

**Africa Must Adopt Pragmatic Energy Transition Using Natural Gas**  
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**Consumer Confidence in Nigeria's Economy Rising**  
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## CBN Introduces BVN Fraud Watchlist

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has introduced stricter regulations governing the Bank Verification Number (BVN) system, including enhanced monitoring of suspicious financial transactions, tighter identity verification procedures, and new limits on the

**Banks must flag BVNs linked to suspected fraudulent transactions. The watchlist will help banks track fraud across institutions. The policy is expected to take effect May 1, 2026.**

modification of customer details tied to banking identities.

The measures were announced in a circular titled

“Addendum to the Revised Regulatory Framework for Bank Verification Number (BVN) Operations and Watch-List for the Nigerian

Banking Industry 2021.” The circular, signed by the Director of the Payments System Policy Department, Musa I. Jimoh, was issued to

banks, other financial institutions, and payment service providers operating within the Nigerian financial system.

The apex bank said the amendments were introduced to reinforce fraud monitoring mechanisms and strengthen identity management across the country's banking sector.

“In line with its mandate of promoting financial

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L-R: Chief Talent Officer, Union Bank of Nigeria, Omayuli Wale-Ajayi; Head, Corporate Banking, Union Bank of Nigeria, Ali Kadiri; Head, Retail and SME Business, Union Bank of Nigeria, Vivian Imoh-Ita; Founder/Executive Director, Deaf International Foundation, Funmilola Ogunro; MD/CEO, Union Bank of Nigeria, Yetunde Oni; SouthWest Coordinator, Nigeria Association of the Blind, Adenike Olorundare; Women Leader, Lagos Chapter, Nigeria Association of the Blind, Olubukola Salako; Executive Director, Corporate Bank & Business Banking Lagos & West, Union Bank of Nigeria, Taiwo Shote; Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, Union Bank of Nigeria, Olufunmilola Aluko; Regional Executive, Business Banking SouthWest and Lagos, Union Bank of Nigeria, Emmanuel Aihvba, and Lead Innovation, Events and Platform Management, Union Bank of Nigeria, Chiamaka Moses during the Bank's commemoration of International Women's Day 2026 at the Stable, Surulere, Lagos recently.

## Nigeria loses 50% of food produced in Lagos— Stakeholders push for large-scale farming

Amarachi Okonkwo

Nigeria may be losing as much as 50 per cent of the food produced in Lagos before it reaches consumers, a situation stakeholders say underscores the urgent need for large-scale commercial farming and improved supply chains to address

the country's deepening food security concerns.

The disclosure was made in Lagos during the unveiling of a corporate farming initiative designed to strengthen agricultural production, reduce post-harvest losses and improve food distribution across Nigeria.

Participants at the

event, drawn from government, agribusiness, banking and farming communities, said Nigeria must move away from its fragmented smallholder farming system and embrace coordinated commercial farming models capable of improving productivity and ensuring stable food supply.

At the gathering, Origin Tech Group introduced its Corporate Farm Model, a platform aimed at supporting large-scale farming through structured financing, professional farm management and guaranteed market access for agricultural produce.

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## Nova Bank meets CBN capital requirements, to open new branches

NOVA Bank Limited has announced the appointment of Jude Anele as its Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, following the approval of the Central Bank of Nigeria. The appointment comes at a pivotal moment

in the Bank's evolution, following its transition from merchant banking to commercial banking and the successful completion of its recapitalisation programme ahead of the March 31, 2026, regulatory deadline.

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## iHatch Seeks 37 Innovation Hubs to Support Startup Development Across Nigeria P.15

**Banks Deposit N7 Trillion Excess Cash with CBN** P.13



**CBN Introduces Automated Anti-Money Laundering Systems for Financial Institutions** P.8

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Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Kingsley Tochukwu (right), receiving a souvenir from the Executive Director, MIT Kuo Sharper Centre for Prosperity and Entrepreneurship (MKSCPE), Dina Sherif, during the visit of the Executive Director to the Minister's Office, in Abuja



L-R: HR Executive, Aero Contractor of Nigeria, Mr. Abolaji Egbejobi; Chief Financial Officer, Aero Contractor of Nigeria, Mr. Charles Grant; Nahco National Women leader, Air Transport Service Senior Staff Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN), Comrade Uju Olisah; National President, ATSSSAN, Ogbé John Ogala; MD/CEO Aero Contractor of Nigeria, Capt. Ado Sanusi and First Vice President, ATSSSAN, Mr. Fadairo Babatunde, during the national President ATSSSAN Mr. Ogala courtesy visit to Aero Contractor, in Lagos.

# CBN Introduces BVN Fraud Watchlist

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system stability, the CBN hereby issues the following amendments to the Revised Regulatory Framework for Bank Verification Number (BVN) Operations and Watch-List for the Nigerian Banking Industry 2021," the circular stated.

Under the revised rules, financial institutions are required to create and maintain a temporary watchlist for BVNs connected to suspicious or potentially fraudulent transactions reported within the financial system.

"A BVN may remain on this temporary Watch-list for a maximum period of twenty-four (24) hours, during which the BVN owner shall be contacted to provide clarification regarding the identified transaction(s)," CBN stated in the circular.

The CBN explained that the temporary watchlist will enable financial institutions to quickly identify unusual transaction patterns while giving customers the opportunity to clarify or resolve the transactions before further regulatory action is taken.

The updated regulatory framework also introduces a stricter age requirement for BVN registration, limiting enrolment to individuals aged 18 years and above.

According to the apex bank, the new requirement is intended to strengthen identity verification procedures and align BVN enrolment with legally recognised age thresholds.

The circular also places a restriction on how frequently customers can change the phone number linked to their BVN records, stating that such modification will only be permitted once.

The restriction is designed to limit identity manipulation and reduce fraud risks associated with repeated changes to personal contact details tied to financial identities.

In addition, the CBN has tightened access to the BVN database, stating that only financial institutions licensed by the regulator will be allowed to access the platform.

However, the apex bank noted that it retains the authority to approve access to the BVN database in special circumstances, provided that such approvals comply with existing legal and regulatory provisions.

The Bank Verification Number system was introduced as part of efforts to strengthen customer identification across the Nigerian banking industry and improve the effectiveness of Know Your Customer (KYC) compliance requirements.

According to the central bank, the BVN framework forms part of a broader strategy aimed at ensuring a safe, reliable, and efficient payment system while reducing the risk of fraud and identity theft within the financial sector.

The biometric identification system assigns a unique identification number to each bank customer, allowing financial institutions to link multiple accounts belonging to the same individual across the banking system.

The regulatory framework guiding BVN operations also provides for the establishment of an industry-wide watchlist designed to track individuals confirmed to have engaged in financial misconduct or fraudulent activities.

"This framework, without prejudice to existing laws, is a guide for the operations of the Watch-list in the Financial System," the regulator stated.

"The Watch-list is a database of customers identified by their BVNs, who have been involved in confirmed cases of breaches, as defined within the framework."

The watchlist framework forms a central part of the CBN's efforts to address growing concerns over fraud and unethical practices within the financial system.

The regulator noted that the system is intended to provide financial institutions with a shared database that allows them to identify individuals associated with fraudulent activities across the banking sector.

Industry participants involved in the BVN ecosystem include the CBN, the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System, deposit money banks, other financial institutions, and bank customers who are registered on the platform.

Under the framework, financial institutions are required to report suspected fraud cases and initiate watchlist procedures where necessary.

The circular also outlines sanctions for participants who violate BVN operational guidelines or misuse the watchlist process.

"The following infractions by participants shall attract appropriate penalties: "Misuse of the BVN

watch-listing process for victimisation; improper linking of accounts/wallets (except Tier 1); and other infraction(s), as may be determined by the CBN."

The apex bank further stated that financial institutions must ensure that BVN details are properly linked to customer accounts and wallets in order to strengthen identity verification across the banking ecosystem.

According to the regulatory framework, operators are required to ensure that all applicable accounts are connected to BVNs within the required timeframe once the identification number becomes available.

Financial service providers are also mandated to ensure that BVN details of signatories, directors, and beneficial owners are linked to corporate or non-individual accounts operated within the banking system.

The circular also requires mobile money operators and payment service providers to integrate BVN records into their platforms in order to strengthen the overall customer identification

framework within Nigeria's digital payments ecosystem.

The regulator said that institutions operating within the financial system must also establish strong risk mitigation procedures to ensure that BVN operations remain secure and resistant to operational failures.

In addition, the CBN stated that it will determine the applicable fees for accessing information from the BVN database as part of the regulatory oversight of the system.

The framework further provides guidelines for addressing disputes or complaints related to watchlist actions.

Individuals who believe they were wrongly placed on the watchlist may initiate a formal request for removal through the financial institution that initiated the listing.

According to the regulatory provisions, only the institution that placed the BVN on the watchlist can initiate the process for delisting.

The CBN warned that any participant that fails to comply with its responsibilities within the BVN ecosystem may face regulatory sanctions.

The regulator also noted that the watchlist database plays a key role in protecting the financial system from fraud, identity theft, and other financial crimes.

Under existing provisions, individuals whose BVNs are placed on the watchlist may face significant restrictions in their banking activities.

For instance, such individuals may be prevented from establishing new relationships with banks or other financial institutions participating in the framework.

They may also be restricted from accessing loans or guaranteeing credit facilities within the banking system.

Where a financial institution chooses to maintain an existing business relationship with a watchlisted individual, the customer may be barred from accessing electronic banking channels such as automated teller machines, point-of-sale terminals, internet banking platforms, mobile banking applications, and USSD services.

The framework also provides that penalties imposed on watchlisted individuals may extend to all accounts in which the individual serves as a signatory.

According to the regulatory guidelines, the duration of watchlist restrictions may vary depending on the severity of the breach committed by the customer.

In cases where a breach is repeated, the penalty period may restart and continue for an additional period as determined by the framework.

The CBN stated that the BVN and watchlist system forms a critical component of Nigeria's broader financial sector regulatory architecture.

The initiative is intended to strengthen transparency, improve customer due diligence, and enhance the integrity of the country's banking system.

By tightening BVN regulations and strengthening fraud monitoring procedures, the central bank aims to reinforce confidence in the financial system while ensuring that financial institutions maintain high standards of identity verification and risk management.

The regulator said it will continue to monitor developments within the financial sector and issue additional regulatory guidance where necessary to safeguard the stability and security of Nigeria's banking system.



CBN Gov. Yemi Cardoso

# Business Briefings

L-R: Kelechi Dennis, Head, Human Resources Consolidated Hallmark Holdings Plc; Oladotun Adeogun, Managing Director, Hallmark Health Services Limited; Mary Adeyanju, Managing Director, Consolidated Hallmark Insurance Limited; Rukevwe Falana, Company Secretary, Consolidated Hallmark Holdings Plc; Patience Ugboajah, Executive Director, Operations, CHI Life Assurance Limited and Kate Itua, Executive Director, Finance and Investment at the IWD Celebration recently held in the office.



## IWD 2026: Union Bank of Nigeria marks with inclusion-first "Give to Gain" campaign

Segun Oni

In observance of International Women's Month 2026, Union Bank of Nigeria has reaffirmed its commitment to gender equity through a focused initiative centred on women living with disabilities and women raising children with disabilities.

Aligned with the global theme "Give to Gain," the Bank's campaign "Give to Gain: Creating Pathways for Inclusion and Endless Opportunities" centres the lived experiences of women living with disabilities and underscores the need for intentional systems of support for social and economic advancement.

Throughout March, Union Bank will implement targeted initiatives to expand access, foster inclusion, and unlock sustainable opportunities. Activities include a flagship event which held at The Stable, its multipurpose venue in Surulere, Lagos, on Saturday. The event convened women with disabilities, caregivers, supporting organisations, and advocates for dialogue, mentorship, and resource sharing.

Complementary efforts include outreach to disability support facilities and collaboration with educational institutions to distribute learning materials to female

students with disabilities. Tailored mentorship programmes will build confidence and capability in education, entrepreneurship, and careers. Through its women's banking proposition alpher and strategic partnerships, the Bank will also deliver business sustainability training specifically designed for women living with disabilities and women raising children with disabilities.

Internally, Union Bank will activate WeHub — its employee-led women's network — to strengthen inclusive culture and support professional growth across the organisation.

These actions reflect Union Bank's longstanding commitment to advancing equity for underserved communities — and align with the United

Nations Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). For Union Bank, these are not frameworks to cite; they are commitments to live out.

Olufunmilola Aluko, Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, Union Bank of Nigeria, stated that

"At Union Bank, inclusion is not an abstract ideal; it is a deliberate choice. While many conversations around women's empowerment are important and necessary, women living with disabilities and women raising children with disabilities are too often left out entirely. This year's theme, 'Give to Gain,' reflects exactly what we believe: that when we intentionally open access, support, and opportunity to these women, the value created

extends to families, communities, and society at large."

Union Bank's IWD 2026 campaign is a statement of intent: that true inclusion requires us to go further, reach deeper, and serve those who have waited longest for a seat at the table. In 2026, Union Bank is committed to ensuring that a seat exists — and that it is built to last.

Established in 1917, Union Bank is a leading provider of financial services in Nigeria, renowned for its "Simpler, Smarter Banking" philosophy. With a nationwide network and a strong focus on digital innovation, Union Bank continues to empower individuals, businesses, and the public sector to achieve lasting success.

The Bank is a trusted and recognisable brand with an extensive network of over 300 branches across Nigeria. The Bank offers a range of banking services to individual and corporate clients, including current, savings, and deposit account services, funds transfer, foreign currency domiciliation, loans, overdrafts, equipment leasing, and trade finance. The Bank also offers customers convenient electronic banking channels and products, including Online Banking, Mobile Banking, Debit Cards, ATMs, and POS Systems.



Union Bank Nigeria, MD, Yetunde Oni

## Power Crisis Looms as Gas Suppliers Halt Supply Over N3.3tn Debt

Amarachi Okonkwo

Millions of Nigerians could face deeper electricity shortages as gas suppliers threaten to stop supplying thermal power plants over mounting debts estimated at N3.3tn, according to power generation companies.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Power Generation Companies, Dr Joy Ogaji, disclosed this during an interview on Fresh FM, warning that mounting debts across the power value chain are pushing the sector toward a major crisis.

Her warning comes amid worsening electricity supply across the country, with many Nigerians experiencing prolonged blackouts since the beginning of the year.

Data from the Nigerian Independent System Operator showed that power generation dropped below 4,000 megawatts in recent weeks, largely due to gas constraints affecting thermal power plants. As of Tuesday, the 11 power distribution companies were sharing only 3,053MW, making reliable electricity supply across their franchise areas virtually impossible.

Electricity consumers across different supply bands have continued to lament the situation, especially as outages persist amid rising fuel

prices and intense heat.

Operational data from NISO illustrates the scale of the shortfall. Thermal power plants require an estimated 1,629.75 million standard cubic feet of gas per day to operate at optimal capacity. However, as of February 23, 2026, actual supply stood at about 692.00 mmscf per day, representing less than 43 per cent of the required volume.

As gas supply declines, several power plants have shut down while the Transmission Company of Nigeria resorts to load shedding, rationing the limited electricity available among distribution companies. DisCos have repeatedly attributed outages to gas shortages.

Ogaji explained that the crisis stems largely from the failure of the Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc (NBET) to fully pay generation companies for electricity supplied since the sector's privatisation.

According to her, the Federal Government currently owes GenCos about N6.8tn, with roughly 70 per cent of the amount linked to thermal power plants that depend on gas.

She noted that about 70 per cent of payments owed to gas-fired power plants belongs to gas suppliers, meaning gas producers are owed approximately N3.3tn out of the N4.76tn tied to thermal generation.

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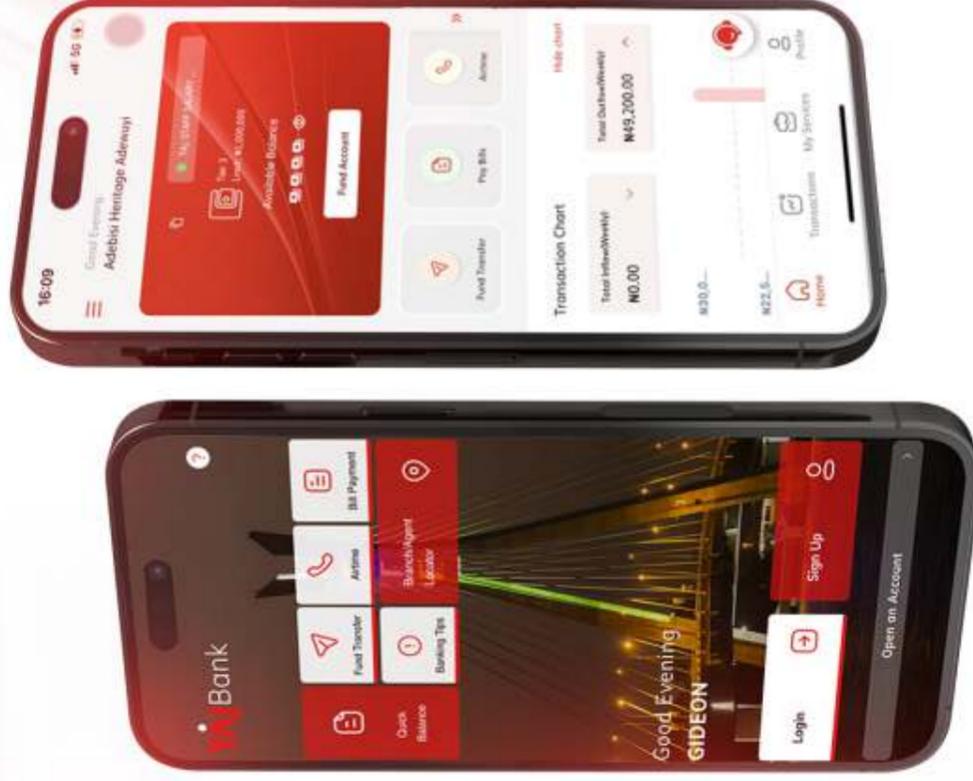
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L-R, Group Head, Digital World Tech Academy, Alex Uwodi; School Administrator, Powerfields Schools, Ngozi Emezue; beneficiary of Egbin Power Tech Empowerment Programme, Esther Bolaji; MD/CEO, Egbin Power Plc, Mokhtar Bounour; beneficiary of the programme, Habeed Akanji and Brand, Event and PCSR Manager, Egbin Power, Stella Olugbemi, during the programme launch at the GenCo's office in Ikorodu, Lagos.

## Nova Bank meets CBN capital requirements, to open new branches .gets new MD/CEO

Anele brings more than 33 years of banking experience across West and Central Africa, with deep expertise in retail / commercial banking, corporate banking, risk management, institutional transformation and executive leadership. Over the course of his career, he has led complex banking operations, strengthened governance frameworks, delivered sustainable revenue growth and built high-performance teams.

The appointment reflects the Board's strategic commitment to consolidating NOVA Bank's commercial banking platform while accelerating growth across its Corporate, Commercial and Retail segments, as well as priority markets.

Speaking on his appointment, Anele said he was honoured to assume leadership of the Bank at a defining stage of its growth.

"Nova Bank has built a strong institutional foundation defined by regulatory compliance, capital strength, disciplined governance and a clear commercial mandate. Our focus now is execution — deepening customer relationships, expanding responsibly across priority markets, strengthening risk discipline and delivering sustainable value to our shareholders," he said.

The Bank's Chairman, Phillips Oduoza, also expressed confidence in the new leadership.

"The Board is pleased to welcome Mr. Jude Anele as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer. His depth of experience, strategic clarity and proven leadership record align strongly with NOVA Bank's growth ambitions," Oduoza said.

He added that with recapitalization completed ahead of the regulatory timeline, the Bank is entering a new phase defined by scale, stability and structured expansion.

NOVA Bank also confirmed that it has met the recapitalization requirements set by the Central Bank of Nigeria ahead of the regulatory deadline, reinforcing its capital adequacy and long-term financial stability. The capital raise, supported by new and existing shareholders, further strengthens the Bank's balance sheet and positions it for disciplined growth.

## Nigeria Considers Age Restrictions for Social Media Use

### ANALYSIS

Sanyaolu Cornelius

The Federal Government of Nigeria is considering new measures to regulate children's access to social media platforms as part of efforts to enhance

online safety.

The proposed measures include the introduction of age restrictions for social media use, aimed at protecting minors from harmful online content and cyberbullying.

Officials involved in the discussions say the

proposed policy could include mechanisms for age verification and parental consent before young users are allowed to access social media services.

The initiative aligns with global efforts to strengthen online child protection, as several

countries are introducing stricter regulations requiring digital platforms to verify the age of users.

Technology companies such as Meta, which operates Facebook and Instagram, as well as TikTok, could be affected by the proposed regula-

tory framework.

Authorities say the objective is to balance digital innovation with the need to protect young users from risks associated with online platforms

## Senate to Engage IMF Officials on Nigeria's Economic Outlook

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The leadership of the Nigerian Senate is expected to meet with officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to discuss Nigeria's economic outlook and ongoing reform programmes under the administration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The engagement forms part of the IMF's Article IV Consultation with Nigeria, a routine assessment of the country's economic policies, fiscal direction, and financial stability.

The meeting is expected to provide lawmakers with insights into the Federal Gov-

ernment's economic management framework and allow discussions on potential support the international financial institution could provide for ongoing economic reforms.

The planned interaction was disclosed by the Deputy President of the Senate, Barau Jibrin, who noted that the consultation exercise runs from March 4 to March 17.

During the period, the IMF delegation is expected to hold consultations with key government institutions across the country as part of its policy review process.

According to a notice issued to lawmakers, the IMF specifically requested a high-

level engagement with the Senate leadership as part of the consultation programme.

The notice stated that the Federal Office of Finance informed the Senate leadership that the IMF Article IV Consultation in Nigeria had been scheduled for the period and would involve meetings with major government stakeholders.

The meeting with lawmakers is expected to serve as a platform for dialogue between the Senate and IMF officials on Nigeria's economic direction and policy reforms.

Recent assessments by global financial institutions indicate that Nigeria's economic outlook is gradually

improving, although key structural challenges remain.

The IMF projected Nigeria's economy to grow by about 3.4 per cent, reflecting modest improvement as economic activity strengthens, particularly in non-oil sectors.

However, analysts noted that the outlook remains constrained by persistent inflationary pressures, fiscal challenges, and structural bottlenecks in areas such as energy supply and infrastructure development.

The World Bank also projected average economic growth of about 3.6 per cent between 2025 and 2026, citing reforms such as fuel subsidy removal, exchange-rate

unification, and tighter monetary policy as factors supporting economic stability and improved investor confidence.

Economic growth during the period has been largely driven by services, especially telecommunications and financial services.

Looking ahead, global institutions have expressed stronger optimism regarding Nigeria's medium-term outlook.

The IMF revised Nigeria's growth forecast upward to about 4.4 per cent in 2026, reflecting expectations that fiscal and monetary reforms would strengthen macroeconomic stability and improve productivity.

## Tinubu reveals Nigeria once struggled to pay airline ticket refunds, defends tough reforms

Isa Daniel

The Nigerian government has entered a \$1.3 billion investment partnership with the Africa Finance Corporation to develop a one-million-tonne-per-year alumina refinery, alongside two strategic mining initiatives aimed at boosting the country's solid minerals sector.

The agreement, announced by the Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake, through his media aide, comes as part of a broader effort to increase the

mining sector's contribution to the nation's GDP and attract large-scale private investment.

Under the pact, the government and AFC will jointly fund the construction of the alumina refinery, implement a nationwide geoscience mapping programme to generate reliable mineral data, and create a special strategic investment vehicle to accelerate exploration, development, and production of targeted mineral assets.

The minister said the refinery is expected to oper-

ate at 95% capacity over a 20-year lifespan, producing a total of 19 million tonnes of alumina. He confirmed that all necessary approvals have been granted to expedite the AFC-SMDF investments and directed relevant agencies to ensure smooth processing of permits, titles, and regulatory clearances. Alake emphasised that recent reforms have modernised mineral regulations, strengthened the investment climate, and established a licensing framework capable of attracting serious private

sector capital.

The refinery project alone is projected to contribute approximately \$1.2 billion annually to Nigeria's GDP. Over its lifespan, it could generate more than \$25 billion for the economy and around \$8 billion in foreign exchange earnings. Initial feasibility studies by AFC and the Solid Minerals Development Fund confirmed the project's commercial viability and competitiveness, positioning it as a cornerstone investment for Nigeria's mineral value chain.

The deal was formally signed by Hajiya Fatima Shinkafi on behalf of the government and Franklin Franklin Edochie for AFC. The partnership also includes a national geoscience mapping exercise and the establishment of a joint strategic investment vehicle to accelerate exploration and eventual production across selected mineral leases, reinforcing Nigeria's push to diversify its economy away from oil dependence.



L-R: Chief of Staff to President /Vice Chancellor, Dr. Joshua Suleiman, University Bursar, Professor Folorunso Akande, Vice President, Student Development, Professor Taiwo Williams, Award Winner, Professor Chibundu Ezekiel, President /Vice Chancellor, Professor Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole and Senior Vice President, Academics Administration, Professor Jonathan Nwoso

## Tinubu reveals Nigeria once struggled to pay airline ticket refunds, defends tough reforms

Amarachi Okonkwo

President Bola Tinubu has revealed that Nigeria's financial position at the start of his administration was so strained that the federal government could not reimburse airlines for travel tickets, underscoring the depth of the economic challenges his government inherited.

Speaking while hosting media stakeholders at the State House in Abuja, the President said the situation reflected the severity of the country's fiscal pressures and justified the sweeping economic reforms introduced since he assumed office.

The meeting brought together leaders of major media organisations, including the Nigeria Press Organisation (NPO), Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), and the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ).

Tinubu defended what he described as "hard but critical" economic reforms, arguing that they were necessary to prevent the country from sliding into financial collapse.

According to him, the administration inherited a fragile fiscal position characterised by soaring inflation, a rapidly depreciating currency and significant financial obligations.

"Leadership must, as a matter of responsibility, make decisions at the best time," Tinubu said. "Yes, I accepted my predecessor's assets and liabilities because I applied for the job and was

given the job. But if anybody tells you it's easy, it's a lie."

Highlighting the severity of the situation, the President said Nigeria's financial stress at the time meant the government could not even settle outstanding airline ticket reimbursements.

"Can you imagine a nation that owes airlines for ticket reimbursements and faces galloping exchange rates and inflation?" he asked.

Despite those challenges, Tinubu said his administration had stabilised the economy and steered the country away from what he described as the "brink".

"Today, I can stand proudly before you and say that we are back from the brink," he said.

Media industry seeks tariff relief

During the engagement, media executives urged the federal government to review import tariffs on key inputs used by the industry, including newsprint and broadcast equipment, which they say have significantly increased operational costs.

Tinubu acknowledged the concerns and pledged to examine possible interventions to support the sector.

"We discussed issues of tariffs this afternoon. What I cannot report back here is whether I took action in the areas that affect you. But if I missed that, I will go back to rectifying whatever was necessary," the President said.

He also commended Nigerian journalists and media owners for their role in informing the public and sustaining democratic accountability, noting that criticism from the media

had challenged and inspired him during the early months of his administration.

"I thank you for your criticism at the beginning of the administration. You challenged me," Tinubu said. "Thank you for inspiring and challenging me at a critical moment in my life."

Calls for accountability across all tiers of government

The President further urged the media to extend scrutiny beyond the federal government and hold state and local governments accountable for their use of public resources.

According to him, fiscal reforms implemented by the federal government have increased the revenues available to subnational governments through the federation allocation.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said the administration remains committed to transparency and constructive engagement with the media.

He expressed confidence that Tinubu's leadership would guide Nigeria towards long-term economic stability and growth.

Also speaking at the event, veteran journalist and

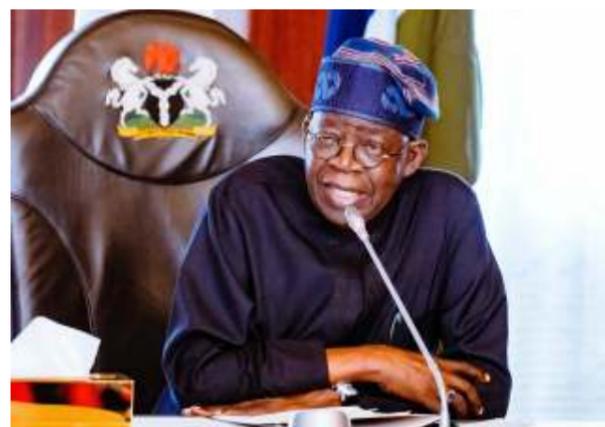
former Ogun State governor Olusegun Osoba commended the administration's reform agenda, citing initiatives such as the establishment of the Nigeria Revenue Service and the implementation of the National Single Window policy as measures capable of strengthening revenue generation and improving economic efficiency.

Media raises concerns over Big Tech

President of the Nigeria Press Organisation and publisher of BusinessDay, Frank Aigbogun, called on the federal government to address challenges affecting the media industry, particularly rising import costs and the impact of global technology companies.

Aigbogun urged the government to consider policy measures that would protect jobs in the sector and ensure that international digital platforms compensate Nigerian media organisations for the use of their editorial content.

Industry stakeholders warn that without policy support, rising operational costs and declining advertising revenues could threaten the sustainability of Nigeria's traditional media organisations.



## NUPRC enforces 'drill or drop' rule to end Idle oil licences

Amarachi Okonkwo

The Chief Executive of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Oritsemeyiwa Eyesan, has declared that the era of oil companies holding exploration licences for years without developing the assets is over, as the "drill or drop" provision under the Petroleum Industry Act now compels operators to either develop their oil blocks within a specified period or relinquish them to the government.

Eyesan disclosed this while receiving a delegation from the Petroleum Directorate of Sierra Leone at the commission's headquarters in Abuja.

According to her, the new regulatory framework now compels operators to either develop their oil and gas assets within a specified period or relinquish them to the government under the "drill or drop" provision contained in Section 94 of the PIA.

She also expressed satisfaction with the level of investor interest recorded so far in Nigeria's 2025 oil licensing round, describing the number of applicants as encouraging despite stricter bidding conditions introduced by the regulator.

The development was disclosed in a statement issued by the Head of Media and Corporate Communications at the commission, Eniola Akinkuotu.

Investor appetite strong despite tighter rules

Eyesan noted that the response from investors to the licensing round reflects renewed confidence in Nigeria's upstream petroleum sector following regulatory reforms introduced by the PIA.

According to her, the exercise currently has 50 oil blocks on offer, and the pre-qualification submissions indicate strong investor appetite for the bid round.

"For the 2025 licensing round, we have 50 oil blocks on offer. The outcome of the pre-qualification submissions demonstrated that there is indeed a strong appetite for the bid round," she said.

She explained that the commission deliberately introduced restrictions limiting companies to a maximum of two blocks, whether bidding independently or as part of a consortium.

The restriction, she said, is designed to prevent asset hoarding and encourage broader participation by investors.

According to Eyesan, the policy ensures that

exploration assets are allocated only to companies with the financial and technical capacity to develop them.

Audit firm engaged to validate digital bidding system

The NUPRC boss also disclosed that the commission has taken additional steps to strengthen transparency and investor confidence in the licensing process.

She said an independent audit firm was engaged to review the digital bidding platform used for the exercise and validate its integrity.

"In order to ensure total transparency in the licensing round, the commission added an extra layer of validation by partnering with a reputable audit firm to interrogate the system and confirm that the system is foolproof.

The outcome of the exercise will be made public to further boost investor confidence," she said.

PIA reforms eliminate dormant oil assets

Eyesan explained that the introduction of the "drill or drop" rule has fundamentally changed how exploration licences are managed in Nigeria.

The provision requires companies to begin exploration and development activities within a defined timeframe or surrender the licence.

She noted that the reform has ended a long-standing practice in the industry where some operators held prospecting licences for decades without carrying out meaningful exploration work.

"In the past, we had operators who retained licences for as long as 20 years and did absolutely nothing with them. Now we have moved from that era to drill or drop," she said.

According to her, the policy has returned more dormant assets to the government's portfolio, creating new investment opportunities and enabling Nigeria to consider holding licensing rounds more frequently, possibly on an annual basis.

The renewed investor interest in the bid round is also expected to support Nigeria's long-term goal of increasing its proven crude oil reserves and sustaining upstream investments.

Nigeria currently holds some of the largest hydrocarbon reserves in Africa, but exploration activity has slowed in recent years due to regulatory uncertainty, security challenges and global energy transition pressures.

## Tinubu appoints Fola Adeola to chair petroleum reform taskforce

### APPOINTMENT

Amarachi Okonkwo

In a move aimed at accelerating reforms in the petroleum industry, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has named Fola Adeola to lead a high-level taskforce mandated to produce execution-ready policy blueprints to strengthen investment, governance and value creation in the sector.

The taskforce has been mandated to design and sequence the next phase of reforms in the country's petroleum sector, with a focus on improving efficiency, attracting investment and maximising value from Nigeria's energy resources.

The appointment was disclosed in a statement issued on Friday by the Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga. According to the statement, the taskforce will operate as a time-bound, high-level executive working group responsible for producing execution-ready reform blueprints.

Other members of the taskforce include Ademola Adeyemi-Bero, Osagie Okunbor, Abubakar Suleiman, Adaye Aguele, Farouk Gumel, Phillipa Osakwe-Okoye and Seyi Bella, while Mofoluwasho Fadayomi will serve as secretary.

According to the presidency, the taskforce will consolidate ongoing reforms within the petroleum industry, unlock capital across the value chain and strengthen Nigeria's position as a competitive global energy investment destination.

"The initiative reflects the President's commitment to transforming Nigeria's petroleum industry into a more competitive, transparent and value-maximising sector capable of driving long-term economic growth, macroeconomic resilience and industrial development," the statement said.

The body will function

primarily as a technical reform platform rather than a representative committee. It will engage industry operators, regulators, investors and civil society groups as consultees while focusing on actionable policy design and implementation strategies.

The taskforce will report directly to the President and submit monthly progress memoranda. An interim report is expected within three months of its inauguration, while the final reform framework is to be delivered within six months.

According to the presidency, the taskforce has been directed to deliver three key reform blueprints. The first is an Implementation Toolkit for Immediate Structural Fixes, which will include draft legislative amendments, executive policy instruments and proposals for institutional restructuring within the petroleum sector.

The second deliverable is the Capital and Liquidity Acceleration Blueprint, designed to unlock between \$5 billion and \$10 billion in sectoral liquidity while safeguarding Nigeria's sovereign interests.

The third component is a National Energy Transformation Strategy, a 10-year roadmap that will outline measurable targets for crude oil production, foreign exchange earnings, GDP contribution and cost competitiveness within the energy sector.

President Tinubu also directed all ministries, departments and agencies, regulators and other relevant institutions to provide full technical support to the taskforce and submit inventories of ongoing initiatives to ensure alignment with the emerging reform framework.

In addition, all existing committees, teams and working groups established under various reform initiatives in the petroleum sector have been instructed to align their activities, reporting structures and work programmes with the new taskforce.



L-R: Sunday Olasupo, Assistant Controller, Ikoyi Correctional Centre; Nwamaka Kalu, Head, Human Resource Business Partnerships and Communication, Fidelity Bank Plc; Sunday Ogundele, Assistant Controller, Ikoyi Correctional Centre; Obiora Mbaekwe, Head, HR Shared Services, Fidelity Bank Plc; Dr Julius Ogueri, Deputy Controller, Ikoyi Correctional Centre; Charles Nwachukwu, Chief Human Resources Officer, Fidelity Bank Plc; and Dr Chidi Nwankwo, Assistant Controller, Ikoyi Correctional Centre; during the Fidelity Helping Hands Programme (FHHP) donation of essential materials to inmates at Ikoyi Correctional Centre in Lagos, recently.

## Dangote Refinery raises petrol price to N1,175/L, depot operators halt sales

Amarachi Okonkwo

Dangote Petroleum Refinery has once again revised the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), popularly known as petrol, back to N1,175 per litre, prompting several depot operators across the country to temporarily suspend sales operations.

The latest adjustment comes barely days after the refinery had reduced its ex-depot price by N100 to N1,075 per litre on March 10, 2026, from the previous N1,175 per litre. Following the earlier reduction, many depot operators had begun selling the product at an average of about N1,100 per litre

in anticipation of improved margins and increased demand.

However, the renewed upward price review by the refinery has disrupted ongoing transactions in the downstream market. Depot operators across major fuel distribution hubs reportedly halted sales temporarily as they reassessed their pricing structures and awaited further clarification on supply terms.

Industry sources disclosed that loading activities at the refinery were also temporarily suspended as the company worked to reconcile existing stock levels and align its operations with the updated pricing framework.

Market participants

attributed the latest price adjustment to the recent surge in global crude oil prices. International benchmark Brent crude has reportedly risen from about \$91 per barrel to around \$100 per barrel, significantly increasing the cost of feedstock for refiners and, by extension, the overall cost of producing refined petroleum products.

The refinery had earlier announced that the gantny price of petrol would be reduced to N1,075 per litre from N1,175 per litre. It also disclosed that PMS supplied through its coastal distribution channel would be priced slightly lower at N1,050 per litre, reflecting a marginal pricing differential for

marine deliveries to bulk buyers and coastal depots.

The reversal of the earlier price cut has introduced fresh uncertainty in Nigeria's deregulated downstream petroleum market, where product pricing is increasingly tied to global oil market dynamics, exchange rate movements and logistics costs.

Analysts say the development could influence retail pump prices in the coming days, depending on how marketers adjust their margins and transportation costs. Stakeholders in the sector are also closely monitoring the impact of rising global crude prices on domestic fuel supply and distribution patterns.

## Nigeria loses 50% of food produced in Lagos—Stakeholders push for large-scale farming

Continued from P.1

Executive Chairman of the company, Prince Samuel, said inefficiencies across Nigeria's agricultural supply chain are responsible for massive food losses.

According to him, a significant proportion of food produced never gets to consumers due to poor logistics, inadequate storage infrastructure and weak distribution networks.

"About 50 per cent of the food produced in Lagos never gets to consumers due to inefficiencies in the supply chain," Samuel said.

He explained that the corporate farming model was developed to address long-standing risks that have discouraged investors from participating in

agriculture.

Samuel noted that many financial institutions previously suffered losses after financing agricultural projects that lacked technical expertise, structured management and guaranteed off-take markets.

Under the initiative, investors will be provided with farmland, professional farm management services, financing support and guaranteed off-take arrangements for agricultural produce.

He disclosed that each farm under the model will operate on a minimum of 1,000 hectares, with investors contributing between 20 and 30 per cent equity, while the remaining funding will be sourced from financial institutions and Origin Tech.

The programme will also provide farmers with technical support for two farming cycles and advisory services for up to five cycles to ensure sustainability and productivity.

Chief Operating Officer of Origin Automobile Works, Leo Edwards, highlighted Nigeria's low level of agricultural mechanisation as a major constraint to productivity.

Citing data from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), he noted that the global benchmark for mechanised farming stands at 1.5 horsepower per hectare, while Nigeria currently operates at just 0.0027 horsepower per hectare, indicating a significant technology gap.

Also speaking at the event, the Lagos State

Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Systems, Abisola Olusanya, said Nigeria's agricultural framework must evolve to tackle persistent food losses and supply shortages.

Olusanya stressed that improving agricultural infrastructure, mechanisation and coordinated production systems would be critical to strengthening food security and reducing the country's dependence on food imports.

Stakeholders at the event agreed that adopting commercial farming models backed by technology, financing and market guarantees could significantly reduce food losses, attract private investment and improve Nigeria's agricultural productivity.



Fola Adeola

# The Banking Hall

Money | Finance | Credit | Funds | Payment

## Banks Deposit N7 Trillion Excess Cash with CBN

### MONEY

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Nigeria's deposit money banks have placed nearly 7 trillion in excess liquidity with the Central Bank of Nigeria through its Standing Deposit Facility, indicating persistent surplus liquidity within the banking system.

Data released by the apex bank showed that banks deposited about 6.96 trillion at the facility before easing slightly to 6.69 trillion within a

day.

The development reflects strong liquidity inflows into the financial system, with banks opting to earn overnight interest from the CBN rather than expand lending immediately.

Figures from the central bank indicated a steady build-up of liquidity in the banking system over several days as lenders continued to place surplus funds at the deposit facility.

Deposits at the facility rose significantly from earlier levels recorded during the week, increasing from about 5.27 tril-

lion to nearly 7 trillion within a short period.

The liquidity surge coincided with large repayments of maturing government securities, which injected about 1.5 trillion into the banking system.

Primary market repayments rose sharply, contributing to the increase in available liquidity within the financial system.

These repayments typically represent maturing Treasury bills or Federal Government bonds returning principal funds to investors, mainly banks and institutional



as a liquidity management tool, helping authorities to moderate excess cash within the money market.

Despite these absorption measures, the level of deposits at the Standing Deposit Facility suggests that liquidity conditions in the banking sector remain elevated.

Opening balances of banks with the central bank also showed a gradual decline, indicating that part of the available funds was redeployed into government securities or parked at the deposit facility.

investors.

While repayments boosted liquidity, fresh government borrowing helped absorb part of the excess funds.

The CBN recorded pri-

mary market sales of about 933.92 billion through government securities, reflecting settlements from recent Treasury bill or bond auctions.

Such issuances serve



L-R: (Front Row Seated) Chief Brand and Marketing Officer, Union Bank of Nigeria, Mrs. Olufunmilola Aluko; Director-General, Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), Dr. Olalekan Olumuyiwa Fadolapo; and Director Regulation, Monitoring and Enforcement, ARCON, Mrs. Emme Akande with (Back Row Standing) 2nd Right, Head Strategic Brand Management, Union Bank, Alvin Agorom; 5th Right, Head Product Marketing, Ejiebhien Egbomondion; 6th Right, Head Strategic Communications and Media, Olufisayo Adelekun with other Union Bank Inductees during their induction by ARCON as Registered Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria held at the Stallion Plaza in Marina, Lagos recently.

## CBN Introduces Automated Anti-Money Laundering Systems for Financial Institutions

### FINANCE

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Central Bank of Nigeria has introduced new technology-driven regulations requiring banks and other financial institutions to deploy automated anti-money laundering (AML) systems to strengthen the detection of suspicious financial transactions across the country.

The directive was contained in a circular issued to banks, mobile money operators, international money transfer operators, payment service providers, and other financial institutions.

According to the apex bank, the policy introduces baseline standards for automated anti-money laundering solutions aimed at improving the monitoring and reporting of financial crimes in Nigeria's increasingly digitised financial system.

The circular stated that the measure is intended to enhance compliance with existing financial crime laws and ensure that institutions deploy modern technology to combat money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing.

It stated, "The baseline standards provide a framework for implementing automated solutions that strengthen the detection and

reporting of suspicious transactions in real time and enhance compliance with applicable AML/CFT/CPF laws and regulations, while also supporting the use of emerging technologies to improve overall financial crime risk management."

The circular was signed by the Director of the Banking Supervision Department, Akinwunmi A. Olubukola, and Olubunmi Ayodele-Oni for the Director of the Compliance Department.

Under the new framework, financial institutions are required to implement automated anti-money laundering solutions that integrate customer identification processes, transaction monitoring, sanctions screening

and risk assessment capabilities.

The apex bank explained that the standards apply to all financial institutions under its regulatory supervision, including banks, payment service providers and other licensed financial operators.

Implementation of the guidelines takes effect from the date of issuance, with institutions expected to achieve full compliance within specified timelines depending on their category.

According to the circular, deposit money banks have been given 18 months to fully comply with the new standards, while other financial institutions have up to 24 months to implement the required systems.

## FCMB Completes N500bn Recapitalisation, Meets CBN Deadline

### FINANCE

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

FCMB Group Plc has announced the successful completion of its N500 billion capital raise programme, meeting the minimum regulatory requirement set by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) ahead of the March 31 recapitalisation deadline.

The development was disclosed in a statement dated March 8, 2026, and signed by the Group Chief Executive, Ladi Balogun.

With the completion of the exercise, the financial services group joins other Nigerian banks that have concluded their capital raising initiatives in compliance with the CBN's revised capital requirements.

The group confirmed that it has secured all necessary regulatory approvals from key authorities, including the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Securities and Exchange Commission Nigeria (SEC), and the National Pension Commission (PenCom).

"FCMB Group Plc announces the successful completion of the capital raise programme undertaken for its banking subsidiary, First City Monument Bank Limited," the statement said.

According to the group, its 2025 Public Offer generated approximately N231.8 billion in gross proceeds.

The company also raised an additional N11.0 billion

through the minority divestment of about 10 per cent of the issued share capital of FCMB Pensions Limited.

FCMB stated that the regulatory approvals obtained from the relevant authorities marked the conclusion of the fundraising process designed to strengthen the capital base of its banking subsidiary.

The recapitalisation effort was initiated following the CBN's directive requiring banks to increase their minimum capital thresholds in line with their respective licence categories.

FCMB initially announced plans in 2024 to raise N340 billion to support the capital strengthening of its banking subsidiary.

The capital target was later revised to N370 billion in 2025 before being further adjusted.

In November 2025, the group increased the capital-raising ceiling to N400 billion in response to regulatory guidance issued by the CBN.

The company clarified at the time that the upward adjustment was not intended to launch a new fundraising exercise but to ensure full compliance with regulatory capital requirements.

FCMB also stated that the expansion of its capital base would not result in shareholder value dilution.

According to the group, earnings per share are projected to increase from N1.85 in 2024 to N4.60 by 2026, supported by improved returns on equity despite the enlarged capital structure.



## CBN Affirms Alpha Morgan Bank's Capitalisation

### PAYMENTS

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has affirmed the capitalisation of Alpha Morgan Bank, confirming that the financial institution has met regulatory requirements.

The bank said the affirmation reflects compliance with capital standards and its focus on strengthening its capital base to support growth, innovation, and improved service delivery.

With the development, Alpha Morgan Bank stated that it is positioned to expand its operations across its 14 approved branches in different states while enhancing financial inclusion and broadening banking services for individuals, businesses, and institutional clients.

The Managing Director of Alpha Morgan Bank, Mr. Ade Buraimo, said the bank remains committed to regulatory compliance, strong corporate governance, and

sound risk management.

He said: "Capitalisation is more than a regulatory requirement; it is an opportunity to strengthen the institution for the future. The affirmation of Alpha Morgan Bank capitalisation reflects the work we have done to build a solid capital foundation that allows us to support businesses more effectively, expand financial access and continue delivering the level of service our customers expect."

According to him, the bank will continue to maintain prudent financial management practices while supporting economic development and creating long-term value for stakeholders.

"As Alpha Morgan Bank enters the next phase of its journey, the institution will continue to scale its operation, invest in technology, expand its branch network and digital banking presence, whilst delivering reliable and satisfying banking experiences to its growing customer base," Buraimo added.

## N20,000 limit on newly activated banking apps to curb fraud - CBN

### MONEY

Amarachi Okonkwo

In a move to tackle rising digital banking fraud, the Central Bank of Nigeria has directed banks to impose a N20,000 transaction limit on newly activated mobile banking apps for the first 24 hours, with the new rule set to take effect from July 1, 2026.

The directive was contained in a circular issued on March 12, 2026, and addressed to banks, other financial institutions and payment service providers. According to the apex bank, the measures are designed to curb fraud, protect customers and improve the resilience of digital payment channels as the use of electronic banking platforms continues to expand across the country.

The regulator said the new provisions will take effect from July 1, 2026, giving financial institutions time to update their systems and align operational processes with the revised requirements.

Under the new rules, financial institutions are required to impose transaction limits on newly activated mobile financial service applications during the first 24 hours of activation.

The circular states that the limit will apply to both inflows and outflows on newly opened accounts, with total transactions not exceeding N20,000 within the first day. However, banks are permitted to set lower thresholds depending on their internal risk management frameworks.

For existing customers activating their mobile banking applications on a new

device, the CBN directed banks to impose an outflow transaction limit of N20,000 within the first 24 hours after activation.

The apex bank explained that the restriction is aimed at reducing risks linked to account takeovers, identity theft and unauthorised device migration, which have become increasingly common with the rapid growth of digital financial services.

Mandatory device binding introduced

As part of additional safeguards, the CBN also introduced mandatory device binding for mobile banking applications, meaning customers will only be allowed to operate their banking applications on one device at a time.

Under the new rule, customers will no longer be permitted to access their mobile banking apps simultaneously across multiple devices.

The regulator added that migration to a new device will automatically trigger a fresh authentication and reactivation process to verify the identity of the account holder before access is granted.

Financial institutions were also directed to enforce additional multi-factor authentication for cus-

tomers logging into internet banking platforms for the first time on a new device.

Real-time fraud monitoring required

Beyond device restrictions, the CBN directed financial institutions to deploy enterprise-level fraud monitoring systems capable of tracking both incoming and outgoing transactions in real time.

According to the regulator, the systems are expected to help banks detect suspicious activities early and block potentially fraudulent transactions before they are completed.

The new framework also strengthens requirements for digital account opening and reactivation processes.

The CBN said accounts opened online must undergo liveness checks to confirm that the person initiating the process is physically present and not using manipulated images or automated systems.

Additionally, all online account opening and account reactivation processes must be validated in real time using the Bank Verification Number (BVN) and National Identity Number (NIN) databases.

Financial institutions were further instructed to implement enhanced authentication mecha-

nisms such as biometric verification, soft tokens, hard tokens and other multi-factor authentication tools during online account reactivation.

The CBN also introduced a voluntary opt-out and opt-in feature for instant payment services, allowing customers to temporarily disable instant transfers on their accounts if they wish.

Under the provision, customers will be able to opt out of instant payment services at any time and for any duration, subject to multi-factor authentication.

When the opt-out option is activated, instant transfers both within the same bank and across banks will be disabled, although customers will still be able to carry out transfers by visiting their bank physically.

For new customers, the default setting will remain opt-in during account onboarding.

The circular also clarified that customers may still voluntarily adjust their transaction limits within existing regulatory thresholds, which currently stand at N25 million for individual accounts and N250 million for corporate accounts.

However, any request to increase limits must undergo enhanced due diligence and risk assessment by the financial institution before approval.

According to the CBN, the newly introduced measures represent the minimum operational standards required for instant payment services in Nigeria's financial system, as regulators continue efforts to strengthen security and maintain trust in the country's rapidly expanding digital banking ecosystem.

## CBN Restricts Banking Services for Large Loan Defaulters

### CREDIT

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has directed commercial banks to restrict access to certain banking services for large borrowers with non-performing loans as part of efforts to strengthen credit discipline and protect the stability of the financial system.

The directive was issued in a circular sent to banks and signed by the Director of Banking Supervision, Olubukola Akinwunmi.

Under the new directive, borrowers whose loan facilities are classified as non-performing and recorded in the Credit Risk Management System or any licensed private credit bureau will no longer be eligible to obtain additional credit facilities from financial institutions.

The apex bank stated that the measure is intended to reduce the risks posed by large borrowers whose loan defaults could threaten the stability of the banking sector.

According to the CBN, financial institutions must immediately restrict further credit access to any large-ticket obligor with a non-performing facility recorded in the Credit Risk Management System or a licensed credit bureau.

The restriction also extends beyond loans to

other banking services and contingent liabilities.

Affected borrowers will not be granted banking facilities such as bankers' confirmations, letters of credit, performance bonds, or advance payment guarantees.

The regulator explained that the restrictions apply to borrowers whose exposures meet the definition of large-ticket obligors as outlined in the Prudential Guidelines for Deposit Money Banks.

Banks have also been directed to obtain additional realisable collateral from the affected borrowers to secure their existing exposures.

According to the CBN, large-ticket obligors are borrowers whose combined credit exposure across banks exceeds the Single Obligor Limit and whose obligations could materially affect a bank's capital adequacy ratio or pose systemic risks to the financial system.

The determination of such exposures will rely on information contained in the Credit Risk Management System and reports from licensed private credit bureaus.

The apex bank noted that similar restrictions had previously been introduced in June 2024 when loan defaulters were prohibited from accessing additional credit facilities within the banking system.



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# The Role of SMEs in Stabilizing the Nigerian Economy

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have long been described as the backbone of economies worldwide, and Nigeria is no exception. In a country where economic fluctuations, policy inconsistencies, and infrastructural challenges often dominate headlines, SMEs emerge as a resilient force capable of cushioning the economy against shocks. These businesses, often operating in trade, manufacturing, agriculture, and technology, play a pivotal role in job creation, wealth distribution, and the diversification of Nigeria's economic base.

Nigeria's economy has historically been dependent on oil revenue, which exposes it to the volatility of global oil prices. When oil revenues dip, government budgets tighten, inflation rises, and unemployment increases. In such times, SMEs provide a counterbalance. By generating employment opportunities for millions of Nigerians, they reduce the pressure on public sector jobs and social safety nets. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), SMEs account for over 96% of businesses in the country and employ approximately 84% of the workforce. This sheer scale underscores their critical role in economic stability.

Beyond job creation, SMEs contribute significantly to Nigeria's GDP. While large corporations dominate sectors like oil and banking, SMEs inject dynamism into local economies. They serve niche markets, meet local demand for goods and services, and drive innovation in ways that larger, slower-moving companies often cannot. In agriculture, for example, smallholder farmers and

agro-processing SMEs help ensure food security, supply raw materials to bigger industries, and foster rural development. The recent approval of a N250 billion facility to support smallholder farmers exemplifies how government intervention, when targeted at SMEs, can stimulate economic activity and enhance resilience.

SMEs also encourage entrepreneurship, nurturing a culture of self-reliance and innovation. In Nigeria, where youth unemployment remains a pressing concern, small businesses provide a platform for young Nigerians to harness their skills and creativity. From tech startups in Lagos to artisanal food producers in Enugu, SMEs allow innovative solutions to emerge locally rather than relying solely on imported solutions. This not only strengthens the domestic economy but also positions Nigeria as a potential hub for African innovation.

However, despite their immense potential, Nigerian SMEs face significant challenges that limit their stabilizing role. Access to finance remains a critical obstacle, as banks often view small businesses as high-risk borrowers. Inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent policies, and bureaucratic bottlenecks further hinder growth. Moreover, limited access to technology and digital platforms means that many SMEs struggle to scale or reach broader markets. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from both government and private stakeholders, including policy reforms, improved funding mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives.

The stability that SMEs bring to the economy extends beyond mere numbers. During periods of

macroeconomic turbulence, they maintain a degree of continuity in local production, distribution, and consumption. For example, during currency fluctuations or inflationary spikes, SMEs that produce essential goods and services locally reduce dependence on imports, helping to stabilize prices and supply chains. Additionally, SMEs often cultivate strong community ties, enabling them to adapt quickly to local market changes and sustain livelihoods even in difficult times.

To maximize the impact of SMEs on Nigeria's economic stability, a multi-pronged approach is necessary. Access to affordable finance, supportive regulatory frameworks, investment in digital infrastructure, and business development services can empower SMEs to thrive. Public-private partnerships can also play a critical role, linking small businesses to markets, training opportunities, and global value chains. By prioritizing SMEs in national economic planning, Nigeria can harness their full potential not only as engines of growth but as buffers against economic shocks.

The role of SMEs in stabilizing the Nigerian economy cannot be overstated. They provide employment, foster innovation, drive local production, and contribute significantly to GDP. Yet, their ability to fully stabilize the economy hinges on addressing persistent challenges, including finance, infrastructure, and policy gaps. By empowering SMEs, Nigeria can build a more resilient, diversified, and inclusive economy, one where small businesses serve as a foundation for sustainable growth and stability.

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# Media & Brands Hubs

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## Meta to Pass Digital Services Tax to Advertisers in Europe

BRAND

Isa Daniel

Meta Platforms has announced that it will transfer the cost of digital services taxes to advertisers in selected European markets starting July 1, 2026.

The policy will apply to image- and video-based

advertisements displayed in Austria, France, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Meta stated that it will introduce "location fees" reflecting national digital services tax rates in those countries.

Austria and Turkey apply a five per cent levy, France, Italy, and Spain impose a three per cent tax, while the United Kingdom

applies a two per cent rate.

The company said the change aligns with industry practices, noting that other technology firms have adopted similar cost-transfer models.

Under the revised structure, advertisers will bear the additional charges, which will be incorporated into advertising costs in the affected markets.

Industry analysts say

the adjustment may increase campaign expenses for multinational brands operating across Europe, as regulatory levies become embedded in digital advertising pricing structures.

The policy shift is expected to affect media planning and budget allocations for businesses advertising on Meta's platforms in the designated countries



## SPAR Opens New Hypermarket in Abuja

MARKETING

Isa Daniel

Samsung has expanded satellite communication capabilities across select Galaxy smartphones in the United States, including the flagship Galaxy S26 series, as part of a strategy to enhance connectivity in areas with limited or no traditional network coverage.

The initiative, implemented through partnerships with leading U.S. telecom operators, allows Galaxy users to send texts, data, and emergency signals via satellite, improving safety and ensuring reliable communication during network outages. Samsung said the feature is increasingly critical in the AI-driven mobile landscape, where seamless connectivity underpins device performance.

"Satellite connectivity is becoming an essential tool for mobile users, especially for emergency and essential communications," said Won-Joon Choi, President, COO, and Head of

R&D for Samsung's Mobile eXperience Business. "We are committed to ensuring Galaxy users have dependable access to communication wherever they are, reflecting our dedication to next-generation mobile innovation."

The company has partnered with T-Mobile, Verizon, and AT&T to extend satellite messaging and data services to a growing number of Galaxy devices. Select models in

the Galaxy A series also benefit from these features, which complement traditional mobile networks and strengthen the overall user experience.

Samsung confirmed that it will continue to expand satellite communication support to additional devices and markets, emphasizing the company's goal of making connectivity more resilient and widely accessible as mobile technology evolves.

## NIVEA N3bn Promo Hits Ninth Draw, Over 550,000 Winners Emerge

PROMOTION

Isa Daniel

The ongoing N3 billion consumer promotion by NIVEA has completed its ninth weekly draw, with additional winners announced nationwide.

The promotion has recorded more than 550,000 winners across Nigeria, according to campaign organisers.

So far, 90 participants have won N1 million each, over 450,000 consumers have received N50,000 shopping vouchers, and approximately 550,000 Nigerians have benefited from N1,000 instant airtime rewards.

The ninth draw produced new N1 million winners, including participants from Enugu and Ibadan.

The company confirmed that the promo-

tion remains active, with additional high-value prizes still available before the campaign concludes.

Participants who purchase any 400ml NIVEA Body Lotion variant and enter the code on the product packaging are automatically eligible for instant rewards and weekly draws.

The promotion is scheduled to run for 12 weeks.

At the end of the campaign, participants will compete for grand prizes, including N5 million, N3 million, N2 million, three SUVs, and ten all-expense-paid trips to Spain to watch Real Madrid CF at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium.

The company stated that the promotion is fully approved and regulated by relevant Nigerian authorities to ensure transparency and compliance.



## U.S. Judge Rules Out Ketamine Evidence in Musk-OpenAI Dispute

BRAND

Isa Daniel

A U.S. federal judge has ruled that Elon Musk's past use of ketamine will not be admissible as evidence in the ongoing legal dispute between Musk and OpenAI Inc., including Microsoft Corp.

U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers made the ruling during a hearing in Oakland, California, clarifying the scope of evi-

dence that will be permitted at trial.

The case centers on allegations related to OpenAI's founding, its structural transi-



tion, and Microsoft's \$13 billion investment in the company. The trial is scheduled to begin on April 28.

Musk alleges that OpenAI co-founders, including Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman and Greg Brockman, misrepresented their intentions to maintain a nonprofit structure when he contributed \$38 million in seed funding. He is seeking up to \$134 billion in damages.

OpenAI and Microsoft have denied the allegations.

During the hearing, the judge expressed skepticism about the damages calcula-

tions presented by Musk's financial expert witness, Paul Wazzan, who estimated potential damages between \$79 billion and \$134 billion based on OpenAI's current valuation. The judge described the methodology as "not particularly persuasive."

OpenAI's legal team attempted to introduce questions regarding Musk's alleged ketamine use during negotiations, arguing it could be relevant to his decision-making. The court rejected the request, stating that drug use is not admissible without evidence of impaired judg-

ment.

However, the judge permitted limited discussion regarding Musk's attendance at the Burning Man festival, where he has reportedly interacted with company executives.

Musk has stated that he previously used ketamine under medical prescription and denies recent recreational use.

The trial will examine claims surrounding OpenAI's original nonprofit commitments and its subsequent corporate restructuring.

# Market Trends

Data | Currencies | Money Market | Capital Market | Commodities | Fund Management | Equities | Trading Room | Crypto Finance

## Treasury Bills Oversubscribed by N2.78tn on N850bn Offer

### MONEY MARKET

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Nigeria's Treasury Bills market recorded strong investor demand as total subscriptions reached N2.78 trillion at the latest Primary Market Auction conducted Wednesday by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), significantly surpassing the N850 billion offered across three maturities.

The auction, which featured the 91-day, 182-day

and 364-day Treasury Bills, drew subscriptions that were about 227.06 per cent higher than the amount on offer, underscoring continued investor appetite for government securities in the domestic fixed-income market.

Auction results showed that the apex bank eventually allotted a total of N933.92 billion across the three tenors, representing about 9.87 per cent higher than the initial offer size. Market participants attributed the strong participation to sustained liquidity in the financial system and

investors' preference for relatively secure instruments.

Demand at the auction was largely driven by the 364-day Treasury Bill, which attracted the bulk of investor interest. Data from the auction indicated that the one-year instrument alone received subscriptions of about N2.57 trillion against the N600 billion offered. The CBN eventually allotted N731.81 billion for the tenor.

The shorter-dated instruments recorded relatively lower subscriptions. The 91-day Treasury Bill

received bids totalling N131.12 billion against the N100 billion offered, while the 182-day bill attracted N82.34 billion in subscriptions compared to its N150 billion offer.

Allotments for the shorter tenors settled at N130.74 billion for the 91-day bill and N71.37 billion for the 182-day bill.

Stop rates at the auction remained broadly stable across the instruments. The 91-day Treasury Bill cleared at 15.95 per cent, while the 182-day instrument settled at 16.65 per cent. The 364-day Treasury Bill closed at

16.72 per cent, representing a marginal decline from the 16.73 per cent recorded at the previous auction.

Analysts said the slight decline in the stop rate of the one-year instrument suggests that investors were willing to accept slightly lower yields in order to secure longer-term returns in the market.

Market observers noted that the continued strong demand for the longer-dated Treasury Bill reflects investors' search for attractive yields in Nigeria's fixed-income market. Institutional investors, including

banks and asset managers, typically favour longer-duration government securities when system liquidity remains strong.

The outcome of the auction also points to stable pricing conditions in the fixed-income market, particularly for short- and medium-term instruments. Analysts added that the unchanged stop rates for the 91-day and 182-day bills indicate steady investor expectations regarding near-term interest rate movements.



## VFD Group to Refund N1.83bn in Surplus Rights Issue Payments

### CAPITAL MARKET

VFD Group Plc has announced plans to refund approximately N1.83 billion in surplus funds to shareholders who participated in its recently concluded N50.6 billion rights issue.

The surplus arose from excess payments made by eleven shareholders during the subscription process, according to details contained in the company's allotment document. The document also confirmed that the company has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for the allotment of shares under the capital raise.

The rights issue involved 5,067,396,400 ordinary shares of 50 kobo each, offered to existing shareholders at a price of N10 per share. The offer was structured on the basis of two new shares for every three shares held by shareholders whose names appeared on the register as of August 8, 2025.

The allotment document shows that the rights issue attracted 1,194 valid applications for the entire 5.07 billion shares offered, resulting in a full subscription of the offer. A total of 962 existing shareholders fully exercised their provisional allotments, accounting for about 1.9 billion shares.

Further disclosures indicate that 94 shareholders with provisional allotments of about 705.39 million shares traded 122.86 million units on the floor of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX). These units were acquired by 138 new inves-

tors who took advantage of the opportunity to participate in the offer.

In addition, another 94 shareholders partially exercised their rights by accepting 356.25 million shares while renouncing 226.27 million shares. Meanwhile, a total of 5,334 shareholders fully renounced their rights, representing approximately 2.46 billion shares, which were subsequently taken up by other investors seeking to increase their holdings in the company.

The company explained that the excess payments made during the subscription process led to the N1.83 billion surplus, which it has committed to refund to the affected shareholders.

Investor demand also played a key role in absorbing all the renounced shares during the offer period. According to the allotment document, 571 shareholders who fully exercised their rights applied for additional shares totaling about 2.69 billion units, effectively taking up the shares that had been renounced by other investors.

The company further confirmed that all valid applications received full allotment, indicating a strong balance between investor demand and the number of shares offered.

With the SEC's approval of the basis of allotment, VFD Group stated that it has successfully completed the capital-raising process tied to its 50.6 billion rights issue, marking a significant step in strengthening the company's capital base and supporting its strategic growth plans.

## FX Reforms Drive 200% Increase in Capital Inflows —Cardoso

### CAPITAL MARKET

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Olayemi Cardoso, has stated that ongoing foreign exchange reforms have significantly increased capital inflows into Nigeria and strengthened confidence in the naira.

Cardoso disclosed this during a lecture delivered at St. Gregory's College in Lagos during the institution's Founder's Day celebration.

He said the reforms were introduced to eliminate distortions in the foreign exchange market, enhance transparency, and restore stability in Nigeria's financial system.

According to him, the pol-

icy measures have reshaped the foreign exchange market and reduced long-standing inefficiencies.

Cardoso stated that the CBN eliminated the system of multiple exchange rates and significantly reduced the premium between the official and parallel market rates.

He noted that the parallel market premium declined from around 50 per cent in 2022 to less than two per cent on average in 2025.

The CBN governor said the foreign exchange market now operates with improved liquidity and efficiency, reducing the need for extraordinary interventions by the central bank.

He added that the apex bank had cleared the backlog of unmet foreign exchange demand that previously constrained businesses and

investors.

Cardoso stated that investment flows into Nigeria increased by nearly 200 per cent between 2023 and 2025 as a result of the reforms.

He noted that the policy measures have improved balance-of-payments conditions and strengthened investor confidence in the economy.

The improvements, he said, are reflected in the growth of external reserves and relative stability in the foreign exchange market.

Cardoso also noted that the central bank has returned to orthodox monetary policy and implemented tightening measures to address inflation.

According to him, inflation has declined from a peak of about 34 per cent to approximately 15 per cent.

He emphasised that transparent markets and

strong financial institutions remain critical to sustaining economic growth and strengthening Nigeria's financial system.

The foreign exchange reforms form part of broader macroeconomic adjustments aimed at addressing structural challenges within Nigeria's currency market.

For several years, Nigeria operated a multiple exchange rate system that created arbitrage opportunities and weakened market transparency.

The current reforms aim to unify the exchange rate system, improve price discovery, and enhance market efficiency.

The CBN stated that the reforms are intended to rebuild trust in financial markets and strengthen the economy's ability to withstand global shocks.

# African Business Review

News Insight | Business Personality

## Kenya Deploys Body Cameras to Tackle Tax Evasion and Corruption

### BUSINESS INSIGHT

Sanyaolu Cornelius

The Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) has begun deploying body-worn cameras to tax enforcement officers as part of efforts to curb bribery, improve transparency, and strengthen tax compliance.

The initiative involves the rollout of about 350 body cameras, particularly for officers working in customs operations and border control units. The deployment began at Jomo Kenyatta International Air-

port and will gradually extend to other enforcement teams that regularly interact with taxpayers, cargo handlers, and logistics operators.

According to the tax authority, the cameras will record interactions between officers and the public in real time, creating video evidence that can help deter corrupt practices, resolve disputes, and expose possible collusion between officials and tax evaders.

The move comes amid heightened scrutiny over corruption within the agency. In recent years, KRA has carried out lifestyle audits and

internal investigations targeting suspected misconduct among its personnel.

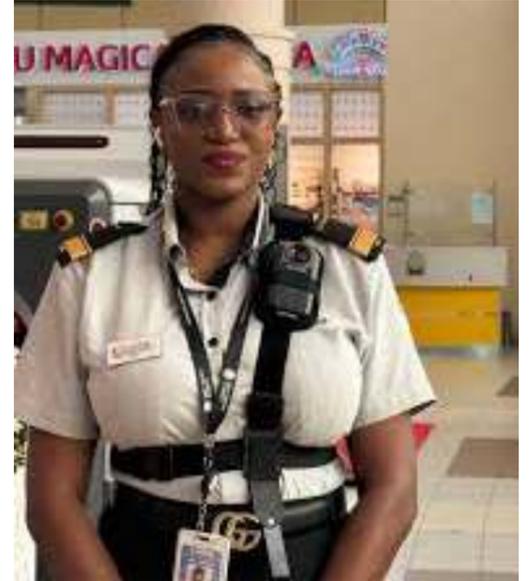
Authorities say these investigations have led to the recovery of about KSh549 million in unexplained wealth and the dismissal of several officers linked to graft-related offences. Some of the affected officials were accused of assisting businesses in under-declaring goods or manipulating tax records to evade duties.

Beyond the deployment of body cameras, the tax authority is also expanding the use of technology to

strengthen revenue collection and reduce leakages. These efforts include integrating tax systems with financial institutions and digital payment platforms such as M-Pesa.

Additional reforms involve the introduction of electronic tax registers and the installation of monitoring cameras at factories producing excisable goods.

Officials say the broader objective is to enhance tax compliance, improve transparency in enforcement operations, and boost government revenue without introducing new taxes.



## Kenya and Rwanda Sign Pact to Streamline Cross-Border Payment Licensing

Sanyaolu Cornelius

The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) and the National Bank of Rwanda (BNR) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at simplifying licensing requirements and expanding cross-border payment services between the two countries.

The agreement was formalised during the Inclusive FinTech Forum held in Kigali, bringing together regulators and stakeholders from the financial technology sector.

Under the new arrangement, both central banks have proposed a "passporting" framework that would allow payment service providers licensed in one country to operate in the other without undergoing separate and duplicative licensing processes, provided they meet agreed regulatory standards. The framework is intended to align supervisory requirements while maintaining oversight and compliance

obligations in both jurisdictions.

Officials said the initiative is designed to reduce regulatory fragmentation, improve operational efficiency, and lower compliance costs for fintech companies seeking to expand within the region. By easing market entry barriers, the agreement is expected to support innovation and encourage greater participation by digital financial ser-

vice providers in cross-border transactions.

The regulators noted that differences in licensing procedures have historically created additional administrative burdens for companies operating across multiple African markets. The passporting model is aimed at addressing these challenges by creating a more coordinated regulatory environment.

The agreement also

forms part of broader regional integration efforts under the East African Community (EAC) cross-border payments master plan. The plan seeks to enhance interoperability between payment systems across member states, strengthen financial linkages, and improve the efficiency of regional money transfers.

Authorities stated that improved interoperability between payment infra-

structures would help facilitate faster settlement processes, reduce transaction costs, and enhance transparency in cross-border financial flows. The initiative is also expected to support increased trade, investment, and economic cooperation between participating countries.

Fintech expansion has continued to accelerate across East Africa, driven by mobile money adoption, digital banking services, and growing demand for efficient payment solutions. Regulators in the region have increasingly focused on balancing innovation with consumer protection, financial stability, and anti-money laundering compliance.

The CBK and BNR emphasised that the agreement reflects their commitment to strengthening regulatory collaboration while maintaining sound oversight frameworks. Both institutions indicated that continued engagement will be necessary to finalise tech-

nic details and implementation mechanisms for the passporting system.

Industry observers say the move could serve as a model for deeper regulatory coordination across the continent, particularly in regions seeking to harmonise digital financial services frameworks. If successfully implemented, the framework may encourage fintech companies to scale operations across borders with greater ease, contributing to the growth of Africa's digital economy.

The agreement underscores the growing emphasis on regional cooperation in financial regulation as governments seek to modernise payment systems and expand access to digital financial services. Officials described the partnership as a step toward enhancing efficiency, strengthening integration, and supporting the development of a more connected cross-border payments ecosystem in East Africa.



## Africa Faces Oil Price Pressure Amid Iran War

ASanyaolu Cornelius

African economies are facing renewed macroeconomic pressure following the surge in global oil prices triggered by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

Brent crude has climbed above \$100 per barrel, with prices spiking higher amid concerns over supply disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz. The escalation

has introduced fresh volatility into global energy markets and heightened inflation risks across oil-importing economies.

Analysts warn that many African countries remain heavily dependent on imported refined petroleum products, making them particularly vulnerable to global price shocks. Rising oil costs are expected to increase transport and food prices, weaken local currencies, and widen fiscal

deficits in several economies.

Central banks across the continent are now reassessing monetary policy trajectories as inflationary pressures rise. Some policymakers had recently begun easing interest rates, but the oil shock is expected to delay or reverse those plans.

While oil-exporting countries such as Nigeria and Angola could benefit from higher crude reve-

lues if elevated prices persist, analysts say the broader regional impact is likely to remain negative due to import dependence, currency volatility, and capital outflows.

Economic experts also caution that prolonged instability could raise borrowing costs for African sovereigns and deepen pressure on foreign exchange reserves.



# Ghana Introduces Sliding-Scale Gold Royalty Law

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Ghana has implemented a new sliding-scale gold royalty regime aimed at increasing state revenue from rising commodity prices, despite diplomatic and industry opposition.

The revised system replaces the previous flat 5 percent royalty with a structure that increases up to 12 percent when gold prices reach specified thresholds.

Under the framework, miners will pay higher royalties as bullion prices rise, with gold currently trading above \$5,000 per ounce.

The policy has faced opposition from several foreign governments and mining executives, who argue that the upper royalty band could reduce investment attractiveness and project margins.

Diplomatic missions reportedly engaged Ghanaian authorities in discussions seeking amendments to the proposal, reflecting unusually coordinated

international concern over the fiscal reform.

Ghana's mining regulator has stated that the reform is designed to balance revenue optimisation with investor stability and maintain competitiveness while ensuring the state benefits from record-high gold prices.

Gold remains Ghana's leading export commodity and a major contributor to national revenue, making the royalty framework a significant fiscal policy shift.



## Tanzanian Billionaire Acquires Majority Stake in Nation Media Group

Sanyaolu Cornelius

Tanzanian billionaire Rostam Azizi has acquired a 54 percent stake in Nation Media Group (NMG), one of East Africa's largest media conglomerates.

The stake was purchased from the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, according to confirmed reports.

Azizi has stated that the acquisition is aimed at strengthening the company's digital transformation strategy and expanding its reach among younger audiences across the region.

He has also publicly committed to maintaining

editorial independence and institutional stability within the organisation.

The transaction represents a significant ownership change for NMG, which operates major media outlets across Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and has long been regarded as a leading independent press institution in the region.

The sale has generated discussion among media professionals and governance observers regarding potential implications for press freedom and corporate independence, although the seller indicated the divestment aligns with broader strategic objectives.

## MTN Zambia Completes Africa's First Starlink Direct-to-Cell Test

MTN Zambia has successfully completed Africa's first field trial of Starlink's Direct-to-Cell technology, sending both a data session and a mobile money transaction via satellites, a development that could extend network coverage to remote parts of the country.

The trial used MTN's spectrum alongside Starlink's satellite constellation, enabling a mobile device to connect directly to space-based infrastructure rather than relying on traditional ground towers.

The companies said the test successfully carried out the country's first fintech transaction and data connection through the system, marking a milestone for satellite-to-phone connectivity in Africa.

Once approved by regulators, the service could allow users in remote areas to make voice and video calls, access messaging apps, and use financial and navigation services.

Starlink's Direct-to-Cell satellites operate like orbiting cellphone towers, using phased-array antennas to link directly with LTE-compatible smartphones. The satellites relay signals through Starlink's global network and connect them to telecom operators' existing systems.

MTN Zambia said the technology would help extend coverage to sparsely populated regions, including national parks, rural settlements, and communities separated by rivers, where ground infrastructure is difficult to establish.

The companies plan to move toward commercial deployment in the coming weeks, subject to regulatory approval. Authorities in Zambia were acknowledged for supporting the testing process.

Satellite-to-mobile technology is being closely monitored as a potential solution to coverage gaps across Africa, where large rural areas remain out of reach for conventional cellular towers.

## Middle East Conflict Threatens Gulf Investment Flows to Africa

Analysts have warned that escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East could disrupt capital flows from Gulf states into African economies.

Rising oil prices and regional instability have increased global market volatility, prompting investors to adopt risk-averse strategies.

Higher crude prices above \$100-\$110 per barrel have intensified inflation concerns across import-dependent African economies, further complicating investment conditions.

Financial markets have reacted with currency

depreciation in several African countries, as investors move funds toward safer assets amid uncertainty.

Economists note that Gulf countries remain significant sources of outward investment into infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, and financial services across Africa, making sustained instability a potential risk to cross-regional investment flows.

Experts say prolonged conflict could increase financing costs and slow new foreign direct investment commitments, particularly in sectors reliant on international capital partnerships.



## ECOWAS Parliament Calls for Greater Participation in Regional Trade

The ECOWAS Parliament has urged businesses and citizens across West Africa to take greater advantage of regional trade opportunities as part of efforts to strengthen cross-border commerce and economic cooperation in the subregion.

The call was made in Abuja during a press briefing announcing private sector activities scheduled to mark the Parliament's 25th anniversary.

Speaking at the briefing, the Director of Parliamentary Affairs and Research at

the ECOWAS Parliament, Kabeer Garba, said regional trade and innovation must translate into improved welfare for citizens across West Africa.

Garba noted that the regional parliament was established to ensure that people across the subregion benefit from integration initiatives such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme and the free movement protocol.

He explained that the institution's mandate is rooted in representing the interests of West Africans

and ensuring that regional programmes serve the needs of the people.

"Our greatest strength as an ECOWAS institution is the fact that we represent the people," he said. "We are providing a voice for the people."

Garba, however, observed that limited awareness remains a major challenge, as many traders and citizens are still unaware of the economic opportunities available through regional integration initiatives.

He explained that the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme

allows traders to move goods across borders and establish businesses in other member states, stressing that increased participation by entrepreneurs and citizens is necessary for the region's economic integration efforts to succeed.

"The idea is that the Parliament should be able to conscientize the people and carry them along so that they take maximum advantage of these programmes that exist within ECOWAS," he said.

Garba added that trade and innovation would form a central focus of the anniversary activities.

activities.

"ECOWAS is not meaningful to the people if it does not boost their welfare. If we are talking about trade and innovation, that is very key because beyond explaining the programmes, we also have to think about how the people will fare and how to put food on their table," he added.

Also speaking, the Chief Executive Officer of Duchess Naturals Limited, Victoria Akai, said the private sector was collaborating with the ECOWAS Parliament to transform regional policies

into real economic opportunities for businesses and citizens.

"As the private sector continues to expand its role across trade, innovation, and investment, ECOWAS institutions remain critical partners in shaping a more integrated and prosperous regional economy," she said.

Akai explained that the anniversary activities would focus on strengthening trade, entrepreneurship, and innovation across West Africa.

# Tech Insight

Startup | Artificial Intelligence | Innovations | Fintech | Events

## iHatch Seeks 37 Innovation Hubs to Support Startup Development Across Nigeria

### INNOVATION

Mbah David

The iHatch programme has opened applications for innovation hubs across Nigeria to serve as state-level hub managers for its fifth cohort, in a move aimed at strengthening support infrastructure for early-stage startups.

The initiative is being implemented by the Office for Nigerian Digital Innovation under the National Information Technology Development Agency in partnership with the Japan

International Cooperation Agency. It is designed to improve the capacity of innovation hubs that provide incubation and mentorship support to emerging entrepreneurs.

Under the programme, one innovation hub will be selected from each of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, bringing the total number of hub managers to 37 nationwide.

Selected hubs will coordinate founder training, deliver incubation programmes aligned with national standards, support startup formalisation, and guide early-stage ventures toward growth readiness



within their respective states.

The programme adopts a decentralised incubation model intended to expand access to structured startup support beyond major tech-

incubation frameworks.

By strengthening innovation hubs, the programme aims to standardise incubation delivery across regions and improve the quality of support available to founders.

Eligibility requirements indicate that applicant hubs must have operated for at least one year, demonstrate experience in supporting startups or managing innovation programmes, show evidence of engagement within local technology ecosystems, and possess physical infrastructure suitable for incubation activities.

Industry observers note that strengthening interme-

diary organisations such as innovation hubs can play a key role in developing startup ecosystems by providing training frameworks, mentorship access, and operational support for emerging founders.

The initiative also seeks to promote collaboration between state-level hubs and national innovation stakeholders, with the goal of improving startup readiness before founders seek investment or expansion opportunities.

Applications for the hub manager roles are currently open and are scheduled to close on March 16.

## Divest Launches Money Xchange to Enable Cross-Border Transfers in Africa

Mbah David

Nigerian fintech company Divest has introduced a new product, Money Xchange, aimed at facilitating cross-border money transfers across several African markets.

The product allows users to send funds between Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa, with exchange rates displayed before transactions are confirmed.

Money Xchange has been integrated into the existing Divest applica-



tion, enabling users to convert digital assets and carry out cross-border transfers from a single interface.

Cross-border pay-

ments remain a major challenge across African financial corridors, with settlement delays, foreign exchange spreads, and fragmented payment pro-

cesses often increasing the cost and complexity of remittance transfers.

Africa processes more than \$100 billion in remittances annually, yet sending money to sub-Saharan Africa remains among the most expensive globally.

The new service allows users to initiate transfers while viewing exchange rates upfront before completing transactions, with the recipient receiving the exact amount displayed at confirmation.

Divest Chief Executive Officer, Kelechi Idoko,

said the platform was designed to address user demand for a simplified system that combines cryptocurrency conversion with traditional money transfers.

According to the company, the product targets individuals and businesses involved in cross-border transactions, including diaspora users sending money home, freelancers receiving international payments, and small traders managing cross-border inventory purchases.

The service is cur-

rently available to users in Nigeria through the Divest mobile application on both iOS and Android devices.

Divest said it plans to expand the service to additional corridors in the coming months, with Canada and the United Kingdom listed among potential markets for future expansion.

The company operates financial technology services across Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa.

## Bluechip Data & AI Summit Returns for Third Edition

### INNOVATION

Mbah David

Bluechip Technologies has announced the third edition of the Bluechip Data & AI Summit, scheduled for June 10, 2026.

The event is expected to bring together industry leaders, innovators, policymakers, and technology professionals to discuss the growing impact of data and artificial intelligence on businesses and society.

According to the organisers, the summit builds on the success of previous editions. The second edition reportedly attracted more than 4,000 participants and included nine fully registered specialised workshops and practical case study sessions focused on real-world applications of data and AI.

The summit was founded by Olumide Soyombo and Kazeem Tewogbade and has grown into a platform for knowledge exchange, industry collaboration, and innovation within the data and artificial intelli-

gence ecosystem.

The 2026 edition will feature an expanded programme, including 12 specialised workshops led by industry experts, real-world case studies demonstrating practical AI and data implementation, technology exhibitions showcasing innovative solutions, and networking sessions for professionals across technology, business, and policy sectors.

Speaking ahead of the event, the founders stated:

"The success of the previous editions demonstrates the increasing relevance of data and artificial intelligence across indus-



tries. We are excited to welcome guests to the third edition and look for-

ward to delivering another impactful experience that connects

experts, innovators, and organizations shaping the future of technology."

The organisers stated that the summit aims to support professionals and organisations adopting data-driven strategies and AI-powered tools in their operations.

Registration details have been made available by the organisers.

Bluechip Technologies described itself as a technology company delivering data, analytics, and artificial intelligence solutions to support digital transformation and business growth.

# Entrepreneur Circle

## Jollof Boss Pilot Tests WhatsApp-Based Commerce System for SMEs

Sanyaolu Cornelius

**A**ldore Business Enterprise Limited has launched a pilot test of a conversational commerce platform known as Jollof Boss, designed to enable small businesses to manage orders and payments directly within WhatsApp.

The pilot integrates the WhatsApp Cloud API with Paystack's payment infrastructure to allow customers to browse product catalogues, place orders through chat-based interactions, and complete payments using generated payment links.

The system enables

merchants to receive automated notifications once payments are confirmed, allowing orders to be processed more efficiently.

Nigeria has been identified as a suitable environment for testing messaging-based commerce platforms due to widespread WhatsApp usage, rapid fintech growth, and a large number of small businesses that manage customer interactions through messaging platforms.

Many businesses currently use WhatsApp as an informal digital storefront, sharing product catalogues through status updates and confirming orders



through direct messaging before requesting payments through bank transfers or payment links.

The pilot programme analysed ten real transac-

tions, consisting of five pickup orders and five delivery orders, to observe transaction behaviour within the conversational commerce workflow.

Findings from the pilot indicated that messaging interactions were processed quickly, with message dispatch occurring within one to three seconds, while backend processing averaged about fifteen seconds.

However, the payment stage accounted for the majority of total transaction time. Pickup orders averaged approximately 132 seconds to complete, with around 79 percent of the time spent during payment processing. Delivery orders averaged about 122 seconds, with payment accounting for roughly 40 percent of the workflow.

According to the pilot

results, most delays occurred after customers exited the WhatsApp conversation to complete payments through external interfaces, where card entry, authentication procedures, and network variability affected transaction speed.

Developers involved in the pilot also identified technical challenges in implementing conversational commerce systems, including the need to define product menus within application code and the use of internal product identification systems that require additional catalogue lookups.

## NGO Launches Sustainable Fashion Project to Address Textile Waste



Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

**E**coSmart Club, a youth-led environmental organisation, has launched the Oniparo Project, a nine-month sustainable fashion research initiative aimed at addressing fast fashion and textile waste.

The organisation stated that the project will highlight the contributions of women

known as Oniparos, who collect and exchange discarded clothes in parts of Western Nigeria through a barter-based system.

The Founder of EcoSmart Club, Hannah Omokhaye, said the initiative seeks to document the environmental and economic value of the trade while promoting sustainable fashion and circular economy practices.

"These women are not

only the pioneers of the circular economy in Nigeria, but they are also providing affordable clothing for low-income communities both in Nigeria and other West African countries, as well as livelihoods for themselves and their families," she said.

She noted that the trade is declining due to economic shifts, climate impacts, and changing consumption patterns.

"This vital business is rap-

idly declining due to economic shifts and climate change. In particular, unpredictable weather affects their mobility, and heatwaves impact their health, and there is a growing preference for disposable clothing among people, which is influenced by cultural shifts and even religious beliefs," she said.

Omokhaye added that the women's contributions remain largely undocumented.

"Additionally, there is little to no documentation or advocacy about Oniparos, leaving them overlooked in informal circular economy discussions. Yet, they play a critical role," she stated.

The project, supported by the African Climate Alliance, will run from March to October 2026.

Project Manager Oluwatoyin Ajao said the initiative will promote sustainable fashion and policy recognition for women in the informal circular economy.

"This project is a shift from the previous ones executed by the team. Not only are we using inclusive storytelling to preserve culture; through this project, we are also showcasing Afrocentric solutions to global issues such as textile waste and the broader conversation on environmental sustainability," she said.

The organisation said it will continue advocacy efforts through recycling programmes, tree planting, upcycling initiatives, and green skills development.

## Group Calls for Stronger Governance Among Women Entrepreneurs

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

**T**he Centre for Enterprise Governance has called for improved governance structures among women-led enterprises in Nigeria to enhance sustainability and access to finance.

The Founder of the Centre, Dr Adeyinka Hassan, said many women entrepreneurs face challenges in scaling their businesses due to governance gaps.

"Enterprise governance is fundamental to business sustainability. It provides the structure through which enterprises define responsibilities, ensure accountability, and manage risk effectively," he said.

He explained that without advisory boards, internal con-

trols, and structured decision-making systems, businesses struggle to expand.

"For women-owned businesses, governance plays a critical role in transforming enterprises from personality-driven ventures into structured organisations capable of attracting investment, strategic partnerships, and institutional financing," he stated.

Hassan identified common gaps, including weak separation between personal and business finances, limited documentation, absence of advisory structures, and lack of risk management systems.

"The most common governance gaps include weak separation between personal and business finances, limited documentation of policies and procedures, and the absence of formal advisory structures. Many MSMEs also lack structured risk management systems and

effective performance monitoring mechanisms," he said.

He noted that while women are highly active in micro and small enterprises, representation declines at larger business levels.

"Women play a significant role in Nigeria's enterprise landscape, particularly within the micro, small and medium enterprise segments," he said.

He added that stronger institutional support and governance systems are necessary for sustainable growth.

"Bridging this scale gap requires stronger institutional support, access to capital, and governance structures that help women-led enterprises grow sustainably," he stated.

Hassan also called on financial institutions to support governance development in women-led enterprises.

"Financial institutions can



play a catalytic role by linking access to finance with governance improvement initiatives," he said.

He emphasised that strengthening governance in women-led businesses is essential for economic devel-

opment.

"Empowering women-led enterprises with stronger governance capabilities is not only a gender inclusion objective; it is an economic imperative," he said

# Global Business Today



## US, Ecuador Sign Trade Deal to Cut Tariffs

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

The United States and Ecuador have agreed to reduce tariff rates between both countries following months of negotiations aimed at easing trade tensions.

The agreement was signed in Washington by US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Ecuador's Minister of Production, Foreign Trade and Investment, Luis Alberto Jaramillo, after about 10 months of discussions.

The deal follows a framework announced in November to lower tariffs on several goods after the United States introduced broad reciprocal tariffs last year under President Donald Trump's trade policy.

The United States remains Ecuador's largest trading partner. According

to Ecuador's Central Bank, Ecuadorian exports to the US reached \$6.8 billion in 2025, while imports from the US totaled \$9.1 billion.

Under the new agreement, Ecuador has committed to reducing or eliminating tariffs in key sectors, including health products, motor vehicles, and selected agricultural goods. The White House stated that the pact also removes customs surcharges previously imposed on Ecuadorian products.

The agreement further includes provisions allowing the United States to export critical minerals and energy resources from Ecuador, strengthening bilateral economic cooperation.

Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa described the agreement as beneficial to the country's economy, stating that it sup-

ports 53 percent of the nation's non-oil exports and expands market access.

"Ecuador had two paths: stay still or go seek better conditions. We chose the second," Noboa said.

US Trade Representative Greer also welcomed the deal, saying it improves market access for American producers.

"President Trump is unlocking commercially meaningful market access for American farmers and manufacturers, opening Ecuador's market of over 18 million consumers to U.S. agricultural and industrial exports," Greer stated.

The agreement comes amid ongoing global trade adjustments and follows legal debates in the United States over the president's authority to impose broad tariff measures.

## Iran, US Exchange Threats as Oil Prices Surge

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Tensions between Iran and the United States escalated further over the weekend as the conflict in the Middle East continued to affect global oil markets, with crude prices rising significantly since the start of hostilities.

Iran warned that it could target US-linked oil infrastructure if its facilities are attacked, amid heightened military activity in the region.

Iranian armed forces issued a statement threatening to destroy US-affiliated oil assets if strikes continue against Iranian energysites.

US President Donald Trump had earlier suggested that Iranian oil infrastructure could be targeted but later stated that he chose not to destroy certain faci-

tiesforthetimebeing.

However, he warned that action could be reconsidered if shipping routes are disrupted.

"However, should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision," Trumpsaid.

The Strait of Hormuz remains a critical global energy route, carrying roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply. Iran has previously threatened to disrupt traffic in the waterway, raising concerns in internationalmarkets.

Crude oil prices have reportedly increased by more than 40 percent since the war began, reflecting fears of supply disruption.

Trump also said US naval forces would begin escorting oil tankers

through the Strait of Hormuz to ensure continued movement of energy shipments.

Iranian officials warned that oil and energy facilities linked to the United States could face immediate retaliation if attacks continue, according to local reports.

Meanwhile, both sides have exchanged airstrikes and military operations, with reports of extensive targeting across multiple locations. Several regional countries have intercepted missiles and drones amid the escalation.

The conflict has triggered widespread displacement within Iran and heightened security concerns across the Gulf region.

International observers have expressed concern about the potential impact on global energy stability if tensions continue to intensify.

## China Warns Nigeria Over \$11.44 Million Satellite Debt

Sanyaolu Cornelius

The government of China has warned that it may shut down a satellite linked to Nigeria if an outstanding debt of \$11.44 million is not settled.

The debt is connected to Nigeria's communications satellite programme developed through cooperation between both countries. The satellite was built by the China Great Wall Industry Cor-

poration as part of efforts to strengthen Nigeria's telecommunications and space infrastructure.

The satellite is operated by NigComSat Limited, Nigeria's government-owned satellite communications company responsible for managing the country's satellite systems.

Officials familiar with the matter indicated that the unpaid balance relates to contractual and service obligations tied to

the satellite's operation.

Industry analysts say any shutdown could disrupt services that rely on satellite infrastructure, including broadcasting, telecommunications, and government communications.

Authorities are expected to engage in discussions with Chinese partners to resolve the outstanding obligations and ensure continued satellite operations

## Global Equity Funds See Highest Outflows Since December on Oil Shock Fears

### EUROBOND

Sanyaolu Cornelius

Galderma Group AG has successfully completed the placement of a EUR 500 million Eurobond, marking a key milestone in the company's refinancing strategy.

The bond carries a five-year maturity and features a fixed annual coupon rate of 3.375 percent. It was placed in early March, with settlement scheduled for later this month and listing

planned on the SIX Swiss Exchange.

The dermatology-focused company stated that the net proceeds from the transaction will be used to fully repay an existing bank term loan associated with its initial public offering in March 2024. The refinancing completes the company's broader capital restructuring process.

Galderma has secured investment-grade credit ratings, holding a BBB rating with a stable outlook from Fitch and a BBB rating with a positive outlook

from S&P Global Ratings. The newly issued bond is also expected to receive a similar investment-grade rating.

The company described the transaction as leverage-neutral, meaning it is not expected to materially impact its overall debt position. Management also indicated that the issuance is unlikely to significantly affect its full-year 2026 guidance for net financial expenses.

The bond placement was jointly led by major international financial institutions, reflecting

continued investor confidence in the company's credit profile and long-term strategy. The successful issuance demonstrates access to capital markets despite broader volatility across global equity and bond markets.

By completing this refinancing step, Galderma strengthens its balance sheet structure while extending debt maturity and optimizing funding conditions. The move positions the company for continued operational focus within the global dermatology market.



# U.S. Business Activity Slows in February Amid Slumping Orders

Isa Daniel

U.S. private-sector growth slowed in February, signaling a cooling of the economy after robust late-2025 expansion, according to a flash S&P Global Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI). The index fell to 52.3, the lowest reading in ten months, down from 53.0 in January. A reading above 50 indicates expansion, but the data suggest growth is moderating in both manufacturing and services.

The manufacturing PMI declined to 51.2 from 52.4, marking a seven-month low, while the services PMI slipped slightly to 52.3 from 52.7. New orders fell for the second time in three months, highlighting weakening demand, and employment growth stalled across both sectors, with readings near the neutral 50 mark.



Chris Williamson, chief business economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said the data point to first-quarter GDP rising at an annualized

rate of roughly 1.5%, compared with stronger growth rates in the latter half of 2025. Economists noted that slower manufacturing expansion, mod-

erating service-sector activity, and stagnating employment could weigh on consumer confidence and spending.

The slowdown follows Commerce Department data showing U.S. GDP growth in the fourth quarter was weaker than expected due to last year's government shutdown and softer household spending. The S&P survey indicates that firms are cautiously adjusting production and hiring in response to cooling orders and uncertainty over future demand.

Analysts caution that the trend could influence Federal Reserve policy, particularly regarding interest rate adjustments and measures to maintain stable growth. While private-sector expansion continues, the pace has slowed, suggesting that the U.S. economy may face a more restrained first quarter than previously anticipated.



## UBA Business Series to spotlight Africa's new generation women leaders

Africa's Global Bank, United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc, is set to host a special edition of its impactful quarterly UBA Business Series, which is specifically focused on celebrating and empowering the modern woman with the theme: "gen w- 'The Evolved Woman'".

The session, scheduled to hold on Wednesday, March 12, 2026 from 11 am at UBA House, Lagos, will bring together an array of accomplished female leaders and professionals who will share insights, experiences and practical strategies for navigating ambition, leadership and growth in today's dynamic environment.

The session will also be streamed live across all UBA digital platforms, and interested participants can register to attend virtually or in person via this link: [on.ubagroup.com/tfig](https://on.ubagroup.com/tfig).

This edition of the Business Series aims to move the conversation around women intensely forward, highlighting a new generation of women who are not simply seeking opportunities but confidently creating them. The discussion will explore

how women today are shaping industries, leading businesses, and redefining success on their own terms. The event will feature an inspiring lineup of speakers, including entrepreneur and founder of ORIKI Group, Joyce Awosika; media personality & entrepreneur, Tomike Adeoye; entrepreneur and founder of Fine Funky, Olufunke Davies; and award-winning Broadcaster, Ayo Mario-Ese. The conversation will be hosted by media personality and actor, Tobi Bakre. Panelists' will share their personal journeys and perspectives on navigating professional spaces, building resilient businesses, embracing authenticity and redefining leadership as women in a rapidly evolving global landscape. Speaking ahead of the event, UBA's Group Head, Marketing and Corporate Communications, Alero Ladipo, explained that the special edition of the Business Series reflects the bank's firm commitment to supporting women for the critical roles they play in driving economic growth and innovation across Africa.



## 30 banks meet new capital base so far -CBN

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has said that thirty banks have met the new minimum capital requirements introduced under its banking sector recapitalisation programme.

The apex bank's Acting Director of Corporate Communications, Hakama Sidi-Ali, who stated this on Friday explained that several lenders had successfully strengthened their capital bases through different fundraising channels, including rights issues, initial public offerings and private placements.

As of March 6, 2026, the recapitalisation exer-

cise is progressing steadily, it said, adding that thirty banks have met the new minimum capital requirements applicable to their respective licence authorisations.

It added: "In total, thirty-three (33) banks have raised additional capital through rights issues, initial public offerings, and private placements as part of the programme."

According to the apex bank, the capital positions of the remaining banks were currently undergoing routine verification before final confirmation of compliance within the stipulated timeline for the recapitalisation exercise.

The verification process, it noted, forms part

of its supervisory role aimed at ensuring that the capital raised by banks aligns with regulatory standards and prudential requirements.

"The capital positions of the remaining banks are currently undergoing the Central Bank's routine verification process ahead of final confirmation of compliance within the recapitalisation timeline," the statement added.

The CBN introduced the recapitalisation programme in 2024 as part of efforts to strengthen the resilience, stability and long-term capacity of Nigeria's banking system to support economic development.



Under the programme, banks were required to raise fresh capital to meet revised minimum thresholds based on the category of their operating licences.

The bank reiterated that the banking system

remained stable and sound despite ongoing capital adjustments by financial institutions.

It stated, "The CBN reiterates that the Nigerian banking system remains stable and sound. The recapitalisa-

tion programme remains firmly on track and will further strengthen the capacity of the banking sector to support households, businesses, and sustainable economic growth."

It further assured stakeholders that it would continue to maintain close supervisory engagement with regulated institutions throughout the process.

It said: "The Central Bank of Nigeria will continue to maintain close supervisory engagement with regulated institutions to ensure full compliance with prudential and capital requirements."

# Boss Talk

## Bitcoin's Scarcity Remains Its Strongest Value Proposition- CEO BitGo

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

BitGo Chief Executive Officer, Mike Belshe, has reaffirmed that Bitcoin's fixed supply remains the cryptocurrency's most important feature, describing scarcity as the foundation of its long-term value in an evolving digital asset industry.

Belshe made the remarks during a recent interview in which he discussed the future of Bitcoin and the broader cryptocurrency ecosystem. While acknowledging the rapid expansion of blockchain applications, stablecoins, and institutional digital asset services, he maintained that Bitcoin's monetary design sets it apart from other cryptocurrencies.

According to Belshe, the defining characteristic of Bitcoin is its limited supply of 21 million coins, a structure embedded in its protocol since inception. He argued that this scarcity provides a level of certainty that traditional monetary systems cannot replicate.

"Over the long arc of history, we are going to realize that the scarcity of money, which only Bitcoin provides, is how you get the bedrock of safety," Belshe said, emphasizing that Bitcoin's supply constraint is central to its role as a digital store of value.

The BitGo chief noted that although the crypto industry has diversified significantly — with thousands of digital assets now in circulation, Bitcoin continues to serve as the benchmark for security and credibility within the

sector. BitGo itself provides custody and infrastructure services for a wide range of digital assets, but Belshe said Bitcoin remains foundational.

"We touch all kinds of coins in addition to Bitcoin today, thousands of coins. But it's that safety piece which matters most and it's why it lasts the long arc of time," he added.

Belshe's comments come at a time when institutional interest in cryptocurrency continues to grow, particularly among financial firms seeking regulated custody solutions and exposure to digital assets. Industry observers have often described Bitcoin as "digital gold," largely due to its scarcity and decentralized structure.

The Bitcoin network is designed to gradually



reduce new coin issuance through periodic halving events, ensuring that the total supply will never

exceed 21 million. According to Belshe, this predictable monetary policy contributes to investor confi-

dence, especially amid global economic uncertainty and inflationary pressures in traditional markets.

He also highlighted the importance of continued technological development to maintain network security and decentralization, stressing that Bitcoin's longevity depends on sustained innovation from the broader ecosystem of developers and infrastructure providers.

Despite volatility in cryptocurrency markets over recent years, proponents argue that Bitcoin's fixed supply gives it resilience over time. Belshe suggested that while market cycles may influence short-term pricing, the fundamental design of Bitcoin remains unchanged and continues to underpin its value proposition.

### CEO OF THE WEEK



## Meet Engr. Adesayo Olusegun Michael, Appointed MD/CEO of NEMSA

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Engr. Adesayo Olusegun Michael has been appointed as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA).

The appointment, announced in February 2026, was confirmed through an official statement issued by the Presidency. Presidential spokesperson Bayo Onanuga disclosed that the decision was part of a broader leadership restructuring aimed at strengthening key agencies within the power sector.

According to the announcement, the appointment reflects the Federal Government's ongoing efforts to improve regulatory oversight, enhance electrical safety standards, and boost operational efficiency in the electricity industry.

As the new head of NEMSA, Engr. Michael is expected to oversee the agency's statutory mandate, which includes enforcing technical standards and regulations within Nigeria's electricity supply industry. His appointment places him at the forefront of ensuring compliance with electrical safety codes, inspection proce-

dures, and certification processes nationwide.

The Federal Government stated that the restructuring aligns with broader reforms aimed at improving governance, operational performance, and accountability within strategic agencies. NEMSA plays a central role in maintaining safety standards across electricity generation, transmission, and distribution systems, making its leadership critical to the stability of the sector.

Engr. Adesayo Olusegun Michael is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Board of the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA), where he provides strategic direction and administrative leadership.

NEMSA is the statutory body responsible for enforcing technical regulations and standards in Nigeria's electricity supply industry. The agency's mandate includes inspection, testing, certification, and monitoring of electrical installations and equipment to ensure compliance with approved engineering and safety requirements.

In his capacity as Managing Director/CEO, Engr. Michael oversees the implementation of policies designed to improve electrical

safety across the country. His responsibilities include strengthening regulatory supervision, coordinating technical operations, and ensuring that installations meet national and international standards. Through these functions, the agency works to reduce electrical accidents, enhance infrastructure reliability, and promote professional compliance within the sector.

The role also requires collaboration with stakeholders across the power value chain, including regulatory bodies, power generation companies, transmission operators, distribution companies, engineering professionals, and other relevant institutions. By fostering coordination, NEMSA contributes to broader sector reforms and supports government initiatives aimed at stabilizing electricity supply and improving service delivery.

Engr. Michael's leadership is expected to focus on institutional efficiency, improved monitoring systems, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms. These priorities are central to ensuring that electrical infrastructure development aligns with safety benchmarks and technical best practices.

# Features

Anyanwu Theresa Ijeoma

Global oil markets are experiencing one of their most severe disruptions in decades as escalating conflict in the Middle East continues to destabilise supply routes, push prices above \$100 per barrel, and trigger large-scale emergency interventions by energy authorities.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the crisis has resulted in what it describes as the largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market, driven primarily by the near-collapse of maritime flows through the Strait of Hormuz. The strait, through which roughly 20% of global oil trade normally passes, has seen traffic drop dramatically amid attacks, security threats, and shipping suspensions.

The disruption has significantly reduced tanker movement, with maritime traffic reportedly falling sharply as vessels avoid the region due to security risks. Analysts say the blockade or effective closure of the waterway has fundamentally altered global supply dynamics, introducing a substantial geopolitical risk premium into crude pricing.

Prices Surge Above \$100 as Markets React to Supply Shock

Brent crude has climbed back above the \$100-per-barrel mark, reflecting heightened concerns about sustained supply shortages. In intraday trading, prices surged sharply as markets reacted to tanker attacks and escalating regional hostilities, underscoring the volatility of current conditions.

According to Reuters, oil futures rose significantly amid the escalation, with prices reaching levels not seen in recent years during peak trading sessions. The rally has been driven largely by fears that production and export flows from key Gulf producers could remain constrained for an extended period.

In addition to crude prices, broader commodity and financial markets have reacted to the shock. Global equity indices have declined amid inflation concerns, while energy-linked stocks have outperformed other sectors due to expectations of higher margins. The oil price spike has also renewed fears of inflationary pressure in major economies, as energy costs feed into transportation, manufacturing, and consumer prices.

Market analysts note that the Strait of Hormuz disruption has significantly altered supply expectations. With flows through the waterway reduced by more than 90% in recent estimates, global markets are now pricing in the possibility of prolonged supply losses. The IEA estimates that total regional production cuts have reached mil-



## Energy at Risk, What the Middle East Crisis Means for Global Oil Supply

lions of barrels per day, further tightening global supply.

In response to the crisis, IEA member countries have agreed to release 400 million barrels of oil from emergency reserves, representing one of the largest coordinated interventions in the agency's history. The decision aims to stabilise markets and offset immediate shortages resulting from disrupted exports.

However, energy officials have cautioned that strategic reserve releases alone may not fully restore equilibrium unless maritime routes through the Strait of Hormuz resume normal operations. Some analysts argue that the reserve release may provide only temporary relief, depending on how quickly supply chains recover.

Refinery Disruptions and Global Economic Risks

Beyond shipping interruptions, refinery operations and export infrastructure across the Gulf region have also been affected. Reports indicate that production cuts and temporary shutdowns have been implemented in several oil-producing states as a precautionary response to the escalating conflict. These reductions have contributed to tightening global balances and reinforced upward pressure on prices.

The IEA has described the current disruption as potentially more severe than previous crises, citing the scale of supply losses and the strategic importance of the affected transit route. Some estimates suggest that millions of barrels per day have been removed from global markets, intensifying concerns about sustained shortages.

Financial institutions have also adjusted their outlooks. Goldman Sachs raised its short-term Brent forecast above \$100 per barrel, citing ongoing vola-

tility and risks tied to the Strait of Hormuz. The bank noted that while prices could moderate later in the year, prolonged disruption could keep benchmarks elevated for an extended period.

Energy analysts warn that if supply interruptions persist, inflationary pressures could deepen globally, potentially affecting monetary policy decisions in major economies. Higher oil prices typically translate into increased fuel costs, transportation expenses, and broader production inputs,

amplifying economic strain.

European and Asian import-dependent economies are particularly exposed, given their reliance on Gulf energy exports. The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the most critical energy corridors worldwide, and any prolonged closure could reshape trade flows and increase shipping costs.

Despite coordinated reserve releases and diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation, market sentiment remains highly sensitive to developments in the region. Brent crude futures have repeatedly crossed the \$100 threshold during periods of intensified conflict, reflecting uncertainty about the duration of the crisis.

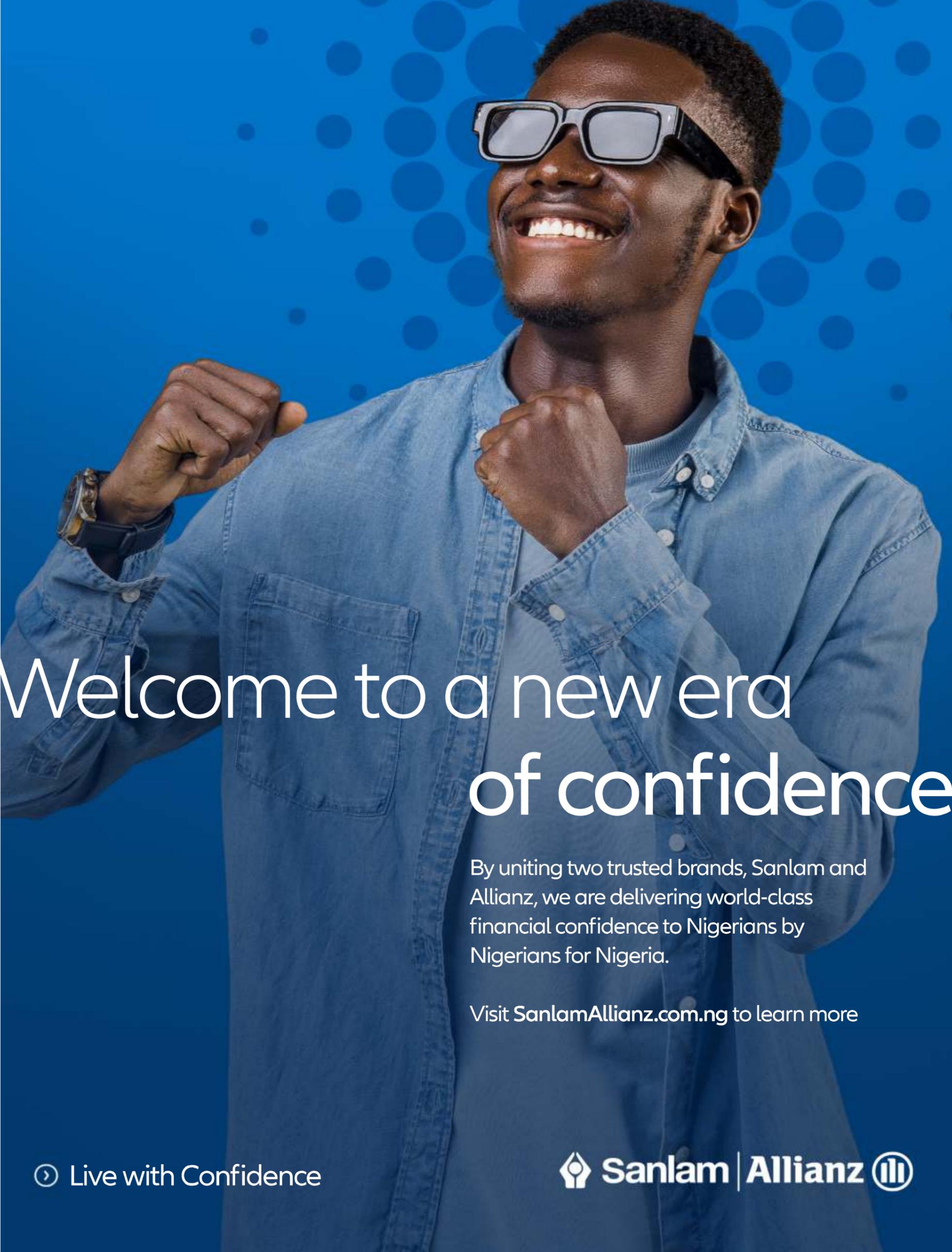
Market observers say the trajectory of oil prices will depend largely on whether maritime flows through the Strait of Hormuz can be restored in the near term. If disruptions continue, supply deficits may persist, keeping prices elevated and increasing the likelihood of prolonged volatility.

The IEA's latest assessment underscores the fragility of global energy systems when key chokepoints are disrupted. With nearly a fifth of global oil trade affected, the crisis has highlighted the concentration risk within international energy supply chains.

***if supply interruptions persist, inflationary pressures could deepen globally, potentially affecting monetary policy decisions in major economies. Higher oil prices typically translate into increased fuel costs, transportation expenses, and broader production inputs, amplifying economic strain.***

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# Opinion

## Africa Must Adopt Pragmatic Energy Transition Using Natural Gas – Omotenioye

The Director-General of the National Council on Climate Change, Majekodunmi Omotenioye, has called for a pragmatic energy transition strategy for Africa that leverages natural gas as a bridge fuel to support industrialisation while aligning with global climate commitments.

Omotenioye made the call in her keynote address at the just-concluded three-day Green Conference 2026, organised by Greenplinth Africa in Lagos.

The conference, themed “Decarbonising Africa: Pathway to Climate Finance, Sustainable Growth and Green Economy,” convened policymakers, climate experts, state governments and development partners to deliberate on strategies for balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability across the continent.

According to a statement issued on Sunday, Omotenioye said Africa faces a unique challenge of pursuing rapid industrial growth while simultaneously reducing carbon emissions—an energy transition that many developed economies did not confront during their own industrialisation phases.

“Africa stands at a pivotal moment in the history of global development. Ours is the youngest continent on earth, rich in resources, innovation and human potential, yet hundreds of millions still live without reliable access to modern energy,” she said.

She stressed that the central challenge is not whether Africa should decarbonise, but how the continent can simultaneously achieve industrial growth, energy security and economic



prosperity while advancing the global climate agenda.

Omotenioye noted that replacing coal and heavy fuel oil with natural gas could cut greenhouse gas emissions by up to 50 per cent while also improving air quality.

“With over 600 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, Nigeria has the resources to support industrial growth while contributing to global climate objectives,” she added.

She further disclosed that Nigeria recently launched a national frame-

**“With over 600 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, Nigeria has the resources to support industrial growth while contributing to global climate objectives,”**

work aimed at decarbonising the country’s oil and gas value chain, covering upstream, midstream and downstream operations.

Also speaking at the event, the Deputy Governor of Benue State, Sam Ode, emphasised the importance of sub-national governments in Nigeria’s transition to a low-carbon economy, describing decarbonisation as an urgent global priority.

He said the transition must ensure that vulnerable and rural communities become key beneficiaries of clean energy access while attracting green investment into the state.

Meanwhile, Niger State emerged as the second sub-national government, after Benue State, to sign a clean energy agreement with Greenplinth Africa during the conference.

The Commissioner for Environment and Climate Change in Niger State, Abubakar Musa, alongside the Director-General of the Niger State Agency for Green Initiatives, Daniel Galadima, said the initiative would help address poverty, boost household incomes and support climate action in the state.

Similarly, Muhammed Gudi, who represented the government of Nasarawa State, said the state was ready to support the initiative through land provision and enabling policies to promote green investment and job creation.

In recognition of its early commitment to the programme, the Lagos State Government was honoured by Greenplinth Africa as the first sub-national government to sign a memorandum of understanding with the organisation on clean energy collaboration.

## Oil producers should invest in Nigeria to diversify supply in time of crisis- Tuggar

Nigeria has urged global oil producers to consider investing in the country as part of efforts to diversify energy supply during global disruptions.

Nigeria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Tuggar, stated that geopolitical tensions affecting oil shipments in the Middle East highlight the importance of diversifying global supply sources.

He noted that disruptions to shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, a corridor responsible for roughly one-fifth of global oil supply, have increased market volatility and pushed prices higher.

According to the minister, Nigeria’s untapped oil and gas reserves present an opportunity for international producers to diversify supply while strengthening partnerships.

He said Nigeria’s oil production had increased to about 1.7 million barrels per day from about 1.4 million barrels per day when the current administration took office.

The minister added that further investments in fields and pipelines could significantly expand the country’s output capacity.

Nigeria has also been engaging international partners to deepen investment in the energy sector.

The Federal Government recently signed a Comprehensive Economic Part-

**although higher oil prices could increase the cost of refined petroleum imports, expanding domestic refining capacity would help cushion long-term shocks.**

nership Agreement with the United Arab Emirates aimed at expanding trade and investment opportunities.

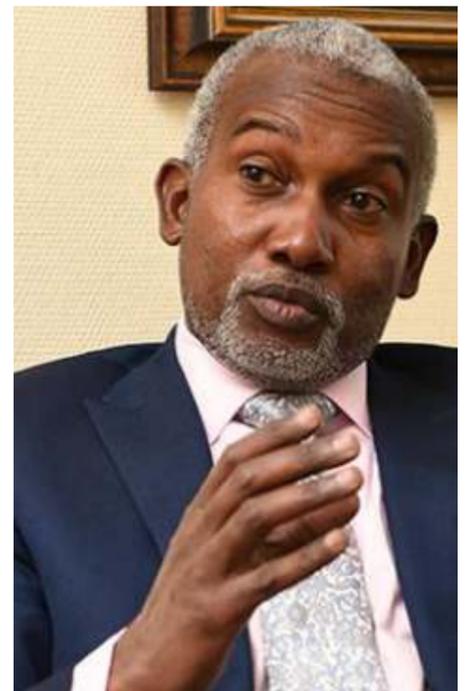
Investors linked to Qatar have also indicated interest in gas sector investments in Nigeria.

Tuggar noted that although higher oil prices could increase the cost of refined petroleum imports, expanding domestic refining capacity would help cushion long-term shocks.

He pointed to the operations of the Dangote Refinery, which has a processing capacity of about 650,000 barrels per day and is expected to meet a large portion of Nigeria’s domestic fuel demand.

The minister added that global demand for hydrocarbons remains strong, with world consumption estimated at about 105 to 106 million barrels per day.

He said international cooperation would remain essential to ensure stable supply and meet long-term energy demand.



# Consumer Confidence in Nigeria's Economy Rising — *Bismarck Rewane*

The Chief Executive Officer of Financial Derivatives Company, Bismarck Rewane, has stated that Nigeria's business outlook for 2026 reflects rising consumer confidence and improving economic expectations.

Rewane disclosed this during an economic roundtable titled "Building with Resilience in the Nigerian Economic Environment."

He stated that consumer confidence is improving, reflecting optimism about household income prospects and financial conditions.

According to him, positive expectations about income levels and economic conditions could drive increased consumer spending and economic activity.

Rewane noted that consumer behaviour remains a key driver of economic performance, adding that market dynamics often influence pricing and competition across sectors.

He also stated that Nigeria is gradually transitioning from a command-style economic structure to a more market-driven system.

According to the economist, policy makers are

increasingly focusing on interventions designed to stabilise the economy while allowing market forces to determine outcomes.

Rewane also discussed the relationship between natural resource discoveries and political instability in some African countries.

He cited examples including Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where conflicts have been linked to competition over mineral resources.

He noted that the discovery of natural resources can sometimes intensify political tensions and resource nationalism.

The economist also referenced Nigeria's history of oil discovery in Oloibiri in 1958, noting that resource-related tensions have historically influenced political developments in the country.

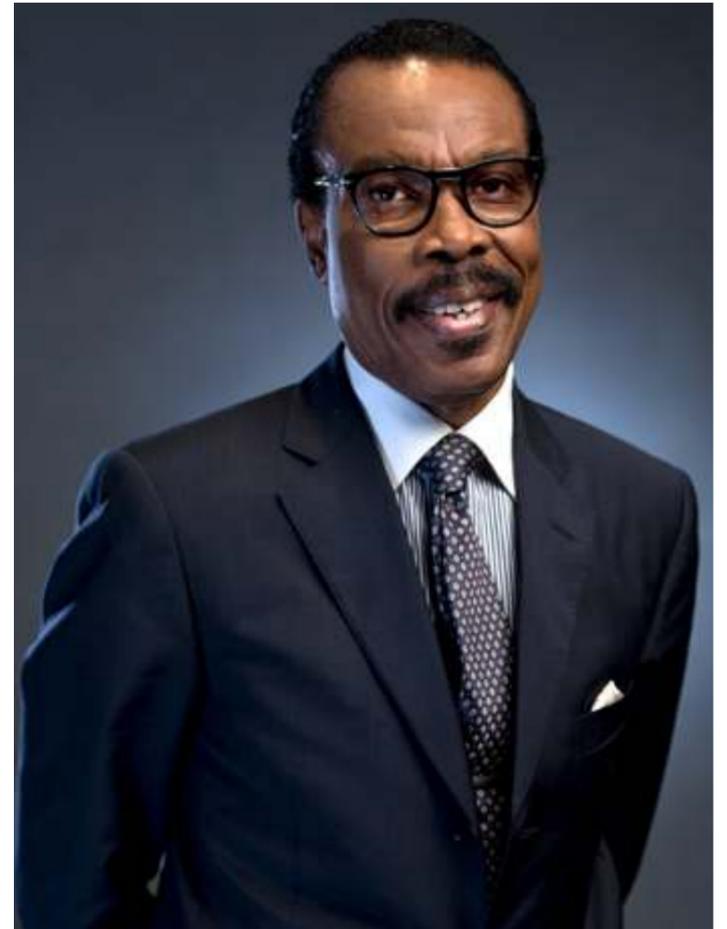
Global financial institutions have also highlighted Nigeria's economic reforms in recent policy discussions.

The World Bank recently described Nigeria as a reference point for economic reform implementation following policy changes introduced under the administration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Officials from the World Bank noted that reforms including fuel subsidy removal and foreign exchange market adjustments are being closely monitored by global policy makers and investors.

The Federal Government has outlined plans to transform Nigeria into a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 through economic and financial reforms aimed at improving growth and investment.

**policy makers are increasingly focusing on interventions designed to stabilise the economy while allowing market**



## 'Nigeria's economic reforms shield economy from global shocks'

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Olayemi Cardoso, has said that Nigeria's ongoing macroeconomic reforms have significantly strengthened the country's ability to withstand potential shocks from rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Cardoso made this known on Thursday while delivering a Distinguished Alumni Lecture at the Founders' Day celebration of St Gregory's College Lagos in Lagos.

According to the CBN governor, the global economic environment is currently facing renewed uncertainty driven by escalating geopolitical tensions, particularly the evolving crisis involving the United States, Israel and Iran.

He warned that the situation could trigger higher global energy prices, disrupt supply chains and increase risk aversion among international investors, developments that could have implications for emerging economies.

However, Cardoso expressed confidence that Nigeria is better positioned to navigate such external shocks due to the macroeconomic reforms implemented over the past two years.

"Today, the global economy is facing renewed shocks, including continued geopolitical tensions and developments in the US-Israel-Iran conflict.



These events have the potential to push energy prices higher, disrupt supply chains and increase risk aversion among global investors," Cardoso said.

"But the macroeconomic reforms and policy buffers we have built over the past two years have placed Nigeria in a far stronger position to navigate these challenges. The storms may come, but our house will stand firm."

The apex bank governor also highlighted improvements in Nigeria's for-

ign exchange market, noting that reforms introduced by the Central Bank have enhanced market liquidity and efficiency.

According to him, deliberate policy actions taken by the CBN have removed distortions that previously characterised the FX market, while restoring investor confidence.

"Today, the foreign exchange market operates with far greater liquidity and efficiency, while the backlog of unmet demand has been cleared. Mar-

ket participants are now able to transact without relying on extraordinary Central Bank interventions," he stated.

Cardoso further disclosed that Nigeria has begun to experience improved capital inflows as investor sentiment gradually strengthens following recent policy adjustments.

He added that Nigeria's external reserves have risen significantly, recently exceeding \$50 billion, the highest level recorded in more than a decade.

According to him, the improvement reflects stronger balance-of-payments performance, supported by increased foreign investment and enhanced policy credibility.

Addressing students at the event, Cardoso urged young Nigerians to develop skills relevant to the emerging digital and technology-driven global economy.

He noted that the careers of the future will increasingly favour individuals with multidisciplinary skills and the capacity to adapt to rapidly evolving technological environments.

Cardoso advised students to cultivate curiosity, discipline, integrity and adaptability, describing these qualities as essential foundations for leadership and long-term success in an increasingly complex global economy.

# Recapitalisation without Transformation is a Risk Nigeria Cannot Afford

BY BLAISE UDUNZE

In barely two weeks, Nigeria's banking sector will once again be at a historic turning point. As the deadline for the latest recapitalisation exercise approaches on March 31, 2026, with no fewer than 31 banks having met the new capital rule, leaving out two that are reportedly awaiting verification. As exercise progresses and draws to an end, policymakers are optimistic that stronger banks will anchor financial stability and support the country's ambition of building a \$1 trillion economy.

The reform, driven by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) under Governor Olayemi Cardoso, requires banks to significantly raise their capital thresholds, which are set at N500 billion for international banks, N200 billion for national banks, and N50 billion for regional lenders. According to the apex bank, 33 banks have already tapped the capital market through rights issues and public offerings; collectively, the total verified and approved capital raised by the banks amounts to N4.05 trillion.

No doubt, at first glance, the strategy definitely appears straightforward with the idea that bigger capital means stronger banks, and stronger banks should finance economic growth. But history offers a cautionary reminder that capital alone does not guarantee resilience, as it would be recalled that Nigeria has travelled this road before.

During the 2004-2005 consolidation led by former CBN Governor Charles Soludo, the number of banks in the country shrank dramatically from 89 to 25. The reform created larger institutions that were celebrated as national champions. The truth is that Nigeria has been here before because, despite all said and done, barely five years later, the banking system plunged into crisis, forcing regulatory intervention, bailouts, and the creation of the Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) to absorb toxic assets.

The lesson from that experience is simple in the sense that recapitalisation without structural reform only postpones deeper problems.

Today, as banks race to meet the new capital thresholds, the real question is not how much capital has been raised but whether the reform will transform the fundamentals of Nigerian banking. The underlying fact is that if the exercise merely inflates balance sheets without addressing deeper vulnerabilities, Nigeria risks repeating a familiar cycle of apparent stability followed by systemic stress, as the resultant effect will be distressed banks less capable of bringing the economy out of the woods.

The real measure of success is far simpler. That is to say, stronger banks must stimulate economic productivity, stabilise the financial system, and expand access to credit for businesses and households. Anything less will amount to a missed opportunity.

One of the most critical issues surrounding the recapitalisation drive is the quality of the capital being raised.

Nigeria's banking sector has reportedly secured more than N4.5 trillion in new capital commitments across different categories of banks. No doubt, on paper, these numbers may appear impressive. Going by the trends of events in Nigeria's economy, numbers alone can be deceptive.

Past recapitalisation cycles revealed troubling practices, whereby funds raised through related-party transactions, borrowed money disguised as equity, or complex financial arrangements that recycled risks back into the banking system. If such practices resurface, recapitalisation becomes little more than an accounting exercise.

To avert a repeat of failure, the CBN must therefore ensure that every naira raised represents genuine, loss-absorbing capital. Transparency around capital sources, ownership structures, and funding arrangements must be non-negotiable. Without credible capital, balance sheet strength becomes an illusion that will make every recapitalization exercise futile.

In financial systems, credibility is itself a form of capital. If there is one recurring factor behind banking crises in Nigeria, it is corporate governance failure.

Many past collapses were not triggered by



global shocks but by insider lending, weak board oversight, excessive executive power, and poor risk culture. Recapitalisation provides regulators with a rare opportunity to reset governance standards across the industry.

Boards must be independent not only in structure but also in substance. Risk committees must be empowered to challenge executive decisions. Insider lending rules must be enforced without compromise because, over the years, they have proven to be an anathema against the stability of the financial sector. The stakes are high.

When governance fails, fresh capital can quickly become fresh fuel for old excesses. Without governance reform, recapitalisation risks reinforcing the very weaknesses it seeks to eliminate.

Another structural vulnerability lies in Nigeria's increasing amount of non-performing loans (NPLs), which recently caused the CBN to raise concerns, as Nigeria experiences a rise in bad loans threatening banking stability.

Industry data suggests that the banking sector's NPL ratio has climbed above the prudential benchmark of 5 percent, reaching roughly 7 percent in recent assessments. Many of these troubled loans are concentrated in sectors such as oil and gas, power, and government-linked infrastructure projects, alongside other factors such as FX instability, high interest rates, and the withdrawal of Covid-era forbearance, which threaten bank stability.

While regulatory forbearance has helped maintain short-term stability, it has also obscured deeper asset-quality concerns. A credible recapitalisation process must confront this reality directly.

Loan classification standards must reflect economic truth rather than regulatory convenience. Banks should not carry impaired assets indefinitely while presenting healthy balance sheets to investors and depositors.

Transparency about asset quality strengthens trust. Concealment destroys it. Few forces have disrupted Nigerian bank balance sheets in recent years as severely as exchange-rate volatility.

Many banks still operate with significant foreign exchange mismatches, borrowing short-term in foreign currencies while lending long-term to clients earning revenues in naira. When the naira depreciates sharply, these mismatches can erode capital faster than any credit loss.

Recapitalisation must therefore be accompanied by stricter supervision of foreign exchange exposure, as this part calls for the regulator to heighten its supervision. Banks should be required to disclose currency risks more transparently and undergo rigorous stress testing at intervals that assume adverse currency scenarios rather than best-case outcomes. In a structurally import-dependent economy, ignoring FX risk is no longer an option.

Nigeria's banking system has long been characterised by excessive concentration in a few sectors and corporate clients, which calls for adequate monitoring and the need to be addressed quickly for the recapitalization drive

to yield maximum results.

Growth in most advanced economies comes from the small and medium-sized enterprises that are well-funded. Anything short of this undermines it, since the concentration of huge loans to large oil and gas companies, government-related entities, and major conglomerates absorbs a disproportionate share of bank lending. This has continued to pose a major threat to the system, as the case is with small and medium-sized enterprises, the backbone of job creation, which remain chronically underfinanced. This imbalance weakens the economy.

Recapitalisation should therefore be tied to policies that encourage credit diversification and risk-sharing mechanisms that allow banks to lend more confidently to productive sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology rather than investing their funds into the government's securities. Bigger banks that remain narrowly exposed do not strengthen the economy. They amplify its fragilities.

Nigeria's macroeconomic conditions, which are its broad economic settings, are defined by frequent and sometimes sharp changes or instability rather than stability.

Inflation shocks, interest-rate swings, fiscal pressures, and currency adjustments are not rare disruptions; but they have now become a normal part of the economic environment. Despite all these adverse factors, many banks still operate risk models that assume relative stability. Perhaps unbeknownst to the stakeholders, this disconnect is dangerous.

Owing to possible shocks, and when banks increase their capital (recapitalization), it is required that banks adopt more sophisticated risk-management frameworks capable of withstanding severe economic scenarios, with the expectation that stronger banks should also have stronger systems to manage risks and survive economic crises. In Nigeria today, every financial institution's stress testing must be performed in the face of the economy facing severe shocks like currency depreciation, sovereign debt pressures, and sudden interest-rate spikes.

Risk management should evolve from a compliance obligation into a strategic discipline embedded in every lending decision.

Public confidence in the banking system depends heavily on credible financial reporting.

Investors, analysts, and depositors need to be able to understand banks' true financial positions without navigating non-transparent disclosures or creative accounting practices, which means the industry must be liberated to an extent that gives room for access to information.

Recapitalisation provides an opportunity to strengthen the enforcement of international financial reporting standards, enhance audit quality, and require clearer disclosure of capital adequacy, asset quality, and related-party transactions. Transparency should not be feared. It is the foundation of trust.

One thing that must be corrected is that while recapitalisation often focuses on financial metrics, the banking sector ultimately runs on human capital.

Another fearful aspect of this exercise for the economy is that consolidation and mergers triggered by the reform could lead to workforce disruptions if not carefully managed. Job losses, casualisation, and declining staff morale can weaken institutional culture and productivity. Strong banks are built by strong people.

If recapitalisation strengthens balance sheets while destabilising the workforce that powers the system, the reform risks undermining its own economic objectives. Human capital stability must therefore form part of the broader reform strategy.

Doubtless, another emerging shift in Nigeria's financial landscape is the rise of digital financial platforms that are increasingly changing how people access and use money in Nigeria.

Millions of Nigerians are increasingly relying on fintech platforms for payments, microloans, and everyday financial transactions. One of the advantages it offers, is that these services often deliver faster and more user-friendly experiences than traditional banks. While innovation is welcome, it raises important questions about the future structure of financial intermediation.

The point here is that the moment traditional banks retreat from retail banking while fintech platforms dominate customer interactions, systemic liquidity and regulatory oversight could become fragmented.

The CBN must see to it that the recapitalised banks must therefore invest aggressively in digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, and customer experience, while cutting down costs on all less critical areas in the industry.

Nigerians should feel the benefits of recapitalisation not only in stronger balance sheets but also in faster apps, reliable payment systems, and responsive customer service.

As banks grow larger through recapitalisation and consolidation, a new challenge emerges via systemic concentration.

Nigeria's largest banks already control a significant share of industry assets. Further consolidation could deepen the divide between dominant institutions and smaller players. This creates the risk of "too-big-to-fail" banks whose collapse could threaten the entire financial system.

To address this risk, regulators must strengthen resolution frameworks that allow distressed banks to fail without triggering systemic panic, their collapse does not damage the whole financial system, and do not require taxpayer-funded bailouts to forestall similar mistakes that occurred with the liquidation of Heritage Bank. Market discipline depends on credible failure mechanisms.

It must be understood that Nigeria's banking recapitalisation is not merely a financial exercise or, better still, increasing banks' capital. It is a rare opportunity to rebuild trust, strengthen governance, and reposition the financial system as a true engine of economic development.

One fact is that if the reform focuses only on capital numbers, the country risks repeating a familiar pattern of churning out impressive balance sheets followed by another cycle of crisis.

But the actors in this exercise must ensure that the recapitalisation addresses governance failures, asset quality concerns, risk management weaknesses, and transparency gaps; and the moment this is done, the banking sector could emerge stronger and more resilient.

Nigeria does not simply need bigger banks. It needs better banks, institutions capable of financing innovation, supporting entrepreneurs, and building economic opportunity for millions of citizens.

The true capital of any banking system is not just money. It is trust. And whether this recapitalisation ultimately succeeds will depend on whether Nigerians see that trust reflected not only in financial statements but in the everyday experience of saving, borrowing, and investing in the economy. Only then will bigger banks translate into a stronger nation.

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