The Guardian

Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

www.guardian.ng

Vol. 43, No. 18,232 ■ Thursday, October 15, 2026

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria N300

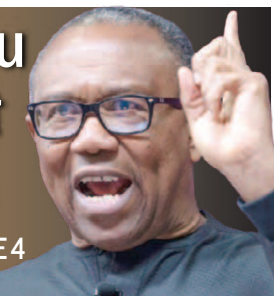


Don't distract me from governance, Tinubu tells campaign council NEWS PAGE 3

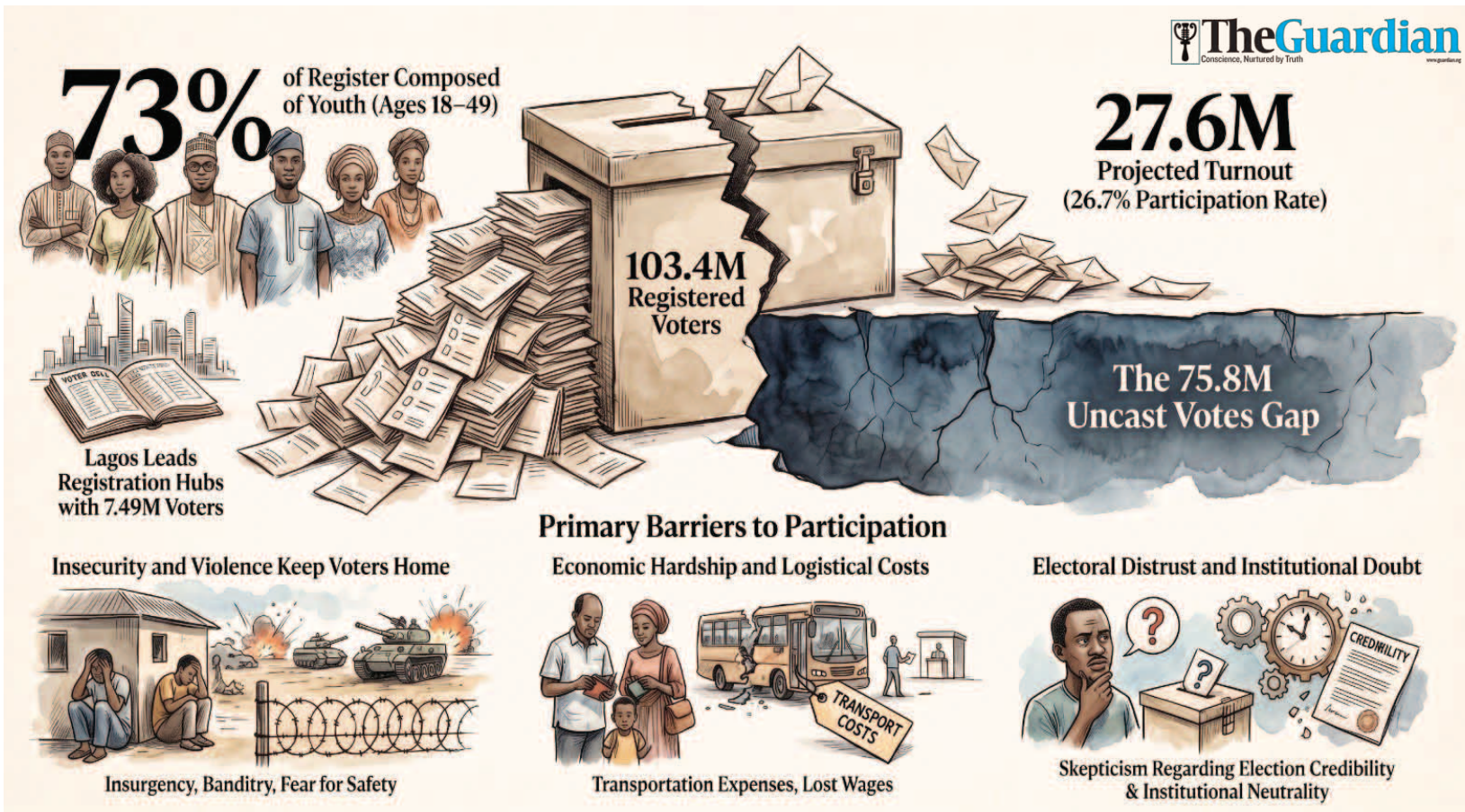


NAFDAC records 474 cases, 821 product seizures in eight months NEWS PAGE 7

Obi faults Tinubu over investment climate, low FDI inflows NEWS PAGE 4



Voter apathy fears, hurdles persist amid 10m spike in registered voters P6

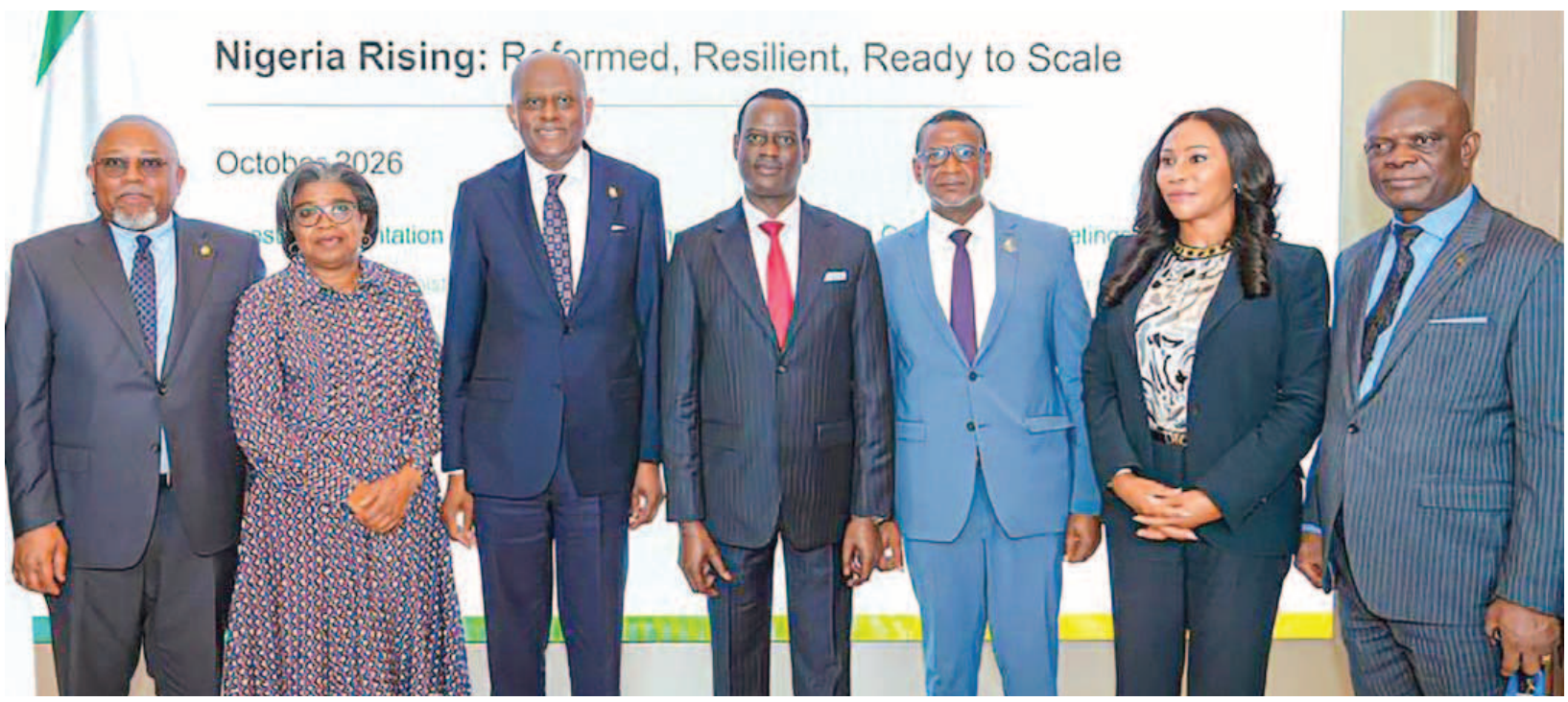


NHRC laments rising rights violations, receives 338,810 petitions NEWS PAGE 4

NERC cites rejection, tampering as obstacles to closing metering gap NEWS PAGE 5

NAF recovers more aircraft components from Ondo crash site NEWS PAGE 5

Senate seeks emergency relief, compensation for flood victims NEWS PAGE 7



Deputy Governor (Economic Policy), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Philip Ikeazor (left); Director-General, Debt Management Office (DMO), Ms. Patience Oniha; Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Olayemi Cardoso; Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Taiwo Oyedele; Nigerian Ambassador to the Royal Kingdom of Thailand, Bello Dogon-Daji Haliru; Deputy Governor (Operations) at the CBN, Ms. Emem Usoro; and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Finance, Mr. Raymond Omachi, after meeting with potential investors yesterday, on the sidelines of the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, holding in Bangkok, Thailand.

LCCI warns Nigeria's N166tr debt piling more pressure on firms BUSINESS PAGE 15

Panorama

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

SPOTLIGHT

FG harmonises 2027 exams, targets results release by August

From **Owede Agbajileke**, Abuja

THE Federal Government has proposed a harmonised 2027 examination timetable targeting the release of WAEC, NECO and other external examination results by August to enable candidates to begin tertiary admission processes in September.

Under the proposed schedule, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) will conduct the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) from May 11 to June 18, 2027, while the National Examinations Council (NECO) will hold its Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) from April 1 to May 14.

Results for both examinations are expected to be released in August, alongside those of the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB) and the National Board for Arabic and Islamic Studies (NBAIS).

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), which conducts the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), is scheduled to hold its examination from March 15 to 25, with results expected in the same month.

The proposed timetable was announced by the Federal Ministry of Education in a statement issued late Wednesday by its Director of Press and Public Relations, Folasade Boriowo.

Peter Obi prays for Pope Leo XIV's full recovery after surgery

From **John Akubo**, Abuja

PETER Obi, the 2027 presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), has expressed gratitude over reports of Pope Leo XIV's successful surgery, praying for the Catholic pontiff's complete recovery and renewed strength.

Obi said he had kept the Pope, who heads the Catholic Church and serves as Sovereign of Vatican City, in his earnest prayers ahead of the medical procedure.

In a message of gratitude and hope, the former Anambra State governor thanked God for seeing the Holy Father through the surgery and expressed optimism about his recovery.

He also prayed for divine guidance for the Pope's medical team, asking God to sustain them as they continue to care for the pontiff.

"May God continue to guide his medical team, sustain him in this period of recovery and grant him the grace to return fully to his pastoral duties," Obi said.

LASTMA warns against consuming spilled groundnut oil after Ojota tanker crash

By **Benjamin Alade**

THE Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) has warned residents, traders and food vendors against consuming or selling groundnut oil spilled from an overturned 33,000-litre tanker at Ojota Bridge, inward Old Toll Gate, Lagos, over fears of possible contamination.

The tanker reportedly overturned around Abiola Garden, completely obstructing the carriageway and disrupting vehicular movement along the affected route.

Traffic gridlock disrupted movement on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway on Wednesday after a tanker conveying 33,000 litres of groundnut oil overturned near Abiola Garden, inward Toll Gate, Lagos.

The incident reportedly occurred at about 2pm near Ojota Bridge, spilling the contents of the tanker onto the road.

Following the accident, some residents were seen scooping the spilled groundnut oil from the scene.

Emergency responders, including officials of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and the Nigeria Police, arrived at the scene to manage traffic and coordinate recovery operations.

The affected section of the road was cordoned off to ensure public safety, while recovery efforts continued.

Preliminary security reports attributed the accident to suspected brake failure, prompting the deployment of emergency responders to evacuate the tanker, manage traffic and restore normal movement.



Former Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief, *The Guardian*, Martins Oloja, during his condolence visit and signing of the condolence register of the late *The Guardian* General Manager, Northern Operations, Chuks Nwanne, yesterday. PHOTO: ISAAC SALEH

We will never forget Nigeria's sacrifice for peace in Sierra Leone, says ex-VP

FORMER Vice-President of Sierra Leone, Mr Samuel Sam-Sumana, says Nigeria's sacrifices in restoring peace to his country will remain indelible in its history.

This is contained in a statement by Mr Sunday Odita, President, Defence Correspondents Association of Nigeria (DECAN), and made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) Abuja on Wednesday.

Odita said that Sam-Sumana said this when the leadership of DECAN paid the former vice president of Sierra Leone a courtesy visit.

The former vice-president expressed gratitude to Nigeria and other countries for their contributions to restoring peace and stability in Sierra Leone during its civil war.

He acknowledged the sacrifices of Nigerian troops and civilians, stressing that their contributions must never be forgotten.

He described Nigeria as a big brother in West Africa, noting that its stability and prosperity had significant implications for the entire subregion.

"As a Sierra Leonean, I wish to express my profound gratitude for the role Nigeria and other countries played in helping Sierra Leone regain peace and stability.

"When Nigeria catches a cold, the rest of us sneeze," he said.

Sam-Sumana urged journalists to hold political leaders accountable, describing constructive criticism as essential to improving public institutions and strengthening governance.

... DAY 4554

OUR GIRLS STILL MISSING

Tope Templer Olaiya, News Editor

@TopeTempler

RANDOM FACTS

• World's highest population of HIV/AIDS patients
1. South Africa - 8.15m
2. India - 3.14 million
3. Nigeria - 3 million
4. Mozambique - 2.6m
5. Tanzania - 1.7m
6. Uganda - 1.496m

• Countries with the World's Lowest Life Expectancy
1. Nigeria - 54.6 years
2. Chad - 55.2
3. South Sudan - 57.7
4. Central African Republic - 57.7
5. Lesotho - 57.8
6. Somalia - 59

TODAY'S QUOTE

"The secret of life is to have no fear.

Music is a weapon of the future; music is the weapon of the progressives; music is the weapon of the givers of life.

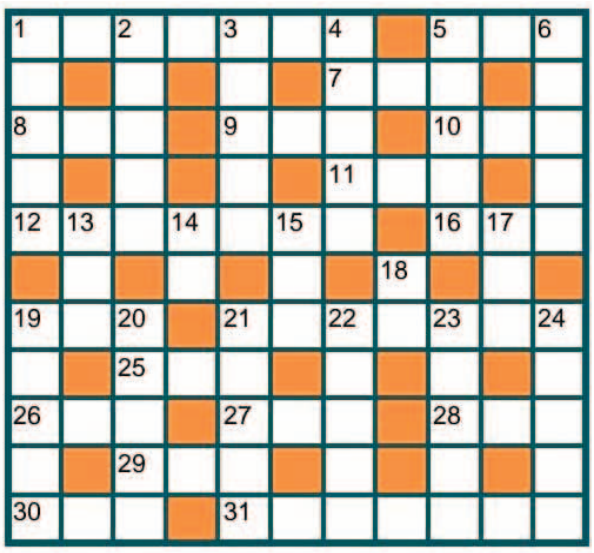
FELA KUTI

The enemies of a people are those who keep them in ignorance.

You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. It comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas and invent the future. It took the madmen of yesterday for us to be able to act with extreme clarity today. I want to be one of those madmen. We must dare to invent the future.

THOMAS SANKARA"

CROSS WORD PUZZLE



• ACROSS
I. Teach somebody, (7).
5. Make request, (3).
7. Fall behind others, (3).
8. Islamic feast day, (3).
9. Frozen water, (3).
10. Local area network, abbr., (3).
11. Management by objectives, abbr.
12. Light-colored social insect, (7).
16. Tiny, (3).
19. Piece cut from tree, (3).
21. Gov. Caleb Mutfwang's state, (7).
25. Nucleic acid in all living cells, (3)
26. Seed as vegetable, (3).
27. Whirlpool bath, (3).
28. Anambra State ex-Governor, (3).
29. Furry animal that purrs , (3).
30. Anger, (3).
31. Without purpose, (7).

• DOWN
1. Bring to bear, (5).
2. Below, (5).
3. Nig. late notorious robber, (5).
4. LGA in Rivers State, (5).
5. Radiating light, (5).
6. LGA in Plateau State, (5).
13. Yoruba name for Lagos, (3).
14. Megabyte, (2).
15. Telephone, abbr., (3).
17. Cassava flour paste, (3).
18. Laos currency unit, (2).
19. LGA in Niger State, (5).
20. Prayer at mealtimes, (5).
21. Food made from flour, (5).
22. Warning device, (5).
23. Get married secretly, (5).
24. Discrete parts, (5).

© Olulana Olukayode

Check page 31 for solution to the puzzle

TODAY IN HISTORY

• 2018 - Nigeria
An online news platform released videos accusing Governor of Kano, Abdullahi Ganduje of receiving bribe amounting to $5million from contractors in the state. In its reaction, the state government claimed the video was cloned and doctored.

• 2018 - USA
Paul Allen, computer programmer, philanthropist and owner of the Seattle Seahawks died. He co-founded Microsoft Corporation with his childhood friend Bill Gates in 1975, which was followed by the microcomputer revolution of the 1970s and 1980s. Allen was ranked as one of the richest people in U.S. history by Forbes with an estimated worth of $20.3 billion when he died.

• 2017 - Nigeria
Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, declared the National Coordinator of the Oodua People's Congress, Gani Adams, as 15th Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland.

• 2016 - Rwanda
150 nations meeting at the UNEP summit in Kigali, Rwanda, agreed to slowly get rid of hydrofluorocarbons. 197 nations amended the Montreal Protocol to include a phase-out of hydrofluorocarbons, to protect the ozone layer by phasing out production of substances responsible for ozone depletion.

• 2011 - USA
Occupy Wall Street Campaign: In 951 cities in 82 countries, people protested against economic mismanagement.

• 1993 - S'Africa
Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk won the Nobel Peace Prize for peacefully ending apartheid and setting up a new government in South Africa.

• 1990 - USSR
Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to lessen Cold War tensions and open up his nation.

•1987 - Burkina Faso
A coup d'état in Burkina Faso overthrew and killed then President Thomas Sankara.

• 1982 - Worldwide
The first 400-year cycle of the Gregorian calendar ended. This date is on exactly the same week-day as the same date in 1582 (the day it was first introduced).

• 1938 - Nigeria
Fela Aníkúlápó Kútì, musician and activist, was born as Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti. He is regarded as the principal innovator of Afrobeat, a Nigerian music genre that combines West African music with American funk and jazz

News

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Don't distract me from governance, Tinubu tells campaign council

- ADC tags inauguration of campaign council 'rape of democracy'
- Adeleke, Soludo drum support forTinubu's re-election
- Oyetola's ally slams Adeleke's 1.5m vote promise for Tinubu as fantasy

From **Terhemba Daka**, **Andrew Oota** (Abuja) and **Timothy Agbor** (Osogbo)

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has warned the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) against allowing the rigours of the 2027 re-election campaign to distract him from governance, insisting that his responsibilities as President must take precedence over political activities.

The inauguration came ahead of the formal flag-off of his re-election campaign scheduled for October 24 in Kaduna, as the ruling party moves to consolidate its structures and coordinate mobilisation across states, local government areas and wards.

This came as the APC National Chairman, Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, charged members of the PCC to unite national and grassroots structures, communicate the achievements of President Bola Tinubu's administration and mobilise Nigerians for his re-election in 2027.

Speaking at the inauguration, Yilwatda described the assignment to the PCC as a collective responsibility requiring effective coordination, discipline, strategic communication and sustained engagement with Nigerians.

But the African Democratic Congress (ADC) PCC condemned the inauguration of the APC PCC in Abuja, describing it as a calculated attempt to impose a one-party dictatorship on Nigeria.

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, and governors of Anambra and Osun states, Charles Soludo and Ademola Adeleke, in that order, were present at the inauguration of the APC-PCC in Abuja.

Meanwhile, Ismail Omipidan, a former media aide to ex-Governor Gboyega Oyetola, warned President Tinubu to be wary of the APC's strategy in Osun ahead of the 2027 presidential election, saying it might backfire. Tinubu gave the warning yesterday while inaugurating the APC-PCC at the State House Conference Centre in Abuja, stressing that Nigeria's pressing needs require his full attention, even as the party begins mobilisation for the 2027 general elections.

"You have warned me and asked me not to allow the rigours of the campaign to distract me from governance. I hear you. I am in full agreement with your decision," the President said.

"Nigeria needs more attention now than ever before. The responsibility of this office does not pause. That responsibility does not recognise our agenda here today."

In a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media and Information Strategy, Abimbola Tooki, the APC chairman said the party's campaign must be anchored on the administration's record, an honest acknowledgement of prevailing challenges and a credible vision for the country's future.

According to Yilwatda, the administration's economic reforms and investments in roads, power, gas, railways, ports, agriculture, and digital connectivity must be clearly communicated to Nigerians, with an emphasis on their impact on productivity, employment, commerce, and national development.

He emphasised that the success of the campaign would depend on the effective collaboration of national leaders, governors, legislators, state chapters, local government structures and ward members to ensure that the party's message reaches every community.



Senate President Godswill Akpabio (left); wife of the Vice President, Nana Shettima; Vice President Kashim Shettima; President Bola Tinubu, and his wife, Oluremi, at the inauguration of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) for 2027 general elections, held at the State House Conference Centre, Abuja, yesterday.

Nigerians, not AI, will determine outcome of 2027 polls, Amupitan assures

- CUPP says electoral fraud undermining democracy
- Group warns electoral violence. threatens Nigeria's reputation, erodes investor confidence

From **Adamu Abuh**, **Sodiq Omolaoye** (Abuja) and **Gloria Nwafor** (Lagos)

CHAIRMAN of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan, has declared that artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms will not determine the outcome of the 2027 general elections.

He insisted that the power to choose Nigeria's leaders rests solely with the electorate.

But National Chairman of the Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP), Peter Ameh, criticised Nigeria's electoral process since the return to civilian rule in 1999, arguing that persistent allegations of electoral manipulation undermined democratic legitimacy, weakened accountability and shut poor Nigerians out of political participation.

Similarly, Nigeria Reputation Management Group (NRMG) has warned that electoral violence, intimidation and disregard for democratic institutions could undermine Nigeria's reputation, calling on political leaders and parties to prioritise national stability, peace and the rule of law ahead of the coming general elections.

Amupitan added that the commission was exploring the use AI to overcome difficult terrain and improve the deployment of personnel and election materials ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He, however, warned that AI-generated disinformation, deepfake videos, cloned audio recordings and other forms of digital manipulation could undermine public trust, influence voter behaviour and threaten electoral integrity, if not properly addressed ahead of the polls.

Shettima takes veiled swipe at Atiku, Obi over economic policies, leadership credentials

- EFCC receives fresh petition on Atiku over 2006 Corruption Report
- Keyamo slams ex-VP over Nigeria Airways collapse

From **Terhemba Daka** and **Ameh Ochojila**, Abuja

VICE President Kashim Shettima, yesterday, took veiled but pointed swipes at opposition figures, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and former Anambra State Governor Peter Obi, questioning their economic prescriptions, political consistency and claims about the 2023 presidential election.

This was as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) received a fresh petition seeking the prosecution of Atiku over allegations of financial misconduct dating back to 2006.

Also, the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, accused Atiku of hypocrisy over his comments on the state of the nation, citing the liquidation of Nigeria Airways and the unpaid entitlements of its former workers.

Speaking at the inauguration of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) in Abuja, Shettima criticised the opposition's "ideological inconsistencies and reliance on economic statistics" that, in his view, failed to account for Nigeria's peculiar circumstances.

Without presenting the opposition as a single ideological bloc, the Vice President directed separate criticisms at Atiku's advocacy of production subsidies and Obi's use of international comparisons to support his economic arguments.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng

Oyedele: We can't power $1tr economy in darkness

By **Geoff Iyatse**

IMF cautions against fuel subsidies, recommends targeted support

MINISTER of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Taiwo Oyedele, yesterday unveiled a plan for a suite of fiscal reforms covering power, agriculture, regulation, inflation and data management, insisting that Nigeria "cannot power a $1 trillion economy in darkness".

Renowned economist and former expert at the Bretton Woods institutions, Dr Ifediora Amobi, described the minister's economic policy expertise as a national blessing, urging the Federal Government to sustain its reforms while ensuring that their benefits reach ordinary Nigerians.

Oyedele, at the Nigerian Investors' Forum on the sidelines of the ongoing International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank Annual Meetings in Bangkok, Thailand, also acknowledged the growing burden of the working poor and promised the country would create decent jobs to address the challenge.

The announcement came as the IMF warned governments against returning to blanket fuel subsidies, recommending targeted support to cushion the impact of high energy prices on vulnerable households.

The advisory comes amid growing global concerns over the rising cost of energy and its knock-on effects on general price levels, survival and economic activities.

With petrol prices rising by over 600 per cent following President Bola Tinubu's removal of the subsidy, the issue has remained a major political debate ahead of Nigeria's 2027 elections, with former Vice President Atiku Abubakar promising to restore the social scheme if elected.

At a briefing on the IMF's *Fiscal Monitor* report, the Director of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department, Rodrigo Valdés, argued that protecting people was not the same as subsidising fuel prices.

"It is, first, fiscally costly. Second, if you look at the pattern of consumption, it is easy to see that subsidy is readily regressive in many places," he said.

Valdés maintained that governments had more effective tools for addressing the energy-price crisis than restoring blanket subsidies.

"Gasoline could go up. Perhaps, bus fees may be subsidised in a way that is a much better policy at the end of the day than just a blanket subsidy for everybody," he said.

He also observed that fuel subsidies often prevent demand from adjusting to changing market conditions, potentially worsening price pressures.

The rising cost of energy has heightened concerns about income inequality, pushed more households into poverty and weakened consumer spending.

Speaking on Nigeria's employment challenge, Oyedele said the government was concerned not just about creating jobs but also about their quality.

"We are clear in our minds that we don't just need to create jobs; we need to create decent jobs because, officially, our unemployment rate is around five per cent and poverty rate is higher than 50 per cent. So you have a lot of working poor," he said.

On the power sector, the minister stressed that reliable electricity "is indispensable" to Nigeria's ambition of building a $1 trillion economy.

TheGuardian
For Advert Enquiry, Call:
GUARDIAN COMMERCIAL/PRINT
0803 348 9497
0802 301 5115
0803 193 0899
GUARDIAN DIGITAL
0808 597 3490
ABUJA OFFICE
0802 319 5673
GUARDIAN LIFE
0803 056 7059

NHRC laments rising rights violations, receives 338,810 petitions

Says N20b budget dwarfed by complaints

From **Ameh Ochojila**, Abuja

NATIONAL Human Rights Commission (NHRC) yesterday expressed concern over the increasing cases of rights violations in the country, revealing that it received a total of 338,810 complaints in September alone.

According to the Commission, the majority of petitions lodged before it were from the North-Central geopolitical zone, with most cases originating from Benue, Plateau and Niger states.

The Executive Secretary of the NHRC, Dr Tony Ojukwu, said the Commission's human rights dashboard showed an increase of 40,867 complaints, approximately 14 per cent, compared with the 297,943 recorded in August.

NHRC also raised the alarm over severe funding constraints, saying its budget of N20 billion is grossly inadequate to investigate millions of human rights complaints recorded yearly across the country.

Ojukwu said the agency would require more than N30 billion yearly to cover even the basic transportation costs of investigating complaints, based on an estimated N10,000 per case.

He made the remarks while responding to questions from journalists in Abuja yesterday during the presentation of the Commission's September 2026 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, which recorded 3.7 million complaints yearly, warning that inadequate funding was limiting its capacity to investigate cases and provide effective remedies to victims.

The commission's funding challenge, he said, was compounded by the lack of sufficient operational vehicles, which forced field officers to rely on hired transport to reach complainants and investigate alleged violations.

According to Ojukwu, an officer travelling to a location to investigate a complaint could spend about N5,000 on the journey and another N5,000 on the return.

He contrasted the commission's current budget with the N8 million it received in the previous year, describing the agency as grossly underfunded despite its nationwide responsibilities.

However, he said the N20 billion budget also had to support the commission's wider operations, including staff salaries, office maintenance, rent, electricity, fuel, and vehicles.

He said the commission operated across the country with approximately 4,900 staff, adding that the cost of running its facilities alone placed considerable pressure on available resources.

Ojukwu, however, said the commission was pursuing digital transformation to improve its operations and expand its capacity to handle complaints despite financial constraints.

He expressed hope that increasing the budget to N40 billion would bring the commission closer to meeting its operational requirements, while acknowledging that significant gaps would remain.

35m Nigerians go to bed hungry, Makinde Campaign says

'Tinubu's grip on National Assembly threatens accountability'

From **Azimazi Momoh Jimoh**, Abuja

DIRECTOR-General of the Makinde-Daura Presidential Campaign Organisation (MDPCO), Felix Hassan Hyat, has accused the All Progressives Congress (APC)-led administration of worsening poverty and hunger in Nigeria, alleging that 35 million citizens go to bed hungry every night.

Hyat, who spoke at the inauguration of the organisation's North Central state coordinators, also accused President Bola Tinubu of exerting excessive influence over the National Assembly, warning that this undermines accountability and weakens democratic representation.

He urged the campaign coordinators to take the message of the organisation's Presidential candidate, Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, to households and polling units across the country ahead of the January 16, 2027 presidential election.

NEF to discuss Nigeria's $11.1b Foreign Education Bill

From **Azimazi Momoh Jimoh**, Abuja

NIGERIA'S reported expenditure of $11.1 billion on foreign education between 2020 and mid-2025 has renewed concerns over the competitiveness of local educational institutions.

To this end, state education commissioners, governors, federal officials and other stakeholders are preparing to examine reforms aimed at improving teaching, research and skills development.

The issue is expected to feature prominently at the 2026 Nigeria Education Forum (NEF), scheduled for December 9 and 10 at the Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja, where participants will explore ways to strengthen Nigeria's education system, improve learning outcomes and reduce the factors driving demand for overseas education.

The two-day summit is being organised by the Committee of States' Commissioners of Education in Nigeria (COSCEN).



Senior Director, Commercial, Sub Saharan Africa, Tenaris, Juan Juanicotena (left); Managing Director, Tenaris Nigeria, Rosario Osobase; Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri; Director at Tenaris Nigeria/Pioneer Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (MCDMB), Dr Ernest Nwapa; and Commercial Vice President, Sub Saharan Africa, Europe and Caspian Sea, Tenaris, Alessandro D'Angelo, at Tenaris 25th anniversary celebration in Nigeria and Commissioning of Pipe Coaters Thermal Insulation Plant held at Onne Free Zone, Rivers State.

Shippers suffer losses as vessel with 2,500 containers sinks in Strait of Hormuz

By **Adaku Onyenucheya**

SHIPPERS are counting their losses as a ship carrying over 2,500 containers sank in the southern waters of the Strait of Hormuz after striking a naval mine and exploding with massive fire.

According to a statement from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Navy, the ship sank yesterday morning due to the intensity of the blaze.

In a statement, the IRGC Navy said the vessel was attempting to cross an unauthorised and dangerous route through the strategic waterway when it struck the mine, triggering an explosion and a severe fire.

ASepah News Agency, which is affiliated to the IRGC, reported: "A container ship carrying 2,500 containers sank south of the Strait of Hormuz after hitting a naval mine and exploding, causing a massive fire."

The statement did not identify the ship, disclose its flag or provide information about its crew or possible casualties.

The incident comes amid heightened maritime tensions in the Strait of Hormuz following the collapse of the U.S.-Iran memorandum of understanding, which has triggered a fresh wave of attacks on merchant vessels transiting the waterway, leaving several seafarers injured or dead.

On Tuesday, a container ship and tanker were attacked in the Strait by "unknown projectile," according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO).

The UKMTO did not provide the times of the attack, the vessel names, the damage, the crew status, or the salvage details.

Also, six attacks were reported Sunday, which UKMTO identified as the most damage yet recorded in one day since the start of the conflict.

Obi faults Tinubu over investment climate, low FDI inflows

By **Kehinde Olatunji**

PRESIDENTIAL candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), Peter Obi, has criticised the President Bola Tinubu-led administration over Nigeria's investment climate, accusing the government of failing to address structural challenges that discourage foreign investors.

Obi, in a *Facebook* post yesterday, stated that concerns raised in the 2026 Nigeria Investment Climate Statement by the United States Department of State exposed weaknesses in the country's business environment despite the Federal Government's emphasis on macroeconomic stability.

He identified corruption, insecurity, inconsistent regulatory enforcement and weaknesses in the judicial system as some of the challenges undermining investor confidence and Nigeria's ability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

The former Anambra State governor said the report raised questions about the country's capacity to attract investments commensurate with its market size and economic potential.

According to him, the report highlights several concerns, including delays in cargo clearance at the ports, power sector challenges and the treatment of foreign businesses involved in regulatory or commercial disputes.

He also cited the report's warning that routine business trips could result in detention when companies face regulatory scrutiny or charges from Nigerian authorities.

Obi further referenced concerns about the alleged use of travel restrictions, exit bans and arbitrary detention as leverage in commercial or regulatory disputes involving multinational companies.

He said the concerns warranted an immediate response from the Federal Government, including investigations and concrete measures to address the issues identified.

"In a nation with an effective, competent and attentive government, this kind of adverse report would have elicited immediate intervention by the President and Commander in Chief ordering prompt investigation, follow-up and effective action," he said.

ECOWAS, OECD target investment, trade to accelerate integration

Regional court elects Liberian, Beninese judges as president, vice president

ECONOMIC Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are strengthening cooperation to attract investment, expand regional trade and accelerate economic integration across West Africa, with priorities spanning infrastructure, agriculture, capital markets and critical minerals.

The renewed commitment followed talks between the President of the ECOWAS Commission, General Birame Diop, and the OECD Secretary-General, Mathias Cormann, at the organisation's headquarters in Paris, France, on October 1, 2026.

The discussions focused on translating the ECOWAS-OECD Memorandum of Understanding.

Afreximbank targets $3.2b investments to strengthen intra-African trade

Nigeria, EU, Euro Bank sign €14m agreement on Fibre-Optic Infrastructure

By **Tobi Awodipe**

AFRICAN Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) is set to convene the sixth African Sub-Sovereign Governments Network (AfSNET) Investment Conference in Calabar, Cross River State, from November 12 to 14, 2026, to strengthen sub-national investment financing, industrialisation and intra-African trade.

The conference, organised in partnership with the Cross River State Government, Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and Forum of State Investment Promotion Agencies in Nigeria (FoSIPAN), will bring together Africa's sub-national governments, investors, financial institutions and development partners to develop investment-ready projects.

NERC cites rejection, tampering as obstacles to closing metering gap

By **Waliat Musa**

Urges DisCos to repair faulty meters within 48 hours, pay customers for wrongful disconnection

THE Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has identified customers' rejection of electricity meters and tampering with installed devices among the challenges facing distribution companies, alongside funding constraints that continue to affect meter deployment.

Principal Manager, Customer Protection, Stakeholders Management Division of the NERC, Atiseer Gberkon, while speaking during an X Space discussion on metering, said some customers rejected meters offered by distribution companies, while others tampered with installed devices, undermining their effectiveness.

"We have, of course, the issue of funding. We know that metering comes at a cost, and that's why the Federal Government has come up with so many initiatives to help support DisCos in metering customers.

"We also have a major issue where some customers, after being metered, tamper with those meters. Once you tamper with that meter, it makes it ineffective. It's as good as you're not even metered because the meter is no longer doing what it was installed to do," she said.

Olisa Chukwuma of the Commission's Economic Regulation Division and a member of its Metering Committee, said 7.7 million customers, representing 61.5 per cent of the total, had meters, leaving 38.5 per cent without devices to measure their electricity consumption directly.

Chukwuma said the Federal Government's National Mass Metering Programme (NMMP), launched through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), facilitated the installation of about 890,000 meters between 2021 and 2024.

The Commission said meters provided under government-led metering interventions were free to customers, saying that under the Meter Asset Provider (MAP) scheme, consumers who choose to pay for meters rather than wait for other interventions are entitled to a refund through energy credits.

Gberkon said that customers in the same feeder area could receive identical bills despite differences in household size, appliances and electricity usage.

She said the Commission calculates monthly estimated billing caps that distribution companies must observe when billing unmetered customers in states still under federal electricity regulation.

Meanwhile, NERC has reminded electricity consumers of their rights to prompt meter repairs, compensation for wrongful disconnection and refund for meters purchased under the MAP scheme.

The Commission also warned electricity distribution companies against charging reconnection fees when customers are disconnected without following the prescribed procedures.

The NERC outlined these rights and obligations of electricity consumers in a metering factsheet published on its official X handle yesterday, as part of efforts to improve consumer awareness and compliance with regulations in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI).

According to the factsheet, faulty electricity meters must be repaired or replaced within 48 hours of being reported, while customers who are wrongfully disconnected are entitled to energy credits equivalent to their average consumption for three months for every day they are left without electricity.

The Commission said the measures were designed to protect consumers and provide clearer guidance on resolving disputes with their electricity distribution companies.

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



All Progressives Congress (APC) Lagos State deputy governorship candidate, Damilola Sonayon-James (left); Deputy Governor and governorship candidate, Obafemi Hamzat, and President, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Leye Kupoluyi, during the LCCI's afternoon of discussion of fact and figures of Lagos State.

Ogun moves to upgrade cooperative college

- Disburses over N1b loans to support artisans, traders, small business owners
- Ogun Assembly bans illegal quarry tickets, orders task force deployment over extortion

From **Azeez Olorunlomeru**, Abeokuta

OGUN State Government has announced plans to upgrade the Ogun State Cooperative College to award National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) qualifications, while disclosing that his administration has disbursed more than N1 billion in loans to cooperatives, artisans and others.

Governor Dapo Abiodun said the initiative was aimed at strengthening cooperative institutions, developing professional manpower and expanding access to finance for grassroots enterprises.

The governor disclosed this yesterday during the 2026 International Day of Cooperatives celebration organised by the Ogun State Cooperative Federation Limited, in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives in Ijebu-Ode.

He said preparations were under way to improve the College's infrastructure and academic capacity, positioning it to provide professional training in cooperative management.

ABUAD urges FG to stop marginalising private varsities

- Wants NELFUND, TETFund bursaries extended to them
- U.S., Canadian varsities to confer honorary degrees on Afe Babalola

From **Ayodele Afolabi**, Ado-Ekiti

THE management of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD) has urged the Federal Government to stop marginalising private universities and extend benefits, including the NELFUND and TETFund bursaries, to them.

Vice-Chancellor of the institution, Prof. Smaranda Olarinde, appealed yesterday in Ado-Ekiti during a media briefing heralding the 14th convocation ceremony of the institution.

Olarinde said: "The Federal Government must be sensitive to private universities, as attention has only been focused on government universities. Private universities have been excluded from NELFUND and TETFund bursaries. They should extend these schemes to all universities."

Meanwhile, Western University, Canada and Trinity International University, United States (U.S.), will honour Afe Babalola with honorary degrees during the grand finale of the convocation on October 21, 2026.

NAF recovers more aircraft components from Ondo crash site

From **Sodiq Omolaoye** (Abuja) and **Adewale Momoh** (Akure)

- Orders airworthiness checks, maintenance review of aircraft
- Aiyedatiwa orders fumigation of Igbokoda river to avert disease outbreak

THE Nigerian Air Force (NAF) has recovered additional components from the site of its ATR 42-500 aircraft accident in Igbokoda, Ondo State, as specialist divers from the Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) sustain underwater search and recovery operations.

The Air Force disclosed this in a post on its official X handle yesterday.

The NAF said the multi-agency teams were maintaining round-the-clock efforts to retrieve relevant aircraft materials for documentation and preservation in support of the ongoing investigation.

According to it, the operation involves underwater searches supported by hydrographic surveys, satellite-based search-and-rescue imagery, mud excavation and pumping out of excess water to facilitate access to relevant areas.

It said specialist divers from the Navy and NSIB were continuing the search, while additional aircraft components had been recovered from the accident site.

MEANWHILE, Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has ordered the immediate fumigation of the river at Igbokoda following complaints of offensive odour and concerns about possible pollution after last week's Nigerian Air Force aircraft crash.

The directive was disclosed in a statement by the Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Idowu Ajanaku.

According to the statement, the governor directed the Ministries of the Environment and Health to jointly carry out an extensive fumigation exercise to reduce potential health risks and prevent possible outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

HOWEVER, the NAF has ordered strengthened flight safety oversight, including rigorous checks on aircraft airworthiness, maintenance quality and aircrew competence, following the crash involving its ATR 42-500 aircraft.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke, gave the directive at a meeting with branch chiefs, air officers commanding and other senior commanders.

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

Stakeholders urge proactive, collective action to curb school attacks

By **Adelowo Adebumiti**

STAKEHOLDERS in the security, education, and media sectors have called for an immediate and fundamental paradigm shift in Nigeria's approach to school safety, warning that the continuous targeting of educational institutions across the country poses a severe threat to national development and the future of Nigerian children.

Speaking at the seventh yearly summit of the Education Writers' Association of Nigeria (EWAN) held in Lagos, key speakers underscored the urgent necessity of moving away from post-incident reactive measures toward proactive, preventive strategies anchored on intelligence gathering, early-warning mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

The summit, themed "Schools Under Threat: From Reactive Responses to Sustainable Protection," brought together security officials, academic leaders, school administrators, civil society organisations, and journalists to address the escalating vulnerabilities of learning institutions across the federation.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Olatunji Disu, in his keynote address, said safeguarding educational institutions must no longer be treated solely as the responsibility of school proprietors or security forces, but as an essential national security imperative.

The IGP, represented by the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Tijani Fatai, stated that the impact of security breaches extends far beyond the immediate victims of attacks.

He, however, encouraged administrators, teachers, parents, and residents to promptly report suspicious movements through verified channels.

Disu further charged the leadership of EWAN to sustain the discourse beyond the yearly gathering by formulating actionable recommendations, fostering inter-agency networks, and holding policymakers accountable to safety commitments.

Group decries exclusion of candidates from INEC list

Cautions electoral body against manipulation by politicians

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

PRO-DEMOCRACY group, Campaign for Democracy (CD), has raised concerns over the omission of some political parties' candidates from the list of candidates to contest in the 2027 general elections, particularly some governorship candidates.

The group warned the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) against manipulation by desperate politicians, saying that any threat to what it described as "political pluralism and participatory democracy" would be resisted.

In a statement, signed by its President, Ifeanyi Odili, and released yesterday, the group wondered how the candidates' names were excluded from the final list without any immediate explanation, and when INEC, in its earlier list made available to the public on August 29, 2026, had cleared and published them.

The statement made particular reference to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate in Gombe State, Isa Pantami; the party's governorship candidate in Ogun State, Ladi Adebutu, and his deputy, Yemi Sowunmi-Kolapo.

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

UI promotes Ekiti First Lady, Orekoya, others to professors

From **Rotimi Agboluaje**, Ibadan

THE University of Ibadan (UI) has promoted the wife of Ekiti State Governor, Dr Olayemi Oyebanji, and 22 other academics to the rank of professor.

Also elevated is Dr Samuel O. Orekoya of the Department of Economics, whose promotion takes effect from 2024.

The promotions were approved at a meeting of the university's Appointments and Promotions Committee for Academic Staff held on Tuesday, October 13, 2026.

Oyebanji, who was a senior lecturer in the Department of Educational Management before her elevation, is now a professor in the same department.

The promotion is part of the university's approval of the elevation of 46 academic staff members, comprising 23 promoted from Reader to Professor and another 23 elevated from Senior Lecturer to Reader.

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

Voter apathy fears, hurdles persist amid 10m spike in registered voters

From **Seye Olumide** (Lagos) and **Leo Sobechi** (Abuja)

- Insecurity, economic hardship threaten voter participation
- Urbanus, Omole seek election-specific security plans, protection for voters
- Uwazurike raises concerns over INEC's impartiality, calls for credible polls
- Mikko, Nwosu express optimism about stronger turnout in 2027
- NOA pledges nationwide voter education, civic sensitisation
- Lagos tops state register with 7.49m voters as Bayelsa records lowest figure

NIGERIA'S 103.4 million registered voters present a formidable opportunity for democratic participation, but the country's declining election turnout raises a critical question: how many will exercise their franchise in 2027?

From insecurity and economic hardship to distrust of electoral institutions and political disillusionment, several factors could determine whether millions of eligible citizens make their way to polling units or remain on the sidelines of the electoral process.

Announcing the significant increase in the number of registered voters, Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Joash Amupitan, disclosed that the North-West and South-West geopolitical zones recorded the highest numbers of registered voters, while the South-East had the lowest. The commission put the 2026 national voter register at 103,428,715.

Amupitan, who delivered a keynote address at a strategic workshop organised by the Nigerian Guild of Editors, said voters aged 18 to 49 accounted for more than 73 per cent of the national register, while Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) numbered 232,658.

The latest figure is about a 10 million increase compared with the figure before the 2023 general elections, and almost a 20 million increase over the 2019 figure.

Although studies are ongoing to establish the reasons for the steady increase in voter registration, concerns about the credibility of the electoral process, violence and political intolerance have been identified as factors discouraging eligible voters from exercising their civic responsibilities.

What the latest number says

PLACED alongside voter turnout in the last eight off-cycle governorship elections, the growing electorate raises questions about the potential to overcome voter apathy.

However, opinions are divided on whether registering more citizens will translate into improved turnout at polling units. For instance, turnout figures from eight states where off-cycle governorship elections were held show that a growing voter register does not automatically translate into higher participation.

Anambra, Bayelsa, Imo, Kogi, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti and Osun recorded considerable variations in turnout, ranging from approximately 10.2 per cent in Anambra in 2021 to 43.2 per cent in Osun in August 2026.

Anambra recorded the lowest participation, at 10.2 per cent, followed by Edo with 22.2 per cent and Ondo with 24.8 per cent. Bayelsa and Imo recorded 27.5 per cent and 27.8 per cent, respectively, while Ekiti had 36.1 per cent. Kogi recorded 41 per cent, with Osun posting the highest turnout, at 43.2 per cent.

In Osun, 1,005,800 votes were cast from a register of 2,339,544 voters, meaning that more than half of the registered electorate did not cast a recorded vote.

Although off-cycle governorship elections differ from presidential and legislative contests in their political stakes, campaign structures and mobilisation, the figures illustrate the gap between voter registration and actual participation.

The trend is also evident in presidential elections. INEC's historical data put turnout at 53.68 per cent in 2011, 43.65 per cent in 2015, 34.75 per cent in 2019 and 26.71 per cent in 2023. The last figure indicated that fewer than three in 10 registered voters participated in the presidential election.

If the 2023 turnout rate were applied to the new register of 103.4 million voters, approximately 27.6 million people would participate in the 2027 general election, leaving about 75.8 million registered voters without a recorded vote. This is an illustration rather than a prediction, as participation could change depending on the political environment, electoral credibility, security conditions and the effectiveness of party mobilisation.

Nevertheless, the calculation underscores the challenge facing electoral authorities and political parties as they seek to convert the country's growing electorate into active participants in the democratic process.

Several factors could discourage voting, including insecurity, economic hardship, distrust of electoral institutions, dissatisfaction with political leadership and logistical difficulties. Although turnout figures alone cannot establish the relative importance of these factors, insecurity remains a significant concern because it can prevent willing voters from reaching polling units.

In communities affected by insurgency, banditry, kidnapping and communal violence, fear for personal safety may discourage residents from travelling to vote. Displacement can also leave eligible voters far from their designated polling units, while attacks and threats against electoral officials, political actors and citizens can disrupt preparations and undermine confidence in the process.

A former Assistant Commandant General of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Billie David Urbanus, said the government must intensify security efforts in areas ravaged by insurgency and banditry to reassure citizens that they can safely participate in the 2027 elections.

He warned that the growing number of registered voters would not necessarily translate into higher turnout if residents in troubled communities continued to fear for their lives.

"People cannot be expected to exercise their civic responsibilities when their safety is not guaranteed. Those living in insurgency- and banditry-affected areas may be afraid to leave their homes, let alone travel to polling units to vote," he said.

Urbanus urged the government to restore peace and stability in affected communities, arguing that residents would be more confident about participating in elections if their safety could be guaranteed.

The Director-General of the Institute for Police and Security Policy Research (IPSPR), Dr Charles Omole, also called for an election-specific security strategy, particularly in areas affected by insurgency and banditry.

He recommended that security agencies develop threat-based plans for affected local government areas, supported by clear command structures, rapid-response teams and measures to protect polling units, electoral officials and routes used by voters.

Omole urged INEC to conduct an early security and voter-accessibility audit to identify communities at risk of exclusion. He also advocated collaboration among the commission, security agencies, traditional rulers, community leaders and humanitarian organisations to develop lawful arrangements for displaced voters and communities that may be difficult to access.

He said internally displaced persons should receive clear information about where and how they could vote, with any arrangements complying with the Electoral Act and applicable regulations.

Beyond insecurity, economic hardship may discourage participation when transport expenses, lost wages and other election-day costs make voting difficult. Residents of remote communities may face additional obstacles where polling units are far away, or transport is inadequate.

Political disillusionment is another possible factor. Citizens who believe elections will not produce meaningful change may question the value of voting, while doubts about electoral transparency, result management and the handling of complaints could weaken confidence in the process.

A chieftain of Ohanaeze, Goddy Uwazurike, said restoring public confidence would be crucial to encouraging Nigerians to participate in the 2027 election. He urged INEC's leadership to demonstrate impartiality and place the national interest above sectional or individual considerations.

Uwazurike said perceptions about the composition of the commission's leadership could undermine confidence in its neutrality.

"The insinuation is that key positions in the commission are dominated by people from a particular section of the country because of a particular candidate," he said.

He also called on the government to curb electoral violence, warning that voters might stay away from polling units in areas where violence was anticipated.

Such concerns underline the importance of distinguishing between voter apathy and the inability to participate. Low turnout does not necessarily mean that citizens have lost interest in elections; some may be prevented from voting by insecurity, intimidation or practical barriers.

Omole urged political parties to take mobilisation seriously by using trusted local networks to counter misinformation, encourage peaceful participation and reassure citizens that their votes matter. He also called on INEC to intensify voter education through local radio, community organisations and languages understood by residents, particularly in vulnerable communities.

He recommended establishing a joint electoral security coordination mechanism well before election day, with clear reporting channels, incident monitoring and agreed contingency plans. Any decision to relocate or suspend voting, he said, must be lawful, transparent and promptly communicated.

"My central point is this: we must not confuse voter apathy with voter intimidation or voter exclusion. Low turnout may be as a result of security concerns and not a lack of interest by voters. Where insecurity prevents citizens from voting, the solution is not simply to urge them to turn out; it is to reduce the danger, remove practical barriers and restore confidence in the electoral process. Every eligible Nigerian should have a realistic and safe opportunity to exercise their franchise," he said.

Despite concerns about declining turnout, a former member of the House of Representatives from Rivers State, Bernard Mikko, expressed optimism that more Nigerians would participate in the 2027 election.

Mikko, a member of the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC), said he expected voters to turn out in large numbers to bring about a change in the administration of President Bola Tinubu. His position reflects the possibility that dissatisfaction with the incumbent government could encourage greater participation rather than increase voter apathy.

Former ADC National Chairman Ralph Nwosu also expressed confidence in his party's mobilisation efforts, saying it had done its homework and that its supporters would come out to vote.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA), on its part, has pledged to intensify voter education and civic sensitisation nationwide ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The agency's Director-General, Mallam Lanre Issa-Onilu, said the NOA would work closely with INEC, security agencies, the media and other stakeholders to promote informed, peaceful and responsible participation in the electoral process.

He said the NOA would leverage its presence across all 774 local government areas to reach citizens through com-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25



Chairman/CEO of Ashbard Energy Company Limited, Emmanuel Chiejina (left); Chairman of the Occasion, Paul Usoro; Dean, Lagos Business School, Information Systems, Prof. Olayinka David-West; Managing Director/CEO, Financial Derivatives Company, Bismarck Rewane; Group Chief Branding and Communications Officer, Dangote Industries Limited, Anthony Chiejina at Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals IPO Roadshow tagged "Back to where it all began" in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

TRUEFACT: GOOD LEADERSHIP QUALITY:

SEEKING OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINION

Proverbs 15:22 (ERV) "If you don't ask for advice, your plans will fail. With many advisors, they will succeed." "Take a complete census throughout the land and bring me the totals," he told Joab and the other leaders. But Joab objected. "If the Lord were to multiply his people a hundred times, would they not all be yours? So why are you asking us to do this? Why must you cause Israel to sin?" **(1 Chronicles 21:1-3 TLB)** David did not listen to Joab's advice and disaster came upon Israel.

Prayer: Lord remove any spirit of pride from my heart.

Email Address: g.truefact@gmail.com

Senate seeks emergency relief, compensation for flood victims

From **John Akubo**, Abuja

Urges FG to complete abandoned roads before starting new projects

THE Senate has urged the Federal Government to rebuild roads destroyed by flooding and erosion, provide emergency relief to displaced residents and assess damaged farmlands and livestock for compensation.

The lawmakers also called for urgent ecological restoration in affected communities nationwide, with priority given to erosion sites in Anambra, Ebonyi and Imo states.

The resolutions followed three related motions presented during yesterday's plenary by Victor Umeh, Anthony Ani and Osita Izunaso, who highlighted the destruction of homes, roads, farms and livelihoods.

The Senate directed the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to provide affected residents with food, potable water, temporary shelter, medical supplies and other essential relief materials.

It also urged the Federal Ministry of Works to reconstruct damaged roads, restore access to isolated communities and improve drainage systems to prevent further destruction.

The Federal Ministry of Environment was asked to conduct technical assessments and implement sustainable flood and erosion control measures.

The Senate further called on the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to assess destroyed farmlands and livestock in Ebonyi State and provide emergency grants to affected farmers.

Its committees on Environment, Works, Ecology and Climate Change, alongside other relevant committees, were mandated to inspect affected communities nationwide and submit their findings and recommendations within one month.

Presenting the motion on Anambra State, Umeh said flooding and erosion had caused deaths, displaced families and destroyed homes and critical infrastructure.

He said at least four people, including a pregnant woman and a six-year-old pupil of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Primary School, Awka, had died.

IN another development, the Senate, yesterday, urged the Federal Government to prioritise completing abandoned and ongoing road projects before awarding new contracts, warning that poor funding and prolonged neglect have worsened road conditions nationwide.



Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara (left), with the Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Olatunji Disu, during the IGP's visit to the Governor in Port Harcourt on Tuesday.

Lagos lotteries agency orders telcos to audit gaming firms' compliance

By **Adeyemi Adepetun**

THE Lagos State Lotteries and Gaming Authority has directed mobile network operators, including MTN, Airtel, Globacom, and 9mobile, along with licensed value-added service providers, to conduct a compliance check.

The MNOs are expected to, within 30 days, confirm that gaming businesses using their platforms in Lagos are properly licensed and up to date on tax obligations.

The directive requires affected companies to provide transaction records, carrier billing data and revenue sharing information for gaming operators covering the period from November 22, 2024, to the date of the authority's public notice. LASG also wants MNOs and VAS providers to stop onboarding gaming businesses that cannot demonstrate valid state licensing and to suspend existing gaming services that are not duly authorised.

Cross River govt signs 4,000-hectare oil palm concession with firm

From **Tina Todo**, Calabar

THE Cross River State government has signed a concession agreement with ValueFronteira Limited for the development of a 4,000-hectare greenfield oil palm plantation in Ijiegu-Yache and adjoining clans in Yala Local Government Area of the state.

The agreement was signed as part of the state government's agricultural transformation programme aimed at boosting food security, rural development and job creation.

As a prelude to the commencement of the project, the state government formally introduced the company to host communities in Yache nation at a stakeholders' meeting and site handover ceremony held in Ijiegu-Yache.

The meeting brought together representatives of six clans in Yache nation - Ijiegu, Wonye, Uchu, Ichui, Ukani and Ewor.

The state government delegation at the ceremony included the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor and Director-General of the Bureau of Public Private Partnerships, Dr Francis Ntamu; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Solicitor-General of the state, Rosemary Onah; and the Director in the Ministry of Agriculture, Brian Ugbe, who represented the Commissioner for Agriculture.

Diri faults Duke's criticism of Lagos-Calabar coastal road project

Niger Delta groups urge FG to restore original route

BAYELSA State Governor, Douye Diri, has dismissed criticism of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway project by former Cross River State Governor, Donald Duke.

Duke said in an interview on Arise Television that the project was impossible because of the swampy terrain. The 750km highway project, being constructed by the Federal Government, traverses nine coastal states, including Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and Cross River.

In his words, the former governor stated: "The Lagos-Calabar Road is unbuildable. You cannot even go through Bayelsa. Bayelsa is swamp. Even Yenagoa, the capital, is swamp. You will probably have to build about 100 or 200 bridges to go through those swamps."

Responding to Duke's criticism, the Bayelsa governor, in a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Daniel Alabrah, expressed disappointment that a former governor of a South-South state in the heart of the Niger Delta region would criticise the project based on politics and not facts or reality.

Diri said Duke's reference to Bayelsa and its difficult, swampy terrain was out of sync with the reality about development in the state.

Diri contended that if Duke was in tune with happenings in Bayelsa, where his administration had built roads and bridges across swamps and the mangroves, he would have known that the coastal road project was possible.

He said: "I have seen the trending video clip of the former governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke, on an Arise Television programme.

"To say the least, I feel disappointed that former Governor Duke, who is from our region, made such a comment. Clearly, he is not abreast of current developments in road construction and infrastructure development in our state.

"I want to believe that his criticism had political colourations and he did not consider the significance of such a project to our region."

MEANWHILE, Niger Delta groups have urged the Federal Government to revert to the original alignment of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway to include riverine communities in Ondo, Delta, Bayelsa and other coastal states.

The groups, under the aegis of Niger Delta Concerned Stakeholders for Accountable Security and Progress (NDC-SASP) and the 21st Century Youths of Niger Delta, condemned the proposed diversion of sections of the highway away from the original coastal route, insisting that Ilaje, Itsekiri and Ijaw communities must not be excluded from the project.

NAFDAC records 474 cases, 821 product seizures in eight months

By **Ijeoma Nwanosike**

THE National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) recorded 474 new cases, 821 product seizure entries and 213 raids between January and August 2026 as part of efforts to curb the circulation of substandard, falsified, unsafe and non-compliant regulated products in Nigeria.

The agency's Directorate of Investigation and Enforcement also recorded 179 establishments closed or sealed, 52 arrests, 157 surveillance activities and 218 administrative sanctions during the eight months.

According to data compiled by the directorate, 295 cases were concluded, while 22 product destruction exercises were reported within the period, reflecting the agency's sustained investigation, surveillance and enforcement activities.

The operations covered food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, packaged water, drinks and chemicals, among other regulated products, as NAFDAC continued efforts to ensure that products available to Nigerians meet the required standards of quality, safety and efficacy.

A breakdown of the 821 product seizure entries showed that cosmetics accounted for the highest number, with 401 entries, followed by drinks with 215 and drugs with 112.

The agency clarified that the figures represented the distribution of reported enforcement activities across product categories and did not, by themselves, indicate the physical quantities or monetary value of products seized.

Cosmetics accounted for 64 of the 179 recorded establishment closures or sealing actions, while drinks featured in 67 of the 213 raids conducted during the period. Beyond raids and seizures, the agency's enforcement activities included placing products on hold, collecting and submitting samples for laboratory analysis, interrogating suspects and referring cases for legal action where applicable.

These measures are intended to help identify suspected regulatory violations, gather evidence, prevent the continued distribution of potentially harmful products, and ensure that appropriate action is taken in line with applicable laws and regulations.

NAFDAC said effective enforcement involves more than raids and seizures, requiring surveillance, investigation, evidence gathering, laboratory analysis where necessary, due process and the application of appropriate administrative or judicial sanctions.

It noted that the conclusion of 295 cases during the period reflected the continuous work of the Directorate of Investigation and Enforcement in processing reported cases and pursuing regulatory action.

The agency said it would continue to strengthen collaboration with relevant government institutions, law enforcement agencies, state task forces and other stakeholders to improve intelligence gathering, enhance compliance and tackle the circulation of unregistered, falsified, substandard and unsafe regulated products.

Dangote Refinery assures small investors of priority as IPO nears close

PRESIDENT of Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, has reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring broad-based participation in the Dangote Refinery Initial Public Offering (IPO), announcing that investors applying with N50,000 and below will receive priority consideration as the company seeks to democratise ownership of one of Africa's most significant industrial assets.

Dangote made the declaration during the final leg of the nationwide IPO roadshow held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, where investors, financial market experts, business leaders and other stakeholders gathered to discuss the investment opportunity and its implications for Nigeria's economic transformation.

Speaking at the event, Dangote emphasised that the IPO should be viewed not merely as an investment opportunity, but as a chance for Nigerians to become shareholders in a landmark enterprise that is reshaping the country's industrial landscape.

Varsity graduates 404 students as 47 bag First Class in Edo

WELLSPRING University, Benin City, Edo State, will graduate 404 students at its 14th convocation ceremony, with 47 of the 292 first-degree graduands earning First Class honours.

Also, the university will graduate its first batch of 15 doctoral degree holders, marking a significant milestone in the institution's contribution to higher education and research development.

The Vice-Chancellor of the institution, Prof. Isaac R. Ajayi, described the graduation of the university's pioneer PhD holders as a landmark achievement that would strengthen its postgraduate programmes and expand its contributions to advanced scholarship, research, innovation and national development.

He noted that the 404 students graduating from the institution comprise 292 first-degree holders, 93 postgraduate diploma and master's degree recipients, and 15 doctoral graduates.

Ajayi added that the graduating students had been equipped with intellectual knowledge, entrepreneurial and leadership skills, and strong moral values to enable them to contribute meaningfully to society.

TheMetroSection

www.guardian.ng
Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Why roadside markets persist in Lagos despite crackdown

By **Glory Sunday**

LAWMA begins clearing traders from unauthorised locations

EVERY evening, as traffic builds around Ojota bus stop in Lagos, traders spread their wares along the roadside, turning busy junctions into informal markets.

For commuters heading home from work, the stalls offer a convenient place to buy foodstuffs, footwear and household items without making a separate trip to a conventional market.

From Ojota to Cele Junction, Oshodi and the Secretariat axis leading to Magodo Phase 2, the pattern is familiar. As the working day winds down, traders emerge with their goods, positioning themselves where passing commuters can easily stop to shop.

Within minutes, spaces meant for vehicles and pedestrians become bustling commercial centres, highlighting the challenge of balancing informal commerce with the need to keep public spaces accessible.

For many Lagos residents, roadside markets have become part of their daily routine. But their persistence raises a question: will the state ever be able to move trading activities away from busy roads and junctions?

At Ojota bus stop, Madam Rafat Bello, who sells women's palm slippers, said securing a regular trading spot was not simply a matter of arriving early and setting up shop.



Roadside traders at Ojota yesterday. PHOTO: GLORY SUINDAY

According to her, different people control particular spaces, and traders have to make payments before using them.

She added that sellers generally return to their designated spots rather than occupy any available space.

Her account raises questions about how these spaces are allocated, who collects the payments and whether the arrangements have official authorisation. For traders, however, having a regular spot offers some certainty in a business where location and access to customers can determine daily sales.

Mallam Hussaini, who sells yams from a wheelbarrow, said he usually arrived at about 4:00 p.m., when other traders, including those selling tomatoes, also begin setting up. He explained that evening traffic brought more potential customers, making the hours after work particularly important for business.

Three CRIN workers regain freedom after six days in kidnappers' den

From **Rotimi Agboluaje**, Ibadan

THREE employees of the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN), Ibadan, Oyo State, have regained their freedom after spending six days in captivity following their abduction by gunmen while working on a farm within the institute's premises.

The victims, identified as Eunice Babalola, Kehinde Gbalajobi and another employee known as Nelson, were reportedly kidnapped last Thursday when armed men stormed the farm at about 1pm and took them to an undisclosed location.

Their release in the early hours of Wednesday brought an end to six days of uncertainty for their families and colleagues, who had awaited news of their whereabouts.

Sources familiar with the incident said the kidnappers initially demanded N40 million for each victim but later allegedly reduced the ransom demand to N50 million for all three workers following negotiations.



IGP Tunji Disu

The circumstances surrounding their release, including whether any ransom was paid, remained unclear as of the time of filing this report.

The Oyo State Police Command confirmed that the workers had been rescued after security operatives traced them to a bush near Globus Farm, also known as Triton.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Olayinka Ayanlade, said security agencies were continuing efforts to identify and arrest those responsible for the abduction.

Yobe distributes 160 motorcycles to forest guards to tackle insecurity

From **Njadvara Musa**, Damaturu

THE Yobe State Government has distributed 160 motorcycles and other operational equipment to forest guards deployed across the state in a renewed effort to tackle insecurity and improve patrols in forested areas.

The motorcycles are expected to improve the mobility of the guards, who are working with the military to strengthen security in the Sambisa and Sasawa forests, where insurgents, kidnappers and other criminals may seek refuge.

The equipment was distributed in Damaturu on Tuesday. Governor Mai Mala Buni was represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Mohammed Goje.

The items include 900 raincoats, pairs of rain boots, blankets, torchlights and mosquito nets for the 886 personnel currently deployed across various operational units in the state.

Speaking at the event, Goje said the equipment would improve the guards' working conditions and strengthen their capacity to respond to security threats.

He urged the personnel to use the items judiciously and remain committed to their duties.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Security Matters, Brig.-Gen. Dahiru Abdussalam (rtd), said the Federal Government established the forest guard programme, with Yobe selected for an initial pilot scheme involving 1,000 personnel.

According to him, the guards were recruited from seven frontline local government areas: Gulani, Gujba, Damaturu, Tarmuwa, Bursari, Yunusari and Nangere.

He said the personnel completed their training in December 2025 before undergoing additional military training to improve their operational capabilities.

Plateau traditional ruler urges ban on tall crops near homes over insecurity

From **Isa Abdulsalami Ahovi**, Jos

RESIDENTS of Pankshin, Plateau State, have been urged to stop planting tall crops close to homes and along residential footpaths, amid concerns that overgrown farms are providing hiding places for criminals.

The Walin Ron of Pankshin Local Council, Bitrus Mangut, said the crops, including maize, guinea corn and millet, were obstructing visibility and making it difficult for residents, neighbourhood vigilantes and security operatives to detect suspicious movements.

Speaking with journalists yesterday, Mangut said Pankshin, traditionally known for its peaceful atmosphere, hospitality and hardworking people, was increasingly feeling the impact of insecurity affecting parts of Plateau State.

He expressed concern that residential areas, including the town centre and newly developed layouts, had become overgrown with crops planted close to windows, fences and footpaths.

According to him, the vegetation could provide cover for criminals to monitor residents during the day and launch attacks, including theft and kidnapping, at night.

KC Luxury challenges court's order preserving Lagos properties

By **Joseph Onyekwere**

BUSINESSMAN Afolabi Michael Kazeem, popularly known as KC Luxury, has challenged the jurisdiction of the Federal High Court, Lagos, over an interim order preserving his properties, alleging that the proceedings leading to the order breached his constitutional right to fair hearing.

Kazeem, who is standing trial alongside two others over alleged cocaine trafficking and money laundering, is asking the court to strike out the proceedings, vacate its September 25, 2026 order and direct the immediate release of the properties.

At yesterday's proceedings, his counsel, Chief Emefo Etudo, told Justice Musa Kakaki that the defence filed an application on October 13 challenging the court's jurisdiction after learning of the preservation order through a newspaper publication.

Etudo said the defence had requested a certified true copy of the September 25 proceedings to establish the circumstances under which the order was made and support a further affidavit.

In the application, Kazeem's lawyers argued that their client was not served with a hearing notice before the order was granted, denying him an opportunity to oppose the application. They contended that this violated Section 36(1) of the 1999 Constitution, which guarantees fair hearing.

Police arraign man over alleged attempt to sell military helicopter at Lagos airport

By **Olusegun Koiki**

THE Airport Police Command has arraigned a 47-year-old man, Mark Agbor, over alleged impersonation and unauthorised access to restricted areas at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMA), Lagos, after he reportedly advertised a military combat helicopter for sale on social media.

The suspect allegedly posted a video online claiming ownership of two military combat helicopters and offering one of the aircraft for sale.

The case was adjourned to November 18, 2026.

The spokesperson for Airport Police Command, Adeola Mohammed, in a statement yesterday, said Agbor, a staff member of Pathfinders International Limited, was handed over to the command's International Division by the Provost Investigation Unit of the Nigerian Air Force, Ikeja, for further investigation and necessary action.

According to the police, investigations revealed that the suspect allegedly uploaded the video on October 7, 2026, presenting himself as the owner of the two military helicopters and seeking potential buyers for one of them.

The police said that following the conclusion of the investigation, Agbor was arraigned before a court of competent jurisdiction.

The Commissioner of Police, Airport Police Command, Olufunke Ogunbode, said the alleged conduct had serious security implications and could undermine the operations of security agencies.

She assured the public that the matter would be pursued in accordance with the law, while commending the Nigerian Air Force for its collaboration with the command.

Ogunbode said the case underscored the importance of cooperation among security agencies in addressing potential threats to airport security.

She also urged companies and other stakeholders operating within the airport environment to strengthen employee screening, vetting and background checks to reduce the risk of security breaches.

The command reaffirmed its commitment to professionalism, inter-agency cooperation and the protection of lives and critical national infrastructure.

It also urged members of the public to remain vigilant and support efforts to maintain a safe and secure airport environment.

www.guardian.ng

TheMetroSection

Rivers arrests four suspects, shuts eight health facilities over quackery

From **Godfrey Gabriel**, Port Harcourt

THE Rivers State Ministry of Health has arrested four people over alleged medical quackery, impersonation and the performance of a thyroidectomy on an unsuspecting patient.

The ministry also shut down eight health facilities during its October inspection exercise for allegedly operating without proper registration or failing to meet prescribed healthcare standards.

The Permanent Secretary of the ministry, Dr Vincent Wachukwu, disclosed this, saying the exercise was part of the state government's efforts to curb medical quackery and protect residents from unsafe healthcare practices.

Among the facilities uncovered was an unregistered health outfit allegedly operating secretly within a residential compound at No. 27 Victoria Street, Port Harcourt.

During the raid, enforcement officers arrested two suspects, identified as Mr Ataisi Jephtha and Mrs Mgboawaji Edwin. Jephtha was allegedly posing as a trained surgeon, according to the ministry. The residential facility was subsequently sealed.

A thyroidectomy is a surgical procedure involving the partial or complete removal of the thyroid gland, an operation that requires appropriate medical training and expertise.



Sealed centre


Supsect

The ministry also sealed five hospitals and two diagnostic laboratory centres for allegedly operating without the required official registration or failing to comply with basic operational guidelines.

Wachukwu warned that licensed medical practitioners found collaborating with unregistered or substandard facilities would face disciplinary action in accordance with the regulations of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN).

He reaffirmed the state government's commitment to enforcing healthcare regulations and protecting residents from unqualified practitioners.

The ministry also urged healthcare operators across Rivers State to comply with registration requirements and minimum operating standards, warning that violators would face sanctions.

Police, stakeholders seek greater investment in girls' rights, education

By **Daniel Anazia**

THE Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has called for increased investment in girls' education, safety and economic empowerment, saying that child marriage continues to undermine their rights and future prospects.

The call was made during the 2026 International Day of the Girl-Child organised by the Police Campaign Against Cultism and Other Vices (POCACOV), in partnership with the Police Officers' Wives Association (POWA), at the Police Resource Centre, Jabi, Abuja.

The event, themed "End Child Marriage and Invest in Girls' Rights," brought together secondary school students from across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), representatives of international organisations, educators, medical practitioners, development partners and policymakers.

Participants discussed ways to address child marriage and other violations of girls' rights despite existing national and international legal protections.

Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG) in charge of Logistics and Supply, Kenechukwu Onwumelie, who represented the Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Rilwan Disu, described the initiative as timely.

NSCDC, Lagos stakeholders unite against infrastructure vandalism

By **Bertram Nwannekanma**

THE Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Lagos State Command, has urged government agencies, community groups, scrap dealers and welders to strengthen collaboration to curb the vandalism of critical national assets and infrastructure across the state.

The appeal was made during a stakeholders' engagement organised by the Command at the Conference Hall of the Federal Ministry of Works in Obalende, Lagos.

The meeting brought together representatives of the Federal Ministry of Works, the Lagos State Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, the Lagos Neighbourhood Safety Corps (LNSC), the Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), the Scrap Dealers and Employers Association of Nigeria, and the Nigeria Welders Association.

The engagement formed part of the implementation of the National Protection Policy and Strategy (NPPS) on Critical National Assets and Infrastructure (CNAI), in line with the NSCDC's mandate to protect public infrastructure and safeguard the nation's economic resources.

Speaking at the meeting, the Lagos State Commandant of the NSCDC, Adedotun Keshinro, called for a coordinated, community-driven approach to tackling vandalism, illegal scrap dealings and other activities that threaten public infrastructure.

Keshinro said no single security agency could effectively protect lives, property and public assets without the cooperation of other agencies, industry stakeholders and residents.

He urged participants to support the Command's efforts by sharing relevant intelligence, reporting suspicious activities and discouraging the purchase and sale of stolen public infrastructure.

The commandant said sustained collaboration and community participation were essential to achieving lasting results in the fight against economic sabotage.

The Federal Controller of Works in Lagos, Olufemi Dare, also stressed the need for stronger cooperation to prevent theft and destruction of public infrastructure, including manhole covers, road barricades, fences and railings on roads and bridges.

Dare said the protection of major infrastructure projects, particularly the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, requires the involvement of residents and communities along the project corridor.

He noted that the 750-kilometre highway project needed the collective support of government agencies, security organisations and local communities to ensure its security and protection.

Red Cross urges households to prepare for disasters

Takes flood campaign to Makoko

By **Eniola Daniel**

THE Nigerian Red Cross Society, Lagos State branch, has urged residents to prepare for floods and other emergencies at household level.

It, however, took its disaster awareness campaign to Makoko, a community vulnerable to flooding.

No fewer than 120 volunteers and members of the organisation participated in an awareness walk through the community on Tuesday to mark the 2026 International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The day, observed yearly on October 13, promotes efforts to reduce disaster risks and build safer, more resilient communities. This year's global theme, "Resilience Starts at Home," highlights the role of individuals and families in preventing disasters and reducing their impact.

During the walk, volunteers distributed information and educational materials on flooding and disaster risk reduction, encouraging residents to take practical steps to protect their lives, property and livelihoods.



Volunteers during the programme.

The exercise was flagged off by the branch's Vice-Chairman, Segun Akande, with support from the Branch Secretary, Olakunle Lasisi; the Disaster Management Officer, Ige Oladimeji, and other officials and members.

The organisation stressed that disaster preparedness should not be left to emergency responders or government agencies alone but should also begin with individuals and families and extend to the wider community.

Oyo First Lady warns against girl-child abuse, trafficking, substance misuse

From **Rotimi Agboluaje**, Ibadan

THE First Lady of Oyo State, Tamunomini Makinde, has called for stronger protection of girls against abuse, human trafficking, child marriage and substance misuse, urging parents, teachers and community leaders to work together to safeguard their future.

Makinde gave the charge during the commemoration of the International Day of the Girl-Child at the Civic Centre, Agodi, Ibadan, where she urged stakeholders to move beyond advocacy and take concrete steps to protect girls' rights.

She said every girl deserves access to education, safety, respect and opportunities to fulfil her potential, adding that families and communities have a responsibility to create an environment in which girls could thrive.

The Oyo First Lady, who said she had hosted the yearly celebration for seven years, noted that the initiative had consistently focused on girls' education, health, safety, rights and future prospects.

According to her, this year's theme, "End Girl-Child Marriage and Engage in Girls' Rights," underscores the need to protect girls from practices that threaten their development and deny them the opportunity to shape their futures.

Erosion destroys N100m investments, threatens over 200 homes in Cross River

From **Solomon Azu**, Calabar

RESIDENTS of Akai Effa community in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, have appealed for urgent government's intervention as advancing gully erosion threatens more than 200 houses and has destroyed fish farms, poultry farms and other investments estimated at over N100 million.

The Village Head, Henrietta Effa-Akpere, raised the alarm on Tuesday after leading community elders on an assessment visit to two major erosion sites that she said posed a serious danger to residents.

She said that the erosion began more than five years ago as small gullies but had expanded into deep craters following heavy rainfall, destroying farmland and cutting off access roads.

According to her, the community had reported the problem to the Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP) several years ago. She said that though officials visited the area for an assessment, no remediation work done.

"We have been reporting it since the time NEWMAP was there. They came here and inspected the area, but nothing was done. It has been four or five years since the gully fingers began, and we did not know that heavy rainfall would aggravate the situation," she said.

Effa-Akpere disclosed that heavy rainfall about three weeks ago destroyed fish ponds and poultry farms belonging to residents, including Surilaco Farms and Dr Henry Onwe, with the losses estimated at more than N100 million.

"Some people who have fish and poultry farms lost their fish because of the heavy rainfall. The rain wiped out their produce worth over N100 million," she said.


House threatened by gully erosion at Akai Effa community.

Court fixes January 18, 19 for trial of Ogoni spokesperson, Gani Topba

From **Godfrey Gabriel**, Port Harcourt

A FEDERAL High Court sitting in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, has fixed January 18 and 19, 2027, for the trial of Gani Topba, leader and spokesman of the Conscience of Ogoni People, over allegations bordering on terrorism, cybercrime and calls for the unlawful takeover of oil assets in Ogoniland.

Justice Mohammed Turaki adjourned the case after defence counsel sought more time for Topba to recover from health complications reportedly arising from his prolonged detention.

Topba had been released from custody at the weekend before the proceedings, following an earlier grant of bail by the court.

The prosecution, handled by the Department of State Services (DSS) on behalf of the Federal Government, did not oppose the application for an adjournment.

The court had earlier granted Topba bail in the sum of N10 million, with two sureties in like sum, subject to conditions set by the court. He remains on bail pending the commencement of his trial.

Topba is facing a four-count charge to which he has pleaded not guilty.

THE AFRICA RAW MATERIALS SUMMIT 2026

THEME:
"FROM AFRICAN FEEDSTOCK TO AFRICAN FACTORY"



19Th - 20TH OCTOBER, 2026

9AM WAT

LADI KWALI CONFERENCE HALL
ABUJA CONTINENTAL HOTEL ABUJA



PROF. NNANYELUGO IKE-MUONSO
DIRECTOR GENERAL / CEO
RAW MATERIALS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

ORGANISED BY

RAW MATERIALS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL — RMRDC

AFRICAN RAW MATERIALS EXPERTS LIMITED

PARTNERS

MAN — MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, TRADE & INVESTMENT

BANK OF INDUSTRY ...transforming Nigeria's industrial sector

THE COCA-COLA SYSTEM

REFRESHING

NIGERIA'S

ECONOMY

SINCE 1951, ONE

COMMUNITY

AT A TIME.

MORE THAN
160,200
JOBS SUPPORTED ACROSS
OUR VALUE CHAIN

$1 BILLION
CONTRIBUTED IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY
ACROSS OUR VALUE CHAIN

$601 MILLION
PURCHASED IN GOODS AND SERVICES FROM
SUPPLIERS IN NIGERIA



Coca-Cola Nigeria

Nigerian Bottling Company

LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR
ECONOMIC IMPACT

Data reflects calendar year 2024.
Prepared by Steward Redqueen, September 2025.

FOUNDER: ALEX U. IBRU (1945 – 2011)
Conscience is an open wound; only truth can heal it. Uthman dan Fodio 1754-1816

Editorial

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Child defilement crisis as urgent imperative for moral rebirth

THE increasing reports of defilement cases, particularly by fathers against their daughters, countrywide are worrisome. In Edo State, Nigeria, the numbers are staggering: 72 cases of child defilement in just seven months, with half of these crimes committed by fathers. This is not merely a statistic; it is, to say the least, a moral catastrophe. It is the collapse of trust within the very institution meant to protect children, the family.

Traditionally, the family is seen as a sanctuary, the first line of defence against the dangers of the outside world. But what happens when the danger lurks within? When fathers, who should embody protection and guidance, become predators, the home transforms from a haven into a prison of fear.

The family is supposed to be a fortress of safety. Yet, when fathers, the figures of authority and supposed guardians, become predators, the home mutates into a chamber of horror. The betrayal is layered: physical violation, emotional devastation, and the destruction of a child's sense of safety. That 50 per cent of cases involve fathers is not just alarming; it is a national disgrace. It signals that the threat is not lurking outside but festering within.

When the abuser is a father, the damage is magnified. The child's concept of love, authority, and family is distorted. The betrayal cuts deeper because it comes from the person society insists should be the most trustworthy.

Indeed, Edo State Women Affairs and Social Development Commissioner, Eugenia Abdullah, who revealed the bad situation in the state, stressed that most of the abused victims, 50 per cent, were between two and 10 years old. For instance, Abdullah said there was a little girl currently in their custody, who was impregnated by her father. The girl is just 14 years old and is eight months pregnant. The case was reported to the agency by a neighbour.

To make matters worse, the victim, according to Abdallah, was still protective of her father. "She pleaded with us not to have him arrested."Abdallah said the government would continue to strengthen measures aimed at protecting vulnerable residents, supporting survivors and creating opportunities for women to improve their economic well-being. She added that the government was committed to ensuring that social protection programmes produced measurable results.

Child defilement thrives in silence. Families hush crimes to supposedly protect honour. Checks have also revealed that communities whisper but rarely confront. Institutions, such as schools, churches, and mosques, often prefer denial to accountability. This silence is complicity.

For victims, speaking out means shattering the family unit, facing stigma, and reliving trauma in courtrooms; this has made many remain voiceless. When a father defiles his child, the victim is often trapped in a cycle of fear and shame.

This is a national issue that deserves urgent attention. The Ministry of Justice deserves credit for documenting these cases, but the sheer volume exposes systemic rot. This development makes one wonder how many cases go unreported. How many perpetrators walk free due to weak investigations, compromised prosecutions, or societal pressure?

Nigeria's laws criminalise child defilement, but enforcement is inconsistent. Today in Nigeria, it is no news that police units are underfunded, courts are sluggish, and survivors are re-traumatised during trials. Worse still, some cases are "settled" out of court, reducing heinous crimes to mere family disputes.

It must be stated that child defilement is not just physical; it is psychological warfare. Survivors grapple with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal thoughts. Their ability to trust, to form healthy relationships, and to pursue education or careers is compromised.

Worst still, when the abuser is a father, the damage is magnified. The betrayal distorts the child's concept of love, authority, and family.

This crisis demands radical action. All hands must be on deck. The relevant authorities involved in women and children affairs, culture, social matters, police and justice departments need to act very fast and in concert. The problem should be seen beyond mere identification and punishment of culprits; it should involve a thorough interrogation of possible causes and how to handle cases effectively with minimum negative impact on the victims, while deterring the offenders, whoever they may be. There must be swift justice. No father who defiles his child should ever walk free. Sentences must be severe enough to deter others.

Community accountability is very crucial going forward. Silence must end. Communities should create safe reporting channels and protect whistleblowers. There must be psychosocial support. Survivors need counselling, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes. Essentially, healing requires structured support.

Education remains very critical in tackling this menace head-on. Schools and religious institutions must teach children about body autonomy and safe boundaries. Parents must learn to prioritise children's voices over family reputation. There is also a need for institutional responsibility. Religious and cultural institutions that shield abusers must face legal consequences. Protecting predators is complicit in all senses of the word.

The most disturbing aspect of these statistics is the possibility of generational cycles. Survivors of abuse often struggle with trauma that can manifest in destructive behaviours later in life. Breaking this cycle requires not just punishing perpetrators but actively rebuilding survivors' lives.

At its core, Edo's child defilement crisis is a moral reckoning. It forces us to ask: What kind of society allows fathers to prey on their children? What kind of justice system tolerates such betrayal? What kind of community silences victims in the name of honour?

The answers will determine whether Edo, and Nigeria at large, can protect its most vulnerable citizens. Seventy-two cases in seven months is not just a statistic; it is a scream for help. Each case represents a child whose innocence was stolen, whose trust was shattered, and whose future hangs in the balance.

The fact that half of these crimes were committed by fathers is a national disgrace. This is not the time for half-measures or polite conversations. It is the time for uncompromising justice, relentless advocacy, and radical cultural change. Edo's children deserve better. Nigeria's children deserve better. Humanity itself demands better.

LETTER

Beautiful quotes of a lifetime

Let us talk about colour blue

SIR: One of the most fascinating and interesting colours is blue.

Our lives are mostly spent between the azure dome of the sky and the green covering of the earth. But for those of us who, "go down to the sea in ships," the blue above is reflected in the blue below, heaven's vault in:

"The sea, the sea, the open sea,
The blue, the fresh, the ever free!"

What a difference it makes to us when the golden sun shines out of a blue sky, and brightens all the colours of the earth, instead of their being muted and toned down by the ambience of lowering grey or black clouds.

This gentle colour is sometimes applied to smoke, distant hills, moonlight, lakes and rivers. In *Efurum*, by Flora Nwapa, it was the colour the goddess Uhamin saw in a dream, gorgeously dressed and "fanning herself underneath the deep blue lake." It is also the colour of a variety of precious stones like, sapphire, turquoise, aquamarine and beryl.

A peacock is a bird with enchanting and splendid plumage and peacock blue is the lustrous and sparkling blue on a peacock's neck.

With painters, the blue is one of the three primary colours, the others being yellow and red. A blue dye, called woad by the ancient Britons, indigo by Nigerians was used for body decorations on special occasions.

Blue is also the colour of love, as sung by many great musicians who were fascinated by its alluring, cool nature and beauty.

The ethereal and romantic nature of colour blue inspired many Rhythms and Blues musicians to sing sweet love ballads and great hits for many decades ago.

The purely spiritual and overwhelming beauty of colour blue spread across the sky is a constant stamp and reminder of the unconditional love the Almighty God have for humanity since creation and it is even there as I type this.

Take a break and gaze at the hovering sky and heavens above and you will realise the fact that the good Lord love human beings so much and that was why He coloured the entire vast sky with this beautiful and enchanting colour, showing His presence always.

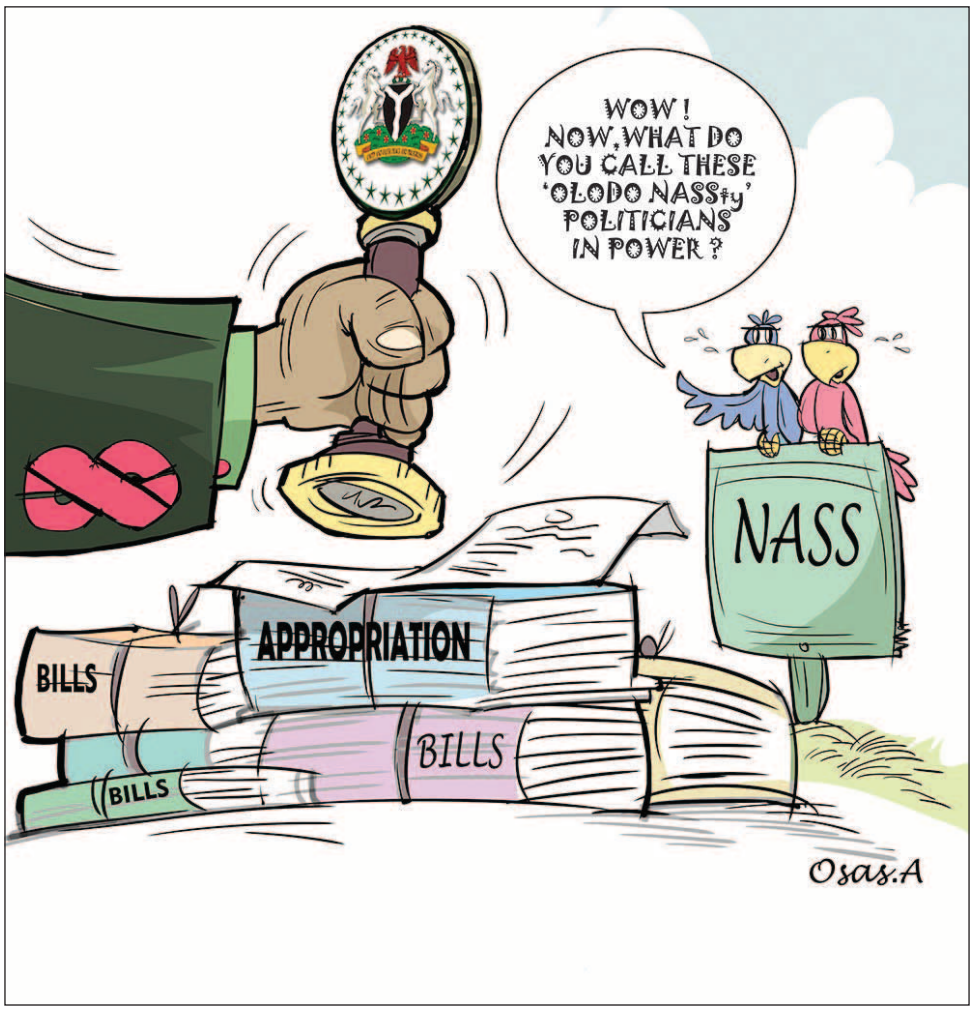
Yorubas have a proverbial saying, "*Ife ni Olorun Oba fi so Ile aiye ro.*" meaning, "The Almighty God moulded and covered the whole world with His love."

Before you take a wrong and evil step or wicked decision, think about the, "Love of the Almighty God over His Creation."

Nothing is hidden to the Almighty God.

Be good and kind always.

Segun Durowaiye can be reached via: (08055356855)



Opinion

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Did the patient live?

By Akin Monehin

What government scorecards can miss about the outcomes that really matter

"WE'VE had a very good year." "How good?"

"My agency is ahead of target. From the latest review, most of the other agencies under the ministry are doing well too. The departments at headquarters are reporting progress. There is a lot of green on the scorecards. It should be a strong year for the Honourable Minister."

"And the ministry?"

He looked at me. "Isn't that what I just told you?"

"Not quite."

His expression changed.

"I run a statutory agency. We have a mandate, agreed targets and a performance scorecard. If we deliver what government asked us to deliver, surely that counts as success."

"It sure does."

"So what exactly are you suggesting?"

"That all the parts can perform and the whole can still fail."

He laughed. "That makes no sense."

"It makes uncomfortable sense."

Nigeria's federal ministries are not single operating entities. Headquarters departments sit alongside supervised agencies, parastatals and other statutory bodies, with the precise relationships varying by ministry and enabling law. That vertical structure is necessary: mandates need owners, budgets need accountability, departments need directors and agencies need leadership.

But the citizen rarely experiences government vertically.

"Imagine a patient undergoing major surgery," I said. "The surgeon performs well. The anaesthesia team does its job. Nursing follows its protocols. Pharmacy supplies the required drugs."

"Sounds like good care."

"The patient dies."

He stopped.

"Why?"

"A critical deterioration emerged during a handoff between teams and was not acted on quickly enough."

"Then somebody failed."

"Perhaps. But imagine every department can show that it completed the tasks on its own scorecard. Would you tell the family the hospital performed well?"

"Of course not."

"Why?"

He paused.

"Because the patient is the outcome."

"Exactly."

A patient does not experience departments. A citizen does not experience parastatals. Both experience outcomes.

That is where institutional performance can become misleading. An agency may deliver its mandate, a department may complete its programme, a regulator may meet its statutory obligations. . .. yet the end-to-end outcome may still fail because the value depends on what happens across them not within them.

Government is organised vertically, however value is created horizontally.

Consider an investor trying to establish a facility, a young person moving from university into employment, or a patient moving through a public-health pathway. The outcome may depend on several institutions, each with legitimate authority and its own targets. The failure may occur not inside any single box, but at the interface between boxes: a delayed decision, missing information, unresolved dependency, conflicting priority or handoff that nobody owns end-to-end.

"So you are saying my agency can be green inside a ministry that is red?"

"Exactly; you got it now."

"Even if we genuinely delivered everything assigned to us?"

"Yes."

"Then the scorecard is wrong."

"Not necessarily. It may simply be answering a different question."

That is the paradox. Vertical scorecards tell leadership how individual institutions are performing. They do not automatically tell leadership whether the system is producing the outcome citizens were promised.The consequence is not merely administrative untidiness.

"When every box is green but the citizen is still waiting, the problem may be between the boxes."

When interfaces fail, businesses absorb delay, citizens make repeated journeys between offices, projects consume more money, and ministers can be presented with reassuring institutional performance while the public experience deteriorates.

Government may then respond by creating another programme, another committee or another intervention whereas the deeper problem is that existing institutions are simply not operating as one delivery system.

In the worst cases, the citizen becomes the systems integrator of government: carrying information from one institution to another, chasing the missing approval, discovering which office must speak to which office.The citizen should not have to manage government in order to receive government.I call the resulting problem the Institutional Interface Gap™: public value lost when responsibility is distributed across institutions but the dependencies between them are not governed with equal discipline.

He pushed back again.

"You really cannot hold my agency responsible for an outcome controlled by five other organisations."

"I agree. Shared outcomes do not mean blurred accountability."

"Then what do they mean?"

"That government must be as deliberate about managing the horizontal journey as it is about managing the vertical institutions."

Three shifts would make a difference.

First, begin with theministry-level outcome, not merely the agency scorecards. Keep the individual targets, but connect them explicitly to the small number of outcomes citizens are meant to experience.An agency target should be evidence of contribution to an outcome, not the final definition of success.

Second, govern the interfaces. Identify where responsibility crosses from one department, agency or regulator to another. Who sees the dependency? How quickly is a stalled handoff visible? Where does a cross-institutional trade-off get resolved?Coordination is not another meeting. It is the deliberate governance of dependencies.

Third, create an integrated line of sight to the outcome. The Minister, Permanent Secretary and senior leadership still need vertical performance information, but they also need an execution capability that can see across institutions, detect where value is becoming trapped and test whether all the green boxes are adding up to a green public outcome.

He reflected deeply.

"So you would not get rid of the agency scorecards?"

"Absolutely not."

"You would add another scorecard?"

"Not necessarily. I would add another question."

"Which is?"

"Did the patient live?"

He smiled, but the point was serious.

Government needs strong ministries, strong departments, strong agencies and strong regulators. Institutional excellence matters. But citizens cannot consume institutional performance; they experience what those institutions collectively make possible.

A green agency inside a red public outcome is not evidence that government succeeded.

The machinery of government may be organised vertically.Public value, however, is created horizontally.

Monehin is the best-selling author of Execution Is a Lie and Managing Partner of Praxis Execution Advisory.

SGBV in Oyo: Towards support for survivors of forced dependence

By Oluwatoyin Adeyemi

OYO State, South-West Nigeria, has a serious problem of Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV), which manifests in various forms. Apart from the issues of underage marriages, rape, incest and physical violence, there is a serious dimension of SGBV, which takes the form of forced economic dependence. This describes a situation in which intimate male partners compel women to forgo pursuing an economic or vocational activity, to dominate and control them.

For many women trapped in financial dependence, speaking out against abuse can come at a particularly high cost. Nigeria has laws designed to protect survivors of SGBV, but many women still do not know where to find help or how to access the support available to them.

Across Oyo State, women continue to experience forms of gender-based violence that do not always leave visible scars. Among them is economic abuse, which is the control, restriction or denial of financial resources and opportunities to leave women dependent on abusive partners and make it difficult for them to leave such relationships.

The hidden face of economic abuse

The reality of two women illustrates how economic control can unfold within marriage and other relationships. In line with standard procedures and best practices, the identities of the women referenced in this report, including their identities and locations, have been withheld to protect their privacy.

The first, a woman in her early thirties and a mother of two young children, was a make-up artist who had built a thriving business before marriage. She had paid her way through school, learnt her trade and established a shop.After the birth of her first child, however, her husband insisted that she remain at home to care for the children. Her business came to an end.

With the loss of her business came the loss of her independent income. Over time, the financial dependence created by the situation made it increasingly difficult for her to exercise the financial freedom she had enjoyed before marriage.

The second woman, in her mid-thirties, holds a master's degree and aspired to become a lecturer and is pursuing a PhD. She narrated how her husband repeatedly asked her to put her career on hold, first until their child turned one. Despite later making a promise that he would support her to establish a business, both promises, including the resumption of her academics, were never fulfilled.

When she eventually secured a teaching job, the situation deteriorated. Her husband became physically abusive and went to her workplace to force her to resign.

With assistance from her father, she eventually started a business selling tailoring materials. But rather than easing the conflict, her growing economic independence appeared to intensify her husband's hostility.

He locked up her shop and accused her of being "arrogant" and "refusing to be submissive" because she was earning her own money.The violence eventually forced her to leave the marriage with her children. The matter is now before the courts, including a dispute over ownership of the business premises.These two cases differ in their circumstances, but they point to the same underlying problem: when a woman has no independent source of income or control over resources, her ability to resist abuse, seek help or leave an unsafe relationship can become severely constrained.

When economic dependence becomes a tool of control

Dr Abimbola Ayo Afolayan, a freelance researcher and scholar at the Institute of Peace, Humanitarian and Conflict Studies of the University of Ibadan with an interest in Gender Relations, while speaking during a phone interview with a reporter, stated that economic dependence needs to be understood within the wider framework of violence, power and autonomy.

"Violence is not limited to physical harm. It encompasses any act that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty," she said.According to Afolayan, forced economic dependence can reinforce existing power structures through the systematic denial of resources, opportunities and autonomy.

"When a woman is economically dependent, her subjugation becomes institutionalised: she cannot bargain and cannot make decisions on her own," she said.Her observation is particularly relevant to situations where women attempt to regain financial independence.Afolayan noted that when women resist economic control by starting businesses or pursuing economic opportunities, violence can sometimes escalate.

She described this as a crucial dynamic because economic independence may be perceived as a challenge to an established pattern of control, with violence then being used to re-establish that control.

"The violence is not random; it is purposeful and aimed at re-establishing control," she said.

Her argument suggests that economic abuse should not be treated simply as a disagreement over household finances. In some circumstances, control over money, employment and property can become part of a broader pattern of coercive control.

What the law says

Nigeria's Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 recognises economic abuse within its provisions. The law addresses conduct including deprivation of or restriction of access to economic or financial resources, controlling or withholding money needed for necessities, damaging or destroying property, and forcing a person into financial dealings against their will.

Yet the existence of legislation does not automatically translate into protection.

Economic abuse can be difficult to identify because it often happens behind closed doors and may initially be presented as an ordinary disagreement about household responsibilities, spending or marital roles.

For some women, the real consequences become apparent only when they attempt to leave or regain control over their finances.

The scale of silence

The challenge extends beyond economic abuse.The 2024 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey reported that 21 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 had experienced physical or sexual violence. Among those who had experienced such violence, only 24 per cent sought help to stop it. Another 18 per cent told someone but did not seek formal help, while 58 per cent neither sought help nor told anyone. The figures are national rather than specific to Oyo State, but they illustrate the extent to which violence can remain outside formal reporting systems.

In August 2026, International Idea, in partnership with NAPTIP (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons), organised a capacity-building programme for journalists in Oyo State under the European Union-funded 'Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Project'.

Data presented at the training indicated that only 41.8 per cent of respondents were aware of GBV laws and policies, while awareness of legal aid stood at 35.4 per cent.

The Oyo State Rapid Response Team on Gender-Based Violence has also recorded hundreds of cases involving abandonment, defilement, rape and intimate partner violence. Of the 692 cases cited, 418 involved children aged between zero and 17, with many incidents occurring in rural communities.

Speaking at an interview in Ibadan in September, the Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Oyo State Command, also revealed that the command has recorded 96 Sexual and Gender Based Violence cases between January and August 2026.

Reported cases, however, represent only those that enter the system.

Fear, stigma, distrust of institutions, social pressure and economic dependence can all make reporting difficult. This means that official figures may not fully capture the experience of women living with violence.

Where survivors can seek help

Oyo State has several institutions and mechanisms through which survivors can seek protection, medical care, legal assistance, counselling and referrals.

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has a presence in Oyo State and provides services that include rescue, shelter, legal assistance, counselling and rehabilitation for cases within its mandate.

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

Adeyemi wrote from Ibadan.

Opinion

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Obi 2027: Is the timing working against South-East?

By **Sunday Ayodele Enikanselu**

PETER Obi has every legitimate right to contest for the presidency of Nigeria in 2027. His decision to contest in 2023 was equally legitimate and, given the political circumstances of that election, understandable.

But politics is not only about the right to contest. It is also about timing, strategy and the long-term interests of the people one seeks to represent.

That is why the South-East must ask a difficult but necessary question: Is Peter Obi's 2027 presidential ambition strategically serving the long-term presidential aspirations of the Igbo people, or could its timing unintentionally weaken that prospect?

2027 is not 2023. The political architecture of Nigeria has changed considerably. New alliances are emerging, old political calculations are being rewritten, and the relationship between the regions and the Federal Government is undergoing significant transformation.

This is precisely why the South-East must look beyond one presidential election and begin to think strategically about the next decade.

Nigeria may finally be confronting its federal question

For decades, Nigerians have complained about an over-centralised federation. We have spoken endlessly about restructuring, devolution of powers, fiscal federalism, resource control and allowing the different parts of Nigeria greater responsibility to determine the pace and direction of their development.

Today, whether one agrees with every policy of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu or not, it is difficult to ignore the direction of some of the reforms being undertaken by his administration.

The Federal Government has explicitly linked its reforms to stronger subnational economies and fiscal federalism, while states have gained greater responsibility in areas such as electricity under the Electricity Act.

There are also constitutional proposals before the National Assembly aimed at transferring additional responsibilities from the Federal Government to the states. These proposals are still subject to the constitutional process and should not be mistaken for completed reforms.

I therefore describe what Nigeria is presently undergoing as a surgical and clinical political operation—an attempt to correct structural weaknesses that have frustrated the Nigerian federation for decades.

If successfully completed, the objective should be a federation in which the regions and states possess greater capacity to develop according to their circumstances, compete productively with one another and contribute more effectively to national prosperity.

That is the Nigeria many of us have demanded for generations.

This is not the moment to abandon the operation This is where every Nigerian should pause. If the present reform direction ultimately produces a more functional federal arrangement, stronger subnational economies and genuine regional competition, it would represent one of the most consequential political transformations in Nigeria's post-independence history.

It therefore deserves serious national attention and constructive support. Support does not mean surrender. Support does not mean that Nigerians should stop asking questions. Support does not mean that the government should not be criticised where it fails.

It simply means that where an administration is attempting to address a structural problem that successive governments have discussed without resolving, Nigerians should give the process the opportunity to mature.

Nigeria cannot continue to demand restructuring and simultaneously resist every political process that could potentially produce it.

Where does peter obi fit into this?

This is where Peter Obi's ambition deserves a sober examination. The question is not whether Obi is qualified to contest. The question is whether another presidential contest at this particular point advances the South-East's larger political objective. The South-East is politically sophisticated enough to understand that winning the presidency requires more than regional popularity. It requires national coalition-building, political relationships and the confidence of Nigerians outside one's immediate constituency. The ultimate objective should not simply be to produce an Igbo presidential candidate.

It should be to produce an Igbo President of Nigeria.

Those are not necessarily the same thing.

A candidate can command enormous support in one region and still struggle to construct the broad national coalition required to govern Nigeria.

That is why political strategy must sometimes look beyond the immediate election.

The south-east must think beyond 2027

The South-East has produced some of Nigeria's greatest political minds and statesmen—Nnamdi Azikiwe, Michael Okpara, Kingsley Mbadiwe and others whose contributions to Nigeria went beyond regional politics.

The question before today's generation is whether that political sophistication can be converted into a long-term national strategy.

Where will the South-East be politically in 2030? In 2035?

What relationships will it have built with the South-West, North, South-South and Middle Belt?

How many young political leaders will have been prepared for national leadership?

How much influence will the region command in the National Assembly?

How strong will its economic and political alliances be?

These questions may ultimately matter more than the outcome of one presidential election.

Let not ambition destroy an opportunity

The greatest danger is not Peter Obi contesting.

The danger is allowing individual presidential ambition to fracture emerging political relationships at a moment when Nigeria may be approaching an important structural turning point.

The South-East and South-West, in particular, must not allow the wounds and rivalries of the First Republic to become permanent political inheritance.

The political history between Azikiwe and Awolowo should teach us that legitimate regional aspirations must be managed within a larger national framework.

Today, there is an opportunity to build a different relationship between the two regions—and indeed among all the regions of Nigeria.

That opportunity should not be sacrificed on the altar of one presidential ambition.

The president should be given the space to complete the reform

President Tinubu has been given a mandate to govern Nigeria.

His administration should therefore be allowed to complete the structural reforms it has initiated and be judged on the results.

If the administration succeeds in moving Nigeria towards a more genuinely federal system, with stronger states and regions, greater economic competitiveness and more effective devolution of responsibilities, every Nigerian region stands to benefit.

The North will benefit,the South-West will benefit, the South-East will benefit, the South-South will benefit, the Middle Belt will benefit and Nigeria will benefit.

This should therefore not be reduced to a Tinubu-versus-Obi argument. It is bigger than both men.

It is about whether Nigeria can finally move from talking about restructuring to actually restructuring the way power and economic responsibility are distributed within the federation.

OBI should think beyond the presidency

Peter Obi has already made an important contribution to Nigerian political discourse.

His 2023 campaign demonstrated that a presidential movement could mobilise millions of Nigerians around issues of governance, accountability and economic management.

That political capital should not necessarily be measured only by whether he eventually occupies Aso Rock.

There are moments in history when leadership means pursuing an office.

There are other moments when leadership means recognising a larger national opportunity and helping to create the conditions for it to succeed.

Obi has an opportunity to demonstrate that distinction.

The South-East must not miss its historic moment

The South-East's presidential aspiration is legitimate. But legitimacy alone is not strategy.

If the region genuinely wants to produce a President of Nigeria, it must build the broadest possible national coalition for that eventuality.

It must cultivate relationships, it must reduce unnecessary political suspicions, it must engage other regions and it must develop political patience.

And it must understand that national leadership is won not merely by demanding one's turn but by convincing the rest of Nigeria that one's turn is also good for Nigeria.

That is the difference between regional ambition and national statesmanship.

Conclusion

Peter Obi has every right to contest the 2027 presidential election but the South-East has an even greater responsibility to think beyond Peter Obi.

Nigeria is at a potentially important crossroads.

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

Prof. Enikanselu (retd), wrote from Lagos.

Chinda, *Wikematics*, Amaechi 2027: No more battalion to Brick House

By **Ekesunnie Caleb**

AS the 2027 general elections tempo unravel, a lot of politicians and their supporters had been mobilising within the traditional media and the entire blogosphere and other visible formats and platform even as the election bell had just been rung. For the race to the Brick house, the name of the seat of power of Rivers State, pundits can tell you for free at the moment that the immediate past Minority Leader of the 10th House, House of Representatives, Ogundu Kingsley Chinda is coasting home to victory with all available indices but that will be for another day when the manifesto debuts and field work starts.

If there is anything significant in the ensuing campaign, it will be the performance record of predecessors, name recognition and capacity of flag bearers to wit: Nyesom Wike the FCT minister and former governor of Rives state and former governor of Rivers State and former transportation minister, Rotimi Amaechi, backing the candidates of the All Progressives Congress, Rt. Hon. O K China and Africa Democratic Congress, ADC, Chief Gabriel Pidomson respectively; the capacity, performance, pedigree and records of both gladiators will sure count even for those who have no political backings.

I watched with interest, a trending video on *Arise* TV and which also trended on the social media where the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Eze Nyesom Wike at a programme in Ikwerre local government in his lively and captivating theatrical characteristics waxed ' no more battalion for many thousand years' single. That single will rule the airwaves beyond the campaign season.

Wike's musical composition is legendary and second to none at the moment. In the single, Wike posites that before noon of the election day, his opponent will direct his followers to boycott the election because they would have been roundly defeated electorally because things have changed; Amaechi would no longer have access to battalion of soldiers, police and other instruments of state coercion as before.

I read Chief Rotimi Amaechi, CRA as fondly called, reel out his record, high points and achievement as Governor of Rivers State when he built primary schools likened to secondary schools and secondary schools likened to tertiary institutions in terms of structural outlay and standards; how he paid pregnant women N10,000 support, built railways from Kaduna to Abuja, Katsina to Maradi in Niger Republic. I also saw his video at a gathering in his Ubima hometown where he castigated President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's economic policies on fuel subsidy removal with promise to revert to status quo when elected as Vice President and all that.

I also watched him sometime at a protest in Abuja with his son, a Canada trained medical doctor if I am not mistaken wherein he said he was 'hungry' few months after leaving office and I began to wonder how the common man would construe his hunger; would it be a literal or metaphorical because Nigerians are wary of turncoating and trebblespeak. Who brought the APC as a political party to power? Who were the masterminds of the APC? Telling his associates and supporters with full chest as Nigerians say that he conspired to bring on the APC and would do same to take them down will not work this time because the party as presently constituted warehouses formidable politics mechinery which make such thought, effort and aspiration nothing but a pipe dream. January and February 2027 will tell better.

At the regional and state level, South-South and South-East will not rally behind CRA Vice Presidency cascading to his governorship candidate for Rivers State; a vice Presidential candidate who personally torpedoed former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's presidency will not sell in the South South and South East geo-political zones; the old block of the People's democratic Party (PDP) have not forgiven him for removing Jonathan from office rather his Vice Presidential bid would re-open the wounds.

CRA will struggle very hard to convince Rivers people of the monumental failure called monorail project which he began but remains largely mumified at Borikiri to the extent that he lost or wasted the privilege of a minister of transportation under whom same railway affairs fell on his portfolio and for eight solid years, he never blinked an eye to either resuscitate or facilitate its completion as a super Minister under President Muhammadu Buhari administration.

His defence of being a state project which is not on exclusive legislative list will not fly because proactive leadership will engender cooperation between the state and the federal government in the interest and delivery of social services to the masses, that's the end of politics and good governance but an opportunity he missed. This would be compared and contrasted with the waste railed away to Niger Republic with lost national income and waste of humongous scare public resources which at the moment had been ripped and scraped by illicit ironmongers called 'babanbolas'. This situation and account will not be lost during the campaigns as he would be required to account for it.

Nyesom Wike the FCT minister on the other hand is ready to give account of his stewardship as minster of state, education in the GEJ administration of just one term starting from the number of universities and high institutions across the nation which are standing tall till date, the radical and innovative change in almajiri education which mopped thousands of out of school children symbolic and symptomatic of one social dysfunctionality index predominant in the North which Wike identified and reasonably profered a cure within the period.

CRA will struggle to campaign in the South South and the South East to promote himself and his gubernatorial candidate among other contestants he is fielding for different posts in the forthcoming general election because he must face public scrutiny for his eight year stewardship as a super minister in Buhari government with regard to what the South South and the South East at least got through his influence such that he is confident to ask for their vote to become vice president. Denigrating Tinubu and the APC with his 'hunger' theory will not work this time.

On the other hand, no one is in doubt of the sobriquet 'WIW', meaning that Wike is working in realising the Renewed hope agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, *res ipsa loquitor*; the transformational and development strides undertaken by Wike is unmatched such that even his critics will attest to the fact that Wike deserves his bragging right. Wike is aware of this and makes no joke about it.

His eight year period as governor of Rivers State still leaves a monumental visibility till this day which will come to play as the campaign rolls when Wike, the APC, formidable polical stakeholders will unveil the man of the moment who by every estimation will follow the development footsteps of Eze Nyesom Wike, I am referring to Ogundu Kingsley Chinda whom the voters have already declared ' our own', the incoming executive governor of Rivers state come may 29, 2027.

Caleb is Chief Press Secretary to Ogundu Kingsley Chinda, Rivers APC gubernatorial candidate, 2027 general election.

The Guardian Business

www.guardian.ng Thursday, October 15, 2026 Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

CRUDE OIL PRICE UPDATE Brent crude: $106.5| WTI crude: $95.64

FOREX MARKET UPDATE I&E window: N1,329.75

LCCI warns Nigeria's N166tr debt piling more pressure on firms

By Tobi Awodipe

THE Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has warned that Nigeria's rising public debt and mounting interest payments threaten private-sector investment, affordable credit and economic growth and urged the Tinubu-led Government to tackle structural constraints undermining businesses.

LCCI president, Leye Kupoluyi, who spoke at the chamber's Q4 conference at Commerce House in Lagos yesterday, said any economic growth touted by the government must translate into broad-based prosperity through higher productivity, industrialisation, private investment and employment creation.

He said a growing economy does not automatically guarantee improved business performance, higher real incomes or sufficient employment, stressing the need to strengthen productive sectors, particularly manufacturing, agriculture, construction, logistics and export-oriented services.

According to him, the reforms can only become tangible when capital flows into productive projects that improve living standards and create jobs.

Lamenting the debt burden, which he said is crowding out credit to the private sector and placing additional pressure on them, he said Nigeria's total public debt rose to N166.79 trillion by June 30, 2026, an increase of N14.39 trillion, or 9.4 per cent, from N152.40 trillion in June 2025.

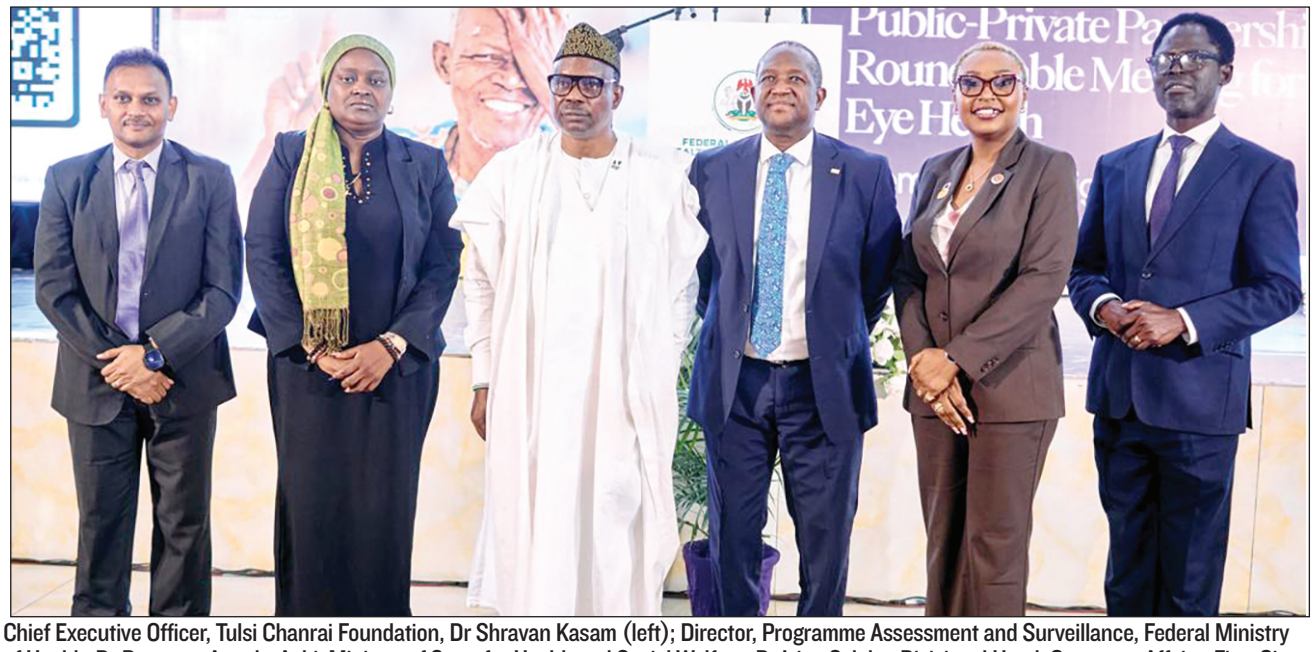
He also stated that Nigeria's interest payments increased to N7.7 trillion in H1 2026, from N5.6 trillion in the corresponding period of 2025, amid high domestic borrowing costs.

He warned that rising debt-servicing obligations are reflected in high interest rates and constraining public spending on infrastructure, electricity, transportation and other growth-enabling investments. He said it is also exposing public finances to exchange-rate risks, while the increasing cost of servicing domestic borrowing is making it harder for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and manufacturers to access affordable financing.

He maintained that Nigeria's economic recovery would remain fragile unless policymakers address the high cost of doing business and macroeconomic stabilisation translates into stronger production, improved household purchasing power and business expansion.

On inflation, Kupoluyi said the elevated cost of living remains a major concern, with households continuing to struggle with food, transportation, housing, energy and other essential expenses. He warned that sharp increases in petrol and diesel prices in Q3 and into Q4, pose renewed risks to the disinflation process, as higher energy costs feed into transportation, manufacturing, agriculture, distribution and retail prices.

He urged monetary and fiscal authorities to coordinate policies that sustain the moderation in inflation without unnecessarily constraining productive investment.



Chief Executive Officer, Tulsi Chanrai Foundation, Dr Shravan Kasam (left); Director, Programme Assessment and Surveillance, Federal Ministry of Health, Dr Perpetua Amodu-Agbi; Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Iziaq Salako; Divisional Head, Corporate Affairs, First City Monument Bank (FCMB), Diran Olojo; National Coordinator, National Eye, Ear and Sensory Functions Health Programme, Dr Oteri Okolo and Team Lead, CSR & Sustainability, FCMB, Omoniyi Iyanda at the Public-Private Partnership Roundtable for Eye Health organised by the Bank in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (through the National Eye, Ear and Sensory Functions Health Programme) and Tulsi Chanrai Foundation in Abuja.

Cardoso succeeds Samuel-Ogbu as AFC board chairman

By Isaac Chibuife

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, has been appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), succeeding Ireti Samuel-Ogbu, who remains a member of the board.

AFC announced the appointment in a statement yesterday. The corporation said Cardoso's experience in financial sector reform, governance and capital markets would guide its strategy to mobilise investment for infrastructure development.

It cited monetary and institutional reforms at the CBN since his appointment in September 2023, including changes to the foreign exchange market and the completion of the banking sector recapitalisation programme.

Before becoming CBN governor, Cardoso spent 12 years as Chairman of Citibank Nigeria and served as Lagos State Commissioner for Economic Planning and Budget. He holds a degree from Aston University, United Kingdom, and a master's in public administration from Harvard Kennedy School.

AFC President and Chief Executive Officer, Samaila Zubairu, said Cardoso's leadership would strengthen the corporation's efforts to deliver on its The Africa We Build 2050 agenda. He also thanked Samuel-Ogbu for her contributions to the board.

Cardoso said AFC had the credibility and track record to mobilise capital for infrastructure and industry.

Nigeria, Ghana to tackle IUU fishing, strengthen vessel authorisation

From Adaku Onyenucheya, Accra

NIGERIA has moved to strengthen bilateral cooperation with Ghana on fisheries governance, sustainable fisheries management and the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboyega Oyetola, yesterday met with the Ghanaian Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Emelia Arthur, in Accra, to emphasise the need for stronger coordination between the two countries in tackling IUU fishing.

Oyetola, who is the President of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), described the menace as a shared concern with serious implications for food security, government revenue and the livelihoods of fishing communities.

Oyetola also engaged with the FCWC Secretariat and the Regional Monitoring, Control and Surveillance Centre in Tema, Ghana, as part of efforts to advance regional cooperation during Nigeria's chairmanship of the Committee.

During the meeting with his Ghanaian counterpart, Oyetola noted that effective cooperation between the two countries would strengthen the wider regional response to illegal fishing and contribute to the sustainable management of shared fisheries resources.

The Minister highlighted Nigeria's pilot implementation of the Regional Record of Authorised Fishing Vessels as a practical platform for enhanced cooperation with Ghana, particularly in verifying vessel authorisations and exchanging relevant information through the FCWC framework.

According to him, technical teams from both countries could work together to identify discrepancies in vessel authorisation records and establish agreed procedures for resolving them, thereby improving transparency, compliance and fisheries monitoring across the subregion.

"Our shared interest is to protect fisheries resources, expand sustainable production and strengthen the livelihoods of our people. Nigeria remains committed to working with Ghana towards these objectives," Oyetola said.

Tech giants, int'l law enforcers bust major W'African fraud syndicates

.Meta removed over 3.7m Facebook, Instagram accounts

By Adeyemi Adepetun

A COALITION of international authorities and global technology titans has dismantled sprawling, sophisticated cybercriminal infrastructure spanning West Africa.

Described as the largest and most comprehensive operation of its kind in history, the landmark operation targeted transnational fraud syndicates operating primarily out of Nigeria and Ghana, exposing deep-seated human trafficking rings and disrupting financial pipelines that have fleeced unsuspecting victims across the globe.

The coordinated offensive was hosted in London by the UK National Crime Agency (NCA) in a high-stakes partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and several other elite U.S. federal agencies.

Law enforcement personnel from 10 countries joined forces with an unprecedented coalition of tech giants, including Meta, Google, Microsoft, OpenAI, Coinbase, Adobe, Starlink, and cybersecurity firm Silent Push, to strike at the heart of cybercrime networks that have long operated with near-impunity across West African territories.

At the epicentre of the tech industry's crackdown was Meta, which executed an aggressive purge of digital assets linked to the West African syndicates. The tech conglomerate announced the removal of more than 3.7 million accounts, Pages, and Groups across Facebook and Instagram.

According to platform telemetry and intelligence reports, most of these removed entities utilised sophisticated impersonation tactics. Cybercriminals routinely adopted fake profiles mimicking American and British citizens to establish false trust with targets in the United States and the United Kingdom.

However, the reach of these criminal networks extended far beyond Western democracies. The report said investigations confirmed that victims were being actively targeted and exploited worldwide, spanning nations including Poland, Germany, Brazil, Japan, India, South Korea, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Turkey, and Nigeria itself.

The operation exposed the industrial-scale nature of modern cyber fraud. Rather than isolated hackers operating out of basements, these syndicates functioned as highly organised corporate entities, managing vast webs of digital infrastructure, communications channels, and physical compounds.

While the digital takedowns crippled the online presence of the syndicates, the physical fallout of the operation delivered profound real-world justice.

Concentration risk as 10 stocks account for 71% of NGX N160tr market value

By Helen Oji

TEN leading stocks on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) account for a combined market capitalisation of N115.98 trillion, representing 71.15 per cent of the bourse's total N163 trillion equity market value, underscoring the concentration of wealth among a small group of listed companies.

The stocks cut across various sectors: the telecommunications, cement, consumer goods, oil and gas and banking sectors, including Airtel Africa Plc, Dangote Cement Plc, MTN Nigeria Communications Plc, BUA Foods Plc, BUA Cement Plc, Seplat Energy Plc, FirstHoldCo Plc, Aradel Holdings Plc, HBM Nigeria Plc and Zenith Bank Plc.

Data from the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) as at October 13, 2026, indicated that Airtel Africa leads the group with N23.7 trillion, which makes up about 14.7 per cent of the entire Nigerian Exchange. Dangote Cement followed with N18 trillion, constituting 11.2 per cent of the overall market value, while MTN Nigeria trailed with N17.7 trillion.

Analysis by The Guardian showed that BUA Foods ranked fourth with N13.7 trillion, while BUA Cement has a market value of N10.1 trillion. Seplat Energy followed with N9.6 trillion, while FirstHoldCo is valued at N6.22 trillion.

Aradel Holdings has a market capitalisation of N5.98 trillion, followed by HBM Nigeria at N5.72 trillion and Zenith Bank at N5.26 trillion.

Together, the 10 companies have a combined market value of N115.98 trillion, constituting 70.55 per cent of the N160 trillion overall market capitalisation and leaving approximately N47 trillion, or 28 per cent, for the remaining 146 listed equities, as there are currently a total of 156 listed firms on the exchange.

The figures highlighted the significant weight carried by a handful of large companies in the overall value of the Nigerian equities market, as changes in the share prices of these stocks can have a substantial effect on total market capitalisation.

Operators argued that when market capitalisation is concentrated in a few large companies, the performance of the NGX becomes heavily dependent on these stocks.

This means that their share price movements can significantly influence the All-Share Index (ASI) even when many other listed companies are recording weaker performances.

Consequently, this may create a misleading impression of broad-based market growth, while smaller companies attract less investor attention and trading activity.

Team Lead, Finance Research Department at InvestingPort, Uwem Olubummo, said the uneven distribution of wealth creation is another concern, as investors in the dominant stocks may enjoy faster share price appreciation than those holding shares in other listed companies.

BENSON IDAHOSA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR | P.M.B. 1100, Benin City, Edo State.

ADVERT FOR THE POSITION OF VICE CHANCELLOR

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ADVERTISEMENT

PREAMBLE:
It is hereby notified for general information that vacancy exists for the position of Vice-Chancellor of Benson Idahosa University, Benin City. The Governing Council, therefore, in accordance with the relevant sections of the University's Law and Statutes, has approved that appropriate machinery be set in motion for the selection of a suitably qualified candidate to fill this important vacancy.

THE INSTITUTION:
Benson Idahosa University, Benin City is a faith-based private University licensed by the Federal Government in February 2002. The vision of the University flows from the divine mandate of raising academics, professionals and entrepreneurs committed in changing Nigeria for the better, by LEADING THE CHANGE.

The University runs both Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes and has recorded remarkable achievements in various areas of research and has great potential for the future.

The University operates a policy of zero tolerance for cultism, examination misconduct, harassment of any kind and other unwholesome practices. The University demands that all its staff and students commit to the highest moral and ethical standards.

APPLICATION:
Applications are hereby invited from suitably qualified candidates for the position of Vice-Chancellor. Interested candidates are to note the following information:

TENURE:
The Vice-Chancellor shall hold office for a fixed tenure of five years.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE POSITION:
(a) The candidate must have a Ph.D. from a recognized University. In addition, he must have a good knowledge of Nigeria educational policy.
(b) The candidate should possess considerable administrative experience within the University system and must show demonstrable ability to attract funds to the University.
(c) A valid NYSC discharge certificate.
(d) The candidate must have been a Professor for not less than eight (8) years with an unbroken service within the University system during the period.
(e) Administrative Experience: Must have been in senior academic leadership at the level of Head of Department, Dean, Provost, Director, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or equivalent.
(f) The candidate must demonstrate academic excellence in terms of quality publications, teaching, innovation, credible community service and proficiency in Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
(g) The candidate must be a person of courage and transparent honesty, who can take decisions on merit of facts, equity, and patriotism and not on the basis of parochial interests or primordial pressures. Candidates should also be free from conflicts of interest.
(h) The candidate must have the highest moral standards, impeccable character, and proven integrity with irrevocable commitment to the best practices in corporate governance, with particular emphasis on accountability, transparency, and probity. He/she must ensure the judicious utilization of scarce resources for optimum public good.
(i) The candidate must have a good knowledge of university tradition and operation.
(j) The candidate must be able to command respect among his/her colleagues and peers and be able to motivate staff towards the achievement of the vision and mission of the University.
(k) The candidate must be firm and fair in decision making and MUST FOLLOW DUE PROCESS in taking decisions.
(l) The candidate must be vast in research and should be able to encourage research development through research proposals.
(m) The candidate must have the ability to provide a conducive, aesthetic, and healthy environment for learning.
(n) The candidate must have the ability to promote linkages with external bodies (locally and internationally).
(o) The candidate must enjoy good physical and mental health and be free from any inhibiting health condition.
(p) The candidate must have a strong spiritual (Christian) testimony.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE:
Remuneration and other conditions of service are as determined by the Governing Council of the University and are highly attractive.

METHOD OF APPLICATION:
1. Interested candidates who meet the conditions stated above should submit a copy of their application and comprehensive current curriculum vitae duly signed and dated, by email.

2. The Curriculum Vitae must include:
   i. The candidate's name in full
   ii. Place and date of birth
   iii. State of origin
   iv. Home address
   v. Contact address (including email and telephone number)
   vi. Marital status
   vii. Number and ages of children
   viii. Nationality
   ix. Academic qualifications
   x. Details of teaching, research, administrative, fund attraction and managerial experiences
   xi. Academic distinction, membership of academic and professional bodies, scholarly publications and
   xii. Names and addresses of three referees.

3. The application must also include a statement of the candidate's vision for the University in the next five years, in not more than 1,000 words and not less than 600 words.

4. Candidates must request their referees to forward references on them in a sealed envelope marked "Referee Report" with the name of the candidate underneath and addressed to the Registrar and Secretary to Council. Such referees should be able to attest to the candidate's claim to higher academic and managerial capabilities as well as the candidate's moral uprightness.

5. In addition, candidates should submit by Courier Service under Confidential Cover 10 hard copies of their applications and curriculum vitae in an envelope marked at the top left-hand corner "Post of Vice-Chancellor, Benson Idahosa University, Benin City", to reach the office of the Registrar, Benson Idahosa University, P.M.B. 1100, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, not later than three (3) weeks from the date of this advertisement.

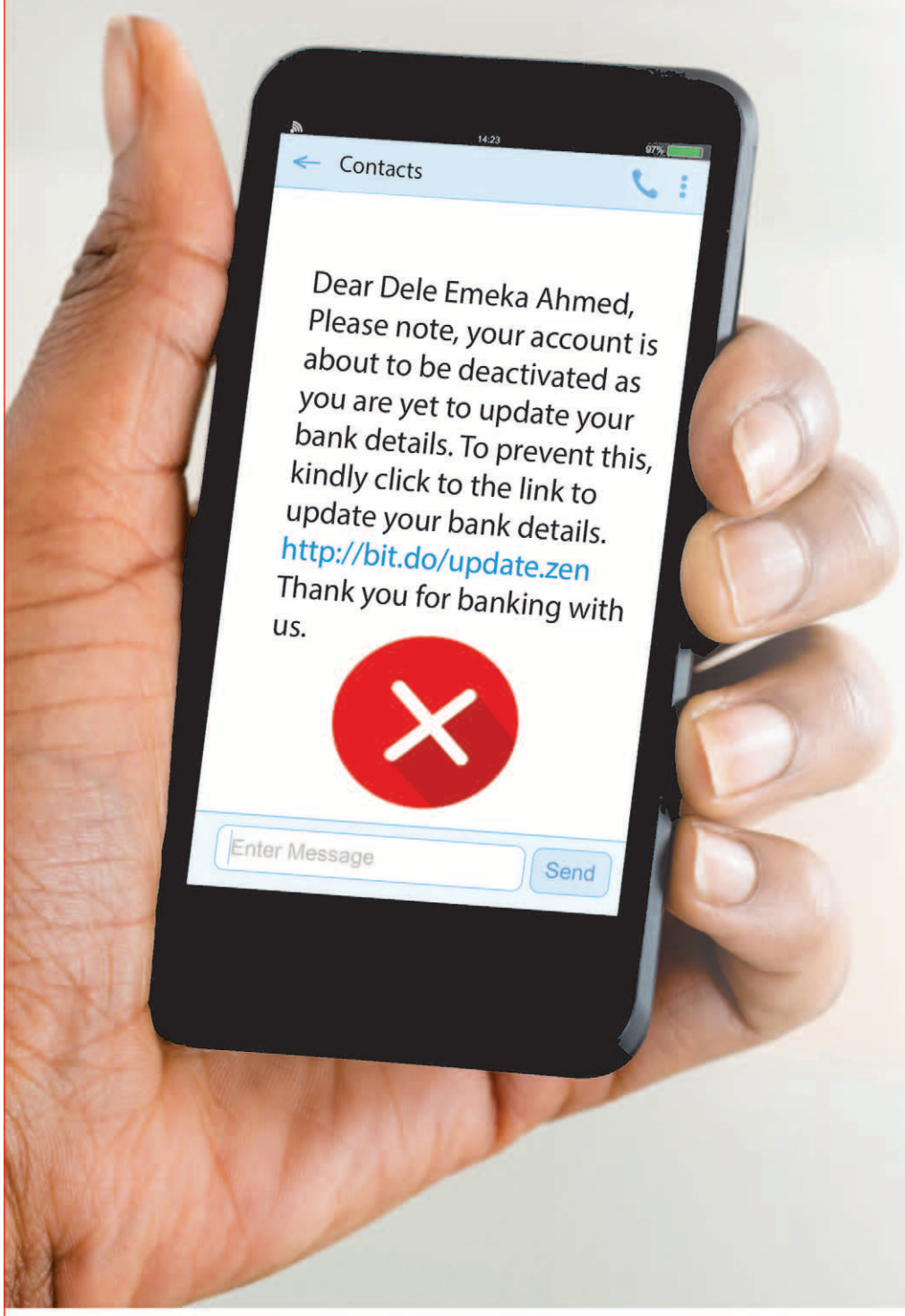
ELIGIBILITY:
Only candidates below the age of sixty-five (65) years are eligible to apply.

SIGNED:
MR. JOSEPH O. OGBEIDE
Acting Registrar/Secretary to Council

ZENITH



Safeguard Your Account



Dear Valued Customer,

Zenith Bank would **NEVER** call, SMS or e-mail requesting for your card details, PIN, Token codes, Mobile/Internet Banking login details or other account related information.

We would also **NEVER** ask you to click on a link to update your bank information or activate your account.

If you receive such messages, please **DO NOT** respond and immediately contact Zenith Direct on +234 201 2787000, 091 1987 7000 or 0700ZENITHBANK.

Thank you for banking with us.

Zenith Bank Plc.

***966*911#** *(SELF-SERVICE EMERGENCY USSD CODE TO BLOCK ACCOUNTS)*

For enquiries and feedback, kindly contact ***ZenithDirect,*** our 24hr interactive Contact Centre:



+234 201 278 7000, 091-1987-7000, 0700ZENITHBANK
zenithdirect@zenithbank.com

Zenith Intelligent Virtual Assistant (ZiVA) - 0704 000 4422 (WhatsApp)

www.zenithbank.com

Airbus forecasts Nigeria's yearly trips per person will double by 2045

By **Olusegun Koiki**

NIGERIA is projected to record a 100 per cent increase in yearly air trips per capita by 2045, Airbus Manufacturing revealed this in its latest Global Market Forecast (GMF 2026).

Airbus said that the 100 per cent surge reflects the country's growing aviation potential as the population expands, while the economy records growth.

According to Airbus, the projection places Nigeria alongside South Africa, which is also expected to record a 100 per cent increase in annual trips per capita over the next 20 years.

Ethiopia is projected to record a higher growth rate of 150 per cent over the same period, indicating the expanding potential of Africa's aviation market.

Besides, Airbus said Africa would require 1,640 new passenger aircraft by 2045 to meet rising demand, comprising 1,310 single-aisle and 330 wide-body aircraft.

The forecast showed the continent's long-term aviation growth prospects, driven by demographic changes, expanding middle-class populations, urbanisation, tourism, and increasing trade, Airbus said.

According to the report, passenger traffic to, from and within Africa is expected to almost triple over the next 20 years, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 4.9 per cent.

This would make Africa the world's second-fastest-growing aviation market after Asia.

Commenting on the projections, President of Airbus in Africa and the Middle East, Gabriel Semelas, said aviation was a major catalyst for the continent's economic development.

Tenaris upgrades $10m thermal insulation plant

By **Waliat Musa**

TENARIS Global Services has invested about $10 million in upgrading its thermal insulation plant in Onne, Rivers State, as the oilfield services company marked 25 years of operations in Nigeria with the completion of pipe coating work for the Bonga North deepwater project.

The investment has brought into operation what the company described as the only five-layer thermal insulation plant in Sub-Saharan Africa, strengthening local capacity to execute technically demanding offshore oil and gas projects without relying on facilities outside the country.

The milestones were commemorated at the Federal Lighter Terminal, Oil and Gas Free Zone, Onne, alongside the commissioning of the upgraded facility operated by Pipe Coaters Nigeria Limited, a Tenaris subsidiary.

The Bonga North campaign involved three-layer polypropylene anti-corrosion coating and five-layer polypropylene thermal insulation coating.

CBN offers N450b treasury bills, targets N369b liquidity withdrawal

From **Joseph Chibueze**, Abuja

. One-year bills dominate issuance as investors await fresh inflation data

THE Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is offering N450 billion in Nigerian Treasury Bills (NTBs) at yesterday's primary market auction, with a full allotment potentially withdrawing N369.16 billion from the financial system as the Federal Government sustains its heavy reliance on short-term domestic borrowing.

The offer, conducted on behalf of the Debt Management Office (DMO), is the second Treasury bill auction of the fourth quarter of 2026 and comes amid strong investor demand for one-year government securities and a gradual decline in their stop rates.

Under the auction circular, N350 billion is earmarked for 364-day bills, while the 91-day and 182-day instruments will receive N50 billion each. Settlement is scheduled for Thursday, October 15 (today).

The 364-day instrument accounts for 77.8 per cent of the total offer, underscoring the government's preference for the one-year tenor in its fourth-quarter borrowing programme.

The N450 billion offer is the smallest scheduled auction in the fourth-quarter issuance calendar and falls below the N500 billion smallest offers in the third quarter.

However, the amount on offer significantly exceeds the N80.84 billion in Treasury bills scheduled to mature at settlement. If the entire offer is allotted, the government would withdraw approximately N369.16 billion in net liquidity from the financial system.

The actual impact will depend on the final allotment, as the DMO has exceeded advertised offer sizes at previous auctions.

Investor appetite for longer-dated Treasury bills was evident at the quarter's opening auction on October 7, when the DMO allotted N968.47 billion against an advertised offer of N900 billion.

The 364-day instrument attracted N1.683 trillion in subscriptions against N700 billion offered, representing demand of approximately 2.4 times the advertised amount.

The strong demand coincided with a decline in the one-year stop rate to 15.85 per cent from 15.89 per cent at the preceding auction.

The latest rate was 185 basis points below the third-quarter peak of 17.70 per cent recorded on July 8, indicating a reduction in the yield investors demanded on the one-year instrument over the period.



Deputy Chief Commercial Officer, Lekki Port, Yetunde Lofinmakin (left); Deputy Chief Technical Officer, Lekki Port, Mattew Oloyede; Managing Director, Lekki Port, Wang Qiang, Deputy Comptroller, Acting Customs Area Controller of the Lagos Free Trade Zone (LFTZ), Olufemi Kukoyi and Deputy General Counsel, Lekki Port, Opeyemi Emmanuel-Olubake during a courtesy visit of the Deputy Comptroller, Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Olufemi Kukoyi to Lekki Port, at Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos recently.

NRS urges stakeholders to secure digital financial infrastructure

From **Joke Falaju**, Abuja

THE Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS) has canvassed for secure, interoperable and resilient financial infrastructure to support Nigeria's growing digital economy.

The Chief of Staff at the NRS, Tayo Koleosho, stated this while delivering a keynote address on behalf of the Executive Chairman of the service, Dr Zacch Adedeji, at the sixth edition of TechConnect organised by Interswitch in Abuja.

Koleosho said financial infrastructure plays a critical role in connecting consumers, businesses, financial institutions and government. He noted that digitalisation goes beyond moving money to supporting broader economic activities and improving service delivery.

He also emphasised the importance of interoperability, cybersecurity, data protection and trust in strengthening digital infrastructure.

According to him, these capabilities are essential for enabling secure transactions, supporting compliance and helping institutions respond effectively to changing market needs.

The event, themed "Built for What's Next: Designing Adaptive Financial Infrastructure for a Dynamic Market," brought together stakeholders from government, financial services, technology and business to discuss how technology, payments, policy and collaboration could support sustainable digital growth.

Vice President, Business Innovation and Growth, Tyoyila Aga, at Interswitch, said TechConnect provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas and explore opportunities for collaboration as the digital economy evolves.

Aga said building adaptive financial infrastructure requires the adoption of new technologies, partnerships and interoperability to translate innovation into practical solutions that can be deployed at scale.

"The future of financial infrastructure will be shaped by how effectively we connect technology, institutions and people around the needs of a changing economy," she said.

Rising costs, regulatory burden squeeze private employment agencies

By **Gloria Nwafor**

PRIVATE employment agencies in Nigeria are facing mounting operating costs, shrinking profit margins and regulatory uncertainties, raising concerns about the sustainability of recruitment and outsourcing businesses amid persistent economic pressures.

The association said inflation, energy and transport costs, exchange-rate volatility, compliance expenses and delays in contract payments were eroding agencies' already narrow margins.

The President of the Employers Association for Private Employment Agencies of Nigeria (EAPEAN), Nzeribe Okegbue, warned that overlapping regulatory demands, uncertainty over policy implementation and competition from unlicensed operators were creating an uneven business environment for licensed agencies, which play an increasingly important role in workforce management, recruitment and employment services.

Okegbue spoke at the association's 15th yearly general meeting yesterday, where he called for clearer and more consistent regulation, coordinated inspections, timely licensing processes and proportionate compliance requirements to improve the operating environment for private employment agencies.

According to him, the N70,000 national minimum wage, where applicable, has increased the importance of realistic contract pricing and timely reviews of service rates, as agencies contend with rising costs of delivering services to client organisations.

He said the challenges must be addressed without compromising workers' welfare, statutory obligations, fair recruitment practices or service quality.

He said private employment agencies operate at the intersection of business competitiveness, labour-market regulation and workers' rights, providing employers with flexible staffing arrangements, specialised skills and workforce management services.

However, Okegbue said the sector's ability to support business productivity and job creation depended partly on a more predictable policy environment and effective implementation of government reforms.

He noted that businesses across Nigeria continued to grapple with elevated operating expenses, financing constraints, exchange-rate uncertainty, infrastructure deficits and pressure on consumer demand.

While ongoing reforms in foreign exchange management, public revenue mobilisation and fiscal policy were intended to improve macroeconomic stability and investor confidence, the EAPEAN boss said their benefits would depend on how quickly they translated into lower inflation, predictable costs, improved infrastructure, stronger purchasing power and increased productive investment.

NAICOM's risk-based capital drive spurs industry plan for Actuarial Fund

By **Bankole Orimisan**

NIGERIA's insurance industry is stepping up efforts to develop actuarial expertise ahead of the implementation of a risk-based capital (RBC) framework, with a multi-million-naira Joint Actuarial Fund scheduled to commence operations in January 2027.

The proposed fund is expected to support the development of specialist skills required to improve risk assessment, premium pricing and financial management as insurers adjust to a new regulatory regime following the completion of the industry's recapitalisation exercise.

The initiative comes as the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) advances plans to align insurers' capital requirements with the nature, scale and complexity of the risks they undertake, in a move aimed at strengthening financial stability and protecting policyholders.

Speaking at a virtual briefing on the outcome of the Insurers' Committee meeting held in Lagos, the Chairman of the Committee's Publicity Sub-committee, Ebelechukwu Nwachukwu, said the fund is expected to become operational in January 2027.

Nwachukwu, who is also Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of REX Insurance Limited, said NAICOM would contribute 20 per cent of the fund, while insurance operators, industry associations, non-governmental organisations and other relevant stakeholders would provide the remaining 80 per cent.

Nigeria seals global measurement pact as SON DG marks three years

NIGERIA has joined the league of nations whose measurement standards are recognised worldwide, after signing the Mutual Recognition Arrangement of the International Committee for Weights and Measures (CIPM MRA) in France.

The feat coincided with the third anniversary in office of the Director- General of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Dr Ifeanyi Chukwunonso Okeke, who signed on behalf of the country at the 28th meeting of the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM).

Okeke, in a statement signed by the Director, Corporate Affairs, SON, Mrs. Ethan Talatu, said Nigeria's admission as an Associate State of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) on June 4, 2026, is a step that brought the country into the international measurement system.

The CIPM MRA is the framework through which national metrology institutes prove that their measurement standards are equivalent and earn global recognition for their calibration and measurement certificates.

Labour & Appointments

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

'Why cybersecurity training must go beyond course completion'

By **Gloria Nwafor**

EMPLOYERS have been urged to measure cybersecurity training effectiveness by changes in employee behaviour rather than course completion rates, as growing cyber threats expose weaknesses in workplace security practices.

Governance Director and Principal Cyber and Information Security Adviser at Black Arrow Cyber Consulting, Bruce McDougall, said human resources departments must work with line managers to reinforce cybersecurity policies, assess whether employees apply what they learn and build confidence in reporting suspicious activities.

He warned that employees were increasingly becoming targets of cybercriminals, who impersonate trusted contacts through emails, workplace messaging platforms and telephone calls, exploiting routine business relationships to gain access to company systems.

The warning followed a cyberattack on online fashion retailer ASOS, which disclosed that an attacker obtained an employee's login credentials by impersonating a trusted contact. The company said it immediately restricted access to the affected platforms after discovering the incident.

The development highlighted the growing challenge facing employers as increasingly sophisticated attacks make it harder for workers to distinguish legitimate communications from fraudulent requests.

McDougall said cybersecurity training should go beyond meeting organisational requirements and focus on whether employees can recognise threats and respond appropriately in their daily work.

He recommended that organisations use phishing simulations to help workers practise identifying and reporting suspicious messages, rather than treating failed tests as grounds for punishment or additional compulsory training.

He said such exercises should build employees' confidence in spotting potential attacks and encourage early reporting before incidents escalate.

Other cybersecurity experts also called for security procedures to be integrated into everyday working practices, warning that employees were more likely to bypass policies they considered complicated or inconvenient.

Anastasia Voronkova, insights analyst at Mindtools Kineo, said awareness alone did not guarantee safer behaviour, urging employers to tailor training to the specific risks employees faced in their roles.

She also advised organisations to examine whether excessive workloads, confusing procedures and unclear guidance contributed to unsafe practices, rather than automatically attributing security incidents to individual negligence.

New ILO rules address pay, social protection in platform economy

By **Gloria Nwafor**

THE International Labour Organisation (ILO) has adopted Convention No. 193, the first international labour standard specifically aimed at ensuring decent work in the rapidly expanding platform economy.

The Convention establishes protections for digital platform workers covering remuneration, social security, occupational safety and health, employment status, data protection and access to dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Speaking on the ILO Future of Work Podcast, Chief of the Inclusive Labour Markets, Wages and Working Conditions Branch at the ILO, Patrick Belser, said the new standard was designed to ensure workers benefit from the growth of digital platforms without weakening labour protections.

The Convention covers both location-based workers, including those involved in food delivery and passenger transportation, and web-based workers such as freelancers and people performing microtasks online.

Belser said the global platform workforce could range from 150 million to 400 million workers. However, the actual figure remains uncertain because many workers are classified as independent contractors and are therefore difficult to capture in conventional employment statistics.

He said the ILO plans to work with member states to improve data collection on the size and nature of platform work.

A key feature of Convention No. 193 is how it treats automated systems used by digital platforms to manage workers.

Under the standard, platforms are expected to inform workers when they use automated systems and, in specified circumstances, explain important decisions. When workers are deactivated, the Convention requires human involvement in reviewing those decisions.

Belser said the approach aimed to regulate technology's effect on working conditions rather than restrict the technology itself.

The Convention also does not impose a single employment status on platform workers. Instead, worker classification is expected to be determined largely by the facts of the work, allowing some workers to be recognised as employees and others as independent contractors or self-employed.

Belser said the flexibility was intended to protect workers while allowing room for entrepreneurship, innovation and the continued growth of the platform economy.

HumanManager pushes workforce data for better talent decisions

By **Gloria Nwafor**

HUMANMANAGER Limited has urged organisations to use workforce data more effectively to identify employee capabilities, improve talent development, and ensure their people strategy supports business performance.

The company said growing changes in skills requirements and the nature of work had made it increasingly important for employers to understand not only the people they have, but also the capabilities within their workforce and the areas where additional skills are required.

Managing Director, HumanManager Limited, Udy Ngele, stated this at the 58th International Conference and Exhibition of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM), held in Abuja.

Ngele said people strategy could no longer be treated as separate from business strategy, stressing that organisations seeking to remain competitive must deliberately build the capabilities required to achieve their business ambitions.

He said, "People strategy can no longer sit on the margins of business strategy," adding that HR professionals must increasingly contribute to discussions around growth, transformation and long-term organisational resilience.

According to him, technology plays an important role by providing workforce insights that make such decisions more informed and actionable.

Ngele said the growing relationship between people capability and business performance had made workforce planning a broader organisational priority.

Also speaking, Group Head, Business Development and Partnerships, HumanManager Limited, Abdulwasiu Issah, said organisations could not effectively develop the workforce they needed without first understanding the capabilities already available within the organisation.

Issah said competency management provides a structured approach for organisations to identify existing strengths, set development priorities and identify where capabilities need strengthening.

TUC seeks workers' inclusion in formulation of government policies

By **Gloria Nwafor**

THE Trade Union Congress (TUC), Lagos State Council, has called on governments at all levels to prioritise dialogue, honour agreements reached with workers and ensure labour is included in decisions affecting employees' welfare and livelihoods.

The council chairman, Abiodun Aladetan, spoke recently at a workshop organised by the Association of Senior Civil Servants of Nigeria (ASCSN) in Lagos.

Speaking on the theme, "A Shift from Confrontation to Collaboration," Aladetan said persistent confrontation between labour and government had often been driven by a lack of dialogue, good faith and workers' participation in decisions affecting them.

He said the traditional perception of government viewing labour as an obstacle and labour seeing government as an adversary had cost the country valuable time, productivity and welfare gains that collective bargaining was expected to deliver.

According to him, collaboration should not be interpreted as labour surrendering its voice or government dictating outcomes, but as both parties approaching industrial relations as partners with clearly defined responsibilities.

"Government brings the resources and the will to act, Labour brings the discipline, the productivity and the goodwill of the workforce that makes governance possible in the first place," he said.

Aladetan urged the government to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration by ensuring that agreements reached with labour were implemented and welfare issues treated with urgency.

He also called for greater worker involvement in policies and decisions that directly affect their livelihoods, saying effective labour relations require mutual trust and good faith.

"As Chairman of TUC Lagos State Council, I say to Government today: collaboration is a two-way commitment. It must show in how agreements are honoured, how welfare matters are treated with urgency, and how workers are carried along, not confronted, when decisions affecting their livelihood are made," he said.

He added that labour would remain willing to engage the government constructively where it demonstrated such good faith.

Aladetan, however, stressed that collaboration did not mean abandoning trade unions' responsibility to defend workers' interests.

NSITF seeks public trust through service excellence

From **Collins Olayinka**, Abuja

THE Managing Director of the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF), Oluwaseun Faleye, has urged staff to prioritise empathy, interdepartmental collaboration and efficient service delivery to strengthen public confidence in the organisation.

Faleye said sustained efforts to exceed customers' expectations would improve public perception of the Fund and reinforce its capacity to serve workers, employers and dependants of employees, who suffer work-related injuries or die in the course of employment.

He stated this in Abuja while flagging off the 2026 Customer Service Week celebration at the NSITF headquarters, with a call on employees to make the theme, "Go the Extra Mile," a permanent workplace ethic rather than a slogan limited to the yearly event.

"Going the extra mile will give us the extra edge in terms of how people perceive us, how people experience NSITF and, of course, the personal satisfaction of knowing that you are doing your best for people," he said.

The NSITF boss stressed that the Fund's mandate required a high degree of sensitivity, particularly when dealing with injured workers, employers, and families of deceased employees seeking compensation and other support.



Past President, Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators of Nigeria (ICSAN), Bode Ayeku (left); Keynote Speaker, Biodun Adedipe; Vice President, ICSAN, Francis Olawale; President/Chairman of the Governing Council, ICSAN, Uto Ukpanah; Past President, ICSAN, Hakeem Ogunniran; Conference Chairman, Oscar Onyema and Registrar/Chief Executive Officer, ICSAN Aniedi Amos, during the institute's 50th yearly conference and diamond jubilee celebration in Lagos.

Labour & Appointments

'Low worker engagement threatens productivity, economic growth'

By **Gloria Nwafor**

POOR employee engagement costs the global economy an estimated $10 trillion in lost productivity yearly, with only 19 per cent of workers in sub-Saharan Africa emotionally invested in their jobs, raising fresh concerns about working conditions, employee welfare and productivity across the region.

The findings in the State of the Global Workplace 2026 report showed that only 20 per cent of employees worldwide were engaged at work in 2025, down from 23 per cent in 2022 and 2023.

The report estimated that lost productivity from low employee engagement amounted to about nine per cent of global Gross Domestic Product, highlighting the economic consequences of workplaces where employees lack a strong connection to their jobs, teams and employers.

For labour unions, employers and policymakers in Africa, the findings raise questions about how workplace conditions, inadequate support, management practices and employees' sense of belonging affect productivity and the quality of working life.

Gallup's figures showed that 64 per cent of employees globally were not engaged, while 16 per cent were actively disengaged. This distinction matters because disengagement goes beyond dissatisfaction with a particular task and reflects a weak psychological connection to work and the organisation.

Sub-Saharan Africa recorded an employee engagement rate of 19 per cent, below the global average of 20 per cent, placing the region among those struggling to sustain employees' involvement and enthusiasm at work.

The report also showed that global engagement had declined for two consecutive years, reversing some of the gains recorded after the pandemic and raising concerns about organisations' ability to maintain employee commitment amid changing economic and technological conditions.

The findings placed employee welfare and management practices at the centre of the productivity debate, challenging the assumption that technology, tighter performance targets, and greater pressure on workers alone can improve output.

Although Gallup's engagement measure does not establish that poor pay or working conditions caused the decline, its findings underline the importance of understanding employees' experiences and the workplace factors that influence their commitment.

For workers, engagement depends not only on the tasks they perform but also on how they are managed, whether their contributions are valued, and whether they have the support and clarity needed to do their jobs effectively.

WITIN Girls win 2026 CTO Digital Excellence Award

By **Victoria Nwachukwu**

WOMEN In Technology In Nigeria (WITIN) Girls have been honoured with the prestigious 2026 CTO Digital Excellence Award for Universal Access Service.

The recognition celebrates innovation, inclusivity, and impact in the digital space. This award highlights the organisation's unwavering commitment to bridging the digital divide and ensuring that girls, especially in underserved communities, have equitable access to technology and digital opportunities.

The accolade underscores WITIN Girls' leadership in advancing universal access through programmes that empower young women with digital literacy, coding skills, and entrepreneurial training. By championing inclusivity and fostering a culture of innovation, WITIN Girls continued to set a benchmark for excellence in digital transformation, inspiring a new generation of female leaders to thrive in the technology ecosystem.

Commenting on the award, WITIN Founder, Mrs Martha Alade, said the recognition belongs first to the girls.

"Through WITIN Girls STEM Clubs & Outreaches, girls across Nigeria are not only gaining access to digital and STEM learning; they are developing solutions to challenges in their own communities. From schools and communities to underserved and hard-to-reach locations, our work is creating opportunities for girls to access technology, develop their capabilities and participate meaningfully in shaping the digital future," she stated.

NIM elects Mustapha as 26th president

By **Gloria Nwafor**

THE Nigerian Institute of Management (Chartered) has elected Dr Umar Musa Mustapha as its 26th President and Chairman of Council, with a mandate to advance management excellence, ethical leadership and institutional governance.

Mustapha, who succeeded Commodore Abimbola Ayuba (Rtd.), was elected alongside Professor Emmanuel Umana, Vice-Chancellor of Obong University, as Deputy President, and Lady Christie Adejoh as National Treasurer. The principal officers will steer the institute's affairs for the next year.

The new president is the Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Mentholatum Nigeria Limited and a former Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Council of the University of Ibadan.

His election comes as organisations face increasing demands for stronger corporate governance, improved management capacity, and accountability in delivering institutional and economic objectives.

With more than 40 years of leadership experience spanning the public and private sectors, Mustapha is expected to build on the institute's existing programmes in professional development, ethical leadership and management practice.

At the University of Ibadan, where he served as Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, he led institutional governance, policy reforms, and financial restructuring.



Mustapha

APWEN seeks more investment in women engineers

From **Collins Olayinka**, Abuja

THE Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria (APWEN) has called for greater participation of women engineers in Nigeria's energy transition, infrastructure development and drive towards net-zero emissions.

The association said women must have a meaningful role in decisions shaping the country's future infrastructure and energy systems.

President of APWEN, Chinyere Nnenna Igwegbe, made the call at the association's International Conference, Exhibition and Annual General Meeting in Abuja, with the theme, 'Designing Adaptive Systems: Building Energy, Building Net-Zero, Delivering Tomorrow's Infrastructure.'

Igwegbe said the accelerating effects of climate change, energy transition, rapid urbanisation and emerging technologies had created an urgent need for infrastructure capable of responding to changing conditions while remaining sustainable and resilient.

She said Nigeria and Africa could not afford to remain spectators in the global energy and infrastructure transition, stressing that women engineers must have a meaningful place in designing the systems of the future.

"Women engineers must be at the very centre of that design table, not at its margins," she said.

She described adaptive systems as infrastructure designed to withstand shocks, respond to changing demand and cope with climate-related pressures.

She added that the pursuit of net-zero emissions required a fundamental rethink of how energy was generated, cities developed and communities served.

Igwegbe urged government, the private sector, industry, academia, professional bodies, development partners and communities to abandon siloed approaches and work together to address Nigeria's infrastructure challenges.

She said APWEN would continue to serve as a bridge among stakeholders by creating platforms for knowledge exchange and partnerships, as well as converting technical ideas into practical solutions.

"Let this conference be more than a meeting of minds; let it be a marketplace of partnerships," she said, urging participants to leave with concrete commitments capable of surviving beyond the event.

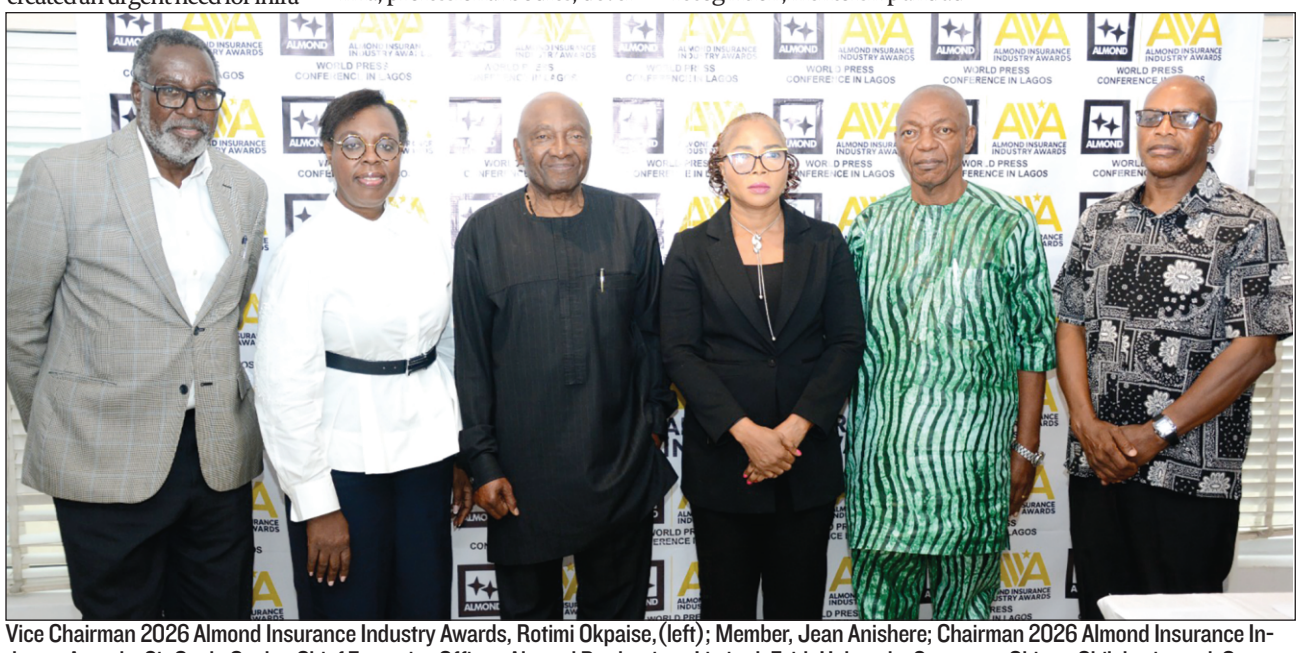
The APWEN president also highlighted persistent barriers facing women in engineering, including limited access, visibility and opportunities for advancement.

She said the association's capacity-building programmes, technical training, professional recognition, mentorship and advocacy for gender inclusion were designed to expand opportunities for women engineers and strengthen their contribution to national development.

Igwegbe called on government agencies, corporate organisations, development partners and professional institutions to deepen support for such programmes, sponsor technical training and create clearer pathways for women engineers into leadership positions.

"When you support a woman engineer, you do not support one person; you strengthen an entire profession and uplift a whole community," she said.

She also called for deliberate investment in young engineers, collegiate members and girls participating in STEM programmes, arguing that the next generation of engineers would be critical to addressing Nigeria's future infrastructure and energy needs.



Vice Chairman 2026 Almond Insurance Industry Awards, Rotimi Okpaise, (left); Member, Jean Anishere; Chairman 2026 Almond Insurance Industry Awards, Sir Ogala Osoka; Chief Executive Officer, Almond Productions Limited, Faith Ughwode; Secretary, Obinna Chilekezie, and Consultant Almond Insurance Industry Awards, Prof. Olajide Fadun at the final selection sitting for the 2026 winners held in Lagos.

NPF Pensions advocates better retirement benefits for police officers

From **Collins Olayinka**, Abuja

NPF Pensions has stepped up efforts to improve services to serving and retired police officers, including direct engagement with contributors, digital access to pension services and support programmes designed to ease the transition into retirement.

Speaking at the 2026 Customer Service Week in Abuja, NPF Pensions Acting Managing Director, Muhammed Dutse, said the pension fund administrator has also intensified engagement with police officers and retirees as discussions continue over measures to improve the retirement benefits of Nigeria Police Force members.

He said the company was implementing a more direct customer-relations strategy under which senior management and staff were assigned contributors to engage regularly. At the same time, the company introduced a WhatsApp for Business platform to make pension services accessible to police officers through their mobile phones.

According to him, almost 100,000 police officers had already been onboarded onto the platform, with the number increasing daily.

He said the objective was to reduce the need for customers to visit NPF Pensions' offices to access basic services, stressing that contributors should be able to access pension services wherever they are.

The managing director also said the company has maintained strong investment performance over the past five years, recording an average yearly return of about 24 per cent, with returns reaching almost 37 per cent in one year.

He attributed the performance to a diversified investment strategy that includes traditional instruments as well as private equity, infrastructure funds and equities.

With the Central Bank of Nigeria's monetary policy rate (MPR) having been reviewed, he said NPF Pensions was assessing alternative investment opportunities to sustain returns for contributors.

"We are looking into all these opportunities to strengthen our investment positions and also maintain the investment returns that we have achieved over the years," he said.

The NPF Pensions boss said the company was also concerned about the adequacy of retirement benefits received by police retirees, acknowledging that some customers remained dissatisfied with the current pension arrangements.

He said the Federal Government was reviewing the situation, with a presidential committee working on measures to improve retirees' take-home pay.

While declining to disclose details of the proposed arrangement, he urged police retirees to be patient, saying the company was working with relevant authorities to address outstanding concerns.

He said recent government interventions, including settling pension arrears and making consequential adjustments to pensions, showed increased attention to pensioners' welfare.

Beyond pension administration, he said NPF Pensions had run a Retirement Resettlement Support Programme to assist police retirees facing delays between retirement and the start of their pension payments.

Politics

www.guardian.ng

Why PDP's crisis matters to electorate ahead of 2027

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), once Nigeria's dominant political machine, is heading into the 2027 elections weakened by factionalisation, defections and the dispersal of its leaders across rival platforms. The crisis raises concerns about the opposition's capacity to compete against an experienced incumbent, as well as the choices available to the electorate, ***SEYE OLUMIDE*** *writes.*

THE protracted crisis rocking the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), once Nigeria's ruling party and now a major opposition platform, is deepening divisions ahead of the 2027 elections, raising fresh concerns about the political alternatives and choices available to voters.

Upon Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999, the opposition seldom approached a major election as a united front. It was that fragmentation that propelled the merger of otherwise fringe political platforms into the current ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2013.

In the lead-up to the 2027 general election, however, the opposition has once again splintered. And the main culprit is the former ruling PDP that the APC merger defeated in 2015, after 16 years of bestriding the nation's polity like a colossus.

Now, as the leading name among the opposition parties, the PDP's present predicament goes beyond an internal leadership squabble. It tends towards indiscipline and an apparent lack of clear structural hierarchy. Having lost some influential leaders in its fold, including lawmakers and state governors, the PDP's traditional role as the main vehicle for opposition political expression has become increasingly uncertain.

The emergence of two rival PDP factions, each claiming control of the party, has further weakened its structure, with prolonged court battles over leadership and party control adding another layer of uncertainty to an already fractured opposition.

The movement of former PDP politicians into different parties perhaps best illustrates the depth of the crisis. Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who flew the PDP presidential flag in 2023, is now associated with the African Democratic Congress (ADC), while former Rivers State governor Rotimi Amaechi is also part of the emerging opposition realignment.

Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde, one of the most prominent figures who remained in the PDP after the 2023 election, is now the presidential candidate of the Allied Peoples Movement (APM). Rabiu Kwankwaso, another former PDP presidential candidate, has also pursued his political ambition outside the party.

Peter Obi, who left the PDP before the 2023 election and contested under the Labour Party, has since moved to the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC).

The significance is not simply that prominent individuals have changed parties. It is that politicians who could have formed the nucleus of a formidable opposition coalition within the PDP are now pursuing separate political vehicles. That fragmentation has consequences for the electorate.

For years, the PDP provided the principal platform for Nigerians seeking an alternative to the ruling party. In 2019 and 2023, despite its weaknesses, it remained one of the two major national political forces. But in 2027, voters dissatisfied with the APC may have to choose among several opposition platforms rather than rally behind one dominant challenger.

The result could be a dispersal of opposition votes, making it more difficult for dissatisfaction with the government to translate into an electoral change of power.

No matter how anybody wants to explain the PDP's loss of stature, its greatest loss does not consist in the departure of stalwart politicians, but in the gradual erosion of the structural strength that has left it rickety and rustic.

Check the numbers: At the inauguration of the 10th National Assembly in 2023, the party had 36 senators and 66 members of the House of Representatives. By March 2026, its representation had fallen to 14 senators and 17 members of the House.

In Nigeria's highly personalised political system, a lawmaker is often more than a legislator. Senators and members of the House have networks of supporters, political associates and ward-level influence. Their movement can therefore weaken a party far beyond the number of seats lost.

The continuing migration of lawmakers from the PDP to the APC, ADC and other platforms consequently represents an erosion of political infrastructure.

The PDP once possessed a broad organisational pyramid stretching from governors and legislators to local government chairmen, councillors, ward executives and polling-unit agents. That machinery enabled it to mobilise voters and remain active between elections. Much of that advantage has been weakened.

This is why the PDP's challenge cannot be reduced to the struggle over its national chairmanship or control of its factions. The deeper question is whether it still possesses the institutional capacity to function as a truly national opposition party.

The role of former Rivers State governor Nyesom Wike adds another dimension to the PDP's predicament.

Wike remains a PDP member but is serving in President Bola Tinubu's administration and has openly supported the President. His political position has become one of the clearest illustrations of the fluidity of party loyalty in Nigeria.

Supporters may regard such political manoeuvring as pragmatism or the pursuit of political relevance. Critics, however, see it as evidence of the weakness of party discipline and ideological commitment.

Whatever interpretation is adopted, the Wike phenomenon raises an important question: what does it mean to belong to an opposition party when a prominent member is simultaneously working with the ruling administration?

The answer exposes one of the fundamental weaknesses of Nigerian party politics. Membership often appears to be driven less by ideology or a clearly defined programme than by political calculations, personal ambition, access to power and the prospect of electoral advantage.

What happened to party ideology?

THE PDP crisis has therefore exposed a problem that extends beyond the party itself: the absence of strong ideological distinctions among Nigeria's political parties.

Politicians move from one party to another without necessarily changing their political philosophy. A politician can contest on the PDP platform, move to the APC, return to the PDP, and subsequently join another opposition platform without voters being presented with a substantially different ideological position.

The movement of Atiku, Amaechi, Makinde, Kwankwaso, Obi and numerous lawmakers across different platforms illustrates this fluidity.

The question is not whether politicians have the right to change parties. They do. The democratic concern is whether voters are being offered competing political programmes or merely competing personalities.

> "The disadvantage to the electorate is that if the ruling party's game succeeds, relying on all these conspiracies and the suffering they are inflicting, the people may not have a choice."

When political parties become vehicles for individual ambition, their structures become vulnerable to defections. A party without a compelling ideology or institutional identity can lose its members as soon as political calculations change. This also explains why the PDP's present crisis has become an opposition crisis.

A functioning democracy requires more than periodic elections. It requires credible competition, a strong opposition, institutional checks and the possibility that voters can remove those in power.

The weakening of the PDP therefore has implications far beyond the party.

If the opposition remains divided among the ADC, NDC, APM, SDP, Labour Party and other platforms, while the APC continues to attract politicians from rival parties, Nigeria could enter 2027 with a highly unbalanced political environment.

For voters, the danger is a political environment in which choices are increasingly determined by personalities, regional interests and alliances rather than clearly differentiated programmes.

Former South-West Vice National Chairman of the PDP, Eddy Olafeso, believes the crisis confronting the PDP and the wider opposition could have serious consequences for democracy.

He acknowledged the party's setbacks but argued that democracy would survive because Nigerians had yet to find a better alternative to democratic governance.

However, he warned that the fragmentation of the opposition could leave voters with fewer meaningful choices.

"The disadvantage to the electorate is that if the ruling party's game succeeds, relying on all these conspiracies and the suffering they are inflicting, the people may not have a choice," he said.

Olafeso warned that the absence of effective opposition could create conditions for one-party dominance, with the attendant danger of excessive concentration of political power.

His concern reflects a broader democratic principle: opposition parties are not merely vehicles for seeking government appointments. They are essential to scrutiny, accountability and the peaceful transfer of power.

PDP chieftain, Diran Odeyemi, argues that the party should not be written off because of its present difficulties.

He pointed out that some prominent politicians, including Atiku, had previously left the party and later returned, stressing that the PDP had survived earlier crises.

"As a political party, our belief is that there is no harm in falling. You don't write yourself off each time you fall. The PDP has remained a party that can come back strongly," he said.

Odeyemi said those remaining in the party should regard themselves as its builders, adding that the immediate objective was to maintain its political presence in 2027 before embarking on a rebuilding process.

"Going into this election, it is just about registering our presence and maintaining our presence. The PDP will come back after 2027," he said.

But rebuilding will require more than reconciliation among factions. The party must restore its grassroots organisation, attract new political leaders, retain experienced politicians, and, most importantly, give Nigerians a reason to identify with it beyond its role as an alternative to the APC.

That is also the challenge facing the emerging opposition platforms.

If ADC, APM, NDC and others simply become new vehicles for politicians who have left the PDP, they may reproduce the same weaknesses rather than create a stronger opposition culture.

For Nigeria, therefore, the real issue in 2027 is not whether the PDP survives as a registered political party. Its name and logo are likely to remain.

The bigger question is whether Nigeria can develop opposition parties strong enough to offer credible alternatives, articulate competing policies and give voters a meaningful choice.

The PDP's decline has exposed how fragile Nigeria's political parties remain when personalities are stronger than institutions and political ambition is stronger than ideology.

The 2027 election may consequently become a defining test not only for the PDP but for Nigeria's democracy itself: whether political competition will produce stronger institutions and clearer choices, or whether the country's parties will continue to revolve around personalities, defections and the pursuit of power.

For the electorate, the ultimate issue is simple. Democracy is meaningful only when voters have credible choices.



World Report

Netanyahu rules out attack on Iran before Israel's election

ISRAELI Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said yesterday that he was not in favour of a preemptive strike against Iran before Israel's October 27 election. He however warned Tehran and its proxies against striking Israel.

"It is not convenient for us, it is no good", Netanyahu said in an interview on Israel's Army Radio, when asked about the possibility of a preemptive strike and allegations by his political rivals that he was seeking a military confrontation ahead of the election.

"Even if Iran fires missiles at us, they will blame me", he added, though he also repeated his previous warnings to Iran, that Israel will respond forcefully if attacked.

He would not elaborate on the possibility of a preemptive strike after the election or about his recent discussions with Washington about Iran.

The United States and Iran have been at war since February 28, when the U.S and Israel attacked Iran, and Tehran responded with strikes on Israel and Gulf States. However, Israel and Iran have not traded fire since June.

Asked whether Israel was assisting Saudi Arabia against attacks by the Iran-aligned Yemeni Houthis, Netanyahu said: "I don't get into those matters. I can only tell you that many countries in the Middle East are turning to us following our massive success and tremendous achievements."

Saudi Arabia has faced widening Houthi strikes over the past week, including an attack on Riyadh Airport last Saturday that killed 13 people.

Netanyahu said that Iran's proxies were also looking to launch attacks on Israel before the election.

Defence Minister, Israel Katz, speaking from the self-declared security zone, said Israeli forces are occupying in southern Lebanon, warning Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah against attack on Israel.

"Hezbollah will suffer a severe blow and lose additional territories in southern Lebanon within the Nabatieh and Litani regions, which will become part of Israel's permanent security zone. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) is prepared to carry out the manoeuvre", Katz warned.

U.S. urges Rwanda to withdraw troops, end support for M23 in DRC

By Ngozi Egenuka

THE United States has urged Rwanda to immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops and military equipment from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and end all support for the M23 rebel group, as efforts to restore peace in the Great Lakes region continue.

The U.S also called on the DRC and Rwanda to fully implement their obligations under the Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity, noting that sustained cooperation and verifiable action are necessary to consolidate recent gains in the peace process.

The U.S representative for UN Management and Reform, Ambassador Jeffrey Bartos, made the call on Tuesday during a United Nations Security Council briefing on the Great Lakes region in New York.

Bartos said the U.S remained committed to supporting peace, security and prosperity across the region, adding that it will continue to act against individuals obstructing peace, abusing civilians or profiting from the illegal exploitation of the DRC's natural resources.

"The United States will continue to take action against those who obstruct peace, abuse civilians or profit from the illegal exploitation of the DRC's natural resources", he said.

He urged the parties to respect the ceasefire; halt harmful drone strikes and refrain from inflammatory rhetoric while calling on members of the Security Council to maintain pressure on the parties to fulfil their commitments.

Bartos described the Washington Accords as a historic opportunity to advance peace, stability and prosperity in eastern DRC and the wider Great Lakes region.

He also welcomed the ongoing diplomatic efforts, including Qatar's facilitation of negotiations between the DRC and AFC/M23, the African Union's mediation under the leadership of Togolese President, Faure Gnassingbé, and contributions from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

He called on the DRC and AFC/M23 operating under their newly rebranded alliance, the Front for the Refoundation of the Nation.

Pope Leo back on his feet after shocking cancer diagnosis

"POPE Leo XIV's recovery from surgery is progressive as expected and he has begun walking in his hospital room and eating normally", the Vatican said yesterday, after doctors announced that the 71-year-old pontiff was being treated for lung cancer.

World leaders, Catholics across the globe and senior cardinals at the Vatican have offered prayers for Leo after he had part of his right lung removed in an operation on Tuesday.

Blood tests and a chest X-ray carried out yesterday showed normal post-operative results, the Vatican said, adding that the pontiff had undergone respiratory physiotherapy.

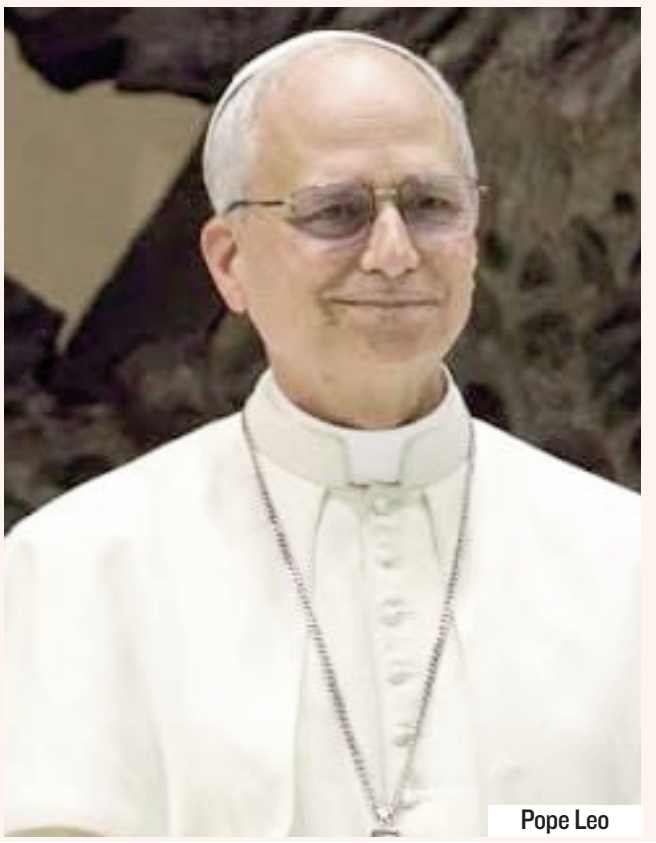
The cancer diagnosis for a pope known to be relatively young and energetic, elected only in May 2025, caused shock and raised questions about the future shape of his papacy as he deals with the illness.

Leo normally follows a very busy schedule. He is due to make a tour of Uruguay, Argentina and Peru between November 6 to 17, and the Vatican press office said yesterday that "nothing has changed" regarding the planned trip.

The pope is the ultimate earthly authority for the world's 1.4 billion Catholics and does not have a deputy who steps in when he is sick. When a pope is incapacitated, the business of the Vatican's vast bureaucracy carries on as usual, holding off on any decision that requires papal approval.

A prayer was recited for Leo to have a good convalescence and complete healing during an open-air Mass in St. Peter's Square on Wednesday following the surgery.

The pope has been diagnosed with lung adenocarcinoma, the most common form of lung cancer, and doctors removed the lower lobe of his right lung during Tuesday's operation to eliminate all cancerous tissue.



Pope Leo

The operation lasted about 90 minutes and was completed without complications, the pope's lead surgeon, Stefano Margaritora, and his personal physician, Luigi Carbone, said late Tuesday.

The Vatican has not disclosed the size of the tumour or whether the disease had spread to nearby lymph nodes, key factors in determining prognosis.

The Vatican said this week that the pope was expected to remain in hospital for about a week and that all his public engagements have been cancelled until October 20.

The Mass yesterday was the closing act of an assembly of bishops called by Leo to discuss the Church's family life teachings, the largest gathering of Church leaders so far during this papacy.

Filipino Cardinal Luis Tagle led the service in place of Leo. The pope had last week, approved Tagle as the dean of the Church's College of Cardinals, in the first selection of an Asian cleric to the elite role.

Meanwhile, political leaders have offered messages of support. United States Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, said he and his wife Jeanette, were praying for the American-born Pope.

Rival communities clash in South Sudan leaves scores dead

CLASHES between armed groups from rival communities in the central part of South Sudan have left scores of people dead and overwhelmed a hospital with wounded people, officials have said.

The fighting swept through the Rumbek area of Lakes State on Friday as government soldiers and Nepalese United Nations peacekeepers tried to maintain order.

"With the order from sector headquarter, we mobilised our troops immediately to the Rumbek State Hospital and we will also patrol around the Rumbek Town", said the Commander of Nepalese Army for UNMISS Rumbek, Lt. Col. Lekhnath Katwal.

Also, the Press Secretary to the Governor of Lakes States, Mabor Deng, said there are patrols in town that are running round the clock to safeguard the movement of people and the return of the displaced to their respective homes.

South Sudan's Information Ministry confirmed that about 70 people were killed, including four soldiers.

A resident of Rumbek, Mbabazi Riesty Loduma, said: "We saw people running with their children to save them from those fighting.

The fighting involved armed youths from the Pakam community in Rumbek North County fighting against armed youths of the Nyang community in Rumbek Central County, both parts of the Dinka ethnic group.

South Africa rejects xenophobia, says 364 arrests made over migration-related offences

By Silver Nwokoro

THE Acting Consul General of South Africa in Lagos, Ms Kgothatso Xulu, has condemned xenophobic attacks in the country. Stating that South Africa rejects the violence, she warned against generalising the actions of some individuals to the entire population.

Xulu, who admitted irregular migration as a serious challenge, said South Africa made over 364 arrests in efforts to address migration-related issues.

She addressed xenophobia, migration and cooperation among African countries, urging African nations to create platforms for honest and structured conversations to tackle the underlying causes of migration and strengthen economic cooperation.

"I would be doing my country injustice if I don't actually address and defend that South Africa is not and we completely reject what is happening", she said.

She cautioned against portraying incidents involving some individuals as representative of all South Africans, adding that the media should avoid spreading false information and presenting past incidents as a reflection of the entire country.

Xulu stressed the need for African countries to examine reasons their citizens were eager to leave their home countries instead of trading and doing business with one another.

She argued that African economic integration should be driven by the desire to expand markets and create business opportunities rather than by circumstances that compel people to leave their countries in search of survival.

"If we want to really have an Africa that is viable, it must be. We are not leaving our homes because of economic emancipation but to expand our market", she said.

Xulu said African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was designed to promote an integrated African market but achieving that objective requires countries addressing the economic pressures driving migration and enabling citizens trade freely across the continent.

"Trade shouldn't be about survival but creating a market", she added.

The South African diplomat also defended the right of citizens to engage in peaceful protests, explaining that public demonstrations were constitutionally protected in the country.

She said South Africa's experience under apartheid had shaped its citizens' understanding of protests as a means of expressing grievances and demanding change.

Science&Health

Concerns over drug-resistant infections from antibiotics in livestock

From **Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze**, Abuja

THE Federal Government has warned that inappropriate antibiotic use in livestock production and agriculture could accelerate antimicrobial resistance (AMR), making infections in humans increasingly difficult to treat.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites no longer respond to antimicrobial medicines, making infections harder or impossible to treat and increasing the risk of severe illness and death.

Bacterial AMR was associated with more than 4.7 million deaths globally in 2021, while an estimated 64,500 deaths in Nigeria were attributed to it in 2019.

Speaking ahead of the fifth Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance, scheduled to be held in Abuja in December under the theme, "One Health: Advancing Global AMR Commitment Through Local Action", Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, said resistant organisms could undermine the treatment of pneumonia, typhoid and other infectious diseases.

Pate said the government was addressing AMR through a One Health, whole-of-government approach involving human health, livestock, agriculture, food systems and the environment.

He noted that the ministry had implemented an antimicrobial stewardship programme in federal hospitals over the past two and a half years to promote appropriate prescribing and responsible medicine use.

Other measures included establishing a clinical governance task force earlier in the year, strengthening regulatory oversight by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), improving pharmaceutical distribution, expanding laboratory diagnostic capacity and training health workers.

The minister acknowledged gaps in Nigeria's AMR surveillance system, which affected the accuracy of national estimates. He said the government was working to improve surveillance, infection prevention and control, antimicrobial stewardship and access to quality medicines.

Pate also identified vaccination as a key preventive measure, explaining that immunisation against infections such as pneumococcal and Haemophilus influenzae pneumonia could reduce antibiotic use.

He urged Nigerians to avoid indiscriminate antibiotic consumption, stressing that not every cough or catarrh required such medication. He advised patients to consult qualified health professionals and follow prescribed treatment schedules.

Pate said the conference would address the need to balance responsible antimicrobial use with access to essential medicines, particularly in countries where many people lack access to necessary antibiotics.

He called for public awareness campaigns using relatable stories and local languages to explain AMR, urging journalists to sustain public engagement and help Nigerians understand their role in preventing drug resistance.

The minister added that the Federal Government was working with state governments, private-sector stakeholders and development partners to strengthen the national response.

Also speaking, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Dr Aliyu Abdullahi, said AMR threatened human health, agriculture, food security, food safety and livelihoods.

He explained that excessive or inappropriate antimicrobial use in crop and animal production could undermine disease control, compromise food safety and disrupt trade.

Abdullahi said the agricultural sector's priorities included promoting responsible antimicrobial and agrochemical use, strengthening food safety systems, expanding agricultural extension services.

And educating farmers on good agricultural practices and biosecurity.

He stressed the need to provide farmers with appropriate guidance and sustainable alternatives to protect crops, livestock, consumers and the environment. He also called for practical interventions at farm, community, institutional and national levels to translate global commitments into measurable results.

Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Adekunle Salako, who presented a joint ministerial position on behalf of four federal ministries responsible for health, agriculture and food security, livestock development, and the environment, described AMR as a major threat to public health, food security, agricultural productivity and environmental sustainability.

Citing the 2022 Lancet-GRAM study, Salako said bacterial AMR directly caused an estimated 1.27 million deaths globally in 2019, including 64,500 in Nigeria.

Psychiatrists urge mental health education in secondary schools

By **Wahab Quadri**

PSYCHIATRISTS have called for mental health education in secondary schools to help students recognise mental health challenges, protect themselves and seek professional help when necessary.

Child psychiatrist, Dr Grace Ijarogbe, made the recommendation at the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos, during activities marking the 2026 World Mental Health Day, themed "Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change."

She urged families to ensure affected relatives received professional care and called on healthcare workers to identify people experiencing mental health challenges and refer them for appropriate treatment.

Ijarogbe warned that delays in seeking care could leave patients vulnerable, with some wandering away from their communities and becoming difficult to locate. She recounted cases of people who had boarded buses to Ghana while experiencing mental illness and were never found.

She also questioned the implementation of mental health reforms, asking whether government agencies at federal, state and grassroots levels were fulfilling their responsibilities and whether social welfare systems were functioning effectively.

Identifying teenage experimentation with drugs and other psychoactive substances as a major concern, she warned that the consequences could emerge years later, undermining individuals' ability to contribute productively to society.

MSF seeks integration of noma care into primary healthcare

From **Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze**, Abuja

MÉDECINS Sans Frontières (MSF) has called for the integration of noma prevention and treatment into Nigeria's primary healthcare system to protect vulnerable children from the devastating disease.

Noma is a non-contagious disease that rapidly destroys facial tissues and bones. About 90 per cent of those affected die within two weeks without timely antibiotic treatment.

Survivors often experience severe difficulties eating, speaking and breathing, as well as social stigma, financial hardship and psychological distress.

Although the World Health Organisation (WHO) classified noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease in 2023, it remains largely absent from routine healthcare and child health programmes in Nigeria.

The disease predominantly affects children under seven in underserved communities marked by extreme poverty, malnutrition, low immunisation coverage and poor oral hygiene.

Speaking on the need to strengthen grassroots healthcare, MSF Nursing Activity Manager at the Noma Hospital in Sokoto, Samuel Ajamah, called for better training.

'Sugary foods may increase infection risks in antibiotic treatment'

By **Ijeoma Nwanosike**

A NEW study has found that consuming sugary foods during antibiotic treatment may increase patients' vulnerability to dangerous infections by reducing beneficial gut bacteria and allowing potentially harmful organisms to multiply.

Published in Nature, the study found that cancer patients who consumed more sweets and sweetened foods and beverages while receiving antibiotics experienced greater losses in gut bacterial diversity, alongside an increase in potentially harmful bacteria, including Enterococcus faecium.

The findings highlight the potential influence of diet on antibiotic-related disruption of the gut microbiome, particularly among vulnerable patients undergoing stem cell transplants, who face increased risks of serious infections and other complications.

However, the researchers cautioned that the findings did not establish a cause-and-effect relationship, calling for further studies to determine whether the results also apply to people taking antibiotics outside hospital settings.

The researchers examined how diet influenced gut bacteria in cancer patients receiving prolonged antibiotic treatment before stem cell transplants. They analysed more than 1,000 stool samples from 173 patients who consumed over 9,400 hospital-prepared meals, allowing them to assess food intake more accurately.

Lead author, Dr Jonathan Peled, said the research provided an opportunity to investigate dietary effects on patients whose gut microbiomes were already being disrupted by antibiotics and cancer treatment.

The team assessed the relationship between nutrients, including fats, carbohydrates and fibre, and different gut bacteria. They also examined individual foods such as chicken, apples and chocolate cake.

Higher consumption of sugary foods repeatedly emerged as a factor associated with greater microbiome disruption, with particularly harmful effects linked to added sugars.

According to the study, the intensity of antibiotic treatment was associated with greater losses in bacterial diversity. While most food categories showed no significant association with changes in diversity, sweets, defined as sugars and sweetened foods and beverages, stood out.

For every additional 3.5 ounces of sweets consumed during antibiotic treatment, bacterial diversity in patients' stool samples decreased by approximately 24 per cent.

This decline was associated with an increase in potentially harmful organisms, including Enterococcus faecium, which can live harmlessly in the gut when other microorganisms keep its growth under control.

When antibiotics eliminate competing bacteria, however, Enterococcus can multiply excessively and, in some cases, cross the intestinal barrier into the bloodstream, potentially causing sepsis, a life-threatening response to infection.

Peled said the findings were particularly significant for bone marrow transplant recipients because Enterococcus could worsen complications such as graft-versus-host disease, in which donated stem cells attack the recipient's healthy tissues.

The study also found that patients who consumed more sugar than average had approximately 12 per cent higher risk of dying after stem cell transplants than those who consumed less.



A former patient at Kelina Hospital, Temilola Ogunyemi-Oke (second left); the President of Kelina Hospital, Dr. Celsus Undie; Chairman Board of Directors, Ifeanyi Anago and others during a press conference to mark the hospital's one year anniversary of Robotic surgery held in Lagos.

'Anaesthesia training critical to saving lives in emergencies'

From **Nkechi Onyedika-Ugoeze**, Abuja

A PHYSICIAN and Managing Director of Braingrace Ambulance Services Limited, Dr Stephen Aiyeyemi Akeremale, has called for greater investment in specialised anaesthesia and critical care training to improve emergency response and save lives.

Speaking at the sixth graduation ceremony of the School of Anaesthetic Studies, Akeremale said airway management could determine whether critically ill patients survived medical emergencies and transportation.

He noted that patients could deteriorate unexpectedly during transit, requiring immediate airway management, resuscitation, ventilatory support, sedation or endotracheal intubation.

He stressed that losing control of a patient's airway could be fatal, making its assessment, protection and management essential skills for healthcare professionals involved in emergency and pre-hospital care.

Akeremale said his experience as a flight physician had exposed him to situations where rapid clinical intervention could mean the difference between life and death, particularly during medical evacuations with limited access to hospital facilities.

He explained that specialised airway management skills were crucial for stabilising critically ill patients during ambulance and aeromedical transportation, especially over long distances.

Challenging the perception that anaesthesia was primarily associated with surgery, he said its applications extended to emergency medicine, trauma care, intensive care, pre-hospital treatment and aeromedical evacuation.

According to him, training equips healthcare professionals with skills in airway management, patient monitoring, pain control, sedation, ventilatory support and emergency response.

"Whether managing a critically injured trauma victim on the roadside, stabilising a patient during a long-distance air evacuation, or accompanying a critically ill patient on a commercial medical escort flight, the ability to protect and control the airway can determine the outcome of the entire mission," he said.

He urged doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals to pursue specialised training in anaesthesia and critical care, noting that Nigeria and other African countries needed more skilled personnel to strengthen emergency services and improve patient outcomes.

WHO unveils guidance to pregnant women in TB trials

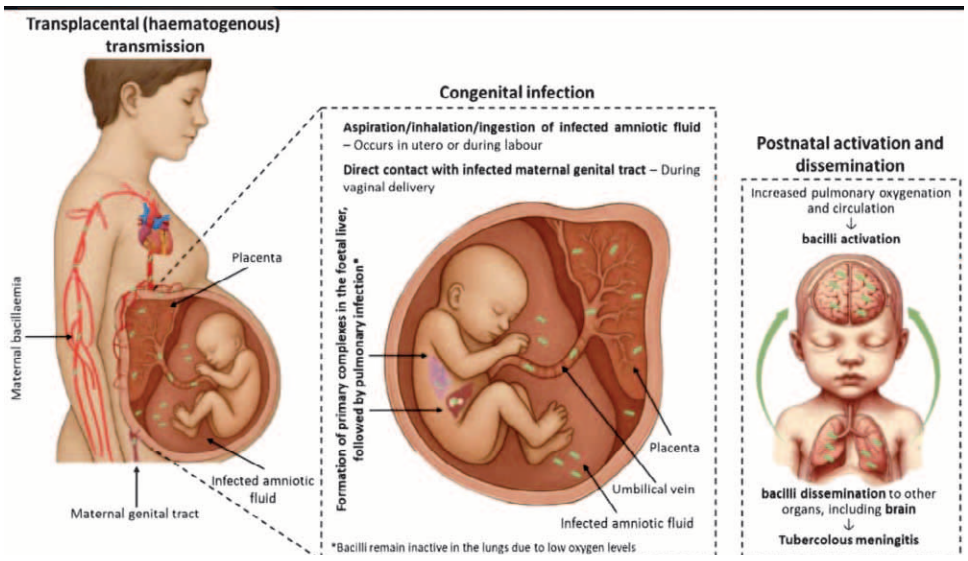
By **Ijeoma Nwanosike**

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a toolkit to address the exclusion of pregnant and lactating women from tuberculosis (TB) drug and vaccine trials, a practice that has created critical gaps in evidence needed to guide their treatment and care.

The toolkit provides practical guidance for researchers, trial sponsors, ethics committees, regulators and other stakeholders to strengthen the inclusion of these women in research and improve prevention and treatment for them and their infants.

Their historical exclusion has limited knowledge of the safety, pharmacokinetics, appropriate dosing and effectiveness of TB interventions during pregnancy and breastfeeding, leaving women and their infants among the last to benefit from advances in prevention and treatment.

Director of WHO's Department for HIV, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections, Dr Tereza Kasaeva, said the underrepresentation of pregnant and lactating women in TB research continued to create evidence gaps, delaying access to medical innovations and optimal care.



She said the toolkit would promote their inclusion in research, ensure that they and their infants benefited from scientific advances, and accelerate progress towards ending TB.

The resource guides ethical considerations, community engagement, preclinical research, trial design and pharmacokinetics during pregnancy, postpartum and lactation.

It also covers outcome measures, sample size, recruitment and retention strategies, regulatory requirements, TB vaccine trials, surveillance and registries. Case studies and curated materials from completed and ongoing research initiatives are included to help stakeholders apply the recommendations.

WHO said the toolkit followed a global consensus process on the early and optimal inclusion of pregnant and lactating women in TB research. During working groups and consultations in 2024 and 2025, experts from all WHO regions examined barriers to participation and identified practical approaches to improve evidence generation for the group.

The agency said the resource complements its broader knowledge portal, which provides general guidance on including pregnant and lactating women in clinical research across health conditions.

'Only people at risk of acquiring HIV can use PrEP'

Dr Oluwafunke Odunlade is the World Health Organisation (WHO) Technical Officer for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and STIs in Nigeria. In this interview with NKECHI ONYEDIKA-UGOEZE, she explains how new pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) options could expand access to HIV prevention and close existing gaps.

WITH advances in HIV prevention and treatment, people living with HIV can now live long, healthy and productive lives. What is pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and how effective is it in preventing HIV infection?

PrEP is medication used to prevent HIV infection. When taken as prescribed, it reduces the risk of acquiring HIV through sex by about 99 per cent.

Nigeria has adopted three options: daily oral PrEP, long-acting injectable cabotegravir (CAB-LA), administered every two months, and lenacapavir (LEN PrEP), administered every six months.

These medicines prevent HIV from establishing itself in the body following exposure. However, PrEP is for prevention, not treatment. Anyone who tests positive for HIV should be linked to appropriate treatment services.

Who is eligible for the different types of PrEP?

Anyone who is HIV-negative and at risk of acquiring HIV can use PrEP. However, because availability is limited, the government prioritises key populations, including female sex workers, people who inject drugs and men who have sex with men, who face a higher risk of infection.

Pregnant women who may be exposed to HIV can also use oral PrEP to protect themselves and reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to their unborn children.

Must an individual test negative for HIV before accessing PrEP?

Yes. Healthcare workers must conduct an HIV test before prescribing PrEP. Anyone who tests positive should be referred for treatment.

For those who test negative, the healthcare worker will assess their circumstances, medical history and preferences before recommending an option. Someone who may struggle to take a tablet daily might prefer an injectable, while someone who prefers tablets can use oral PrEP.

People with hepatitis B may benefit from oral PrEP because some of its medicines are also used to manage the infection. A healthcare professional should assess everyone and recommend the appropriate option.

Are there HIV-negative individuals who may not be eligible for PrEP, and what determines their suitability?

Eligibility depends on an assessment by a trained healthcare worker. Adherence is important because PrEP must be taken according to the prescribed schedule to remain effective. Missing doses or delaying injections can leave gaps in protection.

Nigeria currently provides oral PrEP to pregnant women and has not yet adopted injectable PrEP for this group, although some other African countries have introduced long-acting options.

PrEP does not prevent pregnancy or other sexually transmitted infections, including gonorrhoea, syphilis and chlamydia. We therefore advocate a combination prevention approach involving PrEP and condoms, alongside informed decisions about sexual health.

PrEP should also never be shared with another person or taken without proper medical guidance.

How available is event-driven PrEP?

Event-driven PrEP is an option for people who anticipate occasional sexual exposure rather than ongoing risk. However, it requires careful adherence to a specific dosing schedule and is not suitable for everyone.


Odunlade

People who face regular exposure should consider sustained PrEP under the guidance of a healthcare professional. We encourage individuals to discuss their circumstances with a trained provider to determine the most appropriate approach.

Is there an age limit for accessing PrEP?

Age and eligibility require careful consideration, particularly for adolescents. Healthcare workers must assess an individual's circumstances, risk of exposure and applicable guidelines before prescribing PrEP.

Experts seek training, support to boost local surgical expertise

By **Ijeoma Nwanosike**

EXPERTS have called for advanced surgical training and stronger government support for private healthcare facilities to expand Nigeria's capacity to perform specialised procedures locally and reduce dependence on medical tourism.

The call came as Kelina Hospital disclosed that it had performed more than 50 robotic prostate cancer surgeries within a year of introducing the technology, highlighting the potential of advanced surgical techniques to improve access to complex treatments in Nigeria.

Chairman of the hospital's Board of Directors, Ifeanyi Anago, who announced this at a press conference marking the first anniversary of the hospital's robotic surgery programme in Lagos, described the milestone as a significant development for Nigeria's healthcare system.

According to him, the achievement demonstrated that Nigerians could access advanced medical procedures locally.

He urged Nigerians at home and in the diaspora to support the hospital's vision, expressing optimism that expanding specialised healthcare services would reduce capital flight associated with medical tourism.

Delta offers free healthcare to oil-polluted communities

From **Monday Osayande**, Asaba

DELTA State Government has deployed a multidisciplinary medical team to Odidi Federated Communities in Warri South-West Local Council to provide free healthcare to residents affected by the recent oil spill along the Trans-Forcados Pipeline.

The intervention, directed by Governor Sheriff Oborevwori, aims to address residents' immediate medical needs and mitigate potential health concerns arising from the pollution.

The outreach includes free surgical operations, eye examinations, dental care, laboratory investigations and outpatient services.

Leading the team, the Commissioner for Health, Dr Joseph Onojaeme, said the exercise would bring essential medical services closer to affected residents and prevent untreated illnesses from worsening their difficulties.

He commended the communities for maintaining peace since the incident and urged residents to take advantage of the outreach by presenting themselves for medical examinations and treatment.

Insecurity, economic hardship threaten voter participation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

munity leaders, markets, motor parks, radio, television and social media platforms.

Issa-Onilu described voting as a civic responsibility and urged Nigerians to participate confidently and responsibly in the electoral process.

Political party participation

THE revised voter register provides political parties with a useful resource for voter education, strategic planning and mobilisation. By analysing the figures and conducting a SWOT analysis, parties can identify their strengths and weaknesses, assess opportunities and threats, and develop strategies to maximise voter participation.

The 2026 Register of Voters presents a nationwide picture of voter registration across Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). A total of 103,428,715 voters were registered nationwide, with each state contributing a share of the national total. The figures below follow the order in which the states appear in the official register, showing their respective registration figures and percentage contributions to the national total.

Abia State recorded 2,306,520 registered voters, representing 2.23 per cent of the national total. Adamawa State followed with 2,431,146 voters, or 2.35 per cent. Akwa Ibom State registered 2,566,196 voters, accounting for 2.48 per cent. Anambra State recorded 2,917,728 voters, contributing 2.82 per cent to the national register. Bauchi State had 3,012,547 registered voters, representing 2.91 per cent. Bayelsa State recorded 1,200,691 voters, the lowest number among the states, accounting for 1.16 per cent of the national total.

Benue State registered 3,057,225 voters, contributing 2.96 per cent. Borno State followed with 2,765,165 voters, or 2.67 per cent. Cross River State recorded 1,928,978 voters, representing 1.87 per cent. Delta State had 3,525,988 registered voters, accounting for 3.41 per cent. Ebonyi State registered 1,828,056 voters, contributing 1.77 per cent. Edo State recorded 2,865,263 voters, or 2.77 per cent of the national total.

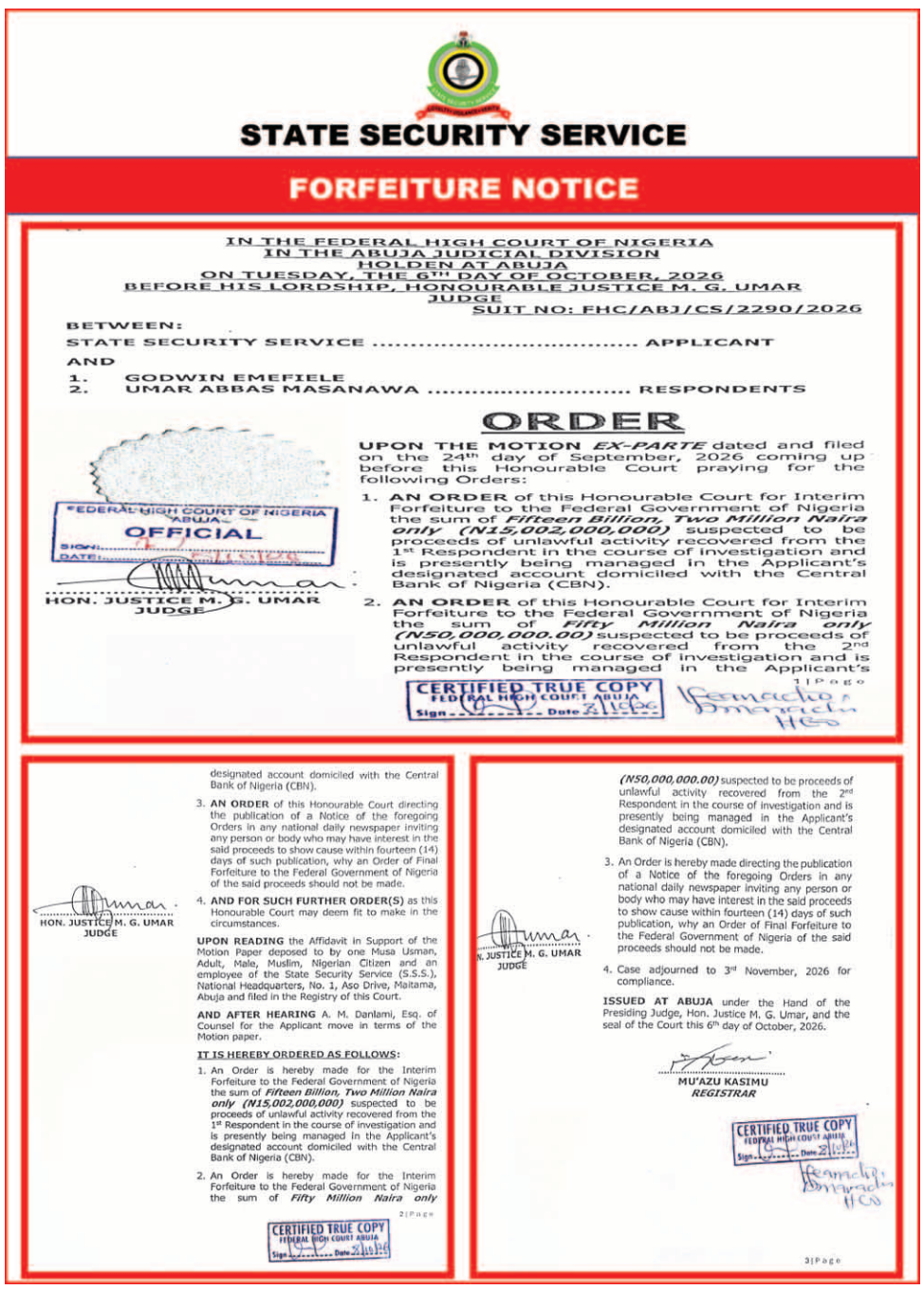
Ekiti State registered 1,055,708 voters, representing 1.02 per cent, the smallest percentage contribution among the states. Enugu State followed with 2,217,862 voters, or 2.14 per cent. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) recorded 1,732,043 voters, accounting for 1.67 per cent. Gombe State had 1,768,566 registered voters, representing 1.71 per cent. Imo State recorded 2,706,052 voters, contributing 2.62 per cent. Jigawa State followed with 2,807,811 voters, or 2.71 per cent.

Kaduna State registered 4,662,640 voters, accounting for 4.51 per cent of the national total. Kano State recorded 6,570,276 voters, contributing 6.35 per cent. Katsina State had 3,876,051 registered voters, representing 3.75 per cent. Kebbi State recorded 2,309,503 voters, or 2.23 per cent. Kogi State followed with 2,232,398 voters, contributing 2.16 per cent. Kwara State registered 1,916,376 voters, representing 1.85 per cent.

Lagos State recorded the highest number of registered voters in the country, with 7,488,633, accounting for 7.24 per cent of the national total. Nasarawa State followed with 2,137,699 voters, or 2.07 per cent. Niger State registered 2,983,476 voters, contributing 2.88 per cent. Ogun State had 3,037,981 registered voters, representing 2.94 per cent. Ondo State recorded 2,116,057 voters, or 2.05 per cent. Osun State followed with 2,327,784 voters, contributing 2.25 per cent.

Oyo State registered 3,588,111 voters, accounting for 3.47 per cent. Plateau State recorded 2,906,570 voters, or 2.81 per cent. Rivers State had 3,736,434 registered voters, representing 3.61 per cent. Sokoto State followed with 2,633,113 voters, contributing 2.55 per cent. Taraba State recorded 2,254,380 voters, or 2.18 per cent. Yobe State registered 1,733,671 voters, representing 1.68 per cent. Finally, Zamfara State recorded 2,224,017 voters, accounting for 2.15 per cent of the national total.

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



STATE SECURITY SERVICE

FORFEITURE NOTICE

IN THE FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA
IN THE ABUJA JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT ABUJA
ON TUESDAY, THE 6TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2026
BEFORE HIS LORDSHIP, HONOURABLE JUSTICE M. G. UMAR
JUDGE
SUIT NO: FHC/ABJ/CS/2290/2026

BETWEEN:
STATE SECURITY SERVICE ..... APPLICANT
AND
1. GODWIN EMEFIELE
2. UMAR ABBAS MASANAWA ..... RESPONDENTS

ORDER

UPON THE MOTION *EX-PARTE* dated and filed on the 24th day of September, 2026 coming up before this Honourable Court praying for the following Orders:

1. **AN ORDER** of this Honourable Court for Interim Forfeiture to the Federal Government of Nigeria the sum of *Fifteen Billion, Two Million Naira only (N15,002,000,000)* suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activity recovered from the 1st Respondent in the course of investigation and is presently being managed in the Applicant's designated account domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).
2. **AN ORDER** of this Honourable Court for Interim Forfeiture to the Federal Government of Nigeria the sum of *Fifty Million Naira only (N50,000,000.00)* suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activity recovered from the 2nd Respondent in the course of investigation and is presently being managed in the Applicant's

FEDERAL HIGH COURT OF NIGERIA ABUJA OFFICIAL SIGN: DATE:
HON. JUSTICE M. G. UMAR JUDGE

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY FEDERAL HIGH COURT ABUJA Sign..... Date 2/10/26

1|Page

designated account domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

3. **AN ORDER** of this Honourable Court directing the publication of a Notice of the foregoing Orders in any national daily newspaper inviting any person or body who may have interest in the said proceeds to show cause within fourteen (14) days of such publication, why an Order of Final Forfeiture to the Federal Government of Nigeria of the said proceeds should not be made.
4. **AND FOR SUCH FURTHER ORDER(S)** as this Honourable Court may deem fit to make in the circumstances.

HON. JUSTICE M. G. UMAR JUDGE

UPON READING the Affidavit in Support of the Motion Paper deposed to by one Musa Usman, Adult, Male, Muslim, Nigerian Citizen and an employee of the State Security Service (S.S.S.), National Headquarters, No. 1, Aso Drive, Maitama, Abuja and filed in the Registry of this Court.

AND AFTER HEARING A. M. Danlami, Esq. of Counsel for the Applicant move in terms of the Motion paper.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AS FOLLOWS:

1. An Order is hereby made for the Interim Forfeiture to the Federal Government of Nigeria the sum of *Fifteen Billion, Two Million Naira only (N15,002,000,000)* suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activity recovered from the 1st Respondent in the course of investigation and is presently being managed in the Applicant's designated account domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).
2. An Order is hereby made for the Interim Forfeiture to the Federal Government of Nigeria the sum of *Fifty Million Naira only*

2|Page

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY FEDERAL HIGH COURT ABUJA Sign..... Date 2/10/26

(N50,000,000.00) suspected to be proceeds of unlawful activity recovered from the 2nd Respondent in the course of investigation and is presently being managed in the Applicant's designated account domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

3. An Order is hereby made directing the publication of a Notice of the foregoing Orders in any national daily newspaper inviting any person or body who may have interest in the said proceeds to show cause within fourteen (14) days of such publication, why an Order of Final Forfeiture to the Federal Government of Nigeria of the said proceeds should not be made.
4. Case adjourned to 3rd November, 2026 for compliance.

ISSUED AT ABUJA under the Hand of the Presiding Judge, Hon. Justice M. G. Umar, and the seal of the Court this 6th day of October, 2026.

N. JUSTICE M. G. UMAR JUDGE

MU'AZU KASIMU
REGISTRAR

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY FEDERAL HIGH COURT ABUJA Sign..... Date 2/10/26

3|Page

UNFPA

UNFPA VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the leading United Nations Reproductive Health and Rights Agency, is recruiting personnel for one (1) Local Service Contract position and two (2) National Individual Assignments as follows:

1.

Title of Position:	**National Post: Driver – LSC-2**
Job Requisition Number:	**37436**
Grade Level of Position:	**LSC-2**
Position Number:	**23496**
Type of Contract:	**Local Service Contract**
Duty Station:	**Lagos, Nigeria**
Duration of Assignment:	**One Year (Renewable based on availability of funds and satisfactory performance)**

CLOSING DATE - WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER, 2026

HOW TO APPLY - Please click on the link below or copy the link to your browser to access the application site:
https://estm.fa.em2.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/CX_2003/job/37436

2.

Title of Assignment:	**Newborn Logistics Management Information System (NLMIS) Integration - Lead Consultant** - NOC
Job Requisition Number:	**37429**
Assignment Level:	**NOC**
Type of Contract:	**National Individual Consultant**
Duty Station:	**Abuja, Nigeria (work remotely)**
Duration of Assignment:	**30 working days (6 weeks)**

CLOSING DATE - WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER, 2026

HOW TO APPLY - Please click on the link below or copy the link to your browser to access the application site:

https://estm.fa.em2.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/CX_2003/job/37429

3.

Title of Assignment:	**Newborn Logistics Management Information System (NLMIS) Integration Consultant** - NOB
Job Requisition Number:	**37428**
Assignment Level:	**NOB**
Type of Contract:	**National Individual Consultant**
Duty Station:	**Abuja, Nigeria (work remotely)**
Duration of Assignment:	**30 working days (6 weeks)**

CLOSING DATE - WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER, 2026

HOW TO APPLY - Please click on the link below or copy the link to your browser to access the application site:
https://estm.fa.em2.oraclecloud.com/hcmUI/CandidateExperience/en/sites/CX_2003/job/37428

UNFPA has established an electronic application management system. This allow applicants to create a candidate profile, which can be updated regularly and submitted for more than one vacancy. For ease of access to the UNFPA application site, please use - *either Google Chrome browser or Firefox browser.*

UNFPA provides a work environment that reflects the values of gender quality, teamwork, respect for diversity, integrity and a healthy balance of work and life. We are committed to maintaining our balanced gender distribution and therefore encourage qualified women to apply. Please note that UNFPA will respond only to those applicants in whom it has a further interest.

DISCLAIMER

UNFPA does not charge any application, processing, training, interviewing, testing or other fee in connection with the application or recruitment process. UNFPA does not solicit or screen for information in respect of HIV or AIDS and does not discriminate on the basis of HIV/AIDS status.

UNFPA - Ensuring Reproductive Rights for All

Education

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Nigeria @ 66:

Education expands as learning crisis deepens

As Nigeria marks its 66th independence anniversary today, education offers perhaps the most revealing lens through which to view the country's journey. What it inherited in 1960 was a narrow, elitist system built to serve a privileged few. Six and a half decades later, it has become one of Africa's largest education systems, with tens of millions of learners in classrooms and hundreds of universities dotting the national landscape. Yet, this dramatic expansion in access masks a deeper, more troubling reality, ***OWEDE AGBAJILEKE*** *reports.*



NIGERIA'S 66-year education journey has expanded access and institutions, but persistent issues of underfunding, poor learning outcomes, inequality, and recurring university strikes underscore the need to shift from expansion to quality and meaningful human capital development.

According to data obtained from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) at independence, Nigeria had only 311 secondary schools and two tertiary institutions – theUniversity of Ibadan (UI) and Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH). Today, the National Universities Commission (NUC) lists over 320 universities, comprising 77 federal, 69 state and 182 private institutions.

Stakeholders said the expansion represents one of the clearest gains of the past 66 years, opening opportunities for millions of Nigerians who would otherwise have had little chance of secondary or tertiary education.

The introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1976 marked another major turning point. Primary enrolment, which stood at about 2.9 million in 1960, rose to 13.8 million by 1975 and exceeded 15.8 million by 1980, according to UNESCO.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, introduced in 1999 and backed by legislation in 2004, further entrenched the principle of free and compulsory basic education.

The expansion has also improved girls' participation. Data from the Federal Ministry of Education's 2024/25 yearly school census put female learners at 49.6 per cent, while women account for 55.7 per cent of teachers.

The figures show a major departure from the early post-independence period, when access to formal education, particularly for girls in some parts of the country, was considerably more restricted.

But the expansion of the system has exposed a more fundamental problem: Nigeria concentrated heavily on access without achieving a corresponding improvement in learning outcomes.

The latest evidence is sobering. An analysis of public financing for basic education by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that in 2023, 49 per cent of Primary Three pupils, 67 per cent of Primary Five pupils and 86 per cent of Junior Secondary School Two learners failed to attain minimum proficiency in mathematics.

The same analysis found that about 30 per cent of learners who reached Junior Secondary Three in 2021 lacked foundational reading skills expected to have been acquired several years earlier.

The implication is significant. A child being enrolled in school does not necessarily mean that the child is learning.

After 66 years of independence, Nigeria's education challenge has, therefore, moved beyond simply building schools and increasing enrolment to ensuring that children can read, write, calculate and acquire skills required to participate productively in society.

The problem is compounded by the number of children still excluded from the system.

According to UNICEF's 2024 report, Nigeria has approximately 18.3 million out-of-school children, comprising 10.2 million of primary school age and 8.1 million of secondary school age.

The burden is particularly severe in parts of northern Nigeria, where poverty, insecurity, displacement, child labour and cultural barriers continue to affect school attendance, especially among girls.

The scale of the education system itself has also placed enormous pressure on available resources. The 2024/25 yearly school census recorded about 39.83 million learners and 1.19 million teachers. Yet, the national learner-to-classroom ratio was 60 to one, considerably above the Universal Basic Education standard of 35 to one.

The learner-to-toilet ratio was 65.9 to one, compared with a recommended 30 to one.The situation is further complicated by inadequate funding. UNICEF's analysis of public financing for basic education found that education's share of total government expenditure declined from 9.3 per cent in 2015 to 3.6 per cent in 2023, significantly below the internationally recommended benchmark of 15 to 20 per cent.

With a rapidly growing school-age population, inadequate financing has continued to widen the gap between enrolment and the quality of facilities and services available to learners.

The funding challenge is reflected in the condition of many public schools, where overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated laboratories and libraries, poor sanitation and lack of teaching materials remain common.

It also extends to teachers, who are expected to serve an increasingly large and diverse population of learners.

Although the 2024/25 school census recorded about 1.19 million teachers, the national figures mask significant disparities between states and schools in teacher availability, qualification and distribution.

At the tertiary level, the phenomenal growth in the number of universities has not been matched by commensurate investment in infrastructure, research and human capital, leaving many institutions grappling with overcrowded facilities, inadequate funding and declining staff morale.

The latest threat of industrial action by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) over the non-implementation of the 2025 renegotiated agreement with the Federal Government has again exposed the fragile state of industrial relations in the sector.

The planned strike, coming amid years of recurring disputes over funding, salaries, working conditions and university autonomy, underscores the unresolved challenges confronting Nigeria's higher education subsector.

While the proliferation of universities has widened access and produced generations of professionals who have contributed to national and global development, repeated disruptions to the academic calendar have imposed significant costs on students and institutions.

> We have good policies on paper. What we lack is accountability for learning. Until states are measured not by how many schools they built but by how many children can read by age 10, the crisis will persist.

The Initiator of the Creative Change Centre, Omole Ibukun, said 66 years after independence, Nigeria had undoubtedly built a much larger education system than it inherited, expanding universities, polytechnics, colleges, secondary schools and basic education, with millions of Nigerians gaining opportunities that were hitherto unavailable to their parents and grandparents.

However, Ibukun noted that the country's report card remained troubling if education was expected to serve as a mechanism for reproducing and expanding human capacity.

He lamented that millions of Nigerian children remain out of school, while UNICEF figures show primary school attendance at about 67 per cent, lower secondary at 45 per cent, and upper secondary at only 35 per cent.

According to him, Nigeria has also normalised the contradiction of governments describing education as the foundation of national development, while consistently failing to finance it at the level required to make that rhetoric meaningful, noting that UNICEF reported that education's share of total government spending fell from 9.3 per cent in 2015 to 3.6 per cent in 2024, against the international benchmark of 15 to 20 per cent.

He added that the limited resources allocated to education were further undermined by corruption involving government officials.

Ibukun, however, said he would not conclude that Nigeria had failed in education, as the country recorded enormous progress in expanding educational opportunities.

Rather, he argued that Nigeria has failed to build an education system commensurate with its size, wealth, aspirations and demographic realities.

"For me, it's not about how many poorly maintained and poorly staffed schools we have built, but about what kind of human being the Nigerian education system is producing, who gets to become that person, and the kind of society we are building through education," he stated.

Until those fundamental questions are answered, Ibukun noted that the country would continue treating symptoms of the crisis - including ASUU strikes, overcrowded classrooms, examination malpractice, graduate unemployment and the growing number of children - without confronting the more fundamental question of what Nigeria's government believes education is actually meant to achieve.

On his part, Nigerian-born biotech executive based in San Francisco, United States, Dr AdeboyeAdewoye, said the country had made substantial progress in education over the decades, stressing that any fair assessment of the country's educational journey should begin by clearly defining the measure, whether the comparison is between 1960 and 2026, or focuses on primary, secondary or tertiary education, enrolment, literacy, graduation rates, the number of institutions or Nigeria's standing globally.

He said the growth in the number of high-achieving Nigerians both at home and abroad, as well as the expansion of private and state-owned tertiary institutions, wider access to education and newer initiatives such as student loans, were important indicators of progress that should not be overlooked.

According to Adewoye, Nigeria still has serious shortcomings to address, but acknowledging those challenges should not require the country to deny its gains.

"Progress and imperfection can coexist, and Nigeria's educational journey is evidence of both," he said.

A former Director at the Federal Ministry of Education and education policy analyst, Dr Amina Bello, said the core failure of the last two decades has been the disconnect between policy pronouncements and implementation at the state and local government levels.

She noted that while the UBE Act guarantees free basic education, many states still levy fees, fail to access matching grants from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC),and leave teacher recruitment to political patronage.

"We have good policies on paper. What we lack is accountability for learning. Until states are measured not by how many schools they built but by how many children can read by age 10, the crisis will persist," Bello said.

Similarly, a professor of Educational Management at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Prof. Chidi Maduagwu, argued that the university expansion must be halted in favour of consolidation and quality assurance. He said licensing new universities without solving funding and staffing gaps has created glorified secondary schools rather than research institutions.

"You cannot have world-class aspirations with third-class funding. The NUC should after imposing a moratorium on new universities, channel resources into fixing existing ones, improving teacher training and linking curricula to industry needs. That is how you move from access to human-capital development," Maduagwu said.

ASUU downplays world ranking 'achievements' for 29 varsities

By Iyabo Lawal

THE Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has dismissed the Federal Government's celebration of 29 Nigerian universities featured in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2027, saying the feat does not warrant any jubilation.

National President of the union, Prof. Chris Piwuna, said the increase from 24 universities to 29 in the latest ranking is insignificant and does not reflect progress in

• Flays FG's jubilations

funding, research and learning conditions.

Reacting to the government's claim that the ranking showed its reforms are working, the ASUU president said the government should be concerned about the quality of the ranking rather than the number.

He noted that only three Nigerian universities are among the top 1,000, one of which is a private university.

"I congratulate the three universities that made it into the first 1000 and the 29 in general, but I honestly don't think, as a country, there is anything to celebrate," he said.

Piwuna described the celebration as complacency, arguing that parameters considered for the ranking, including research impact, learning environment and graduate employability, remain poor in Nigerian universities.

He said the low ranking is linked to poor research funding, a poor staff-to-student ratio, and excessive workloads for lecturers.

According to him, the ideal staff mix in universities should be 20:35:45 for Professors/Readers, Senior Lecturers, and Lecturers I and below, while the staff-to-student ratio should range between 1:15 and 1:30, depending on the discipline.

He said many medical schools and academic departments are losing accreditation due to failure to meet the ratio.

The ASUU chief compared Nigeria's performance with Pakistan, which he said has about 49 universities in the same ranking, questioning why Nigeria is celebrating an addition of five universities, some of which are private.

On what needs to be done to improve Nigeria's standing, Piwuna said the solutions are already contained in the union's agreements with the government, including the 2009 and 2025 agreements.

He said while academic staff have a role to play in improving research output, the environment is not conducive. T

He cited the high cost of publishing in high-impact Q1 journals, which averages $2,000, saying most lecturers cannot afford it given the current cost of living.

Speaking on the recent release of five months' arrears of the Consolidated Academic Tools Allowance (CATA), Piwuna said the union is still at odds with the government over the payment.

He said that while the Ministry of Education claims funds have been released, Vice-Chancellors deny receiving the money to pay.

"The ministry is saying no university would say they cannot pay. Vice-Chancellors are saying they cannot pay. We are caught in the middle. Since nobody is talking to us, we know how to talk," he said.

On the implementation of the 2025 agreement by state governments, Piwuna said most states have complied, except for three state universities in Lagos and Taraba State.

According to the latest ranking, Covenant University (CU); the University of Ibadan (UI) and the University of Lagos (UNILAG) jointly occupied the highest Nigerian position, in the 801–1000 global band.

Covenant University improved from the 1001–1200 band in 2026, while UI and UNILAG retained their positions.

Four other institutions, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Bayero University, Kano (BUK); Landmark University and the University of Ilorin, were placed in the 1001–1200 band, bringing the number of Nigerian universities in the global top 1,200 to seven.

Overall, 19 federal universities, seven state universities and three private universities were ranked.



A cross section of speakers at the StudyIn Global Study Conference 2026 held at Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos.

Experts chart path for Nigerian students in AI-driven future

By Iyabo Lawal

EDUCATION experts have urged Nigerian universities to urgently review and restructure their academic programmes to reflect the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI), warning that failure to do so could render graduates uncompetitive in a labour market that is being reshaped by technology.

The call dominated discussions at the StudyIn Global Study Conference 2026, held at the Federal Palace Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, where stakeholders examined how AI is transforming learning, careers and the demands of the workplace.

The conference, themed: 'Future ready: Succeeding in an AI-driven world,' brought together students, parents, school administrators, education managers and representatives of universities from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

The Country Director of StudyIn Nigeria, Mary Agbu, said the conference was designed to help young people get clarity about their academic and career choices and to prepare adequately for life after secondary school.

She said the platform has evolved over the years into a meeting point where students interact directly with foreign institutions, listen to professionals from different fields and have honest conversations about education, careers and global opportunities.

Agbu, who is the Executive Director of First Multi-Plan Pathway College, said this year's edition was particularly significant because AI is altering how people learn, work and build careers, and students must understand what that shift means for their future.

She explained that panel sessions and student-focused engagements were structured to break down the changes AI is bringing and the practical steps young people must take now to remain relevant.

"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," she noted.

She also stressed the need to balance AI adoption with ethics and values, saying conversations about technology must involve parents, schools and other stakeholders.

"One of the things that we really push out in the college is values," Agbu said, adding that the integration of AI into education must be guided by a clear value system and ethical framework," Agbu stated.

In her keynote address, Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer and founder of Bloom Academy for AI, Dr Lola Olukuewu, said Nigerian learners must begin preparing for a future in which AI will be central to every profession.

Olukuewu warned that within the next three to five years, AI will become a full-fledged co-worker in workplaces in Africa and Nigeria, handling end-to-end processes in sectors such as healthcare, agriculture and aviation while humans provide oversight.

"The world is changing, the educational system is being revamped as well, and so we need to let our learners, our students, know how to be future-ready, how to be well positioned so that the changes going on in the world and in the career space don't make them unprepared," she said.

She, however, lamented that Nigeria's current curriculum does not reflect the realities introduced by AI, a situation she described as worrying.

Olukuewu said Nigeria must be proactive rather than reactive, noting that countries like China are already revamping their education systems and eliminating thousands of obsolete courses.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng

SAA launches essay competition for Nigerian students

SOUTH African Airways is set to hold its yearly essay competition for secondary schools in Nigeria.

The Country Manager, Mrs Kemi Leke-Bamtefa, said the writing contest was initiated to instil the values of patriotism, love for humanity, selflessness, tolerance, and honesty in young Nigerians, and to expose them to the life and legacy of former South African President Nelson Mandela.

She said the airline is committed to positively impacting Nigerian youths and deepening their academic and sociopolitical awareness in the spirit of nationhood and service to humanity.

According to her, the airline deliberately chose to commence the contest on October 12, in commemoration of World Mental Health Day, which was marked globally on October 10.

Leke-Bamtefa said entries for the 2026 edition will open from Monday, October 12, to Friday, November 13, adding that successful participants will be invited to an award presentation reception where winners will be announced and presented with cash prizes and other gifts.

She said the competition is a Corporate Social Responsibility project of South African Airways, organised in partnership with *Travel and Business News*, which serves as a consultant for the project.

Leke-Bamtefa added that the initiative has, over the years, provided a platform for secondary school students to express their ideas on national development, social values, and leadership, while also encouraging reading, writing, and critical thinking among young learners.

Chrisland strengthens safety measures against bullying

By Iyabo Lawal

THE management of Chrisland Schools has said it is reinforcing its safety and child protection architecture across its campuses, urging pupils to speak out whenever they experience bullying, abuse or any situation that makes them feel unsafe.

Officials noted that child protection must go beyond security personnel and physical barriers to become a daily culture in which pupils and staff know what constitutes a risk, whom to report to and what happens after a concern is raised.

The Executive Head of School, Region A, Segun Ogunsola, who stated this while addressing reporters as part of activities commemorating its Safeguarding Week, said the school owes every child in its care a duty of protection.

Ogunsola said the objective is not simply to teach safety rules, but to make safe behaviour instinctive among learners and staff.

Ogunsola explained that the school conducts risk assessments for all activities and maintains a unified calendar for safety and safeguarding programmes, while staff are regularly trained and students are taught how to identify unsafe situations and seek help.

He said external experts are invited for seminars and awareness sessions, and parents are brought into the process through engagement and feedback mechanisms.

Divisional Head, Risks, Compliance, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Kemi Fajemirokun, said the school has established student safety and safeguarding ambassadors who have been sensitised on bullying and general safeguarding measures.

She disclosed that the school is building a system to ensure that every concern raised by a child is heard and acted upon.

Fajemirokun noted that many children find it difficult to report bullying for fear of facing revenge from peers, saying multiple confidential reporting channels have been created to allow learners to disclose incidents without fear of exposure.

She explained that the strengthened safeguarding system is aimed at giving pupils safe avenues to report bullying, abuse and other uncomfortable experiences.

Already, she noted that Chrisland is working to embed a whole-school safety culture that influences learners' character formation and everyday behaviour.

She said the school's safeguarding model is anchored on a triangle of responsibility, with learners, parents and staff each having defined roles.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng

UNILAG VC urges staff school to embrace AI, digital technology

By **Omowunmi Sanni**

THE Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Prof. Folasade Ogunsola, has urged the institution's Staff School to place greater emphasis on digital technology, creativity, critical thinking and innovation as it prepares pupils for the future.

Ogunsola gave the charge in a message delivered at a press briefing to commemorate ULSS's 60th anniversary, noting that the world in which children are growing up is changing rapidly.

According to her, developments in artificial intelligence, digital technology, and climate change are reshaping society and require schools to equip children with the skills and values needed to navigate a changing world.

She urged the management and teachers to build on its existing foundation by giving equal attention to academic excellence, character development, creativity, critical thinking, digital literacy and innovation.

The vice-chancellor also emphasised the importance of raising children who understand that knowledge comes with responsibility and that excellence should be used to contribute positively to society.

She described ULSS as an important part of the institution's history and a significant contributor to the education of generations of Nigerians.

Ogunsola said the school, which was initially established to provide quality education for the children of university staff, had grown beyond its original purpose to become a community where young minds are nurtured, character is developed, and lifelong friendships are formed.

Also speaking, the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Chairman of the school's management board, Prof. Joseph Olayinka, stressed the importance of giving greater attention to primary education.

Olayinka said the foundation laid at the primary and secondary school levels was critical to children's development before they proceeded to higher institutions.

He said universities build on talents and values already developed in children from their early years, stressing that efforts to identify and nurture talents should begin from the primary level.

According to him, the neglect of primary and secondary education could affect children's development and, ultimately, society's progress.

He also called for the development of strong moral values among children, saying education should go beyond academic knowledge to include character formation and responsible behaviour.

The Headmistress of ULSS, Mrs Eunice Akinade, said the anniversary provided an opportunity to celebrate the school's history and recognise the contributions of past leaders, teachers, parents and the university management to its development.

She appealed for stronger support from the school's alumni community, expressing optimism that their involvement would improve the school's infrastructure and learning facilities.

An old student, Dr Wura Abiola, said former pupils had commenced fundraising efforts to support the revitalisation of the school's infrastructure.

Abiola, who is also an adjunct senior lecturer at the University of Lagos, recalled her experience as a pupil of the school, saying ULSS played an important role in shaping her attitude towards education.

She said the school taught her to enjoy learning, experiment with knowledge and apply what she had learnt to new situations.

Abiola, however, expressed concern over the condition of some of the school's facilities compared with what she remembered during her time as a pupil. She recalled that the school previously had pristine facilities, beautiful classrooms and halls, describing it as an environment where pupils could focus on learning, develop friendships and enjoy their formative years.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng



The Designated Safeguarding Officer of Chrisland College Idimu, Ms. Funmi Adewumi (left); Divisional Head, Risks, Compliance, Safeguarding and Child Protection Unit of Chrisland Schools, Mrs Kemi Fajemirokun, and Executive Head of Schools, Academics/ Region A,Mr Segun Ogunsola, at the media parley held to commemorate the Safety and Safeguarding week of Chrisland Schools.

15 bag first class as FUHSI graduates 138 at convocation

From **Rotimi Agboluaje**, Ibadan

THE Federal University of Health Sciences, Ila-Orangun (FUHSI), Osun State, is set to graduate 138 students at its maiden convocation, with 15 of the graduands finishing with First Class.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Akeem Lasisi, who disclosed this to reporters while highlighting activities lined up for the ceremony, said the 138 graduating students are from the departments of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, Biochemistry, Microbiology, and Pharmacology.

Giving a breakdown of the results, Lasisi said 15, representing 10.87 per cent, bagged First Class, 79 obtained Second Class Upper; 43 Second Class Lower, while one finished with Third Class.

Adediran Precious Opeyemi of the Department of Microbiology emerged the overall best graduating student with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 4.93.

Lasisi said the university, established in 2021, commenced academic activities in March 2023 with nine undergraduate programmes, including Medicine, Nursing, and Medical Laboratory Science (MLS).

He said the institution subsequently expanded its academic offerings to 13 before securing approval from the National Universities Commission (NUC) for eight additional programmes,

He disclosed that all nine programmes that have so far undergone NUC scrutiny received full accreditation, while preparations are ongoing for four additional programmes.

NEM renovates Lagos school, donates learning materials

By **Bankole Orimisan**

PUPILS of Ilupeju Primary School, Lagos, are set to enjoy improved learning conditions following the renovation of four classroom blocks within the school premises by NEM Insurance Plc.

The intervention addressed long-standing defects in the buildings, including damaged roofing sheets, leaking roofs, structural cracks and deteriorated ceilings.

The firm also donated notebooks to pupils as part of efforts to enhance teaching and learning.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Group Chairman of NEM Insurance, Tope Smart, said the company decided to intervene after identifying the deplorable state of the facilities.

Smart noted that the renovation was aimed at providing a safer and more conducive environment for pupils and teachers, while also restoring parents'confidence in the school.

Already, he lamented that the deplorable condition of the buildings had forced some parents to move their children to other schools, adding that the facelift would encourage more families in the community to enrol their wards.

The Head Teacher, Mrs Victoria Ajibade, said the intervention has provided pupils and staff with a more comfortable and welcoming environment for teaching and learning.

While thanking the firm, Ajibade called on other corporate organisations to support public schools grappling with infrastructure deicits.

Education Secretary at Mushin Local Government Education Authority, Ademola Olokodana, commended NEM Insurance for investing in the school, urging other organisations to contribute to the development of communities where they generate revenue.

He also called for sustained collaboration between the local education authority and the insurance firm, urging the company to support other education-related needs, including pension management for workers in the sector.

Group tasks states on vulnerable, out-of-school children

By **Kehinde Olatunji**

A NON-GOVERNMENTAL organisation, Engage Youth Africa Initiative (EYAI), has urged state governments to establish more support centres for vulnerable children, including those who are homeless, abused, out-of-school, or battling mental health challenges.

The Community Manager, Bukola Balogun, who made the call during a mental health outreach held at the Children Correctional Centre for Girls, Idi-Araba, Lagos, in commemoration of World Mental Health Day, said the programme was designed to remind the girls that their voices, emotions and personal experiences matter.

Balogun pointed out that children in correctional centres should not be defined by their past experiences or circumstances, but should be encouraged to recognise their potentials and work towards a better future.

She appealed to governors and relevant ministries to prioritise the interests of vulnerable children by providing dedicated facilities where they can receive care, education and skills development.

Balogun noted that many children are homeless and roam the streets, while others have suffered abuse, are mentally unstable or are out of school, with various challenges that require structured support.

With the serene environment and opportunities available at the centre, Balogun said the inmates could develop educationally and acquire useful skills.

Balogun added that if similar facilities are replicated across states, vulnerable children outside correctional centres could also have opportunities to develop their potential.

She called on other organisations and groups to support vulnerable children through regular visits, educational programmes and awareness initiatives, stressing that such interventions should focus on empowerment, rather than pity.

Also speaking at the event, a psycho-educator, Mudashiru Sewanu, said the outreach aimed to help the children understand their experiences and learn to seek help from appropriate sources when faced with emotional or psychological challenges.

Sewanu said while adults may have a better chance of identifying where to seek assistance, not everyone has the knowledge or ability to navigate mental health difficulties.

He stressed the need for a structured system that would make mental health support accessible to children and other vulnerable persons, including those living on the streets.

He also called for the development of a curriculum and clear referral pathways to ensure that persons experiencing mental health challenges can be identified and directed to appropriate support services.

Sewanu advocated the integration of mental health education into everyday life, explaining that ordinary experiences and activities could affect psychological well-being, while greater public awareness would help people recognise challenges, when and where to seek professional assistance.

On his part, the Coordinator of Inspire Growth Alliance, a non-governmental organisation, Innocent Mbanaso, said the group, which focuses on emotional wellness and mental health education, will continue to organise outreach programmes and sensitisation activities in schools and correctional centres.

The Guardian Law

Thursday, October 15, 2026

www.guardian.ng

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Delays in trial undermine access to justice, says Adekunle

Mrs Olamide Mojigbotoluwa Adekunle (née Ehinfun) is a Partner at Afe Babalola & Co. (Emmanuel Chambers), where she specialises in litigation, dispute resolution and arbitration. Her practice spans high-profile litigation, complex negotiations, strategic legal advisory, and regulatory and policy matters involving both the public and private sectors. Sworn in as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) on October 12, 2026, Adekunle made history as the youngest female lawyer to attain the prestigious rank. In this interview with ***JOSEPH ONYEKWERE,*** *she discusses the significance of the honour and shares her perspectives on the future of the legal profession and the administration of justice in Nigeria.*

Nigeria's legal system faces delays in justice delivery, high legal costs, limited access to counsel and inadequate infrastructure. Which of these issues concern you most, and why?

THE four problems are not co-equal. Delay is largely the root, and the others are, in substantial measure, its effects or multipliers.

Delay drives cost. Every adjournment is billed in professional time and in the litigant's lost working days, and the client also bears the cost of the period over which the matter remains in court. Delay equally corrodes access to justice. A litigant who faces a protracted wait may settle on unfavourable terms or abandon a meritorious claim, so the cost barrier operates through time as much as through fees. The criminal justice system shows the same pattern, with awaiting-trial persons constituting a large proportion of the custodial population. Justice must not be sacrificed on the altar of speed.

Even so, I am persuaded that delay is detrimental to the advancement of the judiciary, and that it is eminently capable of improvement. Election litigation demonstrates this. Section 285 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as altered), prescribes strict timelines. An election tribunal must deliver its judgment in writing within 180 days of the filing of the petition (Section 285(6), and an appeal from the tribunal must be heard and disposed of within 60 days of the delivery of its judgment (Section 285(7). The same discipline governs pre-election matters: the court of first instance must deliver judgment within 180 days of the filing of the suit (section 285(10), and any appeal must be heard and disposed of within 60 days of the filing of the appeal (section 285(12). Courts and parties alike labour assiduously to meet these periods. The lesson is that delay in ordinary litigation is substantially a function of incentives and case management, and not purely a question of capacity.

> "Every adjournment is billed in professional time and in the litigant's lost working days, and the client also bears the cost of the period over which the matter remains in court. Delay equally corrodes access to justice. A litigant who faces a protracted wait may settle on unfavourable terms or abandon a meritorious claim, so the cost barrier operates through time as much as through fees"

What practical steps would make legal services more accessible and affordable to ordinary Nigerians?

The frameworks for accessible legal services largely exist already. We have the Legal Aid Act, and most courts' rules provide for substantially reduced costs where parties are indigent. Pro bono service is strongly encouraged by the Bar and is a mandatory feature of the application for the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria. What is required, in my view, is publicity for these existing initiatives. Many citizens are simply unaware that such assistance is available to them.

What reforms would you recommend to Nigeria's laws and regulatory framework to strengthen justice delivery, protect the rule of law and support economic development?

First, financial autonomy must be given real effect. The Constitution (Fifth Alteration) (No. 6) Act 2023 alters section 121 so that funds due to the State House of Assembly and the State Judiciary are paid directly into the accounts of the Assembly and of the heads of court, and it establishes a Disbursement Committee in each State. The difficulty lies in compliance in practice. Second, court orders must be obeyed promptly and within a strict timeline. Third, the apex court must be decongested. I believe the decision of the Court of Appeal should be final in a wider category of causes. Fourth, specialised commercial divisions should be established in every State, with fixed disposal timelines for contract and debt claims. The enforcement of contracts is the practical test of an investment climate and, by extension, of economic development.

What does admission to the Inner Bar as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria mean to you, personally and professionally?

Personally, it is the dividend of perseverance, resilience and industry. It is a reassurance that diligent work is ultimately rewarded and that sustained effort compounds over time. It is also a reminder that when you have a dream and you work towards it; the obstacle will give way.

Professionally, admission to the Inner Bar is not merely a recognition of years spent in practice. It is an acknowledgement of a journey marked by intellectual rigour, professional distinction, and an abiding commitment to the legal profession and the administration of justice. It means a lot to me to belong to the prestigious rank of great lawyers past and present.

How significant is this achievement within the context of your legal career?

My admission is a momentous milestone as I attained the rank at the clock of 40 years, the youngest female to attain the rank. The responsibilities of the rank are considerable. They are discharged in the character one displays, the standards one upholds, the practitioners one mentors, the defence of justice, and service to the Bar, the Bench and society at large.



Adekunle

What inspired you to study law and to pursue a career in the legal profession?

The inclination was evident in my early years. My parents often lamented that I talked too much, and I was frequently disciplined for fighting on behalf of others at school. My primary school report cards consistently described me as talkative, and my name sat near the top of the class list of noise-makers. In secondary school, I gravitated naturally to Arts and Humanities.

My father also regaled us with accounts of the politics of the old Western Region and the part played in it by Chief Rotimi Williams, popularly known as "Timi the Law." I found those accounts intriguing, and they left a lasting impression.

Which mentors, colleagues or experiences have most shaped your development as a lawyer?

Our Principal, Aare Afe Babalola (SAN), has been a guiding light and a standing example to me since I was still an undergraduate. Prince Lateef Fagbemi (SAN), for his advocacy skills and the method with which he approaches his cases. The Managing Partner of Afe Babalola & Co., Mr Kehinde Ogunwumiju (SAN), who has carried the rank with grace and excellence. Finally, I recall Pastor R.A. Ogunwole (SAN), in whose chambers I interned as a law student while at the Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University. It was my first exposure to a law firm.

What legacy do you hope to build, and how will you use the rank to contribute to the profession and to society?

The training of younger lawyers is paramount, and I wish to encourage young people, and women in particular, that their goals are within reach, and that the limitations we experience are largely those to which we submit.

My legacy would be that if, at the end of my career, I am remembered for sound and honest advocacy, for the lawyers I helped to form, and for a genuine contribution to access to justice and the quality of adjudication, I will regard the trust as having been properly discharged to the profession and the society.

Looking back on your early years at the Bar, what specific habits or values shaped your practice?

The habits I imbibed during my early years were my willingness to do the hard work, put in the long hours, to always proffer solutions for clients' matters and to go wherever the work takes me. The values I got from those who have gone ahead include always being ready to go above and beyond for your matters and keeping abreast of the changes in the law.

If you were advising a 28-year-old female lawyer aiming to become a SAN, what strategic counsel would you give her?

I would tell her that she must work twice as hard. Also very important are her environment and the people she spends time with. The impact of those two factors cannot be overemphasised, because you would be the same person that you are now in five years' time except for the people that you have met and the places you have been. My take on networking is that it's really about value. What value do you bring? Also, with whom are you networking? You should network with people who have your best interest at heart, who are happy to give you access, advice or help to make way for you. In fact, you must be careful who you network with. Networking with the wrong set of people would derail your career. How you can manage the personal/professional trade-offs is to work for a good principal, in a good office that makes space for women in all their seasons of life, including maternity and when raising young children, etc. The profession is a fast-paced one; you need a work environment that caters to all these seasons.

‘World Bank’s $552m grant targets 29m children, .5m teachers’

• Groups urge investment as 7.6m Nigerian girls drop out of school

From **Owede Agbajileke**, Abuja

NO fewer than 29 million children, 500,000 teachers in 65,000 public schools and 10,000 non-formal learning centres across Nigeria are targeted in the $552.18 million World Bank-funded Human Capital Opportunities for Prosperity and Equity (HOPE-EDU) programme, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) said.

UBEC Executive Secretary, Dr Aisha Garba, disclosed this in Abuja during a two-day meeting with the chairmen of State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) on the programme’s implementation readiness.

She said the programme also targets the construction of 13,000 new classrooms as part of efforts to improve learning outcomes, expand access to quality basic education and strengthen service delivery across the country.

Meanwhile, a group, the Ibironke Adeagbo Foundation (IA-Foundation), has called for urgent investment in girl child education, warning that poverty, child marriage and inadequate funding are undermining Nigeria’s economic potential.

The foundation said that about 7.6 million girls are among the 18.3 million out-of-school children at the basic education level, stressing that keeping girls out of school deprives the country of future skilled workers, economic opportunities and social progress.

Garba appealed to state governments for the political will and financial commitment required to achieve the programme’s objectives, saying that HOPE-EDU became effective on February 27, 2026, and has entered its implementation phase.

She explained that the federal government initiative, supported by the World Bank, adopts a results-based financing approach under which disbursements are linked to agreed targets and performance indicators.

According to her, $262.2 million has been allocated to improving education quality, $123.9 million to expanding access, and $133.6 million to strengthening key systems, with the first result area open to 33 states.

However, she warned that achieving the programme’s targets would depend largely on the commitment of state governors and other relevant authorities to providing the necessary policy direction and budgetary support.

Nevertheless, the founder of IA-Foundation, Ibironke Adeagbo, speaking at a webinar to commemorate the 2026 International Day of the Girl Child, urged stakeholders to make girls’ education a present priority rather than a future promise.

Adeagbo stressed that educating a girl benefits not only the individual but also her family and community, and called on Nigerians to examine how much they invest in such projects.

In her address during the webinar, an international education strategist and consultant, Bolaji Osime, argued that educating girls could delay child marriage, expand economic opportunities and strengthen Nigeria’s long-term development prospects.

Among other speakers, the founder of Stop the Abuse Against Women and Children Foundation, Toyin Taiwo-Ojo Ndidi, also called for stronger enforcement of the laws protecting girls against child marriage and other forms of abuse.

She attributed child marriage to poverty, inadequate education, social pressure and cultural attitudes that treat women as second-class citizens.



Head of Cooperation at the European Union Delegation to Nigeria, Massimo De Luca (left), and the Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Abubakar Bagudu, during the signing of the €14 million grant agreement for the nationwide fibre-optic backbone in Abuja yesterday.

Sanwo-Olu, UNILAG VC seek AI-driven reforms in higher education

By **Iyabo Lawal**

A COMPREHENSIVE teaching and learning reform is imperative in Nigerian universities to reflect the realities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the changing demands of the global workforce, Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Prof. Folasade Ogunsola, have said.

Making the call at the opening ceremony of the UNILAG International Week, themed: ‘Re-imagining Pedagogy and Teaching for Higher Education in the 21st Century’, Sanwo-Olu said universities must depart from teaching methods that emphasise memorisation and embrace approaches that build critical thinking, problem-solving and adaptability in students.

Also, the Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, emphasised the importance of transnational education, citing the partnership between UNILAG and the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom.

Group pledges legal support for fraud victims

From **Ameh Ochojila**, Abuja

A CIVIL society group, the Initiative Against Human Rights Abuse and Torture (INAHURAT), has urged victims of land fraud in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to come forward with their complaints and seek justice, pledging legal assistance.

INAHURAT, which addressed newsmen in Abuja yesterday while presenting allegations of multiple land disputes involving properties in Katampe, Guzape and Kado districts, urged the affected individuals to report their experiences to the appropriate authorities.

The representative of the group, Dr Maxwell Opara, said INAHURAT was seeking greater accountability in handling land-related complaints. He called on law enforcement agencies to investigate the alleged irregularities in property transactions and the administration of land records.

Kebbi tackles illegal mining as Ebonyi tasks FG on regulatory bottlenecks

From **Ernest Nzor** (Abuja) and **Nnamdi Akpa** (Abakaliki)

IN its efforts to tackle illegal mining, the Kebbi State Government said yesterday that it was organising artisanal miners into registered cooperatives to strengthen regulatory oversight, improve revenue generation and promote a more organised mining sector.

Disclosing this exclusively to *The Guardian* at the Nigeria Mining Week 2026, themed “Unlocking Investment and Growth through Partnerships,” the Director of Mines and Exploration, Kebbi State Ministry of Solid Minerals Development and Mining, Ibrahim Tanimu, added that the initiative would ensure that operators obtain the necessary authorisation before commencing activities.

Meanwhile, Ebonyi State Commissioner for Solid Minerals Development, Chinedu Nkah, has asked the federal government to address the regulatory bottlenecks and create a framework that encourages responsible investment while protecting local interests.

Addressing newsmen in Abakaliki as part of activities marking the 2026 Mining Week, Nkah said these measures would enable Nigeria to derive greater economic benefits from its abundant mineral resources.

He called for a comprehensive overhaul of Nigeria’s mining laws to empower state and local councils and host communities to exercise greater control over mineral exploration and exploitation.

Tanimu explained that artisanal miners were required to register with mining cooperatives before engaging in mining activities in the state, a measure designed to bring their operations under government supervision and discourage illegal mining.

According to him, the ministry also facilitates negotiations between registered mining cooperatives and holders of mining titles to ensure that artisanal miners obtain the necessary consent before operating in designated areas.

FG to end child marriage, expand education access in North

From **Murtala Adewale**, Kano

AS part of efforts to address child marriage prevalence in parts of Nigeria and its negative impact, the federal government has unveiled a national framework to prevent early marriage of the girl child.

Unveiling the regional National Strategy and Costed Action Plan on Ending Child Marriage in Nigeria (2025–2030) in Kano yesterday, the Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, said the new policy would tackle barriers that prevent girls from reaching their full potential.

Alongside the framework, the government is planning to expand access to quality and compulsory education to enable the girl child to achieve her full potential before marriage.

The minister said that the regional launch for the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones was designed to protect the fundamental rights of girls, especially access to quality education during childhood.

She described the prevalence of child marriage as a major obstacle to national development, citing poverty, insecurity, harmful traditional practices, gender discrimination and inadequate social protection as factors aiding the practice.

However, Sulaiman-Ibrahim explained that the new strategy provides a coordinated framework for implementation, financing, monitoring and accountability in the fight against child marriage.

She stressed that its success would be measured not by policy declarations but by the number of girls retained in schools, communities adopting protective practices, resources committed to it, and measurable reductions in child marriage.

Consequently, she urged all levels of government, traditional and religious leaders, civil society, and development partners to strengthen child protection systems, enforce relevant laws, and invest in the education and economic empowerment of the girl child.

‘How CORFEPS deepens good governance advocacy’

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

THE Council of Retired Federal Permanent Secretaries (CORFEPS) has said it contributes to national development and public sector reforms through policy advisory to the federal government on prudent debt administration, predictable budget cycles and stronger procurement practices.

CORFEPS said it draws on the wealth of experience of retired senior civil servants to support effective governance, strengthen public institutions and promote sustainable national development.

Established in Lagos in 2004 as an association, the council disclosed that its 2026 policy recommendations to President Bola Tinubu focused on these three critical areas.

The council comprises retired public servants who had attained the position of federal permanent secretary or Head of the Civil Service of the Federation.

Idris, Umahi tip Lambata-Kontagora Road to improve livelihoods

From **Johnson Eyiangho** (Abuja) and **Bala Yahaya** (Minna)

THE Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said the Lambata–Bida–Mokwa–Makera–Kontagora Road, being reconstructed and dualised at the cost of N1.8 trillion, will boost trade, agriculture and create jobs.

In a statement yesterday, the minister, who flagged off the road project in Bida, Niger State, described the highway as a major investment in Nigeria’s economy, connecting communities to markets and opening economic opportunities across the state and beyond.

Therefore, Idris urged residents and communities along the route to cooperate with the contractors, protect the right-of-way, and safeguard public infrastructure to ensure the project’s completion.

Also speaking on the same occasion, the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, Senator David Omahi, commended some state governors across the country for their road infrastructure development, attributing it to what he described as the positive reforms of President Bola Tinubu’s administration aimed at improving citizens’ livelihoods.

TheGuardianSports

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nige GuardianNigeria 0813637 nigeria

Court adjourns suit over legality of NBBF elective congress to November 3

By **Christian Okpara**

A Federal High Court in Abuja yesterday adjourned to November 3, 2026, for hearing a suit by one of the stakeholders, Coach Ayodele Olaseinde Bakare, challenging the legality of today's Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) electoral congress.

The court's decision allows today's NBBF elective congress to go on as scheduled, while the case will be heard on November 3.

The former D'Tigers' coach is challenging the legality of the NBBF elective congress, which, he alleged, is marked by irregularities.

The suit, marked FHC/ABJ/CS/2428, was instituted by Bakare against the NBBF and the National Sports Commission (NSC).

Bakare was earlier disqualified from vying for the presidency of the federation on the grounds that he submitted his papers late.

But in the suit, he is challenging the validity of the extraordinary congress held in Yola, Adamawa State, alleging that the process violated provisions of the federation's constitution.

Bakare argued that the notice convening the Yola congress was not issued in accordance with the NBBF Constitution, claiming that neither two-thirds of Congress members nor the federation's board provided the required notice.

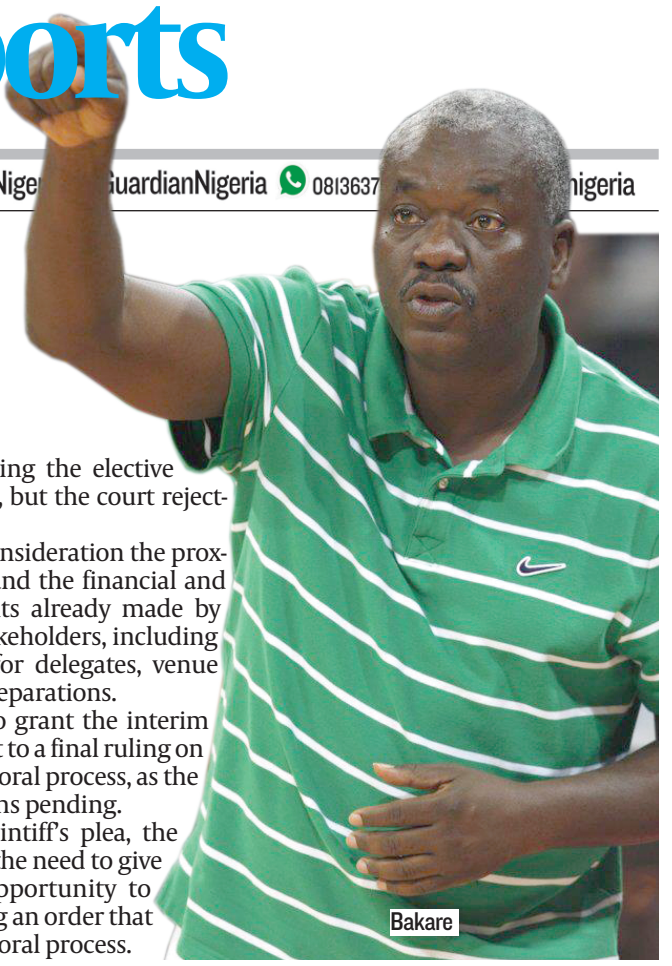
He further alleged that only 44 of the 50 congress members were served notice of the meeting, a development he argued breached constitutional provisions and denied the other members their right to a fair hearing.

He sought an interim order restraining the federation from conducting the elective congress as scheduled, but the court rejected his plea.

The court took into consideration the proximity of the election and the financial and logistical commitments already made by the federation and stakeholders, including travel arrangements for delegates, venue bookings and other preparations.

The court's refusal to grant the interim order does not amount to a final ruling on the legality of the electoral process, as the substantive suit remains pending.

In rejecting the plaintiff's plea, the court also considered the need to give the defendants an opportunity to respond before making an order that could disrupt the electoral process.


Bakare


Osimhen aims for goal during the UEFA Champions League game between Galatasaray and Barcelona on Tuesday.

Pan African School Games winners to get brand-new school bus

By **Daniel Akinola**

THE winners of the second Pan African School Games will earn a brand-new school bus, among other prizes, at the second Pan African School Games, which begins on Friday at the James Hope College, Lagos.

Over 400 student-athletes are expected to participate in the games, which will end on October 18.

The brand-new school bus is sponsored by Mikano Changan Motors.

The three-day competition will bring together young athletes from schools across Nigeria, building on the success of the inaugural edition hosted by British International School (BIS), Lagos.

The Games will feature athletics, swimming and football competitions across the U-11, U-13 and U-15 age categories. Athletics and swimming will each comprise 30 events, while participating schools will compete for honours in football.

Driven by Seun Akinbohun, Busola Tejumola, and Aderoju Ope-Ajayi, the Pan African School Games was established to go beyond conventional school sports by creating opportunities that combine athletic excellence, education, career development, and cultural exchange.

FIFA to propose distributing $25m per country over four years

FIFA is expected to propose distributing more than $6 billion back into football between 2027 and 2030, more than double the amount previously earmarked for the period, *The Athletic* reported yesterday via *aa.com.tr*.

Under the proposal, each of FIFA's 211 member associations would receive $25 million over the four-year cycle, up from a planned $10 million, while each of the six continental confederations would receive $99 million.

To finance the increase, FIFA would distribute more than $3.5 billion from its financial reserves, citing the commercial success of the expanded 48-team World Cup, according to the report.

The FIFA Council is expected to discuss the plan today.

If approved, it would undergo consultations before potentially being finalised by the council in December, with final approval required at the FIFA Congress next March.

Itauma to return in January after Filip Hrgovic defeat

MOSES Itauma will return to the ring in January in time to launch his bid to become king of the heavyweight division by the end of 2027, reports *espn.com*.

Queensberry Promotions boss Frank Warren has revealed that Itauma will make his comeback against a well-known fighter as he looks to rebuild after suffering the first defeat of his career against Filip Hrgovic in August.

The explosive 21-year-old dominated the first half of the bout only to run out of steam, enabling Hrgovic to force a ninth-round stoppage and claim the vacant IBF world title.

Warren is plotting a series of fights for next year involving the likes of Daniel Dubois, Fabio Wardley, Hrgovic and Agit Kabayel that will determine who is the number one heavyweight - and he wants Itauma to be involved.

"Moses will be back in January, if not before, but January's looking like the date," Warren said.

"He wanted a rematch with Filip, which couldn't be done because Filip's got Frank Sanchez, who had agreed to step aside.

UEFA Champions League

'Barcelona maintained aggressive defensive line to neutralise Osimhen's threat'

BARCELONA knew their Champions League trip to Istanbul would test Hansi Flick's side, particularly with Victor Osimhen returning from injury just days before the match, reports *barcauniversal.com*.

However, the Nigerian striker ended the evening struggling to make an impact as Barça secured an emphatic 4-1 victory over Galatasaray.

Osimhen arrived as one of the Turkish side's biggest attacking threats, but Barcelona's defensive organisation repeatedly denied him the space he needed to threaten Joan García's goal.

As such, the striker endured a difficult night, with his statistics explaining how effectively Flick's team neutralised him.

Barcelona's decision to maintain an aggressive defensive line proved crucial.

Rather than retreating to protect the space behind their centre-backs, Flick's side repeatedly caught Osimhen offside, disrupting Galatasaray's attempts to exploit his pace and movement.

Notably, the Nigerian was flagged offside six times, while managing just three attempted passes, two completed passes and three successful duels from nine contests.

Eto'o, Yahya, Diallo jostle to replace Motsepe as CAF president

PRESIDENT of the Cameroon Football Association (FECAFOOT), Samuel Eto'o, is one of the top contenders rumoured to be preparing for a run on the CAF presidency, which will be vacated soon by the incumbent, Patrice Motsepe, reports *insideworldfootball.com*.

The South African billionaire has said he does not intend to seek a third term when his mandate expires in 2029, and potential successors are already beginning to circle.

Others rumoured to be eyeing the post are Mauritania's Ahmed Yahya and Côte d'Ivoire federation chief Yacine Idriss Diallo.

This comes as CAF is preparing to reverse course on the Africa Cup of Nations and restore its biennial cycle, barely 10 months after Motsepe announced that the continent's flagship tournament would move to every four years.

SOLUTION

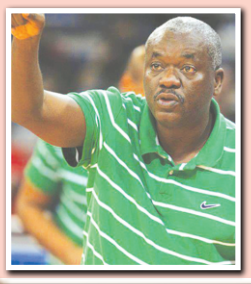
E	D	U	C	A	T	E		A	S	K
X		N		N		L	A	G		A
E	I	D		I	C	E		L	A	N
R		E		N		M	B	O		K
T	E	R	M	I	T	E		W	E	E
	K		B		E		A		B	
L	O	G		P	L	A	T	E	A	U
A		R	N	A		L		L		N
P	E	A		S	P	A		O	B	I
A		C	A	T		R		P		T
I	R	E		A	I	M	L	E	S	S

TheGuardian
Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria 08136370421 Guardiannigeria

Thursday, October 15, 2026

Court adjourns suit over legality of NBBF elective congress to November 3 /31



Can NBBF elective congress fix a 16-year fractured hoop?

The Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) has been ravaged by an internal crisis that has plagued it for over 16 years. ***CHRISTIAN OKPARA*** *reports that something must yield for peace to return to the body, which holds its elective congress in Abuja today.*

AMONG top basketball-playing countries, the hoops game is big business, which confers many advantages on managers, including financial influence and the power to advance their interests, such as getting their players or wards into the prestigious NBA or American colleges.

The quest to control these enormous powers has often caused friction among managers and aspiring officials, to the extent that they resort to different strategies to either hold on to power or get into power.

In Nigeria, such power struggles have often had damaging effects on the game.

For instance, since 2009, when Da Jacob Buba Gyang, a former Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Customs Service, left office as NBBF president, succession to the throne has become a four-year cycle of crises that divides stakeholders in the sport to the extent that some of them boycott activities of the federation until another election cycle.

The question many outsiders ask is, "Why are people desperate to be part of the NBBF governing circle?" According to some stakeholders, there are many benefits to serving on the federation's board; this is even more so when one becomes the president of the federation, controlling enormous resources in the business.

In the 2025 season, the NBBF received total revenue of N598 million, comprising a N488 million government subvention and N110 million from Zenith Bank. This is apart from the subvention from FIBA, basketball's world governing body, revenue from sponsorship deals with Total and other affiliates, as well as some extra-budgetary allocation for the men and women's FIBA Afrobasket championships, World Cup qualifiers and the women's World Cup.



The NBBF crisis is all about the fight to control Nigerian basketball.

Being on the board of the federation comes with visibility that brings international exposure to some board members, who use their position to interact with their counterparts from other countries and, in some cases, to present opportunities to cut collective and personal deals.

For the NBBF president, the opportunities are endless.

The election for a new executive committee to manage the NBBF for the next four years is taking place today, and there are signs that the body is already gearing up for another four years of leadership crisis.

The signs began to manifest at the last extraordinary congress of the federation in Yola, Adamawa State.

Apart from the allegation that the event was moved to Yola to ensure that those opposed to the outgoing leadership did not attend, there were questions about the legality and constitutional basis of the extraordinary congress held on September 25.

> "The fight is more about ego, power and control, but truly many are also looking at how they can manipulate the system to enrich themselves."

One of those opposed to the extraordinary congress was former national team coach, Ayodele Bakare, who attended the congress as a delegate.

In his personal account of the event, titled "The Memoirs of a Delegate to the 2026 NBBF Extraordinary Congress," Bakare said that questions were raised over the validity of the congress.

He cited Article 20.2, which provides for an Ordinary Congress to be held yearly, with every fourth ordinary congress serving as an elective congress.

Bakare also questioned the continued exclusion of some board members by the leadership, saying that, in his account, no written evidence of resignation had been provided to contradict claims by some affected members that they had never resigned.

On the elections, Bakare questioned whether proceeding with an electoral process that he believes could face constitutional challenges would provide a lasting solution to the recurring disputes surrounding NBBF elections.

He warned against rushing into an election that could subsequently face legal or constitutional challenges.

Bakare also questioned the management of the federation's finances, alleging that delegates were asked to approve the financial accounts before being given the opportunity to raise questions about them.

He quoted a statement made from the floor of the Congress as saying: "Let us first vote to accept the accounts presented, and then we can ask any questions later."

Bakare said he and other delegates objected to the procedure but claimed the motion was nevertheless put to a vote and passed, resulting in the financial statements being entered into the official records as approved by Congress.

The Comets Basketball Club president described the process as inconsistent with what he considers proper financial accountability, stressing that his concerns were based on more than three decades of experience in managing sporting and other organisations.

Bakare also questioned the timing of the financial presentation, claiming that the accounts and auditor's presentation were completed in a relatively short period despite the volume of information supposedly contained in the documents.

His account also raised a broader constitutional issue. Bakare said that the Yola gathering was the first Congress held since the inauguration of the current NBBF board, despite provisions requiring the Congress to meet yearly and receive financial statements.

He further explained that some delegates were last-minute replacements for state chairmen and suggested that this affected the voting process.

Many stakeholders believe that Bakare's stance on the extraordinary congress contributed to his disqualification from contesting the presidency of the federation.

The electoral committee disqualified the former D'Tigers' coach "for submitting his nomination form 12 minutes after the stipulated deadline on the due date."

The development has raised questions about the application of the electoral guidelines, particularly following the committee's decision to grant another presidential aspirant, Igoche Mark, an extension to fulfil a documentation requirement.

Mark, who reportedly submitted his nomination form without attaching his tax clearance certificate, was given until last Monday to provide the outstanding document.



Outgoing NBBF President, Musa Kida

The contrasting decisions have drawn attention to the committee's handling of nomination requirements ahead of the polls.

Many of the opposing stakeholders allege that Bakare was disqualified to pave the way for a smooth ride for the Director General of the Nigeria Energy Commission, Dr Abdullahi Mustapha, who is said to be incumbent president Musa Kida's preferred successor.

Apart from Mustapha, other candidates for the NBBF presidency are former NBA star, Ejike Ugboaja; third vice president of the Nigeria Olympic Committee, Olumide Oyedeji, who is also a former national team captain and NBA star; renowned basketball promoter and club owner, Igoche Mark; and Bakare, who until yesterday was said to be insisting that he is still in the race.

Some of the stakeholders have threatened that there would be no election if the Kida-led board insists on handing over the board to his preferred candidate, Dr Mustapha, "by all means possible."

One of the stakeholders challenged the electoral process, alleging that "they have skewed the processes, making it difficult for any other person to even get the form, let alone endorsements, from our zones.

"Stakeholders have been heavily disenfranchised, inducements are rampant, and that paves the way for the impositions they plan to execute on October 15."

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

Published by The Guardian Group, Rutam House, Isolo, Lagos Tel: 01-4489600
Abuja Office: Plot 415 Olu Awotesu Street, Off Idris Ibrahim Crescent, Off Obafemi Awolowo Way, Jabi District, Abuja. Tel: 08065290744
Advert Hotlines: 01-4489619, 08023015115 08031930899, advert@guardian.ng; Circulation Hotline: 07038746449
All correspondence to Guardian Newspapers Limited, P.M.B. 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria.
E-mail:Letters@guardian.ng; www.guardian.ng
Editor:
OLUWAFEMI F. ADEKOYA
ABC (ISSN NO 0189-5125)

What TheGuardian stands for
Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

- *The Guardian* is an independent newspaper, established for the purpose of presenting balanced coverage of events, and of promoting the best interests of Nigeria. It owes allegiance to no political party, ethnic, community, religious or other interest groups. Its primary commitment is to the integrity and sovereignty of the Federation of Nigeria, and beyond that, to the unity and sovereignty of Africa.
- *The Guardian* will at all times uphold the need for justice, probity in public life, equal access to the nation's resources and equal protection under the law of Nigeria for all citizens.
- *The Guardian* journalist must whole-heartedly subscribe to the 1979 Code of Conduct for Nigerian journalists as amended in 1998.
- *The Guardian* believes, therefore, that it is the moral duty of every journalist to have respect for the truth and to publish or prepare for publication only the truth and to the best of his knowledge.
- It is the duty of *The Guardian* journalist to resist and refrain from earning other than his just salary or allowances from his employers: not to demand, and to refuse any reward if offered in cash or kind for publishing news or comments.
- The motto of *The Guardian* is Conscience Nurtured by Truth.

Please report any of our erring journalists to these dedicated telephone numbers: 014489600, 07098147948, 07098147951 Or our e-mail: Complaints@guardian.ng