

Okpebholo bags e-govt governor of the year award

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has been honoured as the e-Government Governor of the Year – Digital Transformation at the Nigeria e-Government Excellence Awards 2026, in recognition of his administration's

strides in advancing digital governance and transforming public service delivery in the state.

The prestigious award, according to the organisers, underscores the growing impact of the Okpebholo administration's digital transformation initiatives and its commitment to deploying technology as a catalyst for efficient, transparent

and accessible governance.

In a letter conveying the honour to the governor, the organising committee of the Nigeria e-Government Excellence Awards said Okpebholo emerged the winner after the conclusion of the awards' voting exercise on August 15, 2026.

The organisers said the outcome reflected the confidence

and endorsement of 11,361 unique voters who participated in the exercise.

The recognition was not, however, limited to the governor, as Edo State recorded an impressive sweep across six additional categories, further highlighting the state's growing profile in digital governance and technology-driven public

administration.

Among the other awards won by Edo State were Best State Business Enabling Environment Award; Best State Social Service Digitalisation Award; Public Sector CEO e-Government (State) Award; State Digital Transformation

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#200

Tinubu declares reforms on track as Nigeria's GDP hits 4.43%

TALBORT HOPE

ABUJA

President Bola Tinubu has described Nigeria's 4.43 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the second quarter of 2026 as a major indication that the economic reforms of his administration are beginning to produce visible results.

The President's reaction followed the latest GDP report

released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which showed that the Nigerian economy expanded by 4.43 per cent in Q2 2026, representing a modest improvement over the 4.23 per cent growth recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2025.

The development places renewed attention on the government's economic reform programme, which has faced criticism over its effect on the

purchasing power and living conditions of millions of Nigerians.

According to the NBS figures, the latest growth was driven by performances across major sectors of the economy, including agriculture, manufacturing, oil and gas and services. The services sector retained its position as the largest contributor to the country's aggregate economic output.

In nominal terms, Nigeria's

GDP also recorded a substantial increase, rising to N119.27 trillion in the second quarter of 2026 from N100.7 trillion recorded in Q2 2025. The increase represents an 18.43 per cent growth in nominal GDP.

Reacting to the figures in a statement issued by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, in Abuja, Tinubu said the latest performance was evidence that the difficult decisions taken by

his administration were gradually stabilising the Nigerian economy.

The President said his administration had spent the past three years implementing reforms considered necessary to reposition the economy and establish the foundation for sustainable growth.

"Now the economy is stabilised, and we have laid the foundation for a prosperous nation," Tinubu said.

He maintained that the reforms were not introduced to deliberately inflict hardship on Nigerians but were aimed at creating an economic structure capable of delivering sustainable prosperity.

Tinubu said the latest economic indicators had strengthened his administration's belief that the Renewed Hope Agenda was producing measurable results.

"The results of the efforts are becoming very clear to all: The Renewed Hope Agenda is working," he said.

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PRESENTATION OF AWARD AND 2026 HAJJ REPORT:

From right: Governor Monday Okpebholo; HRH Mallam Ali D. Sulayman, the Oghieaga of Igbie; Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, Chairman, Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board; and Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkibir, Executive Secretary, Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, during the presentation of the Board's 2026 Hajj report and the NAHCON award to Edo State.

Edo Assembly extends legislative session by 11 days

RAYMOND OSOGBE

BENIN CITY

The Edo State House of Assembly has extended its legislative calendar by 11 days to enable the lawmakers conclude pending legislative business before the end of the current session.

The decision was taken yesterday during plenary in Benin City following a motion moved by the House Majority Leader, Hon. Ojezelle Osezua Sunday, representing Esan South-East Constituency.

Ojezelle told the House that the extension had become imperative due to the volume of legislative matters still awaiting consideration, stressing

that the additional sitting days would provide the lawmakers with sufficient time to deal with the outstanding issues.

He explained that the 11-day extension would bring the total number of plenary sessions to 62 in the last quarter of the current legislative session.

The Majority Leader emphasised that the extension was not being sought for convenience or as a matter of routine, but was necessitated by the need to complete important legislative assignments before the session comes to an end.

The motion was seconded by Hon. Okogbe Donald, representing Akoko-Edo II Constituency.

Other lawmakers who contributed to the debate also

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Okpebholo constitutes 26-member Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board

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Sexual assaults happening almost every day in Ceuta, says prosecutors

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NEWS

Okpebholo constitutes 26-member Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board

BERNADETTE IDALU

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has approved the constitution of a 26-member Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, with Alhaji Musa Uduimo appointed as Chairman.

The appointment, which is aimed at strengthening the administration and welfare of Muslim pilgrims in the state, was contained in a Government Special Announcement issued

by the Secretary to the State Government, Umar Musa Ikhilor, Esq., on August 31, 2026.

Abdulkabir M. Eranga was appointed Secretary of the board.

Other members are Alhaji Abdul Aziz Igbinidu, Hajia Usenat Audu Esohe, Alhaji Musa Isiwele, Hajiya Rabi Abiri, Ahmed Evbareke, Mallam Naasir Usman, Sheikh Sirajudeen Muhammed, Mallam Omosa Shittu Musa and Sheikh Abdul-Ali Abdulqadir Momoh.

Others are Mallam Ismail Ibrahim, Alhaji Muhammed

Otokiti, Alhaji Buhari Aideghe-se, Mallam Abdullahi Aminu, Hajia Zuliatu Bello Osagie, Adams Inusa Oshiohkhamele, Sanni Muhammad, Mulikat Iyoha Oare, Mallam Uthman Abu, Mallam Hassan Mahadi, Alhaji Prince Isah Momodu,

Mallam Mukhtar Abdulkadir, Prince Afe Aliru Momoh, Abdul Rahman Momodu JP and Arc. Mamud Oyarelemi.

The new board is expected to coordinate matters relating to Muslim pilgrimage in Edo State, with particular attention

to the welfare, organisation and effective representation of pilgrims from the state.

The government announcement stated that the board would be inaugurated by Governor Okpebholo on a date to be announced later.

The constitution of the board is expected to provide a renewed institutional framework for the coordination of pilgrimage activities and the welfare of Muslim faithful participating in pilgrimage programmes through the state.

Tinubu declares reforms on...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

The President cited Nigeria's reported trade surpluses, improved foreign reserves, stronger credit ratings and increased infrastructure investments as evidence of what he described as a gradual economic turnaround.

He further disclosed that the country's oil and gas production had continued to improve, while investors who previously withdrew from the Nigerian market were beginning to return.

"Because of those tough decisions, today Nigeria has trade surpluses. Our foreign reserves are at their highest in 17 years," Tinubu said.

He also pointed to ongoing

investments in roads, railways and major highways as part of efforts to strengthen the country's infrastructure and support economic activities.

Beyond the headline GDP figures, Tinubu highlighted developments in education and access to credit as other areas where his administration believed its policies were beginning to have an impact.

He noted that universities had continued academic activities without the prolonged strikes that had disrupted the education system in previous years, while the Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) was expanding access to higher education through student loans.



FELLOWSHIP SESSION:

The Speaker, Edo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Yekini Idaiyi, (8th from left) Flanked on his left by Hon Sunday Ojiezele, Majority Leader of the House and Alhaji Yahaya Omogbai, Clerk of the house. From the right of the Speaker is Rt. Hon. Atu Evbaguehita, Deputy Speaker of the House and Hon. Eric Allison Okaka. Far right is Hon. Donald Okogbe and Hon. Bright Iyamu in a group photograph with members and staff of the house, during the monthly prayer fellowship session of the Edo State House of Assembly...yesterday.

PHOTO: GODWIN ISEGUAN

Okpebholo bags e-govt governor...

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Champion Award; and Digital Inclusion & Rural Access (Healthcare) Award.

The multiple recognitions placed Edo among the leading states in the country in the deployment of digital solutions to improve governance, strengthen public institutions and expand access to essential services.

Other Edo State personalities and institutions recognised by the organisers include the Edo State Health Insurance Commission; Lucky Enemah-Enegbheni; Edo State Information and Communications Technology Agency (EdoICTA); Edo Healthcare Regulation and Monitoring Agency (EDOHRMA); and Dr. Anthony Osas Okungbowa, who was named Public Sector CIO/CTO of the Year (State).

The honours are expected to further reinforce the state government's digitalisation drive, particularly its efforts to modernise public institutions and make government services more accessible to citizens through technology.

The award ceremony is scheduled to hold on September 10, 2026, at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Ikeja, Lagos, where Governor Okpebholo and other award recipients will be formally honoured.

The recognition comes as Edo continues to deepen its digital governance architecture, with technology increasingly becoming a key instrument in the administration's efforts to improve service delivery, strengthen institutional efficiency and create a more responsive government.

Okpebholo commends 2026 Hajj performance, pledges support for 2027 exercise

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has commended the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board for what he described as its outstanding performance during the 2026 Hajj exercise, assuring the board of his administration's continued support for a successful 2027 pilgrimage.

Governor Okpebholo gave the commendation on Tuesday when he received the report of the 2026 Hajj exercise from the leadership of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board at the Government House, Benin City.

The governor, who said he personally followed the activities of the pilgrims and the

board throughout the pilgrimage, congratulated the team on the award presented to Edo State by the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON) in recognition of its patience, perseverance and outstanding coordination.

"I congratulate you for the award. I think you have done very well because I followed up everything," the governor said.

Okpebholo urged the board to commence preparations for the 2027 Hajj early, assuring it of the necessary support from his administration to consolidate the gains recorded during the 2026 exercise.

"I urge you to begin early with the preparation for the 2027 Hajj exercise. You will have my support in everything that is re-

quired to improve on it. I know you will do better," he said.

The report was presented by a delegation led by the Amirul Hajj, HRH Mallam Ali D. Sulayman, the Oghieaga of Ivbie. Other members of the delegation included the Chairman of the Edo State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mallam Musa Muhammad Uduimoh, and the Executive Secretary, Alhaji Eranga Abdulkabir Muhammadkadir.

Presenting the report, the Amirul Hajj expressed appreciation to Governor Okpebholo for his continued support for the welfare of Muslims and pilgrims in the state.

He described the 2026 Hajj as successful, attributing part of the achievement to the support and logistics provided by the

state government.

"Your Excellency, we are here to present the report for the 2026 Hajj in preparation for the 2027 Hajj. We had a good Hajj. Edo State won an award from the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria in recognition of its patience, perseverance and outstanding coordination," he said.

HRH Ali D. Sulayman specifically commended the governor for improving transportation arrangements for pilgrims, noting that the state government had provided vehicles to convey pilgrims between Benin and Lagos during the previous Hajj exercise.

According to him, the transportation support was expanded during the 2026 pilgrimage, with government vehicles conveying pilgrims from Lagos to their respective senatorial districts.

Edo Assembly extends legislative...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

supported the proposal, noting the importance of giving adequate attention to bills and other matters pending before the House.

When the motion was put to vote, it was overwhelmingly adopted by the lawmakers.

In a related development, the House, by a majority decision, resolved to permanently stand down the Constituency and Other Agencies Bill, which was scheduled for second reading.

The lawmakers also stepped

down a bill seeking to establish the Edo State Secondary School Board.

The motion to step down the bill was moved by Hon. Okogbe Donald and seconded by Hon. Asosere, representing Ikpoba-Okha Constituency.

The sitting was later brought to a close following a motion for adjournment moved by Hon. Agabi Kingsley and seconded by the House Minority Leader, Hon. Natasha Osawaru Idibia.

The House subsequently adjourned plenary to Monday, September 7, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

NEPL/Seplat JV to train 500 Edo teachers, targets improved learning outcomes

BENIN CITY

The NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL)/Seplat Energy Joint Venture has announced plans to train 500 teachers across Edo State as part of efforts to strengthen teaching capacity and improve learning outcomes in schools.

The initiative was disclosed in Benin City by Chioma Afe, Director, External Affairs and Social Performance, Seplat En-

ergy Plc, who was represented by Esther Icha, General Manager, Corporate Social Investment and Social Performance, during the onboarding workshop for the 2026 Seplat Teachers Empowerment Programme (STEP).

The 2026 STEP programme represents a significant expansion of the initiative, which over the past six years has trained more than 2,000 teachers and education evaluators across Edo, Delta and Imo states.

Under the latest programme, 500 teachers drawn from schools across Edo State will participate in the capacity-building initiative designed to equip educators with contemporary teaching skills, learning resources and professional development opportunities.

Afe said the Seplat Energy JV remained committed to investing in education because of its critical role in nation-building, noting that teachers had a major responsibility in shaping the future of young people.

"Seplat is very committed to education. It's critical to nation building, and everybody that is here has contributed in one way or the other to the life of one student or one child," she said.

She explained that the rapid changes taking place in education, including evolving curricula, technology and teaching methodologies, made continuous professional development essential for teachers.

"Education is changing daily. This programme is to equip you with what you need to meet the changing trends," Afe said.

NEWS

PenCom engages Lagos Govt over delayed pension increases for CPS retirees

LAGOS

AYENOMOH WINNER
ALUKHEI, OGBUNKWU
NKEM EVELYN AND SULE
OSAGIE MARVELLOUS

The National Pension Commission, PenCom, has commenced dis-

cussions with the Lagos State Government and the Lagos State Pension Commission, LASPEC, over delays in the payment of pension increases and wage awards to retirees under the Contributory Pension Scheme, CPS.

PenCom disclosed this in a statement on Monday, fol-

lowing protests by pensioners in Lagos who raised concerns over the delay in implementing approved adjustments to their benefits.

Members of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners and CPS retirees had staged a protest at Lagos House and the Lagos State House of Assembly

in Ikeja on Monday. They demanded the payment of pension increases, wage awards, outstanding arrears and other benefits.

The protest turned tense after police officers reportedly fired tear gas to disperse some of the demonstrators.

In its response, PenCom said it recognised the importance of ensuring that retirees receive all benefits due to them and acknowledged concerns

arising from the delay.

“PenCom recognises the importance of ensuring that retirees receive all benefits legitimately due to them and appreciates the concerns arising from delays in the implementation of any approved pension adjustments,” the Commission stated.

According to the regulator, engagements are ongoing with the Lagos State Government and LASPEC on the administration of pensions under the CPS, particularly the extension

of appropriate adjustments to eligible retirees.

“PenCom has engaged with the Lagos State Government and the Lagos State Pension Commission on matters related to administering pensions under the CPS, including the need to extend appropriate pension adjustments to eligible CPS retirees,” it said.

PenCom explained that implementing pension increases under the CPS involves several processes before payment can be made.

**PLENARY SESSION:**

Hon. Sunday Aghedo, member representing Ovia South West Constituency, Edo State House of Assembly (left) and Hon. Addeh Isibor member representing Esan North East Constituency 1 during the House Plenary Session recently.

PHOTO GODWIN ISEGUAN

Entertainers face widening insurance protection gap

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH,
NKEM EVELYN AND DAVID
MIRACLE

LAGOS

Behind the applause, red carpets and sold-out shows, Nigerian entertainers are navigating a silent crisis: low insurance coverage amid high health, financial and professional risks.

From musicians and actors to DJs, visual artists and film crews, practitioners face frequent travel, expensive equipment, irregular income and unpredictable health challenges. Yet insurance adoption across the industry remains abysmally low.

Stakeholders blame poor

awareness, misconceptions and a culture that prioritises treatment over prevention for the gap.

Veteran Jùjú musician, Sir Shina Peters, said a medical scare forced him to rethink his approach to health.

“At a point in my career, the Medical Doctors Association advised that I reduce or stop performing because the level of performance and workload had become a significant health risk,” he told the News Agency of Nigeria.

“That experience made me take my health and wellbeing much more seriously. As part of the measures I adopted, I embraced health insurance, alongside having access to exclusive and consistent healthcare.”

Peters, who described his

experience with insurers as positive, urged colleagues to prioritise preventive healthcare and regular medical checks. He also called on insurers to design products tailored to the peculiar risks of entertainers.

The National President of the Actors Guild of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Yakubu, said only 40 per cent of AGN members have enrolled in the guild’s Health Maintenance Organisation scheme.

The guild also operates group accident and “onset” insurance for film productions, which covers cast and crew during shooting. He said it was made compulsory by linking it to registration and validation.

Yakubu attributed low HMO

uptake to poor attitudes toward preventive care, noting that members could use it for routine checks even when not ill. He announced plans for another sensitisation drive to boost enrolment.

He cited past difficulties in claiming benefits after the death of a member and an executive because the cases fell outside policy terms, underscoring the need for industry-specific products.

“Health is wealth. Don’t wait until you are broken down before you begin to know that you must manage your health,” Yakubu said. He recommended quarterly medical checks and short-term cover for film productions.

EFCC dismisses over 40 officials for corruption, charges several others in court

OGBUNKWU NKEM EVELYN
ABUJA

The Economic and Financial Crime Commission has dismissed over 40 officials for corruption, charges several others in court.

This was disclosed by Ola Olukoyede who spoke to journalists on Monday at the EFCC headquarters in Abuja during a media briefing on the agency’s scorecard since he assumed leadership.

He disclosed that the commission had also initiated court cases against more than five of the affected workers.

“In the past two and a half to three years of my leadership, I have ordered the termination of over 40 staff members on grounds of corruption and financial misconduct. More than five of them are currently undergoing prosecution,” Olukoyede stated.

“When we apprehend people from other government bodies for the same offences, investigate them, and arraign them, why should we simply remove someone within our own ranks without also taking legal action?”

The EFCC boss said some of the sacked personnel are al-

ready standing trial, while case files for the others are being prepared for arraignment.

“You can track those proceedings in court; they are matters of public record,” he added.

Olukoyede further announced that the commission’s former Department of Internal Affairs has been renamed the Department of Ethics and Integrity.

According to him, the change was designed to signal the agency’s resolve to pursue “internal house-cleaning” and uphold higher standards.

He explained that the new department will focus on pre-

vention, compliance monitoring, and enforcing professional conduct among staff.

“We cannot credibly fight graft outside if we tolerate it inside. This renaming is deliberate to show we are serious about integrity,” he said.

The chairman revealed that the EFCC has rolled out a gift policy for all employees as part of broader reforms to strengthen transparency.

Under the new rules, personnel will be required to declare assets above a prescribed value, including donations and gifts received from relatives living abroad.

Governor Okpebholo mourns Chief Dan Osi Orbih

Edo State Governor Senator Monday Okpebholo has expressed deep condolences to the Orbih family on the loss of their son, Chief Dan Osi Orbih, Chairman of the Governing Council of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, describing him as a bridge-builder and a voice of reason.

Reflecting on his dedication to institutional leadership and educational excellence, the governor described Orbih’s death as a significant loss to his family, Edo State, and the university community.

The governor, described Chief Orbih as an astute po-

litical leader and in his service as AAU Governing Council Chairman, Chief Orbih demonstrated unwavering commitment to advancing the university’s developmental agenda and played an instrumental role in strengthening ties between the state government and the institution.

Governor Okpebholo prayed that the Almighty would grant the family, friends, and colleagues the fortitude to bear this loss, and that Chief Orbih’s legacy of service would continue to inspire generations of students and educators in Edo State.



DAN OSI ORBIH

Troops destroy 21 illegal refineries, recover 696,800 litres

OSAHENIRO OFUWENGBE

ABUJA

Nigerian troops have dismantled 21 illegal refining sites and recovered more than 696,800 litres of petroleum products during operations against crude oil theft and illegal refining activities in the Niger Delta.

The Defence Headquarters disclosed this on Monday, August 31, 2026, during its monthly operational briefing in Abuja. The operations were conducted throughout August as part of the military’s efforts to protect the country’s critical petroleum assets and disrupt activities described as economic sabotage.

According to the Director of Defence Media Operations, Major General Michael Onoja, troops operating under Operation Delta Safe sustained

coordinated operations against kidnapping, arms trafficking, crude oil theft, illegal bunkering and illegal refining across Bayelsa, Edo, Delta and Rivers states.

The military said the operations resulted in the arrest of 43 criminals and the rescue of 38 civilians. Troops also targeted illegal refining camps, crude oil storage facilities, waterways and other locations allegedly being used by oil thieves and operators of illegal refineries.

In Rivers State, troops dismantled three reactivated illegal refining sites in the Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni axis between August 1 and 2. The operation led to the recovery of about 61,000 litres of suspected stolen petroleum products, comprising 43,000 litres of suspected stolen crude oil and 18,000 litres of illegally refined Automotive Gas Oil.

NEWS

INEC rejects NDC claim of candidate 'smuggling'

CAROLINE AMEH

BENIN CITY

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has dismissed allegations by the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) that its officials manipulated the party's candidate list for the 2027 general elections.

INEC described the allegation as false, particularly the claim that some candidates were allegedly inserted into the party's list for State House

of Assembly constituencies in Anambra State.

The commission said its electronic and documentary records could establish how the disputed names were submitted and uploaded to its candidate nomination platform.

INEC's Chief Press Secretary and Media Adviser to the Chairman, Adedayo Oketola, made the clarification while speaking with journalists in Abuja.

Oketola said political parties, rather than INEC, are re-

sponsible for nominating candidates and submitting their particulars to the commission.

He stressed that the commission has no legal authority to nominate candidates for political parties or replace candidates validly nominated in accordance with the law.

"Similarly, the commission does not possess the legal authority to select a candidate for a political party or substitute its own preferred candidate for a person validly nominated by a political party in accordance

with the law," he said

According to Oketola, political parties submit candidates' details through the INEC candidate nomination portal using access credentials provided to them by the commission.

He explained that activities carried out on the portal are electronically recorded, creating a digital trail through which the source and history of entries can be established.

He therefore urged the NDC and other stakeholders to rely on verifiable electronic and

documentary evidence rather than speculation when investigating how particular candidates' names appeared on the platform.

"The allegation that officials of the commission introduced or 'smuggled' candidates into the NDC's list is not a matter that should be determined by speculation," Oketola said.

He added that records relating to the affected constituencies could be examined to establish the facts.

The commission also explained that monitoring a political party's primary does not confer on INEC the power to determine who emerges as the party's candidate.

Oketola said disputes arising from party primaries, appeals or attempts to alter nominations must be handled in accordance with the Electoral Act 2026 and other relevant laws.

He maintained that INEC could not assume the role of a political party by selecting candidates or disregarding the statutory requirements governing nominations and submission of candidates.

Reacting specifically to the allegation that INEC officials

obtained Form EC9 directly from individual aspirants and uploaded their details without the authorisation of the NDC, Oketola described the claim as serious.

He said the relevant records would be examined and challenged the party to provide evidence against any specific INEC official alleged to have been involved.

"Any credible allegation of misconduct by an official of the commission will be investigated in accordance with established procedures," he said.

The commission reiterated that it had no interest in determining which individuals emerge as candidates of political parties.

Oketola said INEC's responsibility was to administer elections impartially and in accordance with the Constitution, Electoral Act and applicable regulations.

He further reminded political parties that they are responsible for ensuring that their internal nomination processes, appeals and submission of candidates through the INEC portal comply with the law and prescribed timelines.



NEWS BRIEFING:

Director Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Michael Onoja, exchanging pleasantries with newsmen after the end of the month news briefing by the director on the operational successes of the armed forces across the nation, in Abuja on Tuesday.

#587bn wiped off Nigerian stock market in August

SULE OSAGIE MARVELLOUS

ABUJA

Nigeria's equities market closed August on a weaker note, shedding about N587 billion in market capitalisation as a transition to faster trade settlement, profit-taking and cautious foreign participation weighed on investor sentiment.

Market capitalisation fell from N158.326 trillion at the beginning of the month to N157.739 trillion at the close of trading, while the NGX All-Share Index declined by 1,084.29 points, representing a 0.44 per cent drop, from 245,283.68 to 244,199.39 points.

Trading during the month was largely bearish, with the market recording 13 losing sessions and only seven sessions of gains out of 20 trading days.

However, the headline loss at the end of August does not fully capture the scale of the market's volatility during the month. The equities market reached a near-record level of 248,529.75 points on August 10 before a sharp reversal triggered by profit-taking in major stocks.

The sell-off intensified over the following days, wiping about N5.9 trillion from market capitalisation between August 10 and August 21. BUA

Foods and MTN Nigeria were among the major stocks that contributed significantly to the decline during the period.

By August 21, the All-Share Index had fallen to 239,351.16 points, its lowest level since July 8, before the market staged a late recovery.

A major factor behind the market's difficult month was Nigeria's transition from the traditional T+2 settlement system to T+1, which took effect on June 1, 2026. Under the new arrangement, securities transactions are completed one business day after execution instead of two.

The reform is designed to re-

duce settlement risk, improve market efficiency and bring Nigeria's capital market closer to international standards. However, its implementation placed additional pressure on brokers, custodians, banks and international investors to adjust their funding and operational procedures.

Analysts noted that some investors faced concerns over pre-funding requirements and uncertainty surrounding settlement-related debit alerts. These issues contributed to caution among foreign institutional investors, whose participation remained relatively subdued during the month.

\$947m July remittances highest monthly inflow – CBN

SULE OSAGIE MARVELLOUS

ABUJA

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) says the country recorded 947 million dollars in remittance inflows through International Money Transfer Operators (IMTOs) in July.

The Governor of the CBN, Olayemi Cardoso, said this in a statement by the corporate communications department on Sunday in Abuja.

According to Cardoso, the July remittances were the highest monthly inflow ever recorded through formal channels and approaching the one billion dollars monthly target set by the CBN.

"IMTO inflows reached 3.8 billion dollars in the first seven months of 2026, 50.2 per cent higher than the same period in 2025, pointing to a significant strengthening in flows through formal channels.

"The increase follows a series of reforms by the CBN aimed at making formal remittance channels more competitive, transparent and accessible.

"These include a move to a more market-determined exchange rate, reforms to the regulatory framework for IMTOs, and the introduction of the Non-Resident Bank Verification Number (NRBVN)," he said.

He said that the apex bank also embarked on closer engagement with IMTOs, banks, and Nigerian diaspora communities.

"More recently, the CBN has strengthened requirements for remittance transactions to be routed through designated settlement accounts with author-

ised dealer banks," he said.

He said that the significance extended beyond the headline figure.

According to the CBN governor, increasing diaspora flows through formal channels boosts foreign-exchange liquidity and transparency, supports households and investment, and strengthens Nigeria's external financing position.

"When we set a clear ambition to reach one billion dollars a month in remittance inflows through formal channels nearly two years ago, some people thought we were dreaming.

"At 947 million dollars in July, we are now approaching that milestone," he said.

Cardoso said that while individual monthly figures would naturally vary, the CBN's focus was on the broader trajectory and on sustaining the shift towards formal channels.

He said that the significant increase in inflows recorded so far in 2026 pointed to the growing impact of reforms designed to make formal remittance channels more competitive, accessible and transparent.

He said that the CBN was building on this momentum by deepening engagement with Nigerian diaspora communities and financial-sector partners across key remittance corridors.

"As part of its wider international engagements, the Bank will continue to use opportunities in major global financial centres to engage diaspora communities, IMTOs, banks and other stakeholders.

Military intensifies crackdown on oil theft, deactivates 21 illegal refining sites, recovers 696,800 liter of crude

ABUJA

The Nigerian military has intensified its operations against crude oil theft and illegal oil refining activities across the country, deactivating 21 illegal refining sites and recovering 696,800 litres of stolen crude oil, according to the Defence Headquarters.

The development was disclosed by the Defence Headquarters as part of the military's ongoing efforts to protect the nation's critical oil infrastructure, disrupt criminal networks involved in oil theft and deny economic saboteurs access to

the country's natural resources.

The military said the operations were conducted in different areas identified as hotspots for crude oil theft and illegal refining, with troops targeting facilities and locations allegedly being used by criminal elements to siphon crude oil and process it illegally.

According to the DHQ, the latest operations demonstrate the military's continued commitment to tackling activities that threaten Nigeria's economy and undermine legitimate oil production.

Illegal oil refining and crude oil theft have remained major concerns in the Niger Delta,

where criminal groups have continued to exploit pipelines and other oil infrastructure to steal petroleum resources.

The activities have not only resulted in significant revenue losses for the country but have also contributed to environmental degradation in several oil-producing communities.

The military's operations have therefore focused on identifying and dismantling illegal refining facilities, recovering stolen petroleum products and disrupting the supply networks supporting the illicit trade.

The recovery of 696,800 li-

tres of stolen crude oil represents another major seizure by security forces in their ongoing campaign against oil theft.

Troops also continued to conduct surveillance and patrols around vulnerable oil infrastructure to prevent criminal groups from returning to areas where illegal activities had previously been disrupted.

The DHQ said the operations form part of broader efforts by the armed forces and other security agencies to improve security around oil-producing communities and safeguard national assets.

NEWS

Ogbe residents call for govt intervention to save 40-year-old drainage

as flood disaster looms

BENIN CITY

Concerned residents of Akenzua, Omomo, Isibor streets and other parts of Ogbe Community around the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium have raised an alarm over the impending environmental danger that lies ahead in the area, following the alleged encroachment on the major drainage right of way by some unpatriotic

neighbours. The Ogbe residents who spoke with our Correspondent on condition of anonymity, said that some persons who claimed to be community leaders have allegedly

acquired or sold a large portion of government freeland, reserved for the storm water infrastructure built over 40 years ago by the Dr Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia's administration, raising fears of

obstructing to the Benin water storm infrastructure could have serious flood disaster in Benin City.

They appealed to the relevant agencies and Edo State Government to urgently intervene and save the major drainage network constructed decades ago during the administration of the late Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia, then Governor of the former Bendel State.

According to the residents, the drainage system serves as a major channel for the evacuation of storm water in the area for more than 40 years, with several other drainage channels connected to the location now being encroached upon.

They further alleged that an attempt was recently made to sink a borehole on the disputed portion of land, but unfortunately their borehole machine could not penetrate

the concrete structure covering the waterway which indicates that there exists a critical drainage infrastructure beneath the surface.

It was gathered that, Edo State authorities responsible for the protection of government property, have made some arrests in connection with the alleged encroachment, but it looks like the perpetrators are influential.

The community is calling for a more comprehensive investigation and intervention to protect the drainage corridor and stop the activities that could jeopardize the government erosion control systems and to avert possible flood disaster.

The residents are also appealing to the state government to investigate the alleged roles of some identified persons whom the residents alleged are behind the activ

**PRESENTATION:**

Chairman, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Dr Musa Aliyu (M); presenting a souvenir to the Cultural Counselor of Chinese Embassy in Nigeria and Director of China Cultural Centre in Nigeria, Counselor Yang Jianxing (L); during the ICPC /Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN) third International Diploma Dialogue in Abuja on Monday (31/8/26). With them is the Provost of ACAN, Prof. Sheriff Ibrahim.

Bwari residents seek completion of Zango, Kogo road projects

ABUJA

Some residents of Zango and Kogo communities in Bwari Area Council, FCT have appealed to the district administration to expedite work on ongoing road construction projects in the communities.

The residents made the appeal in separate interviews with newsmen on Tuesday in Bwari, Abuja.

The residents while lauding the government's efforts to develop the areas after years of neglect noted that the quick completion of the roads would ease movement and improve livelihoods.

A resident of Zango community, Mallam Buhari Aminu, a

tailor in the area, said the prolonged construction had worsened commuting.

According to him, motorists and commercial motorcyclists now spend more time and money navigating alternative routes or portions of the road under construction.

He said: "The situation has affected activities in the community, especially for some of us business owners, because our customers now find it difficult to access us, so business has slowed down."

Aminu appealed to the contractors handling the projects to increase the pace of work, and urged them to ensure that the roads were completed to the required standard to avoid the need for

sudden repairs.

He, however, commended the present administration of the council for initiating the road project, adding that its completion would improve accessibility, boost economic activities, and enhance the quality of life in Zango community.

Another resident of the community, Mrs Rita Felix, urged relevant stakeholders to closely monitor the ongoing project.

This, she said, was to ensure that contractors remained committed to agreed timelines and addressed challenges slowing down the construction.

"This is so that the situation would not end up frustrating residents rather than earning applause for the government's

efforts," Felix said.

Similarly, Mr Matthew Ikenna, a business owner in Kogo II community, said the slow pace of work had made movement difficult for both residents and commuters.

Ikenna expressed concern over the effect of the prolonged construction on vehicles, saying motorists were spending more on fuel and repairs due to the frequent use of alternative roads and sometimes rough routes.

He said: "This road is almost as if it has been abandoned. Work started during the last administration and it is yet to be completed.

"It has made movement so difficult, particularly during and after the rains."

Shelter awards organiser urges integrity in real estate

ABUJA

The organiser of Shelter Awards, Mr Nicolas Bibiem, popularly known as Nick B, has urged real estate stakeholders to uphold integrity and quality.

Bibiem made the call at the maiden Shelter Awards ceremony held in Abuja, where real estate practitioners were honoured.

He said the awards recognised excellence and commitment among realtors, estate companies and property developers across the country.

According to him, nominees across various categories were selected based on recommendations from members of the public.

"There are those who sell only land, and land has to do with integrity; sometimes, when people buy land, they have issues," Bibiem said.

He noted that the real estate industry comprised various segments, including land sales, property development, foundation construction and finishing.

"There are those who only build foundations and leave the rest for you to complete, and there are others that do the finishing," he said.

Bibiem added that developers also specialised in different property types, including luxury houses, residential buildings and commercial plazas.

"Today, we bring all of them together to celebrate their excellence," he said, describing the sector as worthy of recognition.

He said real estate was a multimillion-naira sector that created employment opportunities and contributed significantly to Nigeria's economic growth.

"Real estate sector is worthy of celebration because it is a multimillion-naira sector that guarantees jobs and boosts the economy," Bibiem said.

He urged industry operators to channel their efforts towards strengthening ethical standards and building public confidence in the real estate sector.

"We must be able to put our energy into developing and building integrity in real estate.

"My advice to developers is to keep integrity, value, standard, quality and keep to their terms of agreement with clients anytime," Bibiem admonished.

Also speaking, Mrs Cynthia Asoluka, Chief Executive Officer of Cyntilos Homes and Property Ltd., expressed gratitude for her nomination and recognition.

"I am very excited for this recognition. I didn't see it coming, but I thank God. The award means a lot to me," she said.

Asoluka said the award demonstrated that her company's efforts were being noticed, adding that the recognition had further strengthened her resolve.

"One thing I learnt from this award today is that whatever you are doing, keep doing it; people are seeing," she said.

She said her nomination came as a surprise because she still regarded Cyntilos Homes and Property Ltd. as a young company.

"I still see my organisation as a baby company, but from today, we are no longer a baby company," Asoluka said.

She disclosed that the company operated in Abuja, Owerri in Imo and Enugu states, while planning further expansion across Nigeria and beyond.

Experts seek AI integration to strengthen health research

ABUJA

Medical experts and global health partners have advocated strategic integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) and local capacity building to sustain public health research and data management in Nigeria.

The stakeholders made this known at the 4th Annual Scientific Symposium organised by the International Research Centre of Excellence (IRCE), Institute of Human Virology, Nigeria (IHVN), Monday in Abuja, with stakeholders examining innovation.

The two-day symposium was themed: "Shaping the Future of Public Health Research: Sustainable Funding, AI/ML & Innovation," and focused on technology-driven solutions for sustainable scientific research and healthcare delivery across Africa.

Speaking via a recorded message, IHVN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Patrick Dakum, said data-driven innovation and technology were crucial to addressing emerging and future public health threats in Nigeria.

"This symposium will stimulate your minds, especially the young researchers, to think

and carry out basic research, implementation research, and innovations related to AI and public health," Dakum said.

He said the 22-year-old institute established IRCE after recognising that rigorous local research was vital to effective public health implementation and sustainable healthcare development across Nigeria and Africa.

Dakum, who referenced IRCE's decade-long journey of excellence, said the Federal Government had introduced measures, including a sector-wide approach, to promote health system sustainability

and strengthen healthcare delivery nationwide.

Prof. Alash'le Abimiku, Executive Director, IRCE, said dwindling international research funding necessitated adoption of advanced technologies to sustain scientific research, innovation and local solutions across Africa and Nigeria.

"Global research funding has been drastically truncated. As scientists, we must deploy AI tools to offset these resource gaps, ensure Africa remains in the global scientific race, and drive local discoveries forward," she said.

**DIALOGUE:**

From left: Cultural Counselor of Chinese Embassy in Nigeria and Director of China Cultural Centre in Nigeria, Counselor Yang Jianxing; Chairman, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Dr Musa Aliyu; and the Provost of the Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN), Prof. Sheriff Ibrahim, during the ICPC /ACAN third International Diploma Dialogue in Abuja on Monday.

Tragedy: Mother, son, three others dead in Ilorin collapsed building ● *Eight trapped, four rescued*

RAHEEM IBRAHIM

ILORIN

A middle aged mother, her son and three other occupants in a 2-storey building in the Ilorin metropolis were confirmed dead after the structure collapsed on Tuesday morning.

Three others are also at the time of this report on danger's list at the General Hospital in Ilorin, while another was rescued with little injuries.

Confirming the incident, the state Emergency Management Agency confirmed that four people died and four were rescued alive.

The Nigerian Observer reliably gathered that the incident happened early Tuesday morning when a three-storey 30-room building caved-in at Oke-Oyan in Popo Giwa area

of the city.

Eyewitnesses recounted that volunteers recovered the corpses of a mother and her son under the rubbles.

Speaking with our correspondent, the head of the family that own the property, Abdulkareem Ayinla Jekide-ro, informed that he and his relatives inherited the over 60 years old structure.

He recalled that the building collapsed at about 5:30 am, saying: "we just returned from Subhi (morning) prayer when I heard a loud noise."

"I sent someone to check what the noise was about; when he returned he told me that the building behind had collapsed. I couldn't believe it," he disclosed.

Pleading with public spirited individuals and groups for assistance, Abdulkareem lament-

ed: "this is disheartening."

Meanwhile, a rescuer, AbdulAzeez, regretted that he and other youths in the area could have rescued many people if only they had building collapse rescue experience.

According to him: "we were removing debris and unknowingly heaping them even on some of the trapped occupants, we became aware when we moved to the spot to lift the debris. By then, some had passed out. Though, they didn't die immediately, they died at the hospital."

The SEMA Secretary, Magaji Saadudeen, confirmed the death of four people and the rescue of four others.

He said eight persons were trapped in the building, adding that the rescued victims and bodies of the deceased had been taken to the morgue

and hospital respectively, adding "The rescued persons are receiving treatment presently".

The Public Relations Officer of the State Fire Service, Hassan Adekunle, said: "we have recovered four people dead and rescued four people alive."

Adekunle said the agency received a distress call at about 5am reporting that a building had collapsed and people were trapped underneath.

"We immediately mobilised to the scene and commenced rescue operation. This kind of situation is not something the fire service can handle alone," he said.

He added that officials of the Hospitals Management Board, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and other emergency agencies joined the rescue operation.

Military eliminates 324 terrorists, rescues 610 kidnapped victims in August — DHQ

ABUJA

The Defence Headquarters says troops have eliminated 324 terrorists and criminals, apprehended 373 others and rescued 610 kidnap victims across the country in August.

The Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Michael Onoja, disclosed this in Abuja at the monthly press briefing on ongoing military operations by the Armed Forces.

Onoja said the military also recorded the surrender of 201 insurgents and recovered 88 arms and 2,077 rounds of ammunition during the period.

He said the month was characterised by coordinated land, air and maritime operations focused on degrading terrorists' and criminal groups' capabilities.

"During the month of August, the Armed Forces sustained a robust operational tempo across

the various geopolitical zones. This was characterised by coordinated land, air, and maritime operations focused on degrading terrorists' and criminal groups' capabilities.

"The operations were also occasioned by the rescue of abducted citizens, disrupting arms trafficking and logistics chains, countering secessionist and other armed criminal elements, as well as protecting critical national assets," he said.

Onoja said troops recorded notable successes across all geopolitical zones, while the Air Component maintained consistent combat support and reconnaissance to ground formations.

According to him, troops of Joint Task Force North East, Operation HADIN KAI, maintained aggressive counter-terrorism operations in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno and Yobe, neutralising 114 terrorists, arresting 146 and rescuing 60 kidnapped victims.

RMAFC, ALGON deepen collaboration to strengthen local govt. autonomy

ABUJA

The Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) has pledged to deepen collaboration with the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) to strengthen local government administration.

The commitment was made when a delegation of RMAFC commissioners paid a courtesy visit to the National President of ALGON, Mr Bello Lawal, in Abuja.

The delegation was led by Mr Aliyu Abdulkadir, the Commissioner representing Nasarawa State in the commission and Chairman, State and Local Government Monitoring

Committee, who represented the Chairman of RMAFC, Dr Mohammed Shehu.

Shehu said the collaboration would advance fiscal autonomy and ensure that increased resources translated into tangible development at the grassroots.

He said that the newly constituted committee was to deepen engagement with the third tier of government and explore practical measures to strengthen local governments.

"As a constitutional body, RMAFC is empowered to monitor accruals and disbursements into and from the Federation Account, to which local governments are constitutionally entitled," he said.

Rotary club gifts 150 pregnant women delivery items in Nasarawa community

NASARAWA

The Rotary Club of Abuja, Central Business District (CBD) has distributed free delivery items to no fewer than 150 pregnant women at the Primary Health Care Centre, Ruga Juli in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

The President of the Club, Rhoda Mando during the distribution of the items on Saturday, said the club was at the facility for a maternal and child healthcare outreach/project.

According to her, the activity is one of the major cardinal projects of the club in 2026.

"We want to make it seamless for pregnant women to be able to have some basic necessary things that they need during child delivery.

"It's not just that; we also provided mosquito nets for them, disinfectant, detergent and lots of things that will

ease their delivery.

"Because of this present economy challenge, we decided that we need to do that. And more so, the district has different activities for every month.

"July was the month of maternal healthcare, but as a club, we had planned that we'll do it in August.

"That is when it's convenient for our host in Ruga Juli, a remote area in Nasarawa State.

"In fact, we were informed that the women here don't have anything. Nobody has come to do anything like this. The road is not even good, but we had to come like that," Mando said.

She described the turn out of the women as overwhelming and encouraging.

"We were able to reach between 150 to 200 women in this facility. The next will also be a rural community in the FCT, because, that's where they really need those assistance"

African traditional medicine, key to universal health coverage – WHO

ABUJA

Africa marked the 24th African Traditional Medicine Day, on Monday with experts urging governments to invest more in research, regulation and innovation to unlock traditional medicine's potential for universal health coverage.

The World Health Organization (WHO), in a post on its official X account on Monday, said the August 31 observance focused on strengthening traditional medicine as a credible contributor to Africa's healthcare systems.

According to WHO, the theme, "Reflection on research and development efforts of traditional medicine towards achieving universal health coverage in the African Region," underscores the need to trans-

form knowledge into solutions.

The organisation said the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre and WHO Regional Office for Africa convened stakeholders to examine how evidence, innovation and community trust could move traditional medicine into practice.

WHO said this year's observance highlighted research and development efforts aimed at making traditional medicine more accessible, safer and evidence-based, while supporting universal health coverage across African countries.

"Participants said traditional medicine could strengthen primary healthcare when supported by scientific evidence, effective regulation, innovation and sustained investment," WHO said, emphasising the sector's growing healthcare relevance.

"African Traditional Medicine Day commemorates a landmark WHO resolution adopted during the organisation's 50th Regional Committee meeting in Ouagadougou in 2000.

"Traditional medicine remains an important source of healthcare, particularly in rural communities where practitioners often serve as the first point of contact," the organisation said.

According to WHO, experts noted that traditional health practitioners possess deep community relationships and cultural legitimacy that can complement conventional healthcare systems and improve access to quality services.

The organisation said Mr Temitayo Erogbogbo, Global Advocacy Director at Merck Sharp and Dohme for Mothers, emphasised that trust remained

a critical asset within traditional healthcare networks.

According to WHO, Erogbogbo said traditional birth attendants, community healers and other practitioners maintain longstanding relationships that can support better health outcomes when appropriately integrated into healthcare delivery.

WHO said Prof. Martins Emeje, Director-General of the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency, participated in the discussion, bringing perspectives on advancing traditional medicine through scientific validation and innovation.

The organisation said that Emeje also serves as Co-Chair of the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine, supporting global policy and research efforts.

NEWS**FG destroys 1,419 illicit weapons, recovers 5,449 firearms in 2026**

The National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW) has destroyed 1,419 illicit weapons and recovered 5,449 firearms in recent operations nationwide.

The Director-General of the centre, retired DIG Johnson Kokumo, made this known on Tuesday in Abuja at the Joint Security News Briefing.

The briefing was organised for spokespersons of defence, security and law-enforcement agencies to update Nigerians on ongoing security efforts.

Kokumo said the 1,419 weapons were publicly destroyed on July 30 during the Centre's Second Quarter Arms Destruction Exercise in Abuja.

He said the exercise brought the total number of illicit weapons destroyed by NCCSALW since 2022 to more than 19,000.

According to him, the destruction is aimed at preventing illicit weapons from reaching non-state actors and fuelling terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other violent crimes.

Kokumo said the Centre also recorded significant recoveries through collaboration with security and law-enforcement agencies.

He said 5,050 illicit, unserviceable, decommissioned and obsolete automatic weapons were retrieved from the Nigeria Police Force in June.

He added that the Nigeria

Customs Service intercepted and handed over 399 JOJEF automatic guns to NCCSALW on Aug. 17.

The director-general said other weapons had also been recovered from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and National Intelligence Agency.

He said the Centre was collaborating with relevant justice-sector institutions to prosecute persons involved in arms trafficking, illegal importation and manufacture.

Kokumo said 11 suspects linked to the illegal importation of 844 assorted automatic

firearms and 112,500 rounds of ammunition were arrested.

The weapons and ammunition were concealed in a container intercepted by the Nigeria Customs Service at Onne Port and handed over to NCCSALW.

He said the principal suspects remained in custody, while investigations continued to apprehend other fleeing suspects.

Kokumo also disclosed the arrest and prosecution of suspects linked to the illegal manufacture of firearms and ammunition in Minna, Niger State.

On weapons management, he said the Centre conducted Physical Security and Stockpile Management training for personnel of arms-bearing security agencies.

The training, conducted from May 18 to June 19, was designed to prevent the diversion of legally held weapons into criminal circulation.

Kokumo said NCCSALW also commenced steps towards a new national Small Arms Survey to replace the 2016 survey, which no longer reflected current realities.

He said the centre held a baseline workshop on Aug.

20 with representatives of UN agencies, Small Arms Survey, security agencies and relevant government institutions.

According to him, the new survey will provide updated data to guide national responses to the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

Kokumo further urged Nigerians to distinguish the Federal Government's National Forest Guards initiative from the illegal Nigeria Forest Security Service.

He said the National Forest Guards initiative was coordinated by the Office of the National Security Adviser.

JAMB, WAEC clarify N4,000 one-off O'Level result verification

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) have clarified that candidates seeking admission into tertiary institutions will pay N4,000 once for verification of their O'Level results.

The two examination bodies made the clarification in a joint statement issued on Tuesday in Abuja, following consultations on the recently introduced policy for verification of West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE/O'Level) results.

They said candidates whose admissions were regulated and coordinated by JAMB would verify their WAEC results once through JAMB.

They said the outcome of the verification would subsequently be made available to the tertiary institution to which the candidate sought admission.

According to the statement, candidates are required to pay N4,000 only for the verifica-

tion service through the specified JAMB platform, and not through their preferred institutions.

The bodies said tertiary institutions would utilise the verified results shared by JAMB for screening, admission processing and other administrative purposes.

"Candidates shall not be required to pay for another verification," the statement said.

They also disclosed that WAEC had authorised JAMB to share the outcome of the verification exercise with relevant tertiary institutions for the stated purposes.

They said the arrangement was designed to ensure that candidates who had successfully verified their WASSCE O'Level results would not be required to repeat the process.

According to them, the initiative will reduce the stress and costs associated with repeated visits to tertiary institutions or JAMB-approved Computer-Based Test (CBT) centres.

Agriculture can lift millions out of poverty – ACCI**MAKURDI**

The Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) says agriculture has the potential to lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty and drive inclusive economic growth.

Prof. Adesoji Adesugba, First Deputy President of ACCI, said this on Tuesday in Abuja while briefing the newsmen ahead of the Agricultural Mechanisation and Export of Quality Products in Africa (AGROMEQA Expo 2026).

The expo 2026 is scheduled to hold from Oct. 15–16.

Adesugba emphasised the need for stronger policies and investments to boost agriculture sector.

He said that agriculture accounted for about 23.16 per cent of Nigeria's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), underscoring its importance to na-

tional economic development.

He said the sector generated N11.87 trillion in real economic output during the first quarter of 2026, compared with N11.51 trillion recorded during the corresponding period of 2025.

The sector also grew by 3.15 per cent year-on-year during the first quarter, compared with 0.07 per cent growth recorded in the corresponding period of 2025.

"This is a significant rebound and shows that agriculture can respond strongly when conditions improve and when we get our policies right.

"Crop production remained the dominant component of the sector, generating approximately N8.9 trillion during the first quarter of 2026.

"Agriculture has a great multiplier effect and can help us lift millions of people out of the poverty situation we currently find ourselves in," he said.

**MEDIA PARLEY TO INAUGURATE:**

From left: Director Public Prosecution, Ministry of Justice, Mr Adebayo Haroun; Executive Secretary, Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi; OG, Gender Unit, Lagos State Police Command, ACP Toyin Kazeem and Chief Executive Officer, Child Advocacy Centre, Mrs Olabisi Ajayi-Kayode, during the Media Parley to inaugurate the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Awareness Month in Lagos on Monday.

Alausa expands national tertiary institutions' ranking, makes participation compulsory

The Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, has expanded Nigeria's national tertiary education ranking framework to cover universities, polytechnics and colleges of education.

This is contained in a statement issued on Tuesday in Abuja by Mr Ikharo Attah, Special Adviser to the Minister on Media and Communications.

Attah quoted Alausa to have announced the development at a meeting with the Nigerian Universities Ranking Advisory Committee (NURAC), adding that participation was now compulsory for all tertiary institutions.

Alausa said the expanded ranking framework was part of President Bola Tinubu's education reforms under the Renewed Hope Agenda, implemented through the Nigeria Education Sector Renewal Initiative (NESRI).

According to him, the initiative is aimed at strengthening quality, accountability, institutional performance and global competitiveness across Nigeria's tertiary education system.

"The ranking will provide institutions with clear benchmarks for assessing their performance, identifying areas requiring improvement and measuring pro-

gress, while promoting healthy competition and continuous institutional advancement," he said.

Alausa said that the 2026/2027 ranking exercise for universities would commence in September, while the committee would determine the appropriate timeline for extending the exercise to polytechnics and colleges of education.

He added that the Federal Government would provide funding for the exercise through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

The minister added that TETFund would develop guidelines to institutionalise the ranking and formally communicate to

vice-chancellors and heads of other tertiary institutions that participation was compulsory.

He reassured the committee of the ministry's commitment to providing the policy direction, funding and capacity-building support required to make the ranking exercise credible, sustainable and impactful.

"The Ministry will work with the committee to facilitate in-service training and institutional capacity-building programmes across tertiary institutions, with the expectation that significantly more Nigerian institutions will achieve greater global recognition in subsequent international ranking exercises," Alausa said.

U.S. troop drawdown won't weaken Nigeria's security partnership — DHQ**IBADAN**

The Defence Headquarters says the planned drawdown of more than 200 U.S. personnel from Nigeria will not affect the enduring security partnership between both countries.

Director of Defence Information, Maj.-Gen. Samaila Uba, gave the assurance on Tuesday in Abuja while responding to questions at the

Joint Security News Briefing.

Uba said the withdrawal should not be interpreted as a breakdown or termination of Nigeria's security cooperation with the United States.

"The relationship between Nigeria and the United States remains strong, enduring and mutually beneficial," he said.

He explained that the deployment of U.S. personnel was tied to specific operational and counter-terrorism objectives, making

the drawdown part of the evolving nature of the engagement.

According to him, intelligence cooperation, training, information sharing and other areas of professional military cooperation will continue despite the adjustment in U.S. troop presence.

"The responsibility for the defence of Nigeria and the protection of its citizens rests primarily with Nigerian security forces," Uba said.

He said the partnership with

the United States was designed to strengthen Nigeria's capabilities through intelligence sharing, training and technical assistance.

Uba added that where both countries jointly assessed the need for additional efforts, including joint strikes, such operations would be undertaken.

He said the partnership had continued to produce favourable outcomes against terrorism and other transnational security threats.

FOREIGN

NEWS

Sexual assaults happening almost every day in Ceuta, says prosecutors

Spanish prosecutors say 23 sexual assaults, including nine against children, have been recorded in Ceuta since the mass influx of migrants into the Spanish exclave at the end of July.

That number meant there was almost one case every day, Ceuta's chief prosecutor Silvia Rojas said.

She told El País newspaper migrant girls were "particularly vulnerable because of their

irregular status in the territory".

At least 72,000 migrants crossed from Morocco into Ceuta on 30 and 31 July and although most have returned, as many as 5,000 remain - leading to unrest in the autonomous city in North Africa and a crisis for Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

There have been scenes of violence in recent days as tensions flare up between migrants and local residents.

Sánchez called the second meeting of his national security council in a week on Tuesday to tackle the issue.

Between 1,400 and 1,600 of the estimated 5,000 migrants still in Ceuta are children, according to Rojas.

Among the suspected attackers are four Moroccans, three Spaniards and a Belgian, Efe news agency reports.

Rojas said the influx had led to an exponential increase in sexual assault, and many victims did not file a report, either out of fear of because of their

"current situation in Ceuta".

The Spanish Society of Epidemiology said the border crisis had highlighted the difficulty in detecting and tackling violence against migrant women and girls.

Economy Minister Carlos Cuervo said a multi-million euro aid package had been approved by the cabinet that would help provide essential services and cover care for unaccompanied children.

The territory's conservative mayor, Juan Jesús Vivas, has called on Spaniards to take part in demonstrations across main-

land Spain in support of Ceuta on Wednesday, which coincides with the city's annual holiday.

The Spanish government is facing bitter criticism from its opponents for its handling of the crisis. The hard-right Vox party said Sánchez had not "lost control of Ceuta - he has handed it over".

Arantxa Campos, president of the Ceuta Employers' Confederation, told the BBC: "We can't do anything unless these people leave."

"We don't have a plan from the government. We don't have anything. We don't even

know when they're going to finish screening everyone."

The prime minister said on Monday that King Felipe VI would visit Ceuta "as soon as conditions allow", seen as an attempt to assert Spanish authority over the exclave.

Morocco has a long-standing claim over Ceuta and its fellow autonomous city of Melilla. The last time a Spanish head of state visited the territories in 2007, Rabat pulled its ambassador from Madrid, and another royal visit may cause further diplomatic tensions.

Algeria president seeks death penalty for arsonists after deadly forest fires

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has said he wants to reinstate the death penalty for arsonists, following a wave of deadly forest fires.

The official death toll stands at 12, but independent news outlets believe the figure is much higher.

The president ordered the justice ministry to introduce changes to the criminal law introducing capital punishment for arsonists. Capital punishment remains in the country's penal code for some offences, but no execution has been carried out since 1993.

More than 100 wildfires have been recorded in recent days in the north-east of the country, most of which have been extinguished. On Saturday, Tebboune said foul play had not been ruled out.

The Algerian president said necessary investigations would be carried out especially in view of the intensity of the fires.

On Sunday, he gave a 15 September deadline for amendments to provide for the death sentence for anyone convicted of intentionally starting a fire in forested areas.

Under the current law, deliberately starting forest fires is punishable by up to 30 years

in prison, or life imprisonment in certain cases.

Deadly blazes swept through large swathes of northern Algeria last week, causing widespread destruction, injuring dozens and displacing thousands of people.

Investigative journalist Nozha Khelalef has been gathering the names of those believed to have died in the fires from death notices posted by families and information shared by some local authorities.

Her tally, listed on the independent news website Twala, puts the death toll at 200.

The fires erupted amid an intense heatwave in northern Africa, with Algeria and Tunisia particularly affected.

Algerian civil authorities were on Sunday afternoon still battling to battle some of the fires, with the Algerian Press Service noting that 18 out of 19 fires that had broken out in the previous 24 hours had been extinguished.

The Algerian president ordered that compensation be paid to the families who have been affected, as well as repairs to damaged homes and essential services.

He said there would be investigations into the extent of the damage and losses caused by the fires.



CEUTA MIGRANT:

Some 5,000 migrants who entered Ceuta from Morocco are estimated to still be in the Spanish exclave.

Zambia's president sworn in for second term while opponent detained

Zambia's President Hakainde Hichilema has been sworn in for a second five-year term following a disputed election and the arrest of his main opponent on treason charges.

Hichilema - credited with stabilising the economy - swept to victory on 13 August

with 60% of the vote, according to official results. Runner-up Brian Mundubile, who received 38%, alleged that the outcome had been tampered with.

He was unable to mount a legal challenge to the result as the courts were sealed off last week on the final day a case

could be filed.

Election observers said that while polling day was largely peaceful, some have raised questions about the vote tallying process.

European Union observers said staff in many tallying centres did not record results on tally sheets as soon as they were announced and cited weak verification between digital entries and paper records.

It added that returning officers frequently paused proceedings while awaiting instructions from headquarters.

The day after the poll, security forces raided a property in the capital, Lusaka, linked to Mundubile, killing a former cabinet minister and arresting a number of opposition politicians.

The authorities accused the opposition of planning an armed insurrection, which they denied.

Mundubile and his running mate, Makebi Zulu, had gone into hiding. They were detained by police last week and charged at the weekend.

During his inauguration speech on Tuesday, Hichilema did not comment on his opponent's detention but said that the "pursuit of political power must never come at the

expense of peace, security and stability in our country".

"Democracy does not require us to agree on everything. It requires us to respect one another even when we disagree," Hichilema added.

He also invited the opposition to work with his government for the good of the country: "When you have a good idea, we will listen to you."

He was sworn into office amid jubilant scenes, as thousands of supporters gathered to celebrate the inauguration. His running mate Mutale Nalumango was also sworn in as vice-president.

Presidents from Kenya, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Tanzania were among several African leaders attending the inauguration ceremony at the National Heroes Stadium in the capital.

When Hichilema, 64, came into office in 2021 after a landslide victory, the copper-rich nation had recently defaulted on its international debt and had an annual inflation rate of more than 24%.

"We inherited a broken-down country... the economy was declining," Hichilema told the BBC in Lusaka before the election.

'I've never been to Afghanistan': Six million deportees forced to start over under the Taliban

The elderly grimace, hobbling on crutches, and wide-eyed children stare, cradling chickens carried from homes they were forced to leave behind.

"It feels good to be in my own country," 35-year-old Nazia says, just minutes after she crosses from Pakistan, where she was born, into Afghanistan.

The Torkham crossing, known as "Zero Point", is where one hard life ends and another begins.

"But I've never been to Afghanistan before and many people here don't even have enough bread to eat," Nazia sighs as she heads, two of her

children in tow, toward registration counters festooned with white and black Taliban flags.

Nearly her entire family, eight sisters and their offspring, were deported to Afghanistan this year from Pakistan or Iran.

They are part of the biggest cross-border movement of people anywhere in the world.

Millions of Afghans have fled across the borders to Pakistan and Iran for decades - seeking refuge or employment - and the number escaping Afghanistan has continued to rise since the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

Most are now being forced

to return as these two neighbours crack down on undocumented migrants. Nazia and her family were undocumented but the UN and human rights groups say the security sweep is reaching far beyond that group to include registered Afghans too. Even Pakistan now publicly says that Afghans with Proof of Registration cards are not exempt.

The expulsions show no sign of stopping.

The number forced to return this year from Pakistan and Iran has already reached another million, according to the UN's Refugee Agency, the UNHCR.

"In a little under three

years, we've seen six million people, a population that is itself the size of a small country, come back to Afghanistan," observes Charlie Goodlake, spokesperson for the UNHCR in Afghanistan.

"We've never seen in recent history a return movement on this scale," he underlines, standing in the baking heat in the tented village close to the border.

It's a desolate landscape of tarpaulin and plastic shelters, many now tattered and torn, erected by the UN and other aid agencies to provide refuge for a few nights for a people arriving with nowhere to go.

Many returnees have not set foot in Afghanistan for decades; many like Nazia have never been here at all.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

Nepal death toll crosses 1,000 as rescuers race to find workers trapped in mud-filled tunnels

The death toll in Nepal from devastating floods on the border with Tibet has crossed 1,000, according to the country's disaster agency.

More than 3,900 people remain missing - of whom more than 600 are workers believed to be trapped in a vast network of mud-filled tunnels at hydropower sites along Trishuli River.

Engineers have been pumping air into the tunnels - and while a team did manage to gain entry to one of them, it withdrew after finding no-one there.

"I wish we could find him. I wish he would come home," Anushila Bhandari, wife of Aarus Bhandari, a 33-year-old engineer missing on a project site, told BBC Nepali.

Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah said on Monday that 279 people had been rescued from the sites.

The rescue operation is being spearheaded by an international team made up of Chinese and Nepalese military personnel, while experts from India, Korea and Australia are also involved.

"I still have a 50% hope that he is alive because there is an

oxygen system inside," Sita Pandey, whose husband was working in the plant when the floods hit, told Nepalese daily Kantipur.

Nepal relies heavily on hydropower and has spent years developing the projects along its mountainous river systems. At least 11 projects either completed or under construction were damaged in the floods, authorities said.

Rescuers began pumping air into a tunnel over the weekend, but the families of those trapped say that should have been done earlier.

A team was able to get into a tunnel leading to one hydropower plant earlier on Monday, but retreated after no one was found there.

"The longer it takes, the more our hope dies. This operation must move much faster because every second is meaningful to us," Jiban Khadka, whose relative is also trapped inside the plant, told Kantipur.

"It's a frustratingly slow operation," Khadka added.

Rescue operations had been "intensified", Nepalese leader Shah said, noting that the floods

were "not an ordinary" event.

"This incident indicates that the risks we face in the Himalayan region are increasing alongside climate change.

"It is now time for us to strongly raise with the international community the issue of the disasters we are experiencing as a result of climate change," Shah wrote in a Face-

book post late on Monday.

Another family member anxiously awaiting news is Priya Kharel, whose brother Milan was working as an engineer in the Upper Trishuli-1 plant when the floods hit.

"Those who returned from the hydropower site said there were people inside the tunnel," she told BBC News Nepali. "So

there is hope that if the army reaches them quickly, they can be saved."

"The actual signature of them has gone - everything is just missing. It looks like a lunar landscape," he told BBC Radio 4's World at One.

Once rescuers knew where the power stations were, Dix said they could then decide

the best way to access them, which typically involves digging and "blasting boulders".

"There's boulders bigger than houses. I've never seen that before in my life. It's just an extraordinary operation," the former head of the International Tunnelling Association said.

He said he still has some hope for those trapped underground, given the protection the subterranean environment might have offered from the deluge above.



WORKERS TRAPPED:

Army personnel have resorted to using explosives to blast into the hillside to reach the trapped workers.

Russian attack hits rail workers in new deadly strikes on Kyiv

At least 12 people have been killed and 20 injured, including two children, in overnight Russian missile and drone strikes on Ukraine's capital Kyiv and the wider region, officials say.

Six of the casualties were railway workers of the state Ukrzaliznytsia company after a depot was hit in Kyiv.

Russia said its "massive strike using high-precision weapons" targeted Ukraine's military and energy facilities, and added that one person was also killed in Ukrainian strikes on Russia's western Belgorod region.

This comes a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin was urged by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a close ally, to end the war.

"Every day spent in war pushes humanity back, and every step taken towards peace fills humanity with new hope and enthusiasm," Modi said at a security summit in Kyrgyzstan.

Modi, whose country's economy depends heavily on discounted oil from Moscow, has made several similar pleas to Putin since he launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Overnight in Kyiv, eight people were killed and fires were reported in three city districts.

Another four people were killed in the nearby town of Boryspil where a residential building was hit.

Ukrainian President Vo-

lodymyr Zelensky said on Tuesday morning that nearly 350 rescue workers had been working through the night in Kyiv and the surrounding region after the latest strikes.

In a post on social media, he said Russia had fired a "significant number of jet drones and ballistic missiles".

The strikes mark the sixth day of sustained Russian drone and missile attacks on Kyiv, in what appears to be a strategy aimed at exhausting Ukrainian air defences and undermining civilian morale.

Russia's military warned over the weekend that its forces were preparing to carry out "massive" strikes on Ukrainian energy facilities.

Eight other Ukrainian regions were attacked, Zelensky said, adding that an Indian national was among the casualties.

Ukraine's Interior Minister Ivan Vyhivsky later said the Indian man - who turned 26 on Tuesday - was killed in Boryspil.

The overnight attacks come after 38 people were killed in Russian strikes on a weapons depot in the Kyiv region on Friday, causing shells, mines and drones to detonate.

Separately, a drone attack hit a major Russian Baltic Sea port in Ust-Luga, triggering a fire, Leningrad regional Governor Aleksandr Drozdenko said.

Ukraine says targets like Ust-Luga - which handles millions of tons of petroleum products each year - are legitimate as they help finance Moscow's war effort.

Ex-gang boss guilty of orchestrating 1996 murder of rapper Tupac Shakur

Former gang boss Duane "Keffe D" Davis has been found guilty of orchestrating the murder of Tupac Shakur - the first conviction in a cold case that has intrigued hip-hop fans for nearly 30 years.

The jury found him guilty of one count of murder with a deadly weapon for the rap superstar's death in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas on 7 September 1996.

Dressed in a black suit, the 63-year-old stood impassively in the Las Vegas court as the verdict was read, before saying he would appeal.

During the trial, the court heard a recording of a police interview in 2008 in which Davis said he was in the car from which shots were fired, but did not himself fire the bullets that killed Shakur.

Prosecutors argued that although Davis, a former leader of the South Side Compton Crips street gang, did not himself fire the gun, he ordered the shooting and supplied the gun that his nephew Orlando Anderson used to open fire.

Anderson died in an unrelated shooting in 1998, having denied involvement in the killing of Shakur.

As the verdict was read out on Monday, Shakur's relatives held hands, some hugging and

crying.

Shakur was 25 when he was slain at the height of his career as one of rap's most influential voices. He has sold more than 75 million records worldwide.

For 30 years, the case remained one of America's most famous cold cases, spurring countless conspiracies - but never a conviction, until now.

During the trial, prosecutors said Davis had planned the shooting as retaliation after Anderson was involved in a fight with Shakur and his crew in Las Vegas just hours earlier.

Shakur's murder happened at a time of intense rivalry between the East Coast and West Coast rap scene and amid gang feuds between the Bloods and Crips, which had deep roots within hip-hop at the time.

His family appeared emo-

tional in court, his sister embracing a prosecutor after the verdict was read while others sat crying nearby.

Outside, devoted fans of Shakur were similarly crying and cheering.

The key evidence in the case were Davis' own words, in which he repeatedly and publicly acknowledged being inside the white Cadillac from where the deadly shots were fired.

Israel says senior Hamas member seized as strikes kill three during Gaza raid

Israel's defence minister says a senior member of the Palestinian armed group Hamas has been captured.

Israel Katz was speaking after reports of a raid by Israeli special forces and an Israel-backed Palestinian militia in Gaza City.

Israeli air strikes at the same time killed at least two children and a woman, local medics say.

A third child was killed in a separate incident in central Gaza. The Israeli defence minister did not say who had captured the Hamas commander, whom he did not identify.

But after meeting Israelis living in Netiv HaAsara, next to northern Gaza, Katz said the activity of Israeli forces in the territory "continues at all times".

"A short time ago, a senior

Hamas terrorist was arrested - and this is our policy: we do not wait for threats, but pursue Hamas terrorists, thwart them and destroy their terror infrastructures," he added.

A Palestinian source said the target of the Israeli operation was a Hamas internal security official.

Earlier, Palestinians in a crowded part of western Gaza City had reported a heavy Israeli bombardment, with two vehicles hit and turned to wreckage.

Videos captured chaotic scenes, with the sound of gunfire and the aftermath of strikes. Reports say that Israeli special forces and pro-Israeli Palestinian militiamen had entered the area, but their presence was discovered. Some Israeli media suggest

that only a local armed militia operated on the ground.

A Palestinian security source said the target of the Israeli operation was a senior official in the Hamas internal security service.

A spokesman for Gaza's Hamas-run government media office, Ismail al-Thawabta, said: "An Israeli special forces unit attempted to carry out a security operation in Gaza City, but the unit was exposed while carrying out the mission."

The ensuing Israeli strikes "resulted in a number of people being killed and others injured, in addition to the deaths of several members of the special forces unit", he added.

The Israeli military has only confirmed striking several targets in Gaza "in order to remove threats" to its troops, adding that none of them were injured.

FEATURE

FG should declare emergency in education, road infrastructure

Nigeria stands at a dangerous crossroads. Two of the most fundamental pillars upon which any modern society is built — education and road infrastructure — are in a state that demands more than routine government intervention. They require an emergency national response.

The Federal Government should, therefore, declare a state of emergency in the education sector and road infrastructure, accompanied by a clearly defined, time-bound national recovery programme and massive investment capable of reversing decades of neglect.

This is not a call for political drama or another government slogan. It is a call for a fundamental rethink of national priorities.

A country cannot aspire to become a major economy while millions of its young people pass through schools without the quality education needed to compete in the modern world. Neither can it achieve meaningful economic transformation when farmers, manufacturers, traders, commuters and businesses struggle to move people and goods because critical roads have deteriorated beyond acceptable limits.

The crisis in both sectors has become too interconnected to be treated as separate problems.

Education: the foundation is cracking

Education is the most important investment any nation can make in its future.

Yet across Nigeria, the education system faces a disturbing combination of inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, shortages of qualified teachers, poor learning environments, insufficient teaching materials and declining educational outcomes.

In many communities, children still learn in dilapidated buildings. Some schools lack functional laboratories, libraries, toilets, electricity, water and other basic facilities that should be considered fundamental to learning.

The situation is particularly troubling in rural and underserved communities, where poverty and inadequate public infrastructure reinforce one another.

A child who attends a poorly equipped school is already at a disadvantage before entering the labour market.

The consequences extend far beyond the classroom.

An inadequately educated population creates a workforce that struggles to meet the demands of a changing economy. It fuels unemployment and underemployment, deepens inequality and leaves millions of young people vulnerable to criminality, extremism, trafficking, political manipulation and other social ills.

Nigeria's demographic strength can become either its greatest asset or its greatest burden.

With one of Africa's largest youthful populations, the country cannot afford to allow its young people to grow up without access to quality education and employable skills.

A national emergency is justified. The Federal Government should establish a National Education Emergency Programme, working with state governments, local governments, development partners,

Nigeria cannot build a prosperous nation on collapsing classrooms and impassable roads, writes MATTHEW OKAGHA



ROAD CONSTRUCTION

communities and the private sector.

The programme should begin with a nationwide audit of public schools. Government must know precisely how many classrooms are unusable, how many schools lack water and sanitation, where teacher shortages are most severe, and which institutions require urgent rehabilitation.

Funding should then be directed according to need rather than political considerations.

Every state should have measurable targets.

Every intervention should have timelines.

And every naira allocated should be traceable.

Emergency funding should focus particularly on classrooms, teacher recruitment and training, laboratories, libraries, digital learning facilities, electricity, water and sanitation.

But infrastructure alone will not solve the education crisis.

Teachers must be adequately trained, motivated and fairly rewarded. Technical and vocational education must receive greater attention because not every young Nigerian will follow the traditional university route.

The nation needs electricians, plumbers, mechanics, welders, builders, agricultural technicians, software developers, nurses, teachers, artisans and thousands of other skilled professionals.

Education policy must therefore be designed around the realities of the 21st-century economy.

The roads that hold Nigeria together are breaking apart

If education builds the human capital of a nation, roads provide the physical network through which its economy moves.

Nigeria's road crisis is therefore not simply an inconvenience to motorists. It is an economic emergency.

Across the country, major highways, inter-state roads, federal roads and rural access roads have deteriorated badly.

Some roads have become death traps. Others have turned into mud-
dy corridors during the rainy season,

effectively cutting communities off from the rest of the country.

The impact is enormous.

Farmers cannot move their produce efficiently to markets. Perishable goods are lost. Transport costs rise. Businesses spend more money maintaining vehicles. Travel time increases. Accidents become more frequent. Security risks multiply.

A bad road is effectively a tax on everybody who uses it.

For the ordinary Nigerian, that tax appears in the price of food, transportation, goods and services.

For businesses, it appears as higher logistics costs.

For farmers, it appears as post-harvest losses.

For government, it appears as reduced economic activity and increased pressure on other infrastructure.

The rural road question
Perhaps one of the most neglected dimensions of Nigeria's road crisis is the network of rural roads.

The nation often focuses on major federal highways while thousands of smaller roads connecting farms, villages, markets, health centres and schools remain neglected.

Yet these roads are critical to economic development.

A farmer may produce enough food to feed a community, but if the road from the farm to the market is impassable, production becomes commercially meaningless.

A child may have a school nearby, but if the road becomes inaccessible during the rainy season, regular attendance becomes difficult.

A pregnant woman may live close to a health facility, but a terrible road can turn a short journey into a dangerous ordeal.

Road infrastructure is therefore directly connected to food security, healthcare, education, commerce and national security.

Beyond rehabilitation: rebuild the system

Declaring an emergency should not become another avenue for awarding contracts without results.

Nigeria has witnessed too many projects announced with fanfare,

only for contractors to abandon them after consuming substantial public funds.

The emergency programme must therefore come with strict accountability mechanisms.

Government should publish major projects, their costs, contractors, commencement dates, completion deadlines and funding sources.

Independent engineers and professional bodies should participate in monitoring.

Payments should be tied to verified milestones.

Contractors who abandon projects without legitimate justification should face sanctions.

At the same time, government must examine why road projects routinely experience enormous cost overruns, endless variations and repeated extensions.

There must be a move away from the culture of starting projects without ensuring that they can be completed.

It is better to complete 100 critical roads than to scatter resources across 1,000 abandoned projects.

Where should the money come from?

The inevitable question is funding.

The answer is that Nigeria must begin to treat education and infrastructure as strategic national investments rather than ordinary expenditure lines.

The country should aggressively reduce waste, improve revenue collection, strengthen tax administration, curb leakages and prioritise capital spending.

Public-private partnerships should be expanded where appropriate, while development finance and infrastructure funds should be carefully deployed.

But borrowing must also be approached with discipline.

Nigeria should not borrow merely to consume.

If borrowing is necessary, it should be directed towards projects capable of expanding productive capacity and generating long-term economic returns.

A properly constructed road that connects farms to markets, for instance, can stimulate agricultural production and commerce for decades.

A properly equipped school can produce generations of skilled citizens.

These are investments whose returns extend beyond one budget cycle or political administration.

The emergency must be national, not political

The proposed declaration must also transcend party politics.

Education and roads do not belong to the APC, PDP, Labour Party or any other political organisation.

They belong to Nigeria.

The Federal Government must work with governors, local councils, traditional institutions, professional bodies, organised labour, civil society organisations and communities.

Governments at all levels must accept that they share responsibility for the country's infrastructure deficit.

The private sector must also be brought into the conversation.

Companies depend on educated workers and functioning transport networks. They therefore have a legitimate stake in rebuilding the systems that sustain the economy.

A generation is waiting
The greatest danger is not merely that some roads are bad or some schools are dilapidated.

The greater danger is what prolonged neglect does to a generation.

Every year that a child receives inadequate education represents an opportunity lost.

Every year that a major road remains abandoned represents businesses that struggle, farmers who lose income, travellers exposed to danger and communities cut off from opportunity.

Nigeria cannot continue to repair these problems piecemeal while the underlying crisis deepens.

The country needs a National Emergency Recovery Plan for Education and Road Infrastructure, with clearly defined priorities, dedicated funding, transparent procurement, independent monitoring and measurable deadlines.

The objective should be simple: within a defined period, every Nigerian child should have access to a safe and functional learning environment, while critical road corridors linking communities, farms, industries, markets and cities should be made motorable.

This is achievable if the political will exists.

Nigeria has demonstrated repeatedly that it can mobilise enormous resources when national priorities demand it.

What is required now is the recognition that education and roads are themselves national emergencies.

The future of the country will not be determined only by the size of its oil production, foreign reserves or Gross Domestic Product.

It will be determined by the quality of its people and the infrastructure that enables those people to create wealth.

Nigeria must therefore act before the damage becomes irreversible.

Declare the emergency. Mobilise the resources. Rebuild the schools. Reconstruct the roads. And give the next generation a country capable of carrying its dreams.

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FEATURE



Justice before reintegration

OSARUGUE SOPHIA OSADOLOR

For more than a decade, Nigeria has battled violent insecurity that has left thousands of families grieving, communities displaced, businesses destroyed, and entire regions living under constant fear. From mass abductions and deadly attacks on villages to ambushes on highways and assaults on security formations, armed groups have inflicted deep wounds on the nation. While the government has explored different strategies to reduce violence, one approach continues to divide public opinion: the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant bandits and other violent extremists.

Supporters of rehabilitation argue that it can encourage fighters to abandon violence and reduce future conflict. They point to deradicalization programmes used in different countries and maintain that not everyone who joins an armed group remains committed to violence forever. In theory, helping former fighters return to society could weaken criminal networks and create lasting peace.

Yet for many Nigerians, this argument is difficult to accept.

The question many citizens continue to ask is simple: Can there be forgiveness without justice?

Across northern Nigeria and other affected regions, countless families have buried loved ones after brutal attacks. Farmers have abandoned their

farmlands because of fear. Schoolchildren have been kidnapped from classrooms. Communities have watched homes, churches, mosques, markets, and businesses destroyed. These are not statistics on paper; they are painful realities that continue to shape the lives of ordinary Nigerians.

Many victims believe that rehabilitating those responsible sends the wrong message. To them, it appears that people who once terrorized communities are being offered another opportunity while survivors are still struggling to rebuild their lives. The emotional burden of this perception cannot be ignored.

Another concern is public safety.

Nigeria's armed forces and other security agencies have sacrificed enormously in the fight against armed groups. Hundreds of soldiers, police officers, and other security personnel have lost their lives while protecting communities from attacks. Others have suffered life-changing injuries in the line of duty. These men and women swore to defend the country, often at great personal cost.

This is why many Nigerians question any proposal that could eventually place former members of violent groups in sensitive positions, especially within the nation's security institutions. If individuals once fought against the Nigerian state, citizens naturally worry about whether complete trust can ever be restored. Security is built not only on weapons but also

on confidence, discipline, and loyalty. Even the perception of divided loyalty can weaken public trust.

Critics also argue that rehabilitation should never come before accountability.

Every society governed by the rule of law depends on justice. Crimes such as murder, kidnapping, terrorism, and armed robbery carry serious consequences because they threaten the safety of everyone. If perpetrators of such crimes appear to receive opportunities that law-abiding citizens struggle to obtain, it may create the impression that violence carries little consequence.

Justice is not about revenge. Rather, it is about ensuring accountability, recognising victims, and reinforcing respect for the law. Families who have lost parents, children, spouses, and friends deserve to know that their pain has not been forgotten. They deserve to see that the legal system values their suffering as much as it values efforts toward reconciliation.

At the same time, this debate should be approached carefully and responsibly. It is important not to make sweeping claims about the nationality or background of every individual involved in banditry or terrorism. Nigeria's security challenges involve different armed groups with different origins, motivations, and structures. While reports have documented cross-border movements of some criminal elements, it would be inaccurate to assume that



REINTEGRATION LAW

every bandit or extremist is a foreign national. Public discussions are strongest when they rely on verified facts rather than assumptions.

Instead of focusing primarily on rehabilitating perpetrators, many citizens believe greater attention should be given to victims. Thousands of internally displaced persons remain in camps or temporary settlements, hoping to return to normal lives. Children have missed years of education. Farmers need support to return to their fields. Widows require economic assistance. Communities need hospitals,

schools, roads, and security restored.

If government resources are available, many Nigerians argue that they should first rebuild the lives of those who suffered because of violence before investing heavily in programmes for those who carried out the attacks.

There is also the issue of public confidence in government. Security policies succeed only when citizens trust them. If communities believe decisions are being made without adequate consultation or transparency, suspicion grows. Any rehabilitation programme should therefore be accompanied by clear information about how participants are selected, monitored, and evaluated. Citizens deserve assurance that public safety will never be compromised.

None of this means that peace should be abandoned. Every nation hopes to end cycles of violence, and history shows that some conflicts have eventually been resolved through dialogue, deradicalization, and reintegration.

However, lasting peace is rarely achieved by overlooking justice. Reconciliation is strongest when it acknowledges victims, holds offenders accountable under the law, and ensures that communities feel protected.

Ultimately, the debate over rehabilitation is not simply about former fighters. It is about the kind of society Nigeria wants to build. Should justice come before reintegration? How can victims find closure if they believe those responsible have escaped accountability? What message does society send to young people when those associated with violence appear to receive opportunities unavailable to many law-abiding citizens?

These are difficult questions with no easy answers.

One thing, however, remains clear: Nigerians deserve security, justice, and peace. These three goals should never compete with one another. Any policy designed to reduce insecurity must place the safety of innocent citizens first, respect the sacrifices of security personnel, and recognise the suffering of victims.

Who will lead tomorrow if our children beg today?

OSARUGUE SOPHIA OSADOLOR

Street begging has become an increasingly visible sight in parts of being city, particularly around Ring Road and the Aduwawa axis. Many residents encounter women, often accompanied by young children and even newborn babies, asking motorists and pedestrians for money. While poverty is a reality for many families, the growing involvement of children in street begging raises serious concerns about their welfare, education, health, and future. The issue deserves urgent attention from government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the public.

One of the mostly disturbing aspects of this situation is the number of children seen begging alone side their mothers. Rather than spending their days in classrooms, many of these children spend long hours on busy roads, exposed to traffic hazards, harsh weather, and other dangers. Observers often note that some appear poorly nourished, unkempt, and exhausted. Every child deserves the opportunity to learn, play, and grow in a safe environment, not to spend their childhood soliciting alms on the streets.

The sight of mothers carrying newborn babies under the scorching sun while begging is equally troubling. In-

fants are especially vulnerable to heat, dehydration, and illness, making prolonged exposure to such conditions a significant concern. Regardless of the circumstances that led these families to the streets, the health and safety of these children should remain a priority. Their presence in such environments highlights the urgent need for intervention and support.

Many people view stress begging as a public nuisance, but the problem is often rooted in deeper social and economic challenges such as poverty,

unemployment, displacement, and limited access to education and social services. Lasting solutions must be therefore address these underlying issues rather than focusing solely on removing beggars from the streets. A compassionate response that combines enforcement with support is more likely to produce meaningful and sustainable change.

The Edo State Government, working alongside NGOs, religious organisations, and community leaders, can play a vital role in changing the

lives of these families. Programmes aimed at rehabilitation women, providing vocational skills business grants could reduce their dependence on begging. At the same time, dedicated educational programmes should and receive the quality education necessary to build a better future.

Government should also strengthen child protection measures by discouraging the use of children for the streets begging. Where children are deliberately exposed to dangerous conditions or denied access to education, appropriate legal action should be taken in accordance with the with child protection laws. However, enforcement should be accompanied by welfare programmes that provide families with practical alternatives, ensuring that punishments alone do not worsen their circumstances.

Ultimately, the growing presence of women and children begging on the streets of Benin city is not merely an issue of public inconvenience but one of the human rights dignity and child welfare. Every child deserves education, protection, and hope, while every mother deserves the opportunity to earn a decent living through lawful means. By combining compassion with effective government policies, Edo State can protect vulnerable children, empower struggling families, and create safer streets for everyone.



CHILDREN