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INSIDE LAND TRANSPORT POLICY:

NIGERIA'S BLUEPRINT FOR INTEGRATED, SAFER AND MORE EFFICIENT TRANSPORT SYSTEM



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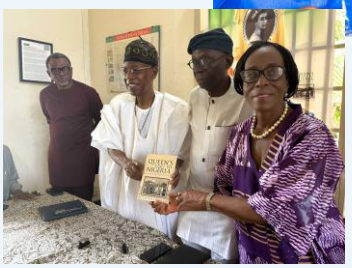
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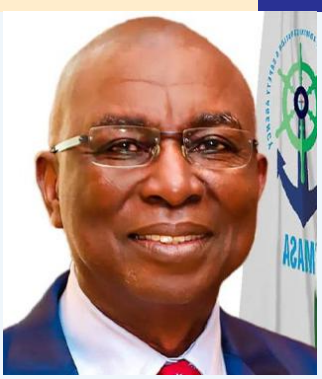


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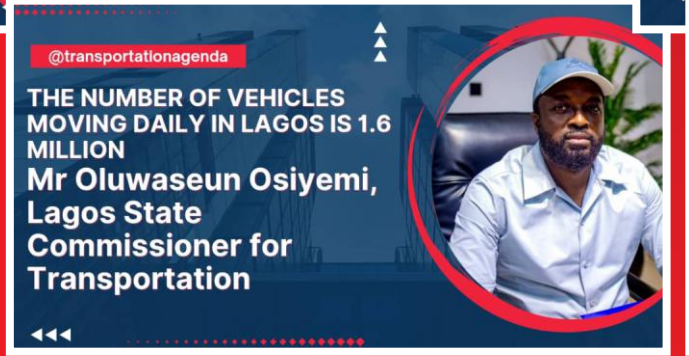
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POLICY, DATA AND CAPITAL: THE FOUNDATIONS OF A WORKING TRANSPORT SYSTEM



Prince Dr Segun Ochuko Obayendo

Three stories in this edition make a single argument: the performance of Nigeria's transport sector depends on the strength of the policies and institutions behind it.

Infrastructure and investment matter, but they deliver results only when the framework around them is clear, coordinated and enforced. Our lead stories show where policy, data and capital must meet. Our cover story examines the National Land Transport Policy, which sets out a blueprint for an integrated, safer and more efficient transport system. For decades, road, rail and urban mobility have been governed through overlapping mandates across federal, state and local tiers, with limited coordination on planning, funding and standards. The policy addresses that fragmentation directly. Its value, however, will be determined by implementation.

That means enabling legislation, defined institutional responsibilities, harmonised safety standards, predictable funding and targets that can be measured. State governments carry much of this burden, since many of the services citizens use daily fall within their jurisdiction. Cooperation between tiers of government is therefore a condition of success, and the policy should be read as an invitation to align mandates and budgets.

The Nigerian Meteorological Agency's call for private investment to close Africa's 30 percent weather data gap deserves equal attention. Meteorological data underpins aviation safety, maritime operations, flood preparedness and road safety planning. Where it is incomplete, risk rises and so do costs. The policy question is how to attract private capital while keeping the data reliable, accessible and in the public interest. That requires a regulatory framework covering data ownership, service standards, pricing and obligations to the public. Weather data should be treated as critical national infrastructure and governed accordingly, with the same attention to standards and continuity that we give to airports and ports. The Blue Economy Expo, which targets a maritime investment boom, raises a similar question. Capital follows certainty. Investors in ports, shipping and inland waterways look for stable regulation, transparent concession terms, consistent charges and credible dispute resolution. Nigeria's maritime potential is not in doubt. What the market will watch is whether the agencies responsible for ports, shipping and inland waterways present a coherent regulatory position. The Expo offers a useful platform, but its success will be measured by the projects that reach financial close, the jobs they create and the skills they build.

Taken together, the pattern is plain. Policy sets direction, institutions deliver, data informs decisions and capital sustains the system. A weakness in any one of these undermines the rest. The task for government is to publish timelines, assign accountability and report progress openly. The task for regulators is to apply rules consistently and predictably. The task for the private sector is to engage constructively and honour its commitments. Nigerians who travel by road, rail, air and water every day are entitled to see these commitments measured and reported. Where all three do their part, policy stops being a document and becomes a working system. Transportation Agenda will continue to track implementation across all modes and to report where policy meets practice. We invite stakeholders to read, engage and write to us. A sector reforms best when it is watched closely and discussed honestly. In the coming months, we will return to each of these stories with updates, interviews and analysis.

REALITY CHECK ON NIGERIA'S $1 TRILLION TRANSPORT DREAM

By Olusemire Jegede



This month, I spent two days in Lagos at Chartered Institute of Transport Administration (CIoTA), 8th National Transport Conference.

I sat in a room full of heavyweights; policymakers, transport commissioners, and fellow practitioners, all talking about our ambition to hit a $1 trillion economy by 2030 under the theme, **"Integrated Multimodal Transport System for Sustainable Development in Nigeria."** It all sounds fantastic on a banner.

But as someone who has spent years in the trenches of Nigerian logistics and infrastructure, listening to the speeches was a mix of hope and profound frustration. We talk a good game on paper, but the gap between the policy documents and the actual asphalt is still a massive chasm.Here is my breakdown of what was said, and what it actually means for those of us doing the heavy lifting on the ground.

The $1 Trillion Vision

Taking the podium on behalf of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Engineer Olufunso Olusesan Adebiyi, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Transportation, set the tone by reframing transport not as a supporting service, but as a critical economic sector in its own right. He tied this directly to the $1 trillion economy target, citing the Renewed Hope Legacy Road Projects and the proposed Smart National Transport Data Bank. As a practitioner, I appreciate the intent. But a data bank is only as good as the data going into it. If a container clears the port in 24 hours but takes a week to reach the hinterland because of bad roads and checkpoint extortion, the system is just tracking a slow, expensive journey. For the $1 trillion vision to work, that data has to translate into actual seamless movement on the ground.

The "Connectivity" Problem, Not Just Infrastructure

Speaking for Governor Babatunde Sanwo-Olu, his Special Adviser on Transportation, Hon. Sola Giwa, hit the nail on the head when he said Nigeria doesn't lack infrastructure, but lacks the connections between them. Honestly, that was the most refreshing dose of reality I heard all conference. Moving heavy cargo or handling supply chain logistics. We can have a beautiful new rail line and a modern seaport, but if the last two kilometers to the industrial park are a death trap for articulated trucks, the system fails. We build islands instead of networks. It plays out on our streets constantly: a road that doesn't connect to a logistics hub is just a scenic route for potholes. We need to start planning the transfer; how goods and people move from one mode to the next, not just the vehicles themselves.

The Public Transport Subsidy Illusion

Engineer Biodun Otunola, the Managing

Director of Planet Projects Limited, gave the most practical presentation of the conference on the economics of public transport. He pointed out that people are spending up to 70% of their income on transport. Living in Abuja, I know commuters who burn a massive chunk of their daily earnings just to get from Area 1 to Life Camp. His call to shift the subsidy from petrol to public transport is exactly right in theory. But here is the reality check: just subsidizing fares without fixing the operational chaos is a black hole for government money. And the popular idea that buying CNG buses will magically solve everything? It won't. Ask any fleet manager: if you don't have the maintenance infrastructure, the spare parts supply chain, and the trained technicians to keep those buses on the road, you just end up with a lot of expensive, broken-down metal sitting in a depot. Public transport is a social service, yes, but it must be run with the ruthless efficiency of a business.

Why We Desperately Need the "Aviation Mindset"

Ogun State's Commissioner for Transport, Engineer Gbenga Dairo, made the point that will probably get ignored but shouldn't: we need aviation standards on our roads. Having worked around both sectors, the contrast is stark. When an aviation incident happens, the entire system stops. Agencies investigate, they find the root cause, and they enforce strict regulations.

On our roads, a fatal crash happens, the bodies are cleared, and by evening the same reckless driving continues. The road transport sector is highly informal and completely unregulated. Until we formalize these operators, register them, train them, and actually sanction them like we do in aviation, road crashes will keep killing us. You cannot have 95% of your transport supply in the hands of an untrained, lawless informal sector and expect a $1 trillion economy.

The Framework We've Been Waiting For

But complaining about the lack of standards is easy. What's harder is actually building the institution that enforces them. To his credit, outgoing CIoTA President, Prince Segun Obayendo; who is completing his tenure as the second President since the Institute attained chartered status didn't just give a speech. He formally handed over to Professor Samuel G. Odewunmi, but not before unveiling the Council for the Registration of Transport Practitioners (CONTRANSP) National Gazette.

This is massive for those of us on the ground. We're talking about CONTRANSP finally acting as a regulatory arm with a government mandate; a public-private partnership with the teeth to actually register, certify, and regulate us. Finally, we're going to have a framework for a digital registry where operators are actually certified for things like emissions and professional standards, not just handed a paper license.

Obayendo's words really hit home: "When I sought to contest and eventually assumed office, I never saw the office as a place to sit. I saw it as a conviction to carry." The Gazette itself is meant to be the authoritative reference document for practitioners, regulators, and policymakers, setting out the ethics and standards we've been missing. "We unveiled the CONTRANSP National Gazette, creating an authoritative platform for professional knowledge, research, regulation and policy discourse," he said. This is exactly the kind of institutional backbone needed to make the "aviation mindset" a reality.

The Bottom Line

The President is right that transport is the physical infrastructure of economic activities. But we need to stop treating it as just "building roads and buying buses." It's about fixing the connections, enforcing standards, and getting the economics right. With CONTRANSP now in play and the baton passed to Professor Odewunmi, the tools for real regulation finally exist on paper.

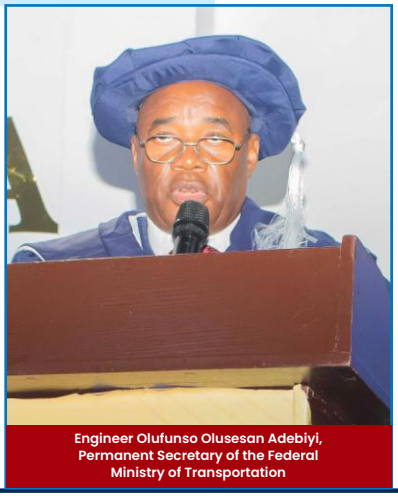
But a gazette won't fix the potholes. I'm challenging the new leadership to take this mandate to the streets. If we don't let the professionals; the people who actually know how to move goods and people efficiently, run the systems and enforce these new standards, we're just going to keep moving the same old bottlenecks from one side of the country to the other.



CIoTA President, Prince Segun Obayendo



Engineer Biodun Otunola, the Managing Director of Planet Projects Limited



Engineer Olufunso Olusesan Adebiyi, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Transportation



Engineer Gbenga Dairo, Ogun State Commissioner for Transport

CIOTA UNDER PRINCE SEGUN OBAYENDO: FOUR YEARS OF INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH, PROFESSIONAL RENEWAL AND POLICY INFLUENCE

By Abike Awojobi



From expanding its membership base to strengthening professional structures and advancing Nigeria's transport policy agenda, the 2022–2026 presidency of Prince Segun Ochuko Obayendo marked a significant chapter in the development of the Chartered Institute of Transport Administration of Nigeria.

The story of the Chartered Institute of Transport Administration of Nigeria (CIoTA) under Prince Segun Ochuko Obayendo is one of institutional expansion, professional consolidation and a deliberate effort to strengthen the place of transport administration in Nigeria's development. Between 2022 and 2026, the Institute pursued a broader vision of professional relevance, seeking to build an organisation with stronger internal structures, wider national reach and a more influential voice in transport policy. As the outgoing National President and Chairman of the Governing Council hands over leadership, the record of his administration offers a useful perspective on the progress made and the foundations laid for the future.

Growing the Professional Community

One of the most visible achievements of the Obayendo presidency was the expansion of CIoTA's membership. From approximately 1,200 members at the beginning of the administration, the Institute's membership database grew to more than 4,000, reflecting increased professional engagement and a wider recognition of the importance of transport administration.

The administration also strengthened the pipeline for future professionals through engagements with tertiary institutions. Student-membership initiatives and memoranda of understanding involving the University of Lagos, Lagos State University, Nigeria Maritime University and Federal University Lokoja helped connect the Institute with emerging talent. Approximately 500 professionals were reported as inducted between 2025 and 2026 in the President's report, while the Secretariat's record separately documented 276 inductees for the 2026 financial year. The figures cover different reporting periods and bases, but both point to a sustained emphasis on professional recruitment and development.

The strategic significance of this growth extends beyond membership numbers. A larger professional community creates opportunities for knowledge exchange, mentorship, continuing education and the development of common standards across Nigeria's diverse transport systems.

Building Stronger Institutional Structures

The administration placed considerable emphasis on strengthening CIoTA's governance and administrative framework.













A key development was the appointment of a new Registrar, Mrs Ijeoma Clara Okere, FInstTA, FNIM, in August 2026, alongside the strengthening of the Secretariat's management capacity. The professionalisation of the Secretariat was intended to improve day-to-day administration, member services and the implementation of the Institute's programmes. Supported by zonal coordinators and state chapter leadership, the Secretariat provides an administrative foundation for sustaining the Institute's growing national presence.

The six geopolitical zones also remained central to the administration's expansion strategy. Each zone had a coordinator, while the establishment of 26 new state branches and chapters was recorded during the period.

These structures brought CIoTA closer to practitioners and created additional platforms for professional engagement, local coordination and the promotion of the Institute's standards. Another landmark was the securing of a dedicated National Headquarters in Katampe, Abuja. Beyond providing a physical address, the headquarters represents an institutional home for meetings, training, administration and future development.

Deepening Professional Identity and Institutional Memory

A defining feature of the Obayendo presidency was the creation and strengthening of bodies intended to preserve professional knowledge, encourage senior-level participation and improve institutional continuity.

The Council of Fellows, also described in the handover report as the Forum for Fellows, was established to draw on the experience of senior professionals in guiding strategy, standards and policy positions. The administration also established the Award of Fellows, with its implementation scheduled to take effect in the following year. The Elders Forum created another avenue for experienced professionals and past leaders to offer counsel, support mediation where necessary and preserve the Institute's institutional memory. Meanwhile, the Council for the Registration of Transportants (CORTRANSP) and the unveiling of its National Gazette represented important steps towards strengthening professional regulation and creating a platform for research, policy perspectives, regulatory developments and industry knowledge. The establishment of CIoTA Consult Limited further broadened the Institute's institutional ambitions by providing a vehicle for consultancy, advisory services, research, technical support and professional training. Together, these initiatives reflect an effort to build an organisation whose influence extends beyond its membership register to the wider development of transport knowledge and professional practice.

Taking a Stronger Voice in National Transport Policy

Perhaps one of the most consequential aspects of the administration was its policy advocacy. CIoTA contributed to and helped facilitate the process that led to the passage of Nigeria's Land Transport Policy, reinforcing the Institute's position as a recognised professional voice in national transport administration. The administration consistently advanced the need for an integrated multimodal transport system in which road, rail, maritime transport, inland waterways, aviation and pipeline logistics operate as complementary parts of a connected national network. This position was reflected in the theme of the 8th National Transport Conference, held in Lagos on 13–14 October 2026: **Integrated Multimodal Transport Systems for Sustainable Development of Nigeria.**

The conference provided a platform for engagement on transport infrastructure, sustainable mobility, investment, safety, regulatory compliance, green logistics and professional capacity development. It also reinforced CIoTA's ambition to contribute practical recommendations to national transport policy, rather than limit its role to professional gatherings and declarations.

Advancing Training and Professional Standards

Professional development remained another important pillar of the presidency. The Institute strengthened its Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Programme, with quarterly sessions held from the beginning of 2026, alongside intensive training for new members and other learning opportunities. The introduction and promotion of the Professional Practice License also underscored the administration's focus on professional standards and accountability. The Secretariat's report listed 12 accredited training centres, while recording that 13 had been approved, indicating the need for continued alignment of accreditation records. National and zonal conferences, including the 7th National Transport Conference in Abuja in 2025 and the 8th edition in Lagos in 2026, further provided platforms for knowledge sharing and engagement across the profession.

A Legacy and a Continuing Responsibility

As Prince Segun Ochuko Obayendo concludes his 2022–2026 tenure, the defining legacy of his presidency lies in the structures established, the professional community expanded and the policy conversations advanced. The next phase will require consolidating these gains: deepening state chapter activity, strengthening professional discipline, converting stakeholder relationships into lasting partnerships and sustaining momentum around the implementation of the Land Transport Policy.

Leadership transitions ultimately test the durability of institutions. For CIoTA, the task ahead is to ensure that the achievements of the Obayendo years become a platform for even greater professional relevance and national impact. The outgoing President's message captures the spirit of this transition: **"We are CIoTANS. We are indispensable."** The challenge for the Institute is to make that assertion increasingly evident in the quality of its professionals, the strength of its institutions and its contribution to the future of transportation in Nigeria.

OBAYENDO: INFORMALITY IS STALLING NIGERIA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

By Olusemire Jegede



Prince Segun Obayendo has identified the persistent informality within Nigeria's transport sector as a critical impediment to national development and economic prosperity.

Addressing delegates at the 2026 CILT Nigeria National Conference and Annual General Meeting in Abuja, themed "Transforming Nigeria's Transport and Logistics Systems for Shared Prosperity and Sustainable Infrastructure," Obayendo, the Technical Adviser to the Vice President on Transportation, Logistics, and Innovation, noted that the informal operational models prevalent in road transport and inland waterways significantly undermine the industry's public image and structural integrity. He called for a collective effort to formalise the sector, pointing to Rwanda's pre-booking system as a viable model."How do we transform this informality to formality? It is not something one professional body can do alone. It is not something government can do alone. We need to look into it," Obayendo said. "In Rwanda, you pre-book your road transport, you reserve your ticket as if you are boarding an airplane. That is where to start."Highlighting the crucial role of transport professionals in the national economy, he added: "When we say we are transport, they should tremble, because the economy is in our hands, and we should be able to translate it to a better world."

Systemic Challenges and Multimodal Integration

Echoing the need for structural reform, Dr. Boboye Oyeyemi, President and Chairman of Council, CILT Nigeria, emphasized that transport and logistics determine the competitiveness of Nigerian trade and the affordability of goods.

Oyeyemi acknowledged the severe challenges facing the sector, citing infrastructure gaps, high logistics costs, and weak coordination across modes as major roadblocks. He called for the development of an integrated, efficient, and multimodal transportation system where roads, rail, maritime, aviation, and logistics hubs operate as a single national network.

The conference also featured the conferment of fellowships on the Chief of Naval Staff and the Inspector General of Police for their contributions to national development. "Fellowship is not merely an honour. It is an invitation to greater responsibility," Oyeyemi said.

International Commendation and PPPsDr. Patrick Mugabo, FCILT, International Vice President for Africa, commended CILT Nigeria for its continental leadership. "There is no CILT Africa without Nigeria, and I meant it. CILT Rwanda wouldn't be where it is today without CILT Nigeria," he said.Mugabo encouraged the Nigerian chapter to align its activities with CILT's international bylaws and governance framework, stressing that sustainable growth must go hand-in-hand with accountability, transparency, and good governance.Also speaking, Dr. Adelano Olamilekon, Managing Director of Zenith Carex Express, emphasized the vital role of public-private partnerships in revamping the sector.



Prince Segun Obayendo With Senator Gbenga Daniels, Former Governor Of Ogun State



Dr. Boboye Oyeyemi,
CILT Nigeria National President



Representative of the Chief of Naval Staff



Dr. Patrick Mugabo, CILT,
International Vice President, Africa

The event featured a keynote presentation by Professor Ayo Omotayo, Director General of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), bringing together policymakers, regulators, investors, and industry leaders. International delegates from Uganda, Ghana, and Rwanda were in attendance, alongside representatives of 17 professional bodies, service chiefs, and distinguished guests, including former Ogun State Governor, Senator Otunba Gbenga Daniels, and Chief Teete Owusu-Nortey, Immediate Past International President of CILT International." No single institution, agency, or sector can deliver the transformation Nigeria needs. It will take all of us, government, industry, academia, professional bodies, development partners, and citizens, working with purpose and a clear commitment to the public good," Oyeyemi concluded.

EXPERTS BLAME LACK OF POLITICAL WILL FOR NIGERIA'S POOR TRANSPORT INTEGRATION

By Lanre Abdul



Transport and logistics experts have blamed lack of political will and poor policy implementation for Nigeria's failure to develop an efficient integrated transport system.

The experts lamented that the country was still lagging behind in integrated transport system despite the arrays of local expertise and repeated government policy initiatives. The experts stated these in Lagos at the second edition of Just Alive Communications Limited Transport Summit with the theme: Navigating Global Disruption and The Road Ahead: Mobility, Energy and Trade Facilitation for Resilient Future,' held in Lagos. Speaking during a panel session on the paper delivered by a senior lecturer at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Dr Femi Aiyegbajeje, 'Rail-Led Multimodal Integration: Unlocking Efficient Transport, Trade Facilitation and National Connectivity,' the speakers said the country's major challenge was not the absence of workable ideas but the failure to translate policies into concrete action.

The Managing Principal of AZ Logistics, Dr Azeez Mustapha, said Nigeria had the capacity to develop an effective integrated transport system, but lacked the political commitment required to implement policies successfully. He urged the governments at all levels to prioritise implementation and develop a transport integration model suited to the country's peculiar circumstances. He said: "You see, some of it we have discussed this several times. Nigeria does not lack anything. What Nigeria lack is implementation. We lack the political will."So, we have discussed here about funds a few minutes ago, regarding the connectivity of the Lagos rail to airports. So, let's see how that works out in the next five years. Implementation is the key because one way or the other, people are benefiting from it. So, the implementation to let that achieve is a very difficult for Nigeria." He maintained that the government must demonstrate sufficient commitment to ensure that proposed transport infrastructure and connectivity projects delivered their intended benefits.

Also, the Managing Director of Expedite Movers Nigeria Limited, Olubowala Ade-Onojobi, faulted the country's approach to policymaking. She emphasised that successive administrations had introduced policies without ensuring their effective execution.

She suggested that the country could learn from the United Kingdom's transport system model, but cautioned against adopting foreign policies without adapting them to local realities. Ade-Onojobi questioned whether imported policies would be fully implemented or just introduced without the institutional discipline and coordination required to achieve their objectives."

We have policy in this country. There is no year in which the government does not come up with new policies. The authorities should demonstrate how existing policies are being implemented." Besides, Special Adviser to the Lagos State Governor on Blue Economy, Oluwadamilola Emmanuel, maintained that Nigeria did not need to import an entire transport model from another country to achieve effective integration. He said the country could develop homegrown solutions by building on existing initiatives and adapting them to local needs.

Emmanuel cited the Lagos State Cowry Card as an example of progress in multimodal integration, explaining that the payment platform allows commuters to pay for journeys on boats, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services and rail.
According to him, the system demonstrated how passengers could move across different transport modes using a common payment platform, improving convenience and connectivity. The Publisher of MMS Plus Newspaper, Kingsley Anaroke in his contribution, called for a gathering of Nigerian transport experts to develop a practical framework for integrating the country's transport infrastructure and services.

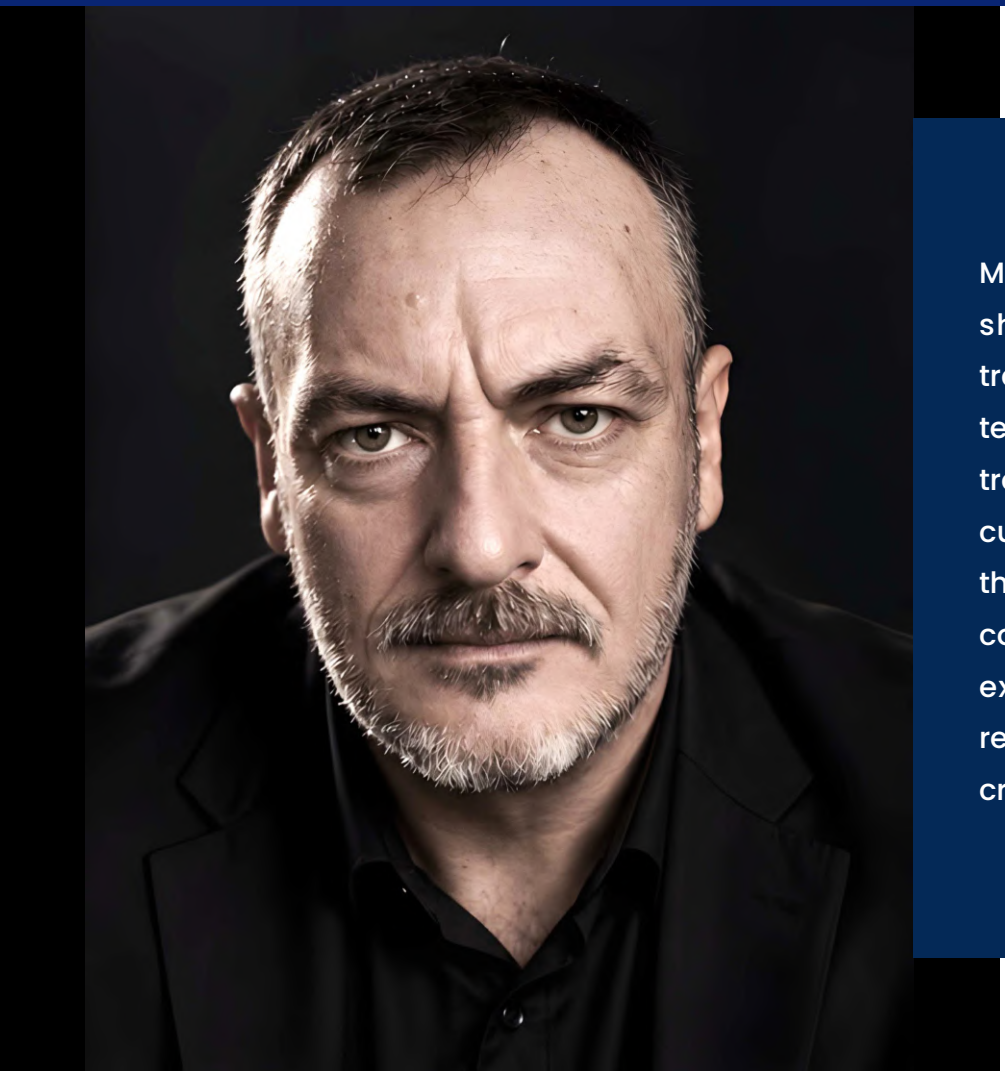
Anaroke stated that Nigeria had the human resources required to design an effective system, but had failed to harness its expertise and implement policies consistently.

He mentioned the country's Cabotage policy as an example whose expected benefits, had not been fully realised. He warned that adopting foreign models without addressing local challenges may not produce the desiring results.





MANY AFRICAN TRAVELLERS ARE HIGHLY CONSCIOUS OF THE COST OF INTERNATIONAL ROAMING



Mr Lee Walkey, Founder of Trvllr, shares insights on the future of traveller connectivity and the role of technology in making cross-border travel more seamless to strengthen customer engagement and retention through digital connectivity. In this conversation with **Abike Awojobi**, he explores how interconnectivity is reshaping the travel experience and creating new opportunities.

How is eSIM technology reshaping the way travellers stay connected across borders? What gap in the travel experience led you to build a white-label eSIM platform?

eSIM technology is fundamentally changing how people access mobile connectivity when travelling internationally. For the first time, travellers can arrange connectivity digitally, without visiting a mobile phone shop, physically changing SIM cards or relying on expensive roaming arrangements with their domestic operator.

However, while the technology has evolved, the commercial model behind much of the travel eSIM industry hasn't really changed. Most providers still sell temporary connectivity through prepaid data bundles with fixed validity periods. Customers are encouraged to estimate how much data they might need, purchase it in advance and consume it before an arbitrary expiry date. Whatever remains unused is typically lost.

Having spent more than 25 years working in telecommunications and connectivity, I saw an opportunity to challenge that model. We built Trvllr around a very simple principle: international connectivity should be a permanent service, not a temporary purchase. Our eSIM is installed once, can be used across more than 190 countries and allows customers to pay for the data they actually consume, without traditional bundle expiry dates or the need to repeatedly purchase and install new eSIMs. The white-label platform was a natural extension of that thinking.

We recognised that airlines, transport operators, travel companies, financial institutions and hospitality brands already have something that most

travel eSIM vendors spend enormous amounts of money trying to acquire: established relationships with people who travel. Rather than asking those customers to discover another unfamiliar eSIM brand, we enable businesses they already know and trust to offer their own branded international connectivity service. In effect, we're helping enterprises turn connectivity into an ongoing customer relationship rather than another one-off transaction.

How can transportation operators use eSIM to improve the passenger journey from booking to arrival?

Transportation operators have a unique opportunity because they already engage with passengers at several important stages of their journey. An airline, for example, knows where its passengers are travelling, when they're departing and when they're likely to need connectivity. That creates an opportunity to offer a genuinely useful service at precisely the right moment. A passenger could activate their airline-branded eSIM when booking a flight, receive a reminder before departure and arrive at their destination with connectivity already available. There's no searching for airport Wi-Fi, no hunting for local SIM cards and no uncertainty about roaming charges.

But the real opportunity extends beyond the initial journey. With a permanent eSIM, the passenger retains the service for their next trip, whether they're flying with the same airline, travelling by rail or visiting another country entirely. For transportation operators, this creates an additional digital touchpoint that remains relevant long after the original ticket has been used. Through our white-label platform, operators can integrate connectivity into their existing booking systems, apps and customer communications, or launch a standalone branded service with minimal technical development. The opportunity isn't simply to sell passengers mobile data. It's to make the entire journey easier while extending the relationship beyond the journey itself.

What role does seamless connectivity play in customer retention for travel and hospitality brands?

Customer retention is increasingly about relevance. Travellers don't necessarily remain loyal to a brand because they receive another promotional email, a small discount or a handful of loyalty points. They remain engaged with brands that consistently make their lives easier. Connectivity is particularly interesting because it's something almost every international traveller needs, regardless of their destination, budget or reason for travelling. Whether they're accessing boarding passes, booking transport, navigating unfamiliar cities, communicating with family or making payments, mobile connectivity underpins much of the modern travel experience.

When a trusted travel or hospitality brand provides that connectivity, it becomes associated with something genuinely useful. And unlike many traditional travel products, a permanent eSIM can remain relevant between journeys and across different destinations. That changes the nature of the relationship. Instead of the customer interaction ending at checkout, arrival or departure, the brand has an opportunity to maintain an ongoing service relationship. For me, the strongest customer loyalty comes from continued usefulness, not repeated incentives to purchase something else.

In your view, how close is Africa to mainstream eSIM adoption in its transport and travel sectors?

Africa represents one of the most interesting opportunities for travel eSIM adoption, but I think it's important to distinguish between the availability of the technology and mainstream consumer awareness. eSIM capability is already present in many smartphones across African markets, and operators are increasingly supporting the technology. However, adoption remains uneven, with differences in device affordability, consumer awareness, operator support and digital purchasing habits.I believe the biggest opportunity is not necessarily convincing consumers to seek out independent travel eSIM providers. It's introducing the technology through organisations they already engage with. Airlines, banks, travel agencies, transport operators and major consumer brands already have established customer relationships, distribution channels and digital platforms. Through our work with partners in Nigeria and across Africa, we've seen considerable interest in providing international connectivity as an extension of existing services.

There's also an important commercial consideration. Many African travellers are highly conscious of the cost of international roaming. A transparent, pay-as-you-go model that doesn't force customers to purchase more data than they need can be particularly attractive. I expect adoption to accelerate as eSIM-compatible devices become more widespread and trusted local brands introduce connectivity directly into their customer experiences. Africa doesn't necessarily need another generation of independent travel eSIM retailers. It needs accessible, affordable connectivity delivered through brands people already trust.

How does trvllr help brands create loyalty by design rather than by discount?

This is probably the most important distinction between trvllr. and much of the existing travel eSIM market. Traditional travel eSIM businesses are largely built around individual transactions. A customer travels, purchases a bundle, uses it or reaches its expiry date, and then starts the purchasing process again for their next

journey. That creates a constant cycle of customer acquisition, price comparison, promotional discounts and competition for the next sale. We've deliberately designed trvllr differently. Our model gives the customer a permanent international eSIM with transparent, country-based pay-as-you-go pricing and no traditional bundle expiry dates. Once installed, there's no reason to replace it simply because a trip has ended. For our white-label partners, this creates a fundamentally different commercial relationship. Rather than competing to sell another temporary data package, the brand can provide an ongoing connectivity service that customers return to whenever they travel.

The commercial benefits are equally important. A customer who retains the service can generate repeat revenue without the business having to reacquire that customer for every journey. Over time, that has the potential to improve customer lifetime value, reduce acquisition costs and create a more sustainable recurring revenue stream. We also allow partners to establish their own retail pricing and margins, giving them commercial control over the service. Loyalty shouldn't have to be bought back through discounts every time a customer travels. It should be earned by providing a service that's so convenient, fair and reliable that the customer has no reason to leave. That's what we mean by loyalty by design

What does the future of cross-border travel connectivity look like over the next five years? How are FinTech and travel converging, and where does eSIM sit in that intersection?

I believe the next five years will see international connectivity move away from being a standalone travel accessory and become an embedded component of the wider digital travel experience. We're already seeing travel and financial services converge. Digital banks, payment platforms, travel wallets and financial technology providers are increasingly offering services that extend beyond traditional banking. Customers can already manage foreign exchange, international payments, insurance and travel-related expenditure through a single digital platform. Connectivity is a natural addition to that ecosystem. After all, most of those digital services depend on the customer having reliable internet access in the first place.

Imagine a traveller using their banking app to exchange currency, purchase travel insurance, manage their spending and access mobile data abroad, all within the same trusted environment. That's a compelling proposition for both the customer and the financial institution. I also expect the distinction between domestic and international connectivity to become less relevant to consumers. Travellers increasingly expect digital services to work wherever they are, without having to understand the underlying mobile networks, roaming agreements or wholesale arrangements. The technology already makes much of this possible. What needs to change is the commercial thinking. At trvllr., we believe the future is persistent, account-based international connectivity, integrated into the platforms customers already use. The successful providers won't necessarily be those selling the cheapest gigabyte. They'll be the businesses that make connectivity so simple and accessible that customers barely have to think about it.

What is the biggest misconception businesses have about integrating eSIM into their offerings?

The biggest misconception is that launching an eSIM service requires becoming a telecommunications company. Many enterprises assume they need specialist telecoms expertise, complex network agreements, substantial infrastructure investment and dedicated technical teams. In reality, none of that needs to be the case. trvllr was built specifically to remove those barriers.We've already developed the connectivity infrastructure, commercial framework, customer management capabilities and supporting technology. An enterprise can launch its own branded international connectivity service without having to build those components itself. Depending on its requirements, that could mean a standalone white-label platform or an API integration into an existing website, booking engine or mobile application.

> **Through our white-label platform, operators can integrate connectivity into their existing booking systems, apps and customer communications, or launch a standalone branded service with minimal technical development.**

The business retains its customer relationship and controls how the service is presented, promoted and priced. We handle the underlying connectivity. There's also a second misconception: that eSIM should simply be treated as another ancillary product to sell during checkout. I think that significantly underestimates its potential.For enterprises with established travelling audiences, connectivity can become a long-term customer engagement and revenue opportunity. The technology is relatively straightforward. The bigger challenge is recognising that eSIM can be a customer retention strategy, not just an additional product.

If you could change one thing about how transport and travel brands engage customers today, what would it be?

I'd encourage businesses to stop viewing customer engagement almost exclusively through the lens of the next transaction. Much of the travel industry is structured around selling the next flight, the next hotel room, the next holiday or the next upgrade. Once that transaction is complete, the relationship often reverts to marketing communications designed to generate another purchase. But customers don't experience travel as a series of disconnected commercial transactions.

They experience it as a continuous journey involving transport, accommodation, payments, communications, navigation and countless other practical requirements. I think brands should spend more time asking how they can remain genuinely useful throughout that experience. Connectivity is a perfect example. An airline might only transport a particular passenger twice a year, but that passenger could use an airline-branded international eSIM on several other journeys. The airline remains relevant even when the customer isn't flying with them. That's a powerful change in how we think about customer relationships. Instead of repeatedly asking customers to come back and buy something, brands can give them a practical reason to remain connected. My view is simple: stop designing customer engagement around the next sale and start designing services around the lifetime of the customer.

Is the travel eSIM market becoming too focused on price rather than long-term customer value?

Absolutely, and I think it's one of the biggest challenges facing the industry. The travel eSIM market has become incredibly competitive, with hundreds of providers offering broadly similar products, often competing almost entirely on price, data allowances and promotional offers. But there's a fundamental problem with that approach. Most providers are selling a temporary service to a customer they then have to acquire all over again. That creates enormous pressure on marketing expenditure, acquisition costs and margins. And because so many packages have expiry dates, customers frequently pay for data they never actually use. Having worked extensively across the telecommunications wholesale market, I believe the industry has become too comfortable with that commercial model. At trvllr, we've taken a different approach.

We believe every gigabyte sold should generate a fair margin, every customer should have a reason to stay and every partner should benefit from the long-term relationship. We don't need customers to waste unused data for the business model to work. And we don't need to force customers into buying another package every time they cross a border. Instead, we focus on sustainable margins, repeat usage and long-term customer value. For enterprise partners, that's particularly important because they're not starting from zero. They already have the audience, the customer relationship and the trusted brand. Our job is to give them a connectivity service that strengthens all three. The future of travel eSIM isn't about selling more temporary packages. It's about building fewer, stronger and longer-lasting customer relationships.

These are the three main ideas that consistently distinguish trvllr from the conventional travel eSIM industry: connectivity should be permanent rather than temporary; enterprises should be able to monetise and strengthen existing customer relationships without becoming telecoms operators; and long-term customer loyalty is more valuable than repeatedly competing for individual transactions.

Customers can already manage foreign exchange, international payments, insurance and travel-related expenditure through a single digital platform.

INSIDE LAND TRANSPORT POLICY: NIGERIA'S BLUEPRINT FOR INTEGRATED, SAFER AND MORE EFFICIENT TRANSPORT SYSTEM

By Lanre Abdul

By addressing road transport, rail development, freight movement, passenger services, funding, regulation and inclusion, the newly launched National Land Transport Policy sets out an ambitious framework for transforming how people and goods move across the country. But as experts observe, the real test lies in implementation. Writes Transportation Agenda.



The Minister of Livestock Development of Nigeria is Alhaji Idi Mukhtar Maiha with Engineer Olufunso Olusesan Adebiyi, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Transportation.

For decades, Nigeria's transportation ecosystem has operated without a clear-cut policy. It has been described as a fragmented system, treating transportation not as a professional field deserving of a well-coordinated and organised management.

Over time the transportation which encompasses all modes – road, air and water transportation – have operated in silos despite decade-old advocacy for an intermodal transportation system that could make commuting much easier and more seamless. With each mode having its policy, the need for land transportation has become much more imperative given the strategic position of road transportation which carries 90 per cent of the movement of people and goods. Land transportation occupies a central position in Nigeria's economic and social development. From the movement of agricultural produce and industrial raw materials to daily commuting, intercity travel and the delivery of essential services, the country depends heavily on its land transport network to sustain economic activities and connect communities. Yet, despite its importance, the sector continues to face longstanding challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, poorly maintained vehicles, high transport costs, road safety concerns, weak coordination among regulatory institutions, congestion and limited access to affordable public transportation.

These challenges have consequences far beyond the transport industry. They affect food prices, business competitiveness, employment, access to education and healthcare, regional integration and the overall quality of life. It is against this background that the Federal Ministry of Transportation developed the National Land Transport Policy (NLTP), a policy framework

intended to establish a more coordinated, professional, competitive, safe and sustainable transport system for Nigeria. The document, which was developed in 2024 and subsequently updated in November 2024, represents an attempt to address the structural weaknesses of a sector that has grown in response to population expansion, urbanisation, commercial activity and changing travel demands, but has not always benefited from corresponding improvements in planning, regulation and investment. The development process involved an inter-ministerial technical committee inaugurated on January 31, 2024.

According to the document's foreword, the draft was presented to the 18th National Council on Transportation in Abeokuta, Ogun State, in February 2024 and subsequently subjected to a national stakeholders' validation process in Abuja in March of the same year. However, two years later, it was unveiled in September 2026 during the 19th National Council on Transportation held in Abuja.



The policy has five parts and nineteen chapters touching on policy fundamentals; modal issues; multimodal issues; cross-cutting issues and implementation strategy. The chapters include rail transport sector, road transport administration, freight transportation, non-motorised transportation, planning research and development, human resource and professionalism, among others. The policy was presented as a framework for coordinating national action while recognising that states, the Federal Capital Territory and local governments have different transport needs and responsibilities. Its central ambition is to move Nigeria towards an organised, professionally administered, efficient, competitive, integrated, private-sector-driven, safe, secure and sustainable land transport system.

Why Nigeria Needs National Land Transport Policy

The policy observes that land transportation is the predominant means of moving people, goods and services in Nigeria, serving more than 90 per cent of the country's transportation needs, according to the document.

Its importance extends from urban commuting to rural accessibility and international trade. Roads provide last-mile connections, while railways and other transport modes can support the movement of passengers and freight over longer distances. An efficient transport system also links production centres to domestic markets, ports and international trade corridors. Where these connections function effectively, businesses can reduce operating costs, improve delivery times and reach more customers. However, the policy identifies a sector characterised by inadequate coordination, limited regulation, insufficient public transport services, poor infrastructure management and underutilisation of alternative transport modes.

In urban areas, growing populations and increased commercial activities have intensified demand for transportation. The expansion of e-commerce has also increased the importance of efficient delivery networks and logistics services. Meanwhile, inadequate facilities for pedestrians and other non-motorised road users have limited the accessibility and sustainability of the transport system. The policy seeks to address these challenges through a common national framework that can guide government agencies, private

operators, investors and other stakeholders. Its underlying argument is that transport infrastructure and services cannot be managed effectively through isolated projects or disconnected institutional decisions. A more coordinated system is needed to align planning, regulation, investment and operations.

A Framework Built Around Integration

One of the most significant features of the NLTP is its emphasis on integrated and multimodal transportation. Vice-President Kashim Shettima who unveiled the policy did not mince words around the policy objectives and mission. He said the Federal Government's transportation strategy was anchored on the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, stressing that the administration was determined to provide infrastructure capable of supporting a productive, competitive and interconnected economy. According to him, the government's approach was shifting from the development of isolated transportation projects to the creation of an integrated national network in which roads, railways, ports, inland waterways and aviation complement one another.

He said the objective was to ensure that transport infrastructure connected production centres with markets, ports and consumers, while improving the movement of people and goods across the country. The vice-president, representated by the Director-General of General Duties, Aliyu Modibbo Umar, highlighted the government's railway modernisation programme, describing it as a critical component of the country's transportation strategy.



He said the administration was pursuing the development of major rail corridors to improve connectivity across the eastern, central and northern parts of Nigeria, while also strengthening links between ports, railways, roads and logistics hubs. He specifically cited the Kano-Maradi Railway Project, which links Kano through Jigawa and Katsina to Maradi in the Republic of Niger, saying the project would support domestic connectivity, cross-border trade and regional integration. He also stressed the importance of linking ports to rail and road networks to facilitate efficient cargo evacuation and reduce pressure on highways.

"Rail must connect to roads. Rail to production centres and markets, while roads provide first- and last-mile access," he said, stressing that no single mode of transportation could adequately meet the country's needs in isolation. Shettima also drew attention to the need for integrated urban transportation, particularly as Nigerian cities grapple with congestion and inefficient movement.

He said the Federal Government had approved high-grade urban transportation projects and urged the Minister of Transportation to work with participating states to establish clear technical, institutional, regulatory and implementation arrangements without unnecessary delays.

The policy

The policy recognises that the different modes of transport should complement one another rather than operate as disconnected systems. Roads, railways, inland waterways, maritime facilities and pipelines each have different operational characteristics and comparative advantages. A well-planned transport system should make use of these differences to improve efficiency, reduce unnecessary costs and strengthen connectivity.

For example, road transport is particularly important for local distribution and last-mile delivery. Railways can offer advantages for certain categories of long-distance passenger and freight movement, while inland waterways may provide practical alternatives for transporting goods in locations where geographical conditions support their use.

Pipelines also have an important role in moving suitable products, potentially reducing the need to transport them by road. The policy therefore seeks to encourage stronger connections between these modes, including links to seaports, inland dry ports, jetties, airports, industrial facilities and major commercial centres. Such integration requires more than constructing infrastructure. It involves coordinated planning, compatible operating arrangements, efficient transfer facilities, appropriate regulation and reliable information sharing. The policy also identifies joint border post infrastructure as part of the Federal Ministry of Transportation's policy scope, reflecting the importance of cross-border movement and regional trade.

Rail Development

Rail transport occupies an important place in the policy framework because of its potential to complement roads, improve passenger mobility and support the movement of heavy freight.

The policy acknowledges that Nigeria's railway system has faced challenges associated with investment, maintenance, infrastructure expansion and relatively limited passenger and freight volumes compared with road transport. It also points to the concentration of railway ownership and operations within the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) as a factor affecting the development of the sector. A major institutional development discussed in the document is the removal of railway matters from the Exclusive Legislative List, placing them on the Concurrent Legislative List and creating an opportunity for state governments to develop and operate railway services within their jurisdictions, subject to the applicable legal and regulatory framework. The NRC is identified in the document as retaining a technical regulatory role for railway safety and interstate connectivity.

The policy proposes several measures to improve railway performance. These include safeguarding existing railway tracks and properties, rehabilitating established corridors, completing the Central Corridor linking Itakpe, Baro and Abuja, and completing the Western and Eastern rail corridors.

It also proposes a restructuring of the railway sector into three entities: a Rail Authority, Railway Operations and a Railway Property Company. Other priorities include studying potential freight traffic, encouraging private-sector participation, strengthening safety and environmental management, improving passenger ticketing and management systems, and securing reliable energy sources for railway operations. The policy further envisages greater collaboration among federal, state and local governments in railway development.

The underlying objective is to establish a modern, efficient and competitive railway system that can serve industry, commerce and passengers while becoming a more effective component of Nigeria's integrated transport network. Realising this ambition will require careful institutional reform, sustained investment, clear responsibilities and transparent operating arrangements. Railway expansion must also be supported by connections to industrial clusters, agricultural production areas, ports and distribution facilities if it is to deliver substantial economic benefits.

The document added as part of the policy strategy to "Develop appropriate criteria to attract private sector investment including Concession and other Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements to ensure sustainable funding and operation of the railway; Improve on the smart ticketing system of the Nigerian Railway System and Collaborate with other energy sector institutions to achieve alternative and clean energy source for the operation of railways and related services.

Reforming Road Transport Administration

Road transport administration is another central pillar of the policy. The policy identifies weaknesses in vehicle administration, registration, inspection, regulation and enforcement as factors affecting the performance of the sector.

It also highlights concerns about the condition of public transport vehicles and heavy commercial trucks, many of which require improvements in maintenance, safety and operating standards. The policy proposes a more organised system in which operators are registered and licensed, relevant standards are established and enforcement is strengthened.

Rather than allowing transport services to develop without adequate oversight, the framework seeks to create a regulatory environment that supports competition while requiring operators to meet appropriate professional and safety requirements.

This distinction is important. Competition can encourage innovation, service improvements and more efficient operations, but an absence of basic standards can expose passengers and other road users to unnecessary risks. The proposed approach would therefore link participation in the sector to appropriate registration, licensing, skills and compliance requirements.

Vehicle inspection and roadworthiness controls are also essential to improving safety and reducing the social and economic costs associated with poorly maintained vehicles. The policy's emphasis on professionalism extends beyond drivers to include vehicle repairers, vulcanisers, contractors, third-party agents and other participants in the land transport value chain. It is believed that improving the skills and accountability of these groups could strengthen maintenance practices, raise service standards and support more reliable operations.

According to the government, the policy objectives include to "Coordinate, support, and provide an enabling environment for a road transport system that encourages the participation of the private sector and adequately meet the mobility needs of the country; Deploy Intelligent Transport System (ITS) technologies in road administration and traffic management like provision of CCTV camera to check traffic violators, other security gadgets, computerized roadworthiness devices among others. "Develop, establish and disseminate a national road transport data management system; Provide new sources of funding to close the resource gap for road transport administration, mass transit development and safety management; promote collaboration among stakeholders; Achieve efficient, effective and harmonized Transport policy management and Motor Vehicle Administration at all levels; Provide efficient and reliable environment required by transport businesses to deliver goods and services around cities and markets.

Interstate Passenger Transportation and Cost of Mobility

Interstate passenger transport is a vital part of Nigeria's mobility system, connecting major cities, state capitals, commercial centres and smaller communities.

For millions of travellers, road-based passenger services remain the most accessible means of making intercity journeys. However, the policy identifies several challenges affecting the sector, including high operating costs, inadequate vehicle standards, limited long-term financing, poor driver conduct and concerns about unregulated fares.

The removal of the petrol subsidy in 2023 and the subsequent increase in fuel costs placed additional pressure on commercial transport operators and passengers. Higher operating expenses contributed to increased fares and made private vehicle use more expensive for many households. These developments reinforced the need for more efficient passenger transport services and a sustainable approach to fleet renewal. The policy seeks to improve the organisation and regulation of interstate passenger services while encouraging safer, more efficient and professionally managed operations.

An important part of this effort is the need to establish appropriate standards for operators and vehicles, improve driver training and conduct, and support investment in modern passenger fleets. Long-term financing is especially important. Where operators cannot access affordable credit, they may struggle to replace ageing vehicles or maintain the quality of their services.

Therefore, the policy observes that a more sustainable financing environment could support fleet renewal, improve reliability and reduce the risks associated with poorly maintained vehicles. Fare regulation presents a related challenge. Transport prices must reflect legitimate operating costs, but passengers also need services that remain affordable. The policy's emphasis on competition, cost recovery and transparent regulation points towards a system in which prices and services operate within a clearer framework.



Hon. Justice Babatunde Adejumo, OFR (Rtd).
Administrator, Nigeria Judicial Institute

Successful reform will require consultation with operators and users, alongside effective oversight to prevent unfair practices and protect passengers.

Freight Transportation Supply Chain Efficiency

Freight transport is indispensable to Nigeria's economy because it connects farms, factories, warehouses, markets and ports. The cost and reliability of freight services affect the prices of food, construction materials, industrial inputs and consumer goods. When trucks are delayed by poor roads, congestion, inefficient procedures or unreliable logistics arrangements, businesses incur additional expenses. These may include higher fuel consumption, vehicle maintenance, labour costs and losses associated with delayed or damaged goods.

The National Land Transport Policy recognises these pressures and seeks to improve the efficiency, safety and organisation of freight transportation. A major concern is the inadequate implementation of axle-load regulations designed to prevent heavy vehicles from carrying excessive loads. Overloaded trucks can accelerate road deterioration and increase safety risks. Effective enforcement of weight limits is therefore important both for protecting infrastructure and for ensuring fair operating conditions across the freight industry. The policy's wider framework also supports better connections between road freight and rail, inland waterways and other suitable modes of transportation. Where freight can be transferred efficiently to modes better suited to particular routes or cargo types, the transport system may achieve lower operating costs and reduce pressure on road infrastructure.

However, modal integration requires dependable infrastructure, suitable terminals, predictable operating arrangements and commercially viable services. Freight operators also need transparent regulation and efficient administrative procedures to plan their operations and meet delivery schedules.

The policy's emphasis on private-sector participation and investment is particularly relevant here because logistics services depend heavily on the availability of vehicles, terminals, warehouses, handling equipment and digital management systems. Improving freight efficiency could support domestic commerce, strengthen agricultural distribution and enhance Nigeria's ability to participate in regional supply chains.

On freight, the policy observed that "Freight transportation is integral to Nigeria's economic framework, forming the backbone of goods movement across domestic, regional, and international markets. Its efficient functioning drives trade facilitation, links industrial and commercial hubs to global supply chains, and supports the delivery of raw materials and finished goods.

"Freight transport underpins critical sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and mining, ensuring these industries contribute effectively to national GDP growth. Additionally, the sector strengthens Nigeria's competitiveness in regional trade agreements like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) by enabling seamless cross-border movement of goods."

Urban Transportation: Moving People More Efficiently

Rapid urbanisation has increased the demand for transport services in Nigeria's major cities. The policy identifies Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Abuja, Ibadan, Warri and Enugu among the urban centres experiencing substantial transport demand.



In many cities, public transportation relies heavily on privately operated minibuses and other commercial vehicles, while formal mass transit services remain insufficient to meet overall demand.This situation contributes to congestion, inconsistent service quality, environmental pollution and dependence on private cars.

The policy seeks to establish an organised, standardised, safe, secure, efficient and sustainable urban transport system that provides equitable access to economic and social opportunities. Among its proposed measures are stronger institutional arrangements for urban transport management, including encouragement for states and the Federal Capital Territory to establish metropolitan transport authorities where appropriate. The policy proposes improved coordination between transport and urban development, recognising that housing, employment locations and commercial activities influence travel demand. Transit-oriented development — organising development around accessible public transport connections — is one of the approaches identified in the policy framework.

The policy also encourages private-sector investment through appropriate incentives, streamlined regulatory processes and public-private partnership arrangements. Pilot projects involving electric buses, smart ticketing and integrated transport technologies are proposed as ways of testing new solutions and evaluating their suitability for wider adoption. At the same time, the policy supports the development of walking routes, cycle paths and other non-motorised transport connections. These facilities are important because not every journey requires a motor vehicle. Safe walking and cycling infrastructure can improve access to public transport, reduce pressure on roads and support healthier urban environments. According to the policy, Non-Motorised Transportation (NMT) "constitutes a critical component of the mobility landscape in Nigeria, especially for low-income populations who rely heavily on walking and cycling due to limited access to motorised transport and affordable public transportation systems. Despite its significance, NMT infrastructure and policies have often been underdeveloped or neglected, leading to challenges that affect mobility, safety, and equitable access."

It observed that strengthening NMT in Nigeria is essential to achieve inclusive and sustainable mobility systems. Integrating Non-Motorized Transportation (NMT) infrastructure in the cities has become essential. It should be embraced by all tiers of government when engaging with public or private road construction work.

Rural and Inclusive Transportation

The policy extends beyond major cities to address the mobility needs of rural communities and people who face barriers to transport access. Rural roads are essential for connecting agricultural production areas with markets, processing facilities, schools, hospitals and administrative centres.

Where these connections are poor, farmers may face high transportation costs, delays and difficulty moving perishable produce to buyers. The policy therefore recognises rural transportation as an important component of national development and seeks to improve connectivity between rural communities and wider transport networks. The objective is not simply to provide roads but to establish transport services that support economic participation and access to essential facilities. Inclusive transportation is another important component. Women, children, older people and persons with disabilities may experience particular challenges when vehicles, stations, pedestrian facilities and transport services are not designed to accommodate their needs. The policy seeks to promote equitable access and non-discriminatory transportation services. The objectives include to "Develop sustainable, cost-effective and efficient rural transport services to enhance the capacity of all rural dwellers to improve their livelihoods; Provide livable and productive socioeconomic activities in the rural areas; Facilitate the evacuation of raw materials to industries and food products to urban markets;

"Facilitate the development and rehabilitation of social amenities like Schools, health centres, etc Promote rural-rural and rural-urban interaction and the exchange of goods and services Improve access to the rural areas..."

Inclusion should also be considered in planning and consultation processes. Communities and transport users must have opportunities to contribute to decisions that affect their mobility as the policy observed. A transport system that excludes vulnerable groups cannot fully deliver the economic and social benefits expected of it.

Safety, Security and Professional Standards

Safety and security are essential to the credibility of any transport system. The policy recognises that poor driver skills, inadequate vehicle maintenance, weak regulation and unsafe operating practices contribute to risks across the sector. It also identifies security along transport corridors and the safe carriage of dangerous goods as issues requiring coordinated attention.

The proposed framework places emphasis on improving professional standards, strengthening regulation and ensuring that transport services operate within appropriate safety requirements.

For road transportation, this includes attention to driver conduct, vehicle condition and the enforcement of relevant regulations. For freight operators, it involves safe vehicle loading, compliance with applicable standards and appropriate handling of dangerous goods. For railway services, the policy calls for effective health, safety, security and environmental management.

The broader approach requires cooperation among transport authorities, road safety institutions, law enforcement agencies, operators and other relevant bodies. Safety performance must also be supported by data, training and continuous evaluation. Identifying recurring risks and monitoring compliance can help agencies focus resources where they are most needed. Professionalisation is therefore not merely an administrative objective. It is a means of improving service quality, reducing preventable risks and strengthening public confidence in the transport industry.

The policy objectives for safety include to "ensure the setup of an effective Inspectorate function by the Rail Authority; encourage the implementation of the of the National Road Safety Strategy (NRSS); encourage the safety mandate of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and Vehicle Inspection Offices (VIOs); ensure compliance with minimum standards for all railway components (track, rolling stock, signaling and equipment, etc)

Others are to "regulate and enforce access to nationally owned rail tracks: promote improvement in rail safety influences the attitude and behavior of persons whose actions may have adverse impacts on rail safety periodically conducts Safety Audit of rail operations as part of a process of ensuring safe operation by rail service providers..."

It further stated that professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Transport Administration of Nigeria (CIOTA) and the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) shall be encouraged to deliver on their mandates to facilitate the development of the Transportation Sector.

Technology, Research and Human Capacity

Modern transport systems increasingly depend on reliable data, digital services and skilled professionals.

The policy therefore identifies inadequate planning, research, data management and the limited use of modern technologies as constraints affecting Nigeria's land transport sector. Its proposed framework encourages the adoption of appropriate technologies, including intelligent transport systems, alongside improved research and knowledge management. Technology can support traffic management, vehicle administration, passenger information, ticketing, freight tracking and operational planning. However, successful adoption requires more than purchasing equipment or introducing digital platforms. Systems must be maintained, personnel must be trained and information must be reliable enough to support sound decisions. The policy also addresses capacity building, knowledge generation and human resource development.

These issues are particularly important because transport services depend on a wide range of professional skills, from planning and engineering to vehicle maintenance, fleet management, logistics and regulatory oversight. A stronger professional development framework could help improve standards across the sector and prepare workers for emerging technologies and new operating models.



Aliyu Modibbo, Special Adviser on General Duties to the Vice President of Nigeria, Kashim Shettima and former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

Environment, Climate Change and Cleaner Energy

Environmental sustainability is another cross-cutting issue addressed by the proposed policy. The policy identifies the environmental consequences of excessive dependence on private cars and the need to encourage cleaner, more efficient transport systems. It includes the use of alternative energy sources, such as electricity and natural gas, among the areas requiring policy direction. This is relevant as Nigeria explores compressed natural gas-powered vehicles, electric mobility and other technologies intended to diversify energy sources and reduce pollution. The policy framework seeks to encourage the adoption of clean energy while supporting appropriate investment, technology and regulatory development.

However, the transition requires careful planning. Alternative-fuel vehicles need suitable infrastructure, technical standards, trained personnel and reliable energy supplies. Operators must also consider vehicle costs, maintenance requirements, operating conditions and the availability of refuelling or charging facilities.

Environmental sustainability should therefore be integrated with transport planning, infrastructure development and fleet renewal rather than treated as a separate initiative. Better public transport, efficient freight movement, appropriate rail services and improved traffic management can also help reduce unnecessary energy consumption. The objective is to create a transport system that supports economic growth while taking account of environmental and social costs. To attain the minimum standard on Climate and Environment as prescribed by the charter on the Sustainable Development Goals, the policy aims at "minimising cost and time of adaptation of the existing vehicle fleet towards the use of renewable energy as opposed to fossil fuel; reducing operating costs related to the provision of transport services and contribute to fare reduction and stability and fostering skill development among transport operators in the use of the new transportation energy mix.

The policy also seeks to "promote Inter-Agency Collaboration with relevant Stakeholders in the Energy Sector in the development of Alternative Energy; sensitize Nigerians on the safety of the usage of Auto-gas Provide incentives to enable certain categories of high-capacity public transport buses convert and use cheap and cleaner energy and strengthen the institutional arrangement for quality assurance in the Autogas conversion and training.

Funding and Private-Sector Investment

Financing is one of the most consequential issues in the proposed National Land Transport Policy. The policy identifies heavy dependence on public-sector budgets, limited long-term financing and high borrowing costs as major constraints on infrastructure development and fleet renewal. Transport infrastructure requires substantial capital investment, but its benefits often extend over many years. Without reliable financing arrangements, governments and operators may struggle to maintain existing assets or expand services to meet growing demand.

The policy seeks to establish a framework that encourages private-sector participation and investment while promoting transparent and competitive arrangements. Its guiding principles include competition, cost recovery, environmental protection, safety, equal access and the use of appropriate user charges. The intention is to create conditions under which private investors can participate in providing infrastructure and services while operating within a clear regulatory environment. Public-private partnerships may offer opportunities to mobilise capital and expertise for suitable projects, but their success depends on careful risk allocation, transparent procurement and realistic revenue arrangements.

The principle of cost recovery must also be balanced against affordability. Charges that support the maintenance and operation of transport services should be designed with consideration for users' ability to pay and the broader economic value of the service. Public funding will remain important, particularly for essential infrastructure and services that may not generate sufficient commercial returns.

The policy therefore seeks to implement an economic regulatory mechanism for competitive pricing in the Land Transport Sector; mobilise for a long-term funding regime for investors to leverage on to launch their new fleet; foster a sound financial base and the proper management of funds allocated to all public agencies and parastatals in the land transport sub-sector encourage more cost-effective modes/means of urban Transport.

Institutional Coordination and Implementation

Perhaps the most important test of the policy will be whether the institutions responsible for transport can work together effectively.

The policy identifies the National Council on Transportation as an important platform for coordination. It also outlines responsibilities for federal ministries and agencies, state governments, the Federal Capital Territory, local governments, professional bodies, organised unions, civil society groups, private operators and citizens. This broad institutional structure reflects the fact that transport is connected to many

other areas of public policy, including works, finance, the environment, agriculture, industry, trade and national security. At the same time, responsibilities must remain clear. Federal authorities, state governments and local administrations have different constitutional and operational roles, and the policy recognises the need to accommodate those differences.

The policy proposes an implementation framework covering planning, timelines, monitoring and evaluation, the legal framework and periodic policy review. These provisions are critical because a policy document, regardless of its technical quality, cannot deliver improvements without defined responsibilities, funding, measurable targets and mechanisms for tracking progress.

The document stated that the Policy shall be domiciled in the Ministry because of its mandate for convening the National Council on Transportation (NCT), which includes engendering Safe and Secure Transportation, Driving of Economic Development, Facilitating Connectivity (Intermodal and Multimodal), Developing Local Capacity (Professionalism), Ensuring Sustainability. Furthermore, the Ministry is responsible for road transport and Mass Transit Administration, management and development of Joint Border Post (JBP) infrastructure under the ECOWAS Protocol, sectoral research and data management as well as inter-modal and multi-modal policy and plans coordination. The Ministry also oversees railway infrastructure development, management and operations. The ministry oversees the implementation of the professionalisation of the industry," the document added.

Need for New Transport Policy?

Transport expert Patrick Adenusi however questioned the value of introducing new transport policies when existing regulations are not properly implemented, arguing that Nigeria's major challenge is poor compliance, weak enforcement and a shortage of practical expertise. Adenusi said the country must move beyond producing policy documents to ensuring that existing rules are understood and followed by road users and relevant authorities.



Captain Alex Sabundu Badeh Jr., Director-General and Chief Executive Officer (DG/CEO) Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB)

"Are we just carrying documents around because we want to have documents and speak big English?" he asked, expressing concern that policy formulation was receiving more attention than implementation.

He acknowledged that there was nothing wrong with introducing a new policy or reviewing existing ones but argued that such efforts would have limited impact without improved road-user education and enforcement. "Our roads do not meet international standard," Adenusi said, adding that many Nigerians struggled to interpret road signs and markings.

He also criticised widespread disregard for speed limits, noting that motorists often failed to comply with restrictions even when the signs were clearly displayed. "A large number of Nigerians don't follow the speed limit even when they see it," he said.

Using the Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos as an example, Adenusi highlighted what he described as the consequences of indiscipline and the misuse of road infrastructure. "When I go on Third Mainland Bridge, I just laugh. Third Mainland Bridge is a three-lane road but we have converted it to four lane," he said.

He explained that lay-bys were important safety features that allowed motorists to pull off the road when their vehicles developed faults. However, he argued that the intended function of such spaces had been undermined by lawlessness. Adenusi warned that including provisions for lay-bys in a policy document would not automatically improve road safety if the physical infrastructure and the behaviour of road users remained unchanged. "Even if the new policy says you must have a layby but the physical thing we have does not correspond with what is written in the paper," he said.



Prince Segun Obayeno, Techniacl Adviser to the Vice President on Transportation, Logistics and Innovation



Professor Umar Adam Katsayal (mni), Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Transportation, Daura (FUTD) in Katsina State, Nigeria

He questioned whether some basic road-safety practices required new policy documents or simply the consistent application of existing rules and common sense. “Do we really need policy to apply common sense?" he asked. 'Nigerians are transport poor, policy must address this’

On his part, Professor Ibe Callistus, a transportation expert welcomed the new policy while calling for cooperation among stakeholders. He said the bottom line is to improve accessibility to transportation.

He said, "The implication of this is that constructing road is not the best. You should begin to think of helping people to move – accessibility. Do people have access to transportation? At what cost? Then you talk of transport justice. Nigerians are transport poor because majority of our income is spent on transportation. That means we are suffering from injustice in the transport system. It is not accessible to us, it is not affordable. That means the movement is impaired and for you to remove it. You need to upscale the skills. You need to digitalise. You need to sharpen the skills of those in the sector to fall into the 21st century demand of the transportation system. “If you have all these things you would remove congestion, you would remove duplication. You would remove multiple agencies you see in the land transportation sector so that we would all be on one page..."

According to him, with the separation of each mode under the transportation sector, there is the need for collaboration among the Ministries for seamless coordination.

"Since they are separated, there is need for collaboration. Somebody must coordinate all these policies for seamless movement and for integration of the transportation system for it to be sustainable," he stated.

According to the expert, each state must have the replica of the Lagos State Metropolitan Transport Authority to coordinate the sector.

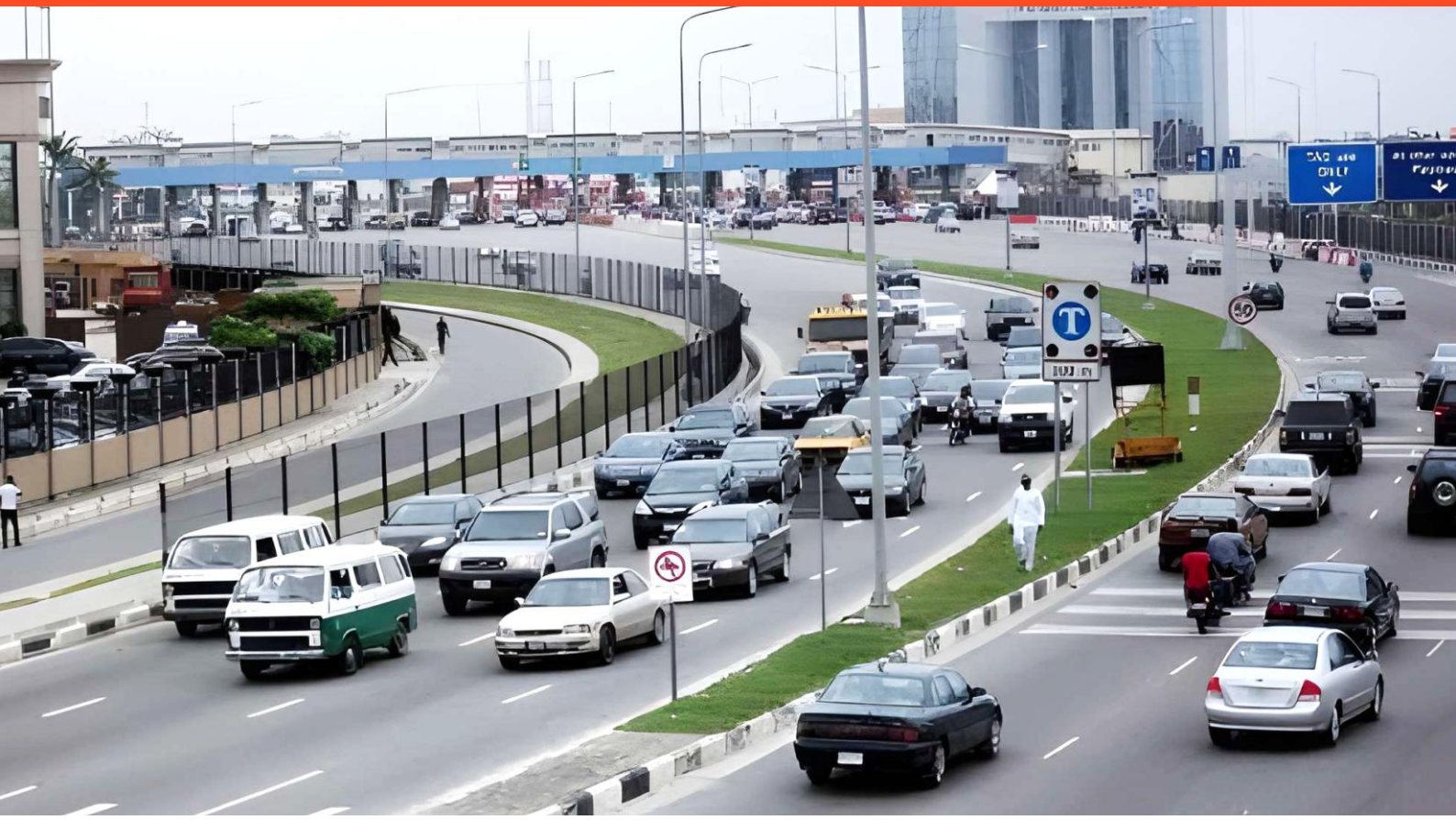
"There must be a coordinating agency that would do the planning of the transportation system, that would enable them to attract fund immediately, that is what is called the metropolitan agenc, that would dovetail down to the local governments.

You know the bulk of our transportation is done at the local governments, they have the largest number of roads, that arm of government should be strengthened with a qualified human being to drive the sector," he added.

More than anything, the goal is straightforward: a land transport system that connects people and markets efficiently, protects lives, supports economic opportunity and remains accessible to the population it serves.

LEKKI-EPE EXPRESSWAY REPAIRS: TESTING TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

By Lanre Abdul



Motorists and commuters plying the Eti-Osa-Lekki-Epe Expressway are expected to experience temporary traffic disruptions as the Lagos State Government flagged off a 35-day rehabilitation of damaged sections of the busy highway from October 15, 2026.

The rehabilitation will cover sections of the expressway from Bonny Camp to Admiralty Way Junction, as well as areas around Victoria Garden City (VGC), in an intervention aimed at improving road conditions, enhancing safety and easing movement along one of Lagos State's most important economic corridors. The state government said traffic diversion arrangements would be introduced during the construction period to minimise congestion and ensure the safety of motorists, commuters, construction workers and other road users. The Special Adviser to the Governor on Infrastructure, Olufemi Daramola, during a stakeholders' engagement organised by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to explain the scope of the rehabilitation project and discuss traffic management arrangements said the engagement was part of the government's commitment to consulting residents, businesses, transport operators and other stakeholders before embarking on major infrastructure projects that could affect daily activities.

He explained that feedback from participants would help the government improve the implementation process and address concerns relating to traffic movement, road safety and accessibility during the rehabilitation.

The special adviser appealed to motorists and residents to cooperate with the government and comply with traffic diversion instructions throughout the exercise. He particularly urged road users to exercise patience as the state approaches the festive season, when increased commercial activities, social engagements and travel typically place additional pressure on Lagos roads.

The rehabilitation is expected to provide relief for motorists who have endured difficult journeys along deteriorating sections of the expressway, which serves as a major transportation route connecting Victoria Island, Lekki, Ajah, Ibeju-Lekki and Epe. The Transportation Agenda reports that the corridor has become increasingly important to Lagos's economic development, supporting residential communities,



commercial centres, industrial facilities and major infrastructure investments. Among the strategic facilities accessible through the expressway are the Lekki Free Zone, the Dangote Refinery and Petrochemical, Dangote Fertiliser Factory, Lekki Deep Sea Port and Eleganza Industrial Estate. The road also serves educational institutions, including Pan-Atlantic University and Lagos Business School, alongside numerous residential estates, hospitality businesses and commercial developments.

However, rapid urbanisation, population growth, expanding industrial activities and rising traffic volumes have placed considerable pressure on the highway, contributing to the deterioration of some sections and worsening the commuting experience.

For thousands of residents who travel daily between the Lekki-Epe axis and other parts of Lagos, the condition of the road has significant implications for commuting time, business operations, logistics and the movement of goods. Daramola said the government was also addressing drainage challenges along the corridor, noting that improvements to the road network must be supported by measures to tackle flooding and ensure the long-term durability of infrastructure.

He added that the proposed Green Line rail project formed part of the broader strategy to improve transportation capacity and provide alternative mass transit options for commuters travelling along the rapidly developing corridor. The Director of Projects, Ibironke Olukoko, said the rehabilitation would improve the movement of passengers and goods while strengthening access to residential and commercial communities between Victoria Island and Epe. Olukoko noted that the corridor's growing economic importance made the rehabilitation necessary to support the movement of people, industrial activities and investments across the eastern part of the state.

At the stakeholders' meeting, participants raised concerns about the potential impact of the construction on traffic flow, particularly during peak commuting periods.

The Chairman of the Victoria Island and Ikoyi Residents Association, Prince Akin Fadoju, called on the government to give greater attention to drainage infrastructure, stressing that flooding remained a major concern in parts of the area. Fadoju acknowledged that the drainage challenges predated the current administration but emphasised the need for urgent and sustained intervention to prevent recurring flooding and protect road infrastructure.

He maintained that effective drainage systems were essential to preserving the quality of roads and reducing the risk of further deterioration, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall. Other stakeholders urged the government to deploy traffic management officials throughout the construction period to direct motorists, enforce diversion arrangements and prevent gridlock at major intersections.

They also called for the maintenance of alternative routes to ensure they remained motorable and capable of accommodating additional traffic diverted from the affected sections. Participants further stressed the importance of providing adequate security for motorists and commuters, particularly around construction zones and alternative routes where traffic

congestion could increase travel risks. The government's ability to coordinate traffic management, maintain access to adjoining communities and communicate changes to motorists is expected to play a significant role in determining how smoothly the rehabilitation proceeds.

Previous rehabilitation works

The latest intervention forms part of the Lagos State Government's broader programme to rehabilitate and upgrade the Eti-Osa-Lekki-Epe Expressway in response to the area's expanding residential, commercial and industrial activities. In November 2020, the government awarded the first phase of the rehabilitation and upgrading project, covering 18.75 kilometres from Eleko to Epe T-Junction in Ibeju-Lekki.

The project involved the construction of a three-lane dual carriageway using reinforced concrete pavement, alongside ancillary infrastructure intended to improve road quality and durability. The completed section was commissioned in February 2023, marking a significant milestone in efforts to improve transportation infrastructure along the corridor.

Subsequently, Phases IIA and IIB, covering the stretch from Eleko Junction to Abraham Adesanya, were awarded to extend the improvements along the expressway. The state government also completed rehabilitation works on damaged sections between Admiralty Intersection and Ajah Jubilee Flyover.

According to Daramola, the government has so far reconstructed and rehabilitated 69.44 kilometres of the expressway, comprising 49.7 kilometres of reinforced concrete pavement and 19.76 kilometres of flexible pavement. The use of reinforced concrete pavement on sections of the road reflects the government's efforts to improve durability along a corridor that experiences substantial traffic volumes and supports heavy commercial transportation. Beyond road rehabilitation, the government is pursuing additional transportation infrastructure intended to address the growing demand for movement between Lagos Island and the Lekki-Epe axis.

In April 2025, the state awarded the development of early infrastructure for the proposed Green Line mass transit project. The planned rail corridor will run from Marina through the Eti-Osa-Lekki-Epe axis towards the proposed Lekki International Airport, linking Lagos Island with the rapidly developing eastern corridor.

The project is expected to form part of a wider transportation network designed to support population growth, industrial expansion and the emergence of new commercial districts. Planning for the corridor also takes account of other proposed infrastructure projects, including the Fourth Mainland Bridge and the future expansion of Ogombo Road.

These developments are expected to increase the strategic importance of the Lekki-Epe corridor and heighten the need for coordinated road, rail and drainage infrastructure.

Commuters face temporary pressure

For motorists and commuters who depend on the expressway daily, the immediate concern will be navigating the 35-day rehabilitation period without excessive delays or disruption to business and personal activities. A commuter, Mr. Akeem Adeola who spoke with this medium expressed fears over the pressure which they might express on the road.

According to him, businesses operating along the corridor may also need to adjust their logistics and transportation arrangements to account for possible changes in travel times and access to commercial facilities.

The government's traffic diversion plan, the availability of traffic management personnel and the condition of alternative routes will therefore be critical to minimising the impact of the works, he said.

"Don't forget this road has always been notorious for traffic gridlock. We have been in it before and we don't want to be pressured too much with this latest rehabilitation. All we want is for the government to put in place measures to ameliorate the expected traffic gridlock," he said.



WHY FG DIVERTED LAGOS-CALABAR COASTAL HIGHWAY ROUTE

By Lanre Abdul



David Umahi
Minister of Works

In a related development, the Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi, has denied claims that the Federal Government demolished Landmark properties to make way for the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, accusing Landmark Africa Chief Executive Officer, Paul Onwuanibe, of misleading the public over the incident.

Umahi said the demolition affected beachside shanties rather than permanent structures belonging to Onwuanibe, adding that the government had adjusted the highway's alignment to preserve some properties along the corridor. Speaking on the controversy, the minister challenged Onwuanibe to publish his Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) to establish the extent of his land ownership and demonstrate his legal entitlement to the beachfront. "I have challenged him separately to publish his C of O so Nigerians can see the full extent of his land ownership," Umahi said.

He alleged that the beachfront had been occupied by shanties and questioned whether the properties affected by the demolition were legally owned by the Landmark Africa chief executive. According to the minister, the hotel demolished during the exercise did not belong to Onwuanibe but to another individual who had previously served as a Special Assistant to the President.

When asked about claims that the demolition resulted in losses estimated at N42 billion, Umahi rejected the figure and called for documentary evidence to support the claim."Ask him a question: where is your C of O that entitled you to that beachfront?" he said. The minister cited a Supreme Court position concerning federal government responsibility over 250 metres from the shoreline, questioning whether Onwuanibe had a title issued by the Federal Government authorising his ownership or use of the area.Umahi maintained that a permanent structure associated with the Landmark development remained standing because the ministry had adjusted the road alignment to avoid it. He said the structures removed were mainly shanties, which the government had enumerated before demolition, adding that compensation was paid to those covered by the exercise."We didn't destroy any permanent structures, but those shanties were destroyed.

We enumerated them and paid," he said. The minister also questioned claims that taxes had been paid on the affected properties, asking for supporting records, including relevant bank account details and tax documentation. Umahi said the government had modified the highway alignment to preserve some properties along the route, arguing that the decision demonstrated efforts to balance infrastructure development with the protection of existing investments."He should thank us because the Federal Government diverted the road to save those properties in the middle of the road," he said.

BANK OF TRANSPORTATION: THE CASE FOR SECTOR-SPECIFIC FINANCING IN NIGERIA

By Lanre Abdul



Aare Tiwalade Akingbade
Ogun State Secretary of RTEAN

The Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN), Ogun State chapter, has urged the Federal Government to establish a Bank of Transportation to provide affordable loans to operators in the road transport sector, arguing that high commercial lending rates are undermining business growth.

The State Secretary of RTEAN, Aare Tiwalade Akingbade, said the proposed financial institution would enable transport operators to access loans at single-digit interest rates of between four and nine per cent to purchase vehicles, expand their fleets and improve service delivery. Speaking in Abeokuta, Akingbade said transportation remained a major driver of economic activity, but operators faced difficulties sustaining their businesses because of the high cost of borrowing. He disclosed that the association had submitted several proposals to the Federal Government and expressed optimism that the government would consider them, particularly the establishment of a dedicated bank for the sector. According to him, the prevailing interest rates charged by conventional financial institutions make it difficult for transport operators to secure financing without placing their businesses under severe financial pressure. "If you are in the road transportation business and have to obtain loans from the same financial institutions that lend to operators in sectors such as oil and gas, at interest rates of 25 per cent, how do you expect to repay such loans and remain profitable?" he asked.

Akingbade argued that road transport operators needed a financing arrangement that recognised the peculiarities of their businesses, including the cost of acquiring vehicles, maintaining fleets, purchasing spare parts and meeting other operational expenses. He said access to affordable credit would help operators replace ageing vehicles, increase their capacity, improve passenger services and create more employment opportunities. "We are not asking for free money. All we are asking for is a dedicated platform that will give transportation operators access to loans at affordable, single-digit interest rates of between four and nine per cent," he said.

The RTEAN official stressed that the proposal was not a request for grants but for a sustainable financing system through which operators could borrow and repay under conditions that would allow their businesses to remain viable. He also highlighted the importance of an efficient and affordable transportation system to national development, noting that road transport remained a dominant means of moving people and

goods while connecting communities to rail, water and air transport services. Akingbade's call came amid the financial pressures confronting transport businesses, where the cost of vehicle acquisition and maintenance can limit operators' ability to expand and improve their services. Besides, many say the current double-digit lending rates are too prohibitive coupled with the naira devaluation which has increased the prices of both new and fairly used vehicles.

A dedicated transportation bank, he argued, could help address the funding gap by providing credit facilities tailored to the needs of the industry. Beyond access to finance, the Ogun RTEAN chapter also highlighted efforts to improve the conduct, professional skills and health awareness of transport operators through training and medical screening. In a related development, 20 members of the association received certificates in conflict resolution after completing a three-day value-added training programme organised in collaboration with the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB). The programme was facilitated by the university's Institute of Communication and General Studies through its Peace and Development Studies Programme.

The certificates were presented at Tuesday's meeting by the State Chairman of RTEAN, Alhaji Akibu Titilayo Efele, who was represented by the Deputy Chairman (Administration), Otunba Segun Johnson. Akingbade said the training was designed to equip members with the skills to manage disputes, improve relationships with passengers and handle their responsibilities as transport operators and employers more effectively. He added that participants could build on the training through further academic programmes, including advanced certificates and diplomas in conflict resolution. According to him, the initiative was particularly important given public perceptions that transport operators could be difficult to deal with, despite their frequent interactions with passengers and other road users. He said conflict management skills would also help members resolve disagreements with drivers, manage their businesses and maintain better working relationships. One of the participants, Osioyemi Osinyemi Olasunkanmi, said the training had changed his perception of the university and demonstrated that transport union members could benefit from structured academic programmes.



Alhaji Akibu Titilayo Efele, Ogun State Chairman, RTEAN

The association's meeting also featured a medical screening exercise during which health professionals checked participants' blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Dr Fashola Caleb of the Ogun State Ministry of Health said the exercise had helped identify participants with health concerns, some of whom were counselled to seek further medical attention. “We have seen a lot of them so far, and some of them had complaints that we have attended to," Caleb said, adding that those requiring further investigations had been advised to visit nearby hospitals.

He said more than 100 people had been screened or attended to during the exercise, with participants continuing to come forward several hours after it began. Caleb urged commercial drivers to prioritise their health, warning that medical emergencies while driving could endanger passengers and other road users. "Generally, for drivers, they need to pay attention to their health because we don't pray that they have emergencies. But if emergencies should happen while they are on their duty, it can affect other people's lives," he said.

He recommended regular medical check-ups, compliance with medical advice and periodic eye screenings organised by transport associations at motor parks and garages.

LAGOS-CALABAR COASTAL HIGHWAY: ROUTE REALIGNMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES AND PUBLIC INTEREST

By Lanre Abdul



The Federal Government has explained that engineering challenges and the need to control construction costs informed its decision to divert part of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway through the East-West Road corridor, particularly sections originally planned to pass through Ondo State.

The Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi, said the original alignment presented difficult terrain, including deep pits and a shortage of suitable sharp sand for filling and stabilisation, which would have significantly increased construction costs. He said the decision to redesign the route followed technical assessments aimed at ensuring that the project could be delivered at a reasonable cost without compromising engineering requirements. Umahi gave the explanation during a press briefing where he addressed concerns about the change in alignment, maintaining that the decision was based on engineering considerations rather than political factors.

According to him, the ministry had to consider the physical characteristics of the terrain and the resources required to construct the highway along the original route. "You want me to pass through a terrain that is over 100 metres of pits deep, and I have no defined sharp sand to 300 metres, and you expect the cost of one kilometre to be the same cost with a road passing through normal terrain?" he asked. He said the ministry consequently adopted an alternative alignment to avoid the difficult sections and reduce the cost implications of construction.

"We had to take a very serious engineering decision by making a detour, redesigning it to avoid such a route. We are doing a filling of over 10 metres, which is 30 feet plus, with sharp sand, and filling is almost concluded," the minister said.

The diversion affects Sections 4A and 4B, covering 67 kilometres, comprising 27 kilometres in Ogun State and approximately 40 kilometres in Ondo State. The section is expected to terminate around the Ondo-Edo axis. The Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway is one of the flagship infrastructure projects of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration. Designed as a four-lane highway with concrete pavement, it is intended to improve connectivity between Lagos and Calabar while facilitating the movement

of people and goods along Nigeria's coastline. The first phase was commissioned by President Tinubu in May 2025. From its entry point at the former Bar Beach area of Victoria Island, Lagos, the original alignment was designed to pass through Ogun, Ondo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom states before reaching Cross River State.

The Federal Government announced in 2025 that the project would require $747 million following approval of an additional $47 million in external borrowing. The increase raised the funding requirement from the initial $700 million, with the adjustment included in the government's 2025–2026 external borrowing plan approved by lawmakers. With more than 40 kilometres of the highway completed, the project represents a substantial investment in Nigeria's transport infrastructure.



Progress on other sections

Providing an update on construction, Umahi said Section 1, covering 47.47 kilometres from Victoria Island, Lagos, had been completed and was ready for commissioning. He added that work on the dual pavement of Section 2, which covers 55 kilometres and terminates at the Lagos-Ogun boundary, was expected to be completed the following month. The minister explained that the construction of flyovers, overpasses and underpasses along Section 2 had required extensive redesign to accommodate major infrastructure around the Dangote Refinery and Lekki Deep Seaport.

He said an 86-metre-span bridge, with 43-metre counterforts, had been designed to accommodate refinery trucks and address traffic conflicts involving the deep-seaport train, the Dangote tax-credit road and the 25-kilometre Seventh Axial Road linking Epe to the Sagamu Expressway. "We have redesigned a very beautiful flyover to resolve that conflict," Umahi said.

At the Calabar end, Sections 3A and 3B, covering 65 kilometres, had achieved more than 30 per cent completion, according to the minister. Construction was also ongoing on Section 5, an 82-kilometre dual carriageway in Akwa Ibom State. Umahi further disclosed that work was progressing on an 88-kilometre link from Calabar to Ebidi Beach, which is expected to connect with the Trans-Saharan route.

Engineering considerations behind the diversion

The route adjustment has highlighted the importance of terrain assessment, geological investigations and the selection of suitable construction methods for major infrastructure projects. Engineers consider factors such as soil composition, the availability of construction materials, ground stability and the volume of earthworks required when determining the most appropriate alignment for a highway. Where a route passes through deep pits or areas with unsuitable ground conditions, construction may require extensive filling, stabilisation and other specialised engineering interventions.

These measures can affect project timelines and costs. An alternative alignment may therefore be considered if technical assessments establish that it offers a more practical and economical solution.

For the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, Umahi said the decision to move part of the route inland was informed by the scale of earthworks and the materials required to make the original alignment suitable for construction.

Transportation safety analyst Patrick Adenusi also supported consideration of the inland route, saying it could reduce construction costs while opening up communities to greater economic activity. Adenusi said roads passing through towns and villages could improve access to markets, support commerce and facilitate the movement of people and goods. He added that improved road connectivity could also strengthen emergency response by making it easier for responders to reach communities and locations where accidents or other incidents occur. Although he said it was difficult to determine whether all necessary feasibility studies had been undertaken before the original route was selected, he noted that such assessments should ordinarily precede major infrastructure projects. Adenusi's position highlights the potential benefits of evaluating alternative alignments not only in terms of construction costs but also their contribution to local economies, accessibility and emergency services.

Balancing cost and connectivity

The diversion of Sections 4A and 4B illustrates the engineering choices involved in delivering a major highway across varying geographical conditions. For the government, the immediate consideration is to ensure that the selected route can be constructed safely and efficiently while managing the cost of public infrastructure.

However, the wider value of the adjustment will also depend on how effectively the alternative corridor connects communities, supports commercial activity and integrates with the existing transport network. The Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway is intended to improve transportation along Nigeria's southern corridor, with potential benefits for trade, logistics, tourism and regional development. As construction progresses, the government's explanation points to the role of engineering assessments in determining whether an original alignment remains the most practical option or whether a redesign offers better value. Umahi has maintained that the diversion was necessary to avoid difficult terrain and limit construction expenses.

The alternative route, he said, would allow work to proceed while addressing the physical challenges encountered along the original alignment. However, a former chairman of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), Ikeja branch, Engr. Akintayo Akintola, raised concerns over the planning, environmental implications and long-term accessibility of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway.

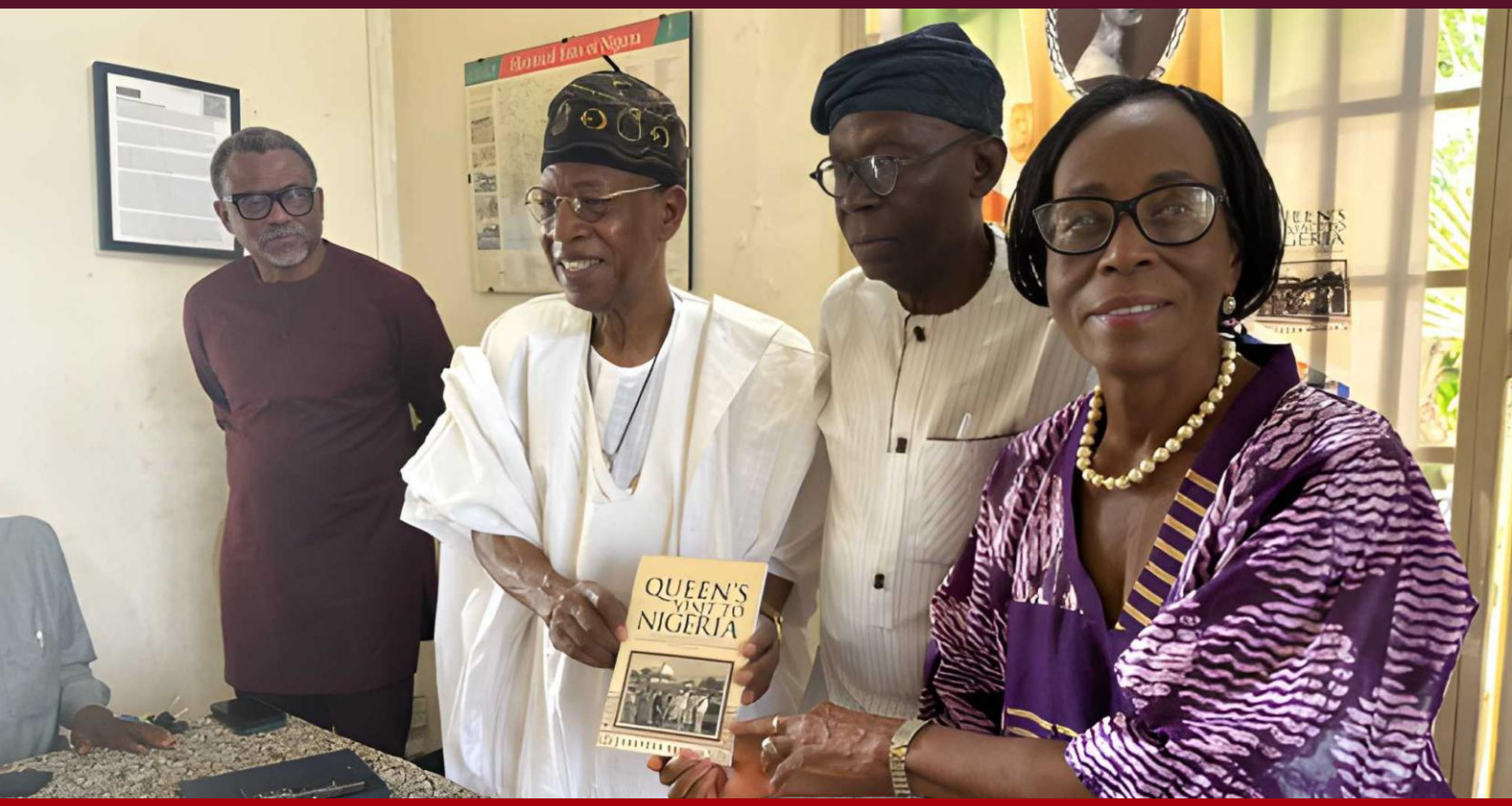
Akintola questioned whether adequate feasibility studies and environmental assessments were conducted before construction began, particularly in areas where the proposed highway could alter natural drainage patterns and affect neighbouring communities. Akintola argued that the debate should extend beyond construction costs to include the original planning assumptions, environmental consequences and the road's intended benefits to commuters and host communities. He recalled previous concerns raised about the need for environmental impact assessments before the commencement of major infrastructure projects, questioning whether sufficient attention had been paid to the physical characteristics of the coastal corridor. According to him, the engineering implications of constructing an elevated road through low-lying coastal communities require careful consideration, particularly regarding water movement and drainage. He explained that hydraulic engineering principles demand that road designs account for the natural flow of water from higher ground towards lower areas and ultimately into the sea. Akintola warned that constructing a raised highway embankment without adequate drainage provisions could obstruct natural water movement and potentially affect surrounding communities.

He observed that sections of the proposed road could function as embankments, raising questions about how water would flow across the landscape once the highway was completed. Akintola also raised questions about the proposed tolling arrangements and the need to ensure that the coastal highway remains accessible to different categories of road users.



LAI MOHAMMED VISITS NRC LEGACY MUSEUM, URGES SUSTAINED COMMITMENT TO RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT

By Michael Olatunji



From left; NRC's Director of Operations, Mr Akin Oshinowo, (who represented the MD, Dr Kayode Opeifa, Special Adviser to the UN-World Tourism Council on Culture, Mr Lai Mohammed, President Legacy 1995, Managers of Railway Museum, Mr Taiye Olaniyi, and a Member Board of Trustees of the Museum, Mrs Josephine Nwokedi, during Mr Lai Mohammed's courtesy visit to the Museum on Friday. PHOTO: NRC MEDIA

Former Minister of Information and Culture, Mr. Lai Mohammed, has highlighted the enduring importance of rail transportation to Nigeria's development and the value of preserving the nation's railway heritage.

The ex-Minister now the Special Adviser to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, made this known when he paid a familiarization visit to the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) Legacy Museum. Mr. Mohammed who was received by the Director of Operations of the Nigerian Railway Corporation, Mr. Akin Oshinowo, alongside members of the museum's management team, led by the President of Legacy 1995, Mr Taiye Olaniyi, lauded the NRC Managing Director, Dr Kayode Opeifa, for the ongoing transformation of the railway. He urged the Managing Director not to relent in his efforts to advance the Corporation, emphasizing that achieving meaningful transformation requires strong individuals driven by commitment, resilience and a genuine passion for the vision.

He also encouraged the Legacy Museum team to sustain its efforts of preserving the railway artefacts, adding that the railway would continue to play a vital role to play in Nigeria's development. Welcoming the visitor, the President of the Legacy Museum Mr Taiye Olaniyi, expressed appreciation for his visit and provided an overview of the museum's vision, explaining how it brings together the past, present and future of railway transportation through the preservation and presentation of the Corporation's rich history and antics. Speaking on behalf of the Managing Director, Mr. Akin Oshinowo, conveyed his greetings and noted the high regard in which the Managing Director holds the former minister. He also

expressed appreciation for the visit and the potential exposure it could bring to the Nigerian railway sector through tourism, heritage promotion and wider public engagement.

Mr. Mohammed was subsequently taken on a tour of the museum, during which he viewed its rich historical collections and gained further insights into the evolution and contributions of railway to land transportation in Nigeria.

Recalling how he used to board the train from Iddo to Government College, Keffi, in the 60s, the UN Envoy said the train had the history of linking people, to cultures adding that many of his friends till date were those he made on his journeys, either going to school or returning home, on vacations. Mr Mohammed who thanked Mr Olaniyi for facilitating the visit said the visit has rekindled in him old memories adding that the visit had greatly enriched his knowledge about the role the nation's railway has played in nation building.

"This visit has further reinforced the importance of preserving Nigeria's railway heritage, strengthening stakeholders' engagement and exploring opportunities to promote rail tourism. It also highlighted the potential of the NRC Legacy Museum as a platform for connecting the Corporation's historical achievements with its present operations and future aspirations," he added. He urged the Nigerian Railway Corporation to remain committed to preserving its heritage while advancing its mandate to provide safe, reliable and customer-focused railway services across all its corridors in the country.

Among those who were on ground to receive the Mr Mohammed are; the Director of Operations, Mr Akin Oshinowo, President of Legacy 1995, Mr Taiye Olaniyi, the Facility Manager, Mr Henry, Member of the Board of Trustees, Mrs Josephine Nwokedi, the Curator, Mr Phillip Adewale and the Special Adviser to the NRC Managing Director on Media and Communication Mr Adeyinka Aderibigbe, and the Head Customer Services Unit, Henrietta Eraghare.



NRC DENIES INVOLVEMENT IN TICKET RACKETEERING ON AKTS

By Michael Olatunji



The attention of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) has denied involvement in a libelous report contained in a video posted by a blogger accusing the corporation of ticket racketeering on its flagship train corridor - Abuja - Kaduna Train Service (AKTS).

The blogger, Faizah Raji, using the Instagram handle @wearegst had on her story titled: The NRC is stealing its own tickets to resell, had alleged that the corporation (which she erroneously addressed as Nigeria Railway Commission) of deliberately creating artificial scarcity of its tickets only to resell it through some agents at exorbitant prices. But in a statement issued by its Chief Public Relations Officer, Mr. Callistus Unyimadu, the NRC Management, stated that it is worrisome that though the blogger admitted in her story that the NRC had advised all prospective passengers to buy tickets only from approved portal, she had gone ahead to buy from "an agent." "Contrary to Faizah Raji's erroneous assumption, any member of the public who patronized 'ticket agents' contrary to NRC's warnings do so at own risk as NRC must not be held liable for any loss," the statement added. NRC, the statement further added, has nothing to do with the e-ticketing services as ticketing, is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement and the Abuja-Kaduna Train Service is handled by SecureID/TPS. The concessionaires which services ticketing demands on the standard gauge, was approved by the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC), and the Federal Executive Council (FEC) before 2023.

According to the corporation, following the 2022 train bombing, the Nigerian government had introduced the National Identification Number (NIN) Card as a condition for buying train ticket, to reduce racketeering, adding that scammers had devised a way of acquiring multiple NINs to get the tickets and resell to unsuspecting passengers who wished to board the train. To deal with the situation, the NRC in 2025 introduced double verification, similar to what obtained at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport 2, Lagos. While your NIN is checked to conform with the NIN used in purchasing the ticket, personal ID card is required to board the train.

"The NRC ticketing and verification system is integrated live with the NIMC database. Our system at Idu, Kubwa in Abuja, and at Rigasa in Kaduna, has the capacity to pull and display the picture of the person whose NIN number was used in purchasing the ticket from NIMC database. That is the

first of the two way verification. Any individual with a third party ticket will be discovered and refused boarding. This capacity also require a good Access Control System at the station.

To check this, in 2025 NRC introduced the MM2 airport system requiring second verification at boarding with a personal ID card," the statement added. While admitting that demands for train travel far exceeds the limited number of seats available on the train, as more Nigerians are opting for train services, NRC reiterates that it is unacceptable and an economic sabotage to buy train ticket from third party and with someone else's NIN or name. NRC added that the e-Ticketing companies had been mandated to improve access to the electronic portals in line with the ticketing protocols. The corporation insisted that the NRC is not involved in buying or selling of tickets but to create access for passengers ease to obtaining the tickets and to oblige ticket holders, access to the trains.

At the moment, the demand. The corporation has declared zero tolerance against ticket racketeers and assured all her esteemed passengers and well-meaning Nigerians, that the corporation shall continue to be ahead of these economic saboteurs who are bent on destroying the system and tarnishing its good image.

"The corporation shall continue to ensure quality customer service at all times, across all our operation areas as we are determined to ensure that the train becomes a first choice alternative by discerning travellers across the country." The corporation is determined to ensure that Nigerians enjoy quality train service that is safe, affordable, reliable and convenient, across all national train corridors.



DR. KAYODE OPEIFA: REDEFINING CUSTOMER SERVICE AT THE NIGERIAN RAILWAY CORPORATION

By Michael Olatunji



Dr. Kayode Opeifa
MD, NRC

Customer service is fundamentally about building and sustaining a strong relationship between an organisation and the people it serves.

Beyond responding to enquiries and complaints, it requires understanding customers' experiences, expectations and concerns. This makes feedback an invaluable instrument for any service-oriented organisation. While Public Relations addresses an organisation's broader relationship with its internal and external publics, customer service focuses more closely on the individual experiences of customers. For a service organisation such as the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC), the quality of this relationship is particularly important. Over the years, engagement between the Corporation and its customers was largely administrative. Issues were communicated, responses were received where available, and attention often shifted to other matters. What was largely missing was sustained, personalised engagement capable of creating a stronger bond between the Corporation and its passengers.

The assumption of office of Dr. Kayode Opeifa as Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Railway Corporation has brought a noticeable change to this relationship. With customer experience occupying an important place in his management philosophy, Dr. Opeifa strengthened the Customer Service function and gave it greater prominence within the Corporation.

The objective has been clear: passengers should not merely be transported; they should be listened to, respected and given value for the services they receive. Richard Branson once observed that customer loyalty is built by giving customers an exceptional experience. Dr. Opeifa's approach to railway management reflects this philosophy, with increasing emphasis on direct engagement, feedback and prompt response to passengers' concerns. One remarkable aspect of his style is his willingness to make himself accessible to railway passengers.

During interactions aboard trains and at stations, he has shared his telephone contact with passengers and encouraged them to communicate their experiences directly. The result has been a considerably shorter feedback chain. Passengers are able to report developments at stations, aboard trains and around railway facilities, sometimes providing information that reaches Management almost immediately. This has also encouraged greater

responsiveness across the system. When passengers know that their complaints, observations and suggestions can receive attention, confidence in the organisation improves. It gives them a sense that they are active stakeholders in the railway system rather than mere users of the service.

Another significant aspect of Dr. Opeifa's customer-centred approach is the attention given to passengers affected by operational incidents. Where circumstances permit, he engages directly with victims and their families. Where he cannot personally visit, District Managers or other senior officials of the Corporation are often directed to represent Management. I witnessed this dimension of leadership following the Warri–Itakpe train accident.

I was part of a delegation that visited one of the affected passengers who had relocated to Nsukka, Enugu State, to stay with her daughter. The family's reaction was deeply touching. They expressed surprise and appreciation that senior representatives of the Corporation would make the effort to visit them after the incident. Their response demonstrated the enormous value of empathy, follow-up and human connection in building public confidence.

Such gestures may appear simple, but they help create goodwill, restore trust and strengthen the relationship between an organisation and the people it serves. Dr. Opeifa captured this philosophy when he said: "Customers are at the heart of everything we do. Their feedback, trust and partnership challenge us to keep improving and delivering value every day. Customer Service Week is an opportunity to recognise that relationship and remind ourselves that great service must go beyond expectations." Beyond customer relations, his administration continues to pursue improvements in other areas of the Corporation, including staff welfare, operational efficiency and service delivery. However, the transformation of the Nigerian railway system cannot be achieved by Management alone.

With customer experience occupying an important place in his management philosophy, Dr. Opeifa strengthened the Customer Service function and gave it greater prominence within the Corporation.

It requires the cooperation of employees, passengers, communities, stakeholders and Nigerians generally. As the Corporation works to align itself with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration, sustained public support and constructive feedback will remain essential.

For the Nigerian Railway Corporation, the emerging message is clear: customer service must no longer be treated merely as a department or an administrative responsibility. It must become a culture. And under Dr. Kayode Opeifa, that culture is gradually taking deeper root.

AVIATION DEVELOPMENT BANK: EXPERIMENT TO SAFEGUARD NIGERIAN AIRLINES

Experts in the Nigerian aviation industry are divided over the push for the establishment of Aviation Development Bank for the country's airline operators. While a few supported the idea, others said it would not safeguard longevity of the carriers. **Pakuli Panam Danlami** writes.



Nigeria's quest for a sustainable aviation financing model has exposed deep divisions among industry stakeholders, with some advocating a specialised development bank to unlock long-term capital, while others insist that weak financial discipline, disputed industry data and a history of unrecovered intervention loans must be addressed before another institution is created.

The disagreement shows a longstanding challenge confronting Nigeria's aviation industry on how to finance an expensive, dollar-dependent business in an economy where airlines earn much of their revenue in naira, face high borrowing costs and struggle to maintain reliable operations. For proponents of an Aviation Development Bank, conventional commercial banks are ill-equipped to finance aircraft acquisition, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities, pilot training, fuel procurement and other capital-intensive requirements of the industry. They argue that a dedicated institution, supported by innovative financing mechanisms and pooled industry revenues, could reduce the cost of capital, improve access to aircraft and strengthen the competitiveness of indigenous operators. Opponents, however, queried whether establishing another financial institution would solve the underlying problems or just create a new channel for loans that airlines might struggle to repay. Their concerns are reinforced by the industry's history of government-backed interventions, persistent disagreements over operational data and the financial vulnerability of carriers whose major liabilities are denominated in foreign currencies. The issue has consequently moved beyond whether Nigeria needed an Aviation Development Bank to whether the industry's problem was primarily a shortage of financing or the operational model of the airlines. For Samuel Caulcrick, Chief Executive Officer of Merchant Express Cargo Airlines and a former Rector of the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Nigeria needed a dedicated aviation



Capt. Samuel Caulcrick
Aviation Expert

financing architecture because conventional banking arrangements have failed to meet the industry's peculiar requirements. Caulcrick dismissed the argument that an Aviation Development Bank should be rejected because such an institution had not previously existed in the country. He described the objection as a misunderstanding of innovation, insisting that the absence of a previous model should encourage stakeholders to develop a solution rather than abandon the idea. He said: "Every time someone proposes an Aviation Development Bank in Nigeria, we hear the same repetitive retort: 'It has never existed before.' That is not an argument. That is the definition of innovation. "Innovation, by its very nature, is what never existed to solve the problems that have never been solved."

According to him, the traditional banking system was not designed to support the peculiar financing needs of airlines, which must acquire expensive aircraft, maintain them over long periods and meet substantial operating costs while navigating volatile exchange rates and relatively thin profit margins. Modern commercial aircraft can cost tens of millions of dollars, while maintenance programmes, spare parts, simulator training and other technical requirements demand sustained investment, he argued. Caulcrick maintained that financing such assets with short-term loans carrying high interest rates creates a mismatch between the life of the asset and the repayment obligations imposed on the operator. He believed a specialised financing structure could provide longer tenors, risk-sharing arrangements and funding products tailored to the aviation industry's operational cycles. To support his argument, he pointed to the African Development Bank's Integrated Aviation Transformation Programme (IATP), which he cited as evidence that aviation-specific financing was gaining institutional recognition across the continent.

The programme, according to Caulcrick, was anchored by a proposed $7 billion Aviation Financing and Connectivity Facility intended to mobilise private and institutional capital for fleet renewal, infrastructure development and improved connectivity through instruments such as guarantees and risk-sharing mechanisms. He posited that Nigeria should build on such initiatives by developing a domestic financing framework that could complement continental funding arrangements and direct more capital towards local aviation businesses.

He expressed that the objective was not simply to create another bank with an aviation label, but to establish an institution capable of financing the wider ecosystem. This, according to him, would include aircraft leasing, MRO facilities, aviation training, fuel procurement, airport infrastructure and foreign-exchange liquidity required by operators. He also advocated the aggregation of industry cash flows, arguing that the combined financial activity of airlines and other aviation businesses could create a stronger basis for attracting long-term investment. Under his proposal, ticket sales, aviation-related charges, fuel levies, maintenance reserves and charter



Festus Keyamo, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development

revenues could be channelled through a carefully organised financing vehicle, subject to appropriate legal safeguards and stakeholder agreements. Caulcrick drew an analogy with OPay, the financial technology company whose business model he said demonstrated how large volumes of relatively small transactions could generate substantial liquidity when aggregated.

He added: "One airline is high-risk. One route is thin. One ticket levy is insignificant. But aggregate the entire industry's cash flows into a single, ring-fenced vehicle, and you suddenly have what banks love: massive, predictable, daily liquidity. "The industry should not merely demand cheaper loans from lenders, but should explore how its collective economic activity can improve its creditworthiness." However, the Chief Executive Officer of Palewater Advisory Group Africa, Alex Nwuba, disagreed with Caulcrick.

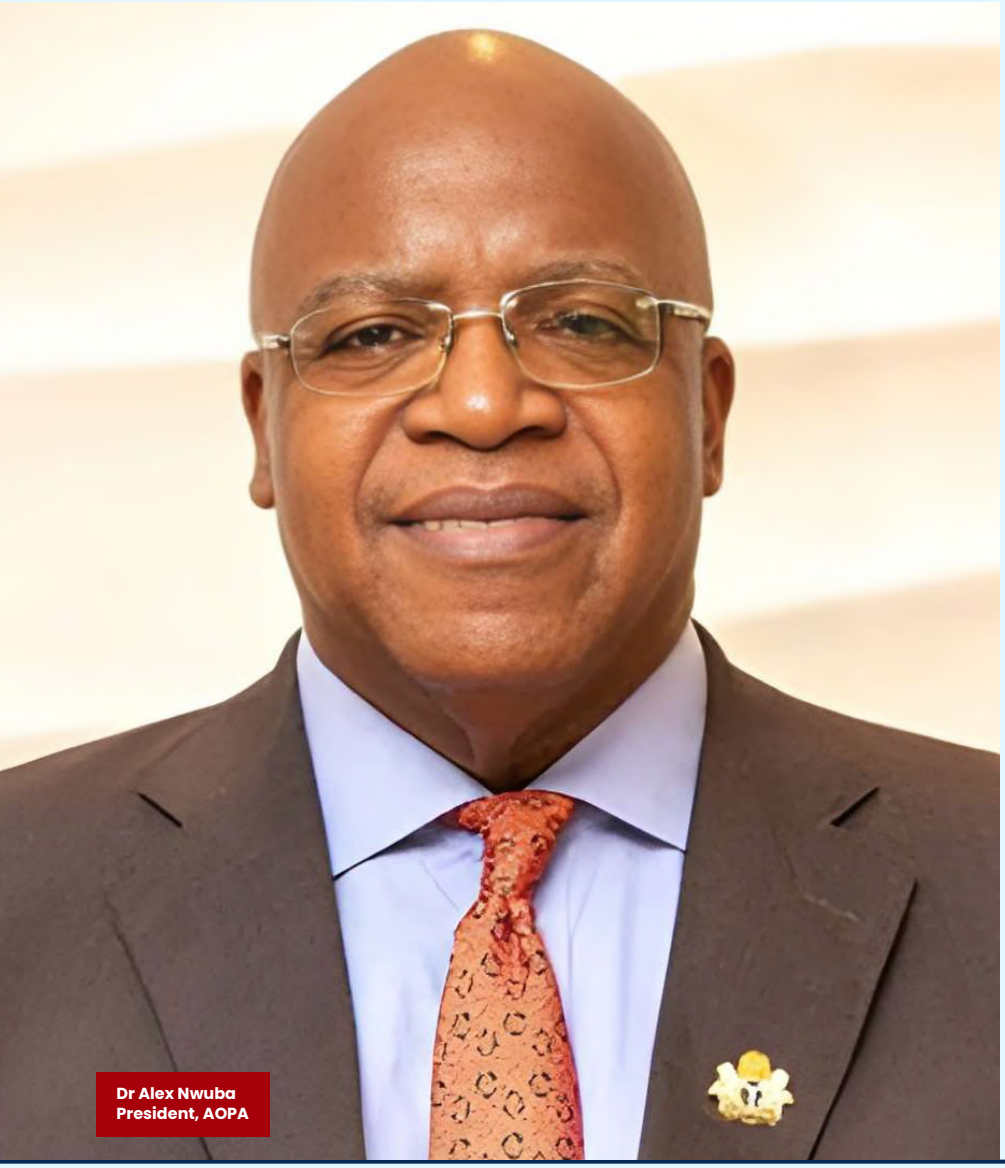
He argued that a specialised bank could not manufacture cheap money, eliminate foreign-exchange risks or compensate for poor operational performance. He declared that the central weakness in the proposal was the assumption that a specialised institution would automatically provide affordable financing.

He emphasised that a development bank would still have to obtain funds from investors, depositors, capital markets, development partners or government-backed facilities and those resources would carry costs and risks. He said: "Such an institution does not manufacture money. It must source lendable funds and price them above what it paid, and lendable funds here do not come at single digits. "It either on-lends at market cost, another expensive lender with an aviation nameplate, or below cost, in which case somebody is paying the difference and we should call it a subsidy and debate it honestly." Nwuba expressed concerns about the currency mismatch confronting Nigerian airlines. While many domestic carriers earn revenue in naira, significant obligations, including aircraft leases, insurance, spare parts and some maintenance expenses are denominated in dollars, he said. He pointed out that naira-denominated loans could not resolve dollar-denominated liabilities, noting that rather, they may instead leave airlines with an additional debt obligation without providing the foreign currency required to meet their principal expenses.

Dollar-denominated loans, on the other hand, could expose operators to repayment risks if their revenues are not sufficiently linked to foreign currencies. For him, improving the quality of airline operations and financial reporting was important to reducing perceived risks

and attracting more favourable financing terms. He also challenged the tendency of airline promoters to rely heavily on debt when equity financing might provide a more appropriate foundation for an inherently risky business. According to him, aviation was an equity-intensive business carrying substantial foreign-exchange exposure, yet some operators preferred borrowing because raising equity would dilute their ownership and required them to share control with other investors. Nwuba did not advocate consolidation among airlines, rather, he argued that operators should match the scale of their businesses to the resources available to them and select financing instruments appropriate to their risks. Besides, the CEO of Centurion Aviation Security Services Ltd, John Ojikutu, opposed the proposal and urged stakeholders to first examine the outcome of previous government interventions. Ojikutu queried what happened to the past aviation intervention funds by the government and warned against repeating a model that could result in "unrecovered loans."

Rather than establishing an aviation bank, Ojikutu canvassed stricter enforcement of economic and financial regulations, credible airline business plans, adequate fleet and route requirements, improved airport infrastructure and differentiated airport charges based on available services and traffic. He also advocated stronger operational structures, including designated airline bases and appropriate airport slots.



Dr Alex Nwuba
President, AOPA

"SUCH AN INSTITUTION DOES NOT MANUFACTURE MONEY. IT MUST SOURCE LENDABLE FUNDS AND PRICE THEM ABOVE WHAT IT PAID, AND LENDABLE FUNDS HERE DO NOT COME AT SINGLE DIGITS."

ABUJA JET SERIOUS INCIDENT: NEED FOR SWEEPING AUDIT OF OPERATORS

The recent serious incident involving a Challenger CL60 Jet in October, has sparked calls for industry-wide audits of airline operators in the country, especially the business jet sub-sector. **Pakuli Panam Danlami** writes



The loss of a door from a business jet shortly after take-off from the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja, has renewed concerns over aircraft airworthiness, maintenance practices, flight crew competence and regulatory oversight in Nigeria's aviation industry, with experts calling for a comprehensive audit of airline operators.

The incident involving a Challenger CL60 aircraft operated by Triton Aviation has raised fresh questions about the safety of business aviation, particularly the operational standards governing private aircraft, foreign-registered jets and the effectiveness of existing regulatory checks. Although the aircraft returned safely to Abuja after its crew declared an emergency, aviation stakeholders have warned that the occurrence could have had far more serious consequences had it happened at a higher altitude or resulted in the loss of control of the aircraft.

The Challenger CL60, with registration number T7-SEI and flight identification DWC052, was operating a flight from Abuja to the Murtala Muhammed Airport (MMA), Lagos, when the incident occurred earlier in the month. According to an incident report, the aircraft departed Runway 22 at approximately 4:17 p.m. Coordinated Universal Time (UTC).

While climbing through 3,000 feet, about three nautical miles from the airport, the crew declared an emergency after reporting that a door had opened in flight. The pilots transmitted a "Mayday" call, the internationally recognised distress signal used when an aircraft faces grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance.

Air traffic controllers subsequently directed the aircraft to return to Abuja for an emergency landing.

Airport fire and emergency response personnel, alongside a medical team, were immediately placed on standby in anticipation of a possible emergency during the aircraft's return.



Grp. Capt. John Ojikutu, retd.
Aviation Security Expert

The aircraft eventually landed safely on Runway 22 at approximately 4:34 p.m. UTC, about 14 minutes after the distress call. A post-landing inspection confirmed that the door was missing from the aircraft's fuselage. The aircraft was subsequently taxied to the international apron extension and parked. The safe landing prevented the incident from becoming a potentially more serious aviation accident.

However, the discovery that a major aircraft component had separated from the fuselage during flight immediately raised questions about the integrity of the aircraft and the circumstances preceding the occurrence. The concerns deepened after a video circulated online showing what was reportedly the missing door lying in farmland within Abuja. In the footage, a man whose identity could not be established said farmers had discovered the door while returning from their farm. The circumstances surrounding the door's separation, its eventual location and the possibility of damage to property or injury on the ground are matters that require verification by the investigating authorities. The Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) is investigating the immediate and underlying causes of the serious incident.

For the experts, the incident is more than an isolated technical failure. It is a reminder that aviation safety depends on several interconnected safeguards, including sound aircraft design, proper maintenance, competent flight crews, functional warning systems and effective regulatory supervision. The Chief Executive Officer of Nigame Aircraft Consultancy, based in the United States, Olufemi Adeniji, said the incident underlined the urgent need for a rigorous and uncompromising audit of operators in Nigeria.

Adeniji expressed concern that the latest occurrence came amid a series of aviation incidents involving runway overruns, an aircraft landing on a road and a military aircraft crash. He warned that the authorities should not treat the incidents as unrelated occurrences without examining whether there were broader lessons for safety management and operational oversight. He recalled the runway overrun at Ibadan Airport, the road landing at Asaba, the overrun at Benin and the military aircraft crash at Igbokoda, Ondo State, before drawing attention to the loss of the Challenger aircraft's door during flight.

Adeniji said the circumstances raised questions about the aircraft's door-locking mechanism and the warning systems designed to alert the flight crew when an aircraft door is not properly secured.

He said: "Once again, just when we believed the series of aviation incidents had ended, another one surfaces. "Could the cockpit indicator light be faulty? Is there corrosion on the main entry door hinge? Is the flight crew adequately qualified?" He stressed that the questions should be addressed through a detailed technical investigation, rather than speculation, adding that a comprehensive review of operators was necessary to establish whether they were meeting the required safety standards. "Every operator in Nigeria requires a rigorous, uncompromising

audit. This event took place in a pressurised cabin; imagine the outcome at cruising altitude. Has anyone assessed the damage on the ground?

"A detailed investigation is imperative. Safety must remain the guiding principle of aviation," he said. Also, Adeniji said that the central issue was whether the aircraft's door-locking and warning systems functioned as designed. Aircraft are fitted with mechanisms intended to ensure that doors are properly secured before flight, while cockpit indications on applicable aircraft types help alert pilots to certain door-related conditions.

However, the precise warnings, interlocks and procedures applicable to the Challenger CL60 must be established from the aircraft's technical documentation and the evidence gathered during the investigation, he said. He noted that investigators would need to establish whether the door was correctly secured before departure, whether the locking mechanism was defective, whether any warning appeared in the cockpit and whether the crew followed the applicable checklist and operating procedures.

Adeniji explained that the condition of the door, its hinges, latches, locking components and surrounding fuselage structure would also be important for investigation. He further pointed out that maintenance records, previous defect reports, inspections and any recent work carried out on the aircraft could help investigators determine whether the incident resulted from a mechanical failure, a maintenance issue, an operational error or a combination of factors. He added: "It would be premature to assign responsibility to the operator, maintenance personnel or flight crew before the investigation establishes what happened. "Nevertheless, the occurrence has highlighted why maintenance compliance cannot be assessed solely by the existence of certificates or inspection records. Regulators must also be satisfied that maintenance is properly performed, defects are addressed and aircraft are released to service only when they meet applicable airworthiness requirements." Also, aviation security expert, John Ojikutu queried the operational status of the aircraft, the qualifications of its crew and the regulatory requirements governing foreign-registered aircraft operating in Nigeria.

He wondered whether the flight was commercial, or the aircraft had obtained the necessary security clearance and whether the relevant authorities had verified its airworthiness documents and crew licences. Ojikutu argued that the incident should prompt closer scrutiny of the movement and operational activities of foreign-registered private aircraft in Nigeria, particularly against the backdrop of domestic and international security concerns. "This is a foreign-registered aircraft possibly flown by foreign crew.

Was the aircraft on a commercial flight and has it a security clearance for flying within the country? he queried. Ojikutu also asked whether cabin crew were aboard the aircraft and whether the cockpit had a functioning warning system capable of alerting the pilots to a door-related technical problem before take-off.

He maintained that such aircraft should not operate beyond authorised points of entry or outside the conditions and duration of their clearances without the necessary approvals. He further called for closer examination of aircraft operating within Nigeria without local registration, insisting that the authorities must ensure compliance with applicable aviation and security regulations.

Ojikutu also drew attention to an earlier incident involving a foreign-registered aircraft that landed on an uncompleted highway in Asaba instead of the airport, wondering whether the lessons from that occurrence had been fully addressed.



NIMET CALLS FOR PRIVATE INVESTMENT TO CLOSE AFRICA'S 30% WEATHER DATA GAP

By Charles Ayodele



Prof. Charkes Anisike
DG, NiMet

Africa accounts for about 30 per cent of the global deficit in weather and climate observations, with the continent operating only 12.5 per cent of the minimum weather station density recommended by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

This was the view of the Director-General of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), Prof. Charles Anosike, recently, during his welcome address at the opening ceremony of the three day's Alliance for Hydromet Development Annual Meeting 2026, hosted by the agency in Lagos. Anosike warned that inadequate observation infrastructure was negatively affecting the accuracy of weather forecasts and leaving vulnerable communities exposed to climate-related disasters. Anosike, who is also Nigeria's Permanent Representative with the WMO, also called for increased public and private-sector investment to close critical gaps in weather and climate monitoring across Africa.

According to him, the continent had some of the most significant weather observation deficits globally, with compliance rates among 53 countries, including Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, standing at only seven per cent for surface land stations and nine per cent for upper-air stations. The Director-General, expressed that the situation was particularly concerning for Nigeria, given its vast landmass of more than 900,000 square kilometres and the limited availability of standard meteorological observation stations in rural, agricultural and remote border communities. He said: "With limited funding, vast rural, agricultural and remote border territories are left completely without standard observation stations.

"Modernising weather and climate observation infrastructure required substantial capital investment, which governments alone cannot adequately provide. I therefore call on financial institutions, development banks, private investors, philanthropic organisations and climate funds to support the expansion and maintenance of observation networks, weather radar infrastructure, remote sensing systems, data analytics and climate information platforms.'

Anosike described investment in weather and climate services as a high-impact strategy, particularly as extreme weather events become more frequent and the demand for reliable climate information increases across critical sectors of the economy. He explained that accurate meteorological data had become indispensable for aviation safety, agricultural productivity, maritime operations, disaster preparedness, infrastructure investment and financial risk management.

According to him, climate information was increasingly relevant to agricultural lending, insurance pricing, corporate sustainability reporting and the assessment of physical climate risks. The NiMet boss said the agency was strengthening its engagement with private-sector organisations and other stakeholders in the climate services value chain through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). He explained that such partnerships would complement government funding by combining private capital, operational efficiency and risk-sharing arrangements with public oversight to deliver essential infrastructure and services.

He further called on participants at the meeting to commit to strengthening the capacity of national meteorological and hydrological services, particularly in sustaining observation systems and improving data exchange in line with WMO standards. In the maritime sector, Anosike said NiMet was collaborating with the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the National Inland Waterways Authority to provide daily maritime weather forecasts aimed at improving vessel safety and operational efficiency. Also, the Director of the Development Partnerships and Programme Delivery Division of the WMO, Daniel Kull, said the Alliance for Hydromet Development was established at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25), in 2019 to close capacity gaps in weather and climate services by 2030. Kull said the alliance had recorded progress through country hydrometeorological assessments, which provide a framework for identifying national capacity gaps and directing investments to areas where they are most needed. He also mentioned the establishment of financing mechanisms to support basic weather and climate observations, particularly in least-developed countries.

According to him, Nigeria had evolved from being a beneficiary of international support to providing technical expertise to other countries, citing its assistance to Burkina Faso as an example of growing regional cooperation. Kull said investments in Nigeria's weather and climate services had been estimated to yield economic returns of 19 to one, showing the potential benefits of strengthening the sector.

With limited funding, vast rural, agricultural and remote border territories are left completely without standard observation stations.

AIR PEACE APPOINTS ONIPE, PAUL-UGOCHUKWU AS DIRECTOR OF FLIGHT OPERATIONS, CHIEF PILOT

By Charles Ayodele



In a strategic move to strengthen leadership capacity, deepen operational expertise and sustain its growth trajectory, Air Peace, has elevated Captains James Adaviruku Onipe and Ikechukwu Paul-Ugochukwu to the positions of Director of Flight Operations (DFO) and Chief Pilot (CP), respectively.

A statement by the Communications Manager, Air Peace, Efe Osifo-Whiskey, said the appointments take effect effective November 1, 2026. According to him, the appointments underscored the airline's commitment to developing experienced aviation professionals, strengthening its leadership structure and sustaining operational excellence.

Onipe, an accomplished airline pilot with almost two decades of experience across multiple aircraft fleets, currently served as Air Peace's Embraer 145 Fleet Manager and Trainer/Check Airman.

Also, Paul-Ugochukwu brings 22 years of aviation industry experience to his new role. He currently serves as a Boeing 777 Type Rating Instructor and Check Airman, contributing to pilot training, technical proficiency and the maintenance of operational standards. He emphasised that the appointments followed the elevation of the outgoing Director of Flight Operations, Augustin Kamano, and former Chief Pilot, Martin Okunpolor, to higher positions within the Air Peace Group.

As the handover process commences, Air Peace said it remained focused on nurturing aviation talent, reinforcing professional standards and building the leadership capacity required to support its expanding operations.

WHY NIGERIA'S AVIATION FUNDING MODEL SHORTCHANGES COMMERCIAL PASSENGERS – CAULCRICK

By Charles Ayodele



The former Rector of the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology (NCAT), Zaria, Samuel Caulcrick, has raised concerns over an imbalance in Nigeria's aviation funding and regulatory framework.

Caulcrick in an interview with Transportation Agenda in Lagos, said that commercial air passengers bear a disproportionate share of the cost of sustaining the industry. Caulcrick said while passengers travelling on scheduled airlines contribute to aviation funding through statutory charges embedded in their tickets, private jet operators using the same airspace and airport infrastructure do not make equivalent contributions.

He declared that the situation places additional financial pressure on commercial airlines and ultimately contributes to higher fares and reduced access to air travel. Caulcrick who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Express Cargo Ltd, mentioned the five per cent Ticket Sales Charge (TSC), collected from airline ticket sales to support aviation agencies, as one of the major funding mechanisms through which commercial passengers contribute to the sector.

According to him, private business jet operators do not pay the charge because they do not sell tickets, relying instead on fuel-related taxes and landing and parking fees. He said: "Your ticket is keeping the entire system alive. Yet you are the one who gets policed, delayed, and squeezed the most. This arrangement is structurally unfair to ordinary travellers.

"Commercial airlines and private aircraft operators benefit from common aviation infrastructure, including air traffic control services, runways and the national airspace, despite differences in their financial contributions to the system." Caulcrick maintained that the disparity deserved closer examination by the Federal government and aviation regulators, particularly as the industry continued to grapple with high operating costs and expensive airfares. He also itemised differences between the regulatory requirements for scheduled commercial airlines and those governing private aviation. While scheduled commercial operators are subject to extensive requirements covering aircraft maintenance, crew rest, operational procedures and flight dispatch, he said private operators conducting non-commercial flights operate under a different regulatory framework.

He noted that in Nigeria, holders of a Permit for Non-Commercial Flights (PNCF) operate under Part 18 of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations (NigCARs), subject to the applicable requirements. Caulcrick emphasised that private aviation serves legitimate corporate and personal transportation needed, but queried whether the distinction between commercial and non-commercial operations was being properly enforced.

He alleged that some PNCF holders were operating flights for hire or reward, contrary to the conditions governing non-commercial operations.

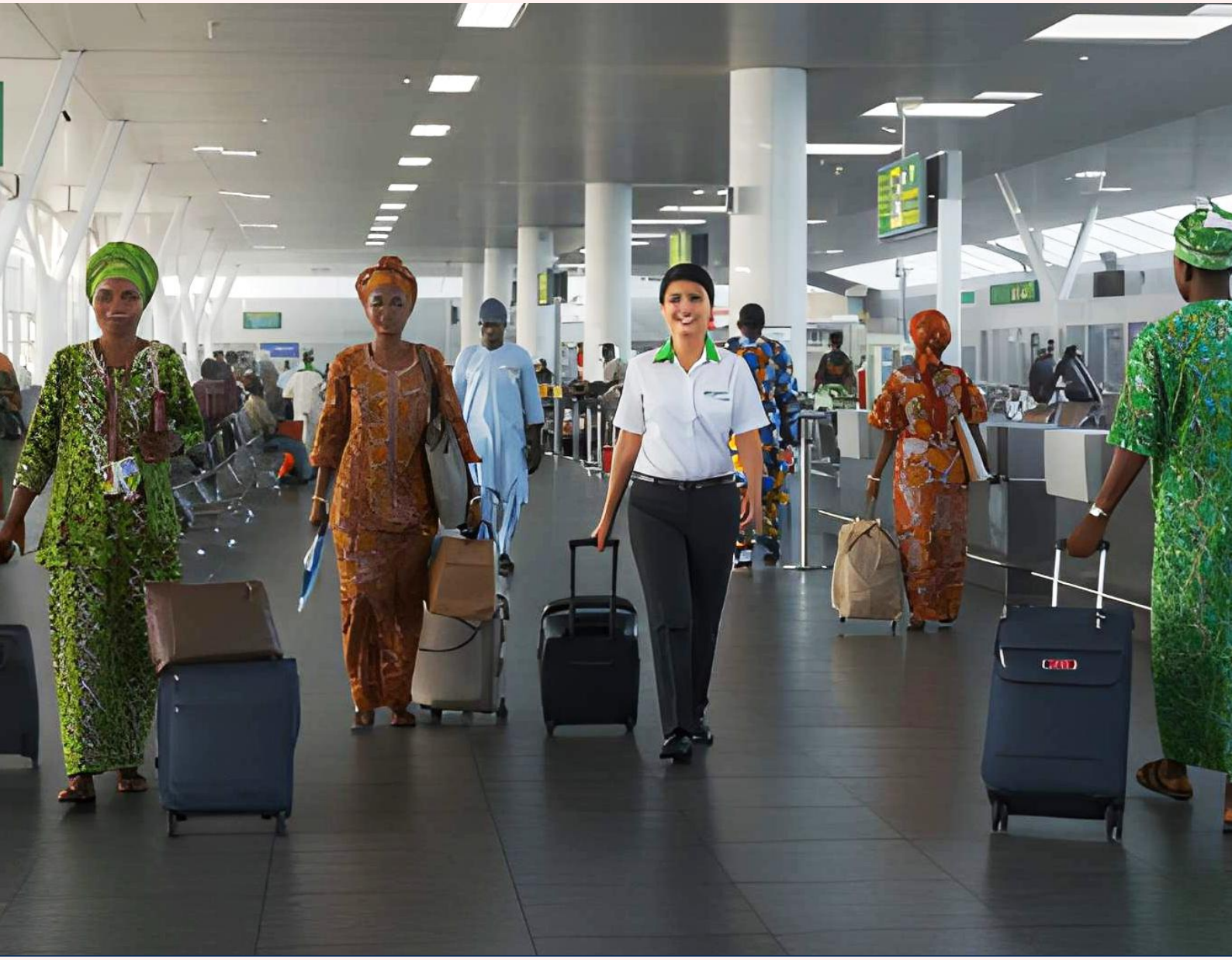
According to him, such practices, if established, would create an uneven competitive environment by allowing operators to attract premium-paying passengers without necessarily meeting the same commercial obligations as licensed charter operators and scheduled airlines.

He expressed that commercial airlines could lose some of their most lucrative passengers to operators offering private flights outside the approved commercial framework, weakening their revenue base while leaving them responsible for statutory charges and other operating costs. Caulcrick said the resulting pressure could affect airlines' ability to sustain routes, expand capacity and keep fares affordable. He further noted that disruptions caused by industrial disputes within the aviation sector often affect scheduled airline passengers more severely than private jet users.

According to him, commercial travellers are more likely to face cancellations, delays and difficulties accessing airport facilities during such disruptions, while private jet users may have alternative arrangements.

He called for a review of the funding and regulatory framework to ensure that all aviation users make appropriate contributions towards the infrastructure and services they utilise. Caulcrick also urged the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) to strengthen enforcement against operators allegedly using non-commercial permits to conduct commercial flights.

He said a more equitable system would require effective monitoring of private aviation activities, enforcement of existing regulations and a funding structure that reflects the demands different categories of operators place on the aviation system.



FAAN RAMPS UP HEALTH SCREENING ACROSS AIRPORTS FOLLOWING ABUJA EBOLA CASE

By Charles Ayodele



The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has intensified vigilance across the country's airports following the confirmation of an imported case of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

FAAN in a statement by its Director, Public Affairs and Consumer Protection, Henry Agbebire, said it was working with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), Port Health Services, the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) and other relevant agencies to support ongoing efforts to contain the disease. The development came as health authorities begin contact tracing for 44 people identified as potentially exposed to the infected woman, who recently travelled to Uganda in East Africa.The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate, confirmed the case at a press conference in Abuja on Tuesday, following laboratory confirmation of the infection. Pate said the patient developed symptoms on October 7 and sought medical attention at a private health facility on October 11. She has since been isolated and is receiving medical care.

According to the minister, those being monitored include healthcare workers, patients, caregivers and travel-related contacts who may have been exposed to the infected woman. Reacting to the development, FAAN said the early identification of the case and commencement of contact tracing underscored the importance of established public health protocols, effective surveillance and inter-agency collaboration in responding to potential health threats. The authority said it was maintaining heightened vigilance across airport operations and would continue to coordinate with public health authorities, aligned its response with further guidance and support additional measures considered necessary to protect passengers, airport personnel and the wider public. The agency urged passengers, airport users, airlines and other stakeholders to remain calm, vigilant and cooperative with health officials.

The authority also advised the public to rely on verified information and avoid spreading unconfirmed reports about the outbreak. The statement read in part: "FAAN is maintaining heightened vigilance across airport operations and will continue to coordinate with public health authorities, align its response with further guidance and support additional measures considered necessary to safeguard passengers, airport personnel and the wider public. "The authority urges passengers, airport users, airlines and other stakeholders to remain calm, vigilant and cooperative with health officials. The public is also advised to rely on verified information and avoid spreading unconfirmed reports."

CLOSURE OF IMO AIRPORT BEST FOR SAFETY - KEYAMO

By Charles Ayodele



The Federal government has said that the temporary closure of the Sam Mbakwe International Cargo Airport, Owerri, Imo State, is necessary to address runway defects and improve aviation safety ahead of the Christmas travel season.

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, disclosed this recently in a statement. Keyamo said that the airport's runway would be closed for approximately 25 days, effective October 20, 2026 to allow for rehabilitation, resurfacing and extension works. Keyamo said the decision was reached in collaboration with the Imo State government and other stakeholders in the South-East, stressing that aviation safety could not be compromised in the interest of uninterrupted flight operations. According to the minister, the rehabilitation became necessary to repair deteriorated sections of the runway pavement, treat extensive surface cracks, fill potholes and resurface affected areas. He said the intervention was also expected to improve the airport's operational efficiency and strengthen its capacity to accommodate larger aircraft, including wide-body aircraft, subject to applicable operational and regulatory requirements. The minister added: "I have spoken with the Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodimma, who, alongside other stakeholders, agreed on the need for the temporary closure to enable contractors to execute the work effectively. "The timing of this intervention is particularly important as we approach the Christmas travel season, when passenger traffic and flight movements to Owerri and other parts of the South-East traditionally increase."

Keyamo explained that the government had a responsibility to ensure that airport infrastructure was in the right condition to support safe and efficient operations during the peak travel period and beyond. The minister agreed that the temporary shutdown could inconvenience passengers, airlines and other airport users, but appealed for their understanding and cooperation. Keyamo added the Federal government, through the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), would continue to engage the Imo State government, airlines and other relevant stakeholders to coordinate the project and minimise disruption to travellers. He also emphasised the contribution of the Imo State government to the runway extension project, describing the collaboration as evidence of what could be achieved through cooperation between different levels of government.

According to him, the joint effort was aimed at delivering an airport capable of meeting the growing air transport needs of the South-East and supporting the region's economic development. Passengers scheduled to travel through the airport during the closure period have been advised to contact their respective airlines for information on flight cancellations, rescheduling and alternative travel arrangements. Keyamo said the confirmed closure and reopening dates would be communicated through appropriate official channels. He further reiterated the Federal government's commitment to developing safer, more efficient and modern aviation infrastructure across the country, adding that the Owerri runway rehabilitation and extension project formed part of efforts to strengthen air connectivity in the South-East.

NIGERIA'S MARITIME SECTOR YET TO UNLOCK BLUE ECONOMY POTENTIAL, SEREC 2026 SCORECARD REVEALS

By Samuel Benjamin



Mr. Eugene Nweke

Nigeria's maritime sector continues to grapple with persistent deficits in port efficiency, indigenous shipping capacity, maritime financing, multimodal logistics and shipbuilding, limiting the country's ability to translate its vast maritime resources into economic growth, the Sea Empowerment and Research Centre (SEREC) has said.

The research centre also identified maritime governance, inland-waterway utilisation, human capital development, maritime technology, fisheries and marine environmental management as areas requiring urgent and sustained reforms. These findings are contained in SEREC's 2026 maritime sector scorecard and policy presentation, prepared by its Head of Research, Eugene Nweke, which assessed the industry across key strategic reform areas and structural constraints. The assessment covered maritime governance and coordination, port infrastructure, trade facilitation and digitalisation, shipping and indigenous participation, logistics and multimodality, maritime security, human capital, technology, maritime industrialisation, the blue economy, and maritime finance and investment. According to the report, although port infrastructure is improving, significant deficits remain, while digital trade reforms have been transformative but remain vulnerable to implementation risks. It described maritime security as an area of significant progress that requires sustained attention, while human capital and technology remain underdeveloped. SEREC also observed that Nigeria's blue economy holds considerable economic potential but has yet to translate that potential into substantial economic returns. The centre acknowledged improvements in port infrastructure, particularly in cargo activity and government-backed modernisation initiatives, which have contributed to a sustained rise in cargo throughput and container traffic.

However, it identified ageing infrastructure, inadequate specialised equipment, weak intermodal connectivity, congestion around port corridors, capacity constraints, uneven development of eastern ports and maintenance challenges as persistent impediments to sectoral growth. The report further highlighted cargo dwell time, vessel turnaround, multiple inspections, duplicated documentation, cargo examination delays, poor port access roads, demurrage and storage charges as factors driving up logistics costs. It also identified underdeveloped inland-waterway evacuation as a major constraint to efficient cargo movement. SEREC stressed that maritime sector performance should not be measured solely by the number of projects announced or initiated, but by tangible economic outcomes, including lower logistics costs, shorter cargo-processing times, increased indigenous participation, higher investment, job creation, stronger export capacity and improved national productivity. On

maritime governance, the research centre raised concerns over fragmented responsibilities and overlapping mandates among key government institutions and industry regulators.

These include the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), the Nigerian Ports Economic Regulatory Agency (NPERA), the National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), the Nigeria Customs Service, the Navy, the Marine Police, environmental agencies, fisheries authorities, state governments and terminal operators. It warned that weak coordination among these institutions could undermine the effectiveness of ongoing and future reforms. To address the challenge, SEREC recommended the establishment of a National Integrated Maritime Governance Framework featuring clearly defined institutional mandates, shared data, coordinated enforcement, common key performance indicators and a unified national maritime strategy. On indigenous shipping, the report noted that Nigeria generates substantial cargo volumes without exercising proportionate control over the vessels, financing, insurance, technology and international freight value chains associated with its maritime trade.

It attributed the limited participation of indigenous operators partly to high borrowing costs, short loan tenors, foreign-exchange exposure, limited specialised lending, difficulties in vessel acquisition, weak maritime leasing arrangements and inadequate participation by institutional investors. SEREC consequently recommended a National Indigenous Shipping Development Programme to support vessel acquisition, long-term ship financing, maritime leasing, indigenous operators, crew development, marine insurance, ship management, and coastal and regional shipping.

The centre also called for a Nigerian Maritime Finance and Investment Architecture that would mobilise capital from development banks, pension funds, insurance funds, private equity, sovereign and other institutional investors. The proposed framework would also incorporate public-private partnerships, vessel financing and maritime infrastructure bonds to expand access to long-term capital for the industry. The assessment expressed concern over the performance of Nigeria's Cabotage regime, arguing that the policy has yet to deliver an indigenous maritime industrial ecosystem commensurate with the country's coastal economy.

It maintained that the effectiveness of the regime should be measured by growth in Nigerian-owned vessels, Nigerian-controlled tonnage, employment of Nigerian seafarers, domestic shipyards and indigenous maritime capital.

On maritime industrialisation, SEREC proposed a National Maritime Industrialisation Programme to integrate shipyards, dry docks, marine engineering, fabrication, universities, financing institutions, shipping companies and the offshore industry. According to the centre, stronger linkages among these segments would help build domestic capacity, retain more maritime-related economic value within the country and expand opportunities for local businesses and skilled workers. The report also identified the absence of integrated maritime data and intelligence as a strategic weakness, warning that inadequate data limits the country's ability to measure the sector's performance and make informed policy decisions. It argued that a modern maritime economy should systematically track cargo entering and leaving ports, cargo ownership, dwell time, movement patterns, vessel calls, maritime assets and the economic value generated by the industry. To close the gap, SEREC proposed a National Maritime Data and Intelligence Platform integrating information from ports, customs, shipping, logistics, security, inland waterways, fisheries, blue-economy activities and trade statistics. The platform, it said, would strengthen planning, improve coordination among agencies and provide a more reliable basis for evaluating maritime reforms. SEREC further warned that Nigeria faces growing competition from Ghana, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin Republic and other emerging West African logistics gateways.

The growing competition, the report suggested, reinforces the need for Nigeria to improve port efficiency, reduce cargo-handling costs, strengthen inland connectivity and expand indigenous participation if it is to remain competitive as a regional maritime and logistics hub. Overall, the assessment called for a shift from policy announcements and infrastructure projects to measurable outcomes capable of improving productivity, attracting investment, strengthening local maritime capacity and unlocking the economic potential of Nigeria's blue economy.



CUSTOMS BOSS COMMITS TO NIGERIA'S $1TN ECONOMY TARGET

By Samuel Benjamin



Adewale Adeniyi
CG, Customs

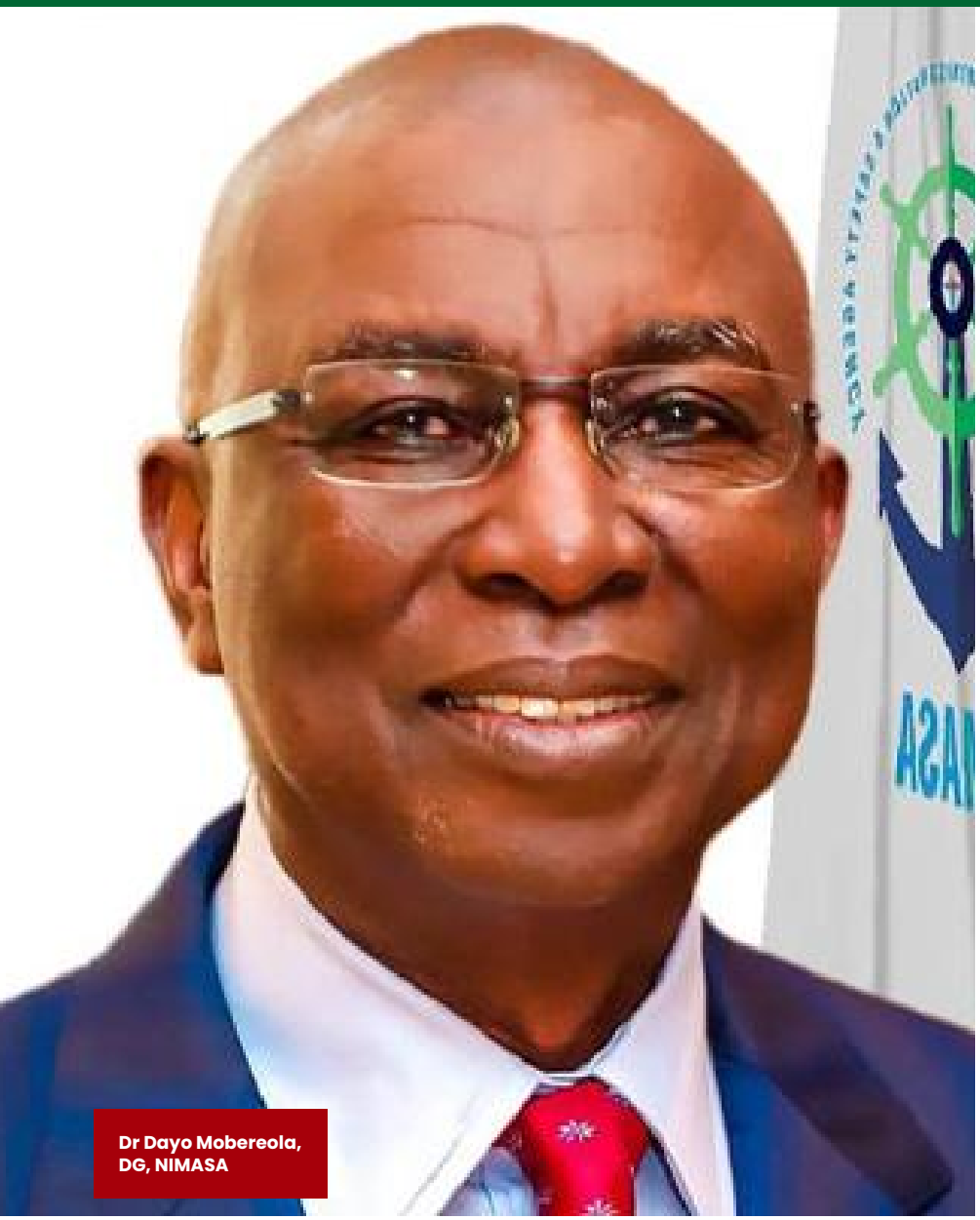
THE Comptroller-General of Customs (CGC), Adewale Adeniyi, has pledged the full support of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) for the realisation of Nigeria's ambition to build a $1 trillion economy, stressing the need for institutions to translate national aspirations into concrete, measurable results.

Adeniyi while speaking at the New Nigeria Festival in Abuja, said the economic target was achievable if the plans and strategies developed to achieve it were properly implemented. The CGC said the Customs had moved beyond ideas and discussions to taking practical steps in support of the national economic ambition, citing the Service's ongoing Modernisation Reforms, including the deployment of B'Odogwu, the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme and the Advance Ruling mechanism, as initiatives designed to facilitate legitimate trade, improve predictability in the trading environment and ultimately strengthen revenue generation. "Execution is nothing if it is not concrete. We have to move from ideas to action and ensure that whatever we plan translates into results. That is how we can begin to see the kind of transformation we are talking about." He said. Adeniyi stressed that the responsibility for achieving the $1 trillion economy could not rest solely on government agencies, noting that the target required the collective commitment of institutions, businesses and citizens.

He said the Customs Service, by virtue of its responsibilities in revenue collection, trade facilitation and border management, remained strategically positioned to contribute to the country's economic transformation. Adeniyi therefore called for a shift from rhetoric to implementation, stressing that the country's economic ambition could be achieved only when institutions and citizens alike took ownership of their responsibilities and turned plans into practical, measurable action.

NIMASA SEEKS INVESTMENT TO UNLOCK N5TN MARITIME ECONOMY

By Samuel Benjamin



Dr Dayo Mobereola, DG, NIMASA

The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) has confirmed that only MT Holmes and MT Sabeak were detained during a targeted enforcement operation code named Operation Sea Guardian to enforce compliance with maritime regulations in Nigeria waters.

Deputy Director/Head, Public Relations, NIMASA, Osagie Edward, said contrary to the earlier statement, MT Fujairah Energy, JS Gratitude and MT Bora were not detained as they were in full compliance with the Cabotage Act and other extant regulations. "However, MT Holmes and MT Sabeak were the vessels detained for noncompliance," he emphasized. Edward said the statement has been released for transparency purposes while the inconvenience caused to the affected vessels and their owners by the mix up is regretted.

"Operation Sea Guardian was conducted as a follow-up enforcement initiative aimed at strengthening regulatory compliance, verifying cabotage obligations, assessing surcharge and levy compliance, and ensuring adherence to applicable maritime regulations. "It deployed Deep Blue assets to help track, board, inspect, and verify the operational status of vessels identified through intelligence reports and compliance indicators through effective inter-agency cooperation among NIMASA enforcement personnel, the Nigerian Navy, the Maritime Guard Command and C4i intelligence personnel," he stated.

NIMENA SEEKS RESEARCH PAPERS FOR 2026 MARITIME CONFERENCE

By Samuel Benjamin



The Nigerian Institution of Marine Engineers and Naval Architects (NIMENA) has called on researchers, marine engineers, naval architects, maritime professionals and industry experts to submit original research papers for its forthcoming 2026 conference, aimed at strengthening Nigeria's maritime sovereignty, indigenous shipbuilding capacity and transition to sustainable shipping.

The conference, tagged MARVEL Nigeria 2026, is scheduled to hold on November 20, 2026, at the Event Hall, Naval Dockyard, 28 Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos. With the theme, "**Advancing Maritime Sovereignty: Maritime Advancement through Resilience, Vessel Development, Energy Transition and Local Capacity**," the event is expected to bring together stakeholders from academia, government, research institutions and the maritime industry to examine practical solutions to challenges confronting Nigeria's maritime sector.

NIMENA said the conference would provide a platform for exchanging ideas, presenting research findings and exploring technological innovations capable of improving indigenous capacity, promoting sustainable maritime operations and strengthening Nigeria's competitiveness in regional and international shipping. The institution identified four major research tracks designed to address critical industry challenges and emerging opportunities across Nigeria and the wider West African maritime environment. The first track, Classification and Standards, will focus on developing local inspection and certification capacity, improving vessel safety and establishing structural requirements suited to the operational conditions of West African waters. The track is expected to explore how stronger domestic technical capabilities and appropriate standards could improve vessel integrity, safety and compliance

while reducing dependence on external expertise. The second track, Green Shipping, will examine vessel retrofits, alternative fuels, emissions reduction and the technical and commercial viability of cleaner maritime operations. As the global shipping industry increasingly considers measures to reduce its environmental footprint, the track will provide opportunities to assess how Nigeria can adopt appropriate technologies and practices without undermining the commercial viability of its maritime businesses.

The third track, Cabotage and Shipbuilding, will address domestic fleet development, shipyard capacity, materials, modular construction and the implementation of cabotage policies. Discussions under this category are expected to examine practical ways of expanding indigenous participation in coastal and inland shipping, strengthening local shipbuilding capabilities and improving the capacity of domestic operators to compete in maritime services. The fourth track, Hydrodynamics of Domestic Craft, will explore hull design, vessel resistance, propulsion and stability, particularly for coastal, inland and shallow-draught vessels. Research in this area could support the development of vessels better suited to Nigeria's waterways and operating conditions, potentially improving efficiency, safety and the performance of domestic maritime transportation.

NIMENA said submissions must demonstrate clear research questions, sound methodologies and findings with practical relevance to maritime development in West Africa. The institution emphasised the importance of original research capable of contributing to engineering practice, policy development, technological advancement and the sustainable growth of the maritime industry. It added that authors of selected conference papers might be invited to submit expanded manuscripts for consideration in the Journal of the Blue Economy and Sustainable Energy Development (JBESED) or the African Journal of Offshore, Marine Engineering and Naval Architecture (AJOMENA). The publication opportunity is expected to provide researchers with an additional platform to disseminate their findings and contribute to professional knowledge in marine engineering, naval architecture and related fields.

Interested researchers and maritime professionals are required to submit abstracts of between 150 and 200 words on or before November 17, 2026. The deadline for full manuscript submissions is November 27, 2026.

Through MARVEL Nigeria 2026, NIMENA is seeking to encourage research-driven solutions to the technical, environmental and industrial challenges facing the maritime sector, while promoting indigenous expertise and strengthening Nigeria's capacity to develop and sustain its maritime infrastructure.

The first track, Classification and Standards, will focus on developing local inspection and certification capacity, improving vessel safety and establishing structural requirements suited to the operational conditions of West African waters.

OYETOLA RECOMMITS TO MODERNISING PORTS OUTSIDE LAGOS

By Samuel Benjamin



Adegboyega Oyetola, Minister of Marine and Blue Economy

The Federal Government has reaffirmed its commitment to modernising ports outside Lagos as part of efforts to reduce logistics costs, improve cargo handling and stimulate economic activities across the country.

Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola, gave the assurance on Friday at the 2026 World Maritime Day celebration held at the Lagos Continental Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos. He identified Onne, Warri and Calabar ports as key facilities in the modernisation drive, which complements ongoing efforts at Apapa and Tin Can Island ports in Lagos.

Oyetola also reiterated the government's commitment to developing deep seaports at Agge, Bakassi, Bonny, Gateway, Ibom and Ondo, saying the projects formed part of a broader strategy to expand Nigeria's maritime capacity and establish a more balanced network of ports. "This is a deliberate effort to expand capacity, improve efficiency and build a more balanced national network of maritime gateways," he said. The minister explained that the ministry's vision was to integrate seaports, inland dry ports and production centres through road, rail and inland waterways to facilitate cargo movement and reduce transportation costs. According to him, improved connectivity would bring cargo closer to producers and consumers, ease pressure on Lagos ports, strengthen exports and stimulate industrial and logistics clusters across the country. He stressed that the maritime development agenda extended beyond coastal communities, noting that inland ports and waterways, including Onitsha and Baro, were important to connecting businesses and production centres to domestic and international markets. Oyetola said the government was working with relevant agencies and investors to ensure that its port development plans translated into functional infrastructure, efficient cargo handling, navigable channels and reliable transport connections.

He also highlighted the Nigerian Ports Economic Regulatory Agency Act, 2026, as part of efforts to strengthen economic regulation, promote fair competition and improve service delivery across the port system. The minister maintained that sustained investment in port infrastructure and improved transport connectivity would attract investment, support exports and create employment opportunities in different parts of the country. In his goodwill message, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Marine Transport, Senator Wasiu Eshinlokun, called for an end to attacks on seafarers in the Strait of Hormuz. The World Maritime Day celebration attracted maritime industry leaders, heads of government agencies, lawmakers and other stakeholders.

TCIPC, MARCON partner to strengthen maritime information dissemination

The Tin Can Island Port Complex (TCIPC) of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) and the Maritime Correspondents' Organisation of Nigeria (MARCON) have pledged to deepen their collaboration to promote public understanding of port operations and improve information dissemination. The Head of Tariff and Billing at TCIPC, Dr Ubolur Julius, gave the assurance when MARCON executives visited the port to strengthen cooperation between both organisations.

Julius, who represented the Port Manager, Abubakar Sani Isa said the NPA recognises the critical role of maritime journalists in educating the public about port operations and is willing to collaborate with the organisation in areas of mutual interest. He said the port maintains an open-door policy and encouraged maritime journalists to contact its officials whenever they require information about its activities. "We welcome you not just as journalists but to understand the critical function you perform, particularly in educating the general public about port operations," he said. Also speaking, the President of MARCON, Ismail Aniemu said the association has maintained a cordial relationship with the NPA at both its headquarters and at the port level.He said the visit was aimed at renewing engagement with the current management of Tin Can Island Port.

The MARCON president assured the NPA of the organisation's commitment to objective reporting and the dissemination of accurate information about port activities."As journalists, for us, truth is sacred. We always give our support to disseminate information about your activities in an objective manner and in ways that promote our national interests," he said. Aniemu added that MARCON remains committed to cooperating with the management of TCIPC whenever necessary, describing the visit as an opportunity to strengthen an existing relationship rather than establish a new one.

the government is working with relevant agencies and investors to ensure that its port development plans translated into functional infrastructure, efficient cargo handling, navigable channels and reliable transport connections.

BLUE ECONOMY EXPO TARGETS MARITIME INVESTMENT BOOM

By Samuel Benjamin



The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboyega Oyetola, has inaugurated a committee to organise the Nigeria Marine and Blue Economy Expo (NIMBEX), in a strategic move to position Nigeria as a leading destination for maritime investment, innovation and trade in Africa.

The expo is expected to bring together policymakers, international investors, industry leaders and technology innovators to support the Federal Government's efforts to unlock the vast economic potential of Nigeria's marine and blue economy. Oyetola said the initiative would provide a platform to translate the country's maritime advantages into tangible investment opportunities, economic growth and job creation. "Nigeria's marine and blue economy holds enormous potential to drive economic diversification, attract investment and create sustainable employment. NIMBEX will provide a strategic platform to bring together the capital, expertise and partnerships needed to unlock these opportunities," the minister said. Oyetola, who was represented at the inauguration by the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy, Mrs Fatima Mahmood, said the expo would help bridge the gap between Nigeria's vast maritime resources and the investments required to harness them for national development. With an 853-kilometre coastline, more than 10,000 kilometres of navigable inland waterways spanning 28 states and a substantial domestic market, Nigeria possesses significant assets to strengthen its position in regional and international maritime trade.

The NIMBEX Organising Committee is chaired by Mr Husseini Shettima, Director of Marine Conservation, Innovation and Technology at the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy. Hajia Kalthum Ibrahim, Director of Planning, Research and Statistics in the ministry, and Professor Busayo Fakinlede, Senior Special Assistant to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Marine and Blue Economy, will serve as co-chairpersons. The minister's Special Adviser, Dr Bolaji Akinola, will serve as a member of the committee and Chief Operating Officer of the expo.

Other members include representatives of the ministry's technical departments and key agencies and institutions across the maritime sector, including the Nigerian Ports Authority, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, Nigerian Ports Economic Regulatory Agency, National Inland Waterways Authority and Council for the Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria.

Also represented are the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron; Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research; Federal College of Fisheries and Marine Technology; National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research, New Bussa; and the Federal College of Freshwater Fisheries Technology in New Bussa and Baga.

The committee also includes representatives of coastal states, terminal operators, shipowners, freight forwarders, barge operators and other stakeholders in the maritime industry.

DATA SECURITY IN FOCUS AS NPERA PARTNERS NDPC TO STRENGTHEN REGULATORY CAPACITY

By Samuel Benjamin



The Nigerian Ports Economic Regulatory Agency (NPERA), has moved for stronger collaboration with the Nigerian Data Protection Commission (NDPC) to enhance data privacy, security, and responsible data management to strengthen its regulatory role.

The Director-General/Chief Executive Officer NPERA, Akutah Pius, made the call when the National Commissioner/Chief Executive Officer of the NDPC, Vincent Olatunji, and his team paid a courtesy visit to the NPERA's Abuja Liaison Office. Akutah described collaboration between the two agencies as essential, noting that data plays a critical role in the Agency's regulatory operations.

He stressed the need for a deeper understanding of data privacy, information security, and the effective management of data to support the Agency's evolving responsibilities.

According to him, cooperation with the NDPC would help strengthen NPERA's capacity to handle data responsibly while promoting compliance with relevant data protection requirements.

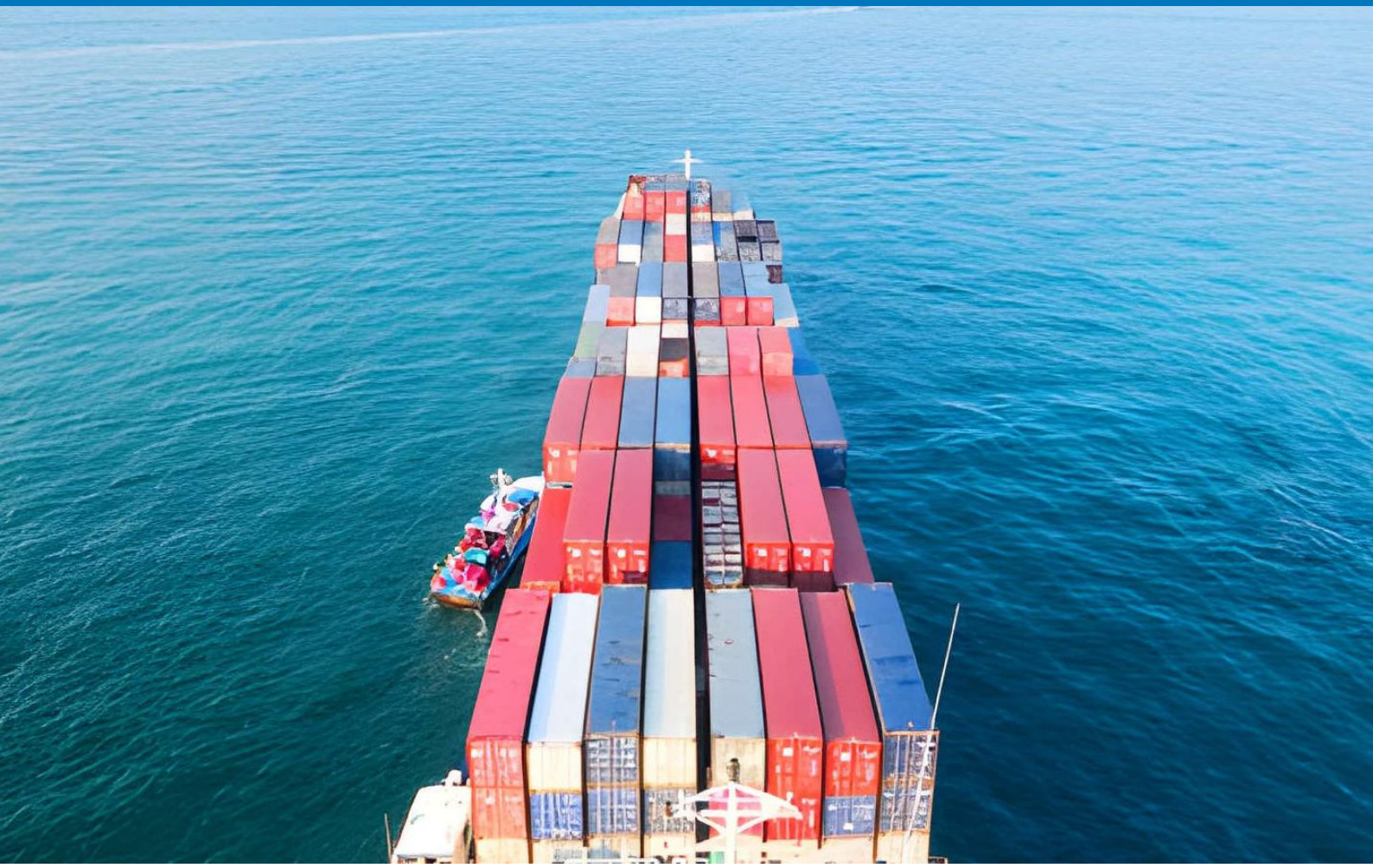
Olatunji earlier congratulated NPERA on its transition from the Nigerian Shippers' Council to the Nigerian Ports Economic Regulatory Agency, describing the development as an important milestone in the Agency's institutional evolution. He explained that the NDPC is responsible for safeguarding personal data and promoting compliance with data protection standards across public and private sector organisations.

The visit provided an opportunity for both agencies to explore areas of mutual interest, particularly data privacy, information security and the responsible use of data in strengthening institutional effectiveness.

The proposed collaboration is expected to support NPERA's efforts to build a more secure, efficient and data-driven regulatory framework in line with its mandate to regulate Nigeria's port economy.

BLUE ECONOMY: EFEREBO SEEKS HOMEGROWN TECHNOLOGY, MARITIME INNOVATION

By Samuel Benjamin



Marine engineering expert, Engr. Dr. Eferebo Ibietela Sylvanus, has called for greater investment in indigenous technology, research and local expertise to unlock Nigeria's blue economy potential.

Eferebo made the call as he received the Maritime Innovation and Technology Leadership Award at the 15th Democracy Heroes Award Africa, held on October 9, 2026, at the Congress Hall of Transcorp Hilton, Abuja. The recognition highlights the growing importance of marine engineering, naval architecture and technological innovation to Nigeria's efforts to develop its maritime industry, strengthen local capacity and create new opportunities for economic growth. With more than two decades of experience in engineering consultancy and technical leadership, Eferebo is the National Chairman of the Nigerian Institution of Marine Engineers and Naval Architects (NIMENA), a professional body committed to advancing marine engineering through research, education, technical standards and industry collaboration.

He holds a Bachelor of Technology degree in Marine Engineering, a master's degree in Naval Architecture and Ship Construction, and a doctorate in Naval Architecture and Shipbuilding from Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. He is also a Fellow of the Nigerian Society of Engineers and a registered engineer with the Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN). As founder and chief executive officer of Somatrix Marine Limited, an engineering consultancy, Eferebo has been involved in marine consulting, ship design, marine surveys, construction management and research and development. His professional interests also cover maritime engineering standards and local content development, areas considered important to reducing dependence on foreign expertise and increasing indigenous participation in Nigeria's

maritime and offshore industries. In April 2026, Eferebo advocated greater technical independence for the country's maritime sector, arguing that Nigeria needed to develop its own capacity for innovation and industrial development rather than rely heavily on foreign expertise.

He has also promoted research and international collaboration through NIMENA, including efforts to encourage peer-reviewed engineering publications and strengthen cooperation among industry practitioners, researchers and policymakers. In August 2026, the institution unveiled a shipbuilding trend report examining emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, digital twins, robotics and blockchain-enabled supply chains, highlighting their potential to support maritime industrialisation. The initiatives reflect the need to translate engineering research into practical solutions that can improve local shipbuilding, strengthen offshore operations, enhance maritime safety and make Nigerian businesses more competitive. Nigeria's extensive coastline and waterways offer opportunities in maritime transportation, shipbuilding, offshore energy and related services.

However, maximising these opportunities requires more than access to natural resources; it also depends on technical expertise, appropriate infrastructure, sustained investment and the ability to develop and deploy homegrown technologies.

The blue economy encompasses economic activities linked to oceans, seas, rivers and other aquatic resources. Developing the sector could support job creation, industrial growth and investment, provided that economic activities are backed by effective regulation, skills development and environmental sustainability. Eferebo's recognition at the Democracy Heroes Award Africa places renewed attention on the role of specialised engineering professionals in advancing these objectives. The award, now in its 15th edition, recognises individuals for contributions across various sectors. For Nigeria, the broader challenge is to ensure that recognition of indigenous engineering expertise translates into stronger research institutions, improved technical training, greater local participation in shipbuilding and offshore services, and policies that encourage innovation.

As the country seeks to expand its maritime economy, sustained collaboration among government, professional bodies, research institutions and private businesses will be essential to turning its maritime potential into tangible economic benefits.



Engr. Dr. Eferebo Ibietela Sylvanus, Marine Engineering Expert

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