

Nigeria Records Year-Long Economic Expansion As Policy Changes Begin To Take Hold

Pg 6



LCCI Urges Tinubu To Tackle Debt, Prioritise Agriculture, Power For Economic Growth

Pg 8

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Nigeria's Economy Regains Stability In 2025 As Reforms Begin To Yield Results

Nigeria ends 2025 with **President Bola Ahmed Tinubu**-led administration leading an economy that is visibly steadier than it was a year ago, yet far from healed. *Headline growth has returned, inflation has cooled, and the currency has found a measure of calm, but these gains sit uneasily beside some hardship for millions of citizens. Enam Obiosio examines the numbers behind the recovery, the policies that shaped them, and the structural gaps that continue to keep prosperity out of reach for most Nigerians.*

By the close of 2025, Nigeria's economic narrative had shifted decisively from crisis response to gradual consolidation. After a turbulent period defined by elevated inflation, currency volatility, and subdued growth, the economy recorded a modest but notable rebound. Real gross domestic product growth averaged about 3.9 percent, improving on 2.98 percent in 2024 and reflecting the combined effects of policy recalibration, sectoral resilience, and structural reforms undertaken during the year.

This recovery, while still evolving, marked an important turning point. Stabilisation came faster than many analysts expected, restoring a degree of confidence among investors and economic actors. At the same time, the government acknowledged that translating macroeconomic gains into broad based improvements in living standards would take time, particularly given the depth of challenges inherited from previous years.

Quarterly data illustrated both momentum and prudence. Output expanded by 3.13 percent in the first quarter, accelerated to 4.23 percent in the second quarter, the strongest performance since mid-2021, and moderated slightly to 3.98 percent in the third quarter. Even with this easing, growth remained well above 2024 levels, confirming that the economy had exited stagnation and entered a



phase of steady expansion.

One of the most significant developments of the year was the rebasing of Nigeria's gross domestic product (GDP). By updating the base year from 2010 to 2019, economic planners were able to better reflect the country's changing structure.

Sectors that have grown rapidly over the past decade, including digital services, fintech, entertainment, and small scale refining, were more accurately captured. As a result, the estimated size of

CONTINUES ON PG 2



the economy expanded from roughly 187 billion dollars to about US\$243 billion dollars, offering policymakers a clearer framework for planning and reform.

Inflation, which had been the most pressing economic concern, showed sustained improvement. After peaking above 33 percent early in the year, headline inflation declined steadily to 14.45 percent by November. This outcome reflected a mix of disciplined monetary policy, easing supply constraints, and supportive structural developments. Reduced reliance on imported fuel, supported by the commencement of full operations at the Dangote Refinery, helped ease pressure on transportation and logistics costs, contributing to price moderation.

The monetary authorities maintained a firm but adaptive stance. The policy rate was held at 27.5 percent for much of the year before being adjusted to 27.0 percent in the final quarter. This careful calibration aimed to preserve price stability while gradually creating space for credit expansion. In the foreign exchange market, reforms and improved external inflows brought greater stability. By year end, the naira traded within a narrower band of approximately 1,490 to 1,600 to the dollar, a marked improvement on the volatility

adjustment. Debt servicing continued to account for a significant share of government revenue, highlighting the importance of ongoing revenue reforms and expenditure efficiency. Following GDP rebasing, the debt to GDP ratio eased to 39.8 percent, providing some fiscal headroom, even as deficits hovered around 2.6 percent of GDP amid softer oil prices.

Compared with the stagflation experienced in 2024, the economy in 2025 demonstrated resilience and adaptability. While poverty levels remained high, macroeconomic stability laid a foundation for targeted social and development interventions designed to improve household welfare over time.

Sectoral performance revealed the underlying drivers of growth. Services remained the dominant contributor, accounting for between 53 and 57.5 percent of GDP. The sector expanded by 4.33 percent in the first quarter, with strong performances in finance, insurance, and information and communications technology. Financial services recorded near 20 percent growth in the third quarter, reflecting reforms in banking and capital markets, while ICT continued to benefit from digital adoption across the economy.

Non-oil sectors accounted for more than 96

by cement and food processing, though growth remained constrained by high input costs. Agriculture, which employs the largest share of Nigerians and contributes roughly 23 percent of GDP, improved from contraction in 2024 to positive growth of 3.79 percent by the third quarter, despite ongoing challenges related to security, climate conditions, and infrastructure.

Several policy milestones shaped the year's progress. Nigeria's exit from the Financial Action Task Force grey list helped restore international confidence, opening the door to renewed capital inflows. Reforms in taxation and securities regulation advanced, while bank and insurance recapitalisation strengthened financial system resilience. Capital market initiatives, including improved settlement cycles and international listings, deepened liquidity and broadened participation.

The commencement of large scale domestic refining marked a structural shift for the energy sector, reducing dependence on imports and easing pressure on foreign exchange. Collectively, these developments pointed to an economy focused on strengthening fundamentals rather than pursuing short term expansion.

Persistent structural challenges, however, continued to shape outcomes. Food prices remained elevated, reflecting insecurity in key farming regions, climate related disruptions, limited mechanisation, and logistical bottlenecks. For households with high food expenditure shares, easing inflation provided gradual relief rather than immediate respite.

Budget implementation also reflected the realities of adjustment. The 2025 federal budget, valued at nearly N55 trillion, set ambitious targets for growth and stability. Revenue mobilisation proved more difficult than projected, prompting a prioritisation of essential spending. Capital expenditure progressed more slowly than planned, with portions rolled into the 2026 budget as part of a broader effort to strengthen fiscal discipline and project delivery.

Employment creation remained a medium term challenge. Growth was led by sectors with relatively high productivity but lower labour absorption, while manufacturing and agriculture faced cost and financing constraints. Recognising this, the government expanded targeted interventions, including the National Social Safety Net Programme, which delivered cash transfers to more than eight million vulnerable Nigerians, as part of a broader strategy to cushion adjustment impacts.

As 2025 draws to a close, Nigeria's economic outlook reflects steady progress built on difficult reforms. Stability has largely returned, growth has resumed, and key structural changes are underway. The task ahead is to deepen these gains, strengthen job creation, and accelerate investment in human capital and productive sectors.

The experience of 2025 suggests that Nigeria has laid important groundwork for sustainable growth. The challenge moving forward is to ensure that this stability evolves into inclusive prosperity, where economic progress is increasingly reflected in improved livelihoods, expanded opportunities, and rising confidence among citizens.



recorded in 2024.

External buffers strengthened in parallel. Foreign reserves rose to nearly \$38 billion by mid year and exceeded \$46.7 billion by early December. A current account surplus equivalent to 6.1 percent of GDP, alongside expanding non-oil exports, supported these gains. Import cover extended beyond 12 months, reinforcing confidence in Nigeria's external position and policy direction.

Fiscal conditions remained challenging but manageable. Public debt rose to N152.39 trillion by the second quarter, reflecting legacy obligations and financing needs during a period of

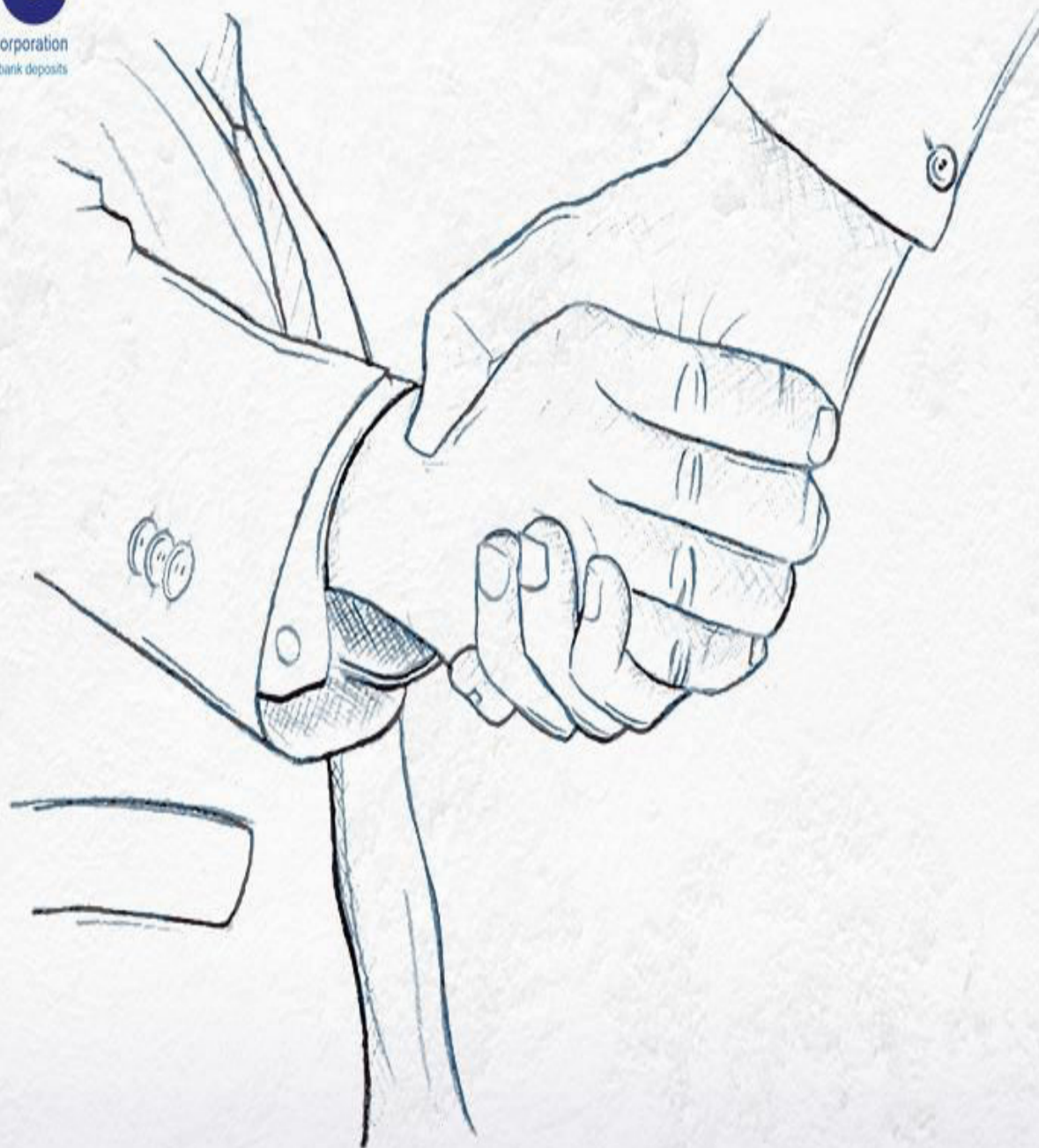
percent of overall growth in the third quarter, expanding by 3.91 percent and underscoring the gradual diversification of the economy. Oil, which now represents about 11 percent of GDP, grew by 5.84 percent in the same period. Production levels averaged between 1.64 and 1.68 million barrels per day, an improvement on 2024 figures and a signal of stabilising output.

Other sectors recorded mixed but generally improving outcomes. Transportation posted strong growth early in the year, while construction benefited from selective infrastructure activity. Manufacturing expanded modestly, supported



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Dakwo, Abuja.**EDITORIAL****Nigerian Economy In 2025 Means Stabilisation Achieved, Diversification Now Urgent**

Though things are gradually picking up, we must diversify the economy with a strong focus on agriculture and manufacturing.

If we may be blunt, Nigeria's economic predicament did not begin in 2023. For many years, the country's economic foundations were built on faulty assumptions and policy shortcuts. By the period between 2015 and 2023, those weaknesses had hardened into a system that was economically unsustainable. Had Nigeria been a private enterprise, few rational investors would have committed capital to it.

The economy suffered prolonged underinvestment, weak productivity, declining exports, shrinking government revenues, widening fiscal deficits, and chronically low growth. Rather than confront these structural failings decisively, successive governments often resorted to subsidies and borrowing to paper over cracks. These measures offered short-term relief but deepened long-term fragility.

By 2023, the consequences became unavoidable. The country had institutionalised an artificial foreign exchange regime, borrowed heavily to sustain fuel subsidies, and, at times, committed crude oil revenues before production. A significant portion of government income went into debt servicing. Beyond fuel, subsidies extended to electricity and agriculture, leaving public finances strained and policy credibility eroded.

Economic growth flatlined. Investor confidence weakened, foreign direct investment declined, portfolio flows dried up, and international rating agencies downgraded Nigeria. The economy drifted toward isolation, with policy features that mirrored command systems rather than a modern market economy.

The year 2023 was therefore a sink-or-swim moment. A reset became unavoidable. Reforms were not optional,

they were existential. The decision to dismantle price controls and allow market forces to reassert themselves triggered painful adjustments. Prices rose sharply, living costs surged, and Nigerians endured what can only be described as a harsh transition phase. This experience mirrored the difficult adjustment faced by other transition economies in history.

The outlook for 2025 began under strain. While reforms were gaining traction, households faced high inflation, reduced purchasing power, elevated food and energy prices, and exchange rate pressures. For an import-dependent economy, these shocks multiplied across housing, construction, transport, and rents. Poverty deepened, and social safety nets struggled to keep pace with the scale of hardship.

By the first quarter, public optimism had waned. Patience was tested, resilience stretched thin. This was understandable. No reform narrative can substitute for the lived reality of hunger, rising costs, and uncertainty.

As the year progressed, however, conditions began to improve. Food prices eased. Energy costs declined, aided by increased domestic refining capacity. These shifts brought some relief to households and businesses. By the third quarter, macroeconomic indicators showed clearer signs of recovery. Inflation slowed, interest rates began easing, GDP growth improved, foreign reserves strengthened, the exchange rate stabilised, and capital markets turned bullish. Credit ratings improved, and investor confidence returned cautiously.

Yet the central question persists: can ordinary Nigerians feel these improvements in their daily lives? While food prices have moderated, they remain above pre-reform levels. Purchasing power is still weak, and job creation has not kept pace with population growth.

This gap reflects the nature of reform itself. Economic reforms are designed first to stabilise an economy in distress, much like resuscitating a patient in critical condition. Stability is necessary but insufficient. The next phase must be growth that translates into higher incomes and better living standards.

To reach that phase, Nigeria must focus on productivity and diversification. Agriculture and manufacturing must move from rhetoric to reality. These sectors have the capacity to absorb labour, grow exports, earn foreign exchange, and strengthen the currency. Without them, growth will remain narrow and uneven.

Diversification must be supported by credible ease-of-doing-business reforms, deeper inflows of long-term foreign direct investment, and a functional credit economy that supports production rather than speculation. Investment in health and education must be prioritised, not deferred. Social safety nets must be expanded and better targeted. Infrastructure gaps in roads, rail, power, and digital connectivity must be closed systematically.

Equally critical is public finance discipline. The practice of overlapping budget cycles and rolling over capital budgets from one year to another undermines credibility and planning. It signals weak execution and erodes confidence in fiscal management. Budgeting must be grounded in realistic revenue assumptions and strict implementation timelines.

The task before government in the coming year is clear. Growth indices must translate into income growth, job creation, and lower living costs. Many Nigerians understandably feel they cannot afford to wait. At the same time, rebuilding an economy hollowed out over years cannot be instantaneous.

DID YOU KNOW?

That President Tinubu's reforms are part of the Renewed Hope Agenda, designed to reposition Nigeria across critical sectors including education, energy, infrastructure, and innovation.

Stay tuned for more updates on reform milestones, policy impact, and opportunities for Nigerian citizens. Have feedback or questions? Send us an email at: editor@thereforms.ng

Time to Tell Nigeria's Story — The Position of The Reforms Newspaper

For far too long, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has been misunderstood, misrepresented, and misquoted — not for a lack of achievements, but for a tragic deficit in communication. Today, *The Reforms*, a National Newspaper, rises not as a mouthpiece, but as a credible national platform to correct the narrative and restore public confidence in Nigeria's reform-driven trajectory.

Let us be blunt: in the past, government's communication structures had been lethargic, inconsistent, and often reactive. Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), despite overseeing groundbreaking reforms across agriculture, power, finance, education, digital innovation, energy, and infrastructure, had largely failed to communicate their successes with clarity and consistency. In their silence, distortions flourished. In their delays, misinformation had taken root.

This was not just a national communication failure — it was a vacuum of narrative power.

It is precisely in this void that *The Reforms* has emerged as a strategic imperative. Our mandate is not to whitewash governments' actions or spread propaganda. We are not beholden to spin doctors or political handlers. We are beholden only to the truth — the verifiable, policy-driven, people-impacting truth of Nigeria's reform journey.

The FGN has rightly endorsed *The Reforms* as the non-partisan channel through which MDAs and private sector partners can boldly articulate the ongoing transformation of the Nigerian economy and society. From economic diversification and tax reforms to housing delivery, digital governance, energy transition, and ease of doing business, among others, — we are committed to amplifying facts, not fiction.

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Nigeria Records Year-Long Economic Expansion As Policy Changes Begin To Take Hold

By Ahmed Ahmed

Nigeria closed 2025 with a rare run of steady economic momentum, recording expansion in economic activity for 12 straight months despite persistent global and domestic pressures. For a country long accustomed to stop-start growth, the signal is modest but meaningful.

Presenting the federal government's end-of-year scorecard in Abuja recently, Honourable Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mr. Mohammed Idris, said the consistent expansion reflected a gradual strengthening of business confidence and productive activity across key sectors of the economy.

At the centre of the assessment is the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), a widely tracked indicator that measures business conditions in manufacturing and services. Mr. Idris said PMI data showed uninterrupted expansion throughout the year, suggesting that firms were recording higher output, new orders and employment compared to previous periods.

The Honourable Minister described the trend as evidence that economic reforms introduced by the current administration were beginning to stabilise the operating environment for businesses, even as inflationary pressures and global uncertainties persisted.

More concrete growth figures supported the narrative. According to him, Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 3.98 percent in the third quarter of 2025, with services, trade and manufacturing accounting for the bulk of the expansion. The performance, he noted, highlighted the resilience of the non-oil sector, which has increasingly carried the economy at a time when oil revenues remain volatile.

For years, policymakers have spoken about diversifying Nigeria's economy away from crude oil. The latest figures suggest that, at least in output terms, that shift is gaining traction. Services such as telecommunications, finance and transport, alongside wholesale and retail trade, continued to expand, while manufacturing showed signs of recovery after years of capacity constraints and rising input costs.

Inflation, which has dominated household and business conversations in recent times, also showed signs of easing. Mr. Idris said headline inflation declined for eight consecutive months to 14.45 percent in November 2025. While still elevated, the downward trend offered relief to consumers whose purchasing power had been eroded by prolonged price increases.

Economists caution that lower inflation does not immediately translate to cheaper goods, but a sustained slowdown can ease pressure on incomes and support consumption over time. For small and medium-sized enterprises, a more predictable price environment also improves planning and investment decisions.

Another bright spot highlighted by the Honourable Minister was the strengthening of Nigeria's external reserves, which stood at approximately



Mr. Mohammed Idris, Honourable Minister of Information and National Orientation

44.56 billion dollars by the end of the year. The improved reserve position, he said, provides a buffer for the economy, supports currency stability and reassures foreign investors wary of sudden shocks.

Foreign exchange management has been one of the most sensitive areas of economic policy, with businesses often struggling to access dollars for imports and operations. Stronger reserves do not resolve all challenges, but they give monetary authorities more room to manage volatility and maintain confidence.

Beyond the statistics, the government is keen to frame the year's performance as a foundation rather than a destination. Mr. Idris stressed that the administration remains focused on consoli-

... PMI data showed uninterrupted expansion throughout the year, suggesting that firms were recording higher output, new orders and employment compared to previous periods

dating macroeconomic stability and ensuring that growth indicators translate into better living standards for Nigerians.

This focus is expected to shape the 2026 budget, which the Honourable Minister said would prioritise security, infrastructure development, youth empowerment and social welfare. These areas, long recognised as critical to inclusive growth, are also where public expectations are highest.

Security remains a key concern, as persistent insecurity disrupts farming, trade and investment in several parts of the country. Infrastructure gaps continue to raise the cost of doing business, while unemployment and underemployment among young people pose social and economic risks. Addressing these challenges, Mr. Idris suggested, is essential to sustaining the current economic momentum.

He described the mission of the 2026 fiscal year as building a secure, competitive and prosperous Nigeria, adding that reforms undertaken by the administration were designed to deliver long-term benefits rather than quick fixes. President Bola Tinubu's economic vision, he said, is bold and focused, aimed at placing the country on a path of inclusive and sustainable growth.

For ordinary Nigerians, the real test lies beyond official briefings and scorecards. Growth figures and reserve levels matter, but their impact is ultimately measured in jobs, stable prices and improved public services. Many households continue to navigate high living costs, while businesses grapple with financing constraints and infrastructure bottlenecks.

Still, the picture painted by the government suggests that the economy is showing greater consistency than in recent years. 12 consecutive months of expansion may not signal a boom, but in a fragile global environment, it points to resilience and cautious progress.

As 2026 approaches, attention will shift to whether this momentum can be sustained and broadened. The challenge for policymakers will be to turn improving indicators into tangible gains that Nigerians can feel in their daily lives. If that connection is made, the story of 2025 may be remembered as the year Nigeria's economy began to find steadier footing again.



Funding Nigeria's Agriculture, Growing Prosperity

Digital Economy Revenue To Hit \$18.3bn By 2026, Experts Project



L-R: Garba Kurfi, Managing Director/CEO, APT Securities and Funds Limited; Prince Cookey, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief, Business Journal Media Group; Olatunde Amolegbe, Managing Director/CEO, Arthur Stevens Asset Management Limited and Keynote Speaker; Prof. Anthony Kila, Pro-Chancellor, Michael and Cecilia Ibru University/Chairman of the Occasion; Tony Epelle, Managing Consultant/CEO, Samuelson Advisory Partners Limited and Dotun Oladipo, Managing Editor, The Eagle Online, during the Business Journal Annual Lecture 2025 on the theme: 'AI & Digital Economy: Projecting the Future of Economic Growth in Nigeria' in Lagos.

By: Majeed Salaam

Nigeria's digital economy is on course for a sharp revenue expansion, with earnings projected to rise to about \$18.30 billion by 2026, highlighting the sector's growing role as a driver of economic growth and innovation.

This projection was disclosed by the Managing Director (MD)/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Arthur Stevens Asset Management Limited, Mr Olatunde Amolegbe, while delivering the keynote address at the Business Journal Annual Lecture 2025 held in Lagos. According to him, the country's digital economy has moved from the margins to the mainstream in less than a decade, reflecting both local innovation and alignment with global technology trends.

Mr. Amolegbe said Nigeria's digital economy generated about \$5.09 billion in revenue in 2019, rising to \$ 9.97 billion by 2021. The projected jump to \$18.30 billion by 2026, he noted, highlights the speed at which digital platforms, services and infrastructure are reshaping economic activity.

Globally, the digital economy has become a major pillar of growth. Mr. Amolegbe cited estimates showing that digital activities accounted for about \$11.5 trillion, or 15.5 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in 2016. Projections indicate that this share could rise to about 25 percent by 2026, reflecting deeper integration

of technology into production, trade and services.

He said Africa is positioning itself to tap into this momentum through initiatives such as the Digital Economy for Africa programme, which is built around inclusivity, local innovation, collaboration and scale. The initiative, he explained, supports the continent's ambition of achieving full

digital enablement by 2030.

Within Africa, Nigeria stands out as a leading digital market. Mr. Amolegbe noted that the country currently leads the continent in start-up investment and is home to five technology unicorns: Interswitch, Flutterwave, OPay, Andela and Moniepoint. These firms, he said, reflect the strength of private-sector innovation and the growing confidence of global investors in Nigeria's technology

ecosystem.

Internet penetration has also expanded rapidly. In early 2025, Nigeria had about 107 million internet users, driven largely by mobile-first access. Mobile connections now account for more than 90 percent of internet connectivity nationwide, lowering entry barriers and expanding access to digital services across income groups and regions.

The contribution of digital-related sectors to the broader economy is already visible. Mr. Amolegbe said telecommunications alone added about 9.20 percent to real GDP in the second quarter of 2025. Fintech and digital payments are also expanding at a fast pace, supported by the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System network, evolving regulations and growing consumer adoption across banking channels.

He pointed out that Nigeria has shown early willingness to adopt new digital tools, citing the launch of the eNaira in 2021 as an example. While adoption has been gradual, the initiative signalled an openness to innovation within the financial system.

According to Mr. Amolegbe, the next phase of growth lies in applying digital solutions and artificial intelligence to sectors that have lagged in technology uptake. These include agriculture, healthcare, education, infrastructure and energy.

He said artificial intelligence has the potential to improve crop yields, enhance healthcare delivery, expand access to digital learning, support smarter infrastructure planning and accelerate the transition to cleaner and more efficient energy systems. Nigeria's large and youthful population, he added, provides a strong demographic foundation for AI-driven growth.

Policy support is also beginning to take shape. Mr. Amolegbe referenced emerging interventions such as the National Information Technology Development Agency's AI strategy, alongside expanding connectivity infrastructure. Nigeria is currently connected to eight submarine cables with a combined capacity of over 40 terabits per second, strengthening its bandwidth base and ability to support data-intensive services.

Despite the optimism, he cautioned that realising the full economic value of the digital economy and artificial intelligence will require deliberate action. Key gaps remain in governance frameworks, talent development, digital infrastructure and regional collaboration.

According to him, without stronger institutions, skilled manpower and coordinated policies, the benefits of digital growth could remain uneven or underutilised. He stressed the need for sustained investment in education and skills, clearer regulatory frameworks and stronger partnerships within Africa to scale innovation beyond national borders.

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LCCI Urges Tinubu To Tackle Debt, Prioritise Agriculture, Power For Economic Growth



Dr Chinyere Almona, Director-General of LCCI

By Jennete Ugo Anya

With Nigeria aiming to accelerate economic growth in 2026, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) has called on the federal government to curb rising debt servicing costs, strengthen the agriculture and power sectors, and prioritise areas that can drive broad-based growth.

The call came as the chamber reviewed the 2026 federal budget and broader macroeconomic direction, noting what it described as a gradual shift from stabilisation to growth acceleration. While acknowledging improvements in economic indicators, the LCCI warned that without decisive execution and structural fixes, growth targets may remain difficult to achieve.

In a statement by its Director-General, Dr Chinyere Almona, the chamber identified agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, infrastructure, energy, and human capital development as the key sectors that could drive Nigeria's economic expansion in 2026. She said unlocking the potential of these areas would require targeted action rather than broad policy intentions.

According to Dr. Almona, agriculture remains central to both growth and stability, particularly given Nigeria's food security challenges and high food inflation. She called for expanded irrigation, stronger agro-value chains, and improved access to finance and inputs to raise productivity and reduce post-harvest losses. Without these interventions, she said, agriculture would struggle to deliver its full contribution to growth and employment.

Manufacturing, she noted, faces persistent constraints from high power and logistics costs, which

continue to erode competitiveness. Reducing these costs, alongside improving transport infrastructure and access to foreign exchange for raw materials, would be critical to reviving industrial output and expanding value addition.

The chamber also placed strong emphasis on infrastructure, urging the government to accelerate delivery through public-private partnerships. Dr. Almona said limited fiscal space makes it imperative to attract private capital into roads, ports, rail and energy projects, rather than relying solely on public funding.

... agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, infrastructure, energy, and human capital development as the key sectors that could drive Nigeria's economic expansion in 2026

Power sector reform featured prominently in the LCCI's recommendations. Dr. Almona described reliable and affordable electricity as non-negotiable for growth, stressing that inefficiencies in the sector continue to undermine productivity across the economy. She said reforms must go beyond policy statements to include practical steps that improve generation, transmission and distribution.

On public finances, the chamber expressed con-

cern over the scale of debt servicing in the 2026 budget. Of the total expenditure, N15.52 trillion is earmarked for servicing debt, a figure the LCCI described as a major constraint on growth-focused spending.

"We recognise the need to address the substantial allocation to debt servicing," Dr. Almona said, adding that stricter borrowing practices, improved revenue efficiency and expanded public-private partnerships are essential to free up resources for productive investment.

While commending the early submission of the 2026 budget, she cautioned that optimistic assumptions could pose fiscal risks if not carefully managed. She pointed to the oil price benchmark of \$64.85 per barrel, noting that while it is lower than the \$75 benchmark used in the 2025 budget, it may still be ambitious given recent price trends.

Oil receipts are projected to account for more than a third of government revenue, making the budget sensitive to price fluctuations. Dr. Almona warned that any sustained dip in oil prices could widen the fiscal gap and increase borrowing pressures.

She also raised concerns about the oil production benchmark of 1.84 million barrels per day (mbpd), compared with current production of about 1.49 mbpd. Achieving this target, she said, would require significant improvements in security, infrastructure and investment in the sector, particularly in tackling oil theft and pipeline vandalism.

The exchange rate assumption of N1,512 to the dollar also drew attention. Dr. Almona said the projection suggests mild depreciation, which could boost naira-denominated revenue but may also increase import costs, complicate inflation management and raise the burden of external debt servicing.

Despite these risks, the chamber acknowledged signs of growing confidence in the economy, citing moderating inflation, stronger external reserves and improving investor sentiment. It described the budget's emphasis on production-oriented spending as encouraging, noting that capital expenditure of N26.08 trillion accounts for about 45 percent of total spending and exceeds non-debt recurrent expenditure.

This structure, the LCCI said, supports infrastructure development, industrial growth and productivity gains. However, Dr. Almona stressed that effective implementation remains a long-standing challenge for Nigeria.

She noted that managing multiple budget cycles simultaneously, including the 2024, supplementary and 2025 budgets, could strain coordination and transparency, potentially undermining execution.

Beyond domestic issues, the chamber urged the government to remain alert to external risks, including geopolitical tensions affecting oil prices, new tax laws scheduled to take effect in 2026, and ongoing pressures from food production costs and business operating expenses.

As Nigeria pursues its ambition of becoming a \$1 trillion-dollar economy by 2030, Dr. Almona said resolving energy sector bottlenecks will be critical. She highlighted the need to address challenges around the naira-for-crude policy, improve oil supply to local refineries, and strengthen regulatory oversight in line with international standards.

In the LCCI's view, the path to growth is clear but demanding. Agriculture, power, manufacturing and human capital offer real opportunities, but only if supported by disciplined fiscal management, targeted reforms and consistent implementation. Without these, the Chamber warned, Nigeria risks missing a narrow window to convert economic stability into lasting prosperity.

World Bank Greenlights \$500m FINCLUDE Package To Empower Nigeria's MSMEs

By Musa Ibrahim

The World Bank has approved a \$500 million financing package to support Nigeria's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) under the Fostering Inclusive Finance for MSMEs in Nigeria (FINCLUDE) project.

The facility comprises a \$400 million International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) loan and a \$100 million International Development Association (IDA) credit, to be implemented by the Development Bank of Nigeria (DBN), with credit guarantees provided through DBN's subsidiary, Impact Credit Guarantee Limited (ICGL).

Designed to tackle the persistent challenges faced by MSMEs, FINCLUDE aims to expand access to affordable, longer-term finance for enterprises that form the backbone of Nigeria's economy. MSMEs account for the majority of businesses, nearly half of the nation's gross domestic product, and a substantial share of employment, yet access to formal credit remains limited. Fewer than one in 20 MSMEs secure bank loans, with many constrained by high interest rates, short-term tenors, and strict collateral requirements.

Women-led businesses, which constitute a significant portion of MSMEs, are particularly disadvantaged, facing higher rejection rates and a lack of tailored financial products. Agribusinesses, vital for food security and rural livelihoods, similarly struggle to secure financing for equipment, processing, storage, and logistics. FINCLUDE targets these gaps by offering longer-term, inclusive financing solutions designed to unlock growth potential in the sectors with the most impact.

World Bank Country Director for Nigeria, Mathew Verghis, described the project as a cata-

MSMEs account for the majority of businesses, nearly half of the nation's gross domestic product, and a substantial share of employment, yet access to formal credit remains limited

lyst for jobs and economic inclusion. "By expanding access to finance for viable MSMEs - especially women-led firms and agribusinesses - Nigeria can accelerate growth and deliver tangible benefits to communities nationwide," he said. "The project will make it easier for deserving small businesses to obtain the finance they need to grow, hire workers, and expand operations."

Through DBN, the initiative will strengthen the capacity of banks, microfinance institutions, and non-bank financial service providers, including FinTechs, to provide larger loans with extended repayment periods. ICGL will scale partial credit guarantees, enabling lenders to extend credit to firms previously considered too risky. Complementary technical assistance will modernise loan appraisal processes using AI-driven digital platforms, improving data quality, accelerating decision-making, and building institutional ca-

credit facility aimed at improving financial management and human resource capacity in Nigeria's basic education and primary healthcare sectors.

Dr. Assad Hassan, National Coordinator of HOPE-GOV, announced the initiative in Abuja, alongside Dr. Deborah Odoh, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, where the program is domiciled. The World Bank-supported facility is structured into two components: Program-for-Results and Investment Project Financing.



capacity for both MSMEs and financial institutions.

Task Team Leader for FINCLUDE, Hadija Kamayo, highlighted the scale and inclusivity of the project. "FINCLUDE will mobilise around \$1.89 billion in private capital, expand debt financing to 250,000 MSMEs - including at least 150,000 women-led enterprises and 100,000 agribusinesses - and issue up to \$800 million in guarantees to catalyse lending," she said. "By extending the average maturity of MSME loans to about three years, firms can invest in equipment, factories, staff, and productivity, converting finance into jobs and tangible growth."

The FINCLUDE project is expected to enhance the quality and reach of Nigeria's financial system by encouraging innovative products, supporting private-sector lenders, and ensuring that previously underserved groups, particularly women and rural entrepreneurs, gain equitable access to finance. By combining concessional funding, private capital mobilization, and technical assistance, the program aims to strengthen the foundation for sustained economic growth and inclusive development.

FG, World Bank Launch \$500M HOPE-GOV Program To Strengthen Education, Healthcare

The Federal Government, in partnership with the World Bank, has launched the Human Capital Opportunities for Prosperity and Equity-Governance (HOPE-GOV) Program, a \$500 million

Of the total funding, \$480 million is earmarked to reward states that achieve Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) in education and primary healthcare, while \$20 million will cover program coordination, results verification, monitoring and evaluation, and technical support for implementing agencies.

The program focuses on increasing sectoral financing, enhancing transparency and accountability in budgeting and audits, and addressing workforce gaps by improving recruitment and retention of teachers and primary healthcare personnel. Participating states will be evaluated against six independently verified DLR indicators, ensuring funds are released based on performance and measurable outcomes.

Dr. Hassan noted that the World Bank approved HOPE-GOV in September 2024, with subsequent Federal Executive Council approval in February 2025 and the signing of the financing agreement in April 2025, officially making the program effective in September 2025. All 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory have expressed interest and received subsidiary agreements for formal participation.

In her remarks, Dr. Odoh reaffirmed the Ministry's support for the initiative and commended the HOPE-GOV team for the progress made within a short implementation period, emphasizing the program's potential to strengthen Nigeria's human capital through improved service delivery in education and healthcare.

Only 17% Of 2025 Capital Budget Released By Q3 As FG Prioritises Project Continuity



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu presenting the budget

By Jennete Ugo Anya

President Bola Tinubu has disclosed that the federal government released only about 17 percent of the 2025 capital budget by the end of the third quarter, amounting to approximately N3.1 trillion, as fiscal authorities focused on completing priority projects carried over from the 2024 budget cycle.

The disclosure was made recently during the presentation of the 2026 Appropriation Bill to a joint session of the National Assembly, where the president outlined the fiscal realities that shaped budget implementation in the outgoing year. According to him, the pace of capital releases in 2025 was influenced largely by the decision to extend the execution of the 2024 budget into the current fiscal year, in order to ensure continuity and value for money on critical projects.

President Tinubu explained that as of June 2025, the government had released N2.23 trillion specifically for capital projects captured under the 2024 budget, whose implementation timeline was extended to December 2025. This overlap, he said, created competing execution demands that affected the rollout of new capital allocations under the 2025 framework.

He noted that the transition between fiscal cycles posed coordination challenges, particularly in aligning cash releases with project readiness and contractor mobilisation, a situation the government sought to manage by prioritising completion of ongoing infrastructure and social investment projects rather than spreading limited resources thinly across new commitments.

Beyond capital spending, the president provided lawmakers with an overview of aggregate fiscal

performance for the year. He said total government revenue for 2025 stood at N18.6 trillion, representing about 61 percent of the full year target, while total expenditure reached N24.66 trillion, or roughly 60 percent of projected spending.

These figures, President Tinubu said, reflected the difficult balance between sustaining economic recovery, servicing legacy obligations, and managing revenue constraints in a period of adjustment. He stressed, however, that lessons from the 2025 fiscal year were already informing a more disciplined approach to the 2026 budget.

... these reforms are designed to enhance transparency, strengthen efficiency, and support long-term fiscal sustainability, particularly by reducing leakages and improving compliance

plined approach to the 2026 budget.

“Let me be clear, 2026 will be a year of stronger discipline in budget execution,” the president told lawmakers, signalling a shift toward tighter coordination, improved monitoring, and stricter adherence to approved timelines.

To that end, President Tinubu said he had issued direct instructions to key fiscal authorities, including the minister of finance and coordinating minister of the economy, the minister of budget and economic planning, the accountant-general

of the federation, and the director-general of the budget office. Their mandate, he said, is to ensure that the 2026 budget is implemented strictly in line with legislative approvals, cash plans, and execution schedules.

Looking ahead, the president expressed confidence that revenue performance would improve, driven by the rollout of the new National Tax Acts

... the pace of capital releases in 2025 was influenced largely by the decision to extend the execution of the 2024 budget into the current fiscal year, in order to ensure continuity and value for money on critical projects

and ongoing reforms in the oil and gas sector. He said these reforms are designed to enhance transparency, strengthen efficiency, and support long-term fiscal sustainability, particularly by reducing leakages and improving compliance.

President Tinubu also issued a firm warning to government-owned enterprises, directing them to meet their assigned revenue targets. He announced plans to accelerate the digitisation of revenue mobilisation systems across federal agencies, a move aimed at tightening controls and improving accountability.

According to him, the digitisation drive will involve standardised electronic collections, automated reconciliation processes, and real-time monitoring of revenue performance. Revenue targets, he added, will now form part of performance evaluations for agencies and their leadership.

“Nigeria can no longer afford inefficiencies or revenue leakages,” the president said, emphasising that fiscal stability requires coordinated effort across all institutions of government.

The budget presentation came amid ongoing legislative deliberations on fiscal adjustments. Earlier in the week, the Senate commenced consideration of a bill seeking to repeal and re-enact the 2024 and 2025 Appropriations Act, proposing a revised budget size of N43.56 trillion.

President Tinubu has formally transmitted the Appropriation, Repeal and Re-enactment Bill 2024 to the National Assembly, setting the stage for legislative review and alignment with the government’s broader fiscal strategy.

Taken together, the disclosures underscore the administration’s emphasis on fiscal consolidation, project completion, and institutional discipline, as Nigeria prepares to enter the 2026 budget year with renewed focus on execution efficiency and sustainable public finance management.




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FG Launches Electric Motorbikes, Introduces Mandatory Drug Testing In Public Service



Senator George Akume, Secretary to the Government of the Federation

By Anita Dennis

The federal government has taken two decisive steps aimed at boosting national security and strengthening workforce integrity, unveiling 75 electric motorbikes for the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) and mandating pre-employment drug testing across all federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs).

Speaking at the inauguration of the newly procured electric motorbikes in Abuja, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, urged the FRSC to leverage modern facilities to enhance road security and support economic growth. He emphasized that road safety and national security are intertwined, noting that well-secured highways are crucial for smooth socio-economic activities.

“The FRSC must key into the renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu, ensuring citizen security, public confidence, and sustainable solutions,” Sen. Akume said. He stated that the deployment of the electric motorbikes demonstrates the federal government’s firm commitment to protecting lives, property, and critical infrastructure across the country.

According to the SGF, the motorcycles are equipped with sirens, high-visibility amber lights, microphones and loudspeakers for public announcements, as well as live audiovisual recording systems to support transparent enforcement. He called on the corps to deploy the motorbikes strategically to ease traffic and provide real-time intelligence to other security agencies for prompt responses to criminal activities.

FRSC Corps Marshal, Mallam Shehu Mohammed, commended the federal government for its continued support, noting that the addition of the electric motorbikes would strengthen the Corps’ operational capacity and enhance nationwide road safety measures.

In a parallel move to strengthen workforce integrity, the FG has approved mandatory pre-employment drug testing for all prospective applicants into the Nigerian Public Service. The policy, communicated through a service-wide circular by the Office of the SGF, directs all Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Extra-Ministerial Departments and Parastatals to implement drug testing in collaboration with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

The Director of Information and Public Relations in the Office of the SGF, Segun Imohiosen, explained that the initiative aims to curb rising incidents of illicit drug use while safeguarding productivity and public trust within the civil service. He clarified that the measure is preventive rather than punitive, designed to promote a healthy, disciplined, and dependable workforce capable of driving sustainable national development.

Together, these initiatives reflect the administration’s dual focus on security and efficiency. While the electric motorbikes are set to improve road safety and national security through enhanced mobility and real-time intelligence, pre-employment drug testing seeks to ensure that only qualified and responsible personnel are recruited into the public service.

Observers say the introduction of modern patrol equipment and preventive drug-testing measures marks a notable shift in Nigeria’s approach to security and workforce management. In combining technology-driven enforcement with preventive health policies, the government aims to create safer roads, a more disciplined workforce, and an environment conducive to sustained economic and social development.

As these programs roll out, attention will focus on the effective deployment of the motorbikes and the implementation of rigorous but fair drug testing procedures, ensuring both initiatives meet their intended goals of enhancing safety, efficiency, and public confidence across the country.

Quotes of the Week

Dr. Dele Alake, Hon. Minister of Solid Minerals Development

This government is committed to harnessing Nigeria’s mineral wealth to achieve the N1 trillion economy target envisioned by His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Council of Nigerian Mining Engineers and Geoscientists (COMEG) is not just a regulator – it is a strategic partner in this national transformation.

Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms

Therefore, the plan to commence the two remaining new laws on the first of January 2026 will go ahead as planned, on schedule, because these reforms are designed to provide relief to the Nigerian people.

Babajide Sanwo-olu, Lagos State Governor

Tax reform is not intended to be ambiguous, cumbersome, or contradictory. Rather, it is designed to simplify processes, eliminate multiple and overlapping collections, and clearly delineate what should be collected by the State and what should be collected by Local Governments.

International Partners' \$1.16bn Support Lifts Nigeria's Power Grid To Record Capacity

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Nigeria's electricity transmission network reached a historic milestone in 2025, as a combination of international financing, structural reforms, and accelerated infrastructure delivery pushed national wheeling capacity to an unprecedented 8,700 megawatts.

The progress, underpinned by \$1.16 billion in support from international partners, marks one of the most significant advances in the country's power sector in decades, even as authorities remain alert to persistent security challenges.

The achievements were outlined by Mr. Sule Ahmed Abdulaziz, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), during a weekend address themed Reflecting on a Year of Progress and Powering Our Future Together. He described 2025 as a defining year in which long planned reforms began translating into measurable gains across the national grid.

Central to this progress was the operational separation of system management functions from core transmission infrastructure. The unbundling of TCN and the commencement of operations by the Nigerian Independent System Operator allowed each insti-

International partnerships played a critical role in this transformation. The \$1.16 billion in funding supported multiple transmission expansion and reinforcement projects, including the Abuja Feeding Scheme. The project delivered five new substations alongside a 330 kilovolt transmission line, significantly improving power supply reliability in the Federal Capital Territory and surrounding areas.

"These partnerships are modernising our grid and positioning Nigeria's electricity sector to support sustained economic growth," Mr. Abdulaziz said, noting that the scale and consistency of donor support reflected renewed global confidence in the country's reform trajectory.

Despite the progress, challenges remain. Vandalism and sabotage continued to threaten transmission assets, with 131 recorded incidents between January and November 2025. In response, TCN intensified collaboration with the Office of the National Security Adviser, the Nigeria Police, and community based vigilante groups to strengthen patrols, improve intelligence gathering, and deepen local engagement around critical infrastructure.

Mr. Abdulaziz emphasised that community ownership and security collaboration had become essential pillars of grid protection, particularly as new transmission lines extend into remote areas. He also commended the commitment of TCN staff and the co-operation of organised labour, including the Senior



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 tion to focus on its core mandate. While NISO now oversees system operations, market administration, and regulatory compliance, TCN has concentrated fully on expanding and modernising transmission infrastructure.

According to Mr. Abdulaziz, this clearer division of responsibilities removed long standing administrative bottlenecks and enabled faster execution of grid projects nationwide. From January 2024 to November 2025, TCN installed 82 new power transformers, injecting more than 8,500 megavolt amperes into the transmission network. The upgrades significantly strengthened the grid's ability to carry higher volumes of electricity from generation points to distribution companies.

These investments translated into record operational performance. On March 4, 2025, the grid transmitted a peak load of 5,801.84 megawatts, while daily energy sent out hit an all time high of 128,370.75 megawatt hours. Industry analysts view these benchmarks as clear evidence of a more resilient and responsive transmission system, capable of supporting Nigeria's growing electricity demand.

Staff Association of Electricity and Allied Companies and the National Union of Electricity Employees, for maintaining industrial harmony during a period of intense operational change.

Looking ahead to 2026, the TCN chief outlined priorities that include faster project delivery timelines, deeper deployment of digital monitoring technologies, and closer operational coordination with NISO to enhance grid stability and market efficiency. He said the objective is not only to move more power, but to do so reliably, transparently, and sustainably.

Mr. Abdulaziz expressed appreciation to President Bola Tinubu, the Honourable Minister of Power, Mr. Adebayo Adedun, international development partners, and security agencies for their support. He also paid tribute to TCN staff members who lost their lives in the line of duty, describing their sacrifice as a reminder of the human effort behind national infrastructure.

"Our people are our strength," he said. "Together, we are laying the foundations to power Nigeria's future."

REA Deploys 200+ Mini-Grids In 2025, Targets 1,350 Projects To Expand Rural Electricity Access

By Kingsley Benson

The Rural Electrification Agency (REA) has stepped up efforts to close Nigeria's electricity access gap, deploying more than 200 mini-grids across underserved communities nationwide in 2025. The initiative forms part of the Nigeria Electrification Project (NEP), which aims to provide reliable power to millions of Nigerians without access to the national grid.

Speaking at a media briefing in Kano, Mr. Abba Abubakar Aliyu, Managing Director of REA, said that the deployments represent a significant milestone in improving electricity supply for rural and off-grid communities. "The completion of the NEP demonstrates tangible progress in ensuring electricity reaches those who need it most," he said.

Mr. Aliyu highlighted that the agency's renewable energy initiatives gained momentum in 2025, supported by both ongoing and newly approved projects. A major boost came with presidential approval for the \$750 million Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-Up (DARES) project, which seeks to deploy 1,350 mini-grids, providing electricity to approximately 17.5 million Nigerians nationwide. "We are currently building over 900 mini-grids across the country, with a target of completing 1,350," he said.

Beyond project deployment, the REA intensified collaboration with state governments through 21 state-specific roundtable meetings, an initiative described as unprecedented. According to Mr. Aliyu, these engagements provided data, partnership frameworks, and updates on ongoing electrification projects, aligning federal and state efforts for greater impact.

The agency also completed a nationwide electrification mapping exercise, identifying over 150,000 communities either without electricity or with unreliable supply. The mapping will guide the adoption of least-cost electrification solutions, ensuring efficiency and sustainability in the delivery of power.

Mr. Aliyu reiterated the agency's commitment to expanding electricity access, noting that the current administration aims to provide power to 25 million Nigerians within the next three years. "The government wants me to tackle this challenge head-on. That is why we set the target to electrify 25 million Nigerians as quickly as possible," he said.

The REA plans to employ a diversified strategy to reach these targets, tailored to regional and infrastructural realities: 30 million Nigerians are expected to receive electricity through isolated mini-grids, 1.5 million through interconnected mini-grids, and 12 million via mesh grids and standalone home systems. This mix is designed to accelerate electrification while maintaining long-term reliability.

In March, REA received approval to establish a renewable asset management company to ensure sustainability of its electrification interventions and the long-term viability of infrastructure. The move is expected to strengthen the agency's capacity to manage projects efficiently and secure energy supply for rural and underserved communities over time.

With these initiatives, REA is steadily reshaping Nigeria's power landscape, making electricity more accessible, reliable, and sustainable for millions of citizens who have long been off the grid.



NIGERIA FIRST

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Let us be blunt: in the past, government’s communication structures had been lethargic, inconsistent, and often reactive.

MDAs, despite overseeing groundbreaking reforms across agriculture, power, finance, education, digital innovation, energy, and infrastructure, had largely failed to communicate their successes with clarity and consistency. In their silence, distortions flourished. In their delays, misinformation had taken root.

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Tinubu Presses Governors On Local Government Autonomy, Signals Readiness To Enforce Supreme Court Ruling



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (m), with Vice President Kashim Shettima (1st r) and others during National Executive Committee meeting of APC

By Kingsley Benson

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has renewed his call on state governors to fully respect and implement the Supreme Court judgment granting financial autonomy to Nigeria’s 774 local government councils, signalling that continued delays could attract decisive executive action.

The president made his position clear recently at the 15th National Executive Committee meeting of the All Progressives Congress (APC) held at the State House Conference Centre, Abuja, where senior party leaders, governors, federal lawmakers, and top government officials gathered to review party affairs and national issues.

President Tinubu said that the apex court’s ruling left no ambiguity about how local government funds should be handled, stressing that allocations meant for councils must be paid directly to them, without interference or diversion at the state level. While emphasising his preference for consensus and cooperation, the president warned that persistent non-compliance could compel the federal government to take further steps to enforce the judgment.

“The Supreme Court has said, give them their money directly,” President Tinubu told the gathering. He said he had deliberately exercised restraint in dealing with governors on the matter, but added that patience should not be mistaken for weakness. According to him, failure to align with the ruling could affect how allocations are treated at future Federation Accounts Allocation Committee meetings.

The renewed push for local government financial autonomy comes amid broader efforts by the administration to strengthen governance at the grassroots, improve service delivery, and deepen democratic accountability. President Tinubu noted that empowering councils financially was essential to bringing development closer to the people and reducing overcentralisation within the federation.

Beyond fiscal federalism, the president used the meeting to urge unity and tolerance within the ruling party. He reminded leaders that the APC

was founded on progressive ideals that value inclusion, internal democracy, and respect for differing views. Sustaining these values, he said, was critical to the survival of Nigeria’s democracy and the party’s long term relevance.

“We must continue to be resolute that this democracy must not fail,” President Tinubu said, adding that resilience within the party required accommodation and mutual respect. He expressed confidence that adherence to progressive principles would enable the APC to continue steering the country toward stability, prosperity, and inclusive development.

On security reform, the president reiterated his support for the creation of state police, describing it as a necessary evolution in Nigeria’s response to terrorism, banditry, and violent crime. He called on the National Assembly to summon the Inspector General of Police to examine frameworks that would allow state policing while instituting safeguards to prevent abuse of power.

President Tinubu also reaffirmed his backing for initiatives aimed at increasing women’s participation in elective offices, describing gender inclusion as both a democratic imperative and a driver of national development. In addition, he advised lawmakers against efforts to centralise lottery regulation, maintaining that lotto activities fall within the constitutional jurisdiction of state governments.

The tone of the meeting reflected strong internal support for the president’s leadership. Vice President Kashim Shettima commended President Tinubu’s political courage and historical role in sustaining Nigeria’s democratic opposition, arguing that the president’s legacy positioned the APC strongly ahead of the 2027 elections.

Vice President Shettima said that President Tinubu had played a defining role in funding and organising democratic resistance at a time when political engagement carried significant personal risk. Any attempt to challenge his popularity in 2027, he said, would underestimate the depth of political capital he has built over decades.

Party organisation also featured prominently at the meeting. APC National Chairman, Mr. Nentawe Yilwatda, announced plans to commence nationwide electronic registration of party members across wards, local governments, and states. He urged governors, legislators, former office holders, and party stakeholders to provide logistical support to ensure the success of the exercise.

Mr. Yilwatda also disclosed that the tenure of current party executive committees at the ward, local government, state, and zonal levels had been extended until March 2026, a move aimed at ensuring continuity as the party prepares for future electoral cycles.

The meeting further drew commendation from Senate President, His Excellency Godswill Akpabio and Imo State Governor, His Excellency Hope Uzodimma, who praised the president for pursuing bold economic reforms they said were beginning to reposition the economy for sustainable growth.

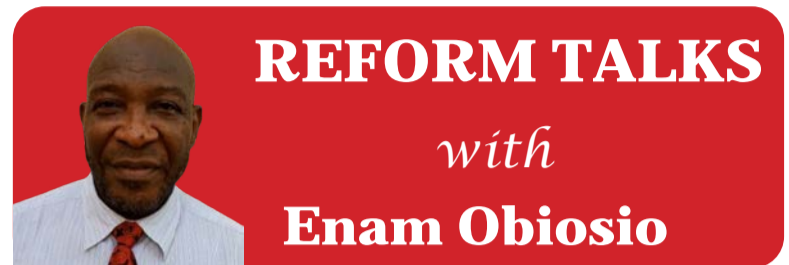
As discussions closed, President Tinubu’s remarks on local government autonomy stood out as a signal of the administration’s intent to translate judicial decisions into practical governance outcomes. With the Supreme Court judgment now firmly on the national agenda, attention is expected to shift to how quickly states align their fiscal practices with the ruling and how the federal government balances enforcement with political consensus.

Reforms Nuggets

Nigeria’s Fiscal Deficit Hits N5.7trn in H1 2025

- Nigeria recorded a fiscal deficit of about N5.7 trillion in the first half of 2025, underscoring sustained pressure on public finances.
- Data from Q1 and Q2 Budget Implementation Reports show deficits were below projections but significantly higher than 2024 levels, reflecting widening revenue–expenditure gaps.
- Q1 2025 deficit stood at N3.04 trillion, 13.67% below the projected N3.53 trillion, but more than double the N1.47 trillion recorded in Q1 2024.
- Domestic borrowing dominated Q1 financing, accounting for N3.30 trillion, alongside N57.16bn from privatisation and N70.11bn from multilateral and bilateral loans.
- In Q2 2025, the deficit eased to N2.66 trillion, about 24.52% below the N3.53 trillion projection and lower than N3.17 trillion in Q2 2024.
- The Q2 deficit-to-GDP ratio was 2.64%, remaining within Nigeria’s 3% fiscal threshold and ECOWAS convergence criteria.
- Domestic borrowing again led Q2 financing at N2.80 trillion, raising concerns about local debt growth and interest costs.
- External financing rose sharply in Q2, with N1.60 trillion from multilateral and bilateral project-tied loans and N7.76bn from privatisation proceeds.
- Increased use of concessional external loans reflects efforts to lower financing costs, though it adds to debt levels and foreign exchange exposure.
- Combined Q1 and Q2 figures place Nigeria’s H1 2025 fiscal deficit at approximately N5.7 trillion, highlighting persistent revenue weakness, especially from non-oil sources.
- Economists warn that heavy domestic borrowing could push up interest rates, crowd out private sector credit, and strain funding for social services and infrastructure.
- In 2024, Nigeria’s fiscal deficit reportedly rose to N13.51 trillion, breaching the Fiscal Responsibility Act’s deficit-to-GDP limit, intensifying scrutiny of current borrowing trends.
- The Budget Office notes that actual quarterly deficits continue to exceed internal benchmarks, reflecting challenges in matching projections with fiscal realities.
- Focus now shifts to H2 2025 revenue performance, as tax and compliance reforms are expected to take effect.
- Staying below projections offers limited relief, as the scale of the deficit highlights the need for stronger revenue mobilisation and tighter spending control.

Over 140 MDAs Fail Ethics Test, Nigeria Is Paying the Price



I read the latest disclosure by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and felt a familiar mix of anger, fatigue, and grim recognition. Over 140 federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) operating without annual ethics and integrity training plans in 2025 is not a technical failure. It is a moral collapse dressed up as bureaucratic routine.

When the ICPC tells the country that most MDAs do not train their staff on ethics, integrity, and compliance, it is effectively saying that corruption in Nigeria is not accidental. It is structural. It is tolerated. It is, in many cases, institutionalised.

This revelation was made in Abuja during the presentation of the 2025 Ethics and Integrity Compliance Scorecard, delivered on behalf of ICPC Chairman, Mr. Musa Aliyu, by Olusegun Adigun. But the venue and protocol do not soften the substance. No MDA achieved full compliance. None. That alone should have triggered resignations across the public service.

Let us pause on that fact. In an entire federal bureaucracy running into hundreds of MDAs, not one could meet basic standards of ethics and integrity compliance. Not one. This is not about lack of capacity. It is about lack of seriousness.

The scorecard shows that 114 MDAs failed to submit their financial reports to the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation in 2025. Forty MDAs refused or failed to remit internally generated revenue as required by law. Seventy five MDAs breached the Fiscal Responsibility Act. These are not grey areas. These are statutory obligations.

Every time Nigerians complain that government is broke, that capital budgets are underfunded, that social services are weak, this is the backdrop. Revenue is leaking. Reports are missing. Laws are ignored. And yet the same MDAs return every year asking for higher allocations, bigger overheads, and fresh borrowing.

The deeper rot is even more disturbing. According to the ICPC, 169 MDAs do not have documented core values, mission, or vision statements that staff can understand or internalise. One hundred and ninety one MDAs have no clear policies governing acceptance of gifts, donations, or hospitality. In plain language, civil servants are operating in ethical darkness.

How does an organisation function without articulated values? How does a public officer decide what is acceptable or unacceptable conduct when no standards are set? The answer is obvious. People fall back on discretion, patronage, and personal judgment. That is how corruption thrives quietly, efficiently, and without paperwork.

This is why Nigeria's corruption problem cannot be solved by arrests alone. You cannot police a vacuum. You cannot enforce integrity where institutions have not defined it. What ICPC's report exposes is not just misconduct, but institutional negligence.

I find it telling that while some agencies performed relatively well, others that shape the future of the country ranked among the worst. The Nigeria Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) topped the EIC ranking, followed by the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC). Meanwhile, the Federal Ministry of Education and the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) were among the poorest performers.

That contrast should worry anyone who cares about Nigeria's trajectory. Education shapes values. Public enterprises manage national assets. When ethics collapses in these spaces, the consequences ripple for decades.

The ICPC also assessed Anti Corruption and Transparency Units (ACTUs) across MDAs. Out of 357 assessed, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria ranked 37th. That detail matters because ACTUs were created to be internal guardrails. Their uneven effectiveness tells us that even anti corruption structures inside government are often symbolic rather than functional.

I am tired of pretending that this is normal. It is

What ICPC's report exposes is not just misconduct, but institutional negligence

not. In functional states, failure to submit financial reports or comply with fiscal laws carries consequences. In Nigeria, it is treated as a statistic in a report, discussed briefly, and forgotten until the next scandal.

What makes this even more painful is the timing. Nigeria is in the middle of painful economic reforms. Subsidies have been removed. The currency has adjusted. Inflation has bitten hard. Citizens are being told to endure short term pain for long term gain. Yet the same government machinery asking for sacrifice is riddled with ethical indiscipline.

There is something deeply offensive about asking market women, workers, and small businesses to tighten their belts while MDAs cannot even account for revenue or define basic ethical standards.

It sends the message that reform is for the governed, not the governors.

I do not believe corruption persists because Nigerians lack laws. We have laws. We lack enforcement, leadership, and consequence. When 40 MDAs fail to remit internally generated revenue and nothing happens, it becomes a business model. When 114 MDAs ignore reporting obligations and no one is sanctioned, impunity hardens.

Ethics training is not a luxury. It is not a seminar box to tick. It is the foundation of public service. In countries that take governance seriously, ethics compliance is embedded from recruitment to retirement. In Nigeria, it is treated as an afterthought, if at all.

The absence of clear gift and hospitality policies is particularly dangerous. That is how bribery hides in plain sight. A gift becomes appreciation. Hospitality becomes access. Favour becomes entitlement. Without clear boundaries, corruption does not look like corruption. It looks like culture.

The ICPC says these reports are meant to promote integrity, accountability, efficiency, and productivity. That is commendable. But reports alone will not save Nigeria. What will matter is what happens next.

I want to see consequences. Not press statements. Not workshops. Consequences. Heads of MDAs that repeatedly fail compliance tests should be named, sanctioned, and removed. Budgetary allocations should be tied to ethics performance. Promotion in the civil service should be impossible without compliance certification.

If Nigeria is serious about reform, ethics must stop being decorative language and become operational reality. Every MDA should be required to publish its ethics framework, compliance score, and remedial actions annually. Citizens should be able to see who is compliant and who is not.

The President talks about discipline. Ministers talk about reform. Legislators talk about oversight. This is where all three must meet. A government that cannot enforce ethics within itself cannot credibly enforce sacrifice on its people.

I am not naïve. I know reforming institutions is slow and difficult. But refusing to act is costlier. Corruption is not just stealing money. It is stealing time, trust, and opportunity. It is why budgets fail, policies stall, and citizens lose faith.

The ICPC has done its job by exposing the truth. The ball is now squarely in the court of political leadership. Will these findings gather dust, or will they mark a turning point?

Nigeria cannot afford business as usual. Not now. Not with debt rising, poverty deepening, and patience thinning. Ethics is not an abstract ideal. It is economic infrastructure. And right now, that infrastructure is dangerously weak.

If we are serious about rebuilding Nigeria, we must start with the simplest demand of governance that those entrusted with public power act with integrity, or step aside.