

FG arraigns Adeyemi over alleged fake presidential agency

OKUNBOR DELIGHT ESOSA

ABUJA

The Federal Government has arraigned Adeniyi Adeyemi before the Federal High Court in Abuja over alleged forgery and the creation of a purported presidential agency.

● Court remands accused in Kuje Prison, AGF takes over case

The court subsequently remanded Adeyemi in the Kuje Correctional Centre and ordered an accelerated hearing of the case.

Adeyemi is facing an eight-count charge bordering on alleged forgery. He pleaded not

guilty to all the charges.

According to the prosecution, the accused allegedly forged presidential letterhead paper dated March 8, 2024, and used it to produce documents purportedly emanating from the State House, Abuja.

The charge further alleges that he forged a request for the allocation of land and provision of office accommodation across the 36 states of the federation.

Justice Muhammed Umar adjourned the matter until October 12 for hearing of Ad-

eyemi's bail application.

Adeyemi's arraignment followed several unsuccessful attempts to bring him before the court.

He was brought into the courtroom at about 2:33 p.m. on Wednesday by a female po-

lice officer attached to the Nigeria Police Force National Cybercrime Centre (NPF-NCCC).

Dressed in a white flowing outfit and white baseball cap, Adeyemi appeared cheerful but kept his head lowered, with the brim of his cap partly cover-

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Okpebholo charges APC Campaign Council to win every ward, polling unit in Edo

● 'Reach out to non-members, win Edo at grassroots'

RICHARD EWEKA

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has charged members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Campaign Council to take the party's campaign to every ward, community and polling unit across the state ahead of the 2027

general elections.

Okpebholo gave the charge yesterday while inaugurating the Edo APC Campaign Council for the 2027 general elections, which he chairs, urging members to work as a united team and engage directly with the people at the grassroots.

The governor said the campaign must go beyond party

leaders and political office holders to encompass youths, women, traditional institutions, traders and other critical stakeholders across the state.

He urged members of the council to explain the programmes and achievements of the APC-led administration to the people, while also listening to their concerns and aspirations.

Okpebholo further charged the campaign council to promote peaceful campaigns and avoid statements or actions capable of causing division within the party or the state.

He stressed that effective grassroots mobilisation would be critical to the APC's success in the forthcoming elections.

Speaking at the inauguration,

Co-Chairman of the campaign council and Senator representing Edo North, Senator Adams Oshiomhole, commended Governor Okpebholo for what he described as his grassroots approach to governance.

Oshiomhole said the governor's ongoing visits to local government areas had demonstrated the importance of tak-

ing government and leadership directly to the people.

He urged members of the council not to limit their mobilisation efforts to existing APC members, but to reach out to residents who were yet to identify with the party.

> "Those who are not mem-

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Tinubu undertaking difficult reforms to develop Nigeria — Okpebholo

RICHARD EWEKA

OKADA

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has said President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is undertaking difficult but necessary reforms aimed at repositioning Nigeria for sustainable development and a better future for its citizens.

Governor Okpebholo stated this on yesterday while addressing members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) at Ikala-derhan Primary School, Okada, in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State.

The governor spoke during the continuation of his state-wide tour of the 18 local government areas of the state to

meet party members and mobilise support ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He was accompanied by his deputy, Dennis Idahosa; APC State Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe; Deputy State Chairman, Sylvester Aigboboh; former Deputy Governor, Lucky Imasuen; and other party leaders.

The delegation visited Oluku and Okada in Ovia North East, which has 13 wards, before proceeding to Iguobazuwa and Udo in Ovia South West Local Government Area, which has 10 wards.

Okpebholo said the reforms being implemented by the Federal Government, though difficult, were necessary to place

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Nigeria marks 66th Independence Anniversary with low-key celebration —Pg 2

HAPPY 66th Independence Anniversary

NEWS

Okpebholo charges APC...

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bers of the party are Nigerians and Edo people. They are our members. Our task is to motivate them and bring them into our fold,” Oshiomhole said.

The Edo APC Chairman and Co-Chairman of the campaign council, Mr Jarrett Tenebe, said the council comprised experienced party members carefully selected to deliver the party's candidates in the various elections.

Tenebe urged members to work collectively and ensure that campaign activities reached all wards and polling units across the state, assuring that the party would provide the necessary support for the council to discharge its responsibilities.

Director-General of the campaign council and former Senator representing Edo South, Senator Matthew Urhoghide, said the campaign must be taken to the “nooks and crannies” of Edo State.

Urhoghide urged members to engage non-APC members and convince them of the reasons to support the par-

ty, stressing that the election would ultimately be won or lost at the polling-unit level.

A former Deputy Governor of Edo State, Dr Pius Odubu, also urged members of the council to regard their appointments as a call to duty, charging them to extend their mobilisation beyond their immediate supporters and engage people across the state.

The APC recently constituted its 2026/2027 campaign structure, with Governor Okpebholo as Chairman, Oshiomhole and Tenebe as Co-Chairmen, and Urhoghide as Director-General.

Among those present at the inauguration were Deputy Governor Rt. Hon. Dennis Idahosa; Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly, Mr Yekini Idiaje; former Deputy Governor Lucky Imasuen; Senator Neda Imasuen, representing Edo South Senatorial District; Joe Ikpea; Edo Central APC chieftain, Gen. Cecil Esekagbe; Edo APC Deputy Chairman, Mr Sylvester Aigboboh; and the party's Secretary, Mr Lawrence Okah.

FG arraigns Adeyemi over...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

ing his face until his case was called.

The accused is alleged to have presented himself as the Director-General of the purported Presidential Foreign Intervention Promotion Council (PFIPC).

The case has also generated allegations involving the Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabiamila. Adeyemi had claimed that he was asked to make financial payments in connection with his purported appointment.

He further alleged that N400 million was paid through intermediaries, while another N200 million was allegedly requested. The claims have not been established in court.

Adeyemi had also questioned the Federal Government's position that the PFIPC and the Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PAEC) did not officially exist, arguing that references to both bodies appeared in the 2026 Appropriation Act.

The Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF) has taken over the prosecution of the case.

Tinubu undertaking difficult...

«CONTINUED FROM PG 1

the country on the path of sustainable growth.

> “The President has embarked on serious reforms that will help develop Nigeria and our children will benefit and enjoy it. Reforms are very difficult, but we are progressing as a nation.”

He commended President Tinubu for his anti-corruption efforts and support for his administration in Edo State.

“Tinubu is fighting corruption; that is why the enemies of the nation hate him. We are working in Edo State because the President is supporting us. He is helping us to build Edo just like he built Lagos State,” he said.

The governor expressed satisfaction with the massive turnout of party members at the various locations visited, saying it demonstrated the unity, strength and readiness of the APC ahead of the 2027 elections.

He urged party members

in Ovia North East and Ovia South West to support all APC candidates, describing them as tested and trusted leaders capable of delivering effective representation.

“All our candidates are tested and trusted. They are ready to deliver and improve the lives of the people. Our candidates will work and represent the people well,” Okpebholo said.

The governor also disclosed that his administration had pledged to deliver 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu in the 2027 presidential election, urging party members to support efforts towards achieving the target.

He further commended the President for supporting Edo State in the fight against insecurity, saying the security situation in the state had improved significantly.

According to him, criminals were gradually relocating from the state as a result of the administration's security measures

Nigeria marks 66th Independence Anniversary with low-key celebration

OKUNBOR DELIGHT ESOSA
ABUJA

Nigeria is marking its 66th Independence Anniversary with a low-key celebration focused on national reflection, the sacrifices of the country's founding fathers and the gains of ongoing reforms.

The anniversary is being cele-

brated under the theme, “From Reforms to Stability: Consolidating Nigeria's Renewed Hope for Shared Prosperity.”

The Federal Government has declared today, Thursday, October 1st, a public holiday, while activities lined up for the anniversary include religious services, a public lecture and a nationwide broadcast by Presi-

dent Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The programme commenced with a world press conference on September 24, followed by a Jumaat service on September 25 and an interdenominational church service on September 27.

The Independence Day public lecture was held yesterday, September 30, 2026, while President Tinubu is expected to

address Nigerians in a nationwide broadcast today.

The Federal Government said the low-key approach is intended to provide an opportunity for sober reflection on the nation's socio-economic challenges, while reaffirming its commitment to reforms aimed at achieving stability, growth and shared prosperity.



WORKING TOUR:

L-R: APC State Chairman Jarrett Tenebe, Governor Monday Okpebholo, Deputy Governor, Dennis Idahosa and chief of staff, Hon. Yakubu Musa during a working tour to Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State.

Retiring Justice Saulawa to Judges: Reject Politicians' 'Greek Gifts'

OSAHENIRO OFUWENGBE
ABUJA

Retiring Supreme Court Justice Ibrahim Mohammed Musa Saulawa has charged judicial officers to shun gifts from politicians and litigants, warning that such gestures could compromise judicial independence and erode public confidence in the administration of justice.

Justice Saulawa gave the warning on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, during his valedictory court session in Abuja, held to mark his retirement from the Supreme Court at the mandatory age of 70.

He particularly frowned at the practice of politicians sending cows, rams and other gifts to judges, describing such gestures as “Greek gifts” capable of creating obligations or raising questions about a judge's impartiality.

He urged judicial officers to remain guided by integrity, honesty, morality and contentment, stressing that judges must be able to discharge their responsibilities without fear, favour or external influence.

Recalling his experience as a magistrate in Katsina, Saulawa disclosed that a prominent businessman once offered him a brand-new Peugeot 504 car, but he rejected the gift despite pressure from influential individuals to accept it.

According to him, the wisdom of that decision became evident when the businessman

and others later appeared before his court over the alleged assault of a worker.

Saulawa said the accused persons were convicted and fined, while the injured worker, who had spent about two weeks in intensive care, was awarded damages.

The retired Justice said the experience reinforced the importance of judicial officers maintaining professional boundaries and refusing gifts that could influence their judgment or create

an appearance of indebtedness.

He therefore urged judges to protect the dignity of their offices by avoiding relationships and benefits that could compromise, or appear to compromise, the administration of justice.

Speaking at the valedictory session, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, commended Saulawa for his distinguished service to the judiciary and his progression from the High Court

to the Court of Appeal and ultimately the Supreme Court.

Saulawa joined the Supreme Court in November 2020 and bowed out of the Bench after more than four decades in the legal and judicial profession.

His parting message was a strong call for judicial officers to guard jealously the independence, integrity and credibility of the Bench by rejecting gifts and associations capable of compromising public trust in the administration of justice.

NNPC Ltd to partner private operators for refinery revival

OSEMUDIAMHEN FAITH
ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) says it is pursuing technical equity partnerships with experienced refinery operators to ensure sustainable performance of its refineries.

The Group Chief Executive Officer, Bayo Ojulari, disclosed this while addressing newsmen on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, in Abuja.

Ojulari said the company would partner with operators with proven records in running refineries and petrochemical plants, who would also take equity stakes in the facilities.

“The model will align the in-

terests of NNPC and its technical partners towards achieving sustainable results from the refineries,” he said.

He disclosed that Chinese investors have shown strong interest in two of the refineries, although no final agreement had been signed.

According to him, an existing Memorandum of Understanding provides for the Chinese team to conduct technical studies before submitting a proposal to NNPC Ltd.

“Once the Chinese finish the report of their study, they will come back to us with a proposal. Following that proposal, we will go into negotiations, both commercial and technical,” Ojulari said.

He said the level of commitment by the Chinese was demonstrated by the deployment of 33 top engineers who had spent about three months assessing the facilities, adding that the technical studies would determine next steps towards possible partnerships.

The NNPC Ltd. boss, however, said work had not commenced on the Kaduna Refinery, although the company remained committed to advancing the process.

He said NNPC Ltd. was working towards becoming a globally competitive energy company and must set high standards for transparency, accountability and sustainable performance.

“We are going to be Saudi Aramco. That is what we are talking about. Nothing less,” he said.

NEWS

Inauguration of Edo APC Campaign Council



Governor Monday Okpebholo discussing with Rt. Hon. Dr Patrick Ikhariale, former member House of Representatives during the inauguration of the APC campaign council



Left to right: Hon Pius Alile, Dr Mary Alile, National Women's Leader, APC and Lady Patricia Betty Okoebor-Benson, Edo State Woman leader, APC, at the inauguration of the APC campaign council



From right to left: Hon Esosa Iyawe, Oredo House of Reps, Hon Razaq Bello Osagie, Rt.Hon. Osamwonyi Atu, Deputy Speaker Edo House of Assembly.



Rt. Hon.Barr Friday Itulah, Special Assistant to the Speaker on Political Matters, South South geo-political zone, Senator Clif-ford Ordia and Hon. Joe Edionwele.



From left to right: Reverend Peter Obadan, former Deputy Governor of Edo State, Dr. Pius Odubu, former Deputy Governor of Edo State and Hon. Lucky Imasuen, former Deputy Governor.

Governor Monday Okpebholo shaking hands with Col. David Imuse (rtd) immediate past APC state chairman during the All Progressives Congress, APC Inauguration of the campaign council in Benin city yesterday

PHOTOS:
Emmanuel Ijebai



THE NIGERIAN OBSERVER

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LONG MAY HE REIGN

NEWS

Edo APC sets campaign machinery in motion for 2027

By Success Edenamuike

BENIN CITY

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Edo State has formally set its campaign machinery in motion for the 2027 general elections, with the inauguration of its Campaign Council at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub, Benin City.

The inauguration, which attracted a large gathering of party faithful and stakeholders from across the 18 local

government areas of the state, marked a significant step in the APC's preparations to consolidate its political strength and mobilise support ahead of the elections.

The ceremony was attended by Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo; the Deputy Governor; the Commissioner for Education; members of the Edo State House of Assembly; heads of districts; leaders of various party structures and other political stakeholders.

Also present were members of the inauguration committee, the Edo State Political Evangelism Group, representatives of the Edo State Women Committee and other women's groups, security agencies, the media, as well as party supporters drawn from the state's 18 local government areas.

Addressing the newly inaugurated council members, Governor Okpebholo charged them to close ranks, work as a united team and avoid actions capable of creating division within the party.

He urged members of the council to take the APC's message to the grassroots, stressing

that discipline, effective mobilisation, unity and issue-based campaigns would be critical to the party's success at the polls.

The Governor also emphasised the need for members to put the collective interest of the party above personal ambitions, insisting that the 2027 campaign must be driven by a

coordinated strategy capable of reaching every ward, polling unit and community across the state.

A major talking point at the inauguration was the directive to party supporters to desist from unauthorised personal campaigns on preferred candidates or individuals they want to support.

Governor Okpebholo Mourns Pastor Chris Oyakhilome's Mother at 88

BENIN CITY

Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has expressed condolences to the family of Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, President of LoveWorld Incorporated, also known as Christ Embassy, over the death of his mother, Deaconess Angel Oyakhilome.

Deaconess Oyakhilome who lived in Benin City, Edo State, died on Friday, September 25, 2026, at the age of 88.

The governor described her death as a loss to the Oyakhilome family and to people who were touched by her life in Edo State and beyond.

"Losing a mother is never easy, whatever her age. But Deaconess Oyakhilome lived a long and fruitful life, and she raised children who have served humanity in their own

ways. That is a legacy any parent would be proud of," the governor said.

According to Governor Okpebholo, the values of faith, discipline and love that Deaconess Oyakhilome instilled in her children had contributed to the ministry and charitable activities of Pastor Oyakhilome, which has now reached millions of people in Nigeria and around the world.

Commending the family for the manner in which it had received the news, the governor said there was comfort in a life well lived.

He prayed for God's comfort for Pastor Oyakhilome, his siblings, the wider Oyakhilome family and members of the LoveWorld community.

"On behalf of the government and people of Edo State, I extend our deepest condolences. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family at this time," the governor said.

**PLENARY SESSION:**

Hon. Donald Okogbe, Chairman Edo State House of Assembly standing committee on education (left) presenting the report of his committee to Alhaji Yahaya Omogbai, Clerk of the house, for the house consideration on a bill for a law to repeal the Bendel State Post Primary Education Edict 1988; provide for the Establishment of the Edo State Senior Secondary Education Board and for other related matters connected thereto, during the house plenary session

Nigeria @66: Agbonlahor calls for prayers, unity

BENIN CITY

The Chairman, Edo State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board, Very Rev. Fr. Alfred Agbonlahor, has called on Nigerians to intensify

prayers, promote unity and harness the country's abundant natural and human resources to overcome its challenges and secure its place among the comity of nations.

Fr. Agbonlahor made the

call in a goodwill message to Nigerians as the country celebrates its 66th Independence Anniversary, stressing that Nigeria, as a developing nation, has enormous opportunities and resources capable of transforming its fortunes if properly harnessed and channelled towards national development.

He congratulated President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Edo State Governor, Senator Monday Okpebholo, and the founding fathers of the nation for sustaining Nigeria's corporate existence for 66 years despite the numerous challenges it has encountered.

According to him, Nigeria has passed through difficult periods, including the First and Second World Wars, political crises, the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and the subsequent return of the military to power, before the restoration of democratic governance in 1999.

The cleric attributed the continued peace and survival of Nigeria as one indivisible nation to the grace and divine intervention of God.

He therefore appealed to Nigerians agitating for the separation or division of the country to abandon such ideas, noting that breaking up the nation would not serve the collective interest of its citizens.

Rather, he urged Nigerians to remain committed to protecting the unity and corporate existence of the country, irrespective of their ethnic, religious and cultural differences.

Fr. Agbonlahor also called for intensified prayers for peace, stability and tranquillity across the country, stressing that Nigerians must work together to build a nation where all citizens can live and pursue their legitimate aspirations in peace.

The Edo State Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board chairman commended Governor Okpebholo for what he described as the administration's tough measures against kidnapping, cultism, banditry and other heinous crimes in the state.

He said sustained efforts to tackle insecurity would help create a peaceful environment capable of attracting investors and accelerating development in Edo State.

On the 2027 general elections, Fr. Agbonlahor urged politicians, political parties, security agencies and other stakeholders to ensure a peaceful, credible and orderly electoral process.

He warned against violence and the shedding of innocent blood in the quest for political power, urging all stakeholders to place the interest and peace of the nation above partisan considerations.

Fr. Agbonlahor wished Nigerians a peaceful and hitch-free 66th Independence Anniversary celebration, urging citizens to remain hopeful and united in the task of building a stronger and more prosperous Nigeria.

Okomu Oil, PIND equip 500 Edo farmers for climate-smart farming es media

BENIN CITY

Okomu Oil Palm Company Plc (OOPC), in partnership with the Foundation for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), has equipped 500 farmers from 17 communities in Edo State with practical knowledge and resources to adopt climate-smart and improved agricultural practices.

The initiative, implemented through two Green Field Days held in Udo, Ovia South-West Local Government Area, and Odighi, Ovia North-East Local Government Area, on September 28 and 29, 2026, respectively, is aimed at moving farmers from training to actual adoption of improved farming techniques.

The field days, organised under the theme, "From Training to Adoption: Promoting Improved and Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices," were part of the PIND/Okomu CSR Livelihood Project and built on demonstration plots

established to expose farmers to practices capable of increasing productivity, reducing production risks and improving farm profitability.

During the sessions, PIND Technical Service Providers demonstrated the use of improved cassava stems, appropriate planting methods, spacing and farm-establishment techniques, as well as commodity-specific practices for oil palm, cocoa and rubber.

Selected farmers also received adoption-support inputs, including improved cassava stems, fertilisers and herbicides, according to their commodity needs, to enable them to immediately apply the demonstrated practices on their farms.

Speaking on behalf of the Managing Director of Okomu Oil Palm Company Plc, Dr. Graham Hefer, the company's Smallholder Scheme Manager, Mr. Sam Aisien, said the initiative was designed to

ensure that investments in neighbouring communities translated into practical and sustainable improvements in livelihoods.

"Our goal is to ensure that investments in neighbouring communities strengthen livelihoods in practical and lasting ways.

"When farmers can see what works, access the right inputs and remain connected to technical and market support, they are better positioned to improve productivity, build resilient farm businesses and ultimately improve their living conditions," he said.

Also speaking, PIND's Economic Development Manager, Mr. Misan Edema-Sillo, who represented the organisation's Executive Director, Mr. Sam Ogbemi Daibo, said the field days were designed to bridge the gap between agricultural knowledge and actual adoption.

"Training creates value when farmers can apply what they learn.

These field days help close the gap between knowledge and adoption by combining field-based demonstrations with appropriate inputs, local advisory services and market connections that can continue beyond the event," he said.

Beyond the distribution of inputs, the Green Field Days connected farmers with Local Technical Service Providers who will continue to provide advisory and mentorship services.

Participants also interacted with accredited input dealers, large-scale buyers, financial institutions and other market actors, providing them with opportunities to access services, finance, quality inputs and markets beyond the life of the project.

The approach, according to the organisers, is intended to enable farmers to sustain the practices introduced during the field days through existing commercial channels rather than depend indefinitely on project support.

NEWS

FG plans 24-hour power zones in Lagos, Abuja, Kano, others

ABUJA

The Federal Government has begun engagements with electricity distribution companies to develop proposed Energy Zones aimed at delivering 24-hour

electricity supply to homes, businesses and industries in major demand centres across the country.

The Minister of Power, Joseph Tegbe, held a closed-door meeting with the leadership of selected distribution companies to discuss the pro-

posed initiative, which targets the Lagos axis, Abuja-Kaduna-Kano and Enugu-Port Harcourt corridors.

The meeting was disclosed in a statement issued on Wednesday by the minister's media aide, Adeola Adelabu.

The statement read, "In furtherance of the Federal Government's commitment to deliver reliable electricity

to Nigerians, the Minister of Power, Joseph Tegbe, has held a strategic closed-door meeting with the leadership of select electricity distribution companies over the proposed Energy Zones, designed to deliver stable, 24-hour power supply to homes, businesses and industries in the country's highest-demand areas, namely Lagos axis, Abu-

ja-Kaduna-Kano and Enugu-Port-Harcourt."

The initiative is designed to address electricity distribution constraints and ensure that power generated and transmitted to the national grid reaches consumers more reliably, particularly in areas with high commercial and industrial demand.

According to the statement, Tegbe said the challenges facing the power sector extended beyond electricity generation and transmission to the capacity of distribution companies to receive and deliver available electricity to end users.

"The constraint on the sector is not limited to generation and transmission but includes how much power is taken up and delivered at the distribution end," the statement quoted the minister as saying.

He said the proposed En-

ergy Zones would help close the gap, unlock commercial and industrial demand, and improve the revenue and collection performance of distribution companies.

The minister also reaffirmed the Federal Government's commitment to expanding electricity infrastructure in areas with high demand, noting that supply capacity must grow in line with the needs of Nigeria's expanding economy.

The proposed zones are expected to focus on locations where reliable electricity is critical to businesses, manufacturing and other productive activities. However, the statement did not provide a timeline for implementation, the proposed capacity of the zones or the specific infrastructure investments required to deliver round-the-clock supply.



MOBILISATION RALLY:

L-R: Governor Monday Okpebholo, Hon. Omosede Igbiniedion and Ogbeide-Ihama during the mobilisation rally of the All Progressives Congress (APC) to Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State yesterday.

Omoike charges Etsako West legislators on diligence at seminar

Lamai Cassius

AUCHI

The Executive Chairman of Etsako West Local Government Council, Hon. Romeo Aloaye Omoike, has charged members of the legislative arm to discharge their responsibilities with dil-

igence, integrity and commitment to good governance.

Hon. Omoike gave the charge while declaring open a 5-day seminar organised for members of the Legislative Council to enhance their effectiveness, professionalism and understanding of legislative procedures.

He urged the lawmakers to make the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria their principal guide in the discharge of their duties, while also ensuring strict adherence to relevant Edo State laws and bye-laws governing local government operations.

The Chairman stressed the importance of sound legislative knowledge, constructive engagement and effective col-

laboration between the Executive and Legislative arms in promoting accountability, transparency and sustainable development in Etsako West. He further encouraged the legislators to apply the knowledge and experience gained from the seminar to strengthen their capacity and contribute meaningfully to the growth and development of the council.

Ondo orders removal of abandoned heavy vehicles, equipment on roads

ONDO

The Ondo State Government has ordered owners of abandoned heavy-duty vehicles, trucks, machinery and large watercraft obstructing roads and waterways across the state to remove them.

The government declared that failure to do so within seven days of the announcement, the owners risked forfeiture of such equipment.

The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa on Emergency Response and Safety Enforcement, Mr Wellington Adebawo, announced the directive while speaking with newsmen in Akure the state capital on Wednesday.

Adebawo said the directive became necessary following "growing safety concerns over the presence of abandoned heavy-duty vehicles and equipment on roads, as well as abandoned large boats and other watercraft on the state's waterways."

According to him, such abandoned objects constitute potential hazards to motorists, commuters, pedestrians and waterway users, particularly where they were left unattended for extended period of time.

He said, "The government has already carried out a comprehensive survey of abandoned heavy-duty vehicles, equipment and other related obstructions across the 18 local government areas of Ondo State, as part of

efforts to identify and address potential safety hazards across the state.

"We want to appeal to companies, businesses and individuals whose heavy-duty vehicles, trucks, trailers, construction equipment and other large machinery have been abandoned along roads or other public spaces to take immediate steps to remove and relocate them to safe and appropriate locations within the stipulated period.

"Similarly, owners of abandoned large boats, barges and other commercial watercraft on the state's waterways are advised to retrieve and relocate their vessels to designated and safe locations within the seven-day

period," he stated.

The governor's aide also stated that the directive was primarily aimed at preventing avoidable accidents and protecting lives and property, rather than targeting legitimate businesses or individuals.

He stressed that abandoned heavy vehicles and equipment could "create dangerous obstructions, reduce visibility and available road space, and expose road users to avoidable risks."

He further warned that where owners fail to comply with the directive within the specified period, the Ondo State Government will take necessary enforcement action to remove and impound the abandoned vehicles, equipment and watercraft, with such items liable to forfeiture in accordance with applicable government regulations and laws.

S'West APC youth leader urges Oyeibanji to prioritise youths

EKITI

The All Progressives Congress South-West Youth Leader, Adesuyi Daramola, has appealed to the Ekiti State Governor, Mr Biodun Oyeibanji, to give greater consideration to competent and capable young people among his next set of political appointees.

The APC South-West Youth Leader said that Oyeibanji's second term "presents an opportunity to further strengthen youth inclusion and participation in governance, particularly by creating meaningful opportunities for competent young Ekiti indigenes to contribute to the administration."

Oyeibanji will be inaugurated for his second term in office on October 16 following his reelection victory in the June 20 Ekiti State Governorship Election.

The governor had last week approved the dissolution of boards, commissions and parastatals in the state, as well as the termination of appointments of political appointees ahead of the inauguration of his second term.

Daramola, who spoke in a statement by his Media and Publicity Director, Remilekun Oyelowo, made available in Ado Ekiti on Wednesday, urged the governor that "giving qualified youths a stronger place in government will deepen their sense of belonging while also strengthening their confi-

dence and trust in the administration."

He stated, "We respectfully appeal to His Excellency, Governor Biodun Oyeibanji, to remember the youths of Ekiti State as he constitutes his next team of political appointees. Our young people are not only the leaders of tomorrow; many are already capable contributors to governance today.

"Providing competent young people with opportunities to serve will inspire our youths, strengthen their confidence in government and demonstrate that the administration values their energy, ideas, expertise and commitment to the development of Ekiti State."

Daramola hailed and appreciated the immediate past political appointees for their service and contributions to the development of the state, saying, "The next phase of the administration provides an opportunity to bring in fresh perspectives while retaining the experience and institutional knowledge required for effective governance."

The APC South-West Youth Leader also encouraged young people across Ekiti State to continue to develop their skills, knowledge and leadership capacity so they could take advantage of opportunities to contribute to governance and public service.

He noted that greater youth participation could further strengthen the relationship between the government and the younger generation.

NEWS

NNPC Ltd. posts ₦7.2trn profit amid revenue decline

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. (NNPC Ltd.) recorded N7.2 trillion Profit After Tax (PAT) in 2025, a 33 per cent increase from N5.4 trillion.

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from N5.4 trillion.

Nigeria news updates

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, disclosed this on Tuesday in Abuja at a media briefing after the company's AGM and second Earnings Call.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that revenue declined to N34.5 trillion from N45.1 trillion in 2024.

Ojulari attributed the 24 per cent revenue decline to

lower crude oil prices and reduced product volumes following market deregulation.

He said earnings per share rose to N35.90 from N27.07, while return on equity improved by 200 basis points to 16 per cent.

The company's declared dividend increased by 35 per cent to N5.8 trillion, while taxes, royalties and other government remittances rose 39 per cent to N22.3 trillion.

"Stronger earnings in spite of this pressure demonstrate the resilience of NNPC Limited's operations," Ojulari said.

He said profit grew because NNPC had improved its operations and maintained discipline across its businesses.

Ojulari said crude oil and condensate production reached a five-year peak of 1.77 million barrels per day.

He added that gas supply

reached a three-year high of 7.2 billion standard cubic feet per day.

"Stronger performance gives NNPC Limited more capacity to invest, contribute to public revenue and strengthen Nigeria's energy security," he said.

On infrastructure, Ojulari said the mainline of the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano gas pipeline had been completed.

He said work was ongoing on tie-ins to delivery points, beginning with Abuja, followed by Ajaokuta and Kaduna.

According to him, the next milestone is to commence gas flow through the pipeline to industries and power plants.

Ojulari said the company completed the Obiafu-Obrikom-Oben (OB3) gas pipeline in 2026 after several years of challenges.

On the refineries, he said prospective partners under NNPC's technical equity partnership model had conducted a three-month onsite review.

He said more than 34 engineers participated in the review, adding that NNPC was now concluding the report.

Ojulari said the company was targeting self-sustaining and profitable refineries, with a pathway expected to be defined soon.

**NNPC STATION:**

Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd. (NNPC) fuel station.

No date yet for IPO, listing decision rests with stakeholders – NNPC

ABUJA

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) says it has no fixed date for its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO), emphasising that the ultimate decision rests with its shareholders.

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) says it has no fixed date for its proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO), emphasising that the ultimate decision rests with its shareholders.

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, NNPC Ltd., said this on Tuesday in Abuja at a news conference on the company's 2025 Audited Financial Statements, after its Annual General Meeting.

Economy/Business news

Ojulari said the company was focused on achieving readiness for the proposed IPO, while consultants and other relevant parties were assessing its preparedness and outstanding actions.

"We don't have a date, but we are working hard to make sure we are ready as soon as we can."

"The decision to take IPO is not ours. It's the shareholders that will take ultimately that decision on behalf of the country."

"But just also bear in mind

that we cannot just determine a date for IPO on our own. It is the consultants and the parties that assess and evaluate that will give us a sense of readiness overall when they finish," he said.

He said the timing would be determined by the outcome of the readiness assessment, prevailing market conditions and other strategic considerations.

According to him, NNPC's

responsibility as management and board is to ensure that all requirements and evidence needed to make the company ready for listing are in place.

He said transparency, clear accountability and sustainable performance were critical requirements for achieving such readiness.

"Therefore, we need to set our bar where it belongs. To do that, we have to make sure there is transparency, clear ac-

countability and sustainable performance," Ojulari said.

He said that management could only prepare the company for listing, while the decision to proceed would ultimately be taken by the shareholders on behalf of the country.

Ojulari said the company would communicate the IPO date once the relevant assessments had been completed and the necessary advice received.

NNPC sustains crude supply to Dangote, improves pipeline availability – Ojulari

ABUJA

Mr Bayo Ojulari, Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.), says the company is sustaining crude oil supply to Dangote Refinery under the approved naira-for-crude arrangement.

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Nigeria news updates

Ojulari said this on Tuesday in Abuja at a press briefing on the company's 2025 Audited

Financial Statements, after its Annual General Meeting.

He said NNPC was supplying a specified number of crude cargoes to Dangote Refinery in Naira, while additional crude volumes were supplied in dollars.

He said that the dollar-denominated transactions were necessary because most of NNPC's financial obligations, including payments to drilling contractors, project contractors and operators, were in dollars.

"Most of our commitments are in dollars, so there is no point receiving Naira and then going to buy dollars to meet those obligations."

"We have a commitment for supplying crude in Naira for a specific number of cargoes, typically. But also, the extra

crude that are available, we only supply in dollar," he said.

Ojulari said the company would continue to honour the Federal Government-approved Naira-for-crude arrangement while supplying additional available crude volumes in dollars.

On crude theft and pipeline security, he said the combination of community-based surveillance, intervention and security agencies had significantly improved the availability of major crude oil pipelines.

He said pipeline availability, particularly on major export routes, had improved substantially from levels recorded in early 2024, when some facilities operated at less than 10 per cent of producers' reported output.

Dangote sponsors Abuja trade fair, features refinery IPO

ABUJA

Dangote Industries Limited (DIL), one of the sponsors of the 21st Abuja International Trade Fair, will spotlight the ongoing Initial Public Offering (IPO) of the Dangote Petroleum Refinery and Petrochemicals (DPRP) during the company's Special Day.

The Dangote Special Day, scheduled for Friday, will feature a high-level fireside and business interactive session bringing together representatives of Dangote Group, government, the organised private sector and business leaders to examine the transformative role of the Dangote Refinery in Nigeria's economic development.

According to the company, the interactive session will provide prospective investors, entrepreneurs, business oper-

ators and other participants with an opportunity to engage directly with representatives of Dangote Group and gain a better understanding of the refinery's ongoing IPO and its broader economic significance.

The session, themed "Dangote Refinery, Vision 2030, ACCI and the Economy," will examine the refinery's contribution to Nigeria's energy security, industrialisation, trade, employment generation, taxation and economic growth.

Particular attention will be paid to how increased domestic refining capacity can reduce Nigeria's dependence on imported petroleum products, conserve foreign exchange, strengthen local value chains and create new opportunities for businesses across the petroleum, petrochemical, logistics, manufacturing and services sectors.

Organisation to build 100 CNG sites to address refuelling shortage

ABUJA

A group, Ardova Plc-Diadem Energy consortium is set to expand gas infrastructure, targeting 100 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) refuelling sites nationwide, to address refuelling shortage and more access to customers.

The Chairman of Diadem Group, Dr George Eluwa and Chairman Ardova Plc, Dr Abdul-Wasiu Sowami, jointly made the announcement in a statement made available to newsmen on Wednesday in Abuja.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the move is following the consortium agreement to acquire Powergas, one of Africa's largest compressed natural gas producers and virtual pipeline distributors from Africa Infrastructure Fund I ("AIF I").

According to the statement, Ardova Plc of the consortium, a Nigerian integrated energy and infrastructure company, will deploy CNG infrastructure across its retail network.

It said the organisation is

targeting 100 CNG refuelling sites nationwide within 24 months, expanding access to gas for commercial fleets and motorists while supporting Nigeria's drive to increase domestic gas utilisation.

"The Ardova-Diadem consortium intends to expand Powergas' compression capacity across viable gas-producing corridors."

"Creating firm offtake for associated and non-associated gas, supporting flare reduction and unlocking further investment across the gas value chain," it stated.

The statement said the acquisition, expected to be completed by the end of 2026, would combine Powergas' gas sourcing relationships, compression infrastructure and industrial customer base with Diadem's virtual pipeline logistics.

It said the deal would also leverage Ardova's nationwide retail, logistics and distribution network to achieve the target, with plans to extend the platform into the wider West African market over time.

NEWS**FOREIGN**

Africa's richest man launches Kenya oil refinery despite land protests

Aliko Dangote made his fortune in cement before branching into oil.

Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote and Kenya's President William Ruto have broken ground on a \$16bn (£12bn) oil refinery in Lamu, on Kenya's north-eastern coast.

Upon completion, the refinery is expected to process 700,000 barrels of crude oil a day, making it East Africa's largest industrial project by capacity.

Ahead of the launch, some local residents took to the streets to demand more compensation for land used for the refinery.

Speaking to the BBC, Dangote, Africa's richest man, dismissed the protests as games played by local marketers and international players, insisting the refinery would go ahead and would be ready by 2030 as planned.

The ground-breaking was also attended by the leaders of Uganda, Ethiopia, Togo and Benin.

Dangote has offered regional governments a combined 30% stake in the refinery, according to Reuters news agency.

"This is Africa coming together to build Africa. Today we are not simply breaking ground for a refinery, we're breaking ground for a new chapter in Africa's industrial journey to a brighter future," Dangote said as he launched the project.

"Lekki [his Nigerian refinery] proved that it can be done, Lamu must prove that it can be repeated."

The refinery is set to become the only one in East Africa and is Kenya's largest infrastructure project since independence, surpassing the \$5.1bn (£3.9bn) Standard Gauge Railway.

In his interview with the BBC's Focus on Africa programme, Dangote disputed the compensation claims and said the company took only the portion of land it needed from what the government made available.

"To come and say some people are demonstrating, demonstrating about what? Have you ever seen people demonstrating against themselves in terms of development?" he asked, indi-



ALINKO DANGOTE

cating he was not fazed by the protests.

Walid Ali, the co-founder of the Save Lamu campaign group, told the BBC that they are concerned about the environmental impact the project could have on the local community.

"We are asking for the findings from the environmental impact assessment so that we can see what mitigation measures are being proposed," Ali said.

"This is not the first project where we have seen environmental concerns being overlooked," he added.

Ali said that they were yet to raise concerns directly with the company because "they have not even engaged with the local community."

"They have only been talking to the government. There is no ownership of the project by the community," he said.

At the height of construction, Dangote said the refinery would create 60,000 jobs, with the benefits extending beyond those employed directly by the project.

"Are we going to bring robots? Of course, the people will benefit," he said.

Critics have questioned the decision to build the refinery in Kenya, which

is not an oil-producing country. Others have suggested Tanzania or Uganda, both of which are moving towards oil exports through the East African Crude Oil Pipeline.

But Kenya's Energy and Petroleum Minister Opiyo Wandayi told the BBC that the refinery's location did not mean it would rely on oil from the region.

Crackdown on South Africa's unsafe streets ordered by president to keep women safe

President Ramaphosa has announced an audit of unsafe streets "that place women at risk", after the bodies of 12 women were found in just two months east of Johannesburg.

The deaths have sparked a national outcry about the scale of violence against women in a country that has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world.

Ramaphosa also announced plans to reduce alcohol-related violence as part of his multidisciplinary, national emergency response to the murders.

He said gender-based violence could not "be accepted as a normal part of life" and admitted that South Africa had "not done enough" to protect women and girls.

"There has understandably been widespread fear that the discovery of these women in close proximity could indicate the work of a single perpetrator," Ramaphosa said in an address to the nation on Tuesday evening.

"At present, the police have not found evidence establishing that these killings were committed by a

single perpetrator."

Four arrests have been made so far. Twelve women have been killed in one part of South Africa since July.

Admitting the government has not done enough in recent years to prevent gender-based violence, he announced a new wave of measures to help protect women and girls.

"Every municipality must begin a women's safety audit without delay," he said. "High-risk areas must be identified" and addressed.

"These audits must identify broken streetlights, overgrown public spaces, abandoned buildings, unsafe transport routes and facilities, poorly secured parks, and other conditions that place women at risk."

Ramaphosa has also instructed ministers to draw up a plan for an "enforcement package" to reduce alcohol-related violence.

"Alcohol does not cause gender-based violence and it can never excuse it. Responsibility always lies with the perpetrator," he said.

"But harmful alcohol use is a sig-

nificant aggravating factor in interpersonal violence, and it must be addressed as part of our wider prevention effort."

The South African president also said a deeper change, beyond policing and legislation, must take place to reduce violence against women and girls, saying it "does not begin when a fist is raised" or when a woman is raped or murdered.

"It begins much earlier," he said. "It begins in attitudes that regard women as inferior... with the belief that a man has the right to control a woman."

"It begins when jealousy is mistaken for love, when control is mistaken for protection and coercion is mistaken for affection."

"It begins when a man refuses to accept the word no."

He went on to call on men and boys to take the lead in ending gender-based violence.

"We have placed the burden of male violence on women," Ramaphosa said. "That must change."

Widespread industrial action begins across Republic of Ireland

Some health, education and council workers in the Republic of Ireland have commenced industrial action over an ongoing public sector pay dispute.

More than 100,000 workers, including nurses, school staff and civil servants, moved to work-to-rule measures on Wednesday morning.

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) said its public health service staff will perform only duties necessary for safe patient care and "will not work any additional unpaid hours".

Two days of fuller strike action have been planned for 14 and 21 October, when it is expected schools could be closed and picket lines formed across the country.

INMO said nurses and midwives who have taken work-to-rule action "will not attend non-clinical meetings, except where attendance is strictly necessary for direct patient care".

They have been joined by Fórsa, the Republic's largest public sector

union, after 96.6% of their members who voted in an industrial ballot did so in favour of action.

Members of SIPTU, who represent public sector workers in health and administration, have also signed up to work-to-rule measures.

'No talks taking place'

On their website Fórsa said "there are currently no talks taking place" with the Irish government in relation to a new public sector pay deal, after the previous arrangement expired on 30 June.

They said dialogue with state employers has been held up by the "government's unwillingness to address cost-of-living measures at the start of any negotiations".

They added: "With no public service agreement in place, we are now in dispute with government, as the employer of public service workers."

SIPTU Divisional Organiser Brendan O'Brien said the "goodwill" of workers was a large part of what kept public services going, but said the Irish government's failure to establish a ba-

sis for formal talks "left our members with no alternative but to act collectively".

He added: "We are calling on public service employers and the government to engage constructively and urgently to avoid an escalation of this dispute."

Last UK and US troops leave Iraq as anti-Islamic State mission ends

The last British and American troops have left Iraq after a military presence of more than a decade in the country.

The exit of the remaining UK military personnel - around 100 - from Irbil, in the northern Kurdistan region, was co-ordinated over recent weeks with US forces, who also departed on Wednesday.

It follows an agreement between the US and the Iraqi government, signed two years ago, to withdraw foreign troops by the end of this month.

British and US forces have been present in Iraq since 2014, as part of

the international coalition to help defeat the extremist Islamic State (IS) group. Their departure brings the mission, known as Operation Inherent Resolve, to an end.

Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi said the end of the coalition's mission marked "Iraq's transition to a phase in which it assumes full responsibility for its security and stability".

Iraq is set to hold four "Sovereignty Days" as a national holiday to mark the withdrawal.

"Following more than a decade of operations, training and capacity building, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

and the Kurdish Peshmerga have secured the enduring territorial defeat of Daesh in Iraq and are now well placed to take primary responsibility for the country's security," the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) said in a statement, referring to IS by an Arabic acronym.

"With these objectives achieved, Iraq and its international partners can begin a new chapter focused on enduring security co-operation under Iraqi leadership."

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the coalition's departure from Irbil marked "the successful conclusion of the military mission that defeated [IS] in Iraq".

FOREIGN

NEWS



Flydubai plane

Israel-bound flight diverted after fight between pilots

A flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv was unexpectedly diverted to Saudi Arabia after a fight between the pilots, Israeli officials told local media.

The Flydubai plane - which took off from Dubai International Airport in the United Arab Emirates early on Wednesday morning - signalled an emergency code two hours into the journey, flight tracking website Flightradar24 said.

Minutes later, the code was switched to report a hijacking, before it was later turned back to the general emergency sig-

nal.

Israeli media cites officials as saying that one pilot stabbed the other, before being restrained. Passengers have also shared reports of a stabbing with local news outlets.

Flight FZ1073 - carrying around 150 people, most of whom are Israeli - was due to land at Ben-Gurion Airport but instead landed at Tabuk Airport in northeastern Saudi Arabia.

A Flydubai spokesperson confirmed the flight "experienced an incident while en route", and that updates will

be issued as further details become available. "Our teams are working closely with the relevant authorities," it added.

Data from Flightradar24 shows a rapid descent for the plane over Saudi Arabia, just two hours after take-off, descending more than 17,000 feet (over 5,000m) in less than two minutes just after 05:21 UTC (06:21 BST).

At 05:40, the flight briefly entered Jordanian airspace before looping back into Saudi Arabia minutes later, where it then began its descent for landing.

The Israeli air force dispatched fighter jets in response to the incident and Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held urgent consultations on the incident.

In a statement, Netanyahu said the situation is under control and that efforts are under way to return the Israeli passengers home from Saudi Arabia. Argentine forces landed on the Falklands to stake a territorial claim in 1982, sparking a 74-day war over the territory as a British military task force ejected them.

The conflict led to the deaths of 255 British military personnel, three islanders and 649 Argentine military personnel.

South Korea demands apology from Pyongyang for landmine blasts that injured three

South Korea's military has demanded an apology from North Korea for landmine blasts along their shared border that wounded South Korean soldiers earlier this month.

Three South Korean personnel were injured by explosions in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) - a buffer zone separating the two Koreas, on 21 September.

South Korea said on Tuesday it was "certain" that the blasts, which happened on South Korea's side of the DMZ, came from North Korean mines. It vowed to take "corresponding measures" for what he said was a violation of a decades-old armistice.

North Korea has denied responsibility for the blasts, calling Seoul's claims "groundless" and a "farce" to escalate tensions on the peninsula.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, accused South Korea of "cooking up" the claims for "political and military provocation".

Kim denied suggestions that North Korean had crossed the border to plant the mines, calling it "a deliberate and planned strained assertion to shift the responsibility for escalating tension" to North Korea.

Her statement, published in state media on Wednesday, also warned the South to be "prepared

for paying price for the farce of their own making."

South Korea says the mines are believed to have been laid by Pyongyang to fortify its border. In a statement on Wednesday, it called for North Korea to apologise for the blast and put an immediate stop to such fortification activities along the border.

South Korean Defence Minister Kang Shin-chul previously said on Tuesday that the blasts were a "clear" violation of the 1953 armistice, which halted active combat in the Korean War.

That armistice resulted in the creation of the 4km-wide (2.5-mile) DMZ, a buffer strip containing the Military Demarcation Line which marks the land border between the two Koreas.

In the decades since, sporadic clashes and mine explosions have broken out in the DMZ.

In 2015, two South Korean soldiers were maimed by landmines while patrolling the area. South Korea said the mines had been secretly planted by North Korean soldiers near a South Korean guard post - a claim that Pyongyang denied.

Kim referenced that 2015 incident in her statement on Wednesday, claiming South Korea had used that as a "pretext" to escalate tensions, and were doing the same thing now.

Chinese AI tool told researchers how to make bioweapons

Chinese AI developer Moonshot is conducting an internal review after researchers were able to persuade two of its popular Kimi models to tell them how to make biological weapons and carry out assassinations.

Mindgard, which tests the security of AI systems, told the BBC it discovered in July that Kimi K2.6 and K3 Swarm could evade safety limits put in place by developers.

It arose during a process called "jailbreaking", where researchers use a series of complex instructions to see if AI tools ignore guardrails - which Mindgard said should have stopped Kimi from discussing concerning topics.

Moonshot told the BBC it welcomed third-party input "as a key pillar for building better and safer AI".

The company also told the BBC it was in discussion with Mindgard about its findings.

Mindgard's founder Peter Garraghan told the BBC World

Service programme Tech Life that its findings about Kimi K2.6 and K3 Swarm were concerning.

"Once the jailbreak works it will talk about any topic, it will even freely offer up recommendations about other topics that are also nefarious and it will be inventive and creative," he said.

Jailbreaks present a different kind of risk to those seen with the recent slew of high-profile AI incidents.

These have seen autonomous AI tools known as agents, developed by US firms including OpenAI, Meta and Anthropic, hack some online services.

While jailbreaks are complex processes that can take a lot of time and determination some experts fear hackers and other bad actors could try to use them to cause harm.

Anthropic recently said it had identified and disrupted attempts to use one of its AI model for "malicious activity" that could support the development of biological weapons.

Cyber-attack launchpad

Mindgard has not proven whether the answers supplied by Kimi on concerning topics would work.

But it argued guardrails should have prevented the models in question from entering into discussion with users on such subjects.

The firm said it was also confident a jailbroken Kimi 2.6 could allow hackers to run code on its computing resources and connect to the internet - making it a potential launchpad for cyber-attacks.

Garraghan defended Mindgard's decision to publicly discuss its jailbreak of Moonshot's systems, saying it had informed the developer and was not revealing key details about how it got the firm's models to ignore guardrails.

Mindgard alerted Moonshot to the jailbreak in an email on 27 July, following up about a week later.

It then published a blog about the issue on 12 September.

But the company said Moonshot only made contact recently, after it was approached by the BBC for comment.

He will never walk free': Indian judge's letter promises child sex abuse survivor

An Indian judge's moving letter praising a child rape survivor for her "courage" and assuring her that her abuser "will live in a cage for the rest of his life" is winning hearts in India.

Trial court Judge Rajani Ranga's letter addresses the 10-year-old, who was sexually abused on 23rd July 2023 when she was seven, as "Dear child" and describes her as "the bravest little girl this court has ever seen".

The trial court gave the convict a life sentence, emphasising that he would remain in prison for "the remainder of his natural life" and also awarded the survivor a compensation of 1.05m rupees (\$10,941; £8,274).

At the end of her order, Judge Ranga said she "must address the child victim - not in the formal language of a judgment but as a judge who has heard her voice, who has read her words, and who has been moved by her courage".

"When you said 'Jab tak uncle buddhe na ho jaaye, tab tak unhe jail mein hi rakha jaaye [Keep the 'uncle' in jail until he grows old], this court listened. And this court has answered

your plea," she wrote to the child survivor.

"Today, this court has ordered that the man you called 'uncle' will never walk free again. He will live in a cage for the rest of his life. He will grow old in that cage. He will die in that cage. He will never be able to hurt you, or your little sister, or any other child, ever again," she added.

Calling her "the bravest little girl", the judge praised her "for coming to court, pointing out the man who hurt her and telling the truth".

"The man you called 'uncle' did a very bad thing to you. But you did not stay quiet. You told your mother. And because you had the courage to speak, he will never be able to hurt another child again.

"The court can promise you that he will never see the sun as a free man again."

Concluding her letter, the judge said the "court cannot give you back your childhood", but advised her to "now live your life. Go to school. Make friends. Laugh. Play. Dream. This court will always remember your courage".

Judge Ranga's letter is part of

the order that was announced on 11 July, but as cases of child sexual assault are tried in special Pocso (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) courts, their judgments are never made public to protect the identities of the victims.

It came to light after it was reproduced recently in a Delhi high court order which rejected the convict's appeal for bail and suspension of sentence. The high court order named the convict, who is an adult, but gave no other details about him.

Describing Judge Ranga's letter as "a message of encouragement" to the child, the high court judges ordered the Delhi State Legal Authority to print out a copy and give it to the child along with the compensation money.

The emotional letter has moved many Indians who have shared it on social media, describing it as "a rarity" and "a ray of hope" and praising the judge.

Many have also expressed sorrow at the horrific nature of the crime where a child was sexually abused when she was just seven.

INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY



Nigeria @66: A nation still evolving

MATTHEW OKAGHA

Sixty-six years after gaining independence from British colonial rule, Nigeria remains a nation in transition — evolving through political, economic, social and technological changes while confronting challenges that have continued to test the resilience of its citizens.

As the country marks its 66th Independence Anniversary on Thursday, October 1, 2026, Nigerians across different walks of life are reflecting on the nation's journey, the progress made since 1960 and the work that remains to be done to build the Nigeria of their dreams.

From the optimism that accompanied independence to decades of military rule, democratic transitions, economic reforms, technological advancement and growing global influence, Nigeria's national story has been one of remarkable achievements intertwined with difficult setbacks.

At independence, expectations were high that the new nation would rapidly harness its vast human and natural resources to become one of Africa's leading economies.

Sixty-six years later, Nigeria has indeed recorded significant milestones in education, telecommunications, banking, infrastructure, entertainment, sports, entrepreneurship and democratic governance.

The emergence of a vibrant technology and creative ecosystem has particularly changed the way the world views Nigeria. Nigerian music, film, fashion, literature, cuisine and digital innovation have earned growing international recognition, while young Nigerians continue to make their mark across the globe.

Yet, beneath these achievements lies a complex national reality.

Insecurity, unemployment, poverty, inflation, inadequate infrastructure, electricity challenges, corruption and concerns over the quality of govern-

ance remain major issues confronting millions of Nigerians.

For many households, the rising cost of food, transportation, housing, healthcare and education has made everyday life increasingly difficult.

The challenge of translating Nigeria's enormous natural resources into broad-based prosperity has also remained a central issue six decades after independence.

Despite being one of the world's major oil-producing countries, Nigeria has continued to grapple with energy shortages and economic vulnerability, prompting successive governments to pursue diversification and reforms.

The democratic experience has equally evolved. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has sustained uninterrupted democratic governance, making the current Fourth Republic the longest continuous pe-

riod of civilian rule in the country's history.

However, concerns over electoral credibility, political accountability, effective representation and citizens' participation continue to shape national conversations.

For many Nigerians, therefore, independence is not merely about the absence of colonial rule. It is also about the freedom to live in security, find meaningful employment, access quality healthcare and education, enjoy justice and participate fully in the affairs of the nation.

The expectations are particularly strong among the youth, who constitute a significant proportion of Nigeria's population.

Young Nigerians are demanding greater opportunities, better leadership, stronger institutions and an economy capable of rewarding hard work

and innovation.

At the same time, millions continue to demonstrate remarkable resilience, creating businesses, supporting families, contributing to their communities and finding innovative ways to survive despite economic pressures.

Nigeria's diversity remains another defining feature of the national journey.

With more than 250 ethnic groups and hundreds of languages, the country possesses enormous cultural richness. But managing this diversity and transforming it into a source of national strength rather than division remains an enduring responsibility.

As Nigeria enters another year of independence, the question is no longer simply whether the country has made progress.

The bigger question is whether that progress is translating into better lives

for the majority of citizens.

For many Nigerians, the answer is still a work in progress.

The Nigeria of 1960 is not the Nigeria of 2026. The country has changed profoundly, expanded economically and socially, and produced generations of citizens whose achievements have placed Nigeria prominently on the global stage.

But the journey towards a more prosperous, secure, just and united nation remains unfinished.

At 66, Nigeria is therefore neither a failed dream nor a finished project.

It is a nation still evolving — carrying the weight of its past, confronting the realities of its present and holding on to the hope of a better future.

Matthew Okagha is a Benin-based journalist and media consultant.

Nigeria: 1960–2026 short historical takes

1960 — Independence: Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule on October 1, 1960, with Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as Governor-General.

1963 — The Republic: Nigeria became a republic on October 1, 1963, replacing the British monarch as head of state. Nnamdi Azikiwe became the country's first President.

1966 — Military Intervention: A military coup in January 1966 ended the First Republic. Later that year, a counter-coup deepened political instability and contributed to growing ethnic tensions.

1967–1970 — Civil War: The Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, lasted from 1967 to 1970. The conflict caused enormous loss of life and displacement before Biafra's surrender in January 1970.

1970s — Oil and Reconstruction:

The post-war period brought reconstruction and a dramatic expansion of government revenues from crude oil. Rapid urbanisation and public-sector development accompanied the oil boom.

1979 — Return to Civil Rule: Nigeria returned to democratic government in 1979, with Alhaji Shehu Shagari becoming President of the Second Republic.

1983 — Another Military Takeover: The military again seized power in December 1983, ending the Second Republic and ushering in another period of military rule.

1993 — Democracy Interrupted: The annulment of the June 12 presidential election plunged the country into a major political crisis. The following years were marked by military rule and international pressure for democratic reforms.

1999 — Fourth Republic: Nigeria returned to civilian dem-

ocratic rule on May 29, 1999, with Olusegun Obasanjo becoming President. The Fourth Republic has continued, making it the country's longest uninterrupted period of civilian government.

2000s — Democratic Consolidation and Challenges:

Nigeria experienced successive elections and peaceful transfers of power, while confronting corruption, insecurity, infrastructure deficits and the challenge of translating oil wealth into broad-based development.

2015 — Historic Political Transition: Muhammadu Buhari defeated incumbent Goodluck Jonathan in the presidential election, marking Nigeria's first democratic transfer of power from one major political party to another since independence.

2019 — Another Electoral Cycle: President Buhari secured a second term, while Nigeria continued to grapple with insecurity, economic pressures

and demands for institutional reform.

2020 — EndSARS: Nationwide protests against police brutality became one of the most significant youth-led civic movements in recent Nigerian history, with the EndSARS movement drawing international attention.

2023 — Another Change of Government:

Bola Ahmed Tinubu emerged from the 2023 presidential election and was inaugurated as President on May 29, 2023. His administration introduced major economic reforms, including the removal of the petrol subsidy and changes affecting foreign exchange.

2024–2026 — Reform, Pressure and Resilience:

Nigeria has continued to navigate economic reforms, inflationary pressures, insecurity, unemployment and infrastructure needs while pursuing investment, diversification and stronger domestic production.

INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

Nigeria @66: Citizens bare their minds, question Independence gains



Celebrations by Nigerians

BELOVED EKHADAFE/ MUSA ABDURAHHEEM OMOH

As Nigeria marks its 66th Independence Anniversary today, October 1, 2036, some residents of Benin City, Edo State, have expressed mixed feelings about the country's journey since independence, with many lamenting the rising cost of living, high fuel prices, poor roads and increasing financial pressure on families.

While Independence Day is traditionally a period for celebrating Nigeria's freedom, unity and achievements, the residents interviewed said the economic hardship confronting ordinary citizens had dampened the excitement associated with the anniversary.

A market woman, Mrs. Christiana Oghechi, said the significance of the anniversary had been overshadowed by the struggle to provide basic necessities for her family.

According to her, the current economic situation is so difficult that she would not have known that October 1 was Independence Day had she not been reminded.

"Things are expensive. I can't even afford to put my children in government school because it is not free anymore. We now pay in government schools," she lamented.

Oghechi said the high cost of goods had also negatively affected her business, as customers could no longer afford to patronise her regularly.

She explained that a carton of noodles, which she sells among other provisions, now costs about N18,000, leaving her with little or no profit after transportation and other expenses.

"I don't even have goods in my shop because they are expensive to buy, and I also have to pay for transportation to bring them to the shop," she said.

The trader appealed to the government to take urgent measures to



High cost of food stuffs in the market

reduce the cost of fuel and food, arguing that the rising prices were making it increasingly difficult for families to survive.

She also called for a reduction in school fees in government-owned schools, saying many parents could no longer cope with the cost of educating their children.

"I can't afford N40,000 to pay for my children's school fees. I am only selling noodles," she said.

Also speaking, a commercial bus driver, Mr. Daniel Osarumwense, expressed deep frustration over the economic situation, saying the high cost of fuel and poor condition of roads had made transportation business increasingly difficult.

Osarumwense questioned whether Nigeria had made sufficient progress since gaining independence, recalling that Independence Day used to be

widely celebrated when he was growing up.

"Now the country is too hard. I can't even remember when Independence Day is. An advanced country cannot work this way," he said.

The driver identified the high cost of fuel as one of the biggest challenges confronting transport workers, explaining that a large portion of his daily income goes into fuelling and maintaining his vehicle.

"I can take N5,000 for a trip and spend N4,000 on fuel. My gain is only N1,000. It is not working," he lamented.

He added that bad roads had also damaged his vehicle and reduced his ability to operate profitably.

According to him, the poor condition of roads in many parts of the country has compounded the difficulties faced by transport operators and

other road users.

Osarumwense expressed concern about the future of Nigerian children, saying the country's economic difficulties and debt burden could make it difficult for the younger generation to achieve their aspirations.

He urged political leaders to be more concerned about the welfare of citizens and to demonstrate greater commitment to national development.

"Leaders should think about what will affect the citizens. We need leaders who will be disciplined and loyal to Nigeria and not only to their pockets," he said.

Despite the frustrations expressed by the residents, their concerns largely centred on the need for government to create conditions that would make life more affordable and restore confidence in the country.

They called for lower fuel and food prices, affordable education, better roads, improved economic opportunities and stronger support for small businesses.

As Nigeria clocks 66 years of independence, the voices from Benin City present a sobering reflection of the expectations of ordinary citizens — citizens who may still believe in the promise of Nigeria but want to see the dividends of independence translated into affordable food, quality education, decent livelihoods, security and better living conditions.

For many of them, therefore, the October 1 anniversary is not merely about celebrating the past, but also about asking whether Nigeria can fulfil the promise of a better future for its citizens.



"The driver identified the high cost of fuel as one of the biggest challenges confronting transport workers, explaining that a large portion of his daily income goes into fuelling and maintaining his vehicle."

Security operatives move to rescue 47 abducted farmers in Niger

MINNA

A joint security team comprising personnel of the Nigerian military and the Nigeria Police Force has moved into a forest in Niger State to rescue farmers abducted by suspected bandits.

The spokesman for the Niger State Police Command, Wasiu Abiodun, disclosed this on Wednesday in a WhatsApp message, saying the operatives were

combing Mukura village, Kasuwan-Garba District, in Mariga Local Government Area.

"Reports received on 28th Sept 2026 indicated that on 27th Sept 2026 at about 3pm, suspected bandits abducted over twenty persons at Mukura village, Kasuwan-Garba District of Mariga LGA. Joint security rescue efforts ongoing," Abiodun stated.

It was learnt that the terrorists abducted more than 47 farmers in Mariga Local Government

Area of Niger State while they were harvesting groundnuts on their farms at Tungan Rimi in Ma'undu-Beri Ward of the LGA. Most of the abducted farmers were women, alongside a few men.

The Chairman of Mariga Local Government, Alhaji Aliyu Muhamadu, who confirmed the abduction on Tuesday in a chat, said the majority of the victims were women, alongside some men. He put the number

of victims at more than 47 and disclosed that one of the women gave birth while in captivity.

Muhamadu also disclosed that the abductors had contacted some relatives of the victims and were demanding N2m from each victim for their release.

"Yes, some of my people were abducted and they were in the farm harvesting groundnuts. Many of them are women and there were some men. One of the women gave birth in the abduc-

tors camp and the abductors are asking for N2 million from each victim," he said.

The chairman also said he learnt that security personnel and some local vigilantes had been mobilised to rescue the victims.

"The joint security personnel and the vigilantes engaged the terrorists in a gun battle at Alibani village after passing through Kasuwan Garba and Biri, during

which a vigilante sustained injuries," Muhamadu said.

A source in Mariga LGA, who did not disclose his name, told PUNCH that he sighted the armed men moving through the areas between Mangoro and Wamba after emerging from the Dogon Dawa axis.

He said the terrorists moved into the Bariki Forest, also known as Ma'undu, where the victims are suspected to be held.



NEWS CONFERENCE:

Director of Defence Media Operations, Maj.-Gen. Michael Onoja briefing Defence Correspondents during the end of third quarter news conference in Abuja on Wednesday

Independence: FG declares Thursday public holiday

ABUJA

The Federal Government has declared Thursday, October 1, 2026, as a public holiday to mark Nigeria's 66th Independence Anniversary.

The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, announced the declaration on behalf of the Federal Government in a statement signed by the Permanent Secretary in the ministry, Mag-

dalene Ajani, on Wednesday.

Tunji-Ojo congratulated Nigerians at home and abroad on the anniversary and urged citizens to use the occasion to demonstrate unity, patriotism, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

He said peace and stability were necessary conditions for national development, calling on Nigerians to emulate the nation's founding fathers in their love for the country.

"As we celebrate 66th years of our independence, we should always remember that there is hope for our country and our diversity is our strength, and our collective determination remains the foundation upon which a stronger and more prosperous nation will be built," he said.

The minister assured Nigerians that the Federal Government remained committed to strengthening national securi-

ty, improving public safety and creating an environment where citizens could live, work and pursue their legitimate aspirations with confidence.

He also said the administration's Renewed Hope Agenda would continue to pursue a better Nigeria for all citizens.

Tunji-Ojo urged Nigerians to use the celebration to reaffirm their commitment to national unity and peaceful coexistence.

Peter Obi demands better facilities for displaced persons in Sokoto

ABUJA

The presidential candidate of the Nigeria Democratic Congress, Peter Obi has called on the government to urgently improve living conditions for internally displaced persons at the Ramin Kura IDP Camp in Sokoto State.

Obi made the call after visiting the camp in Sokoto North Local Government Area on Monday, September 29, as part of his two-day visit to the state.

On his X handle on Wednesday, he said the camp is currently home to more than 1,000 internally displaced persons, many of whom are living in difficult conditions.

During his visit, Obi said he was particularly concerned by the makeshift shelters and thatched rooms where displaced

families are accommodated, noting that some rooms house as many as 10 people.

He also identified inadequate toilet facilities, the absence of a primary healthcare centre and the lack of a basic school for children among the challenges facing residents of the camp.

Obi urged the government and relevant agencies to immediately address the pressing needs of the displaced persons while also tackling the security challenges that forced them to leave their homes.

"I have always insisted that as long as even one Nigerian lives in an IDP camp, we are all internally displaced," Obi said.

He said temporary accommodation should be made more comfortable while efforts are intensified to create the security conditions necessary for dis-

placed Nigerians to return to their ancestral homes.

Obi also said the visit was his 12th to an IDP camp in Nigeria and pledged to continue supporting displaced Nigerians.

The former presidential candidate further called on political office holders to spend their holidays within the country so they can better understand the challenges faced by vulnerable Nigerians.

He attributed the difficult conditions in the camps to what he described as the failure of government to prioritise critical areas of development.

Obi urged the government and relevant agencies to take immediate steps to provide better facilities and support for residents of the Ramin Kura camp.

He concluded by reiterating his call for a "New Nigeria," saying: "A New Nigeria is POSSible and will be OK."

Lagos commissioner, Rhodes-Vivour disagree over waste management, flooding

LAGOS

The Lagos State Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Tokunbo Wahab, and the 2027 Lagos governorship candidate of the African Democratic Congress, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, have disagreed over the state government's management of waste and flooding.

The disagreement followed Rhodes-Vivour's appearance on Channels Television's Politics Today on Tuesday, where he raised concerns about waste management and flooding in Lagos and described the state as "stinking."

Responding to the concerns, Wahab said while some of Rhodes-Vivour's concerns were legitimate, it was mislead-

ing to suggest that the Lagos State Government had no plan beyond clearing refuse after it accumulated.

Lagos generates an estimated 13,000 to 15,000 tonnes of municipal waste daily, Wahab said, adding that the Lagos Waste Management Authority and private sector participation operators evacuated approximately 418,500 tonnes of waste in May 2026 alone. He said this represented an average of about 13,200 tonnes daily.

"These figures underscore the enormous scale of the responsibility.

They do not suggest that every resident receives satisfactory service.

"We acknowledge collection failures, underperforming PSP operators and operational bottlenecks.

However, it is misleading to suggest that Lagos has no plan beyond clearing refuse after it accumulates," Wahab said.

The commissioner said waste management was an interconnected system, explaining that delays at disposal facilities could affect truck turnaround, disrupt collection schedules and eventually lead to refuse accumulation in neighbourhoods.

"Waste management is an interconnected system. Delays at disposal facilities affect truck turnaround, disrupt collection schedules and eventually create refuse accumulation across neighbourhoods," he said.

Wahab said the rehabilitation of Road E and additional disposal platforms at the Oluosun landfill had improved operational efficiency.

Sports

● Football ● Athletics ● Golf ● Basketball ● Tennis ● Boxing

NFF challenges CAF's U-Turn on Edo Queens' victory

KEHINDE OSAGIEDE

The Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) has challenged the reversal of Edo Queens' WAFU-B final victory, asking the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to restore a result that was concluded on the pitch and initially recognised after the Nigerian side defeated Ghana's Ampem Darkoa Ladies on penalties.

The appeal, filed on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, follows CAF's decision to annul Edo Queens' 4-1 shoot-out victory and order the final to resume from extra time after ruling that the required 30 minutes of extra time had not been played.

The September 5 final in Ouagadougou ended 2-2 after regulation time before the referee directed both teams to a penalty shoot-out. Edo Queens won 4-1 and were declared WAFU-B champions, securing the zone's qualification ticket for the CAF Women's Champions League.

The subsequent protest by Ampem Darkoa centred on the competition regulations, which provide for extra time before penalties in a drawn final.

CAF upheld the protest and ruled that the penalty shoot-out could not stand as the prescribed procedure had not been followed.

The NFF, however, is asking CAF to consider the circum-

stances under which the disputed procedure occurred, arguing that Edo Queens did not choose to bypass extra time but acted on the instructions of the appointed match officials.

"Edo Queens neither elected nor requested that extra time be dispensed with," the federation argued.

It further stated: "The fact that Edo Queens ultimately won the shoot-out cannot retrospectively convert its compliance with the referee's instruction into responsibility for the regulatory breach."

The Nigerian federation's appeal therefore turns on the remedy rather than simply the existence of the regulatory requirement.



EDO QUEENS CELEBRATE

Abeokuta 10KM Race: Kits collection begins three days to showdown

With just three days to the 2026 Abeokuta 10KM Race, registered runners have commenced collection of their race kits ahead of the much-anticipated road event scheduled for Saturday, October 3, in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

The kits collection got underway on Wednesday, 30th September at the parking lot of the MKO Abiola Sports Arena, Kuto, Abeokuta, with runners turning up to collect their running bibs and other materials provided by the organisers.

Organisers of the race, Nilayo Sports Management Limited (NSML), said the collection exercise will continue until Friday, October 2, between 9am and 5pm daily.

More than 3,000 runners have already registered for the fifth edition of the race, which is expected to attract sports administrators, enthusiasts, athletes and other residents from different walks of life.

The 10-kilometre race will commence at 7am from Macjob Grammar School, Onikolobo, Abeokuta, with the finish point at the MKO Abiola Sports Arena, Kuto.

The 2026 edition has been specifically designed to provide

a platform for indigenous Nigerian athletes, with only Nigerian runners eligible to participate in the race.

Beyond its sporting significance, the Abeokuta 10KM Race is also expected to showcase the cultural and historic heritage of the Ogun State capital, while providing opportunities for small-scale businesses and residents to benefit from the influx of participants and visitors.



ABEOKUTA 10KM RACE

Leave out NSC from blame for Super Eagles' lackluster outing – Akinwunmi

Leave out NSC from blame for Super Eagles' lackluster outing - AkinwunmiA former vice President of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), Barrister Seyi Akinwunmi has implored Nigerians to look outside the National Sports Commission (NSC) in apportioning blame for the lacklustre performance of the Super Eagles against Guinea-Bissau. Barrister Akinwunmi admitted that the result was totally unacceptable to the football loving Nigerians, but rather than picking the NSC as responsible for the chaotic play of the players, Nigerians should know that it's not the creation of recent months.

"Your pain, frustration, and passion are entirely justified. Every Nigerian who watches our national teams struggle against sides we historically dominated shares that same pain. When a proud footballing nation like ours is reduced to calculating permutations and praying for other results, anger is natural."

"However where you and I must diverge, is where you confuse the symptoms on the pitch with the root cause, mis-target the blame and attack an administrator just at the time genuine structural reform appears to be finally underway."

"What we are witnessing today with the Super Eagles and Super Falcons is not the creation of re-

cent months. It is the cumulative breakdown of a long infested structural malaise spanning several decades, characterized by neglected facilities, near non-existent grassroots pipelines, and administrative structure deficiency.

"For years, football administrators navigated this reality with hands metaphorically tied, while successive governments failed to confront the decay. Losing a match or jeopardizing qualification hurts deeply, but it is merely the symptom of that chronic neglect." Casting blanket blame on the current National Sports Commission (NSC) leadership at the exact moment structural surgery has begun.

Gymnastics Federation of Nigeria appoints Kuti Dare as Media Director

The Gymnastics Federation of Nigeria (GFN) has appointed sports media professional Kuti Oluwadamilare Ismail as its new Media Director and head of the federation's media department. The appointment was contained in a letter made available to Savid News, signed by the GFN President, Prince Kelvin Erhunwunse, following a board meeting of the federation.

According to the letter, the appointment was unanimously approved by the GFN Executive Board after an assessment of Ismail's records, dedication and contributions to the development of sports.

The federation said the new appointment was intended to further

encourage Ismail to bring greater dedication to his responsibilities and contribute to the advancement of gymnastics in Nigeria.

The appointment places Ismail at the centre of the federation's media and communication activities, with responsibility for projecting the activities, programmes and achievements of Nigerian gymnastics to the public and the wider sporting community.

Congratulating him, the GFN President urged the newly appointed Media Director to use the opportunity to contribute to taking Nigerian gymnastics to greater heights.

The letter concluded with the message: "Take Gymnastics to the next Level."



KUTI APPOINTED GYMNASTICS FEDERATION MEDIA DIRECTOR

NPFL coaches, officials risk sanctions for disparaging interviews



All EuroMatch-NPFL clubs have been reminded of acceptable standards of conveying grievances in match officiating, and particularly told to desist from making disparaging public comments on the NPFL.

Dr. Ayo Abdulrahman, the Chief Operating Officer of the league said the advisory has become necessary to protect the brand and avoid acts that are capable of driving away partnership interests.

Titled, "warning against disparaging statements by club coaches and officials, the memo drew the attention of all clubs' leadership to extant provisions of the Frameworks and Rules on incendiary public statements capable of bringing the league to disrepute."

"This has become necessary as the 2026/27 season progresses and with particular reference to a trending video interview featuring the Sporting Lagos FC

Coach, Jeffery Buter, which questioned the integrity of the centre referee at the end of Matchday 6 encounter in Lagos against Barau FC", the memo referenced.

Abdulrahman also reminded club officials that there exists official channels of communicating grievances about officiating issues to the Secretariat.

It continued, "All Clubs are hereby reminded of Appendix B, Rule 7 and Section A, Rule 5.5.2

of the NPFL Framework and Rules 2026/2027, which prohibit public criticism and disparaging statements against the League and its officials by players, club coaches and officials".

The COO admonished Clubs to strictly ensure that their coaches, managers, and officials refrain from making statements capable of bringing the League and its Match Officials into disrepute.

SPORTS



Chelle blames poor pitch, heat for Super Eagles defeat to Guinea-Bissau

Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle has admitted that Guinea-Bissau were the better side as Nigeria suffered a 3-0 defeat in their Matchday 2 fixture of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifi-

ers in Bissau.

The defeat left Nigeria with a difficult start to their qualification campaign, with Chelle acknowledging that his team struggled to cope with the intensity and conditions in the

West African country.

"Guinea-Bissau were better than us," Chelle said after the match.

The Franco-Malian coach also pointed to the poor condition of the playing surface, noting that the hosts had a clear advantage from their familiarity with the pitch.

"They always play on this pitch. They know it better than us. For us, it was the first time. It was very, very bad," he said.

Chelle also identified the weather as another factor that affected the Super Eagles' performance.

"The weather was very hot too," he added.

Beyond the playing conditions, however, Chelle admitted that Guinea-Bissau showed greater hunger and intensity throughout the encounter.

"They were more motivated, more aggressive. They put more intensity and we never found the solution," the Super Eagles coach explained.

Despite the heavy defeat, Chelle insisted that he remains confident in his players and believes Nigeria can respond when the two teams meet again on Nigerian soil.

"When Guinea-Bissau come to Nigeria, we have to put them in the same situation and the same conditions too," he said.



SUPER EAGLES OF NIGERIA

'Mr Rugby' Ntiense Williams urges NRFF, NSC, corporate bodies, stakeholders to work harder

Renowned rugby coach, technical officer, instructor and organiser, Obong Ntiense Williams has described the national team's outing at the recent African championship in Kampala, Uganda as a wake up call for Nigeria's sports authorities.

Sports247 reports that Williams pointed out that, although The Stallions could not win the competition, the squad's gallant efforts at the 2026 Rugby Africa Men's Sevens Series speaks volumes about their potential to do better if adequately supported.

The soft-spoken expert then called on administrators of Nigeria Rugby Football Federation (NRFF) and the National Sports Commission (NSC) to look further into steps that would enhance the game's progress and development at a rapid rate.

'Mr Rugby' added that corporate bodies in the country should also start playing key roles towards ensuring that the gritty sport begins to surge faster and better on the home front, especially through establishment of a domestic league for the sport.

He further noted that, though Steve Lewis' side finished sixth out of eight nations, it was an improvement, considering that they climbed one spot higher than their seventh place end to the 2025 edition that featured a 12-team format in Mauritius.

Williams added, "The team won two of their five matches, thereby showing massive resilience by foreign-based in a

squad blended with just two local players. Daniel John's MVP proves Nigeria does not need to depend 100% on diaspora players.

"Talent exists at home (but there is an urgent need for a national league. Without a league, we cannot discover the next Daniel John. A national 15s league and national Sevens circuit are critical to build depth for the Stallions.



NIGERIA RUGBY TEAM

Dimeji Lawal slams lack of creativity in Super Eagles' performance versus Guinea-Bissau



DIMEJI LAWAL

Ex-international winger, Mohammed Oladimeji Lawal has taken a swipe at the Super Eagles for what he referred to as their lack of creativity in Tuesday's 3-0 loss away to Guinea-Bissau in their second match of the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers.

Lawal, who shot into lime-light in the silver-winning Golden Eaglets' squad of Canada 1987 FIFA U-17 World Cup and played for Real Madrid B of Spain at the height of his ca-

reer, lamented that the Eagles could not create any goal scoring opportunity.

Goals from Franculino Dju, Mama Balde and Alvaro Djaló saw The Wild Dogs pull off a most unlikely result at 24 September Stadium in Bissau, much to the dismay of Lawal, as the defeat left Nigeria three points behind their hosts after two matches.

However, the former fleet-footed winger, who also played for Femo Scorpions of

Eruwa, Julius Berger of Lagos, Shooting Stars of Ibadan, KV Kortrijk of Belgium and Hellenic of South Africa, expressed confidence in a revival for the Eagles.

"I really feel disappointed with this result. I expected the team to take the game straight to their hosts, but we allowed them to dominate. We created very few chances to threaten their goalkeeper, but that is not the end of the world.

"There are still many matches to play in the group. So, I am still optimistic that the Super Eagles will top the group," opined Lawal, who scored on his senior debut during an AFCON qualifier against Togo in 1990.

Sports247 reports further that Tuesday's game brought back memories of the last time the Eagles conceded three goals against an African side - 12 years ago, on September 6, 2014 - when they lost 3-2 at home to Congo in an AFCON 2015 qualifier, and subsequently failed to qualify.



PRESIDENT FABRICE SHEMA NGOGA

Rwanda FA President resigns

Rwanda Football Federation (FERWAF) President Fabrice Shema Ngoga has resigned from his position with immediate effect, bringing his brief tenure at the helm of Rwandan football to an end.

Shema was elected FERWAF president on August 30, 2025, after emerging as the sole candidate at the federation's Annual General Assembly in Kigali.

He secured 51 of the 53 votes cast and was handed a four-year mandate. His resignation comes amid recent legal issues surrounding his private business activities.

Reports indicate that Shema had faced legal proceedings and was subsequently handed a suspended six-month prison sentence following a plea agreement.

The case was reported to be unrelated to his role at FERWAF. FERWAF had already been operating under Acting President Claudine Gasarabwe earlier in September, according to the federation's official website.

Shema's resignation leaves FERWAF facing another leadership transition just over a year after he took charge of the federation.

2028 AFCON: Zimbabwe secures government guarantee for joint bid

Zimbabwe has officially secured a government guarantee for its joint bid with South Africa and Botswana to host the 2028 Africa Cup of Nations.

The three southern African nations submitted a joint proposal to the Confederation of African Football (CAF) to stage the 2028 AFCON, with hosting responsibilities expected to be shared among the countries.

However, Zimbabwe has now become the only member of the joint bid to have officially received government guarantee backing.

South Africa and Botswana have yet to secure their respec-

tive government guarantees, leaving Zimbabwe as the only country in the proposal to have met that requirement.

Despite the development, Zimbabwe is unlikely to be considered as a standalone host because the bid was submitted as a joint proposal involving all three countries.

Under the original plan, Zimbabwe and Botswana were expected to host group-stage matches, while Botswana had also expressed interest in staging a semi-final.

The status of the joint bid could become clearer in the coming days, with further updates on the 2028 AFCON hosting process expected next week.

