technology in the results process.

Nigeria must turn reforms into jobs, lower costs, says NESG

From Bertram Nwannekanma (Lagos) and Joseph Chibueze (Abuja)

NIGERIA must urgently convert its recent economic reforms into jobs, higher productivity, lower production costs and rising household incomes, the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) has said.

The group said yesterday that reforms that have helped restore macroeconomic stability would amount to little if they failed to translate into productive investment, stronger businesses and improved living standards.

GAFAMORG says salary increase doesn't mean living wage

Speaking ahead of the 32nd Nigerian Economic Summit (NES#32), scheduled to hold in Abuja from October 26 to 27, NESG Chief Executive Officer, Dr Tayo Adeloju, said Nigeria had moved beyond the immediate challenge of economic stabilisation to a more difficult task of turning stability into broad-based prosperity.

He said the country must strengthen the link between reform and investment, investment and productivity, productivity and jobs, and jobs and shared prosperity.

His warning comes as Nigeria continues to contend with high production costs, infrastructure deficits, low productivity and insecurity, while more than 90 per cent of employment remains informal.

MEANWHILE, the Gani Fawehinmi Memorial Organisation (GAFAMORG) has called for a fundamental shift in how workers' welfare is measured, saying a salary increase should not be mistaken for a living wage.

In a statement signed by its Chairman, Babatunde Agunbiade, and Public

Relations Officer, Ade Adeoye Adewumi, the organisation said the real test of any wage increase is not the percentage announced but what the income could buy.

It noted that workers could receive substantial pay increases and remain unable to afford food, housing, healthcare, education and other essentials if the cost of living rises faster than their income.

GAFAMORG acknowledged the sacrifices of Nigerian soldiers, including exposure to danger, separation from their families and difficult working conditions.

Yilwatda charges ICT sector to drive \$ltr economy

By Adeyemi Adepetun

IN recognition of the importance of the telecommunications sector to Nigeria's economy, the All Progressives Congress (APC) Chairman, Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, has called on the sector to position itself strategically for the task ahead.

Yilwatda, during a virtual session yesterday with leading Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of both technology and telecom companies in Nigeria, stressed that technology alone could not transform a nation. Instead, he said the ultimate determinant of Nigeria's digital evolution rests on the quality of political leadership, policy framework predictability, and strong institutional backing.

He stressed the importance of aligning public policy with private enterprise to construct a resilient, tech-driven economy capable of reaching a \$1 trillion valuation.

AU, AFRIMA open 10th edition entries portal October 11

INTERNATIONAL Executive Committee of the All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA), in partnership with the African Union (AU), has opened the entry portal for the 10th AFRIMA, inviting artistes, creative and music professionals across Africa and the Diaspora to submit their works for consideration for the 10th AFRIMA, slated to hold from May 18-23, 2027, in Lagos, Nigeria.

The entry portal will open on October 11, 2026 and will run until January 10, 2027, allowing artistes, songwriters, producers, and other music professionals across Africa and the Diaspora to compete for recognition at the 10th edition of the awards.

A statement said AFRIMA would be receiving entries across 40 award categories, comprising Regional and Continental categories covering Africa's five regions and diverse music genres.

Experts seek state of emergency on mental health, drug abuse in Nigeria

From **Innocent Anoruo** (Lagos) and **Azeez Olorunlomu** (Abeokuta)

MEDICAL experts have called for a multi-sectoral approach to tackling

CMUL commits to healthcare devt, set to establish prosthetics, orthotics departments

By **Sunday Aikulola**

THE Provost of College of Medicine, University of Lagos (CMUL), Prof. Ademola Oremosu, has disclosed that in the next five years, the College is moving into other healthcare development, such as Prosthetics and Orthotics, to be globally competitive and evolve with current trends.

The Provost, while fielding questions from journalists during the maiden edition of the 2026 College Week, said that there would be training of professionals in speech therapy, occupational therapy and audiology.

He said: "We will continue to evolve. We intend to have a five-, 10-, and 20-year strategic plan. We are also looking at backward integration. There is the Diaspora bridge programme where people who have improved their capacity through emigration are able to give back to the system.

"It is a celebration of our community, connection, culture and academic excellence. The duty of an academic institution is to impact the community. So, we are reaching out to the community."

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng

New Consulate building in Lagos will inject \$95m into Nigeria's economy, says U.S.

By **Victor Gbonegun**

THE United States (U.S.) government, yesterday, said the ongoing construction of its new Consulate Compound at Eko Atlantic is contributing over \$95 million to the local economy through employees, sub-contractors, and suppliers across Lagos State and Nigeria at large.

The U.S. government also revealed that the project stands as a tangible expression of the importance it places on its relationship with Nigeria.

It said that through the project, over 1,500 Nigerian workers had received training to the highest construction standards in the world, strengthening their competitiveness in the local labour market, long after the construction is complete.

The U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for West Africa and for Public Diplomacy, Richard Michaels, who spoke at the top-off ceremony yesterday, said the vision for the new Consulate Compound is to create a facility honouring the vibrant U.S.-Nigeria relationship.

UK-based curator to convene artists for mental health summit

mental health challenges in Nigeria, urging the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency on mental health and drug abuse in the country.

The experts made the call during an awareness walk in Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, yesterday, where they raised concerns over the growing burden of mental health challenges and the stigma faced by people living with mental health conditions.

The medical personnel also urged Nigerians to stop discriminating against people with mental health challenges but to encourage those affected to speak out and seek professional help rather than suffer in silence.

The experts, however, advocated stronger collaboration among government agencies,

parents, traditional and religious leaders, healthcare professionals, and other critical stakeholders to address the underlying causes of mental health problems, particularly drug abuse.

A Consultant Psychiatrist at the Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta, Dr Abayomi Olajide, who spoke during the awareness campaign, stressed the need for concerted efforts to confront mental health challenges and substance abuse.

Olajide said addressing the problem required the involvement of all sectors of society, noting that drug abuse had become a major contributor to mental health challenges.

The Acting Medical Director of the Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Abeokuta, Sunday Amosun, also called for

greater awareness and collective action to address mental health challenges and curb drug abuse.

He, therefore, urged parents and other stakeholders to pay closer attention to the mental well-being of young people and take early signs of substance abuse and mental health difficulties seriously.

IN another development, a United Kingdom (UK)-based Nigerian curator, Oluwaseun Dosunmu, has planned to bring artists, cultural leaders and creative-health professionals together for a Global Creative Wellbeing Convention on October 10, 2026.

The hybrid event, scheduled to mark World Mental Health Day, will examine mental health and wellbeing challenges affecting creatives.

Dosunmu, a Bradford-based

curator and Combined Arts Producer, said the convention would provide a safe space for creatives to discuss the realities behind their careers.

He said the convention would encourage creatives to move "from Art to Heart" and support one another through difficult experiences.

"My goal is to create a community of artists, who do not only use their art and abilities to express themselves, but also support one another through difficult situations," he said.

Meanwhile, the keynote will be delivered by the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Red Media, Deji Razaq, while artists and creatives, including Moyosore Martins, Joachim Keke, Elizabeth Olubunmi and Nosa Iyobele, are expected to participate.

The programme will feature

discussions, artists' lived experiences, live painting, dance, poetry, performances and exhibitions.

Ogun's pension commitment reaches N157.9b as Abiodun approves N5.83b for retirees

[Oyebanji to present N490.74b 2027 budget proposal to Assembly](#)

From **Ayodele Afolabi**, Ado-Ekiti

OGUN State Government, yesterday, said that it had committed N157.9 billion to pension-related payments since May 29, 2019, following the release of an additional N5.83 billion for gratuity and additional pension benefits to retirees.

The latest release, approved at the September 24, 2026 meeting of the Joint Accounts Allocation Committee (JAAC), was part of the administration's efforts to clear outstanding retirement obligations and improve the welfare of senior citizens who served the state.

Head of Service, Olanrewaju Saka, said N4,906,950,967.98 of the funds would be used to pay gratuity to local council pensioners who retired in 2022 and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) retirees who retired in 2021.

The remaining N918,596,179.16, he said, was earmarked for additional pension benefits to eligible retirees under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).

IN another development, Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has planned to present the proposed 2027 Budget of N490,740,209,860.38 to the State House of Assembly for consideration and passage.

A statement by the Commissioner for Information, Taiwo Olatunbosun, said the budget presentation followed its approval by the State Executive Council.

Olanipekun to deliver FUOYE lecture today

ALEGAL luminary and renowned constitutional lawyer, Wole Olanipekun (SAN), has been scheduled to deliver the fifth yearly Faculty of Law lecture of the Federal University Oye Ekiti (FUOYE) today.

Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Timothy Akomolede, in a statement, said that Olanipekun would speak to the university's law and digital communities and on the topic: "The Jurisprudence Criminal Defamation and Cyberstalking Under Nigerian Law; Examining the Intersection of Legal Theory, Human Dignity and Digital Responsibilities."

The Special Guest of Honour for the event is retired Justice, Prof. Alaba Omolaiye-Ajileye, while FUOYE's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Joshua Olalekan Ogunwole, will preside at the occasion.



Chief Executive Officer and Senior Partner, J. Soji-George Consultant Nigeria Ltd., Prof. Olusoji George (left); representative of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Establishment and Training, Adedolapo Ajayi; Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Innovation and Enterprise, University of Kigali, Rwanda, Prof. Ogechi Adeola, and Director of Learning and Development, Lagos State Ministry of Establishment and Training, Biodun Akindele, during the Executive Leadership Masterclass in AI, Governance and Economic Transformation in Lagos, yesterday. PHOTO: AYODELE ADENIRAN

Lagos-bound passenger dies on board Kenya Airways flight

By **Olusegun Koiki**

ALAGOS-BOUND male passenger on a Kenya Airways flight from Nairobi, Kenya, has died after reportedly becoming restless and aggressive on board the aircraft.

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), which confirmed the development, said the police had taken over the investigation into the circumstances surrounding the passenger's death.

The passenger, whose identity was not immediately disclosed, reportedly became

unresponsive about 20 minutes before the aircraft landed at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA), Lagos, on Tuesday night.

Kenya Airways, in a statement yesterday, said the medical emergency occurred at about 9:20 p.m., shortly before the aircraft was due to land.

According to the airline, the crew responded immediately by administering first aid and following established emergency procedures on the passenger before the aircraft landed at the airport.

The statement said: "Upon landing at Murtala Muhammed International Airport at 21:41 hours, the aircraft was met by medical personnel, and upon further examination, it was confirmed that the passenger had passed away."

Director of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection of the NCAA, Michael Achimugu, said the airline's Country Manager briefed the agency about the incident yesterday.

Achimugu said the passenger had reportedly been

picked up from Madagascar after Customs authorities allegedly denied him entry into the country.

He said that Kenya Airways, having transported the passenger into the country, was expected to return him to his point of departure.

The NCAA official said the passenger subsequently became restless and aggressive during the flight and purportedly attempted to gain access to the cockpit before trying to open the rear door of the aircraft.

FG releases eight-month CONTA for non-academic tertiary staff

From **Owede Agbajileke**, Abuja

THE Federal Government has released the Consolidated Non-Academic Staff Tertiary Institutions Allowance (CONTA) to non-academic workers in federal universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, covering January to August 2026.

Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, announced the payment yesterday, saying it was aimed at boosting staff welfare, strengthening industrial harmony and pre-

SSANU confirms release after strike threats

venting disruptions to academic activities across the nation's tertiary institutions. Alausa said the payment demonstrated President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration's commitment to fulfilling its obligations to workers and creating a stable environment for the delivery of quality education.

He said the welfare and motivation of both academic and non-academic personnel remained critical to the effective functioning of tertiary institutions and the development of Nigeria's human capital.

According to him, the release of CONTA was part of the government's sustained efforts to address legitimate welfare concerns and minimise industrial disputes that could disrupt the academic calendar.

MEANWHILE, the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) has confirmed that the Federal Government has released eight months' salary arrears to its members.

The release follows a 14-day ultimatum issued to the government to pay up the salary arrears. SSANU's leadership described the prompt intervention as a demonstration of responsiveness by the Federal Government and underscored the commitment of Alausa to honouring agreements reached with university-based unions.

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Situation Room: CSOs, parties caught between legality, electoral accountability

By Seye Olumide

THE 2027 elections could trigger a fresh battle for credibility as political parties, civil society organisations, media platforms and civic technology groups increasingly generate their own election data, raising overlapping concerns on electoral accountability and potential illegality of the process.

Imagine a voter leaving a polling unit after watching the votes counted and the result sheet completed, only to get home and find a different result circulating on his phone.

A political party has released its own figures. A civil society situation room says its observers recorded another set. A civic technology platform has published a projection. Social media users are already declaring winners, while the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)—the only body legally permitted to declare results—is still collating the official outcome.

For the voter, the question is no longer simply whether his vote was counted. It is: which result should he believe?

That odd question could become increasingly important in the 2027 general elections as civil society organisations (CSOs), political parties, media organisations and civic technology groups expand their independent election-monitoring, verification and results-analysis platforms.

The growing number of situation rooms and independent data-gathering

- Independent figures risk being mistaken for official results
- How Osun poll exposed opportunities, challenges of parallel verification
- AI deepfakes raise fresh threat to credibility of election information
- Experts urge clearer distinction between observation, projection and declaration

initiatives is intended to strengthen transparency and provide an additional check on the electoral process.

But it is also creating a more complicated information environment in which several actors can observe the same election, produce different figures and disseminate them to millions of Nigerians within minutes.

The danger is not independent scrutiny itself; it is what happens when observation, verification, projection, parallel tabulation and official declaration begin to look the same to the public.

In a closely contested election, conflicting figures can become more than a disagreement over numbers. They can fuel suspicion, trigger premature claims of victory or manipulation, deepen mistrust of the electoral umpire and create fertile ground for misinformation and disinformation.

This is the dilemma confronting Nigeria ahead of 2027: how to preserve the valuable role of independent election monitors without allowing multiple sources of election information to become competing claims to electoral authority.

The challenge has become more urgent with the rapid development of artificial intelligence, deepfakes and instant digital communication.

At a World Press Conference

and National Stakeholders Meeting in Abuja on Tuesday, INEC Chairman, Prof Joash Amupitan, announced the establishment of a dedicated Artificial Intelligence Division within the commission's Information and Communications Technology Department to strengthen results verification and detect anomalies.

He said automated AI auditing tools had already been incorporated into the commission's results-verification process, while a five-pillar AI governance framework with mandatory human oversight was being developed.

Amupitan also warned of a new dimension to election misinformation: the ability of generative AI to produce convincing fake voices, videos, result sheets and other official-looking documents.

"The greater danger is not any single falsehood. When deepfakes render lies believable, real truth is treated with scepticism, and cynicism replaces civil engagement," he said.

The warning comes against the backdrop of an electoral environment that has changed dramatically.

Today, an election is no longer experienced only at the polling unit or collation

centre. It is simultaneously being watched through WhatsApp groups, X, Facebook, television, online news platforms, party situation rooms, CSO monitoring centres and civic technology platforms.

Organisations including the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, Yiaga Africa, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Electoral Hub, CLEEN Foundation and Women Situation Room Nigeria have, at different times, operated election-monitoring, verification or situation-room initiatives.

Their contribution has often been significant. Independent observers can document incidents that might otherwise go unnoticed, compare polling-unit results

with official figures, identify irregularities and provide citizens with another means of scrutinising the electoral process.

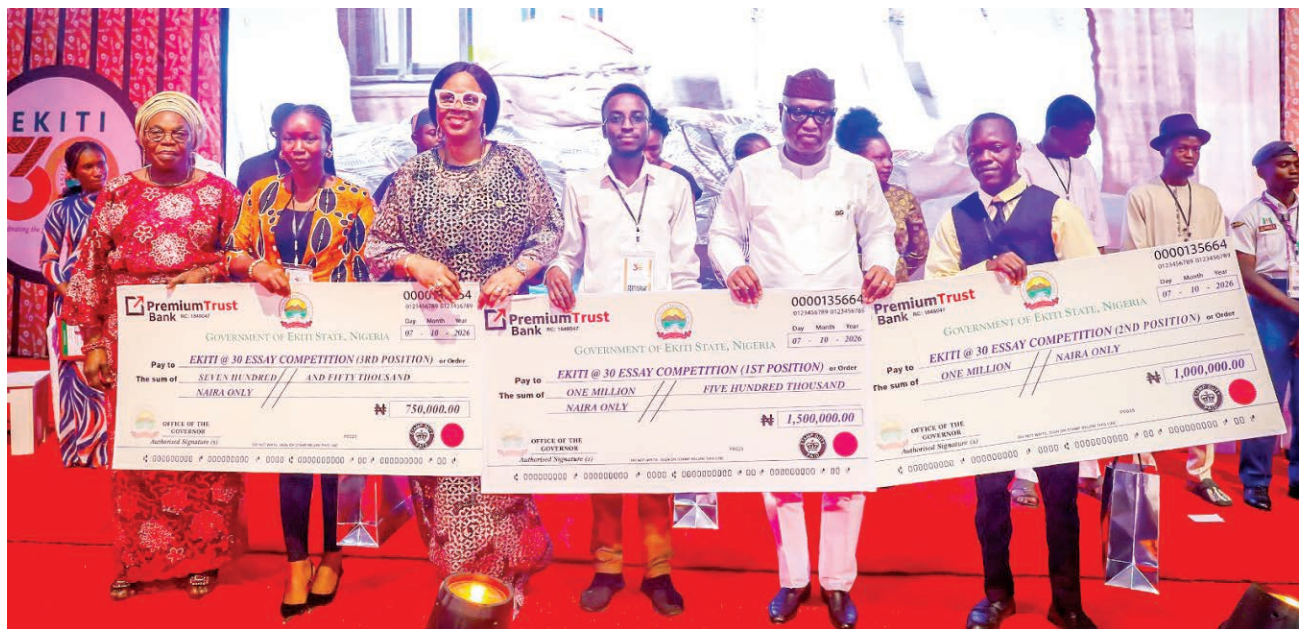
But recent elections have also exposed the difficulty of managing several streams of election information at the same time.

From verification to competing claims

THE 2022 Osun governorship election offered an early warning. Yiaga Africa deployed its Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT), a statistical methodology designed to independently verify official election results. Its findings broadly corresponded with the results later announced by INEC.

But reports suggesting that Yiaga's analysis amounted to a declaration of an alternative

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



Deputy Governor, Ekiti State, Mrs Monisade Afuye; Second runner-up, Ekiti At 30 Youth Essay Competition, Miss Ayomide Janet Olafaiji; Wife of Ekiti State Governor, Dr Olayemi Oyebarji; winner of the essay competition, Peace Adewole Ogunjemilua; Governor Biodun Oyebarji and first runner-up, Blessing Adefemi Adelusi, during the presentation of winners of the essay competition at the Ekiti Future Summit in Ado-Ekiti, yesterday.

NAF plane crash: Civil, military aviation authorities strengthen safety pact as recovery intensifies

From Olusegun Koiki (Lagos), John Akubo, Joke Falaju (Abuja) and Adewale Momoh (Akure)

THE crash of a Nigerian Air Force (NAF) aircraft at Igbokoda, Ondo State, has prompted moves to strengthen cooperation between civil and military aviation authorities, even as recovery teams intensify efforts to locate the submerged aircraft and investigators probe the circumstances surrounding the tragedy.

The ATR-42 aircraft crashed in a swampy area near the Naval Base in Igbokoda, Ilaje Local Council Area of Ondo State, on Monday, while on a routine mission from Benin to Lagos. Air traffic controllers lost con-

- Pilot diverted aircraft from community before crash, says Aiyedatiwa
- Sonar, divers, drones deployed to locate submerged aircraft
- Naval, Air Force commanders assess difficult recovery operation
- Obi pays tribute as Adebayo-Bugaje suspends campaign for one week
- Bayelsa mourns four indigenes killed in tragedy
- Ex-DSS director questions aircraft's mission, calls for wider probe
- Retired naval officer urges investigators to keep all possibilities open

tact with the aircraft at about 9:13 a.m., after which the wreckage was located and search and recovery operations launched.

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, and the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Aneke, yesterday agreed to deepen collaboration between Nigeria's civil and military

aviation authorities following the tragedy.

The two leaders, who met in Abuja, resolved to establish a joint framework involving the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and the NAF to strengthen aviation safety, airworthiness, certification, training and capacity building.

A statement by Tunde Moshood, who is the Special Adviser on Media and Communications to Keyamo, said the development was expected to narrow the longstanding operational divide between civil and military aviation, while also facilitating greater exchange of technical expertise between the two sectors.

Keyamo paid a condolence visit to Aneke in his office and signed the condolence register before holding a private meeting with the NAF chief.

Addressing journalists after

the meeting, the minister said the accident had reinforced the need for closer cooperation between civil and military aviation authorities, stressing that aviation accidents do not discriminate between civilian and military operators.

He said: "It is one country, one people. When disaster happens, it affects everybody. There were civilians in that air crash and when there's an air crash in civil aviation too, there can be military personnel. And so, we must cooperate in the area of safety."

He said the Federal Government would leverage the expertise available in both sectors to improve aviation safety and protect the lives of Nigerians.

According to him, the NAF already depended on some civil aviation infrastructure, particularly air traffic control,

making it necessary to expand the existing relationship into a more structured and mutually beneficial partnership.

Keyamo disclosed that he had already contacted the Director-General of Civil Aviation, Chris Najomo, and facilitated direct communication between the NCAA leadership and the Chief of Air Staff.

The minister stated that a joint committee involving the NCAA and the NAF would be established to coordinate collaboration in areas including airworthiness, certification, training and other aviation safety measures.

He stressed that the proposed framework would respect the statutory mandates of the respective institutions while creating room for greater technical cooperation.

Keyamo also offered NAF personnel access to relevant training programmes being undertaken by civil aviation authorities.

"There is no reason we cannot take some names from the Air Force. We have a lot of training we go for, so there is no reason why we cannot," he said.

The minister noted that the collaboration would not be a

one-way arrangement, pointing out that the military also possesses specialised knowledge and experience that could benefit civil aviation.

In his response, Aneke commended the minister for the condolence visit and his support for the Nigerian Air Force, describing the engagement as evidence of the growing relationship between the civil and military aviation sectors.

Aneke noted that discussions had already commenced on a framework that would allow personnel from the civil aviation sector to support the Air Force's safety environment, particularly in areas of airworthiness and certification.

He added that NAF personnel would also make their expertise available to the civil aviation sector where necessary.

He said: "We have both agreed that we need to move the aviation industry, whether military or civil, to a higher level. "We are serving the same government; we are protecting the same Nigerians. So, we are just a blend of each other."

NAF pilot averted bigger disaster before crash, says Aiyedatiwa

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

TRUEFACT: GOOD LEADERSHIP QUALITY:

NEVER TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PEOPLE

David said to Ornan, "Let me buy this threshing floor from you at its full price; then I will build an altar to the Lord and the plague will stop." "Take it, my lord, and use it as you wish," Ornan said to David. "Take the oxen, too, for burnt offerings; use the threshing instruments for wood for the fire and use the wheat for the grain offering. I give it all to you." "No," the king replied, "I will buy it for the full price; I cannot take what is yours and give it to the Lord. I will not offer a burnt offering that has cost me nothing!"

(1 Chronicles 21: 22-24 TLB)

Prayer: Every area I have taken advantage of people around me, Lord forgive me.

Email Address: g.truefact@gmail.com

Asaba Massacre: Asagba gives conditions for closure after Obasanjo's appeal

From Monday Osayande, Asaba
THE Asagba of Asaba, His Royal Majesty Obi Epiphany Azinge, has declared that there can be no closure or complete healing for the people of Asaba until a sitting Nigerian President

Ijaw group calls for mass action over gas pollution in Bille

By Suliyat Tella

THE Ijaw Professionals Association (IPA), in collaboration with the Coalition of Ijaw Interest Groups (CIIG), has called for organised advocacy and lawful mass action over the worsening gas pollution in Bille Community, Rivers State.

The group said the situation, which allegedly left gas bubbling across the community's land, rivers and water wells, had gone beyond routine complaints and correspondence. In a statement signed by its President, Pattison Boleigha, and Chairman, Board of Trustees (BoT), Gen. Paul Alaowei Toun (rtd), the association said both ground-water and surface water in Bille had been contaminated, while the community's water wells were producing blackish water.

"The entire Bille environment has been rendered unfit for human habitation by decades of unmitigated oil and gas pollution," the group said.

Mbah calls for national emergency in education, appoints 690 aides

From Lawrence Njoku, Enugu

GOVERNOR Peter Mbah of Enugu State has called for a quantum leap and the declaration of a national emergency in Nigeria's education sector to guarantee the nation's development and future prosperity.

Mbah argued that the audacity to fund a quantum leap in the nation's education sector would flow from an appreciation of its necessity.

This was as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), British Council, and other global and national education stakeholders have hailed the governor for making education the centrepiece of his administration's development agenda.

The governor made the call in his keynote address at the 2026 Enugu Education Summit and the unveiling of the Enugu Education Policy at the International Conference Centre, Enugu, yesterday.

Speaking at the summit, themed "Transforming Education for the Future: Leadership, Innovation, Partnership, Financing and Sustainable Reform," he said Nigeria had reached the point where education must be treated as a national emergency.

publicly apologises for the 1967 killings, 50 years after the Asaba Massacre.

The monarch made the declaration yesterday in Asaba, Delta State, during the 59th anniversary memorial of the Asaba Massacre, where former President Olusegun Obasanjo called on Nigerians and the people of Asaba to embrace forgiveness and reconciliation.

Obasanjo, who participated virtually as Chairman of the occasion, described the massacre as one of the most painful and terrible episodes of the Nigerian Civil War, saying the tragedy remained a painful reminder of the consequences of conflict.

He said: "This marks the remembrance of one very sad aspect of the Nigerian Civil War. Of course, the war was an unfortunate event, which should never have happened."

"But the Asaba Massacre, as it is called, was one of the most painful, one of the most terrible aspects of that war." The former President disclosed that he was moved to tears after receiving documents on the massacre from the Convener of the Asaba Massacre Memorial, Chief Chuck

Nduka-Eze.

According to him, the documents made him deeply sad that such an atrocity could have occurred in Nigeria during his lifetime. He therefore urged the people to make forgiveness a central part of the healing process.

"To all of you assembled: let us keep one thing in mind —

forgiveness, forgiveness, and forgiveness again," Obasanjo said.

However, the Asagba, while acknowledging the importance of forgiveness, drew a distinction between forgiveness and closure, insisting that the people of Asaba still expected formal acknowledgement and accountability

at the highest level of government.

The monarch said the community could forgive without forgetting the tragedy or abandoning its demand for justice and official recognition.

He, however, stressed: "There will be no closure, there will be no healing until a sitting

President, not an ex-President, but a sitting President, publicly apologises to us."

Glo to sponsor Ofala festival for Achebe's 25th coronation anniversary

From Chuks Collins, Awka

GLOBACOM has announced its partnership with the people of Onitsha as the official sponsor of the 2026 Ofala Festival, a landmark edition that marks the 25th Ofala of the reign of the Obi of Onitsha, Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe.

With the theme "Igba Mbo, Iga N'Iru-Strive and Advance: From Resilience to Progress," the 2026 edition brings into focus the resilience, enterprise and forward-looking spirit that have characterised the history of Ndi Onitsha.

For Globacom, the occasion represents another chapter in a relationship with Ofala that has lasted more than 15 years, reinforcing the company's commitment to using its platform and resources to preserve, promote and project Nigeria's cultural heritage.

The telecommunications company said its continued association with Ofala reflects its conviction that culture remains a powerful force for identity, community development and national progress. "Ofala is far more than a yearly cultural celebration. It is a living expression of identity, continuity and collective aspiration," Globacom said.

IPO: Dangote Foundation to empower two million vulnerable women

THE Aliko Dangote Foundation (ADF) has unveiled the Women's Share Subscription Grant Initiative, a pioneering financial inclusion programme aimed at increasing women's participation in Nigeria's capital market through the ongoing Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals FZE (DPRP).

The nationwide initiative is designed to support up to two million Nigerian women, with a special focus on low- and middle-income earners, as well as vulnerable women. Through the programme, ADF seeks to expand access to equity ownership, promote a culture of savings and long-term investing, and empower women with greater opportunities for wealth creation through responsible participation in the capital market.

The initiative is open to several categories of beneficiaries, including independent applicants earning N100,000 or less per month, verified participants in designated ADF programmes such as CROWN, ADFIN, and Mu Shuka Iri, eligible non-commissioned servicewomen and service spouses, as well as verified service widows.



Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori (left); General Manager, Integrity Heritage Oil and Gas Company Nigeria Ltd, Nelson Wilbert, and Chairman, Warri South-West Local Council, Sylvester Oromoni, during the governor's visit to Odidi and other communities affected by an oil spill in Warri South-West Council.

2027: Concerns as political tension turns violent in Edo

From Joseph Kanjo, Benin

ELECTIONEERING for the 2027 general elections in Edo State took a dangerous turn on Tuesday, October 6, as suspected political thugs reportedly opened fire on a convoy of some leaders of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Igueben Local Council Area of the state.

A former Labour Party (LP) governorship aspirant and now a chieftain of the ADC in the state, and the party's Edo Central Senatorial candidate, Herberta Okonofua, and other party leaders were said to have been attacked during the ADC leaders' political engagements in the area, while a party supporter, identified as Jerry Oliha, reportedly sustained gunshot

wounds during the attack.

The development has sparked fresh concerns over the growing political tension in Edo State, particularly coming barely a week after All Progressives Congress (APC) State Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe, was reported to have threatened to deploy AK-47s against perceived opponents in the party's drive to deliver 2.5 million votes to President Bola Tinubu.

In a statement by the State Publicity Secretary of the ADC, Chris Ojeikere, the party alleged that the attackers were led by the Igueben Local Council Chairman, Endurance Azemegbe.

Ojeikere lamented that it was the third attack on the en-

tourage within the local council, recalling earlier alleged shootings in Wards 4 and 5.

He alleged that the latest attack was part of a wider pattern of violence against opposition members and facilities in the state, citing similar incidents allegedly recorded in Etsako East, Owan West and Owan East.

"The Igueben Local Council Chairman has just led a team of gun-toting assailants to attack the entourage of Kenneth Imasuangbon and the Edo Central ADC Senatorial candidate, Herberta Okonofua. The hoodlum shot a young man, Jerry Oliha, from ADC Ward 6, at the premises of the Enogie of Igueben.

"The young man has been

rushed to the Irrua Specialist Hospital, where doctors are battling to save his life. This shooting is the third time the entourage was shot at today. First at Ward 4, and then at Ward 5, of the Local Council Area.

"ADC will come out with a comprehensive report on this unfortunate policy of violence of the APC shortly. The DPO of the Igueben Local Council Area has been informed and involved in the unfortunate incident."

When contacted, Azemegbe denied any involvement in the alleged attack, saying he was not in Igueben when the incident occurred and was only hearing about it from journalists.

Abducted Oyo NYSC members regain freedom in Imo

From Rotimi Agboluaje (Ibadan) and Ernest Nzor (Abuja)

THE 20 prospective National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members and one other person abducted along the Owerri-Onitsha Road in Imo State have regained their freedom.

The victims were rescued from the Amakohia-Ubi forest in Owerri West Local Council Area of the state following a coordinated operation involving security agencies.

They have since been taken to the Department of State Services (DSS) Hospital in Owerri, where they are receiving medical attention and undergoing necessary medical checks.

The Director-General of the NYSC, Brigadier General Olakunle Oluseye Nafiu, was at the DSS Clinic in Owerri, where

he addressed the rescued victims.

He was in the company of the Imo State Commissioner of Police, Director of DSS and Brigade Commander, 34 Artillery, Imo State.

Details of the operation, including whether any arrests were made or ransom paid, have not yet been made public.

The victims were abducted on October 1 while travelling from Ibadan, Oyo State, to NYSC orientation camps in Abia and Akwa Ibom states. The two buses conveying the prospective corps members came under attack near Umunoha in the Mbaitoli Local Council Area of Imo State.

Following the abduction, security agencies launched a coordinated search-and-rescue

operation to locate the victims and their abductors. The Imo State Police Command later said its operatives had located the kidnappers' camp through drone surveillance but were unable to immediately enter the location because it was reportedly mined with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).

The police subsequently deployed additional operational assets, including bulldozers and armoured personnel carriers, as efforts intensified to reach the victims.

The development also triggered anxiety among the victims' families after reports that the abductors were demanding N50 million for each victim.

MEANWHILE, Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodim-

ma, has applauded security agencies for their quick response in securing the release of the 20 corps members.

He said he was particularly pleased with the security agencies for their collaboration and patriotism in ensuring that the corps members were rescued unharmed.

In a statement he personally signed, Uzodimma also expressed satisfaction with the collaborative efforts of both the Oyo and Imo State Governments towards the quick release of the corps members.

He said that since the issue involved the security of lives, the government was cautious about releasing too much information to the public, hence the discreet manner in which it was handled.

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Scores injured as Okada riders, ticketers clash over multiple levies

From **Adewale Momoh, Akure**

SCORES of people were reportedly injured in Akure, the Ondo State capital, following a violent clash between commercial motorcyclists, popularly known as Okada riders, and ticket sellers over alleged multiple levies.

The confrontation occurred at different locations across the metropolis, with the riders accusing ticket sellers of demanding additional payments after they had already paid similar levies.

The incident reportedly caused a breakdown of order in parts of the city, with the dispute centred on a daily levy collected under the guise of an "emblem".

Some of the riders accused the Chairman of Akure South

Local Council, Gbenga Fasua, of authorising multiple charges.

One of the riders, Jimoh Akindele, alleged that the ticket sellers were acting on the council chairman's directive.

"We see this as double taxation because we cannot imagine Fasua selling an emblem for riders in Akure South. He claimed it was meant for Akure South Local Government and they are collecting N7,000 from us as a total package.

"This is totally wrong. He sent boys to move around different locations to collect levies from us. We learnt that the levy is not for the state government but for the Akure South Local Council, and the state government is not aware of it. That is why we are saying

Council boss denies involvement, urges calm

enough is enough. We cannot take it anymore," Akindele said.

Another rider, who identified himself simply as Adekunle, said the multiple collections had become a

burden on operators already struggling to make a living.

"We are not against paying government levies, but there should be transparency. You cannot collect money from us several times for the same

purpose.

"We pay in the morning, and another person comes later to demand another ticket. When we ask questions, nobody gives us a satisfactory explanation. They will say it is for Akure South Local Council.

"Fasua is even using the local

security outfit he set up, known as Tiger Base, to terrorise Okada riders in Akure, and this is very wrong," he alleged.

Adekunle appealed to Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa to intervene in the dispute to prevent the situation from escalating.



Injured victim and commercial motorcyclists during the incident

Nine-year-old arrested over alleged deaths of four family members in Yobe

From **Njadvara Musa, Damaturu**

THE Yobe State Police Command has arrested a nine-year-old boy over the alleged killing of four family members in Rugan Badali community, Karasuwa Local Council of the state.

The police said the child allegedly set fire to the family house while his two stepmothers and two younger brothers were asleep, resulting in their deaths.

The suspect was said to have committed the act after his father flogged him over an allegation that he had stolen a fowl.

Speaking with journalists in Damaturu yesterday, the suspect, whose name was withheld because of his age, allegedly confessed to setting the house ablaze.

Businessman shot dead in robbery incident

Herdsmen nabbed over alleged crop destruction

From **Monday Osayande, Asaba**

A businessman, Enebeli Robinson, has been shot dead by suspected assailants at Umusadege Ogbe Community in Ndokwa West Local Council of Delta State.

Robinson was reportedly killed at about 9:00 p.m. on September 30 after he allegedly noticed suspicious movements around his shop.

Sources in the community said the businessman, who became suspicious of the activities around his premises, attempted to leave the area with the money realised from the day's sales.

The assailants reportedly pursued him, shot him and fled with the cash.

The Guardian learnt that security concerns had earlier prompted the imposition of a curfew across Utogba Ogbe Kingdom in an effort to curb suspected criminal activities.

Residents expressed concern over the latest killing, urging security agencies to intensify surveillance, identify those responsible and bring them to justice.

The circumstances surrounding Robinson's death, including the identities and motives of the attackers, were not immediately clear as of press time.

Meanwhile, tension has also been reported in Isele Mkpitime Community, Aniocha North Local Council, following allegations that cattle destroyed crops on farms in the area.

The development prompted officials of the Delta State Livestock Management Committee and the Ministry of Agriculture to inspect the affected farms following complaints from farmers.



Robinson

Court jails three for trafficking two-year-old boy in Cross River

From **Tina Agosi Todo, Calabar**

THE Federal High Court, Calabar Judicial Division, has convicted and sentenced three men for trafficking a two-year-old boy from Bunyia Community in Boki Local Council of Cross River State.

The convicts—Felix Iorlumun, 18; Silas Shie, 19; and Samuel Moses, 27—were found guilty of three counts bordering on conspiracy and transporting the child by means of abduction for the purpose of exploitation.

The offences contravened Sections 13 and 27 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEA) 2015.

The case, Federal Republic of Nigeria v. Felix Iorlumun and two others, was prosecuted by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Cross River State Command, under Charge No. FHC/CA/160C/2026.

The convicts were said to have abducted the child, Wisdom

Emmanuel Achua, and transported him to Mbube Community in Ogoja Local Council, allegedly with the intention of taking him to Benue State.

They were intercepted by community vigilantes in Mbube, who alerted NAPTIP, leading to the agency taking over the investigation and prosecution.

The three men pleaded guilty to the charges when they were arraigned before the court in October.

Police recover AK-47, pump-action guns, arrest suspected cultists in Delta

From **Monday Osayande, Asaba**

THE Delta State Police Command has arrested three suspected members of the Black Axe confraternity and recovered an AK-47 rifle, two pump-action guns and ammunition in separate operations across the state.

The command said the operations were part of its ongoing crackdown on kidnapping, armed robbery and cult-related activities.

The command's spokesperson, SP Bright Edefe, confirmed the operations yesterday.

Edefe said operatives of the CP-Special Assignment Team (CP-SAT), acting on intelligence about suspected kidnappers and armed robbers, stormed a suspected criminal hideout in a bush around Uduere Community, Ughelli North Local Council, at about 9:00 p.m. on October 4.

According to him, the suspects opened fire on the operatives after sighting them, leading to an exchange of gunfire.

He said the suspects eventually fled the hideout

when they could not withstand the police response.

A search of the location, he

said, led to the recovery of an AK-47 rifle, two magazines and 55 rounds of live ammunition.



Suspects

Police arrest three as AAU lecturer dies in hotel room

From **Joseph Kanjo, Benin**

A senior lecturer at Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma, Edo State, Dr Matthew Uwuigbe, has died in a hotel room in Ekpoma, with police arresting three persons in connection with the incident.

Uwuigbe, a lecturer in the Faculty of Medical Laboratory Science, was found dead on Monday, October 5, 2026, at a hotel in the Mosco area of Ekpoma, Esan West Local Council of the state.

Spokesperson for the Edo State Police Command, Eno

Ikoedem, who confirmed the incident, said the hotel owner, manager and a 21-year-old woman who was with the lecturer had been arrested and detained for questioning.

Ikoedem said the command received a report at about 8:00 p.m. on Monday that the lecturer had lodged at the hotel and engaged the services of the woman, identified as Angela Defa Jacob.

According to her, the lecturer later asked Jacob to leave the room to buy water for him.

She said the woman returned to the room and found him lying lifeless, "prompting the report to the police.

She added that the circumstances surrounding the lecturer's death were being investigated, stressing that the arrests were aimed at establishing what transpired before his death.

Ikoedem said Uwuigbe's remains had been deposited at the Oriaifo Memorial Hospital mortuary for preservation, while investigation into the incident continued.

Pastor's supporters damage journalists' gadgets at Anambra court

From **Chuks Collins, Awka**

A mild drama unfolded at the Anambra State High Court, Awka, when supporters of the embattled General Overseer of Dayspring Assembly, Awada-Obosi, Pastor Harrison Anazodo, allegedly attacked journalists covering his court proceedings.

At least three journalists reportedly had their phones and cameras damaged during the altercation as supporters attempted to shield Anazodo from the media while he entered the courtroom.

The supporters allegedly used wrappers and their bodies to block journalists and cameramen from filming the pastor, while pushing some members of the press. They subsequently occupied available spaces in the courtroom, leaving limited room for journalists and other observers.

Speaking to journalists after the proceedings, the Anambra State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Tobechukwu Nweke, condemned the incident and said it would be reported to

law enforcement authorities. Nweke said he had drawn the attention of the court to the incident because the court premises were public spaces where journalists should be allowed to perform their duties.

He said the media had a responsibility to report proceedings and should not be subjected to harassment.

According to him, counsel to Anazodo apologised to him, the journalists and the court and agreed to replace the damaged gadgets.

Police arrest 80 suspects, neutralise two in Lagos robbery operations

By Eniola Daniel

TWO suspected armed robbers were killed during a gun duel with operatives of the Lagos State Police Command in the Ijora-Badia area of Lagos, as the command said it arrested 80 suspects in various operations across the state in the first days of October.

The Commissioner of Police, Tijani Fatai, disclosed this yesterday while briefing journalists at the command headquarters in GRA, Ikeja.

He said the arrests and recoveries were recorded in operations targeting armed robbery, vandalism, traffic robbery, public disturbances and other criminal activities.

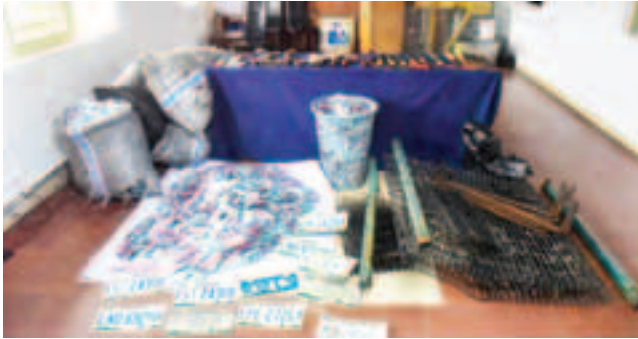
According to him, the command recovered six vehicles, four Beretta pistols, eight lo-

cally made pistols, four live 9mm rounds, seven vehicle number plates, six mobile phones, vandalised iron materials and electrical wires, six battle axes, four cutlasses, one toy gun and five sacks of suspected illicit drugs.

Fatai said operatives of the command's Anti-Kidnapping Unit, acting on intelligence, traced a suspected robbery gang to its hideout along Gasikia Road, Ijora-Badia, at about 10:00p.m. on October 4.

He said the suspects allegedly opened fire on the operatives, leading to a gun battle in which two suspects were killed, one escaped, while another, 26-year-old Patrick Azure, was arrested.

Two Beretta pistols and four rounds of live 9mm ammu-



Recovered Items

nition were recovered from the scene.

The commissioner said preliminary investigation indicated that the gang was allegedly preparing to carry out a robbery before the police intervention.

In another operation, nine suspects were arrested for al-

leged vandalism along the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road. They were identified as Mustapha Salisu, 28; Chidi Emmanuel, 35; Joseph Johnson, 24; Samuel Kingsley, 36; Fredrick Mathew, 27; Abdulazeez Mubarak, 25; Chibuzor Odira, 26; Abraham Ofiegede, 57; and Salisu Saleh, 31.

Iron materials and electrical wires were recovered from them.

The command also arrested three suspected armed robbers at different locations in Lagos. They were identified as Chubuzor Anasihwe, 31; Uchena Steven, 26; and Ejike Ani, 31.

Fatai said preliminary investigation linked the suspects to alleged robbery operations along the Ife Expressway in Osun State on August 23 and September 30, during which about five vehicles were reportedly stolen and valuables worth about N50 million allegedly taken.

A Toyota van with registration number BDJ 180 AJ, registered in Oyo State, was recovered.

The police also arrested 29 suspects allegedly involved in traffic robbery and the dis-possession of motorists and other members of the public along the Lekki-Epe axis.

Another 14 suspects were arrested in connection with alleged public nuisance and disturbances in the Maroko area.

The suspects, according to the command, have made statements while investigations continue to establish their individual roles and possible links to other crimes.

Fatai said operatives also arrested 28-year-old Emmanuel Amadi over the alleged robbery and drugging of a woman in an Ikeja apartment.

He said the suspect allegedly gave the victim a substance

NDLEA mourns NAF personnel killed in Ondo plane crash

By Bertram Nwannekanma (Iagos) and Segun Ayinde (Abeokuta)

THE National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has expressed condolences to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) over the aircraft crash in Ondo State that claimed the lives of NAF personnel and others.

In a condolence letter to the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd.), expressed sympathy to the Air Force leadership, officers and personnel, as well as

the families of those who died.

Marwa described the crash as devastating and said the loss of personnel who dedicated their lives to national service was a blow to the NAF, the national security community and the country.

He commended the Nigerian Air Force for what he described as its patriotism, gallantry and commitment to the defence and security of Nigeria.

“In this moment of deep sorrow, our thoughts and prayers are with the grieving families

of the fallen heroes, as well as the entire NAF family,” he said.

Marwa prayed for comfort for the bereaved families, strength for the Air Force and eternal rest for those who died.

He also assured the NAF of the solidarity of the NDLEA leadership and personnel during the period of mourning.

Meanwhile, the Agency has called for stronger community participation and collaboration with security agencies to curb drug abuse and illicit trafficking in Ogun State.

Seeks stronger community support to tackle drug abuse in Ogun

MACBAN suspends cattle movement to Bukuru market after attacks

From Isa Abdulsalami Ahovi, Jos

FULANI cattle owners and herders in Plateau State have suspended the movement of cattle to the Kara Bukuru Livestock Market in Jos South Local Council following a series of attacks on herders and vehicles conveying cattle.

The suspension, which took effect yesterday, will last until October 20, according to the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN).

The decision followed an attack on Sunday in which gunmen reportedly opened fire on herders returning home

to Bassa from the market, killing two people and injuring eight others.

It came less than three weeks after another attack on September 20, when gunmen reportedly attacked herders in Kassa community, Barkin Ladi Local Council, killing five and injuring one.

Following the incidents, Fulani leaders, including local government chairmen, Ardos and cattle owners, met in Jos to deliberate on the situation.

In a communique signed by the Plateau MACBAN chair-

man, Ibrahim Yousuf Babayo, the leaders said the suspension was intended to mourn those killed and reduce further risks to members.

“The meeting unanimously resolved that, as a mark of mourning for those who lost their lives and in the interest of preserving lives, all Fulani cattle owners and herders are directed to suspend the movement of cattle to the Kara Bukuru Livestock Market from 6 October 2026 to 20 October 2026,” the communique stated.

HURIWA urges Tinubu to act on abandoned Oba-Nnewi-Okigwe road project

By Bertram Nwannekanma

THE Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has urged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to intervene in the Oba-Nnewi-Uga-Akokwa-Arondizuogu-Okigwe road project, saying communities along the route are yet to see significant construction activity despite reported presidential approval.

In a statement signed by its National Coordinator, Emmanuel Nnadozie Onwubiko, yesterday, the group said residents were becoming increasingly frustrated by the continued poor condition of the road.

HURIWA said the concern was heightened by public comments from the member representing Ideato North and South Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Ikenga

Ugochinyere Ikeagwuanu, who had commended Tinubu over the reported approval of

the project.

The group said residents who had endured the poor state of



Deplorable Oba-Nnewi-Uga-Akokwa-Arondizuogu-Okigwe Road.

the road for years needed visible action rather than further assurances.

HURIWA recalled that Tinubu had approved the design and procurement of the 150-kilometre Oba-Nnewi-Uga-Ihube (Okigwe Junction) Road as part of infrastructure projects intended to improve connectivity and economic activity in the South-East.

The group said the announcement had raised expectations among residents, businesses and road users who continued to bear the consequences of the road's poor condition.

It also recalled that Ugochinyere had drawn the attention of the House of Representatives to the deplorable condition of the Akokwa-Arondizuogu-Okigwe section, describing it as a death trap and raising concerns about reported attacks on motorists.

Coleman: ‘Conviction sends warning to counterfeit dealers’

By Adaku Onyenucheya

THE conviction of a businessman, Samson Okonkwo, for selling counterfeit Coleman wires and cables has been described by Coleman Technical Industries Limited as a significant warning to dealers involved in the circulation of fake electrical products.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Coleman, George Onafowokan, said

the judgment demonstrated that manufacturers could rely on the justice system to protect their investments, customers and employees from counterfeiters.

Okonkwo was jailed with hard labour without an option of fine by Magistrate O.P. Mobee of the Ojodu Abiodun Magisterial District Court, Ogun State, on September 24, 2026.

He was convicted in Charge No. MOJ/138C/2025, filed by the Commissioner of Police, after

being arraigned on April 10, 2025, on four counts bordering on conspiracy to forge Coleman wire and cable products, unlawful possession of forged products and selling products bearing forged Coleman marks.

The case followed the recovery of 317 coils of cables bearing Coleman wraps and labels from Okonkwo.

During the trial, the prosecution presented evidence that the seized cables did not orig-

inate from Coleman Technical Industries Limited.

Physical comparisons and tests revealed differences between the seized products and genuine Coleman cables.

One of the key findings was the weight of the cables. Although the seized products were marked as two-kilogramme cables, one of the recovered cables weighed 1.2kg, compared with the 2kg weight of a genuine product obtained from the Coleman factory.

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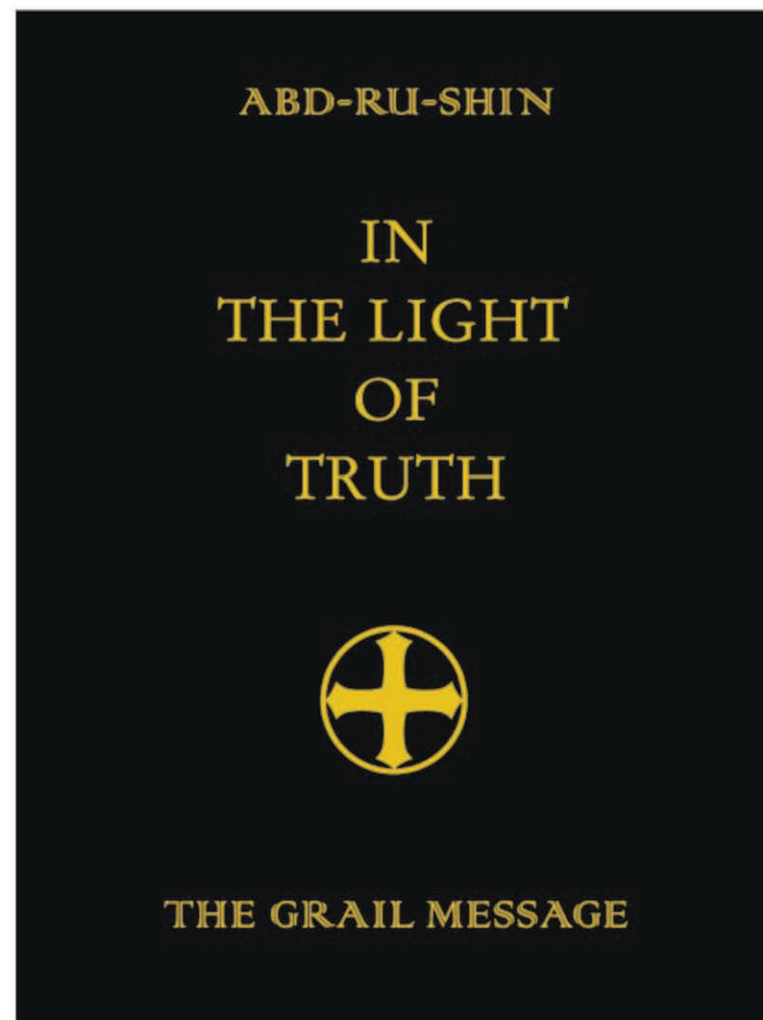
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IN THE LIGHT OF TRUTH

THE GRAIL MESSAGE

ABD-RU-SHIN



PUBLIC LECTURE

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Date: Sunday, October 11, 2026

Time: 4.00p.m. prompt



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Editorial

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2027: Stop recycling former governors into the Senate

As Nigeria inches towards the 2027 general elections, the reported scramble by no fewer than 18 former governors to secure seats in the Senate raises fundamental questions about the quality, character and direction of the country's political leadership.

The growing interest of former governors in the National Assembly is not entirely new. Several governors have successfully moved from state government houses to the Senate, while others are now positioning themselves to make the transition.

Among those reportedly linked to the 2027 Senate race are the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, Orji Kalu, Ahmadu Fintiri, Bala Mohammed, Seriake Dickson, Ifeanyi Okowa, Adams Oshiomhole, Ibrahim Dankwambo, Yahaya Inuwa Yahaya, Hope Uzodimma, Ibrahim Shekarau, Adamu Aliero, Yahaya Bello, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, Dapo Abiodun, Simon Lalong, Aminu Tambuwal and Mai Mala Buni.

There is, in principle, nothing wrong with a former governor seeking election to the Senate. The Constitution does not prohibit it. Indeed, the experience acquired by a former governor in managing the machinery of state could enrich legislative debates, particularly on public finance, security, governance and intergovernmental relations. But political experience alone should never be treated as sufficient qualification for another public office. The Senate must not become a retirement home, political sanctuary or refuge for former governors seeking to preserve their influence after leaving executive office. Nor should senatorial seats become extensions of state political machinery through which former governors continue to exercise power by proxy.

If former governors compete with other candidates on a level playing field and win on the strength of their records, ideas and popularity, there should be no objection. The problem arises when incumbency, political godfatherism, state machinery and illicit influence are deployed to bulldoze a former governor into the Senate.

That is where the real danger lies. A former governor who deploys the enormous political influence acquired in office to manipulate a party primary or undermine the electoral process raises serious questions about his fitness to become a lawmaker. Worse still, if a politician leaves the state government house only to seek another office as a means of perpetuating the same political practices that damaged the state

under his watch, Nigeria would merely be recycling its problems.

The Senate should be a chamber of serious lawmaking, scrutiny and accountability. It should not become a haven for political elites seeking to preserve influence, privilege or access to public resources.

There is also a troubling perception that some former governors seek Senate seats to retain political relevance or, in some cases, to shield themselves from accountability for their stewardship in office. Such perceptions are damaging to public confidence in representative government. No public office should be converted into a sanctuary from legitimate investigation or prosecution.

The case of former Senate President, David Mark, illustrates the broader concern about the danger of excessively long political careers without commensurate accountability. Mark represented Benue South in the Senate from 1999 and served as Senate President from 2007 to 2015. His long public career was accompanied by controversies and allegations of financial impropriety, including matters that attracted the attention of anti-corruption authorities. Such allegations should not be presented as facts in the absence of judicial findings. But the episode underscores a larger national problem: the tendency to recycle political elites without sufficiently interrogating their records in public office.

Nigeria cannot continue to recycle failure. If a former governor performed poorly in office, what compelling reason should Nigerians have to believe that he would suddenly become an outstanding senator? If a governor was accused of mismanaging public resources, abusing state power or undermining democratic institutions, the appropriate response is not to reward him with another platform but to subject his record to rigorous public scrutiny.

Nobody should be rewarded with another public office merely because he once occupied a powerful office. This is where the electorate has an indispensable role to play. Representative democracy is ultimately about the power of citizens to reward good leadership and reject bad leadership. Nigerians should not vote for candidates simply because they are former governors, wealthy politicians, party leaders or political heavyweights.

They should ask difficult questions. What did the former state governor aspirant achieve as governor? What happened to the state's revenues and federal allocations under him? What loans were obtained and how were they spent? What major contracts were awarded? Were public assets properly managed? What

debts were accumulated? How transparent was the administration? What was its record on education, healthcare, security, infrastructure and employment? Above all, did the governor leave the state stronger or weaker than he met it?

These questions are particularly important at a time when Nigerians are struggling with economic hardship, insecurity, unemployment and declining confidence in public institutions.

Granted that former governors are entitled to contest elections. Under the present constitutional framework, a former governor who satisfies the applicable requirements is eligible to seek election to the National Assembly. Section 65 of the 1999 Constitution sets out the qualifications for membership of the National Assembly, while Section 66 provides grounds for disqualification, including certain criminal convictions and, subject to the constitutional provisions, indictment for embezzlement or fraud by a judicial or administrative panel of inquiry.

However, former governors should not be allowed to bulldoze their way into the Senate as if a senatorial seat is their entitlement. For instance, a former governor whose record is tainted by fraud should not be allowed to contest for the Senate. Likewise, a former governor against whom a competent court has made a final finding of corruption, fraud or misappropriation of public funds should face appropriate constitutional or statutory consequences, including disqualification for a prescribed period, where constitutionally permissible.

Every former governor seeking a senatorial seat should also be required to publicly account for his stewardship. Such an accountability statement should cover state revenues, federal allocations, loans, expenditure, major contracts, public assets acquired or disposed of, outstanding liabilities and other material aspects of his administration.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) could, subject to the necessary legal framework, be empowered to publish relevant accountability records of former governors seeking elective office. Political parties should equally be required to disclose

the integrity criteria used in selecting such candidates.

This would shift the emphasis from political pedigree to public accountability. The reform should not stop with former governors. Former ministers, deputy governors and other senior public officials who seek elective office should equally be subjected to appropriate transparency and accountability requirements. The strongest restrictions, however, should apply to persons against whom there are established findings of serious misconduct.

The objective should not be to witch-hunt former state governors at all cost. It should be to ensure that public office is not used as a revolving door through which political actors move from one position to another without ever accounting for their previous stewardship.

Former governors must also learn to let go of power. There is nothing undemocratic about retiring from political office and allowing a new generation of leaders to emerge. The Senate is not the fiefdom of former governors. Neither is it a dumping ground for failed politicians seeking a second political life.

The 2027 elections must, therefore, be more than the familiar contest among political heavyweights. They should be an opportunity for Nigerians to demand a higher standard of representation.

The country needs senators who can scrutinise government expenditure, make sound laws, defend constitutional democracy, protect citizens' interests and hold the executive accountable. It does not need politicians whose principal qualification is that they once occupied a Government House.

Former governors should be judged by what they did with power, not merely by the power they once possessed. The message to political parties and voters should be unmistakable: the Senate must not become a sanctuary for recycled political failure. In 2027, Nigerians should vote for competence, integrity, accountability and a demonstrable commitment to public service.

The ballot box remains the most powerful instrument available to the citizen. Nigerians should use it wisely.

LETTER

Beautiful quotes of a lifetime

Why honesty is still the best policy!

SIR: There was a great and timeless expression filled with wisdom coming from ancient thinkers that, "Honesty is the best policy."

This ingenious and powerful message may sound old, cliché and stereotype but it still makes sense and relevant even till today and it carries with it loads of truth.

Search your heart and mind, you will definitely see the truth inherent in that simple statement.

Human beings, the world over, have lost confidence in leaders and people who indulge in lies, tricks, chicanery and subterfuge.

At the end of the day, such people reap shame, ridicule and even poverty as

compensation from the Almighty God. The Karmic forces never sleeps nor slumber.

Do not mix wiles and lies in your character and relationship with fellow human beings because it has grave and bad repercussions at the end of the day. People have lost confidence and trust in individuals who trade in lies, and their reward is going down from grace to grass.

There are lots of instances and factual experiences of honest and truthful people becoming rich and successful due to their unblemished and impeccable character. God hates liars!

Note these deep sentences and aphorisms:

"True blue will never stain. Howell, 1659.

Many a true word is spoken in jest. 14th Century.

Trust not a new friend nor an

old enemy. Kelly, 1721. Truth fears no colours. Ray, 1678. Truth is stranger than fiction. 19th Century.

Truth is the daughter of God. Fuller, 1732.

Truth never grows old. Fuller, 1732.

The whole truth and nothing but the truth. 17th Century."

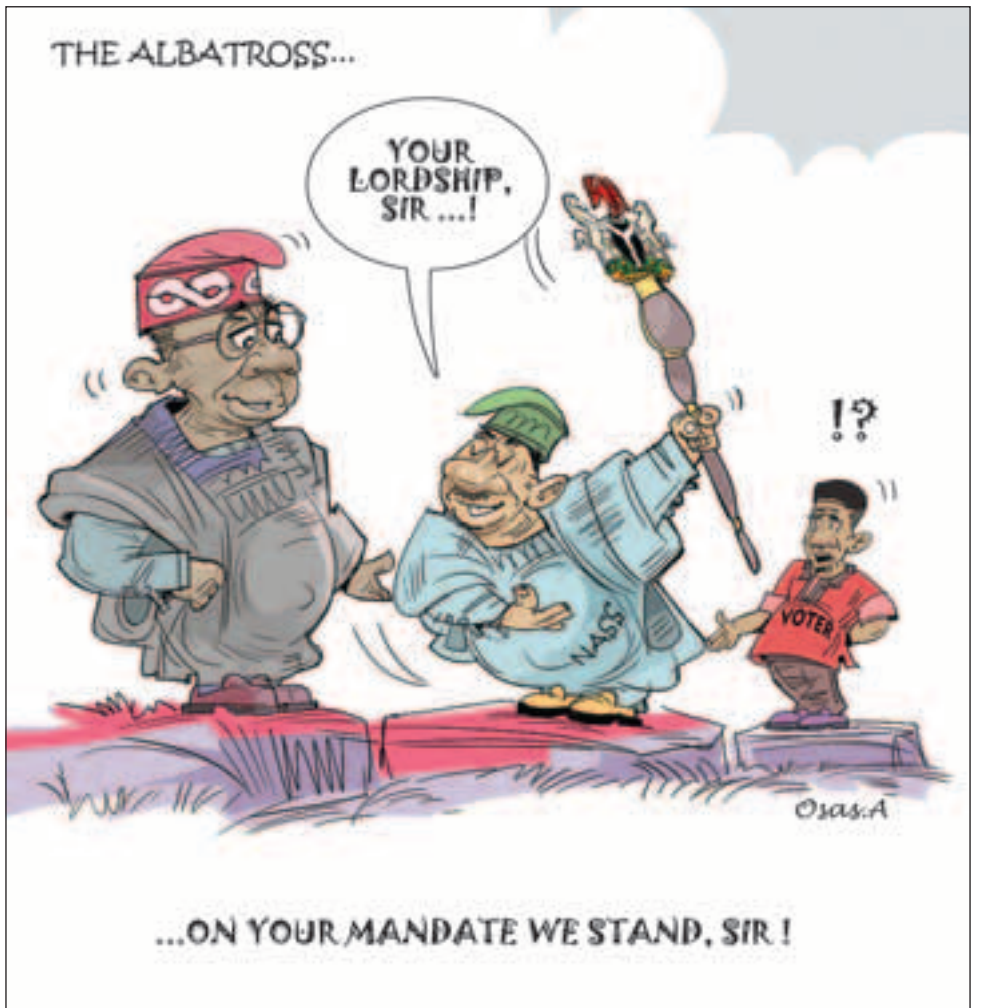
The Yorubas have a witty saying, "Ti iro ba lo ni ogun odun, ojo kan soso ni otito yi o ba." meaning, "Lies may tarry and stay long for ages but the absolute truth will come to light in just one day."

"Esan wa fun gbogbo ohun ti a n se laiye." meaning, "There's compensation and judgment for all we do here on earth."

I am sure you see why truth is good and honesty is still the best policy?

Think about it. *Segun Durowaiye can be reached via:*

(08055356855).



Opinion

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Nigerians in cement captivity

By **Oluwale Osagie - Jacobs**

ANY sensitive and informed mind will allude to it that Nigeria is currently experiencing a cement crisis. The problem is not about availability as cement is everywhere in good quantity. For good measure, God endowed Nigeria with limestone, clay, bauxite and gypsum which are the core materials for cement manufacture. Our current experience with cement is a doppelganger, a twin evil, with our current experience with the price of petroleum products.

Out of the 193 sovereign countries of the United Nations, Nigeria is number 11th and 9th in crude oil and gas endowments respectively. It is pertinent to ask why citizens of a country well endowed with crude oil and cement are battling with prohibitive prices of these commodities? It was for the reason of a similar circumstance that Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians - a group of believers who are rich beyond measure but living as beggars.

Most Nigerians are now hedged from accessing cement due to its high price. It is, therefore, a paradox that with the high price of cement in the market Nigerian cement companies are making fantastic profits. The reason for this is simple. The cement companies in Nigeria operate under a market structure called Oligopoly. Here, a small

number of large firms dominate the entire industry. This is possible because of high start-up costs and expensive technology.

In Nigeria, the dominant cement companies are; Dangote, BUA and Mangal. There is a good demand for cement in spite of high price because of these reasons: Under Oligopoly, cement is an essential good with inelastic demand. This means the amount of the product people buy change very little when the price goes up or down. It is like the demand for table salt; Cement has no substitute in modern construction; Government infrastructure projects and Real Estate Developers keep purchase orders active at high costs.

In an Oligopoly market one dominant company sets the price and others follow. With collusion and price fixing price will remain rigid. These cement companies have been luxuriating in a good market and cared less if we perish.

This scenario has been sustained for about ten years because cement production in Nigeria is an unregulated terrain. The three cement companies in Nigeria have a combined production capacity of about 65 million metric tons. This is compared to Egypt with nineteen cement companies with a combined production capacity of about 80 million metric tons.

Dangote Cement Company with plants in Obajana, Ibeke and Gboko has over 50 per cent share

of the Nigerian market. In the financial year 2025, Dangote Cement Company posted a revenue of N4.31 trillion (With approximately N3 trillion from Nigerian operations) and net profit of N1 trillion. Net profit doubled with a dividend payout of N45 per share.

Net Profit is what is left after paying all expenses, taxes and bills. Posting a quarter of revenue as net profit is a very rare occurrence in great economies. In the same year under review, BUA Cement Company earned a revenue of N1.18 trillion and a net profit of N356 billion. This gives about 33 per cent of revenue. This is incredible! Mangal Cement Company operates as a private company and for this reason is not required by law to file or share its income statements.

When Nigeria attempted opening its borders to bring in cement from Egypt there was an outcry by local manufacturers. They canvassed the need to protect home industries. They overlook the fact that Nigerians are enduring a housing deficit currently estimated at 25 million units.

This is due partly to increase in population, urbanisation, inflation, cost of land, cost of building materials and poor mortgage plan. Not up to ten percent of civil servants can build a three bedroom bungalow from their legitimate earnings at this time. The problem is compounded by gentrification - a process in which a poor area experi-

ences the influx of middle class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes. Here, the poorer residents are displaced. This aggravates the mushrooming of squatter settlements common in Nigerian cities.

A home is a fundamental need and a secure place for rest. A situation where senior civil servants cannot build a house from their salary after 35 years in service and without access to mortgage is a serious matter. The seriousness of the housing deficit is underscored by the advice of the Lagos State Deputy Governor to young workers to consider living with their parents or relatives until such a time they can afford house rent.

It is imperative that Nigerians are rescued from cement captivity. We should not be choked to death in the name of protecting local production. In advanced countries antitrust laws are enacted to promote fair market competition and banning unfair business practices. It outlaws price - fixing and cartels.

The government should audit profit margins of dominant producers and provide cheap credit to new entrants into the market. If all these fail the government should open borders for foreign imports preferably from Egypt.

Osagie-Jacobs is an economist and chartered accountant. He can be reached via :jacobsosagie@yahoo.com

Otedola Bridge: When the next crash is not merciful

By **Kalu Okoronkwo**

ON Wednesday, September 16, 2026, Otedola Bridge on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, outbound Lagos, offered travelers yet another terrifying glimpse of how quickly an ordinary journey can become a fight for survival.

Five vehicles, including a containerised truck, a loaded trailer, another truck and two cars were caught up in a violent chain of collisions, leaving wreckage strewn across one of Lagos' busiest transport corridors. For a frightening period, one victim was trapped inside a mangled vehicle, struggling desperately to escape as rescuers battled to reach him. It was a grim reminder of how thin the line can be between an ordinary journey and irreversible tragedy.

In its preliminary account of the incident, the Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) said a containerised truck developed a mechanical fault while in motion, lost control and rammed into three vehicles before another truck crashed into the wreckage. Five people were rescued alive. No fatality was recorded. LASEMA said its response team arrived about 10 minutes after receiving the distress call, while the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the police, the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and ambulance personnel participated in the rescue and evacuation operation.

That fortunate outcome is a cheering news. But it should not lull the Lagos State Government, the Federal Government or agencies responsible for the road and its safety, including the Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) into complacency. Rather, it should force a more uncomfortable question: what happens when the next Otedola Bridge crash is not merciful?

For a bridge with a long and disturbing history of crashes, injuries and deaths, September 16 should not be filed away as another traffic incident. It should be read as a warning: a stark reminder that the latest crash could have ended very differently, and that the question is no longer simply whether government can respond when disaster strikes, but whether it will act decisively enough to reduce the likelihood and severity of the next one.

That nobody died on September 16 should be a source of relief, not reassurance. Otedola Bridge is not safe simply because one potentially catastrophic crash ended without a recorded fatality. Sometimes survival is not proof that danger has disappeared; it is evidence of how narrowly disaster was avoided.

For those who are not familiar with the geography of Lagos State, Otedola Bridge got its name from a low-medium income estate consisting of about 100 or more three-bedroom bungalows built for Lagos State civil servants by former governor of Lagos State, Sir Michael Otedola, just after the Lagos State secretariat heading towards the popular Berger bus stop out of Lagos to Ogun State. It is sandwiched by two more illustrious neighbourhoods of Magodo Estate and Omole Phase 2. The residents of the estate just overlooking the ever-busy Lagos-Ibadan expressway would be traumatised by these serial fatal accidents beside their estate.

The history of Otedola Bridge is inseparable from Nigeria's continuing struggle with road safety, heavy duty vehicles and infrastructure management: overturned trailers, jack-knifed trucks, sudden walls of smoke, vehicles crushed against one another, kilometres of gridlock and the familiar scramble of emergency responders. These are no longer extraordinary images. They have become part of the vocabulary of commuting along the Otedola bridge corridor and, more broadly, on Nigerian highways.

The defining tragedy came on June 28, 2018, when a fuel-laden tanker crashed and exploded on Otedola Bridge. The Federal Road Safety Corps confirmed nine deaths at the scene and reported that

54 vehicles were burnt, including buses, trucks, a tricycle and cars. Rescue operations continued as emergency workers dealt with the devastation and the massive traffic disruption that followed.

The precise casualty figure was later the subject of varying reports as rescue operations continued, but the essential fact remains: Otedola Bridge had demonstrated its capacity to turn a traffic incident into a mass casualty disaster within minutes.

The 2018 incidence should have changed the way the location was treated. It should have triggered a comprehensive safety audit. It should have prompted a forensic examination of the recurring causes of heavy-vehicle crashes. It should have produced a sustained strategy for preventing a recurrence. Yet the accidents continued.

The Federal Road Safety Corps' analysis of the Kara Bridge, Otedola Bridge and OPIC corridor recorded 256 road traffic crashes between January 2018 and June 2020. Of those, 39 occurred at Otedola Bridge, representing 15 per cent of the crashes recorded across the corridor. The FRSC identified speed violation as the leading recorded contributory factor, followed by brake failure, mechanical deficiency and tyre bursts. The report also recorded 36 fatal crashes across the corridor during the period under review. Those figures are important because they move the debate beyond anecdote.

One accident may be bad luck. Two accidents may be coincidence. But repeated crashes at the same location, involving recurring risk factors, constitute a pattern. And when a dangerous pattern persists for years, it becomes a governance question. The tragedy is that Otedola Bridge has continued to produce precisely the kind of warning signs that a modern road-safety system should be designed to detect and address.

In January 2026, a multiple crash sequence at Otedola Bridge resulted in the death of a trailer driver after two heavy-duty trailers collided, according to reports. Earlier, another truck reportedly lost control after a brake failure and rammed into vehicles on the bridge. In December 2020, The NEWS Magazine had already described Otedola Bridge as a recurrent nightmare, drawing attention to the frequency of fatal and near fatal incidents involving articulated vehicles.

Then came September 16: different vehicles, different circumstances, different days, but the same bridge. The same vulnerability, the same terrifying possibility. At some point, statistics must cease to be statistics and become a call to action.

Every new crash is followed by a familiar choreography: emergency responders arrive, traffic officers divert motorists, cranes and towing vehicles are deployed, victims are evacuated, traffic eventually resumes, officials urge motorists to exercise caution and life moves on until another vehicle loses control.

There is nothing wrong with emergency response. Indeed, the coordinated response to the September 16 crash deserves recognition. LASEMA said its team arrived approximately 10 minutes after the distress call, while other emergency and traffic-management agencies worked together to rescue the trapped victims and clear the scene.

But a society cannot indefinitely confuse its ability to respond to disasters with its ability to prevent them. The more important question is this: why should emergency response be the principal measure of road safety when the same location continues to generate emergencies?

The September 16 incident was particularly revealing because it occurred barely a day after another serious multiple vehicle crash at nearby Kara Bridge, amid ongoing repairs at the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. The corridor was already under enormous pressure when another collision at Otedola bridge compounded the crisis.

The emergency response worked, but the larger system must still answer for why the danger remains.

Perhaps one of the most disturbing questions surrounding Otedola Bridge is not why accidents happen, but why the frequency of accidents has not produced a sufficiently sustained intervention. One cannot help wondering whether the political urgency would be different if a minister, governor, senator, prominent business executive or another nationally recognisable public figure was among the victims.

It is an uncomfortable proposition, but it deserves public examination. Nigeria has often struggled with a hierarchy of urgency in which ordinary citizens can wait while matters involving powerful people receive immediate attention. That perception becomes especially troubling when the issue is something as fundamental as the protection of human life.

The question, therefore, is not whether government cares about human life. It is whether the institutional value assigned to the life of an anonymous commuter is genuinely equal to that assigned to the life of some powerful public official. On March 29, 2025, newly wedded, Chidozie and Joan Okoye were burnt alive on same Otedola Bridge when a tanker laden with gas caught fire following an accident and burnt cars and commuters.

Joan had come from the UK two weeks earlier for the wedding and was planning to go back with her husband who was working in a popular commercial bank in Lagos. But their marital journey ended even before it started. Like they say in street parlance, Nigeria happened to them.

A bridge is not successful merely because it stands. A highway is not successful merely because vehicles can travel on it. A road system is successful when it moves people efficiently and returns them safely to their destinations. People have pointed fingers at a possible structural defect on that axis as the cause of the constant accident. Coming from the Lagos State secretariat, that portion of the road dips steeply before rising again. For an articulated vehicle that uses hydraulic brake system, it may be difficult to break speed suddenly if effort is not made earlier to break speed from the Mobil fuel station nearby. From a layman's point of view. I think that section of the road needs a redesign to elevate it to the level of the rest sections of the road.

There is an understandable temptation to blame the driver. Certainly, drivers must bear responsibility where negligence, speeding, dangerous overtaking, fatigue or disregard for traffic regulations contributes to crashes. There is also a compelling case for scrutinising the condition of articulated vehicles. Brake failure, mechanical deficiencies and tyre problems have featured prominently in official analyses of crashes along the corridor.

But blaming the driver alone can become a convenient way of avoiding the larger systems question: Why are mechanically defective trucks able to operate on such critical corridors? How effective is enforcement of vehicle roadworthiness requirements? How frequently are heavy-duty vehicles inspected? Are there adequate systems for identifying repeat offenders? Are dangerous sections of the highway subjected to systematic road-safety audits? Are speed-control measures sufficiently effective? Are barriers, lighting, markings and signage adequate? Are towing and recovery assets positioned strategically enough to prevent a disabled truck from becoming a major obstruction? And, perhaps most importantly, what has government learnt from every previous Otedola Bridge disaster?

A responsible road-safety system does not merely ask who caused the last accident. It asks why the environment allowed that accident to become so destructive.

Read the remaining part of this article on www.guardian.ng. Okoronkwo, a communications strategist, a leadership and good governance advocate can be reached via kalu.okoronkwo@gmail.com

Opinion

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Anambra debt: Beyond the politics of numbers

By **Chiwuike Uba**

I HAVE examined the one-page financial handover document attributed to the Peter Obi administration, the latest three-page publication by the Anambra State Government dated September 16, 2026, and the various arguments that have followed. My conclusion is simple: the latest publication has not settled the debt question. It has made a proper reconciliation even more necessary.

The problem is not that the figures are necessarily false. The problem is that different figures are being presented as though they answer the same question when they do not. In public finance, dates, definitions and accounting classifications matter. A loan commitment is not necessarily a disbursement. A disbursement is not necessarily the same thing as outstanding debt. Outstanding debt at one date is not the same as outstanding debt twelve years later. And government liabilities are broader than conventional debt.

That distinction is crucial to the current Anambra debate.

The document circulated as the 2014 “Anambra State Handover Report” is itself revealing. The financial section is expressly described as a summary of the full financial statement. It reports local investments of N27 billion, foreign currency investments of \$156 million, certified State and MDA balances of N28.166 billion, an FGN-approved refund of N10 billion and estimated liabilities of N5 billion, producing what it calls a net balance of N8.666 billion.

But look at what is missing. There is no debt schedule. There is no line for domestic debt, external debt, outstanding principal on individual facilities, undisbursed loan commitments, guarantees or other contingent liabilities. Therefore, this single page cannot reasonably be presented as a complete statement of Anambra State’s financial position at handover.

But the reverse argument is equally important. The absence of a debt schedule on this page does not prove that Anambra was debt-free. That is where the

debate should begin, rather than end.

The latest publication from the Anambra State Government provides another set of figures. It identifies eight financing facilities signed between 2007 and 2013 and puts their aggregate original amounts at \$123.771 million. It then states that the outstanding balance on those facilities was \$92.353 million as at June 30, 2026, equivalent in the table to N127.372 billion.

At first glance, those numbers appear devastating. But an economist must resist the temptation to stop at the headline.

Look carefully at the table itself. The third column is headed “Loan Amount in USD as at Date Signed.” The fourth is headed “Outstanding Debt in USD as at 30 Jun 2026.” Those are completely different measures.

The \$123.771 million is the aggregate of the original amounts associated with the facilities when they were signed. The \$92.353 million is the balance the State says remains outstanding on those facilities in June 2026. Neither figure is the debt stock as at March 17, 2014. And that missing figure is the elephant in the room.

If the purpose is to determine what Peter Obi actually handed over to Willie Obiano, then the relevant question is not simply how much financing was approved or contracted during Obi’s tenure. The relevant questions are: How much had actually been disbursed by March 17, 2014? How much principal remained outstanding on that date? How much of the approved financing remained undisbursed? Were further disbursements made after the change of administration? How much was subsequently repaid by each administration? Without those answers, we are comparing apples with oranges and then arguing about the colour of the fruit.

There is an important independent benchmark which cannot simply be ignored. The Debt Management Office recorded Anambra’s external debt stock at \$30.324 million as at December 31, 2013. Its revised domestic debt table recorded N3.026 billion for Anambra at the same period.

Those are official debt-stock figures from an institution whose job is to track public debt. They do not necessarily provide the precise position on March 17, 2014, but they are much closer to the handover date than a June 2026 balance.

This produces an uncomfortable but necessary conclusion for both sides of the argument. Anyone claiming that Anambra had absolutely no debt at the end of Peter Obi’s tenure has to reconcile that claim with the DMO’s official records.

But anyone claiming that Peter Obi handed over \$123.771 million in debt has an equally important burden of proof. The \$123.771 million in the new Anambra publication is not described as the outstanding balance on March 17, 2014. It is the sum of the original amounts listed at the dates the facilities were signed.

Those are not the same thing.

Consider, for example, a development loan approved for \$48 million. If only \$20 million had been disbursed by the handover date, it would be economically inaccurate to say that the State had already borrowed \$48 million simply because the agreement carried a \$48million commitment. If another \$15 million was subsequently disbursed after the change of administration, it would also be inaccurate to attribute the entire \$35 million drawn over time to the administration that signed the original agreement.

This is not political semantics. It is basic public-sector debt accounting.

The same problem applies to the present claim that \$92.353 million remains outstanding in 2026. That figure may be perfectly genuine as a current balance. But it does not tell us how much was outstanding when Peter Obi left office. A debt balance can change because of additional disbursements, principal repayments, interest, exchange-rate movements, restructuring and other factors. A current balance cannot simply be projected backwards twelve years and assigned wholesale to the administration that originally signed the financing agreement.

There is another important issue in the present

Anambra publication. Some of the facilities listed as State development financing were structured through the Federal Government rather than as conventional sovereign borrowing directly by Anambra from the World Bank. The World Bank’s documentation for the State Education Program Investment Project, for example, describes a \$150 million credit to the Federal Government of Nigeria, with funds to be disbursed to participating states, including Anambra, through subsidiary financing agreements. The project was also structured substantially around results-based financing and disbursement linked indicators.

This distinction does not make a state obligation disappear. If Anambra entered into a valid subsidiary financing arrangement, the state could have a genuine repayment obligation to the Federal Government. But the legal and financial description matters. The Federal Republic of Nigeria being the sovereign borrower from IDA is not identical to saying that Anambra State itself was the sovereign borrower from the World Bank.

The precise state obligation, therefore, needs to be established from the relevant subsidiary agreements, disbursement records and debt accounts. This is another reason simply adding original facility amounts and calling the total “Peter Obi’s debt” is insufficiently precise.

Indeed, the question becomes even more important for facilities signed in 2013, only months before the change of government. A financing agreement signed in 2013 does not tell us how much money had actually reached Anambra by March 17, 2014. Development programmes can involve staged disbursements linked to implementation milestones, procurement, counterpart funding or verified results. The World Bank’s SEPIP documentation, for example, explicitly describes a results-based component and disbursement-linked indicators.

Read the remaining part of this article on

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Prof. Uba is a Nigerian development economist, public sector finance consultant and governance reform specialist.

Beyond retirement, pension: Occupational illness we overlook

By **Timi Olubiye**

IMAGINE waking up on the first morning of retirement after decades of dedicated service, expecting to embrace freedom, travel, grandchildren, and the long-awaited peace that accompanies the end of a demanding career, only to discover that every attempt to get out of bed is interrupted by persistent neck pain, an aching lower back, numb fingers, stiff shoulders, and knees that seem decades older than the calendar suggests. The salary has stopped, the office keys have been returned, but the invisible debt accumulated over years of unhealthy work refuses to retire.

For many workers in Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial heartbeat, this is not a fictional scenario but an unfolding reality hidden beneath impressive job titles, corporate success stories, and bustling office towers. Occupational illness rarely announces itself dramatically; instead, it develops quietly through thousands of repetitive movements, endless hours sitting before computer screens, poorly designed workstations, stressful commutes that extend the workday, inadequate breaks, and organisational cultures that reward endurance more than wellness. By the time retirement arrives, many employees discover that they have unknowingly exchanged years of physical wellbeing for career progression, leaving families and healthcare systems to bear the consequences.

This growing challenge deserves far greater attention because occupational illness extends beyond individual suffering into the domains of management, organisational productivity, healthcare expenditure, social welfare, and national economic development.

Neck disorders, chronic lower back pain, repetitive strain injuries, obesity resulting from prolonged sitting, cardiovascular complications associated with sedentary lifestyles, hypertension intensified by workplace stress, and mental exhaustion are increasingly becoming occupational companions rather than isolated medical diagnoses.

In Lagos, where many professionals spend several hours daily navigating traffic before sitting for another eight to ten hours behind office desks, the combination of prolonged commuting and sedentary work creates a dangerous cycle of inactivity. A bank employee in Victoria Island may leave home before dawn, spend two hours in traffic, remain seated throughout meetings and customer interactions, eat lunch at the workstation, return to another lengthy commute, and repeat the routine five days every week for thirty years. Although this pattern appears productive from a managerial perspective because employees remain constantly available, the hidden costs gradually emerge through increased absenteeism, declining concentration, musculoskeletal disorders, rising healthcare expenses, early retirement due to disability, and reduced quality of life after leaving employment.

Management scholars increasingly recognise that employee health is not merely a welfare issue but a strategic organisational as-

set directly influencing innovation, productivity, organisational commitment, customer satisfaction, and long-term competitiveness.

Healthy employees think more creatively, make fewer costly mistakes, interact more positively with colleagues and clients, and remain economically active for longer periods. Unfortunately, many organisations across Nigeria continue to perceive ergonomic investment as an unnecessary expense rather than a profitable long-term investment. Adjustable chairs, height-appropriate desks, ergonomic keyboards, standing workstations, adequate lighting, scheduled movement breaks, and employee wellness programmes are frequently regarded as luxuries instead of evidence-based interventions that reduce injury and improve organisational performance.

This perspective contrasts sharply with practices in countries such as Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada, and Finland, where occupational health is integrated into national economic planning and corporate governance. In these countries, employers routinely conduct ergonomic risk assessments, redesign workspaces according to scientific principles, encourage flexible work arrangements, provide physiotherapy access, promote standing meetings where appropriate, support active commuting, and require regular occupational health evaluations.

Workers are educated to recognise early warning signs of musculoskeletal disorders before permanent disability develops, while employers understand that preventing injury costs significantly less than treating chronic illness or replacing experienced staff. The economic implications are profound because healthier workers contribute to greater productivity, reduced healthcare expenditure, lower insurance costs, prolonged labour participation, and sustained consumer spending during retirement.

Strong occupational health systems, therefore, become contributors to national economic growth rather than merely components of healthcare policy. Nigeria possesses tremendous human capital, yet much of this potential is undermined by preventable occupational illnesses that gradually erode workforce capacity. The consequences extend beyond retirees because younger family members often become caregivers, household income declines due to medical expenses, and experienced professionals exit the workforce prematurely.

From a social perspective, occupational illness also affects family relationships and emotional wellbeing. Retirees who anticipated active lifestyles frequently become socially isolated because persistent pain limits mobility and participation in community activities. Instead of enjoying recreational walks, volunteering, mentoring younger professionals, or spending energetic time with grandchildren, many struggle with routine household activities. Such experiences challenge conventional assumptions

that retirement automatically represents a period of happiness and fulfilment.

The management implications are equally compelling because organisations that neglect employee wellbeing risk higher turnover, reduced morale, diminished organisational reputation, and difficulties attracting highly skilled professionals who increasingly value healthy workplaces. Conversely, companies that prioritise ergonomic excellence often experience stronger employee engagement, improved retention, enhanced innovation, and superior financial performance.

Practical ergonomic interventions need not always require enormous financial investment. Simple measures such as encouraging employees to stand and stretch every 30 to 60 minutes, redesigning office layouts to encourage walking, providing lumbar-support chairs, positioning computer monitors at eye level, ensuring wrists remain in neutral positions while typing, organising wellness seminars, introducing workplace exercise sessions, promoting stair use where feasible, and training supervisors to recognise early symptoms of occupational strain can collectively produce substantial improvements. Employers should also reconsider performance cultures that celebrate uninterrupted desk time instead of meaningful productivity because remaining seated for prolonged periods should never be mistaken for effective work.

Government intervention remains equally essential. Occupational health regulations should be strengthened, regularly enforced, and incorporated into labour inspections across both public and private sectors. National awareness campaigns could educate employers and employees about ergonomic practices, while tax incentives might encourage businesses to invest in healthier workplace infrastructure. Public hospitals and primary healthcare centres should integrate occupational health screening into routine medical services, allowing early identification of work-related disorders before irreversible damage occurs.

Universities and professional institutes can contribute by incorporating ergonomics, occupational health management, and workplace wellness into management education, ensuring future business leaders appreciate the strategic relationship between employee wellbeing and organisational success.

Transportation policies that reduce commuting time through improved public transit and smarter urban planning would further decrease the cumulative physical and psychological burden experienced by workers in Lagos.

Ultimately, the true measure of organisational success should not be determined solely by quarterly profits, skyscrapers, or market share but also by whether employees retire with strength rather than suffering, mobility rather than medication, and optimism rather than chronic pain.

Read the remaining part of this article on www.guardian.ng

Dr Olubiye is an entrepreneurship and business management expert.

CRUDE OIL PRICE UPDATE Brent crude: \$105.8| WTI crude: \$102.5

FOREX MARKET UPDATE I&E window: NI,329.30

Bio, Sanwo-Olu, Elumelu charge OPS on W'Africa's regional integration

By Geoff Iyatse and Isaac Chibuife

WITH about 170 projects valued at \$108 billion in the pipeline, the private sector is expected to take the lead in driving the long-awaited single regional market under the 2026 West Africa Integration and Investment Summit (WAIS).

Sierra Leone's President, Julius Maada Bio, disclosed this yesterday in Lagos shortly before proceeding to a high-level meeting with key stakeholders driving the regional integration ambition.

Bio is co-chairing the second meeting of the WAIS Private Sector Advisory Board with the Chairman of Heirs Holdings, Tony Elumelu. The meeting was also attended by the Lagos State

Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who joined Bio and Elumelu in a media briefing.

Bio said the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had existed for five decades without achieving a truly integrated market for its more than 400 million people, stressing that the region must now rely more heavily on the private sector to translate economic integration into practical business opportunities.

"I am mobilising private sector in West Africa and around the world to get together and start to be serious about a free market in West Africa," the President said.

Elumelu said Bio, in his capacity as former Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, had approached

him, Aliko Dangote and other business leaders to support the initiative and had moved the summit's secretariat to Lagos to strengthen private-sector participation.

The Africapitalism advocate said the initiative was designed to mobilise resources, create jobs for young people and demonstrate that West Africa could overcome its development challenges through greater economic cooperation and private investment.

ment.

Sanwo-Olu urged African countries to focus on producing goods and services that Africans could use and consume, saying political leaders must provide the policy support, regulatory certainty and assurances required for businesses to operate across borders.

He said deeper regional integration would remain difficult unless African governments created an environment that encouraged businesses to invest, expand and

trade across national boundaries.

The summit is scheduled to be held in Sierra Leone in November. Chief Operating Officer of WAIS, Joseph Nganga, said the programme would begin with a pre-summit meeting on November 12, followed by a ministerial session on November 16 and a meeting of heads of state on November 17 and 18.

Nganga said the projects in the pipeline covered energy, agriculture, digital transformation and

critical minerals, with a separate focus on women-led businesses.

Among the projects are the Côte d'Ivoire-Liberia-Sierra Leone-Guinea (CLSG) transmission line and the Mano River and Abidjan-Lagos corridors.

He said about \$90 billion would be required to develop transmission lines across the region, while a \$1 billion project-preparation facility would support agricultural investments aimed at improving food security.

AELEX confirms advisory role in \$1.5 billion Dangote Refinery IPO

By Joseph Onyekwere

A LAW firm, AELEX, has confirmed its advisory role as legal adviser on the initial public offering (IPO) of Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals FZE, described as the largest single IPO ever undertaken in Africa.

AELEX acted as solicitors to the offer in the transaction, which also represents the first public offering by a Free Zone Entity (FZE) in Nigeria.

The successful completion of the offering marks a significant development in the country's capital market, potentially opening a new pathway for large-scale industrial and infrastructure businesses operating under the Free Zone framework to access public capital.

According to a statement on the transaction, the offering

brought together a consortium of financial and professional advisers.

AELEX advised as solicitors to the offer alongside another leading law firm, a statement said.

The transaction builds on AELEX's experience in capital markets and securities transactions, as well as its longstanding relationship with the Dangote Industries Group.

The law firm previously acted as solicitor to the issuer in the N60 billion IPO of Dangote Sugar Refinery Plc, which was one of Nigeria's significant equity offerings at the time.

Beyond capital markets transactions, AELEX has advised on major projects within the Dangote Group, including the financing of the Obajana Cement Project.

NGSTQB backs NITDA software testing rule, pushes risk-based oversight

By Adeyemi Adepetun

THE Nigerian Software Testing Qualifications Board (NGSTQB) has endorsed the National Software Testing Guideline introduced by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), but urged the agency to adopt a risk-based, tiered approach to enforcement rather than a one-size-fits-all standard.

The Guideline, issued in April 2026, requires software developed, modified, integrated or deployed for use in Nigeria to undergo functional and non-functional testing covering security, performance, usability, compatibility, reliability, maintainability and portability before operational deployment.

It applies to both the public and private sectors, with the depth of testing determined by a system's risk, data sensitivity, public exposure and potential consequences of failure.

NGSTQB, a professional body focused on software testing standards and certification in Nigeria, said the Guideline addresses a critical gap in the

country's digital economy, where software failures have disrupted banking, identity and public-service platforms relied upon by millions of Nigerians.

President of NGSTQB, Boye Dare, said: "Software has become the invisible infrastructure of Nigeria's economy; it sits behind every bank transfer, every hospital record, every government portal. When that infrastructure is not properly tested, the cost is not abstract; it is failed transactions, exposed data and public services that let people down.

The Board said its position was anchored on five principles: full support for the Guideline's objectives and implementation; alignment with NITDA's goal of ensuring software meets defined standards of quality, security and performance; support for independent, competent and accountable testing of systems whose failure could materially affect citizens or critical infrastructure; proportionate, risk-based regulation; and the treatment of compliance as a market-enabling investment rather than a late-stage certification exercise.



Director-General, National Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Sola Obadimu (left); Executive Secretary, Nigeria South Africa Chamber of Commerce (NSACC), lyke Ejimofor; Chairman, Nigeria South Africa Chamber of Commerce; Dr Ije Jidenma; President of NACCIMA; Dr Janice Ibrahim; Deputy National President, Dr Olawale Cole and others, during a visit to the NACCIMA office in Lagos, yesterday.

PHOTO: NAN

Banks, insurers face fresh pressure amidst push for decent-work compliance

By Gloria Nwafor

BANKS, insurance companies and other financial institutions may face mandatory decent-work compliance requirements under corporate governance rules, as the Association of Senior Staff of Banks, Insurance and Financial Institutions (ASSBIFI) seeks regulatory action to strengthen protections for workers in the sector.

The union called on the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) and other regulatory agencies to make compliance with decent-work standards a mandatory corporate governance requirement for financial institutions.

Acting National President of ASSBIFI, Fanimokun Adesina, made the

demand at the association's 2026 World Day for Decent Work celebration.

Adesina said the demand had become necessary as artificial intelligence, digitalisation, automation, platform work, algorithmic management and outsourcing rapidly transform employment in the banking, insurance and financial services sectors.

According to him, the sector has witnessed significant displacement of permanent employment by casual, contract and third-party outsourced jobs, with many graduates and professionally qualified workers employed without pension, health insurance, job security or collective bargaining rights.

gaining rights.

He said some workers were also compelled to surrender their freedom of association rights before or during employment.

Adesina urged the CBN, NAICOM and other regulators to ensure that financial institutions treat decent work as part of their corporate governance responsibilities rather than as a voluntary workplace practice.

He said employers must respect workers' constitutional and international rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, citing International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions 87 and 98.

Supporting the need to adapt labour regulation to changing

workplace realities, the Zonal Director, Southwest and State Controller, Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Mienye Badejo, said the government would work with stakeholders to review existing labour laws.

Badejo said the review had become necessary as technological changes and evolving workplace practices continued to reshape employment, particularly in the banking and insurance industries.

She said the ministry would liaise with critical stakeholders and push for the review of relevant labour laws to make them more compatible with emerging hybrid and flexible working arrangements.

515,675 Lagos customers unmetered as transformer breakdown surges by 455%

By Waliat Musa

TRANSFORMER faults on the 33kV network of IE Energy Lagos Ltd surged by 455.1 per cent in August, worsening supply interruptions even as more than 515,000 customers in Lagos remained without meters.

The development is contained in the August 2026 technical factsheet released by the Lagos State Electricity Regulatory Commission (LASERC).

The report revealed a sharp divergence in the operational performance of the state's two electricity distribution companies, IE Energy Lagos and Eko Power.

According to the report, IE Energy recorded 223 faults on its

33kV transformers during the month, compared with the previous level, while Eko Power recorded only four such faults.

The high-voltage equipment failures contributed to a sharp deterioration in supply continuity at IE Energy, whose total interruption duration on its 11kV and 33kV lines rose by 4,474.57 per cent month-on-month to 6,746 hours. In contrast, Eko Power recorded an improvement in network stability, reducing its total interruption duration on 11kV and 33kV lines by 60.19 per cent month-on-month to 173 hours.

However, the commission said Eko Power recorded 7,583 customer interruption incidents, a 4.11 per cent decline, with the incidents involving 802,907 cus-

tomers connections.

Fault-clearing performance also improved for both utilities. Eko Power recorded improvements of 15.17 per cent on its 33kV lines and 12.93 per cent on its 11kV lines, while IE Energy improved its fault-clearing performance by 5.56 per cent and 31.46 per cent on its 33kV and 11kV lines, respectively.

Network load-management pressures remained high across both franchise areas.

Eko Power recorded 3,145 load-shedding instances during the month, representing a 25.67 per cent increase, while IE Energy recorded 4,096 instances, up by 16.73 per cent.

The factsheet also showed a wide disparity in the metering

performance of the two utilities.

IE Energy added only 270 metered customers in August, resulting in its overall metering rate declining by 1.16 per cent, from 86 per cent in July to 85 per cent.

Of its total customer base of 1,120,107, the utility had 955,857 metered customers, leaving 164,250 without meters.

Eko Power, however, added 1,979 newly metered customers during the month, increasing its overall metering rate by 1.4 per cent to 70 per cent.

The utility had 590,256 metered customers out of a total customer population of 841,681, leaving 251,425 customers without meters.

BAKERY STAFF RECRUITMENT

LOCATION: KUBWA, BWARI LGA, ABUJA

A bakery in Kubwa invites applications from skilled, reliable and customer-focused candidates for the positions below. We seek versatile staff who can support related functions while maintaining high standards of product quality, hygiene and service.

MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ACCOUNTING

1 Bakery Operations and Administrative Manager

Duties Coordinate daily production, retail sales and staff deployment; manage rosters, attendance, employee records and onboarding; monitor purchasing, waste and operating costs; resolve customer issues and prepare operational reports.

Requirements HND/BSc in Business Administration, Hospitality, Food Science or a related field, or substantial relevant practical experience. At least four years in bakery, food-service or retail operations, including supervisory experience. Strong leadership, Excel and organisational skills.

2 Accountant

Duties Maintain financial records; independently reconcile cash, POS, transfers and bank transactions; prepare payroll and management reports; monitor supplier payments, inventory values and product costs; support tax and statutory reporting.

Requirements HND/BSc in Accounting or Finance with at least three years of relevant experience. Strong Excel and accounting-software skills. Food-production or retail experience is preferred; ICAN/ANAN qualification or progress towards qualification is an advantage.

BREAD PRODUCTION

3 Head Baker and Production Supervisor

Duties Lead bread production and coordinate with pastry staff; plan batches and production timings; maintain recipes, weights and quality; supervise ingredient use, hygiene and production records; train assistants and minimise waste.

Requirements At least four years of commercial bread-baking experience, including team supervision. Proven competence in mixing, dividing, proofing and commercial oven operation. Ability to organise production and deliver consistent results.

PRODUCTION PASTRY AND STORES

4 Bread Bakers

Duties Prepare and weigh ingredients; mix, divide and shape dough; control proofing and baking; follow standard recipes; cool, slice, count, package and label finished bread; prepare orders for dispatch and maintain clean workstations.

Requirements At least two years of practical commercial bread-baking experience. Sound knowledge of dough handling, fermentation and oven operation. Baking or catering certification is an advantage.

5 Pastry and Cake Makers

Duties Produce pastries, savoury snacks and cakes; prepare doughs and fillings; maintain consistent portions and finishing; cool, count, package and label finished products; fulfil customer orders and follow safe storage procedures.

Requirements At least two years of relevant practical experience. State products you can make independently, including meat pies, chicken pies, sausage rolls, doughnuts or cakes. Cake-decorating applicants should provide photographs of their work. Candidates may specialise in pastry or cakes; competence in both is an advantage.

6 Pastry Chef

Duties Lead pastry and confectionery production; plan batches and standardise recipes; supervise pastry and cake makers; develop products; control portions, ingredient usage and waste; oversee finishing, packaging, hygiene and order deadlines.

Requirements At least four years of commercial pastry-production experience, including team supervision. Demonstrated skill in pastry doughs, fillings, baking and frying. Cake-production and decorating skills are an advantage. Relevant culinary or catering certification is desirable.

7 Storekeeper and Purchasing Officer

Duties Receive and inspect ingredients and packaging; maintain stock and issue records; monitor expiry dates and reorder levels; compare supplier quotations and arrange approved purchases; conduct stock counts.

Requirements OND or equivalent relevant experience, with at least two years in stores, inventory or purchasing. Good numeracy, Excel and recordkeeping skills. Knowledge of FIFO/FEFO stock rotation and food-storage practices.

RETAIL SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

8 Front Desk and Sales Supervisor

Duties Lead the retail shift; oversee customer service, product displays, order collection and cash handovers; coordinate with production; handle complaints and complete daily sales and stock reports.

Requirements OND or equivalent relevant experience, with at least two years in retail or hospitality. Supervisory ability, good communication and competence with POS systems and cash-handling procedures.

SALES DELIVERY AND SUPPORT

9 Sales Assistants and Cashiers

Duties Serve customers; process cash, transfer and POS payments; package purchases; maintain displays; record telephone and WhatsApp orders accurately and coordinate collection. Support simple product posts where skilled.

Requirements SSCE/OND or equivalent; good communication, numeracy and customer-service skills. Retail or food-service experience is an advantage. WhatsApp Business, basic social-media and beverage-service skills should be stated where applicable.

10 Delivery Driver and Dispatch Assistant

Duties Check and load orders; deliver products safely and promptly; obtain delivery acknowledgements; maintain dispatch records and daily vehicle checks; support order assembly when required.

Requirements Valid driving licence appropriate to the vehicle, at least three years of driving experience and good knowledge of Abuja routes. Ability to read delivery instructions, keep records and handle food products carefully.

11 Cleaner and Sanitation Assistant

Duties Clean production and retail areas, conveniences and designated equipment surfaces; follow cleaning schedules; handle waste and cleaning materials correctly.

Requirements Ability to understand instructions and follow hygiene procedures. Reliability and attention to detail. Experience in a bakery, restaurant or other food establishment is an advantage.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must be honest, dependable, safety-conscious and able to work well with others. Candidates should be available for scheduled shifts, including weekends where required, and able to commute reliably to Kubwa. State additional skills that would enable you to support related departments. Relevant practical competence will receive strong consideration for production roles.

Shortlisted candidates may undergo interviews and role-specific practical assessments. Employment history and references must be verifiable. Remuneration will be based on the role, experience and demonstrated competence.

HOW TO APPLY

Send your CV and a brief application stating your preferred position, relevant experience, additional skills and current area of residence to:

Email: contact@bakeatkubwa.com Application deadline: 22ND OCT 2026

Use "Application — [Position]" as the email subject. Cake decorators should attach photographs or a portfolio. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.



CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PURCHASING AND SUPPLY MANAGEMENT OF NIGERIA (CIPSMN)

ESTABLISHED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT No. 21 OF 2007

NATIONAL SECRETARIAT: No. 2 Christian Chukwu Street, Gwarimpa, Abuja.

Tel: 08037879866, E-mail: cipsng@yahoo.com Website: www.cipsmn.com

LAGOS OFFICE: 27, Shipeolu Street, Onipanu Junction, Shomolu, P.O. Box 6995, Surulere, Lagos.

Tel: 08131098063, E-mail: cipsng@yahoo.com Website: www.cipsmn.com

COMMUNIQUE

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 2-DAY BATCH 'B' MANDATORY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (MPDP) ORGANISED BY CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PURCHASING AND SUPPLY MANAGEMENT OF NIGERIA (CIPSMN) HELD AT WETLAND HOTEL CONFERENCE HALL ABUJA, FCT FROM 23RD - 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2026 WITH THE THEME:

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICE IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS.

1. PREAMBLE

The Batch 'B' Mandatory Professional Development Programme [MPDP] was held from 23rd to 25th September, 2026 in Abuja. The programme was organized for procurement and supply chain professionals from the public and private sectors in line with the Institute's mandate for continuous professional development.

The programme drew participants from Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Parastatals, State Governments, and private sector organizations across the country. The training was aimed at updating participants on emerging contemporary issues and equipping them with sustainable procurement and supply chain management strategies to enhance value, resilience, innovation and compliance.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME

The objectives of the programme were to:

- Examine contemporary issues affecting sustainable procurement in both sectors.
- Strengthen knowledge of sustainable procurement and ESG compliance.
- Discuss the impact of supply chain disruptions, digitalization, and local content on procurement planning and ethical execution of contract.
- Promote ethical standards, performance, transparency, accountability and many more in procurement and supply chain practice.

3. TECHNICAL SESSIONS

Papers were presented, discussed, questions were asked by participants and adequate answers were provided by the resource persons on the following sub-themes:

- Understanding the applicability of newly revised Request for Proposal (RFP) for consultancy services.
- Enhancing Public Accountability Through Participating Budgeting System.
- The fundamentals of stores demand and forecasting in relation to warehousing management in the private sector organisations.
- Understanding the Applicability of newly Revised SBD's for goods and works- the practical approach.
- The characteristics of efficient contract management procedures and standards in the public sector.

4. OBSERVATIONS

Participants observed that:

- Many organizations still practice traditional procurement planning that does not integrate sustainability, resilience and innovation.
- Public sector procurement faces challenges of bureaucracy, weak policy implementation of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) 2007 as amended, and low adoption of e-procurement.
- Private sector organizations are more flexible but often prioritize cost over sustainability and long-term value.
- Global and local supply chain disruptions including forex volatility, inflation, port congestion, and insecurity continue to affect lead time, cost and quality of procurement outcomes.
- Continuous professional development is critical to keep practitioners of global best practices.

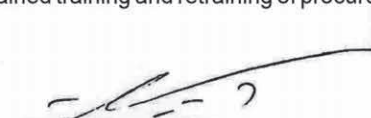
5. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the deliberations, participants unanimously resolved as follows:

- Public sector organizations should accelerate full implementation of e-procurement and open contracting to enhance transparency and efficiency.
- Both public and private sector organizations should adopt resilient procurement strategies including supplier diversification, local sourcing, safety stock management and flexible contracting.
- Procurement professionals should adhere strictly to ethical standards, due process and professional codes of conduct to curb corruption and procurement infractions.
- Government should review procurement policies to integrate sustainability, circular economy and local content development without compromising competitiveness.
- There should be stronger stakeholder engagement and inter-departmental collaboration in needs identification, market survey and procurement planning.
- The Institute should sustain the Mandatory Professional Development Programme as a platform for knowledge sharing and professional networking.

6. APPRECIATION

Participants commended the National Executive Council (NEC) and Management of the Institute for organizing the timely and impactful Batch 'B' MPDP. They expressed appreciation to the resource persons for their insightful presentations and called for sustained training and retraining of procurement professionals.


Saidu Zubair Umar
Chairman Drafting Committee


Dr. Evelyn Max-Alalibo
Secretary Drafting Committee



NIGERIAN AGIP EXPLORATION LIMITED RC299647

TENDER OPPORTUNITY

CHARTER AND OPERATION OF 1No MEDIUM WEIGHT HELICOPTER

NipeX Ref.No.00000036

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigerian Agip Exploration Limited (hereinafter referred to as "NAE"), hereby invites reputable Helicopter Operators to apply to be considered for inclusion in the bid list for the proposed contract for charter and operation of helicopter through the NipeX portal under **Category A**.

The work location, for ease of project administration, having due regard to climatic, hydrological and local area peculiarities shall operate out of applicants Lagos Base to NAE Offshore locations and to such areas as NAE may desire. The proposed contract term shall be fixed for a period of Three (3) years, with Two (2) successive options to extend for an additional two (2) years for each option. One single contract will be awarded at the end of the tender exercise to the lowest technically accepted responsive applicant. The Bidder qualification process is based on the third party audit and evaluation.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The Scope of work shall include but not be limited to the following activities:

- Provision and operation of one (1) medium weight helicopter AW139 of 12 seater capacity for offshore helicopter services which shall be supported by a technical back up of similar make/type to be used in the event of non-availability due schedule/un-schedule maintenance of contracted aircraft. The helicopter services shall also include 24/7 medevac.

- The Model of the helicopter shall be compliant with the requirement stated in the tender technical specification as appropriately equipped for offshore operations

- Multi engines IFR certified
- Be type certificated in accordance with EASA Certification Specifications 27/29 and/or Federal Aviation Regulations Part 27/29 or FAA/EASA recognized equivalent standards.
- Certification in Category A or equivalent
- Certification basis shall include full compliance with CS 27/29.631 or FAR equivalent requirement for the Bird Strike protection
- Performance Class 1 or alternatively Performance Class 2 / 2e approval / acceptance by competent Authority.
- The helicopter have not undergone any serious occurrence
- All necessary instruments for day and night flights as appropriate for area of operations.
- Lifesaving and safety appliances for flying over water
- Communication (Radios) and Navigation equipment appropriate for her class and operation.
- Room for 12 no. detachable pax seats sufficiently spaced in rows for comfortable seating position and a minimum required crew consisting of 2 Pilots
- The craft shall be crewed with a Captain with a total cumulative flight hours not less than 3,000 and a co-pilot with not less than 1,000 cumulative flight hours experience.

- Further details to be found in the Technical Specification attached to the ITT. The ITT is expected to be launched by Third quarter of 2026 and contract issued by Third quarter of 2027.

3. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

- a) To be eligible for this tender exercise, interested Contractors are required to be pre-qualified under **Category A 3.08.03: Air Transport Services of Passengers and Freight** (Product/Services) in the NipeX Joint Qualification System (NJQS) database. **All successfully pre-qualified suppliers in this category will receive Invitation to Technical Tender (ITT).**
- b) To determine if you are pre-qualified and to view the product/service category you are listed for, visit <https://vms.nipex.org/login> and access NJQS using your login details. Click on the 'Subscription' tab on the left-hand side of the dashboard to view your status and click on the 'Product Code' tab to view your registered product codes.
- c) If you are not listed in a product/service category and you are registered with NUPRC to do business, contact NipeX Head Office Post Square building, 1-3 (Building B) Ologun Agbaje Street, off Adeola Odeku Street Victoria Island, Lagos customersupport@nipex.com.ng, 08032850332, 0903845285 "with your NUPRC Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission certificate as evidence for verification and necessary update.
- d) To initiate the NJQS pre-qualification process, access www.nipex-ng.com, click on the 'Registration' tab, and select 'New Vendor Registration'.
- e) To be eligible, all tenders must comply with the Nigerian Content requirements in the NipeX system.

4. NIGERIAN CONTENT

NAE is committed to the development of the Nigerian Oil and Gas business in observance with the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Act 2010 (NOGICD Act) enacted by the Federal Government of Nigeria in April 2010.

Contractors shall comply with the provisions of the NOGICD Act and all applicable regulations.

Bidders that do not meet the Nigerian Content criterion will not be allowed to participate in next Tender Stage.

Pursuant to enactment of the NOGICD Act, the minimum Nigerian Content in any project, service or product specification to be executed in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry shall be consistent with the level set in the schedule of the Act and any other target as may be directed by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

Bidders are invited to express complete understanding and willingness to comply with the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act 2010 Pursuant to the above, bidders' submissions shall be evaluated strictly with the minimum evaluation criteria defined in the NOGICD Act provisions/Schedule. Only bidders whose submissions are in compliance shall proceed to the next stage of the tendering process.

The following are some of the Nigerian Content requirements bidders are expected to comply with in their technical bid submission

- a. Provision of detailed description of all work bidders will accomplish using Nigerian Resources (Labour, Materials & Services).
- b. Provision of current and in-place organization structure with detailed experience and skills of key management personnel with names. Provide evidence (personnel list and positions with organization chart to substantiate) of percentage of management that are Nigerian Nationals and the percentage of the total workforce that are Nigerians.
- c. Detailed past experience/present commitment to staff training and development of Nigerian personnel. Furnish details of training plans for Nigerians specific to this scope of work
- d. Nigerian Content Plan with detailed description of the role, work scope, man-hours and responsibilities of all Nigerian companies and personnel that are involved in executing the service.
- e. State any further innovative proposals that would enhance the development of Nigerian Content for the Project
- f. Demonstrate that entity is a Nigerian company as defined in the NOGICD Act 2010. Where capacity is inadequate, genuine alliances with multinationals companies for the purpose of technology transfer will be accepted; the alliance or Joint venture will demonstrate with binding Memorandum of Agreement signed by chief executives of the entities that evidences clear work-share ratio among the parties and time frame for growth or transfer to be achieved.
- g. Details of Company ownership and shareholding structure with certified true copies of CAC forms CO2 and CO7, including company memorandum & article of association and other evidence of entity's incorporation.
- h. Comprehensive description of company's Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) policies together with the programmes and HSE management system.
- i. Detailed record of accidents, injuries, damages and near-misses related to helicopters operations including aborted flights due to technical reasons for the past three years.
- j. Community Affairs policies together with programmes and records of community matters handled for the past three years.
- k. Evidence of Quality Assurance Programme Comparable to ISO9000 or equivalent
- l. Copy of Corporate Registration and Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) certificate for 2014 in the related area, Evidence of Compliance with NCAA Laws, Certification of Airworthiness, Communication License, Helicopter Registration, License and Survey Certificate.
- m. Copy of Air Operators Certificate with approved maintenance system.
- n. Copy of the Air Maintenance Organisation Certificate
- o. Annual financial report and relevant funding information from a licensed accounting firm for the last three (3) years prior to the tender year.
- p. Record of experience of similar jobs performed within the last five (5) years. Include performance record of each helicopter used.
- q. Provide minimum equipment list approved for each helicopter.
- r. Description of equipment currently owned by company that will aid the execution of the service. Proof of offices workshop, warehouse, spare parts, resources and other support facilities.
- s. Copy of Nigerian Content Equipment Certification.
- t. Any additional information that will enhance the potential of the company.

5. CLOSING DATE

Only tenderers who are registered with NJQS Product/Service under **(Category A) 3.08.03: Air Transport Services of Passengers and Freight (Product/Services)** as of **16:00 hrs. 29th October 2026** being the advert closing date, shall be invited to submit Technical Bids

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This advertisement of "Tender Opportunity" shall not be construed as a commitment on part of NAE, nor shall it entitle Applicants to make any claims whatsoever and/or seek any indemnity from NAE and/or any of its Partners by virtue of such Applicants having responded to this Advert.

- Please visit the NipeX Portal at www.nipex-ng.com for this Advert and other information.

Business

Rising cost of debt squeezes developing countries' public spending

By Benjamin Alade

RISING borrowing costs are putting increasing pressure on developing countries' public finances, with governments diverting more resources towards debt servicing at the expense of healthcare, education and other development priorities.

A new report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said developing countries paid almost \$1 trillion in net interest on public debt in 2025, nearly three times the \$363 billion recorded in 2010.

The report, published under UNCTAD's World of Debt series, warned that the rising cost of borrowing was undermining the ability of developing economies to finance critical investments and sustain development.

According to the report, 3.7 billion people live in 51 developing countries where interest payments on public debt exceed government spending on either health or education.

UNCTAD said the situation reflected a broader shift in the role of external borrowing, as debt that should provide

resources for development was increasingly absorbing resources through debt servicing.

"Debt should help countries invest in their future. But in many developing countries, the servicing of external debt now exceeds new inflows," the report stated.

Since 2022, interest payments on external public debt have

exceeded net new lending to developing countries, meaning external borrowing is no longer generating additional resources for development.

Instead, the report said, developing countries were becoming increasingly reliant on domestic borrowing, which often comes at higher costs.

UNCTAD said global public debt reached \$111 trillion in 2025, up from \$49 trillion in 2010.

Although developed economies account for more than two-thirds of the global public debt stock, debt has increased significantly faster in developing countries.

The report also highlighted a

persistent disparity in borrowing costs between developed and developing economies.

Developing countries paid an average interest rate of 5.2 per cent on public debt between 2010 and 2025, compared with 2.2 per cent in developed economies.

Africa's \$400b financing gap persists despite huge capital pool

By Helen Oji and Abigail Ikhanghu

AFRICA'S financing gap has risen above \$400 billion despite substantial capital in the continent, highlighting the difficulty of connecting investors with bankable businesses and infrastructure projects capable of driving economic growth, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) has said.

Principal Investment Officer at the IFC, Dafe Oraka, disclosed this in Lagos at a media parley organised by the IFC and Africa Financial Industry Summit (AFIS) ahead of sixth edition of its summit scheduled for November in Luanda, Angola.

Oraka said the priority should be to strengthen the link between capital available on the continent and businesses and infrastructure projects requiring long-term funding.

"We see opportunities in connecting capital more effectively to finance businesses, to finance infrastructure, and to create jobs in Africa," Oraka said.

He said the financing gap showed that Africa's challenge was not simply a shortage of

funds, but the difficulty of developing financing structures capable of moving available capital into productive activities.

Also speaking, Director of AFIS, Hicham Al Morabet, said the challenge was particularly striking given that pension funds, insurers, sovereign wealth funds and other institutional investors control more than \$2 trillion in assets under management.

According to him, African banks are recording strong returns, with average return on equity of about 19 per cent, yet businesses continue to struggle to access affordable long-term financing.

He said more capital needed to be channelled into productive sectors rather than remaining concentrated in instruments that do not directly finance businesses and infrastructure.

Al Morabet said achieving this would require stronger project development, better risk-sharing mechanisms and closer cooperation among governments, regulators, financial institutions and development finance institutions.

LSDPC goes digital, launches online payment platform

By Bertram Nwannekanma

THE Lagos State Development and Property Corporation (LSDPC) has launched a digital payment platform, PayPortal, allowing customers to settle their obligations online without relying solely on conventional payment channels.

The Corporation said the initiative was part of efforts to make its services more accessible, convenient and responsive as digital transactions become increasingly prevalent.

The Chief Executive Officer of LSDPC, Ayodeji Joseph, said the initiative was driven by the need to keep pace with changing customer expectations and the rapid growth of digital services.

Joseph said LSDPC, which has been part of Lagos' development since 1972, had evolved alongside the city and could not afford to remain static as the needs and expectations of residents changed.

He explained that customers could now make pay-

ments through the platform 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with instant confirmation of successful transactions.

Joseph said the initiative was also consistent with the responsibility of a public institution to regularly review its processes and adopt technology that would improve service delivery.

According to him, customers can access the platform by visiting PayPortal, creating a username and password, entering the required details and proceeding with their payments.

He said PayPortal provides secure access, round-the-clock availability and instant payment confirmation, giving customers an additional channel for settling their obligations to the Corporation.

Joseph stressed that the launch should be viewed as part of a broader transformation of LSDPC rather than simply the introduction of an online payment facility.

Business leaders optimistic on cross-border trade despite lingering concerns

By Tobii Awodipe

AFRICAN business leaders are optimistic about the outlook for cross-border trade, with 81.3 per cent expecting their international activities to increase over the next 12 months.

However, limited access to trade finance, credit-risk perceptions and gaps in the implementation

of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) continue to constrain the expansion of intra-African commerce.

This is contained in the preliminary findings of the 2026 PAF-TRAC Africa CEO Trade Survey, presented at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Public Forum yesterday.

The survey, conducted by the Pan-

African Private Sector Trade and Investment Committee (PAF-TRAC), showed that intra-African commerce has emerged as the leading destination targeted by African executives, ahead of China, Europe and the United States.

Despite the growing interest, merchandise trade within Africa remains low, accounting for

between 15 and 18 per cent of total exports, with little significant movement recorded despite the operational rollout of AfCFTA.

Now in its sixth year, the survey has expanded from 400 respondents in 2021 to more than 2,500 business leaders in 2026, making it one of the broadest assessments of African private-sector sentiment on trade.

Experts seek implementation of SAATM eight years after launch

By Olusegun Koiki

AVIATION experts and stakeholders have renewed calls for the effective implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), eight years after the initiative was launched.

The initiative was designed to liberalise Africa's aviation market, but industry stakeholders say African governments have yet to fully implement the programme.

As part of efforts to revive the initiative, the 2026 Annual Lecture of the Sam Adurogoboye Professional Training and Consultancy Organisation (SAPTCO), scheduled for November 5, 2026, in Lagos, will focus on unlocking the African avi-

ation market.

The lecture is expected to bring together aviation professionals and other stakeholders to examine why SAATM has yet to deliver fully on its promise of an integrated and liberalised African air transport market.

According to the Managing Consultant of SAPTCO, Sam Adurogoboye, the lecture will be delivered by former Secretary-General of the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC), Iyabo Sosina, who played a significant role in the development and launch of SAATM during her tenure at the continental aviation body.

He said the event would provide an opportunity for industry stakeholders to critically examine the challenges undermining the initiative and chart a new course for the continent's aviation sector.

Adurogoboye said the lecture would seek to redirect the attention of African leaders to the original objectives of SAATM, including the liberalisation of air transport, open skies, traffic freedoms and implementation of the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision.

SAATM is also regarded as a critical component of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as efficient air connectivity is essential to the movement of

people, goods, services and investment across the continent.

Adurogoboye lamented that the ambitious programme was yet to translate into the level of integration and market access envisaged when it was conceptualised.

He expressed optimism that effective implementation of SAATM would lead to better connectivity, economic growth and lower operating costs across the continent.

He added that removing barriers to market access and creating a more integrated African aviation market would provide airlines with greater opportunities to expand their networks while giving passengers more travel options.



General Manger, Business Development, Anchor Insurance Company Limited, Valentine Afegbai (left); Director, Technical, Adebisi Ikuomola; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ebosa Augustine; Director, Akin Taiwo, and Company Secretary/Legal Adviser, Ime Umoh, during the media launch of enhanced Third Party Motor Policy, Anchor App in Lagos.

PHOTO: MARVELLOUS OBASA

Shipping line raises surcharge on China's shipments to West Africa

By Adaku Onyenucheya

AFRICA shipping line, CMA CGM, has imposed new peak season surcharges (PSS) on shipments originating from China and Special Administrative Regions (SARs) to Nigeria and other destinations across West Africa.

The carrier, in a notice dated October 5, 2026, said the surcharge would apply to dry and reefer cargoes under short-term contracts.

The adjustment comes as global shipping lines continue to revise

freight-related charges on major trade routes, particularly in Africa, in response to seasonal demand and operating costs.

According to the notice, shipments from China and SARs to Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana and Togo will attract a surcharge of \$350 per 20-foot equivalent unit (TEU).

Shipments from China and SARs to Angola, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Namibia, Gabon,

Cameroon, Liberia, Senegal, Mauritania, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe will attract a PSS of \$550 per TEU.

CMA CGM said the existing surcharge for shipments to Guinea-Conakry would remain unchanged at \$200 per TEU.

The new charges will apply to loading dates from October 22, 2026, the shipping line said, adding that the measure was part of its continued effort to provide cus-

tomers with reliable and efficient services.

For ex-China shipments, the applicable PSS would be subject to filing with the Shanghai Shipping Exchange and/or incorporated into the ocean freight, the carrier said.

It added that basic freight rates would be available through its price finder, while bunker-related surcharges, terminal handling charges at origin and destination, and safety and security-related surcharges could also apply.

VACANCIES: FINANCE OFFICER & SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

A leading engineering and manufacturing group seeks competent and proactive professionals for the following positions:

1. FINANCE OFFICER

Reporting to: Head of Finance & Strategy

Support cash-flow planning, banking operations, allocation of funds, payment scheduling and strategic procurement financing. Coordinate with Sales and Accounts on collections and funding requirements, and flag financial gaps promptly.

Requirements:

- BSc/HND in Finance, Accounting, Economics or a related field.
- 4–6 years' relevant experience; banking-sector experience preferred.
- Strong understanding of cash-flow management, banking transactions and financial controls.
- Proficiency in Excel and familiarity with ERP/financial systems.

- Strong analytical skills, integrity, accountability and follow-through.

2. SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

Reporting to: Chief Accountant

Support accurate manufacturing accounts, monthly reporting, inventory and production costing, reconciliations and internal controls. Resolve accounting discrepancies and assist with statutory reporting and audits.

Requirements:

- BSc/HND in Accounting, Finance or a related field.
- 4–5 years' relevant experience, preferably in manufacturing.
- ICAN qualification is an advantage.
- Sound knowledge of costing, inventory accounting, financial reporting and reconciliations.
- Proficiency in Excel and ERP/accounting systems.
- Strong attention to detail, ownership and ability to meet deadlines.

HOW TO APPLY

Send your CV and application to [employmyskill@gmail.com] (mailto:employmyskill@gmail.com).

*Email subject: "Application — Finance Officer" or "Application — Senior Accountant", as applicable.

VACANCIES: MATERIALS & PURCHASING CONTROL LEAD

A leading engineering manufacturing firm is seeking to recruit an experienced Materials & Purchasing Control Lead to support local purchasing, supplier follow-up, stores coordination, and materials control.

The ideal candidate must have experience in a manufacturing or engineering environment, with strong discipline in documentation, quotation comparison, delivery follow-up, stock monitoring, and reporting.

Requirements:

- Degree or HND in Purchasing, Supply Chain, Business Administration, Accounting, or related field
- Minimum of 5 years' relevant experience
- Good knowledge of local purchasing, stores coordination, stock control, and supplier follow-up
- Strong ERP software, Excel, reporting, and documentation skills
- High integrity, accountability, and attention to detail

Interested candidates should send their CV and application to:

[employmyskill@gmail.com]

Subject: Application for Materials & Purchasing Control Lead

GRADUATE TRAINEE PROGRAMME 2028

Leading heavy manufacturing company invites **Fresh Graduates / 0–2 years' experience** for an **18-month career development programme** (Foundry, Machining, Fabrication, Engineering Design, 3D Printing).

CAREER TRACK: Sales Engineer | Design Engineer | Production Engineer | Sales & Marketing

• **Engineering Tracks:** B.Sc/B.Eng/HND in Mechanical, Electrical/ Electronics, Chemical, Metallurgical/Materials or related (**CAD mandatory:** SolidWorks/Fusion 360/AutoCAD)

• **Sales & Marketing:** B.Sc/HND in Marketing or any **Social Science** (Engineering graduates interested in technical sales may apply)

• **Age:** 27 years or below

REQUIRED: Strong communication, problem-solving, and **Excel/ Word/ PowerPoint** skills. **SELECTION:** IQ Test | Personality Test | Excel/Word Test | CAD Test (Engineering) | Communication/ Expression Assessment (research-based scenario)

BENEFITS: Structured training, rotations, mentorship, hands-on factory experience, career growth, and opportunity for permanent placement.

LOCATIONS: Ota (Ota), Ogun State; Ilupeju, Lagos (*Sales roles start with training in Ota*)

APPLY: CV + Cover Letter to recruitment@nigerianfoundries.com



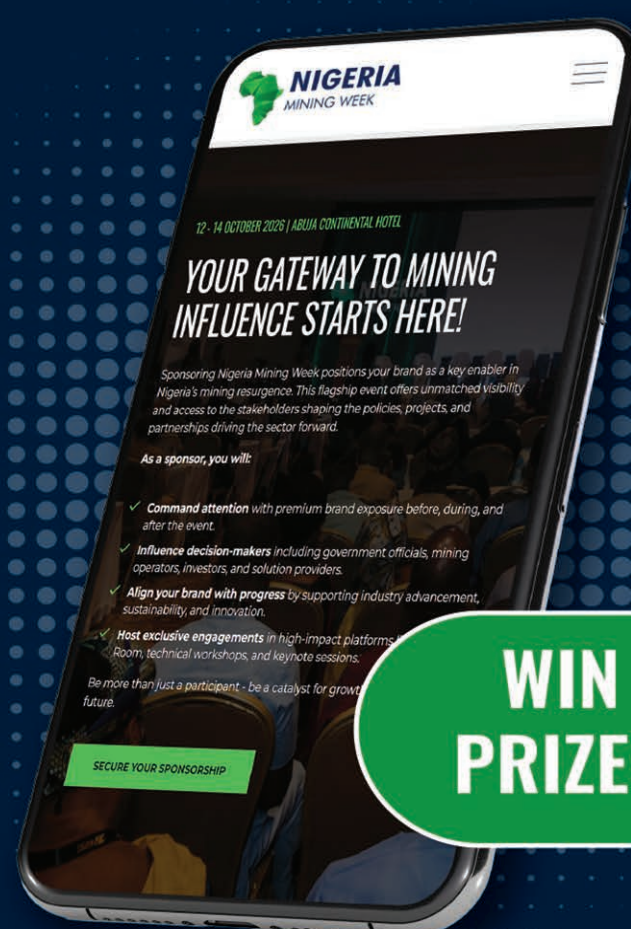
NIGERIA MINING WEEK

12 OCTOBER 2026: PRE-CONFERENCE
13 - 14 OCTOBER 2026: MAIN CONFERENCE & EXPO DAYS

ABUJA CONTINENTAL HOTEL, ABUJA, NIGERIA

**GET YOUR FREE EXPO TICKET
AND STAND A CHANCE TO
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CONNECT WITH INDUSTRY EXPERTS**



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Zamfara'll not be defined by Sharia,

As Zamfara State marks 30 years since its creation from the old Sokoto State, Governor Dauda Lawal spoke with media executives on the state's journey, its development challenges, insecurity, education, agriculture, solid minerals, state police and the controversy surrounding ransom negotiations with bandits. The media interview, which brought together senior journalists from various media organisations, also examined perceptions of Zamfara following the introduction of Sharia law, efforts to attract investment, and the administration's six-point "Rescue Mission" agenda. The Guardian was there.

Zamfara was created 30 years ago from the old Sokoto State. With the ongoing constitutional amendment process and renewed agitations for the creation of more states, how would you assess the impact of Zamfara's creation on the people?

ZAMFARA was created out of the former Sokoto State, and from what we have seen, the creation has had a positive impact in terms of bringing development closer to the people.

Before the creation of Zamfara State, the area was not as developed as it is today. There have also been advantages in terms of employment creation and other opportunities.

However, we also need to look at the reality today. State creation cannot continue to be approached in the same way it was in the past without considering the financial challenges involved.

Many of the states created in the past are finding it difficult to function effectively because of finances. So, I think we need to think through the issue before we begin to agitate for more states.

For me, for now, we should concentrate on making the states we already have viable and functional. If we are comfortable with that, then we can begin to think about creating additional states.

You inherited a state that had faced serious challenges in infrastructure, agriculture and other sectors. What have you done to change the situation?

From the outset, Zamfara had serious challenges. When we came on board, we asked ourselves: Is this how a state should be?

We looked at infrastructure and agriculture, including areas where we have comparative advantages, and realised that these were challenges that needed to be addressed. So, we began making conscious efforts to confront the reality and put things in place.

If you have gone around Gusau within the last one or two days, you can see the kind of development taking place. It is an ongoing process because there are still many things that need to be done.

That is where we are now in our vision for a better Zamfara State.

About 26 years ago, Zamfara attracted international attention following the introduction of Sharia law. The perception that emerged was that Zamfara was a fundamentalist Islamic state and a no-go area for non-Muslims. Has your administration been able to change that narrative?

Absolutely. When you mention Zamfara, the first thing that comes to the minds of many people, not just in Nigeria, is Sharia.

I believe there was a reason why the administration at the time decided to implement Sharia. But I think the process of implementing it and communicating it to the people was wrong. If you are going to introduce something like Sharia in a state like Zamfara, you need to properly explain the process and engage the media so that people understand why you are doing it.

That was not done properly, and it created a perception that people still have today. People think Zamfara is a no-go area. They believe there are no Christians, no churches and that everybody has to dress in a particular way. But you can see the reality yourself. Yesterday was Sunday, and you went to church. That tells you that the perception and narrative from day one were wrong. We are trying to change that perception.

If you talk about Zamfara, people immediately associate it with Sharia and insecurity. But Zamfara is a diverse state. We have people from the Southwest. If you go to Sawangari, it is

predominantly occupied by Yoruba people. If you go to Chiduada, it is predominantly Igbo. So, we are trying to change the mindset and perception about Zamfara.

The state should not be defined by insecurity or Sharia. It should be defined by its comparative advantages.

You have spoken about changing the narrative and attracting investment. What are the areas you believe can drive Zamfara's economic development?

Investment is possible when there is a clear understanding that something good will come out of it. That is the message we are trying to send to the world: there are opportunities in Zamfara State.

We are putting the right things in place and creating a conducive environment for investment. People are beginning to understand that Zamfara is not only about insecurity and Sharia. We are also changing the perception of Zamfara from being known only as a farming state to a state with both agriculture and solid minerals.

Even before I contested to become governor, I had tried to understand the key things that Zamfara had and what could be done differently.

That informed what we called the Rescue Mission. We have six major areas: security, education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure and human development. I am happy to say that in each of those areas, we have made between 60 and 70 per cent progress.

Security remains one of the biggest challenges facing Zamfara. There have been reports of hundreds of kidnappings and attacks. Is the security situation improving, and are you getting the necessary support from the Federal Government?

If you compare the data from 2023, before I came on board, with what is happening today, the data is very clear that insecurity has reduced significantly.

Zamfara is one of the critical areas where we have serious security challenges because of the activities of terrorists and criminal groups.

One

of our major challenges has been response time. There are areas where, when an attack happens, it is difficult for conventional security agencies to get there quickly.

Take the road from Shinkafi to Zurmi, for example. It is a troublesome area. We believe that constructing the road will improve response time and enable security personnel to get there much faster. Access is critical to security.

There may still be pockets of attacks, particularly in ungoverned areas. During the rainy season, getting to some of those locations becomes extremely difficult.

That is why we are also encouraging the use of technology, including drones, to monitor what is happening and determine the response required.

You are a strong advocate of state police. Why do you believe it will help solve the security problem?

I am a very strong supporter of state police, and I will tell you why. If you are dealing with rural communities, you need people from those communities who understand the terrain and the people.

Another issue is command and control. In many cases, when there is an attack, and you engage conventional security agencies, there are several processes involved before permission is obtained from headquarters to act. That affects response time.

State governments are already financing security operations involving the police and military in their states. So, if we have local security personnel who understand the terrain and are under the control of the state, they can serve as the first point of response.

I strongly believe state police will go a long way in addressing security challenges, not only in Zamfara but across Nigeria.

You have consistently opposed negotiations with bandits. How do you reconcile that position with families who simply want their kidnapped relatives returned alive?

My position has always been that we should not negotiate with bandits.

The reason is simple. Kidnapping and ransom have become a business. When you pay ransom, you are empowering the bandits. Where do you think they get the money to acquire sophisticated weapons? They get it from the money they collect.

There was a case involving some people close to me where a ransom of N300 million was demanded per person. I said I was not going to pay a

dime.

I said that because I would rather use that money for something else than to encourage the system. If you pay N300 million today to rescue somebody and tomorrow something happens to that person, can you stop God from taking his life? That was the point I made.

Leadership sometimes requires hard decisions. Fortunately, the people involved were eventually released, and the final demand was for recharge cards from a family member.

If you look at the history of negotiations that took place under previous administrations, what positive results did they produce? These people are not organised in the conventional sense. If you negotiate with somebody, you may also be elevating that person and giving him recognition.

During your campaign, you promised to end insecurity in Zamfara within two years. Yet insecurity remains in some parts of the state. When will that promise become reality?

If you compare the data from 2023 to what we have today, the difference is clear. Security was one of my major campaign promises, and I am happy with what we have achieved, although there is still a lot to do.

When we came in, we had to ask what the best approach was under the circumstances. That informed the decision to establish the Community Protection Guard, CPG.

The CPG is our local security outfit, working in collaboration with conventional security agencies. We worked with the DSS to vet the recruits and selected credible young people from the communities.

We realised that we could not be everywhere across the 14 local government areas. So, we identified people within the communities who understood the terrain and the people and recruited them.

The first batch had about 3,000 recruits who underwent rigorous three-month training by the military and police. We also went through the legislative process to ensure they were legally authorised to carry arms.

They were later posted back to their communities, where we provided logistics, motorcycles, vehicles, kits and ammunition. This has helped reduce attacks in some communities.

What is being done to reintegrate victims of insecurity and those who genuinely repent from banditry?

Victims have gone through trauma, so they need psychological support, counselling and guidance. We also look at what businesses they were doing before the crisis and provide incentives to help them return to those businesses.

We have also started rebuilding communities. In one community near Kotorokoshi, for example, we took people back to their village, provided security, and gave them government support.

Most of these people are farmers. They are not asking for too much. Sometimes N500,000 can make a significant difference in someone's life. We are also working to attract industries into the state so that employment opportunities can increase.

As for repentant bandits, there has to be a process. They must go through counselling and guidance, and we must establish that they are genuinely repentant. We also have to inform the community that these people have genuinely repented so that they can be accepted.

We can then provide skills and starter packs to keep them occupied. But I have made it clear that anybody who wants to enter the process must first lay down his arms. I cannot accept somebody who says he has repented while keeping weapons in his custody.

Education has historically been one of Zamfara's weakest areas. What are you doing to



insecurity, says Lawal

change that?

Education was the first major challenge I identified when I took over. Zamfara was ranked around 35th or 36th among the states in educational performance. That is a fact. That was why we declared a state of emergency in education.

Education is the bedrock of society. Without education, people may be unable to distinguish right from wrong or develop the kind of rational thinking required to contribute effectively to society. We therefore decided to address both infrastructure and teachers.

You can build schools, but if you do not have the right teachers, what is the point?

We have renovated more than 850 schools, covering primary and secondary schools. We have before-and-after records of these schools and can make them available for verification.

We have also focused on teacher recruitment, training and retraining. We have employed hundreds of teachers. Development partners, including programmes supporting girls' education, have also assisted us substantially.

We intend to move Zamfara from where it was to among the top three states in Nigeria in education. We will get there by the grace of God.

Before your administration, more than 800,000 children were reportedly out of school, while students in the state went for years without receiving their examination certificates. How did you address that?

We paid the outstanding fees and collected the certificates that had accumulated over the years. Once students have their certificates, they can apply for admission and continue their education. Without certificates, many of them remained idle.

We are seeing a significant increase in school enrolment. There was a time I received enrolment figures from a university in Gusau and questioned whether the figures were correct because they were so high. I invited the scholarship secretary and the vice-chancellor, and they explained the figures.

The increase was due to students who had previously been unable to continue their education now having their certificates. That is how you reduce the number of idle young people.

How are you addressing the challenge of girls' education, particularly in communities where some parents remain reluctant to send their daughters to school?

One of the reasons some parents do not send their daughters to school is because they do not believe girls should be educated. We are trying to address that through engagement and persuasion.

We are also experimenting with combining Western and Islamic education. We have schools in the three senatorial districts where we are testing the model. We have one in Gusau, one in Gummi and another in Kaura Namoda.

We have also engaged Islamic scholars because they are influential in the communities. Some people initially felt that Western education was going to take their children away from Islamic education.

We explained that this was not the objective. We want to combine the two so that children can receive Western education while retaining their Islamic education.

On girls' education, I believe that when you educate a girl, you are educating the entire community. For example, when a woman needs medical treatment, there are situations where she may prefer to be attended to by another woman. If we do not educate girls and encourage them to study medicine, how do we produce enough female doctors?

So, there is a lot of re-engineering and persuasion involved. We are also providing incentives. There are programmes under which girls who attend school receive financial support.

When people begin to see the benefits and trust the programme, they are more willing to send their children to school.

Today, particularly in urban areas, you can see more girls in schools. The key thing is trust. Once people trust what the government is doing, they will respond.

You mentioned infrastructure and teachers' mindset earlier. One of the major barriers to girl-child education in Zamfara has been the belief among some parents that girls should not receive a Western education. How have you addressed that?

The first thing we did was to introduce a trial of a combination of Western and Islamic education. We have what we call the integrated or blended approach. Zamfara has three senatorial districts, so we established one school in Gusau for the Central Zone, one in Gummi for the Western Zone and another in Kaura Namoda for the other zone.

The idea was to blend the two forms of education. It was important because this is a serious and sensitive issue. We had to engage Islamic scholars because we did not want people to feel that we were taking away their religious education or trying to Westernise everything.

Our position was simple: let us blend the two. The children can continue to receive Islamic education while also acquiring a Western education. That approach gave us some leverage and helped us to address the concerns of parents and religious leaders.

How did you tackle the cultural perception that educating girls is unnecessary?

Coming from a Sharia state, there has always been the perception that girls should not go to school. We said no, that is not right. You need to educate the girl because when you educate a woman, you are educating the entire community.

Take healthcare, for example.

If a woman goes to a hospital, there are situations where she would prefer to be attended to by another woman. If we do not encourage girls to go to school and study medicine or other health-related professions, where will we get the female doctors and other professionals we need?

So, we had to do a lot of re-engineering and persuasion. We had to explain to parents why their daughters needed to go to school and the benefits to their families and the wider community.

Poverty is another factor. How have you encouraged poor families to send their daughters to school?

Poverty is a major issue, and we cannot ignore it. So, how do you incentivise parents? We said, okay, girls should have free education, but it should not stop at free education.

Under one of the programmes, girls who attend school receive an incentive. I believe it is about \$50 per child. The purpose is to encourage parents and demonstrate that we are serious about girl-child education.

People began to realise that we meant well. They started responding positively. Today, if you go to most schools, particularly in the urban areas, you will find that we have more girls in school than boys in some cases.

It has taken a lot of persuasion and effort to convince people, but the good thing is that everything is about trust. People are beginning to trust our words. One thing I don't do is make false promises.

When you came into office, there was a perception that Zamfara was largely a welfare state, with resources distributed to political leaders and individuals. You came in with an agenda to redirect the state towards development, particularly health and education. There has been resistance from some political leaders. Looking back, do you regret taking that path?

We have no regrets about what we are doing and how the state is transforming. We are building a functional state.

One of the most difficult challenges I faced, especially during my first year, was changing the mindset of people who were used to a sys-

tem that built on welfare at the expense of development.

My intention was very clear: we are here to make meaningful and positive changes for the people of Zamfara State. I want history to judge me as somebody who transformed the state, not somebody who simply came to distribute money.

As a leader, you must make decisions.

Some decisions may be painful, but once you are convinced that what you are doing is in the right direction, you have to stand by it.

When people started talking about 2027, my position was simple. I said, 'I am here now as governor. Is there any guarantee that I will survive until tomorrow? Is there any guarantee that I will get to 2027?'

I said let me use the opportunity God has given me to transform the state. When 2027 comes, that will be another chapter. When we get there, we will determine what happens. That is exactly what we have done. People have seen the difference and are beginning to key into the development agenda.

I am happy to say that we have been able to show the world that Zamfara, despite the challenge of insecurity and other problems, is ready to compete with any state in Nigeria in education, infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture and solid minerals.

One of the concerns about some of these interventions is sustainability. How do you ensure that programmes such as incentives for girls' education and other development initiatives survive beyond your administration?

The answer is very simple. When you are talking about transformation, you don't build it around an individual. You build a system. That is exactly what we are doing. We are building a system whereby whoever comes after Dauda as governor will have to key into the processes we have

established.

It is interesting to know that since the creation of Zamfara State, there has never been a development plan for the state. I am happy to say that last year we launched a 10-year development plan for Zamfara. It was developed with the support of KPMG and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We are building a system. When you have a system, you don't need to worry too much about what happens tomorrow because whoever comes after you will have to work within that framework.

But when everything is built around individuals, people come and go. People die and knowledge is lost. When there is a system in place, you can go to sleep because the system continues to work.

You mentioned the importance of building systems. Revenue is one area where your administration appears to have made significant changes. What was the situation when you assumed office?

When we took over, the internally generated revenue of Zamfara State was about N90 million a month. And about 80 per cent of that N90 million was from Pay-As-You-Earn, PAYE.

You can imagine how a state can function on that kind of revenue. So, I had to take some drastic measures to review the entire revenue collection process.

We brought in consultants and reviewed the system. Based on the changes we introduced, Zamfara is now able to generate about N5.5 billion monthly.

...where is the money coming from?

It is coming from different sources. It includes collections from areas that were supposed to generate revenue, motorbike licensing and



other taxes and levies.

The important thing is that people are now willing to pay taxes because they can see what the government is doing.

Today, when you go around and speak to people, they will tell you that they are willing to pay because they can see the difference. We now have access to areas where government officials could not previously go.

For example, transporters are earning from the system. On average, after all the expenses and other deductions, some of them make between N12,000 and N15,000 monthly in net earnings. We are also changing the transportation system and improving the process of revenue collection.

You also mentioned the geographical information system and land administration. What has changed there?

We introduced a geographical information system because we had problems with land and occupancy records. What we did was to develop a clear master plan and ensure that people could obtain proper documentation. As more people come into the system, we are able to properly document land, permits, changes of purpose and other transactions.

Has the N5.5 billion monthly revenue included income from mining and solid minerals?

No, we have not really gone into that yet. You cannot sell what you don't have. Mining was not given that much attention when we started because the problems confronting us were enormous. We had to decide what to address first.

Education is key to everything we are doing. Agriculture is also important because Zamfara is predominantly an agrarian economy. Healthcare is another priority.

We had to stabilise these areas first. Now that we have made conscious efforts to understand what we have and where we are going, we can begin to look at other critical areas.

You cannot manage what you do not know. Before now, there was no formal way of knowing exactly what Zamfara had in terms of critical mineral resources. Now we are beginning to address that.

When we came to Gusau, you took us on a nostalgic journey into what the city used to be. You spoke about your father, the textile industry and the presence of multinational companies. What happened to that vibrant economy, and what are you doing to revive it?

Let me take you back to the old days. When Gusau was still a local government, it was one of the major commercial centres in northern Nigeria.

As you mentioned, we had the textile industry. We had about 27 functioning ginneries. We also had an oil mill that was being supplied with cottonseed from the ginneries.

We had multinational companies — SCOA, GB Olivant and many others — operating here because Zamfara was an agrarian economy.

We had people from North Africa, Algeria, Lebanon and other parts of the world coming here. There were also many Chinese because of the textile industry. The textile business was a partnership involving Nigerian and Chinese interests.

Gusau was a cosmopolitan city. In those days, I used to leave Zaria to come to Zamfara to enjoy the weekend. We could drive late at night, spend the weekend and return to Zaria on Sunday. That was how vibrant the economy was.

Read the remaining part of this interview on www.guardian.ng

Labour & Appointments

TUC warns MDAs against dealing with rival ASCSN leadership

From Collins Olayinka, Abuja

THE Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) has warned Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), employers, development partners and the public against dealing with individuals or groups it described as unauthorised representatives of the Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN).

The Congress said the ASCSN leadership under Shehu Mo-

ammed remained the only leadership recognised by TUC, citing the outcome of the union's delegates conference held in Lagos on August 12, 2024.

In a public circular signed by the TUC Secretary-General, Nuhu Toro, the Congress said the conference was duly convened and observed by the Registrar of Trade Unions in the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Amos

Falonipe, as well as the TUC President-General, Festus Osifo, and the Secretary-General.

TUC said its position was based on ASCSN's status as an affiliate of Congress and the established democratic and statutory processes governing the trade union movement. The Congress, however, raised concerns over what it described as the activities of "unauthorised individuals and groups" allegedly presenting themselves as leaders or representatives of ASCSN.

According to TUC, such activities could undermine the

unity and institutional integrity of the labour movement and potentially affect industrial peace.

The Congress also rejected reliance on a lower court judgment by those challenging the Shehu Mohammed-led administration, saying the judgment is currently under appeal before the Court of Appeal.

It therefore maintained that the rival individuals or groups lacked the authority to represent or transact business on behalf of ASCSN pending the determination of the matter by the competent courts. "Any individual or group out-

side the recognised leadership of Comrade Shehu Mohammed-led ASCSN lacks the mandate and legitimacy to act on behalf of the union," the circular stated.

TUC consequently directed stakeholders dealing with ASCSN-related matters to engage exclusively with the Shehu Mohammed-led leadership.

It also called on security and law-enforcement agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force and the Department of State Services, to investigate what it described as acts of im-

personation and illegality and take appropriate action.

The Congress further warned that engagements, negotiations or transactions conducted with persons it considers unauthorised would have no validity, adding that parties choosing to recognise such individuals would do so at their own risk. TUC said it would use "all lawful, institutional and industrial mechanisms" available to defend its affiliate and uphold what it described as the sanctity of democratic trade union processes.

Retirement security starts during working life, NSITF tells workers

By Gloria Nwafor

RETIREMENT security cannot be left to individual savings and pension planning alone, as workers also need effective institutional protection against workplace injuries, occupational diseases, disability and loss of earning capacity during their productive years, the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) has said.

The Managing Director/Chief Executive, Oluwaseun Faleye, stated this at the 2026 National Pre-Retirement Summit policy dialogue in Abuja, warning that retirement planning must begin long before workers exit employment.

Speaking on the theme, "Between Duty and Delivery," Faleye said pensions and personal savings, while essential, could not

provide a complete social protection system if workers remained exposed to occupational risks and inadequate compensation.

He said the Employees' Compensation Scheme (ECS), administered by NSITF, formed part of the retirement and social protection continuum by providing compensation, medical care, rehabilitation, survivor benefits and return-to-work support for workers affected by employment-related injuries, diseases, disability and death.

According to him, NSITF's coverage has risen from more than 7.6 million workers as at July 2026 to over 7.8 million, reflecting efforts to move beyond registration towards sustained participation and compliance.

CSOs back new AUPCTRE leadership, push against public utilities privatisation

From Collins Olayinka, Abuja

CIVIL society and faith-based organisations have welcomed Eugene Manji as the new National President of the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations Civil Service Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE).

The groups expressed expectations that the new leadership will intensify the campaign for accessible and affordable public services.

Manji was elected alongside other national officers at the union's 7th National Delegates Conference held in Kano on September 23 and 24, 2026.

The civil society groups described the outcome as reflecting the demand for purposeful leadership within the union, while pledging to collaborate with the new executive to oppose the privatisation of essential public utilities and defend workers' and citizens' access to quality public services.

The Registrar of Trade Unions, who represented the Minister of Labour and Employment, supervised the election.

Among those elected with Manji are the two National Deputy Presidents, Uzu Fidelis and Ibrahim Kirfi; National Vice Presidents for the various zones, including Umaja Aloysius, Adoga Abdullahi, Adebayo Adeyoyin, Joman Bernard, Bashir Chibuzo, Samaila Abdullahi and Moses Helda.

Also elected were Farotimi Olu-soji as National Treasurer, Rabiu Abdulrahman as National Secretary and Finance, and Rashila Alkali and Nnamachi Anthony as National Auditors.

Executive Director of Citizens Free Service Forum (CFSF), Sani Baba, said the election had gen-

erated optimism among civil society organisations because of Manji's previous involvement in campaigns concerning public service delivery.

"We are elated about the election outcomes. Comrade Manji has been in the trenches for years challenging impunity in the delivery of public services," Baba said.

He said the new leadership would strengthen campaigns against the privatisation of water and other public utilities while maintaining constructive relations between the union and civil society.

Similarly, Executive Director of Renewlyn Development Initiative (RDI), Philip Jakpor, described Manji's election as significant, citing his previous campaign against water privatisation in Plateau State, where he served as AUPCTRE state chairman.

Jakpor said the new leadership emerged at a time when accountability and affordable access to public services were increasingly subject to profit-driven considerations, with consequences for low-income communities.

Coordinator of the Ecumenical Water Network Africa, Rev. Kolade Fadahunsi, said the organisation expected the new AUPCTRE leadership to continue challenging policies that turn essential services into profit-oriented commodities.

Executive Director of Environmental Defenders Network (EDEN), Chima Williams, also congratulated the union on what he described as a rancorous free election, saying the new leadership was expected to promote transparent, efficient and equitable public services.

Women earn 18 per cent less than men, says ILO

By Gloria Nwafor

WOMEN globally still earn about 18 per cent less than men, with the gender pay gap narrowing by only two percentage points over the past decade, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has said.

The ILO said the pace of improvement remained too slow to deliver meaningful progress towards equal pay, warning that closing the gender pay gap would remain a distant prospect without faster action.

ILO Director-General Gilbert Houngbo said the reduction of only two percentage points in 10 years was inadequate, stressing that equal pay was fundamental to gender equality and social justice in the world of work.

"A reduction of just two per-

centage points in ten years is simply not enough," Houngbo said, calling for faster action to turn equal-pay commitments into measurable results.

The latest ILO estimates, released on September 18 to mark International Equal Pay Day, showed significant differences across countries and income groups.

In high-income countries, the gender pay gap narrowed by about 2.5 percentage points over the past decade, compared with two percentage points in lower-middle-income countries and one percentage point in upper-middle-income countries.

Senior Gender Specialist at the ILO, Emanuela Pozzan, said the variations demonstrated that progress was possible where policies were

tailored to specific labour-market conditions.

She said millions of women whose work sustains families, businesses and communities remained undervalued, requiring governments, employers and workers to accelerate action.

The ILO attributed persistent pay disparities to wider structural inequalities in the labour market, including unequal access to employment and career progression, occupational segregation, unequal distribution of paid and unpaid care responsibilities, discrimination and the undervaluation of women's work.

Chief of the ILO Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Branch, Chidi King, said governments, employers and workers needed to act in a coordinated manner to re-

move the structural barriers sustaining pay inequality.

According to her, social dialogue, including collective bargaining, could help address the undervaluation of women's work, strengthen pay transparency and create fairer wage structures while giving women a greater voice in decisions affecting their economic lives.

The ILO identified stronger pay transparency, objective and gender-neutral job evaluation, effective wage policies, collective bargaining, enforcement of equality legislation, and investment in care systems and social protection as measures capable of accelerating progress.

Equal pay for work of equal value is a fundamental ILO principle and is enshrined in the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).

Coalition demands action on jobs, social protection

By Gloria Nwafor

THE Global Coalition for Social Justice has called for accelerated action to translate international commitments on jobs, wages, social protection and inclusive development into measurable

results at country level.

The call formed part of the outcome of the coalition's annual forum in Geneva, where representatives of governments, employers' and workers' organisations, international and regional institutions, development

banks, businesses, academia and civil society re-

viewed progress and announced new initiatives.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby notified that Zhongtian Construction Nigeria Limited has applied to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for approval to change its name to ZTC Construction Nigeria Limited.

The general public is hereby put on notice that it is now to be known as ZTC Construction Nigeria Limited.

Signed:
The Board of Directors

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Pharmacists urge full execution of drug distribution guidelines

By Ijeoma Nwanosike

PHARMACISTS have called for the full implementation of the National Drug Distribution Guideline to strengthen Nigeria's medicine supply chain and curb the circulation of falsified and substandard medicines.

They made the call at the fourth Thematic General Assembly of the African Pharmaceutical Distribution Association (APDA), organised in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Wholesalers and Distributors Association of Nigeria (PWDAN) in Lagos, with the theme, "Advancing Pharmaceutical Distribution in Africa: Building secure supply chains against falsified medicines."

PWDAN Chairman Oghenechuko Omaruaye said poorly structured distribution systems remained a major challenge, stressing that distributors play a critical role in safeguarding the medicine supply chain.

He said PWDAN had continued to engage government and regulatory agencies, including the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN), on implementation of the guideline.

He said full implementation would ensure manufacturers and distributors are properly recognised and regulated while limiting the entry of unregulated players into the medicine supply system.

cine supply system.

Omaruaye, however, said inadequate government resources remained a constraint, urging the government to revisit the guideline and provide the support required for its implementation.

He also called for government backing for distributors seeking to strengthen self-regulation, noting that pharmaceutical distribution covered medicines, medical devices and hospital consumables.

Vice President, Central Africa, APDA, Dr Yolande Djomo, said distributors across the continent faced similar challenges, including falsified medicines, informal markets, weak regulatory controls and inadequate supply-chain infrastructure.

She said the assembly provided an opportunity for distributors to exchange experiences and develop solutions to challenges affecting medicine distribution and public health.

Djomo said Nigeria, Cameroon and Congo faced similar problems with informal markets and infiltration of substandard and falsified medicines. She added that distributors were exploring artificial intelligence to improve efficiency and strengthen supply-chain security.

She identified Cameroon's porous borders and more than 1,000-kilometre border network as factors facilitating the entry of sub-



Omaruaye

standard medicines, urging governments and regulators to strengthen border controls.

Director, Inspection, Monitoring and Quality Assurance Unit, Lagos, PCN, Solomon Shiihii, stressed that maintaining medicine quality after products leave manufacturers was equally important.

He said potency loss could occur silently but has serious consequences for patients, making compliance with Good Storage and Distribution Practice essential.

Shiihii called for continuous training and re-training of personnel, saying distributors needed adequate financial resources, competent staff and appropriate facilities to maintain quality systems.

He said warehouses should have designated areas for quarantined, approved, returned, expired, damaged and recalled products, warning that returned medicines must not be placed directly back into sellable stock.

He also stressed the need for quality management systems and standard operating procedures, while urging distributors to properly assess temperature excursions during transportation and storage to determine their impact on medicines.

Describing Nigeria as Africa's largest pharmaceutical market, Shiihii said the position placed a major responsibility on the country to improve medicine access and distribution.

He identified open drug markets, overlapping regulatory mandates, price sensitivity, inadequate storage facilities in some public institutions and procurement challenges among factors affecting the pharmaceutical supply chain.

FG seeks private sector intervention to curb vision loss in 24m Nigerians

From Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze, Abuja

THE Federal Government has called on financial institutions, telecommunications companies and other private-sector players to deepen investment in eye health to prevent vision loss from undermining human capital, productivity and economic development.

The government estimates that 24 million Nigerians live with vision loss, with a significant proportion linked to preventable or treatable conditions, including cataracts, glaucoma, uncorrected refractive errors and digital eye strain.

Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Adekunle Salako, made the call at a Public-Private Partnership Roundtable on eye health, organised by the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in collaboration with the Tulsi Chanrai Foundation in Abuja.

Salako said the consequences of poor vision extend beyond healthcare, affecting education, workplace productivity, household income and the wider economy.

"A worker who cannot see clearly cannot manufacture efficiently, operate heavy machinery safely, analyse financial figures accurately, or till the soil effectively," he said, adding that untreated visual impairment could cause children to fall behind in school while adults could suffer reduced productivity, premature retirement and loss of earning capacity.

He said Nigeria had relied substantially on donor agencies and overseas development assistance to fund

eye-health interventions, but changing global priorities and declining external funding made sustainable domestic financing imperative.

"No sovereign nation can sustainably secure the health of its citizens on foreign charity alone," he said.

Salako urged the private sector to mobilise domestic capital for eye-health infrastructure, workforce development, technology, medicines and community-based services.

He cited the partnership between First City Monument Bank (FCMB) and the Tulsi Chanrai Foundation as an example, noting that the Priceless Gift of Sight initiative had provided free eye care to more than 400,000 Nigerians.

Salako called for the model to be expanded across banking, manufacturing, telecommunications, energy and other sectors through social-impact bonds, blended finance, co-financing, concessionary loans and low-interest health infrastructure financing.

He also advocated equipment-leasing arrangements to enable hospitals to acquire diagnostic and surgical equipment without prohibitive upfront costs, while urging companies to direct corporate social responsibility funds to structured national programmes rather than fragmented medical outreaches.

Salako challenged telecommunications companies to use digital infrastructure to expand tele-ophthalmology, remote consultations, mobile diagnostics and cloud-based data systems in underserved communities.

Foundation seeks heart-health education in classrooms

By Ijeoma Nwanosike

THE Nigerian Heart Foundation (NHF) has called for heart-health education in schools to instil healthy lifestyle habits in children and reduce the incidence and mortality associated with cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) in Nigeria.

The foundation made the call during a press conference in Lagos to commemorate this year's World Heart Day (WHD), saying taking heart-health awareness to classrooms would help "catch them young" and en-

courage healthy habits from an early age.

Executive Director of the NHF, Dr Kingsley Akinroye, said heart disease often begins early and accumulates over the years, stressing that preventive measures should not be delayed until middle age.

He urged schools to teach children healthy diets and physical activity, saying early education could help them resist peer pressure and other social influences that encourage behaviours harmful to heart health.

Akinroye said the WHD commemoration provided an opportunity to raise awareness about cardiovascular diseases, which he described as a major global health challenge.

According to him, of the 63 million deaths recorded each year globally, 19.8 million are caused by cardiovascular diseases, while more than 235,000 people die from the diseases annually in Nigeria.

He said at least 80 per cent of premature deaths from heart disease could be prevented by controlling five

major risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, harmful alcohol consumption and air pollution.

Akinroye said the need for healthy diets had become increasingly important in Nigeria amid rising consumption of junk food, sedentary lifestyles, air pollution, alcohol and tobacco use.

He warned that cardiovascular diseases could remain undetected until they become severe, urging greater attention to prevention and early intervention.

Harmless low blood pressure could signal an emergency

From Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze, Abuja

LOW blood pressure, or hypotension, is not always a cause for concern, but a sudden drop can signal a medical emergency, particularly when caused by significant blood or fluid loss, a cardiologist has warned.

Director of Hypertension, Nigerian Heart Foundation (NHF), Prof. Austine Obasohan, told The Guardian that heavy bleeding from accidents or menstruation, severe dehydration caused by vomiting or diarrhoea, illnesses such as cholera, and excessive doses of blood pressure medication can cause a dangerous fall in blood pressure.

He said a person whose usual blood pressure is about 120/80mmHg but suddenly records 90/50mmHg after substantial blood or fluid loss requires urgent medical attention and appropriate fluid or blood replacement.

However, Obasohan cautioned against treating every low blood pressure reading as a disease, saying some healthy people naturally have readings below the conventional 100/60mmHg threshold without symptoms or health complications.

He said doctors are more concerned about why blood pressure is low, whether it has fallen suddenly and whether the individual has symptoms than about the numerical reading

alone.

A person whose blood pressure is naturally around 90/60mmHg but who feels well, remains active and has no underlying illness may not require treatment, he said.

"If your blood pressure is low, whether it is 90/70, 100/70, and you have no complaint, we say congratulations," Obasohan said, explaining that lower blood pressure is generally associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

He noted that some populations living in rural or less urbanised environments have historically recorded relatively low blood pressure without suffering the cardiovascular complications associated with hypertension.

He cited observations among the Koma people in northern Nigeria, whose blood pressure, he said, has been recorded at around 90/60mmHg despite being healthy and physically active. He also referred to the Samburu people of East Africa.

Obasohan said increasing urbanisation and modern lifestyles have contributed more significantly to rising blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. "In cardiovascular medicine, we will say the lower your blood pressure is, the better

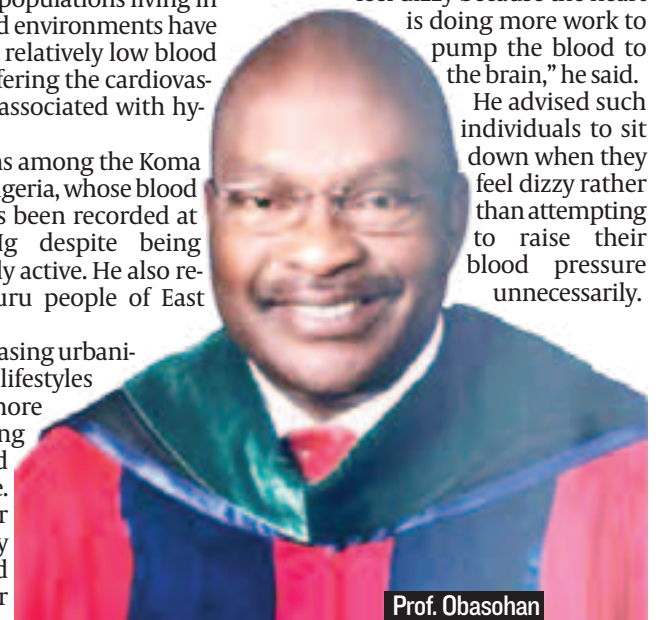
for you, provided you probably do not stand too long," he added.

He explained that some people with naturally low blood pressure may experience dizziness after standing for a prolonged period because the cardiovascular system must work against gravity to maintain adequate blood flow to the brain.

"You will see some people who, when they stand for a long time, may start to feel dizzy because the heart

is doing more work to pump the blood to the brain," he said.

He advised such individuals to sit down when they feel dizzy rather than attempting to raise their blood pressure unnecessarily.



Prof. Obasohan



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Design, Development and Deployment of a National Learning Management System (LMS) and Digital E-Library, including Development of Digital Learning Content

1. BACKGROUND

The National Health Logistics Management ecosystem generates and supports a significant body of knowledge, tools, guidelines, standard operating procedures, training materials and operational lessons related to health commodity and supply chain management in Nigeria. However, this knowledge is dispersed across different programmes, platforms, documents and institutional repositories, making it difficult for users to consistently access, learn from and apply relevant information and ensure a sustainable flow of expertise and skill.

To address this gap, NPSCMP and GHSC-PSM Nigeria are establishing an integrated Learning Management System (LMS) and Digital E-Library that will contribute to a national knowledge and learning platform for health supply chain stakeholders. The platform will provide a single, searchable national repository for health supply chain knowledge, while transforming available knowledge into structured, interactive and measurable learning.

The platform is expected to be built using open-source technologies, with Moodle as the preferred LMS, and hosted on Government-controlled infrastructure to promote sustainability, institutional ownership, data sovereignty, interoperability and long-term maintainability. The platform must be operable, maintainable, and extensible by Government personnel from the point of handover in March 2027, without recourse to the developer.

Alongside the platform itself, the LMS requires high-quality digital learning content. The technical topics and source materials already held by GHSC-PSM must be transformed into engaging, interactive, learner-centered digital courses, applying recognized instructional design and adult learning principles, before the platform can deliver meaningful training to the health supply chain workforce.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVE

2.1 Objective

At the end of the assignment, the client should have a fully functional, secure, Government-hosted National Health Supply Chain Digital Knowledge and Learning Platform, populated with high-quality digital learning content, comprising:

Digital E-Library: a centralized, searchable, and governed repository containing the country's health supply chain knowledge, guidance, tools, manuals, SOPs, reports, and learning resources.

Learning Management System: a structured, interactive learning environment through which users can undertake role-based courses, complete assessments, receive certificates, and track their learning and competency development.

Digital Learning Content: a set of engaging, instructionally sound courses, transformed from approved GHSC-PSM source materials, ready for delivery through the LMS.

The specific objectives of the assignment are to:

- Design and establish the technical architecture for the LMS and Digital E-Library.
- Configure and customize an appropriate open-source LMS and digital library platform, at Moodle-class maturity or better for capacity, scalability, customization, mobile access, and tools interactivity and management.
- Establish a centralized, searchable repository for health supply chain knowledge and resources.
- Develop structured, role-based learning pathways for different categories of users.
- Review, assess and transform the GHSC-PSM course topics and their source content into high-quality, engaging, interactive and learner-centred digital learning courses, applying recognized instructional design and adult learning principles.
- Enable self-paced e-learning, assessments, certification and progress tracking.
- Enable secure hosting on Government-controlled infrastructure
- Ensure appropriate integration, interoperability and data exchange with relevant systems where required.
- Establish appropriate user management, role-based access and security controls.
- Conduct comprehensive functional, technical, security, performance and user acceptance testing of the platform, and technical, instructional and editorial quality assurance of the digital learning content
- Train designated Government administrators, content managers and end users in the management and use of the platform.
- Provide complete technical and system documentation, and all editable content source files, to facilitate Government ownership and sustainability.
- Transfer technical knowledge and system administration capabilities to designated Government personnel.
- Ensure conformance with recognized e-learning interoperability standards (SCORM, xAPI) so that learning content and learner records remain portable.
- Ensure the platform and its content conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 Level AA and the Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines (ATAG) 2.0.
- Ingest, tag and publish the initial corpus of e-library content, and configure the approved taxonomy.
- Ensure that all technical requirements, content and deliverables under this assignment are reviewed and signed off.

2.2 Project Scope

The assignment comprises five workstreams, covering both platform development and digital content development, to be delivered as one integrated engagement;

- Workstream 1: Platform design, specifications and architecture
- Workstream 2: Platform build and configuration
- Workstream 3: Digital content development and instructional design
- Workstream 4: Security, testing and deployment
- Workstream 5: Training, documentation, and knowledge transfer

3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The assignment should be undertaken by a firm, consortium, or established team demonstrating the full range of competencies below, covering platform development and digital content development, either within a single organization or as a consortium meeting the requirements and bidding jointly as one proposal.

3.1 Mandatory Requirements

Interested organisations/firms must fulfil the following minimum eligibility criteria. Submissions failing to provide verifiable evidence of these requirements will be technically disqualified:

- Minimum 5 years of professional software development experience, including demonstrated experience implementing LMS platforms (Moodle or comparable open-source LMS) with evidence of pass performance (Purchase Order/Service completion Note/Award Letter).
- Demonstrated experience configuring or developing digital libraries/repositories, web applications, relational databases, APIs and system integration, and application/database security.
- Demonstrated experience in digital/e-learning content development, instructional design, adult learning, storyboarding, multimedia production and online assessment development.
- Experience deploying applications on Linux/cloud/on-premises infrastructure, and conducting software testing and UAT.
- Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) Certificate of Incorporation, including Form CAC 1.1 or CAC 2 and CAC 7.
- Company Income Tax Clearance Certificate (or Personal Income Tax Clearance Certificate of all partners, for a Business Name) for the last three years, valid to 31 December 2026.
- Pension Clearance Certificate valid to 31 December 2026 (applicable to bidders with five or more staff).
- Industrial Training Fund (ITF) Compliance Certificate valid to 31 December 2026 (applicable to bidders with five or more staff, or annual turnover of ₦50 million and above).
- Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Clearance Certificate valid to 31 December 2026.
- Evidence of registration on the National Database of Federal Contractors, Consultants and Service Providers, by submission of an Interim Registration Report (IRR) or valid Certificate issued by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP).
- At least three comparable assignments completed in the last five years, including at least one LMS or digital library platform deployment and at least one digital learning content assignment, each supported by a signed reference letter and a contactable client referee.
- A signed Bidder Declaration, confirming among other things that the bidder, its consortium members and its proposed personnel are not debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded by any government or donor institution, including on the U.S. Government System for Award Management (SAM.gov) exclusion list.
- A technical presence in Nigeria, or a demonstrable arrangement for local support, maintained throughout the twelve-month post-handover support period.

3.2 Desirable Requirements

- Experience with Government or public-sector digital platforms and Nigeria's health information ecosystem.
- Experience with health supply chain systems and data protection/cybersecurity requirements.
- Preference will be given, through the sub-criteria in Annex B, to bidders with a verifiable history of capacity-building or systems work within public-sector healthcare institutions, government ministries, or donor-funded programme ecosystems.

4. METHOD OF SUBMISSION

Please submit expression of interest no later than 12:00 noon October 19, 2026 by e-mail to PSMNigeriaTLPQuotes@ghsc-psm.org

Stakeholders push for discipline guidelines, counsellors in Lagos schools

By Iyabo Lawal
FOLLOWING the ban on corporal punishment in Lagos schools, education stakeholders have demanded clearer discipline guidelines, the employment of more guidance counsellors, and closer partnerships among parents, school authorities, and the government to address rising cases of student misconduct. The call was made at the Lagos State School Discipline Policy Roundtable organised by the Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation (AAAF), with support from SIFAX Group. The event themed: ‘Assessing the impact of banning corporal punishment on discipline in schools: Exploring alternative strategies for managing student misconduct’, was

held as part of activities commemorating this year’s International Teachers’ Day. It brought together policy-makers, school administrators, teachers, students, civil society organisations and representatives of government agencies. The event also featured the recognition and presentation of cash gifts to outstanding teachers in Lagos State following a statewide nomination exercise conducted by the foundation. At the end of the exercise, Modupe Odumade of Ijaye Ojokoro Senior High School emerged as the highest-ranked teacher, while others included ThankGod Priscilla, Ramota Balogun, Akinola Oluwatobi, and James

Omolade. Participants at the meeting agreed that although the ban on corporal punishment aligned with child rights and child protection principles, schools require clearer operational guidelines, stronger institutional support and effective alternatives to address behavioural challenges. A statewide policy review conducted by AAAF across Lagos State’s five administrative divisions formed the core of the meeting’s deliberations. The study covered 451 students, 42 school leaders and teachers, while 150 students participated in focus group discussions across 15 schools. Presenting the findings, the

researchers said while a majority of students surveyed described discipline in their schools as relatively good, many educators expressed concerns about inadequate guidance on disciplinary alternatives following the prohibition of corporal punishment. According to the report, gaps exist in policy implementation, teacher capacity, institutional support and stakeholder engagement. It noted that some schools lacked school-level disciplinary frameworks to operationalise the state policy, while teachers reported insufficient training on alternative disciplinary measures. **Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng**



Winner of the 2025 EY Young Tax Professional of the Year, Oluwabukola Essien (middle) with EY partners at the ceremony in Lagos, recently.

UNICROSS graduate wins EY Young Tax Professional of the Year

By Iyabo Lawal
OLUWABUKOLA Essien, a recent graduate of Estate Management from Cross River State University (UNICROSS), has emerged winner of the 2025 EY Young Tax Professional of the Year (YTPY) competition in Nigeria. Essien defeated over 500 contestants drawn from 56 tertiary institutions across the country to clinch the top prize. The YTPY is a global competition that attracts talent from diverse academic disciplines. Through practical case studies and presentations, participants are equipped with the skills required to thrive in an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving global economy. Designed as a platform to identify, develop and celebrate the next generation of tax leaders, the programme provided young talents the opportunity to showcase their technical knowledge, analytical ability and innovative think-

ing, while gaining exposure to real-world business challenges. Beyond taxation, the competition tasks participants with examining issues across corporate strategy, finance, technology, artificial intelligence, sustainability, business ethics, supply chain management, and broader business operations. This year’s grand finale was held at the EY Lagos office, where 10 finalists drawn from top universities across the country, including the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ife; University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN); Covenant University, Ota (CU); Babcock University, (BU), Ilishan; Pan-Atlantic University (PAU), Lagos; University of Ibadan (UI) and UNICROSS contested for the national title. Providing an overview of this year’s competition, the Associate Partner at EY and Coordinator of the programme, Dr Akeem Ogunseni, said the competition attracted 510 entries from 56 tertiary institutions

nationwide. According to him, following a rigorous selection process that involved assessment tests, research, strategic analysis, and presentations, 305 candidates were shortlisted. He said 122 contestants progressed to the quarterfinals, 31 advanced to the semifinals, and 10 advanced to the grand finale. Ogunseni noted that the YTPY programme is one of the ways EY is giving back to society, adding that EY Nigeria joined the global initiative in 2022. “The competition is dedicated to undergraduates, and the 10 finalists are all winners and pride to all of us here. Today, we usher them into a new realm. The overall winner will represent Nigeria at the global stage, with all expenses covered by EY. The top five finalists have the opportunity to undertake their internship at EY. This is all about grooming the next generation of tax leaders,” he said.

Group tasks students on literacy for environmental protection

By Princess Olaleye
THE Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of Zaccheus Onumba Dibiaezue Memorial Libraries (ZODML), Mrs Ifeoma Esiri, has charged students to deploy their literacy skills to protect the environment. Esiri gave the charge during the celebration of this year’s International Literacy Day, organised by ZODML at the National Library of Nigeria

(NLN) in Lagos. She said the theme of this year’s celebration: ‘Literacy for people, planet and prosperity: Reading, creating and protecting our future,’ underscored the critical role literacy plays in environmental protection and the prosperity of the people. According to her, individuals’ actions and inactions directly impact the environment, which, in turn, affects what is derived from it.

“We have been reminded that literacy is not simply about reading words on a page. Literacy helps us understand people, appreciate our environment and prepare ourselves for a better future. “We have listened to an author, explored stories, asked questions, participated in competitions and learned about recycling and caring for our planet. I, particularly, want our young participants to remem-

ber three words: read, create, protect. Read to expand your mind; create because your ideas matter; and protect our planet because you are part of its future. I encourage every child here to make a personal commitment to read more, learn more and do something positive for the environment,” Esiri said. The Head of NLN in Lagos State, Mrs Obianuju Onuorah, commended ZODML for its

YABATECH ‘86 Class invests N100m in alma mater

By Princess Olaleye
THE 1986 Accountancy Class of Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), have invested about N100 million in the rehabilitation and upgrade of facilities at the institution, 40 years after their graduation. The legacy project was unveiled as part of activities commemorating the set’s 40th anniversary. The intervention focused on the former School of Management and Business Studies, now known as the School of Financial Studies, and aimed to improve learning and research facilities for current and future students of the college. The renovation covered critical areas of the building and was fully equipped with modern teaching and learning facilities. Speaking at the unveiling, Chairman of the institution’s governing council Prof. Funso Afolabi, said the event represents history, friendship, gratitude, reunion and enduring institutional loyalty. Afolabi commended the

Class of 1986 for returning to their alma mater four decades after graduation to create a legacy that would benefit generations of students. Afolabi said tertiary institutions could be strengthened not only through government and management efforts, but also through sustained contributions from alumni who remain connected to their alma mater. He said the renovated facilities would serve as a reminder to present and future students of the long-standing relationship between YABATECH and its alumni, and encourage the set to maintain the relationship through mentorship, engagement and continued support. The Rector, Dr Ibraheem Abdul, described the project as an investment in the future of the institution and generations of students yet unborn. Abdul said the alumni had returned not merely as former students but as builders who had transformed their appreciation for the college into a practical contribution.

Ronik wins Lagos Agricultural Science Scholars Competition

RONIK Comprehensive School (RCS), Ejigbo, Lagos, has emerged as the winner of the Lagos State Agricultural Science Scholars Competition. The competition tested students’ understanding of agriculture and its application to real-life situations. The Principal, Mrs Victoria Duru, said the outstanding performance is a reflection of the school’s commitment to developing all-round students who are not only academically sound, but also equipped with practical knowledge, creativity and skills relevant to 21st century needs. She said the competition provided an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of the subject and its application to real-life situations. According to her, the school’s emergence as champion reflects the quality of teaching, student preparation and deliberate emphasis on experiential learning. In recognition of the achievement, Duru disclosed that the Lagos State government is installing a greenhouse at the school, which is an investment in the continued development

of agricultural education and practical learning. She added that the facility will provide students with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in modern agricultural practices, including controlled-environment farming, crop production, experimentation and observation. Besides, she stated that it will create a platform for students to connect classroom theories with practical agricultural production. In his remarks, the subject teacher, Shobowale Olanrewaju, said the school’s agricultural programme places emphasis on practical exposure, experimentation, problem-solving and innovation, adding that the new greenhouse will provide an important additional platform for this approach. He said: “The school believes that agricultural education should go beyond teaching students to memorise definitions and principles. Students should understand how agricultural knowledge can be applied to food production, environmental sustainability, technology, and national development.”



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Academics bemoan language policy reversal, threat to cultural heritage

By Adelowo Adebunmi

ACADEMIC leaders have warned that systemic policy reversals, social prestige dynamics that favour English and a growing gap between federal guidelines and classroom practice are endangering Nigeria’s cultural heritage and undermining cognitive development in the education system.

The warning was given at the fifth conference of the International Association of Language Educators (IALE), hosted at Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State.

The conference, themed: ‘The question of medium of instruction in the quest for sustainable education,’ brought together linguists, scholars and university administrators to examine how Nigeria can transform its multilingualism from a perceived administrative obstacle into a driver of cognitive wealth and sustainable education.

Stakeholders at the conference called for an overhaul of how indigenous languages are taught and valued in the Nigerian education system, proposing three main strategies, which include establishing structured trans-languaging frameworks to teach complex concepts such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in mother tongues, creating economic incentives to combat societal stigma attached to local languages and

deploying open-source educational technology tools and native artificial intelligence models to preserve under-resourced mother tongues across the country.

The keynote speaker, Prof. Graceful Ofoedu, said multilingualism must be recognised as national wealth rather than a systemic burden.

Ofoedu, a Professor of English Language and Applied Linguistics at Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, said early childhood instruction in a child’s native language sharpens cognitive competence and critical thinking, and establishes a flexible base for future learning, adding that thrusting children directly into an unfamiliar foreign language creates a harsh transitional gap that leaves many struggling throughout their academic careers and ultimately contributes to Nigeria’s workforce employability crisis.

“If a learner starts with his or her mother tongue, the child’s thinking capacity is properly developed; His cognitive competence is sharpened, and comprehension is flexible. But when another language, which is foreign to that child is introduced, there is a kind of gap in transition,” she said.

She challenged educators to bypass bureaucratic delays through digital grassroots action rather than waiting indefinitely for state funding, noting that by creating indigenous language educa-

tional content on digital platforms, teachers can digitise local knowledge, monetise their expertise and export Nigerian cultural capital to the world.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Solomon Makinde, described the policy’s cancellation as a grave error that threatens the survival of indigenous languages.

He said the 2022 policy, which mandated native language instruction in early basic education, was celebrated as a vital step for cultural preservation, adding that its reversal represents a negative shift that undermines the highest form of language promotion, which is using a language as a medium of educational instruction.

Makinde also rejected the practice of labelling native Nigerian languages as vernacular, a term historically used to imply inferior or unofficial speech.

“My own language, Yoruba, is not inferior to any language,” Makinde declared, adding that Nigerian leaders should be able to address international bodies such as the United Nations in Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo, utilising real-time translation technology to project national sovereignty on the global stage.

The President of IALE, Prof D. O. Fakeye, said the association aligns with the Nigerian Academy of Education in opposing government’s stance, pointing to decades of research-backed evidence

demonstrating how native mother tongues facilitate early cognitive development and foundational learning.

Professor of Communication and Language Arts at the University of Ibadan, Prof. Nkechi Christopher, said offi-

cial mandates will achieve nothing unless Nigerian society actively increases the practical value of mother tongues in daily economic and civic life.

Christopher said there is a fundamental hypocrisy in the national debate, noting

that while policymakers and middle-class advocates champion mother tongue policies in public, few choose to enrol their wards in schools that teach in local languages, as long as English remains the sole gateway to prestigious careers.

Firm restates commitment to transformative learning in Kano

By Eniola Daniel

INTERACTIVE technology firm, Wowbii, has restated its commitment to support educational institutions in Nigeria with innovative technology solutions to enhance learning outcomes.

The company gave the assurance at a dinner organised for school owners and education leaders in Kano State to celebrate partnership and deepen collaboration towards advancing transformative learning.

A statement made available to *The Guardian* said the event brought together prominent stakeholders in the education sector, including proprietors of private schools and education administrators, to deliberate on the evolving landscape of education and the growing role of technology in creating engaging and effective learning environments.

The dinner also provided an opportunity for the company to appreciate school owners for their continued partnership and reaffirm its resolve to provide innovative solutions for teaching and learning.

Speaking at the event, General Manager of Wowbii, Ipoola Morakinyo, who represented the Group Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Gbolahan Olayomi, said the company’s relationship with schools goes beyond commercial engagement.

Morakinyo said the company views its partnership with schools as a shared responsibility to improve learning experiences.

“Our partnerships with schools are built on a shared commitment to improving the learning experience. We are here not only to provide technology, but to work alongside school leaders as they build learning environ-

ments that prepare students for the future,” he said.

He disclosed that Wowbii will continue to deepen its engagement with education stakeholders across Kano and other parts of the country, with a focus on delivering technology solutions that provide practical value for schools, teachers and learners.

The event featured networking sessions, discussions on the future of education and entertainment, giving guests an opportunity to connect and exchange ideas on best practices in technology-driven learning.

The company noted that the Kano engagement forms part of its broader strategy to strengthen relationships with school communities and promote the adoption of technology-driven approaches to transformative learning across Nigeria.

Students, global varsities to converge in Lagos for AI-focused conference

By Princess Olaleye

STUDENTS, parents, young professionals and representatives of international universities will converge in Lagos for an education conference focused on artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on education and careers.

The conference, tagged ‘StudyIn global study conference 2026,’ will hold on Saturday, October 10, in Lagos.

Themed ‘Future ready: Succeeding in an AI-driven world,’ the conference will examine how artificial intelligence is changing education, careers and the skills students need to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global economy.

The event is expected to attract over 300 participants, including secondary school students, young professionals, parents and education stakeholders, alongside representatives of universities from the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland.

Organisers said the conference will provide

conversations around higher education, employability, emerging technologies and future career opportunities, as well as guidance for students and parents on international education decisions.

Participants will have the opportunity to interact directly with university representatives and obtain information on academic programmes, admission requirements, application timelines, tuition fees, scholarships, visa processes and post-study work opportunities.

As part of the programme, Year 11 and Year 12 students from secondary schools across the country have been invited to participate in the Future Ready Essay Competition.

The competition is aimed at encouraging students to critically examine the impact of artificial intelligence on education and to articulate perspectives on preparing for an AI-driven future.

According to the organisers, outstanding entries in the essay competition will receive prizes, including a

MacBook, an iPad and other prizes.

StudyIn, the organiser of the conference, said it has supported over 1.3 million students globally since 2006 and operates through more than 100 offices in 42 countries.

Speaking ahead of the conference, the Country Director of StudyIn Nigeria, Mary Agbu, said students are preparing for a world that is changing rapidly, with artificial intelligence already influencing learning, work and career development.

“Students today are preparing for a world that is changing faster than ever. AI is already influencing the way we learn, work and build careers, which means students need to think carefully about the education and skills they will need for the future.

“Through the StudyIn Global Study Conference, we want to give students and parents access to the right information, international institutions, and expert guidance to help them make informed decisions about their education journey at no cost,” Ogbu added.



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INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

1. INTRODUCTION

The Office of the Auditor General for the Federation (OAGF), in furtherance of its statutory mandate intends to procure Works, Goods and Services under the 2026 Financial Year in accordance with the Public Procurement Act 2007.

The Office of the Auditor General for the Federation by this publication hereby invites interested Companies/Accounting Firms to submit Expression of Interest for the Vetting of Accounts of Federal Government Agencies and Parastatals.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work to be carried out includes the following:

CATEGORY F (Expression of Interest)	Lot	Audit House
F1 Financial Consulting A	II	II
F2 Financial Consulting B	II	II
F3 Financial Consulting C	II	II

3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

a) Evidence of Certificate of Incorporation issued by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) including Forms CAC 1.1, CAC2 and CAC7;

b) Evidence of Company Income's Tax Clearance Certificate (or Personal Income Tax Certificate where applicable for the last three (3) years valid till 31st December, 2025;

c) Evidence of Pension Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2026 (this requirement is only applicable to bidders whose number of staffs is 5 and above or the bidder's annual turnover is N50m and above);

d) Evidence of current Industrial Training Fund (ITF) compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2026;

e) Evidence of current Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) Compliance Certificate valid till 31st December, 2026;

f) Evidence of Registration on the National Database of Federal Contractors, Consultants and Service Providers by submission of Interim Registration Report (IRR) expiring on 31/12/2026 or valid Certificate issued by BPP.

g) Evidence of Firm's Registration with relevant professional body e.g ICAN/ ANAN/ Financial Reporting Service.

h) Sworn Affidavit disclosing whether or not any officer of the relevant committees of the Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation or the Bureau of Public Procurement is a former or present Director, Shareholder or has any pecuniary interest in the bidder and to confirm that all information presented in its bid are true and correct in all particulars.

i) Company Audited Accounts for the last three (3) years – 2023, 2024 & 2025.

j) Evidence of financial capability to execute the project by submission of Reference Letter from a reputable commercial bank in Nigeria, indicating willingness to provide credit facility for the execution of the project when needed;

k) Company Profile with the Curriculum Vitae of key Staff to be deployed for the project, including copies of their Academic/ Professional qualification (in case of construction: COREN, QSRBN, ARCON, CORBON etc);

l) Verifiable documentary evidence of at least three (3) similar jobs executed in the last five (5) years including Letters of Awards, Valuation Certificates, Job Completion Certificates and Photographs of the projects;

m) Evidence of current Registration with Auditor General for the Federation, and; Evidence of Firm's current registration with the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria;

n) All documents for submission must be transmitted with a Covering/ Forwarding letter under the Company/Firm's Letter Head Paper bearing amongst others, the Registration Number (RC) as issued by the corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) Contact Address, Telephone Number (preferably GSM No.), and e-mail address. The letterhead Paper must bear the Names and Nationalities of the Directors of the Company at the bottom of the page, duly signed by the authorized officer of the firm.

4. SUBMISSION OF EOI DOCUMENTS (CATEGORY F)

Interested firms are to submit Two (2) bound copies of Expression of Interest (EOI) documents separated by dividers and arranged as indicated above (No 3 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT). The documents should be submitted in a sealed envelope and addressed to the Auditor-General for the Federation with the address below and clearly marked with (the name of the project and the Lot number). Furthermore, the reverse of each sealed envelope should have the name and address of the bidder and dropped in the designated Tender box not later than 12:00 noon on Tuesday, 27th October, 2026 at:

The office of;
The Secretary,
Procurement Planning Committee
Room 717B, 7th Floor,
Audit House,
Central Business District, Abuja.

5. OPENING OF BIDS

The EOI and Technical Bids will be opened immediately after the deadlines for submission at 12:00 noon on Tuesday, 27th October, 2026, at Audit House Conference Room in the presence of bidders or their representatives. Please, ensure that you sign the Bid Submission Register, as the OAGF will not be held liable for misplaced or wrongly submitted bids. Companies or their representatives, Civil Societies, NGO's, Professional Bodies and members of the general public are by this publication invited to witness the bid opening exercise.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION

a. Bids must be in English Language and signed by an official authorized by the bidder;

b. Bids submitted after the deadline for submission would be returned unopened;

c. Bidders should not bid for more than one (1) Lot

d. All costs will be borne by the bidders;

e. Non-compliance to the instructions will lead to disqualification

f. Category F: Only short-listed bidders will be notified/contacted at a later date;

g. The OAGF is not bound to pre-qualify any bidder and reserves the right to annual procurement process at any time without incurring any liabilities in accordance with section 28 of the Public Procurement Act 2007.

h. Submission of EOI indicates acceptance of the Terms and Conditions above.

Signed

AUDITOR-GENERAL FOR THE FEDERATION

Office of the Auditor-General for the Federation

World Report

Israel marks three years since October 7 attacks

ISRAELIS are marking three years since the Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others were taken hostage.

Memorial events took place across Israel, they began with a nationwide minute's silence at 06:29 local time (04:29 BST), to mark the time the attacks started. In Tel Aviv, people stopped their cars to pay their respects.

At the site of the Nova music festival, where 378 people were killed and 44 taken hostage, the mother of one victim says the attacks were "dystopic, unimaginable".

"What happened here was not human," says Ahuva Yavin Mayze, whose daughter was shot dead at the festival.

In response to the October 7 attacks, Israel launched a military offensive in Gaza in which more than 74,200 people have been killed, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

"I don't believe Israel caused all this destruction for nothing," one Palestinian man said. "They have turned Gaza into a place that is almost impossible to live in".

Hundreds of people gathered earlier in Sydney,

Australia, to mark the third anniversary of the October 7 attacks.

Similar memorial events have been organised in other countries around the world, including in Germany, where the Jewish students' union installed a vigil at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate.

In France, a memorial stone to the victims was unveiled in the southern city of Carcassonne.

Mourners are laying wreaths on graves in Kfar Aza, a kibbutz in southern Israel, just a few kilometres from the border with Gaza.

An Israel Defense Forces investigation found that 62 residents of the small village, which had a population of under 1,000 three years ago, were killed in the Hamas-led attacks.

Eighteen security personnel were also killed, and 19 people taken as hostages.

In London, the Metropolitan Police says five people have been arrested for inciting racial hatred outside the Board of Deputies of British Jews building in Camden.

Ten people linked to Kenya's first-ever Ebola case quarantined

TEN people who came into contact with a man who died of Ebola in Kenya have been quarantined, health officials in the East African nation say. They are also trying to trace 57 other contacts of the Kenyan patient after he travelled from the Democratic Republic of Congo, dying in hospital in Nairobi on Monday.

This is the East African nation's first-ever Ebola case and there is now growing concern about the country's screening measures.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention chief has told the BBC that despite being sick for a month, the patient passed through multiple cities in DR Congo, driving to Uganda and eventually flying to Kenya without his sickness being detected.

"We know that he left Buta, a city in (northern) DR Congo, to

drive to Kisangani. And from Kisangani, he took a flight to Beni. From Beni, he drove to Uganda. And from Uganda, he took a flight to Nairobi," Jean Kaseya told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme.

"What are symptoms he was presenting? Why was he not detected?" he asked.

The Ebola virus spreads through contact with infected bodily fluids such as blood or vomit.

The current outbreak in DR Congo, which began in May, has been caused by the Bundibugyo species of Ebola, which is relatively rare, with no approved vaccine or treatment, though trials are under way.

Kaseya said the Africa CDC was investigating the case, alongside the Congolese authorities. A team from the organisation was also due to

meet the Kenyan health authorities.

Kenya's health ministry official Patrick Amoth said the patient might have passed screening after taking medications that masked his symptoms.

After arriving at the airport in Kenya's capital, he was transferred by a relative to a hospital in the city where he died, and was buried on Tuesday in line with health safety guidelines.

Kenyan authorities have urged people not to panic, with the health ministry assuring of heightened surveillance at airports and border crossings.

But Dr Dennis Miskellah, a representative from Kenya's main doctors' union, said the Ebola case did not come as a surprise to him and most health workers.

ECOWAS to strengthen statistical systems amid data credibility concerns

By Joseph Onyekwere

THE Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission has commenced a regional training programme for statistical leaders from member states and Mauritania, seeking to strengthen national statistical systems and improve the quality, credibility and accessibility of official data across West Africa.

The five-day training, which began in Monrovia, Liberia, on October 5 and ends tomorrow, is bringing together managers from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and National Statistical Systems (NSSs), as well as officials of the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA), West African Monetary Institute (WAMI) and technical staff of the ECOWAS Commission.

The programme is being implemented through the World Bank-funded Project for the Harmonisation and Improvement of Statistics in West and Central Africa (HISWACA), against the backdrop of growing demand for timely, reliable and comparable statistics to support economic policymaking, development planning and regional integration.

The training is designed to equip statistical managers with modern leadership and management skills to enable them to navigate an increasingly complex data environment, lead teams effectively, improve institutional performance and respond to emerging challenges, including digital transformation and the

responsible use of artificial intelligence.

At the opening ceremony, the Director General of the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Richard Fatorma Ngafuan, described the initiative as an important step towards strengthening leadership within National Statistical Systems.

Ngafuan, who highlighted the longstanding partnership between LISGIS and ECOWAS in statistical capacity building, said statistical institutions required leaders capable of maintaining professional integrity while managing institutional change and technological transformation.

He stressed the need for statistical managers to uphold statistical integrity, improve institutional performance, embrace digital transformation and the responsible use of artificial intelligence, while communicating effectively with policymakers and the public.

According to him, stronger statistical leadership remains critical to building institutions capable of producing reliable, credible and trusted statistics for evidence-based decision-making and improved development outcomes.

Also speaking, ECOWAS Resident Representative in Liberia, Ambassador Mohammed Kenewui Konneh, said effective leadership was indispensable to building strong, credible and professional National Statistical Systems.



LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY, OJO

LAGOS-BADAGRY EXPRESSWAY, PMB 0001, LASU POST OFFICE, OJO, LAGOS
Website: www.lasu.edu.ng Email: vc@lasu.edu.ng, registrar@lasu.edu.ng

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE POSTS OF:

- DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF UNIVERSITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRE; AND**
- DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES**

1.0 PREAMBLE

The Governing Council of Lagos State University hereby announces vacancies in the following positions:

A. Director, Directorate of University Multimedia Centre

B. Director, Directorate of Health Services

In consonance with the Lagos State University Law, 2004 (As Amended), and in exercise of the powers contained therein, the Governing Council has decided to begin the process of appointing Directors to the above vacant positions. Consequently, applications are hereby invited from suitably qualified applicants for these positions.

2.0 THE INSTITUTION

Lagos State University (LASU) was established in 1983 by the Enabling Law of Lagos State of Nigeria, for the advancement of learning, establishment of academic excellence AND to meet the specific manpower needs of Lagos State, as well as undertake any other activities appropriate for a university of the highest standard. Lagos State University is reputed for high standards, which it has maintained over the years and is currently ranked amongst the foremost universities in the country. The University currently has sixteen (16) Faculties, six (6) Schools, nine (9) Centres, and three (3) Institutes, spread across the four (4) campuses of the University.

3.0 THE DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF UNIVERSITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRE

The Director, Directorate of University Multimedia Centre is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the coordination of multimedia services in the University.

Qualifications/Requirements

- A good honours degree from a recognised institution;
- A relevant Higher Degree;
- Minimum of fifteen (15) years' relevant post-qualification experience;
- Must have served for a minimum of three (3) years as a Deputy Director of University Multimedia Centre in a University or comparable institution;
- Proficiency in computer skills in linear and non-linear editing of real-time recorded materials;
- Proficiency in the use of AI tools, multimedia services, editing software and online streaming services; and
- Membership of relevant professional bodies.

Key Responsibilities

- Coordinate the day-to-day multimedia services of the University;
- Oversee the entire multimedia content lifecycle, from conceptualisation and design to final production; and
- Perform any other responsibilities that may be assigned by the Vice-Chancellor.

4.0 THE DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES

The Director of Health Services is responsible to the Vice Chancellor for the day-to-day administration of the University Health Services.

Qualifications/Requirements

- First Degree in Medicine (M.B.B.S) from a recognised institution;
- Evidence of one year's housemanship, plus NYSC Discharge/Exemption Certificate;
- Fellowship of National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria;
- Duly registered with the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) plus a current practising license;
- Minimum of fifteen (15) years' post-qualification cognate experience;
- Must have served for a minimum of three (3) years as a Deputy Director of Health Services in a comparable institution;
- Proficiency in the use of ICT; and
- Public Health/Family Medicine qualification is an added advantage.

Key Responsibilities

- Serve as the Chief Medical Administrator of the University Health Services
- Coordinate day-to-day operations of the University Health Services;
- Provide strategic leadership and implement health policies;
- Ensure compliance with regulations and supervise

the medical registration of staff and students;

- Advise University Management on health policies; and
- Perform any other responsibilities that may be assigned by the Vice-Chancellor.

5.0 TENURE

The Director, Directorate of University Multimedia Centre and Director, Directorate of Health Services shall hold office for a SINGLE TERM of five (5) years ONLY on such terms and conditions as may be specified in the letter of appointment.

6.0 AGE REQUIREMENT

Candidates for either position must not be above the age of sixty (60) years as at November 2026.

7.0 REMUNERATION

The remuneration and other conditions of service are as applicable to the post of Director in Nigerian universities and as may be determined from time to time by the Governing Council, as appropriate.

8.0 METHOD OF APPLICATION

Candidates should submit fifteen (15) copies of their application accompanied with detailed recent Curriculum Vitae (CV), providing information on the following:

- Names in Full
- Place AND Date of Birth
- Gender
- Permanent Home Address
- Nationality at Birth
- State/Local Government Area/Ward
- Marital Status
- Number AND Ages of Children
- Degree (including Dates/Class Institutions) and any other qualifications and distinctions
- Professional Qualifications
- Statement of Experience, including full details of former and present posts
- Vision for the University in the next five years (not more than five hundred (500) words)
- Other activities outside current employment
- Proposed date of availability for duties, if appointed
- Names AND Addresses of Three (3) Referees
- Publications (if any)

Names, addresses and phone numbers of three (3) referees who should be able to attest to the candidate's standing and abilities academically and managerially, as well as morals, character and integrity. Each referee must be contacted by the applicant to forward, directly to the Registrar, a confidential report, in a properly sealed envelope marked "POST OF DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF UNIVERSITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRE OR POST OF DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES" at the left hand corner of the envelope, to reach the Registrar on or before the deadline for the submission of application.

9.0 SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION/DEADLINE

All applications are to be submitted under CONFIDENTIAL COVER, with the envelope marked "POST OF DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF UNIVERSITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRE OR POST OF DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH SERVICES" sealed AND addressed AND submitted to:

**The Registrar AND Secretary to Council,
Registrar's Office,
5th Floor, Babatunde Raji Fashola Senate Building,
Lagos State University,
Badagry Expressway, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria.**

The application should reach the Registrar **NOT** later than **four (4) weeks** from the date of this publication.

10.0 SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES

Shortlisted candidates will be required to make themselves available for an interview before the Joint Council and Senate Selection Committee at a DATE that will be duly AND formally conveyed to such candidates in writing.

Please **NOTE** that only candidates who satisfy **ALL** the above criteria will be shortlisted and contacted for the next stage of the appointment process.

SIGNED
Emmanuel A. FANU, MANUPA, MNIM, MCIPM, Fcpi
Registrar and Secretary to Council

CJN warns against misrepresenting proceedings, abuses

From **Ameh Ochojila** and **Tina Abeku**,
Abuja

THE Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, has stressed the need for restraint in public commentary by legal practitioners, stating that lawyers’ right to criticise judgments or proceedings should not be exploited to malign judges or misrepresent proceedings to tilt public opinion against the court.

Describing lawyers as indispensable partners in the administration of justice, she emphasised that “where there are genuine concerns about judicial conduct, the appropriate institutional channels remain available and should be used.”

In another development, stakeholders in the criminal justice sector have described

Stakeholders seek improved funding for non-custodial sentencing, others

the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) Act 2019 as a critical shift from punitive incarceration to restorative justice, and therefore called for increased funding and synergy to sustain the implementation of non-custodial measures.

Speaking at a policy dialogue in Abuja, the Controller-General of the NCoS, Sylvester Nwakuche, said the agency had successfully transitioned from mere policy formulation to practical implementation.

Nwakuche, who was represented by the Assistant Controller-General in charge of Non-Custodial Services, Timothy Dabit, noted that Section 37 of the Act empowered NCoS to effectively administer community serv-

ice, probation, parole, and other viable alternatives to imprisonment.

The CJN spoke in Abuja yesterday at the commissioning of the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN) headquarters building and at a special court marking the commencement of the court’s 2026/2027 legal year.

She also urged judges to be cautious in handling election tribunal cases and to refrain from conduct that could cast doubt on their integrity.

“Whether sitting in this court or performing a tribunal assignment, you must remain conscious that your conduct will be closely scrutinised,” she stated. “You must ensure that nothing in your associations, public engage-

ments or other conduct creates a reasonable perception of political alignment or predisposition.”

The CJN also counselled lawyers to remain professional when handling political cases and warned them against engaging in forum shopping and other unethical conduct.

Meanwhile, Kekere-Ekun commended the leadership of the NICN for the successes so far recorded by the court. Urging the judges to remain committed to diligence, patience and intellectual discipline, she noted that “the volume of cases before a court can be demanding, but pressure must never become an excuse for impatience, discourtesy or inadequate attention to the matters placed

before the court.”

Meanwhile, NICP President, Justice Benedict Kanyip, stressed the importance of the court in resolving labour disputes in the country, dis-

closing that over the past 12 months, a total of 2,236 cases were disposed of across the court’s judicial divisions, significantly cutting down its historic backlog.

FCT workers begin indefinite strike over teachers’ welfare

From **Azimazi Momoh Jimoh**, Abuja

FOLLOWING the expiration of its seven-day ultimatum, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Council of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) yesterday commenced an indefinite strike across all sectors over alleged career stagnation and other welfare concerns affecting the FCT Administration’s (FCTA) teachers.

The labour body had issued the warning on September 8, 2026, urging the FCTA to resolve what it described as longstanding grievances concerning the promotion

and welfare of teachers in the territory.

In a communique, the NLC FCT Council Chairman, Knabayi Adalo, said the congress considered the FCTA’s response “ambiguous, dismissive, and totally unacceptable,” and therefore rejected it.

Consequently, the union directed all workers in the public and private sectors, including its affiliate unions in schools, hospitals, offices and government establishments, to withdraw their services from yesterday until its demands are met.

REA, Stanbic seal N100b buffer for renewable energy developers

By **Waliat Musa**

THE Rural Electrification Agency (REA) and Stanbic IBTC Bank Limited have sealed a N100 billion financing facility to enable renewable energy project developers to access funds to procure equipment and accelerate the implementation of electricity projects in unserved and underserved communities.

Signed yesterday at the REA Corporate Headquarters in Abuja, the agreement established a framework for

Stanbic IBTC to provide financing to eligible developers participating in REA-led electrification programmes, including the Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-up (DARES) Project, the World Bank-funded scale-up of the Nigeria Electrification Project (NEP).

Under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Stanbic IBTC will make available a N100 billion revolving loan facility for eligible project developers to procure

equipment required for renewable energy projects under REA programmes.

The facility has a one-year tenor, while the amount accessible to each developer will be determined on a case-by-case basis, subject to the underlying grant agreement, developer capacity and the bank’s credit assessment.

The financing arrangement is expected to address funding constraints that have slowed the pace of renewable energy project delivery,

particularly the difficulty for developers with approved projects and grants to raise the capital required for equipment procurement and the commencement of implementation.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of REA, Abba Abubakar Aliyu, said the partnership would strengthen the financing ecosystem required to deliver renewable energy infrastructure at scale.



Chief Academic Officer, Miva Open University, Udochi Obiukwu (left); Registrar, Lovlyn Okonkwo; Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Oladiran Arulogun; Chief Operating Officer, Aniekeme Umoh, and Chief Technology and Innovation Officer, Paul Ehiagbonare, during media briefing on the institution’s efforts towards the development of Nigeria’s education sector, in Abuja, yesterday.

PHOTO: LUCY LADIDI ATEKO

TUC demands increased funding as insecurity keeps farmers off farms

From **Collins Olayinka**, Abuja

THE Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) yesterday in Abuja called on the federal government to increase security funding to significantly curb rising food prices.

TUC President, Festus Osifo, who spoke at the end of the TUC Administrative Council meeting, explained that persistent insecurity was keeping farmers from their farms, discouraging investment, and threatening food production.

In the meantime, presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Atiku Abubakar, has accused

Atiku accuses Tinubu of importing food, abandoning farmers

President Bola Tinubu’s administration of presiding over a sharp reversal in Nigeria’s agricultural trade.

In a statement yesterday by the Director of Strategic Communication of the ADC Presidential Campaign Council, Phrank Shaibu, the former vice president said the country moved from a N740.27 billion surplus to a N56.13 billion deficit in one year.

According to Atiku, the figures were a troubling reflection of an economy in which farmers are struggling with insecurity, manufacturers are

battling high production costs, and Nigeria continues to lose value by exporting raw agricultural products instead of processing them locally.

Osifo argued that protection of lives and property must take precedence over infrastructure development because Nigerians must first be alive and secure to benefit from government investments.

He said the worsening insecurity in parts of the country had prevented farmers from returning to their farms, with serious implications for food availability, household wel-

fare and the wider economy.

Consequently, he urged the government to double its efforts and increase the funds allocated to fighting insecurity, arguing that investment in roads, power and education would have limited value if citizens could not live, work and produce safely.

The TUC leader also warned that insecurity was affecting investors’ willingness to commit capital to the Nigerian economy, saying that uncertainty and threats to lives and property could discourage both domestic and foreign investment.

NSIL confab to appraise efficacy of int’l law

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

THE Nigerian Society of International Law (NSIL) is set to review the effectiveness and implementation of international law in contemporary international relations during its 47th annual conference coming up on October 13 to 14.

Billed for the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Lagos, the conference, themed “From Obligations to Implementation: Reassessing the Efficacy of

International Law in Contemporary International Relations,” will feature speakers from Nigeria and other African countries, including Prof. Carol Ngang of Lesotho, who will speak on the right to development.

Addressing newsmen yesterday ahead of the event, the NSIL President, Prof. Yinka Omorogbe, said the conference would examine how international obligations translate into practical benefits for citizens and states.

Court dismisses suit against APC guber candidate in Kwara

From **Mansur Aramide**, Ilorin

A FEDERAL High Court in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, has dismissed a suit seeking to invalidate the candidacy of the Kwara State governorship flagbearer of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Yakubu Salihu.

The Citizens Awareness Against Corruption and Social Vices Initiative had filed a suit. FHC/ABJ/CS/1112/2026 against the APC, Salihu and the

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), with the Special Adviser to the Governor on Legal Matters, Sambo Muritala, as an observer.

In a judgment delivered yesterday, however, Justice Emeka Nwide dismissed the suit for want of locus and awarded N10 million in costs against the claimant, who had alleged that Salihu was doubly nominated in the APC’s House of Assembly and governorship primaries.

The Guardian Oyewole emerges chairman of Bauchi Correspondents’ Chapel

From **Murtala Adewale**, Bauchi

THE Guardian correspondent in Bauchi State, Rauf Oyewole, defeated Samuel Luka of Daily Times in a keenly contested election held yesterday in Bauchi to emerge the chairman of the state’s Correspondents’ Chapel.

The election also saw Mohammed Kawu of New Nigeria Newspapers elected as vice chairman, Nasiru Shuaibu of New Telegraph as secretary, and Adamu Imam of Trust TV as treasurer.

Speaking after he was sworn in for a three-year tenure, Oyewole applauded members for the confidence reposed in him and pledged to run an inclusive administration that would prioritise welfare, professionalism and unity among members.

He promised to strengthen the relationship between the chapel and government institutions, security agencies and other stakeholders while upholding ethical journalism.

Chelle: ‘Draw with Russia shows Eagles are in safe place’

Ambassador wants repeat game in Nigeria

By Christian Okpara

SUPER Eagles’ 3-3 draw with Russia on Tuesday has convinced Coach Eric Chelle that Nigeria has a good reservoir of talent to build a championship-winning team.

Nigeria rallied from 3-1 down to hold Russia to a 3-3 draw despite playing with a squad comprising 90 per cent new players.

For the first time in over two years, the team played without the likes of Wilfred Ndidi, Alex Iwobi, Calvin Bassey, Victor Osimhen, Ademola Lookman and Samuel Chukwueze, among other regulars.

Chelle fielded nine promising players, including Samuel James, Isaac James, Stephen Michael,

Wilfred Igor, Chibuzo Nwoko, Vince Osuji, Peter Edokpor, Abdullahi Umar and Umar Abubakar. Yet the team held Russia, ranked as the 35th

Ogunbote

Ogunbote excited to work with Chelsea ‘one of world’s most successful teams’

By Christian Okpara

CHELSEA’S new head of women’s football, Lola Ogunbote, has described her new role in the leading European team as a dream come true.

Announcing her new position on her linkedin.com page, Ogunbote said: “I’m thrilled to share that I’ve joined Chelsea Football Club Women—one of the most successful women’s teams in the world—as Head of Football Operations & Player Services.

“In the first three months, we have delivered a pre-season tour in Australia and New Zealand; taken all home league fixtures to Stamford Bridge; welcomed Champions League home games at AFC Wimbledon; delivered Champions League and WSL match-days and kicked off an impressive league campaign.”

Ogunbote confessed that “it’s been a whirlwind start. I’m deeply grateful to our leadership for the trust, and to the mentors, allies, and safe spaces that helped me make this decision. Proud to serve the club, players and staff every day.”

Ogunbote joined Chelsea after almost nine years as Burnley’s first Head of Women’s Football.

During her time at Burnley, Ogunbote played a central role in building the women’s programme, overseeing recruitment, player development and operations.

best team in the world by FIFA, to a draw.

Nigeria is ranked 30th by FIFA. Chelle had plenty to say about the contest itself after the Super Eagles escaped with a 3-3 draw.

Speaking after Tuesday’s game at the Nizhny Novgorod Stadium, Chelle praised Russia’s quality while acknowledging the unusual competitive circumstances surrounding Valeri Karpin’s team.

“I consider the Russian national team a good and strong team. They’re having a tough time right now because of the suspension; they’re forced to play only friendly matches and only against those who agree.”

He said that the Super Eagles controlled the opening stages before Russia seized the initiative, but tactical adjustments helped his side recover.

“We dominated the first half, and the second, of course, was Russia’s. Then they couldn’t find a way to deal with what we offered them. And we secured a draw. I’m happy with my team.

“We have taken note of what these players can do, which will help us going forward,” he said.

Messi: ‘Argentina farewell saddest day of my career’

WORLD Cup winner, Lionel Messi said saying goodbye to Argentina was the “saddest day” of his career as he brought an end to his international career, reports hayters.com.

The 39-year-old delivered an emotional farewell after his final appearance in a 3-0 win over Benin, thanking his family, teammates and supporters while reflecting on a journey that saw him experience both heartbreak and historic success.

“It’s hard to say anything today; there are so many emotions, so many things are going through my mind,” Messi said.

“The first thing I think of is my dad. All I can do is express my gratitude, as I said in my farewell letter. It was a great honour to wear this jersey for over 20 years. Even in the worst moments we’ve faced, I never stopped fighting, never stopped giving my all, and never stopped being there. Not coming back is going to be a huge pain.”

Messi admitted the physical and emotional toll of the 2026 World Cup had played a major part in his decision to step away.

“I swear I’d like to come back for the rest of my life, because playing for the Argentine National Team is the most wonderful thing that can happen to you,” he said. While I want to stay here

forever, I feel like it’s the right time. The last World Cup was too much for me.

“We dreamed of being world champions again; we came so close, and the truth is, nothing unusual happened. We gave it our all; the match against England was incredibly draining for us, both physically and emotionally. The truth is, we barely made it.”

Messi also paid tribute to the teammates who helped him finally achieve the international success that had eluded him for so long.

“I want to thank my teammates for the time I shared with this group, who helped me fulfil my childhood dream of being a world champion, a champion of the Americas, a champion of the Finalissima, a champion of everything we played for,” he said.

“It was an enormous honour to share the field with them, both on and off the field.

“I was ready to compete against anyone because I knew I had warriors by my side who would give their all.”

The former Argentina captain also thanked supporters for the backing he received throughout his international career.

EuroMatch NPFL Result

Shooting Stars 0 Kano Pillars 0



Kelechi Iheanacho scored the opening goal in Super Eagles’ 3-3 draw with Russia at the Nizhny Novgorod Stadium on Tuesday.

CAS to hear Senegal’s AFCON appeal today

THE long-running saga over the winner of this year’s Africa Cup of Nations title will move closer to resolution today when Senegal’s appeal after being stripped of the title is heard by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, reports rte.ie.

Senegal are contesting the Confederation of African Football’s (CAF) decision to declare Morocco champions, despite Senegal beating the hosts 1-0 after extra time in January’s final in Rabat.

Senegal walked off the pitch for 14 minutes after a penalty was awarded against them late in regulation time, with several players returning to the dressing room in protest before they resumed play.

Morocco failed to convert the spot kick, sending the match into extra time, where Senegal scored the winner to secure victory.

However, they were stripped of the title two months later after CAF’s Appeal Board ruled that Senegal had forfeited the match by walking off the pitch, overturning the result and awarding a 3-0 victory to Morocco.

BAL unveils courts in Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal

THE Basketball Africa League (BAL) said yesterday that it is unveiling six newly refurbished basketball courts in Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire and Senegal

in support of NBA Africa’s commitment to build or renovate 1,000 courts across the continent over the next decade. Collectively, the courts are expected to reach thousands

of youth and community members annually.

The first two courts were unveiled on September 30 in Saint-Louis, Senegal, in collaboration with Senegalese national oil and gas company Société des Pétroles du Sénégal (PETROSEN), and on October 3 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in collaboration with Wave Côte d’Ivoire.

Additional courts will be unveiled through December in Dakar, Senegal, in collaboration with Ville de Dakar; in Joal, Senegal, in collaboration with Woodside Energy; and in Guédiawaye, Senegal, and Owerri, Nigeria, in collaboration with Qatar Foundation.

65th FirstBank Lagos Open Golf Championship set for November

By Daniel Akinola

LAGOS is gearing up for a historic week of world-class golf as the 65th FirstBank Lagos Amateur Open Golf Championship prepares to take over the lush fairways of the Ikoyi Club 1938 in November.

As the nation’s longest-running golf tournament, organisers

promise this year’s edition will be an unforgettable showcase of talent. The premier event is expected to draw the continent’s finest amateur golfers to battle for glory and valuable global ranking points.

Powered by FirstBank, the tournament has consistently strengthened the popularity and rich heritage of several sporting events and reaffirmed the bank’s commitment to the development of sporting talent in Nigeria.

SOLUTION

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Messi waving goodbye to fans after his international farewell game against Benin Republic on Tuesday night.

Independent figures risk being mistaken for official results

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

winner forced the organisation to clarify its position. Yiaga said it had not declared a winner or loser, stressing that its objective was to independently verify the official result.

The episode exposed a problem that Nigeria could face on a much larger scale in 2027: an independent organisation may intend to verify an election, while sections of the public interpret its figures as an alternative official result.

The problem became even more pronounced during the 2023 general elections.

INEC's electronic results portal, IReV, was expected to give Nigerians unprecedented access to polling-unit result sheets. Instead, delays and technical difficulties in uploading some results became a major source of controversy, particularly during the presidential election.

That information gap was quickly occupied by political parties, CSOs, media organisations and civic technology groups operating their own monitoring and collation systems.

Some published projections. Others issued assessments of the conduct of the election. Still others analysed available polling-unit results.

The result was a crowded

information space in which the official results process was no longer the only source of election information available to Nigerians.

Questions were subsequently raised about the geographical reach and methodology of some observer reports. A 2023 analysis by *The Guardian* found that no accredited domestic or international observer organisation had deployed observers to as many as 10 per cent of Nigeria's 176,606 polling units, while observer groups defended the use of sampling and statistical methodologies.

The lesson was not that CSO monitoring was ineffective. Rather, it demonstrated the importance of telling Nigerians what a particular organisation actually observed, where it observed it, how it reached its conclusions

and whether its figures represented observations, estimates, projections or a complete collation. That distinction could become critical in 2027.

A member of the Coalition of Democrats for Electoral Reform (CODER), Popoola Ajayi, believes independent monitoring remains necessary but should not be allowed to blur the statutory process.

"A situation room can say: 'Our observers recorded these results.' It can say: 'Our independent analysis indicates that Candidate A has the highest number of votes,'" he said.

"But it should not present its own tally as the official result or claim the statutory authority to declare a winner."

Ajayi warned that Nigeria could move from an era of

inadequate electoral information into one of competing information, where several actors release different figures before INEC has completed its statutory collation.

That could be particularly dangerous in a tightly contested presidential or governorship election.

A result announced from a situation room may be intended as an analytical projection. But to a voter receiving it on a mobile phone, accompanied by a dramatic headline or a viral video, it may look indistinguishable from an official declaration. That is where misinformation can acquire political consequences.

Osun offers a recent test

THE August 2026 Osun governorship election

provided a more recent illustration of both the value and complexity of independent verification.

Yiaga Africa said its independent statistical estimates were consistent with the official INEC results, reinforcing confidence that the figures declared at the state collation centre reflected the votes counted at polling units.

At the same time, the Peering Advocacy and Advancement Centre in Africa (PAACA), through its EveryVotes initiative, reported that some result sheets appeared to have been uploaded more than once on IReV, identifying duplicate uploads involving six polling units.

The two developments demonstrate why independent scrutiny remains important. One

organisation can provide evidence supporting the official result while another identifies weaknesses in the electronic trail that require explanation.

Neither development, however, changes who has the statutory responsibility to declare the winner.

Indeed, a coalition under the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room had earlier raised concerns about the 2026 introduction of an electronic EC&A and an INEC backend validation process before results appear on IReV. Fourteen CSOs called for greater transparency around the process, particularly over which version of a result should be regarded as authoritative.

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng

Pilot diverted aircraft from community before crash, says Aiyedatiwa

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MEANWHILE, the Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has said the pilot of the NAF ATR-42 aircraft averted a bigger disaster by manoeuvring the plane away from the community before it went down.

Aiyedatiwa disclosed this yesterday during an on-the-spot assessment of the crash scene.

According to the governor, residents who witnessed the

incident said the aircraft appeared to be descending towards the community, accompanied by a sound suggesting an engine problem.

He said the pilot managed to manoeuvre the aircraft away from the community before it crashed into a swamp about 200 metres away.

Aiyedatiwa said only the pilot could explain the effort made to divert the aircraft, adding that a crash in the middle of the community

would have resulted in a major catastrophe.

The governor described the crash site as a "very gory sight", saying parts of bodies, clothes and jackets belonging to Air Force personnel, as well as broken aircraft parts, had been recovered and preserved for further investigation.

He, however, said the main body of the aircraft had yet to be sighted, as it was believed to be submerged in the swamp.

According to him, the difficulty in accessing the site prompted him to direct the Ministry of Works to deploy two amphibious machines to create wider access through the waterways.

Aiyedatiwa said the aircraft had still not been sighted as of the time of his visit, while Navy personnel and local divers continued searching the deeper sections of the area for possible bodies and the cockpit.

Military commanders assess crash site

THE Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), Western Naval Command, Rear Admiral Abubakar Mustapha, and the Air Officer Commanding, Logistics Command of the Nigerian Air Force, Air Vice Marshal Abubakar Abdul Suleh, have conducted an on-the-spot assessment of the crash site.

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng



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GRS INSURANCE REMEMBERS OUR DIRECTOR



The Management and Staff of GRS Insurance today fondly remember our late Director and wife of our Vice Chairman, **Mrs. Adenike Omolara Elusakin**, who passed away exactly one year ago today. While we deeply miss her immense impact and wise counsel, we find great comfort in her enduring legacy.

Signed Management



Chelle: 'Draw with Russia shows Eagles are in safe place' /30



How not to administer sports for podium finishes

Over the years, systemic administrative lapses have forced top Nigerian athletes and sports teams to miss major international competitions despite earning their spots through rigorous qualification. GOWON AKPODONOR reports that authorities must devise new strategies to check national self-sabotage and stars tripping over their own shoelaces.

PRIOR to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, Annette Nneka Echikunwoke, who had just switched allegiance from the United States to Nigeria, looked forward to winning a medal for her new country in the hammer throw. Her optimism stemmed from being among the best athletes listed for the Games.

Born to Nigerian parents in the United States, Echikunwoke saw the Olympics as an avenue to begin integrating into Nigerian society, which she believed was where she truly belonged. But her dreams were shattered on the eve of the Games when she was disqualified, alongside nine other Nigerians, because the Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) failed to conduct the required number of mandatory out-of-competition dope tests on the athletes.

The hammer thrower who lives in Ohio, United States, was so disappointed that she immediately reversed her decision to switch from the United States to Nigeria. Four years after the Tokyo disappointment, Echikunwoke realised her dream of becoming an Olympic medalist when she won a silver medal in her event for the United States.

At the same Olympics, Nigeria failed to win a medal, but came out of the Games with another scandal as 100-metre runner, Favour Ofili, was erroneously omitted from the list Team Nigeria submitted for the event.

Like Echikunwoke before her, Ofili chose to dump Nigeria for Turkey, which she is hoping to represent at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

While Nigeria suffered

severe consequences for its officials' negligence in the Echikunwoke and Ofili cases, the country was luckier in 2018, when the Super Eagles narrowly escaped being disqualified from the FIFA World Cup hosted by Russia after fielding an ineligible Shehu Abdullahi in the final qualifying game against Algeria.

It turned out that the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) failed to inform the coach, Gernot Rohr, that Abdullahi already had three yellow cards from previous games and was therefore ineligible to play the game against Algeria. Nigeria's saviour was that the Super Eagles still had more points than Cameroon

and Algeria, even when three points were deducted from the country's tally by FIFA.

Over the years, Nigerian athletes have endured the harrowing experience of missing major international championships after spending years training for them.

Apart from official negligence, some athletes have suffered from the effects of appointing incompetent and ill-trained officials to handle critical aspects of the country's sports, including disqualification from events after excelling at the competition.

On August 9, this year, Nigeria's U-20 mixed 4x100m relay team was disqualified from the Junior World Championships final in Oregon, United States of America, after one of the athletes wore what was described as "a non-compliant shoe".

The Nigerian quartet of Tejiri Godwin, Chigozie Rosemary, Perfect Faye and Oluebube Ezechukwu ran a fantastic race and crossed the finish line to the admiration of the crowd. But while the athletes were celebrating what could have been a remarkable fourth position, which could have sent them into the final, their celebration was short-lived when the post-race disqualification was announced.

The team was disqualified under World Athletics Rule TR7.1 (TR5.2)

for non-compliance with the shoe rules, as one of them wore a shoe that had been banned by World Athletics. Nigerians were horrified that the officials did not know the rules on footwear approved for such races.

The dust raised by the international embarrassment in Oregon, U.S., was yet to settle when another incident cropped up in September at the 2026 World Athletics Ultimate Championships, in Budapest, Hungary.

Team Nigeria missed the chance to line up for the mixed 4x100m relay because three members of the team, Miracle Ezechukwu, Favour Ashe and Rosemary

Nwankwo did not make the trip to Hungary due to visa complications arising from delays at the Hungarian Embassy in Abuja. This was after the team had battled to qualify for the race as one of the best six teams

at the World Relays in May.

At the ongoing FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup in Poland, Nigeria's Falconets, who were knocked out of the championship at the quarterfinals by Colombia, was forced to participate in the competition without team captain, Joy Igboke and defender Faridat Abdulwahab, who were ruled out after failing to secure their entry visas.

The trend is not new. As far back as 1985, former England star John Fashanu joined the then Green Eagles in the build-up to World Cup qualifiers against Tunisia. He actually played in some friendly matches within Africa, against Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. But when the time for the real action against Tunisia in Lagos came, Fashanu was found ineligible to play because some officials of the then NFA had forgotten to procure a Nigerian international passport for him. The Green Eagles managed to beat the visiting Tunisians 1-0 in Lagos but lost 1-2 in Tunis, waving goodbye to the Mexico '86 World Cup.

In 1991, the Super Eagles were forced to cut their tracksuits into makeshift

shorts because an official of the then NFA forgot the team jerseys at their training camp in Ota, Ogun State. It was a 1992 Africa Cup of Nations qualifier

against Burkina Faso, at the National Stadium in Lagos, and with just five minutes before kick-off, team officials realised the actual kits had been left behind at the camp in Ota, Ogun State. To prevent a walkover on home soil, scissors were brought into the dressing room, and the players cut their tracksuit trousers into knee-length shorts.

Five years later, Nigeria's U-17 boys' football team, the Golden Eagles, was disqualified in their World Cup qualifier against the Benin Republic in Ibadan because an official of the NFA forgot the players' passports in Lagos.

These negligence and gross incompetence displayed by officials have accounted for as much for the country's poor standing in the comity of sporting nations as has the athletes' failure to meet the winning standards.

Although some stakeholders would rather blame the visa denials on the host country's delay in issuing timely visa-support letters for Nigerian competitors to meet some of the sovereignty and headline policies enforced by some Western and European embassies, there are those who say that since the dates for such competitions are known months, and sometimes, years before the events, if the affected associations had put their documents together on time, such denials would either be curtailed or avoided entirely.

Missing out on such big championships could have some negative impacts on the athletes. Apart from the loss of a historic opportunity to compete with their peers on the global stage, such visa denials impose psychological strain on athletes who have expended so much energy qualifying for the event.



FIFA deducted three points from Nigeria for fielding an ineligible Shehu Abdullahi in a 2018 World Cup qualifier against Algeria.



Former Nigerian hurdler, now based in the Republic of Ireland, Moses Oyiki, who witnessed the events at the World Athletics Ultimate Challenge in Budapest, said that the country is suffering the effects of handing top jobs to unqualified personnel.

He said: "I was in Budapest to cheer our athletes to victory, only to discover that the 4x100m mixed relay team could not make the trip from Nigeria due to visa complications.

"I felt so disappointed about it, and I expressed my reservations about it when I met with some officials of Team Nigeria. Missing out on such big championships could have some negative impacts on the athletes. Apart from the loss of a historic opportunity to compete with their peers on the global stage, such visa denials impose psychological strain on athletes who have expended so much energy qualifying for the event. The athletes also missed a golden opportunity to make some cool cash for themselves, which could help them to improve on their training ahead of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, even before government grants will come."

"There is an urgent need to address such an ugly situation as we prepare for the 2027 World Championships and the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics."

The Head Coach of Delta Athletics, Emilly Osakwe, said: "Denying an athlete or team the visa to compete at major events, particularly at the world level, has a way of destroying their career gradually.

"They feel dejected and discouraged because all their time and efforts in training have become a waste. They also suffer loss in potential earnings from the prize-rich competition. For instance, at the just-concluded World Ultimate Championships in Budapest, the athletes on our mixed relay team were already targeting the \$150,000 prize money, but they could not travel due to visa issues. It was a sad experience."

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