

MPAC graduates 27 Muslim professionals from Leadership and Governance Impact Programme

Shehadeh

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Social impact expert urges LGIP Cohort 1 set to lead beyond titles, build solutions

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Sheikh Lemu: 13-week fellowship designed to develop future leaders

- Pursue significance and impact, not recognition

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7TH ANNIVERSARY LECTURE & MNAWARDS PRESENTATION

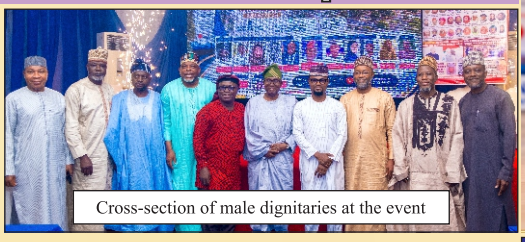
CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

- Zulum, Namadi, Ali, Alaro, Dangote, Hendricks, Qadhi, Sanni, Adedimeji, others honoured Pg. 5,7&11
- 30 exceptional women recognised across diverse professions





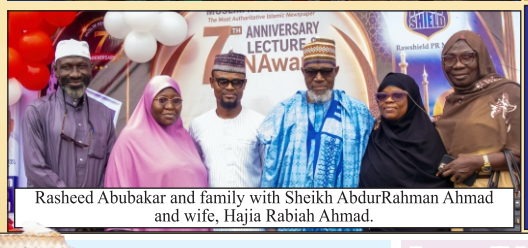
NASFAT Women's Wing members celebrate colleagues



Cross-section of male dignitaries at the event



Women celebrate with Muslim News Publisher, Rasheed Abubakar (middle), at the MNAwards.



Rasheed Abubakar and family with Sheikh AbdurRahman Ahmad and wife, Hajia Rabiah Ahmad.

More than a plaque: The story behind the MNAwards trophy

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Muslims must unite, support own media to project true image of Islam — MUSWEN President

Alhaji Oladejo Pg. 5



Muslims must engage media more strategically – MPAC Nigeria boss

- Says internal divisions weaken collective action against Islamophobia Pg.6

Mal. Disu

Ansar-Ud-Deen Missioner urges Muslims to invest in media to counter anti-Islam narratives



Sheikh Ahmad



Mumuni congratulates *MNAwards* recipients, urges them to rally support for *Muslim News*

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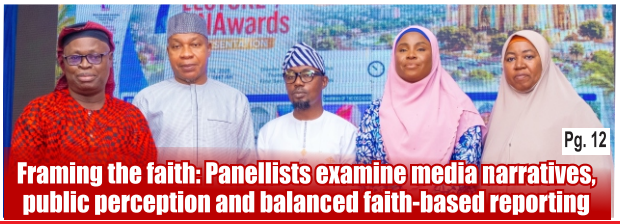
Mumuni



TRT Arabi's Sami Shehadeh dedicates *Global Muslim Media* award to journalists murdered in Gaza Pg. 10

- Says journalists' sacrifices must not be forgotten

Shehadeh



Framing the faith: Panellists examine media narratives, public perception and balanced faith-based reporting

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How media misrepresentation sparked the birth of Muslim News Nigeria eight years ago Pg. 2

More than a plaque: The story behind the MNAwards trophy



●How media misrepresentation sparked the birth of Muslim News Nigeria eight years ago

The 7th Anniversary Lecture and MNAwards Presentation of Muslim News Nigeria may have come and gone, but one feature of the event continues to resonate with guests, award recipients and observers: the distinctive design of the MNAwards plaque.

Held in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, on Sunday, June 14, 2026, the anniversary brought together Muslim scholars, community leaders, public figures and professionals from diverse fields. The event provided a platform to celebrate excellence, honour impactful contributions and examine lasting solutions to the negative and distorted portrayal of Islam and Muslims in the media.

While the keynote address, panel discussion, goodwill messages and award presentations formed the centrepiece of the occasion, the uniquely crafted MNAwards plaque quietly captured the admiration of many attendees. More than a ceremonial trophy, it was designed as a symbol of identity, purpose and excellence.

> **The trophy also mirrors the evolution of *Muslim News Nigeria*, established in August 2018 as a platform committed to fair and balanced reporting on Muslim affairs. Now in its eighth year, the newspaper has grown beyond journalism to documenting achievements, celebrating Muslim excellence and helping change narratives about Muslims.**

As recipients and their representatives stepped forward to receive their plaques and certificates, the design attracted attention for its simplicity, sophistication and symbolism. Awardees under the Nigerian and Global Muslim Personalities of the Year categories and the 30 Muslim Women of Substance initiative received a trophy deliberately created to tell a story.

Crafted from premium acrylic and standing at approximately 12 inches, the plaque combines modern aesthetics with a distinctive visual identity. Unlike conventional plaques that often rely on generic shapes and decorative embellishments, the MNAwards trophy is immediately associated with the publication behind it.

An award built on purpose

Behind the elegant design is a concept closely connected to the vision and mission of *Muslim News Nigeria*. The trophy was not conceived as just another ceremonial plaque but as a visual identity for the newspaper and a lasting symbol of its commitment to recognising excellence, leadership and service within the Muslim community.

According to the publisher and convener, Rasheed Abubakar, the design was carefully conceptualised to ensure that it could be instantly associated with Muslim News Nigeria. This led to the adoption of the iconic letter "M" as its dominant feature.

The idea went through several refinements before the final acrylic structure emerged. Acrylic was chosen over crystal or metal because of its modern appearance, versatility and ability to create layered transparency, allowing light to interact with the design.

The thinking behind the award is rooted in a longstanding concern about the imbalance in media coverage of Muslims and Islam. For years, Muslims have raised concerns that their contributions to education, medicine, law, business, academia, technology, public service and humanitarian work often receive limited attention, while crimes involving individuals bearing Muslim names can receive disproportionate coverage and sometimes contribute to distorted perceptions of the faith.

One episode that amplified these concerns was the case of Firdaus Amasa, the law graduate whose refusal to remove her hijab during the Call to Bar sparked a national debate between 2017 and 2018. Although her eventual victory affirmed her right to wear the hijab, the outcome did not receive comparable media attention, becoming an important reference point in wider discussions about fairness and balance in media representation.

Rather than simply criticising existing structures, Abubakar and his team chose to build a platform capable of documenting stories that were often overlooked. That conviction led to the establishment of Muslim News Nigeria, a newspaper dedicated to reporting Muslim affairs, challenging stereotypes and presenting balanced narratives about Islam and Muslims in Nigeria and across the world.

But Abubakar believed reporting alone was not enough. He also wanted exceptional Muslims and organisations to be publicly celebrated, both to acknowledge their contributions and to inspire others. From that vision emerged the MNAwards.

The structure behind the recognition

Since its inception in 2019, the MNAwards has developed into a structured recognition platform built around two major initiatives: the Nigerian and Global Muslim Personalities of the Year Awards and the 30 Muslim Women of Substance.

The Personality Awards have had five editions since 2019. However, there have been years when awards were not presented in certain categories because no individual was considered to have met the required threshold of exceptional impact within the period under review. In some instances, broader challenges affecting oppressed Muslim communities also influenced the decision not to confer particular awards.

Financial and sponsorship constraints have also affected the staging of physical ceremonies. Rather than abandon the recognition exercise during such periods, the organisers produced special 16-page commemorative editions of *Muslim News Nigeria,* which were distributed across major Islamic centres in Nigeria. These editions documented the achievements of the honourees and ensured that their contributions received public recognition.

Altogether, the platform has held two physical award ceremonies over the past seven years, including the most recent edition, while maintaining its commitment to sustaining the initiative.

Celebrating Muslim Women

The 30 Muslim Women of Substance initiative was introduced in 2022 to highlight the achievements of Muslim women in hijab across different professional fields. It is anchored around significant global occasions such as World Hijab Day on February 1 and International Women's Day on March 8.

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"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing." — Qur'an 4:58

"Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler who is over the people is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock; a man is the shepherd of the people of his house and is responsible for his flock; a woman is the shepherd of the house of her husband and is responsible for her flock; and the servant of a man is a shepherd of the property of his master and is responsible for his flock." — Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Sahih al-Bukhari 7138; Sahih Muslim 1829

Editorial Policy

ABOUT US: Muslim News Nigeria, a publication of Rawshield PR Media, is a mouthpiece for underreported Muslim achievers and events in Nigeria and across the world, which are never given prominence in the mainstream media.

OUR MISSION: To give special media attention and coverage to important people and events in the life of Muslims that do not gain mainstream media attention, and to change the media narrative of blaming Islam and Muslims for offences committed in its lofty name.

EDITORIAL POLICY: We shall be fair to all persons, irrespective of their religions and ideologies, as long as that promotes the image of Islam and unites the Muslims. We shall also uphold the ethical standards of journalism.

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LGIP graduands share experiences from 13-week leadership programme

Twenty-seven Muslim professionals have graduated from the Leadership and Governance Impact Programme (LGIP), a 13-week intensive initiative designed to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and ethical framework required to engage effectively with Nigeria's governance systems. Organised by the Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC), the programme combines academic learning, practical exposure, mentorship and personal development, preparing Muslim professionals for roles in the public and private sectors, policymaking and community leadership. For the graduands, however, LGIP was more than a leadership course. Their reflections show that the experience challenged their understanding of leadership, strengthened their professional capacities, broadened their perspectives and reinforced the Islamic concept of leadership as an amanah, a trust and responsibility. Most of the graduands who shared their experiences with Muslim News said their most important lessons centred on leadership as an amanah, service, integrity, accountability, collaboration and the responsibility to create meaningful impact. They also highlighted personal growth, professional development, mentorship, diverse perspectives and the need to contribute to society without compromising Islamic values



1. Al-Amin Bobboi Muhammad: Leadership as an Amanah

Al-Amin Bobboi Muhammad: Leadership as an Amanah, from Adamawa State, Al-Amin Bobboi Muhammad holds a B.Tech. in Information Management Technology from Modibbo Adama University, Yola, and works as an E-Business Champion at Quantum Microfinance Bank (Islamic Bank).

Muhammad joined LGIP hoping to deepen his understanding of leadership, governance, public service and accountability while connecting with other Muslim professionals committed to positive change.

He said the experience exceeded his expectations because it challenged him to rethink leadership not as a position, but as an amanah, a responsibility to serve, build systems, uphold integrity and create meaningful impact.

His most important lesson was that leadership is about responsibility, service, integrity and impact. He said the programme strengthened his understanding of accountability, ethical decision-making, collaboration and institution-building.

He plans to apply these principles in his professional career by promoting transparency, improving systems, working collaboratively and taking responsibility for the outcomes of his decisions. In his community, he hopes to support initiatives focused on youth development, good governance and leadership capacity building.

He advised prospective participants not to approach the programme simply as another training or certificate programme, but to come prepared to learn, contribute, build relationships and be challenged.

"The certificate marks the end of the programme, but it marks the beginning of a greater responsibility to serve and create impact," he said.



2. Abdulquadir Muhammed Jamaldeen: A Change in Mindset

Abdulquadir Muhammed Jamaldeen, from the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, holds a B.Sc. in Education (Economics) from Ekiti State University. He works with the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), National Assembly, in the Department of Economic and Social Research.

He expected LGIP to deepen his understanding of leadership and governance and help him become a more effective contributor to society. Instead, he said, the programme went beyond knowledge acquisition, challenging his mindset and strengthening his self-awareness.

Exposure to accomplished intellectuals and professionals also gave him access to diverse perspectives and helped him understand leadership as a responsibility and form of service rather than merely a position or title.

He intends to carry this perspective into his professional and community engagements by becoming more intentional about creating solutions, empowering others and contributing to better governance and public service.

He identified the transformation in his mindset, alongside access to knowledge, mentorship and a community of people committed to positive change, as the programme's greatest value.

His advice to prospective participants is to come with an open mind and a willingness to learn, unlearn and grow.



3. Salako Kabirat: Finding the Link Between Islam and Governance

Salako Kabirat of Ogun State holds a B.Agric from the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), where she is also pursuing an M.Sc.

She joined LGIP looking for an opportunity to learn, connect with others and sharpen her knowledge. According to her, she gained all of that and much more.

She particularly appreciated the programme's curriculum and facilitators, as well as the class tasks and practical engagements that made learning more immersive rather than purely theoretical.

One of her strongest takeaways was the realisation that governance and Islam can run concurrently. The programme also helped her recognise that she has an opportunity to make an impact through leadership, beyond simply identifying as a Muslim woman.

She described learning, unlearning, connecting and seeing leadership from a broader perspective as the biggest value of the programme.

Her message to fellow graduands is to approach LGIP with an open mind and a willingness to learn, stressing that it offers more than a certificate and provides an opportunity to build leadership capacity while remaining grounded in Islamic values.



4. Nimatallahi Kehinde Masuud: Bringing leadership into technology

Nimatallahi Kehinde Masuud of Lagos State holds a National Diploma in Civil Engineering from Yaba College of Technology and B.Sc. in Geophysics from the University of Lagos. She currently works as an AI Engineer at Infinion Technologies/TRI-AI (Research and Innovation).

Before joining the Leadership and Governance Impact Programme (LGIP), Nimatallahi expected to deepen her understanding of leadership and governance and learn how to become a better leader. However, the 13-week programme, she said, went beyond her expectations by broadening her perspective on leadership.

She learnt that leadership is not simply about occupying a position but involves responsibility, values, accountability and the impact of decisions on others.

She intends to apply these lessons in her career by combining her work in AI and technology with responsible decision-making. She also plans to be more intentional about how she contributes to her community.

The opportunity to learn from different perspectives and connect leadership and governance with real issues affecting society was, according to Nimatallahi, the biggest value of LGIP.

She encouraged other Muslim professionals considering the programme to approach it with an open mind, saying it offers not only lessons in leadership and governance but also an opportunity to reflect on the kind of leader they want to become and the



5. Sodiq Suleiman: The Value of Diverse Perspectives

Sodiq Suleiman, a graduate of Economics from the University of Ilorin, works as an Operations and Logistics Analyst at Lastbaff Concept.

Before joining LGIP, Suleiman expected to gain practical insights from people with leadership experience and to meet like-minded individuals.

He said those expectations were fulfilled through interactions with participants from diverse backgrounds and with differing views on societal issues. The diversity, he noted, made the programme worthwhile because participants were able to engage different perspectives and ultimately arrive at ethical conclusions on issues under discussion.

He also praised the experienced facilitators and industry experts whose engaging presentation styles ensured that the sessions were based on two-way communication rather than one-sided lectures.

For Suleiman, one of the programme's greatest values is the platform created for continued interaction. He said the relationship built among participants will continue beyond graduation through the LGIP alumni network.



6. Omobolaji Naeemah Fashina: Learning to Delegate

Omobolaji Naeemah Fashina, from Lagos State, holds a B.Sc. from the University of Ilorin and is Director of AlMuhsinaat Safe Haven Foundation.

She initially expected LGIP to be similar to other fellowship programmes she had participated in. However, she said the experience far exceeded her expectations, from the selection process through the practical, hands-on sessions covering different aspects of leadership and governance.

She became particularly interested in the sessions and found the experience so enriching that she said she was still finding it difficult to adjust to life after the programme.

Her most important takeaway was delegation and collaborative leadership.

As a director of a charity foundation, Fashina said she had previously struggled with delegating tasks and ensuring that different arms of the foundation worked together as one team.

LGIP equipped her with practical leadership tools and changed her perspective on trusting and empowering her team. Since completing the programme, she said she has become more confident, delegated more effectively and improved how she works with her colleagues.



8. Muhammed Abdulkabir Olorunjeda: Leadership Is a Trust

Muhammed Abdulkabir Olorunjeda of Ogun State holds a B.A. in History and International Studies from Lagos State University and is a corps member and journalist.

He entered LGIP expecting to acquire leadership skills but said he did not anticipate the depth of knowledge he would gain from accomplished professionals and stakeholders throughout the programme.

His strongest takeaway was the Islamic concept of leadership as an amaanah (a trust.) He learnt that leadership should not be driven by a hunger for power because those entrusted with leadership will ultimately be held accountable for how they discharged their responsibilities.

Going forward, Olorunjeda said he intends to discharge his responsibilities diligently and would not accept a leadership position unless he is prepared to be accountable for it.

He identified LGIP's commitment to high standards as its biggest value, particularly the calibre of stakeholders invited and the relevance of the topics taught.



10 Hauwa Bala Geidam: Connecting Leadership With Communication and Advocacy

Hauwa Bala Geidam of Yobe State holds a B.Sc. in Public Administration from Yobe State University, Damaturu, and works as a Strategic Communication Officer at Dar Al-Andalus Center.

She joined LGIP hoping to deepen her understanding of leadership, governance and how Islamic values can inform responsible leadership and public service.

The programme, she said, went beyond providing knowledge. It challenged her to reflect on her leadership style, responsibilities to society and the kind of impact she wants to create.

Her major takeaway was that leadership is not simply about holding a position but about responsibility, integrity, service, accountability and the willingness to create positive change.

She said LGIP strengthened her ability to think critically and approach leadership challenges from both ethical and practical perspectives.

Geidam intends to apply these lessons in communication, peacebuilding, community engagement and advocacy, while creating opportunities for young people and women to participate meaningfully in issues affecting their communities.

She described the programme's greatest value as its ability to connect knowledge with purpose and reminded prospective participants that the real value of LGIP goes beyond a certificate.



12 Liadi Abdulazeez Opeyemi: From Leadership to Sustainable Solutions

Liadi Abdulazeez Opeyemi of Lagos State holds a B.A. in Religions and Peace Studies from Lagos State University and works with Rightpath Academy.

Before joining LGIP, Opeyemi expected to gain a better understanding of leadership, governance and public service while interacting with like-minded Muslim professionals.

He said the programme exceeded those expectations by challenging his thinking, strengthening his leadership capacity and exposing him to practical approaches to governance and community development.

The networking opportunities, mentorship and collaborative learning were also significant aspects of his experience.

His biggest lesson was that effective leadership is rooted in service, integrity and collaboration. The programme also reinforced the importance of developing sustainable solutions rather than temporary fixes, while strengthening his strategic thinking, teamwork and policy analysis skills.

He intends to apply these lessons by contributing to governance reforms, supporting community-driven development initiatives and creating platforms that encourage civic participation and accountability.

Opeyemi described the transformation in mindset as LGIP's greatest value and encouraged other Muslim professionals to embrace the opportunity to grow personally and professionally.



7. Aisha Haruna: From Shyness to Finding Her Voice

Aisha Haruna of Sokoto State holds a Bachelor of Pharmacy from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, and is a pharmacist serving as an NYSC corps member.

She joined LGIP hoping to gain a deeper understanding of leadership and governance and learn how to contribute meaningfully to her community.

The programme, however, broadened her understanding of leadership across the public and corporate spheres while exposing her to professionalism, organisational dynamics, strategic thinking, accountability and collaboration.

For Haruna, one of the most significant changes was confidence. An introvert who had previously been shy about speaking and expressing her ideas, she said discussions, teamwork, presentations and leadership responsibilities pushed her beyond her comfort zone.

The programme also transformed the way she approaches problems. She learnt about design thinking and the importance of understanding people experiencing a problem before proposing solutions.

One statement from a facilitator particularly stayed with her:

"You cannot feel a pain more than the pain bearer; hence, the need to work with them."

She intends to take this human-centred approach into her career and community work, particularly in public and health policy.



9. Ganiu Babatunde: Discovering the Leader Within

Ganiu Babatunde holds a B.Sc. in Computer Science from Southwestern University and an HND in Computer Science from Moshood Abiola Polytechnic. He works as an IT Support Officer at AVON Healthcare Limited.

Babatunde initially thought LGIP would be a series of lectures on leadership. Instead, the deeper engagement after each lecture, group assignments and projects pushed him to think beyond his initial expectations.

His experience became particularly challenging when he served as Project Manager for his capstone group. The role forced him to think critically, develop solutions and constantly respond to challenges throughout the project.

Looking back, he realised the programme was not simply teaching him about leadership; it was helping him discover and develop the leader within him.

He intends to become more accountable, trustworthy and intentional in his career and community, while striving to be a just leader and follower wherever he finds himself.

He also valued the opportunity to learn from professionals he had admired from afar and to build relationships with people from different tribes, backgrounds and experiences.

His advice to fellow graduands is to come with an open mind because the programme offers more than knowledge, it provides exposure, relationships, perspectives and a network capable of challenging and inspiring participants to become better.



11 Lateefat Bello-Ahmed: Don't Be Afraid to Initiate Change

Lateefat Bello-Ahmed of Kwara State has a background in Information Systems Engineering and holds a B.Sc. in Computer Science, with an MBA in view. She works as an Operations/Project Manager at Zulaiy Technologies Ltd.

She joined LGIP expecting to learn mainly about corporate and economic leadership through lectures similar to webinars or online classes.

Instead, she experienced a 13-week programme that exposed her to different leadership tracks and learning from seasoned managers, leaders, advocates, policymakers and implementers.

The experience also included classroom activities, book analysis, cross-regional teamwork and a capstone project — all of which surpassed her initial expectations.

Her strongest takeaway was the importance of being impactful and not being afraid to initiate change or improvement.

At the same time, she stressed the need to remain ethical and God-conscious in the process.

Bello-Ahmed described the knowledge she gained about leadership and governance within the Islamic context as one of the programme's greatest values.

She encouraged Muslim professionals looking for an opportunity to learn, grow, lead, network and make meaningful impact without compromising their religious values to consider LGIP.



L-R: Senior Broadcast Journalist with Voice of Nigeria, Mallam Hussain Bin Hyacinth, Chairman of the Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC), Mallam Kamor Disu; Chairman, MMPN Lagos chapter, Alhaji AbdulKabir Garuba; President of the Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), Alhaji AbdurRahman Balogun; Executive Director of Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Prof. Lakin Akintola; Muslim Ummah of South West Nigeria, MUSWEN, Alhaji Rasaki Oladejo; Publisher Muslim News Nigeria, Rasheed Abubakar; Chairman AS Foundation, Dr Abdullahi Shuaib; Ali AbdulMajeed representative of Prof Abdulrazaq AbdulMajeed Alaro, and President of the Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN), Prof. Ibrahim Oreagba, at the newspaper's 7th Anniversary lecture.

Muslim leaders advocate fair media representation

• At *Muslim News Nigeria*'s 7th anniversary lecture, MNAwards presentation

• Stakeholders call for stronger Muslim engagement, media ownership

BY: OUR REPORTERS

Dignitaries from religious, academic, media, health, business and professional circles converged in Lagos for the colourful celebration of the seventh anniversary of Muslim News Nigeria and the presentation of MNAwards, calling for greater media responsibility, stronger Muslim engagement in public discourse and deliberate efforts to counter the misrepresentation of Islam.

The event, held on Sunday, June 14, 2026, at Olanike Hall, Shamsi Adisa Thomas Mosque, Ikeja, Lagos, had as its theme, "Framing the Faith in the Midst of Media Misrepresentation and Global Conflicts."

The event was chaired by the President of the Muslim Ummah of South West Nigeria (MUSWEN), Alhaji Rasaki Oladejo, while it brought together prominent Islamic scholars, community leaders, professionals, media practitioners and other stakeholders.

The event also featured the presentation of the Nigerian and Global Muslim Personalities of the Year Awards (MNAwards) 2025 and recognition of 30 Muslim Women of Substance for their contributions across different fields.

Muslim News Nigeria has since clocked eight years, having been established in August 2018 but at the time of the seventh anniversary lecture and MNAwards presentation on June 14, 2026, the newspaper was still seven years old. Entering its eighth year in August underscores almost a decade of consistent journalism dedicated to reporting Islam, celebrating Muslim excellence and changing the narrative about Islam and Muslims.

Muslims must become authors of their own narratives; MPAC Boss

Delivering the keynote lecture, Chairman of the Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC), Mallam Disu Kamor, urged Nigerian Muslims to move beyond reacting to negative narratives and take active control of public discourse through strategic media engagement, legal advocacy, scholarship and responsible use of digital platforms.

Speaking on the theme, Kamor said Muslims must become authors of their own narratives rather than allow stereotypes, misinformation and biased reporting to define Islam and its followers.

He stressed that "silence is not a strategy", noting that communities that fail to tell their own stories eventually allow others to define them.

Kamor said Islam is often portrayed through the narrow lens of violence and extremism, while its contributions to peacebuilding, education, charity and social development receive less attention.

> ***We must fund this. We must establish our own media. Verbal support alone is not enough. Without collective investment in media ownership and funding, Muslims will continue to struggle against negative stereotypes and remain largely unable to shape narratives concerning their faith and community. – Sheikh AbdulRahman Ahmad***


Alhaji Oladejo


Sheikh Ahmad


Imam Nojeem

Referring to issues such as the hijab controversy and Boko Haram insurgency, he noted that Muslims are often among the major victims of terrorism but are still unfairly associated with the violence.

"Criminals do not define a faith," he said, stressing that extremists cannot represent a religion followed by more than two billion people worldwide.

The MPAC chairman criticised what he described as double standards in media reportage involving Muslims, including selective verification, omission of important facts and delayed corrections.

He said Muslims were not demanding favourable treatment from the media but equal treatment.

"We are not asking the media to become pro-Muslim. We are asking the media to remain pro-truth," he said.

Internal divisions weaken response

Kamor also challenged Muslims to examine their own weaknesses, particularly the excessive sectarian disputes that dominate social media.

He warned that while Muslims spend time on internal disagreements, negative narratives about Islam continue to circulate largely unchallenged.

According to him, energy spent on endless sectarian debates should instead be channelled towards correcting misinformation and engaging the wider society.

Kamor called on journalists to uphold accuracy and fairness, lawyers to challenge defamation and discrimination, scholars to address contemporary societal challenges, Islamic institutions to invest in media and advocacy, youths to embrace journalism and digital media, and social media users to communicate responsibly.

He emphasised that the responsibility of correcting misinformation extends beyond institutions to every individual who participates in public discourse.

Kamor concluded by urging Muslims to shift from being passive subjects of narratives to active participants in shaping public discourse. "We must move from being subjects of narratives to becoming authors of narratives," he said.

Muslim media as a tool for correcting misconceptions: MUSWEN President

In his opening remarks, the chairman of the occasion, Alhaji Rasaki Oladejo, described the lecture theme as timely and relevant, noting that media narratives continue to influence public understanding of Islam and Muslims around the world.

Oladejo said Islam and Muslims have for decades been subjected to stereotypes, sensationalism and misrepresentation in mainstream media, with the religion's contributions to development, peace and progress often overlooked.

He commended Muslim News Nigeria for providing a credible platform for telling Muslim stories, correcting misconceptions and highlighting the positive contributions of Muslims to society. He described the newspaper's seven years of consistent, high-quality and unbiased journalism as a remarkable achievement in Nigeria's challenging media environment.

The MUSWEN President called for greater unity among Muslims and stronger institutional collaboration to address challenges confronting the Ummah, particularly in the area of media representation.

He stressed that Muslim-owned media organisations require sustainable financial investment, patronage and strategic partnerships to survive and grow. He therefore urged wealthy individuals, Islamic organisations and members of the Muslim community to support and patronise Muslim media platforms.

Continues on page 6

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"Media projects like *Muslim News Nigeria* cannot survive on passion alone," he said, calling for collective commitment to help the newspaper transition from its current successes into a global media institution.

Awards as inspiration for Muslim excellence

Oladejo also congratulated the recipients of the Muslim News Awards, describing their recognition as a testament to their dedication, leadership and contributions to humanity.

He said the awardees exemplified the Islamic principle of Ihsan (excellence), adding that their achievements in public service, business, academia, philanthropy and community leadership should inspire younger Muslims to pursue excellence and contribute positively to society.

How media misrepresentation shaped a generation; Missioner Ansar-Ud-Deen

Also speaking at the event, the National Missioner of the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Sheikh AbdulRahman Ahmad, called on Muslims to make strategic investments in media ownership and communication to counter biased narratives, stereotypes and misinformation about Islam and Muslims.

Reflecting on his experience as a student at the Kwara State College of Technology in 1981, Sheikh Ahmad recalled how the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Maitatsine uprising dominated media coverage and contributed to negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims.

He said the experience made him and some Muslim colleagues realise that Muslims needed to enter the media profession and participate actively in shaping narratives about their faith.

This event at the time subsequently led him to encourage colleagues, including veteran broadcaster AbdulRazaq Abdussalam, NatureNews Africa Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Aliu Akoshile, and Tajudeen Adeyemi, to study Mass Communication. The four eventually pursued careers in the media.

Sheikh Ahmad said their entry into journalism exposed them to the extent of the challenge facing Muslims, noting that major international news organisations controlled significant information channels at the time.

He recalled that services such as the BBC Hausa Service, Deutsche Welle Hausa Service and Voice of America Hausa Service had enormous influence among audiences in Northern Nigeria because of their reach and credibility.

He said although the media landscape had since evolved into the digital age, negative stereotypes about Islam had persisted because Muslims had failed to make sufficient investments in information and media institutions.

Muslims must own media and set the agenda

The National Missioner argued that media organisations have moved beyond simply informing, educating and entertaining, noting that influential media platforms now shape public opinion, political conversations and national and global agendas.

Citing the former Concord newspaper founded by the late Chief MKO Abiola, he said its enormous investment enabled it to become a major source of news and set the national agenda.

"When Concord emerged, it became the news. It became the source. It set the agenda," he recalled, noting that the decline of the newspaper left Muslims without comparable capacity to influence public discourse.

'Verbal support alone is not enough'

Sheikh Ahmad praised Muslim media professionals and content creators contributing to the correction of misconceptions about Islam. He particularly commended the Publisher of Muslim News Nigeria, Alhaji Rasheed Abubakar, for sustaining the newspaper for seven years despite limited financial and institutional support.

He urged Muslims to move beyond verbal encouragement and provide concrete financial backing for Muslim-owned media platforms.

"We must fund this. We must establish our own media. Verbal support alone is not enough," he said.

Sheikh Ahmad concluded by urging wealthy Muslims, Islamic organisations and professionals to invest strategically in sustainable media institutions capable of accurately representing Islam, amplifying Muslim voices and influencing public discourse.

He warned that without collective investment in media ownership and funding, Muslims would continue to struggle against negative stereotypes and remain largely unable to shape narratives concerning their faith and community.



Publisher of *Muslim News Nigeria,* Rasheed Abubakar (middle), shares a heartfelt family moment with some of his mothers and sisters in Islam from various Muslim women's organisations, whose love, prayers and support have remained a cherished part of his journey.



Alhaji Mumuni



Hajia Abiola-Andu



Mall. Disu

Muslim-owned media vital to countering negative narratives: Imam Nojeem

On his part, the National President of The Companion, Imam Nojeem Jimoh, called for greater financial and institutional support for Muslim News Nigeria, describing the platform as an important voice for correcting misconceptions about Islam and projecting the positive contributions of Muslims.

He said the anniversary theme resonated with him because Muslims are not only underrepresented in the media but are also frequently misrepresented. He commended Muslim News Nigeria for consistently providing balanced reporting and giving Muslims a voice, noting that mainstream media often gives prominence to negative stories about Muslims while overlooking their positive contributions.

Jimoh also criticised the selective use of religious identity in crime reporting, observing that the word "Muslim" is often emphasised when a Muslim commits a crime, whereas similar references are rarely made when offenders belong to other faiths. He stressed the need for Muslim-owned media platforms that can provide balance, context and fairness in reporting issues concerning Islam and Muslims.

The National President of The Companion urged wealthy Muslims, corporate organisations and community leaders to support Muslim News Nigeria through sponsorships, partnerships and financial contributions. Sharing his personal experience, he disclosed that he once facilitated the production of thousands of copies of a Muslim News publication for free distribution during the installation of the Olowu of Owu Kingdom, Oba Prof. Saka Adelola Matemilola, after mobilising friends and supporters to sponsor the publication.

He concluded by praying for the continued success of Muslim News Nigeria, its Publisher, Alhaji Rasheed Abubakar, its staff and supporters, expressing hope that the organisation would continue to grow in service to Islam, the Muslim Ummah and Nigeria.

> ***"Muslim News Nigeria has maintained consistency despite the financial challenges of sustaining a media organisation, while Rasheed Abubakar has demonstrated unwavering commitment to quality journalism and service to the Muslim community. — Alhaja Shareefah Abiola-Andu"***

Highlights of the event

One of the major highlights of the event was a panel discussion moderated by ace broadcaster and legal practitioner, Hajia Nyma Akashat Zibiri. The panel featured the Executive Director of the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Professor Ishaq Lakin Akintola; a Director of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), represented by Principal Reporter, Mallam Talha Babalola Musa; Senior Broadcast Journalist at Voice of Nigeria (VON), Mallam Hussain Bin Hyacinth; and Director of the Hijab Rights Advocacy Initiative, Hajia Mutiat Orolu Balogun. The full panel session is featured on Page 6.

Another major highlight was the presentation of awards in the Nigerian and Global Muslim Personalities of the Year and Muslim Women of Substance categories. Details of the award presentation are featured on Page 7.

Arabel CEO commends Muslim News Nigeria's seven-year consistency

Others who spoke at the event included the CEO and Founder of Arabel Exclusive Islamic Materials Limited, Alhaja Shareefah Abiola-Andu, who praised the Publisher of Muslim News Nigeria, Alhaji Rasheed Abubakar, for his nearly two decades of journalistic excellence and unwavering commitment to quality.

Recalling their first encounter about 18 years ago when Abubakar interviewed her while working with Encomium magazine, she said she was impressed by the accuracy and quality of his report, noting that, despite being meticulous about stories written about her, she had no corrections to make to his work.

Abiola-Andu commended Muslim News Nigeria for maintaining consistency over seven years despite the financial challenges of sustaining a media organisation in Nigeria. She also praised Abubakar's selfless service to the Muslim community, particularly his regular coverage of Islamic events and distribution of the newspaper free of charge.

She prayed for Allah's continued blessings and success for the Publisher, while urging the Muslim community to recognise and support his efforts to promote Islam through journalism.

We have a responsibility to challenge distortions about Islam: Mumuni

Earlier in his welcome address, which was delivered on his behalf by the Master of Ceremony, the host of the occasion, Alhaji Abayomi Nurain Mumuni, praised the Publisher of Muslim News Nigeria, Alhaji Rasheed Abubakar, for his dedication to promoting Islam and documenting the achievements of Muslims through journalism.

Mumuni recalled supporting the idea behind Muslim News Nigeria when it was conceived in 2018, saying the platform has since grown into a respected medium for reporting issues affecting Muslims, promoting unity and dialogue, and celebrating the achievements of the Ummah.

He stressed the responsibility of Muslims and media practitioners to challenge negative narratives, stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam, particularly those arising from the activities of groups such as Boko Haram and ISIS, which he said have no basis in Islamic teachings.

Mumuni called for the use of knowledge, professionalism, engagement and constructive dialogue to correct distortions about Islam, expressing hope that the anniversary lecture would produce practical recommendations for fair and balanced media representation.

He also congratulated the MNAwards recipients and urged Muslims to continue supporting Muslim News Nigeria in sustaining its mission of documenting the aspirations, achievements and challenges of Muslim communities in Nigeria and beyond.

Continues on pg. 11


Mr Kassim Yusuf Adegboyega and his wife after accepting the Nigerian Muslim Teacher of the Year Award.


Members of the family of Alhaji Kunle Sanni receiving the Lifetime Service to Islam Award on his behalf.


Mr Taiwo Olufemi (middle) receives he Best Muslim Owned Brand Award on behalf of Lotus Bank.

Continued from page 2

Two editions have so far been held, in 2022 and 2026, recognising a total of 60 Muslim women. The 2027 selection process is currently underway, with the results expected in February 2027.

Among those recognised are Prof. Olayinka Ramota Karim, Hajia Azeezat Muse-Sadiq, Professor Khadijah Idowu, Dr Afusat Adesina, Builder Jelilat Oyinlade Abdul Hamid, Professor Fatimah Abdulkareem, Professor Lateefah Durosinmi, Dr Maryam Jamila Ali, Princess Jemilat Omolola MKO Abiola Oyekunle, Hajia Mutiat Orolu Balogun and Hajia Nymat Akashat Zibiri, alongside other distinguished scholars, professionals and women achievers.

A growing archive of Muslim excellence

Across its various categories, the MNAwards has recognised more than 100 Muslim men and women from Nigeria and around the world. Its global honourees have included Turkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan; Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani; Islam Channel founder Mohamed Ali Harrath and ex-Arsenal and Germany star Mesut Özil, among others.

The current and 2025 global recognitions include The People of Gaza, named Global Muslim Personality of the Year; Sheikh Yasir Qadhi, honoured for Lifetime Service to Islam; Sami Shehadeh, Global Muslim Media Person of the Year; Dr Ghassan Abu Sittah, Global Muslim Health Person of the Year; Ousmane Dembélé, Global Muslim Celebrity of the Year; Associate Professor Ziyaad Mahomed, Global Muslim Finance Person of the Year; Naglaa Weshah, Global Muslim Teacher of the Year; TIKA, Global Humanitarian Organisation of the Year; Qatar Airways, Global Muslim-Owned Brand of the Year; and Dr Fatima Hendricks, Global Muslim Advocate for Peace and Justice of the Year.

Past Nigerian honourees have included the Sultan of Sokoto, Prof. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum, Alhaji Femi Abbas, Barrister Ibrahim Yakubu Umar, Dr. Saliu Oyelami, Modupe AbdulKareem Kadri, Ahmed Musa and Alhaji Kabir Garba, among other prominent Muslim figures recognised for their contributions across different sectors.

The current and 2025 Nigerian awardees include Malam Umar Namadi, Nigerian Muslim Personality of the Year; Prof. Yusuf Olaolu Ali, SAN, Nigerian Muslim Legal Personality of the Year; Prof. Abdurrazaq Abdulmajeed Alaro, mni, Nigerian Islamic Finance Person of the Year; Dr Maryam Jamila Ali, Nigerian Muslim Health Person of the Year; Hajiya Halima Musa, Nigerian Muslim Media Person of the Year; Yusuf Kassim, Nigerian Muslim Teacher of the Year; Lateef Adedimeji, Nigerian Muslim Celebrity of the Year; Alhaji Ishaq Kunle Sanni, Lifetime Service to Islam; Hajiya Hadiza Bala Usman, Female Public Service Excellence Award; Aliko Dangote Foundation, Humanitarian Organisation of the Year; and Lotus Bank, Nigerian Muslim-Owned Brand of the Year.

Initially comprising seven categories covering areas such as law, health, media, finance, governance and politics, the Personality Awards have expanded to 11 categories. The expansion now accommodates areas including Muslim teachers, Muslim-owned businesses and humanitarian organisations, reflecting the growing breadth of Muslim contributions across sectors.

The meaning of the moment

The essence of the MNAwards becomes particularly visible during the presentation itself. As cameras flash and applause fill the hall, recipients lift the distinctive "M" shaped plaque for photographs. At that moment, the trophy becomes more than an award. It becomes a symbol of recognition, belonging and achievement.

For many recipients, the plaque represents years of dedication, sacrifice and service, particularly in fields where their contributions may not always receive sufficient public attention. Its significance therefore extends beyond its physical appearance to the personal and communal meaning attached to the recognition.

The symbolism in the design

At the heart of the trophy is the commanding letter "M", its most distinctive feature. More than an alphabet, the "M" serves as the visual signature of Muslim News Nigeria. It represents the newspaper, the Muslim community whose stories it amplifies and the mission that inspired its creation.

The design also reflects Muslims making meaningful contributions across different professions and societies. Its geometric structure conveys aspiration and upward movement, representing progress and continuous advancement and mirroring the journeys of those being honoured.

A striking red peak crowns the upper section, symbolising excellence, ambition and the pursuit of higher ideals. Its upward orientation suggests leadership, growth and resilience in service to humanity.

The colour palette adds another layer of meaning. Blue represents trust, professionalism and journalistic integrity. White reflects truth and objectivity, while red signifies courage, sacrifice and determination. Together, the colours reflect values closely associated with the identity and mission of *Muslim News Nigeria.*

The layered acrylic construction further enhances the design. Its transparent surfaces create depth and allow light to interact with the trophy, giving it a dynamic quality rather than the appearance of a conventional static plaque.

More than a plaque

Each trophy is accompanied by a specially designed certificate bearing the recipient's name and citation. Together, the plaque and certificate preserve the recognition as part of a documented record of achievement.

Unlike awards whose prestige depends largely on gold plating, metallic finishes or imported crystal designs, the MNAwards plaque derives much of its significance from symbolism and storytelling. Its value lies not in material extravagance but in the meaning attached to its structure, colours and identity.

Conceived by Abubakar and his team, the design represents a deliberate attempt to create an award that embodies identity, excellence and purpose. Every element communicates the broader mission: to celebrate achievement, document contributions and inspire future generations.

A symbol of legacy

Over time, the MNAwards trophy has evolved into a recognisable symbol of distinction. Whether displayed in an office, home or institution, it represents a connection to a Muslim recognition platform dedicated to celebrating excellence and documenting positive contributions.

The trophy also mirrors the evolution of *Muslim News Nigeria.* Established in August 2018 as a platform committed to fair and balanced reporting on Muslim affairs, the newspaper has grown beyond journalism into recognition, documentation and community impact.

Now in its eighth year, the publication continues to expand its role in celebrating Muslim excellence and changing narratives about Muslims.

As future editions of the MNAwards take shape, the iconic "M" is expected to remain central to the identity of the trophy and the values it represents.

Long after the applause fades and the ceremony ends, the plaque remains. It carries with it a story of recognition, purpose and legacy, reflecting *Muslim News Nigeria's* enduring mission to celebrate excellence, preserve achievement and inspire generations.

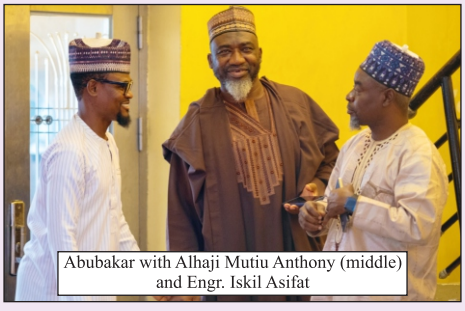
The amazing people who graced MNAwards


Prof. Lakin Akintola (middle) receiving the Vanguards of Hijab plaque.


Alhaji Kabir Garuba at the event.


Muslim News Nigeria Publisher, Rasheed Abubakar, with members of the MNN staff.


A cross-section of participants at the event.


Abubakar with Alhaji Mutiu Anthony (middle) and Engr. Iskil Asifat

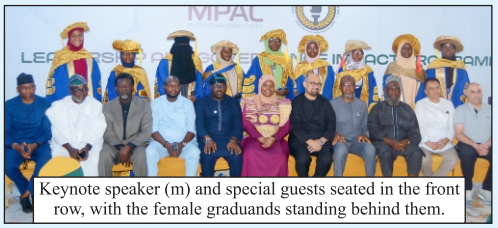

A cross-section of guests at the event.



Cross-section of cohort 2026 at the graduation ceremony.



Special guests and the keynote speaker seated, with the male graduands standing behind them.



Keynote speaker (m) and special guests seated in the front row, with the female graduands standing behind them.

BY: BAMIRO ADEJOKE MARYAM

MPAC graduates 27 Muslim professionals from Leadership and Governance Impact Programme

- Praises LGIP graduands, says programme is raising new generation of leaders
- 'Lead beyond titles, build solutions,' social impact expert tells cohort members

The Muslim Public Affairs Centre (MPAC) has graduated 27 Muslim professionals from the pioneer cohort of its Leadership and Governance Impact Programme (LGIP), charging them to transform their knowledge, influence and professional networks into meaningful impact across Nigeria.

The 13-week programme was designed to prepare Muslim professionals for effective engagement with Nigeria's governance systems and equip them with the knowledge, skills and ethical framework required to contribute to the public sector, private sector, policymaking and community leadership.

The graduates, who constitute Cohort One, Class of 2026, received their certificates at a graduation ceremony held on Saturday, September 12, at the Function Hall, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos.

Muslim News gathered that the ceremony featured a keynote lecture by communications and social impact professional, Omodara Adediran, who challenged the graduands to look beyond professional titles and become people who actively build solutions in their communities, institutions and wider society.

'Do not let your title become your identity'

Using the story of Prophet Musa (AS) as a central example, Adediran urged the graduands not to allow their qualifications, positions or professional recognition to become their identity.

She said leadership often requires courage, faith and the willingness to enter difficult environments without being defined by social status.

The Keynote speaker identified people who benefit from the status quo, influencers who shape public opinion and ordinary people exhausted by broken systems as some of the forces professionals would encounter.

She urged the graduating students to remain focused on their purpose, service to God and contribution to society rather than becoming distracted by these forces.

Adediran, who has more than a decade of experience across Nigeria's private, public and development sectors, encouraged them to build strategic networks and remain professionally visible while ensuring that their credentials were matched by competence, character and useful action.

"When it becomes your identity, the problem is you have stopped believing at that point and you have started performing," she said, warning against professional packaging without substance.

"Don't ever be a person with a package more useful than content."

She also warned that commitment to integrity could sometimes leave professionals standing alone, particularly in environments where compromise had become normal.

Drawing from Prophet Musa's story, she said difficult moments should not necessarily be interpreted as failure or abandonment. "Your loneliness is not abandonment," she said.

Adediran shared her experience of leaving the private sector to work fully in the development sector despite concerns about the financial implications, saying she made the decision because she believed her skills could be used more meaningfully to create social impact.

'Nigeria needs builders, not just commentators'

The social impact expert prepared the graduation class for rejection, unanswered emails and failed proposals, describing them as part of the reality of pursuing social change.

She urged them not to abandon worthwhile causes simply because expected support did not come, noting that difficult circumstances could reveal abilities and solutions they did not know they possessed.

Adediran also cautioned against measuring impact by visibility or public recognition.

According to her, professionals could do meaningful work without receiving attention, while people with large social media followings could receive greater recognition despite contributing less to a cause.

The social impact expert challenged the cohort members to move beyond discussing Nigeria's problems and become people who actively work to solve them.

She said the country's professional class was often highly articulate when discussing national challenges but reluctant to take responsibility for addressing them.

"Nigeria's professional class is extraordinarily articulate about problems in discussions and making noise on Twitter. But tell someone to actually champion the cause, and it's dead silence," she said.

Rather than merely criticising broken systems, she urged the graduates to imagine what their sectors and communities would look like if they functioned properly and begin building towards that reality. "Prophet Musa (AS) didn't just confront, he constructed," she said.


Adediran

The keynote speaker further advised them to build a small circle of two or three trusted people who could challenge their decisions, support their growth and hold them accountable when difficult assignments test their resolve.

Adediran urged the propgramme participants to see their presence in Nigeria at this time as a responsibility and to use their skills to build the country they want to live in.

She also encouraged them to collaborate rather than pursue leadership as an individual performance, reminding them that meaningful impact often requires people who can challenge and strengthen one another.

> **"Today we celebrate more than certificates. We celebrate discipline. We celebrate learning. And we celebrate the deliberate, patient work of raising a new generation of leaders for our community and our nation." — Executive Chairman of MPAC, Disu Kamor**

'Leadership gap requires preparation'

Earlier, the Executive Chairman of MPAC, Disu Kamor, said the programme was established in response to the underrepresentation of Muslims at important decision making tables despite the size, diversity and talent within the Muslim community.

He said the challenge could not be addressed through complaints alone, but through deliberate preparation and development of competent professionals capable of contributing to society.

"Today we celebrate more than certificates. We celebrate discipline. We celebrate learning. And we celebrate the deliberate, patient work of raising a new generation of leaders for our community and our nation," Kamor said.

He said the responsibility of the graduates was to combine the confidence of their faith with the discipline required for effective governance, adding that they must become professionals who are ethical, capable and committed to serving the whole of society.

According to him, the fellowship programme was built around the belief that Muslims must be adequately prepared to participate in spaces where decisions affecting the country are made.

"That gap is not closed by grievance. It is closed by preparation," he said.

Kamor urged the new fellows to lead with ethics and integrity, govern with knowledge and vision, and measure their leadership by the quality of service they provide.

He also challenged them to champion causes that would improve society and contribute to a new era of national leadership.

The MPAC boss reminded the graduating students that leadership should not be regarded as a trophy or reward, but as an amanah, or trust, that comes with responsibility to the people, particularly the vulnerable.

"You are the foundation of a new era of national leadership," Kamor told the graduands, congratulating them on the successful completion of the programme.

Leadership and governance fellowship

The 13-week fellowship programme exposed participants to key areas of leadership and governance, including Islamic ethics and public leadership, Nigeria's governance architecture, policy design and implementation, public finance and accountability, media and public communications, political advocacy and youth engagement, and leadership in crisis and change.

As part of the programme, participants developed capstone projects addressing practical governance and development challenges, allowing them to apply the knowledge and skills gained during the training to real world issues.

The part-time programme was delivered virtually through weekly live sessions, group activities, assignments, field

immersion, mentorship and peer engagement.

The courses were delivered by a faculty of professionals and scholars with expertise in governance, leadership, public policy, media, economics, institutional development and Islamic ethics.

Dr Ridwan Lawal handled Foundations of Public Governance; Dr. Muiz Banire led sessions on Civic Advocacy and Mobilisation; Mr Babalola Abd Rasheed facilitated Governance and Policy Design; Mr Sulaiman Aledeh took Media and Narrative Power; Mr Abdulmalik Mahdi focused on Statecraft and Governance Ethics; and Arigbabu Sulaiman covered Policy and Social Innovation.

Mrs Oyindamola Mutiat Dada addressed Markets and Shared Prosperity; Sheikh Nurudeen Lemu delivered sessions on Islamic and Moral Leadership; Mrs Shakirah Mustapha handled Boards and Institutional Excellence; Mrs Rinsola Abiola led Diversity and Nation Building; Mr Tosin Ali Osori covered Crisis, Change and Resilience; while Mr Kola Osinowo facilitated Global and Sustainable Governance.

Speaking on behalf of the faculty and facilitators, Sheikh Nurudeen Lemu said the 13-week fellowship was designed to help develop a generation of future leaders capable of making a difference across industry, civil society, non-governmental organisations, government, academia and the media.

Lemu said the goal should not merely be personal success or recognition, but significance and lasting impact. He described leadership as an amanah and urged the graduands to remain worthy of the trust that comes with leadership positions.

"Move up the ladder at the speed of your trustworthiness, your significance and your impact," he told them.

Lemu also stressed the importance of identifying and developing young people with leadership potential early, noting that the skills acquired through training must be sustained through continuous practice, advocacy and engagement.

MPAC builds alumni network for continued impact

For MPAC, the graduation marks the beginning of a longer journey rather than the end of the programme. The 27 graduands are expected to join an alumni network that will promote continued learning, mentorship, professional collaboration and leadership development.

The network will organise quarterly meetups and masterclasses, while alumni will also have opportunities to support and contribute to future cohorts of the Leadership and Governance Impact Programme.

Founded in 2001 as an online initiative, the centre was formally incorporated as a public service agency in August 2002, and has since focused on advocacy, strategic media engagement, interfaith peace-building, and developing Muslim professionals.

MPAC's sister organisation, Sakinah Medical Outreach, also grew from an internal humanitarian initiative into an independent organisation, expanding its work to provide medical support and outreach to underserved communities.

Roll call of guests

Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, Justice Habeeb Adewale Abiru; Chairman of the Board of Trustees of MPAC, Mr Adesegun Ajibola, SAN; and Member of the Board of Trustees of MPAC, Alhaji Ariyo Olushekun, attended the event.

Also present were the Vice Chancellor of the African School of Economics, Abuja, Professor Mahfuz Adedimeji; former Chairman of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria, Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan; President of the Institute of Islamic Finance Professionals of Nigeria, Professor Tajudeen Yusuf; Chief Academic and Responsibility Officer of QHSES Leadership Academy, Lagos, Engineer Jamiu Badmus; and Chairman of the Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria, Alhaji Abdulfatai Olajide.

Other guests included the Managing Director of Eagerly, Lagos, Hon. AbdulBaqi Ladi Balogun; Director General of the Office of Education Quality Assurance, Lagos State, Dr Sulaimon Ogunmuyiwa; Principal Partner at Adepoju and Olatunji and Co, Alhaji Nurein Olatunji; Dr Mosun Adeku, Mr Hakeem Alabi Adeku; Executive Secretary of MIND, Mr Sulaimon Olokodana; and Executive Secretary of MICA, Mr Abdulhameed Danmole.

Representing the Pakistani expatriate community in Nigeria were Mr Ahmed Akhter Qazi, Mr Abdul Basit Quraishi and Mr Kamal Ashraf.

Beautiful faces at the graduation ceremony



Disu Kamor (third from right), with some of the dignitaries at the event.



MPAC directors and LGIP faculty members seated, with female graduands standing behind them


MPAC directors and LGIP faculty members alongside male graduands during the graduation ceremony.


Disu Kamor (second from left) with members of the MPAC Board of Directors during the event.


Disu Kamor with the VC, ASE, Prof. Mahfouz Adedimeji.



MPAC trustees and directors with the graduating set standing behind them.

The remaining cohort members



Yusuf Muhamed Isa



Hussein Aisha Olamide



Sumayyah Adetomiwa Ajani



MUHAMMAD, Abdallah



Abdulraheem Abdulraheem



Adam Abdulrahman



Akinmade Lateef Oluwaseye



Fatima Adam Sheikh


Justice Habeeb Abiru and Prof. Tajudeen Yusuf.


Alhaji Zikrullah Hassan, Alhaji Abdul Ganiy Abdul Majeed and Alhaji Abdul Hameed Danmole



Shehadeh

TRT Arabi's Sami Shehadeh dedicates Global Muslim Media Award to journalists murdered in Gaza

● Reflects on covering Israel's genocidal war on Gaza after losing a leg on duty

Veteran Palestinian photojournalist and TRT Arabi cameraman Sami Shehadeh has described his emergence as Global Muslim Media Person of the Year 2024/2025 as a tribute not only to himself, but to all journalists who risked their lives to document the realities of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

Shehadeh was one of the distinguished recipients of the Global Muslim Personalities of the Year awards announced by *Muslim News Nigeria,* the country's most authoritative Islamic newspaper, in December 2025.

The convener, Alhaji Rasheed Abubakar, said the Palestinian journalist was recognised for his courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to documenting the humanitarian consequences of the more than two-year Israeli aggression on Gaza.

The veteran photojournalist was scheduled to attend the award presentation held on Sunday, June 14, in Lagos, Southwest Nigeria, but was unable to make the trip due to visa delays.

He, however, joined virtually as one of the panellists during the panel session, although time constraints prevented him from making a full presentation.

Speaking exclusively in Arabic with *Muslim News Nigeria* from his base in Istanbul, Türkiye, on Thursday, June 25, Shehadeh expressed deep gratitude for the honour, saying it reflected the sacrifices made by media professionals who continued reporting despite immense personal risks.

"I feel deeply grateful for this nomination, and I consider it a tribute to all the journalists who risked their lives to convey the truth from Gaza, not a personal honour for me alone," he said.

"We worked under extraordinary circumstances, and many of our colleagues paid with their lives for carrying out their professional duty. Therefore, any recognition should also be attributed to them."

Shehadeh became internationally known after surviving a deadly Israeli attack on a press team in Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza on April 12, 2024. The attack resulted in severe injuries that led to the amputation of one of his legs.

Despite the life-changing injury, the veteran cameraman returned to reporting from the field, first on crutches and later using a prosthetic leg, earning admiration from journalists and human rights advocates worldwide.

Reflecting on his experience, Shehadeh said journalism had never been about awards or recognition.

"For me, the goal was never to win awards or receive honours. My objective was to document the truth and convey the suffering of civilians to the world as it truly was.

"I was injured while carrying out my work and lost my leg, but I remain convinced that what happened will not deter me from continuing my journalistic mission, because conveying the truth is a responsibility before it is a profession," he said.

Gaza's daily suffering remains underreported by international media

Drawing from his years of reporting inside Gaza, Shehadeh said one of the greatest shortcomings of international media coverage is its tendency to focus primarily on explosions, destruction and casualty figures while overlooking the daily realities endured by civilians.

"In my opinion, international media outlets still fall short in portraying the daily lives of civilians living through war, not just the moments of bombing and destruction," he said.

"There are stories that remain unseen, such as the suffering of families who spend months without shelter, children who have lost their parents or limbs, and medical personnel and journalists who continue their work despite being directly targeted."

According to him, the long-term psychological consequences of war remain one of the least reported aspects of the Gaza crisis.

"There is also a lack of coverage of the long-term psychological impact of war on people. Gaza is not merely a collection of casualty figures; it is an entire society living through continuous trauma."

The veteran journalist stressed that every photograph emerging from Gaza carries a deeper human narrative often lost in headlines and brief news reports.

"Through my work as a photojournalist inside Gaza, I saw that behind every photograph lies a profound human story that cannot be reduced to a headline or a brief news report," he added.

Visual evidence helped counter attempts to discredit Gaza reports

Shehadeh highlighted the crucial role played by visual journalism in shaping global understanding of the conflict, particularly amid efforts to challenge or discredit accounts from the ground.

"The image played a pivotal role in conveying the reality of what was happening to the world," he said.

"The photographs and videos documented by journalists inside Gaza enabled millions of people to see the reality as it was, helped change the views of many around the world, and sparked widespread discussions about humanitarian and legal responsibility."

He argued that credibility remains the most valuable asset a journalist can possess, especially during periods of intense conflict and competing narratives.

"I believe the most important lesson journalists can learn is that credibility is a journalist's greatest asset," he said.

"Commitment to accuracy, firsthand documentation, and reporting the truth as it is make an image more powerful than any propaganda or misinformation."

Shehadeh noted that the Gaza experience demonstrated both the risks and responsibilities associated with journalism in conflict zones.

"This experience has also demonstrated that journalists may pay a heavy price for conveying the truth, but continuing to document events remains both an ethical and professional duty."

Visual storytelling gives victims names, faces and stories

The award-winning cameraman also underscored the role of visual storytelling in combating misinformation and restoring the humanity often lost in discussions about war.

"Visual storytelling is one of the most powerful tools for countering misinformation when it is grounded in professional and accurate documentation," he said.

"An authentic image captured and verified in the field can expose the falsehood of many claims, especially when it is presented with the proper context."

Beyond exposing misinformation, Shehadeh believes visual journalism helps humanise victims who might otherwise be reduced to statistics.

"Visual storytelling gives victims names, faces, and stories, rather than leaving them as mere statistics in news bulletins," he explained.

"When the world sees a child smiling despite an injury, or a mother embracing her children amid the rubble, people connect with the human being before they connect with the news."

According to him, this represents the fundamental purpose of journalism.

"That is the true role of journalism: to convey the truth, preserve human dignity, and remind the world that behind every number is a life, a story, a family, and a set of dreams."

A message beyond recognition

While thanking *Muslim News Nigeria* for the nomination, Shehadeh said the recognition carries a broader significance beyond personal achievement.

"This nomination carries a deeper message for me: that the world still values courageous and independent journalism, and that the voices of the victims have not gone unheard," he said.

He expressed hope that the honour would draw renewed international attention to the plight of Palestinians in Gaza and the sacrifices made by journalists covering the conflict.

"If this nomination has any significance, I hope it will help shine an even brighter light on the suffering of the people of Gaza and on the tremendous sacrifices made by the journalists who documented this war, especially those who were martyred while carrying out their professional duty."

Shehadeh joins distinguished list of Global Muslim Media award recipients

For *Muslim News Nigeria*, the recognition of Shehadeh is consistent with its tradition of honouring journalists whose courage, resilience and commitment to truth have inspired millions across the world.

The award celebrates media professionals who, often at great personal risk, uphold the principles of truthful reporting, give voice to the voiceless and bring global attention to humanitarian crises and issues affecting Muslim communities.

Shehadeh joins a distinguished list of recipients of the Global Muslim Media Person of the Year award. In 2023, the honour was bestowed on Al Jazeera's Gaza bureau chief, Wael Al-Dahdouh, in recognition of his steadfast reporting despite suffering devastating personal losses during the war in Gaza.

In 2021, Indian investigative journalist and Washington Post columnist Rana Ayyub received the award for her fearless reporting on human rights issues and advocacy for oppressed Muslim communities.

A year earlier, Mohamed Ali Harrath, founder of the UK-based Islam Channel, was recognised for his pioneering role in challenging negative stereotypes about Muslims and expanding Muslim representation in the global media landscape.

Muslim News Nigeria said Shehadeh's story, like those of many journalists working in conflict zones, serves as a powerful reminder that behind every image, report and headline are individuals willing to risk everything to ensure the truth is seen, heard and remembered.



E-Cover



Shehadeh

Cont'd from pg. 6

Celebrating Muslim excellence, changing the narrative: Convener

The Convener and Publisher of *Muslim News Nigeria*, Alhaji Rasheed Abubakar, expressed appreciation to Almighty Allah for His guidance and for making it possible for the organisation to reach its seventh anniversary. He also appreciated the individuals, organisations, partners, colleagues and supporters who have contributed to the growth and sustainability of the platform over the years.

He said MNAwards was conceived to celebrate Muslims making positive contributions to society and to address the imbalance in media coverage, where negative stories about Muslims often receive greater attention while outstanding Muslims and their achievements are overlooked.

"The mainstream media have always amplified negative narratives about Muslims. Whereas, we have many Muslims out there who are doing wonderfully well and making us proud. They do not get the recognition they deserve for making positive impacts in society. This is dedicated to them. We hope that this will serve as a motivation for them to do more," he said.

Abubakar explained that the Nigerian and Global Muslim Personalities of the Year Awards, which began in 2019, recognises Muslims distinguished by their achievements, leadership and contributions across fields including leadership, politics, law, health, media, education and business. He added that the Muslim Women of Substance category complements the initiative by celebrating exceptional Muslim women, with 30 women so far recognised across diverse professions.

He stressed that MNAwards goes beyond presenting plaques, as Muslim News Nigeria documents the achievements of honourees through dedicated 16-page publications produced ahead of the award ceremonies. "We do not organise MNAwards merely to give people plaques. We use journalism to document their stories, celebrate their achievements and preserve their contributions for future generations," he said.

Call for support and continuity

Abubakar said MNAwards is part of Muslim News Nigeria's broader mission of reporting Islam responsibly, celebrating Muslim excellence and changing negative narratives about Muslims and Islam. He noted that documenting positive Muslim contributions would also inspire younger generations to pursue excellence and make meaningful contributions to society.

He therefore called for greater support from individuals, organisations, Muslim communities and corporate partners to ensure the continuity and sustainability of *Muslim News Nigeria* and *MNAwards*. He said such support would enable the platform to strengthen its journalism, expand its reach and sustain the awards as a credible platform for recognising excellence.

He expressed the hope that, with increased support, MNAwards would grow into a revered award platform dedicated to celebrating Nigerians and Muslims across the world, consistently identifying, documenting and honouring Muslims whose achievements and contributions are making positive impacts in Nigeria and globally.

Gathering of high-profile Islamic leaders

The event attracted high-profile Islamic leaders, influential Muslim personalities, including former Chairman of the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), Alhaji Zikrullah Kunle Hassan; President of the Muslim Media Practitioners of Nigeria (MMPN), Alhaji AbdurRahman Balogun; Executive Director of Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Prof. Lakin Akintola; and Chairman of the Abdullahi Shuaib Foundation, Dr Abdullahi Shuaib.

Others included the National President of the Muslim Lawyers Association of Nigeria (MULAN), Alhaji Hassan Fajimite, Esq.; Chairman, Lagos Chapter of MMPN, Dr Abdul Kabir Garuba; National President (Amir) of the Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN), Prof. Ibrahim Oreagba; Chief Executive Officer of Easy and Quiet, Alhaji Mutiu Anthony; Engineer Iskil Asifat; alongside other distinguished guests whose presence contributed to the success of the event and enriched the broader discourse on media representation, advocacy and community development.

Awardees and representatives receive MNAwards



Anifat Sadu, third right, receives plaque as one of 30 Women of Substance.


Hajia Mutiat Orolu-Balogun, centre, receives Vanguards of Hijab Award.



NASFAT women receive awards for Prof. Ramota Karim and Princess Jemilat Abiola-Oyekunle.


Alhaji Musa Talha receives the Muslim Media Award on behalf of Hajiya Halimah Musa.



Dr. Maryam Jamila Ali receives plaque as Nigerian Muslim Health Person of the Year, alongside family and IMAN leaders.


MULAN President Hassan Fajimite, Esq., accepts Legal Person of the Year Award for Prof. Yusuf Olaolu Ali, SAN.


Hajia Azeezat Muse Sadiq, third left, is honoured as one of 30 Women of Substance



Alhaji Ali AbdulMajeed accepts the Muslim Finance Person of the Year Award on behalf of Prof. Abdur-Razaq Alaro.

MNAWARDS: Panellists proffer strategies to counter negative narratives about Islam



Panel session

Legal advocacy, increased Muslim participation in journalism, greater investment in media ownership and stronger adherence to ethical reporting have emerged as key strategies for countering negative narratives about Islam and promoting balanced faith-based reporting.

The recommendations formed the outcome of a robust panel discussion held during the 7th Anniversary Lecture of *Muslim News Nigeria* and the presentation of the Muslim News Awards (MNAwards), which recognised outstanding Nigerian and global Muslims making positive contributions to humanity and the development of the Muslim community.

Held on Sunday, June 14, 2026, at Olanike Hall, Shamsi Adisa Thomas Mosque, First Secretariat, Ikeja, Lagos, the event was themed "Framing the Faith in the Midst of Media Misrepresentation and Global Conflicts."

The panel session served as one of the major highlights of the anniversary lecture, complementing the keynote address by examining how media narratives influence public perception of Islam and identifying practical steps Muslims can take to reclaim their own story.

Moderated by veteran broadcaster and co-host of TVC's Your View, Hajia Nymat Akashat-Zibiri, the discussion featured Executive Director of the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Prof. Ishaq Lakin Akintola; Director of the Hijab Rights Advocacy Initiative (HRAI), Barrister Mutiat Orolu-Balogun; Senior Broadcast Journalist with the Voice of Nigeria (VON), Mallam Hussain Bin Hyacinth; and Principal Reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Mallam Talha Musa.

Media framing shapes public perception

Opening the conversation, Akashat-Zibiri reminded participants that media remains one of the most powerful institutions in shaping public understanding, noting that narratives are often influenced not merely by facts but by the way stories are framed.

Referring to earlier remarks by the National Missioner of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria, Imam AbdurRahman Ahmad, she observed that audiences could easily become "miseducated" if they consumed news without critically examining how information was packaged.

She said the panel was designed to move beyond complaints about media bias by exploring practical ways Muslims could engage journalism, communication and public discourse more strategically.

Hyacinth advocates ethical journalism over emotional reactions

During his presentation, Senior Broadcast Journalist with the Voice of Nigeria, Mallam Hyacinth, urged Muslims, particularly journalists and media organisations, to respond to negative narratives about Islam with ethical, evidence-based and professional journalism rather than emotional reactions or counter-propaganda.

He said Muslims should understand how the media frames events and ensure that their reports are factual, balanced and professionally presented.

Hyacinth explained that the choice of headlines, language and emphasis could significantly influence public perception of religious and global conflicts.

He noted that similar events were often presented differently depending on political, ideological and cultural interests, stressing that "journalism anchored on fairness, truth and justice is more consistent with Islamic ethics than sensationalism and vested interests."

He also cautioned Muslims against allowing allegations of an Islamisation agenda to dictate their priorities or push them into reactive campaigns.

According to him, Muslims should develop positions based on their own principles rather than constantly responding to narratives created by others, warning that emotional reactions could leave them playing into the hands of those shaping the narratives.

Addressing the issue of objectivity, the VON broadcaster said complete objectivity was difficult to achieve because media organisations operate within different ideological, political and cultural perspectives.

He, however, maintained that journalists could still pursue fairness and justice, noting that "our friend is always right, while our enemy is always wrong" is often reflected in the way conflicts are reported.

Hyacinth identified the global imbalance in information production as another major challenge, noting that Muslims and much of the Global South remain largely consumers rather than producers of dominant media narratives.

"Globally and locally, we are not in control of information dissemination machineries," he said, stressing that influential news organisations in the Global North largely determine how major events are framed and presented to audiences.

He therefore called for greater Muslim investment in credible media institutions, saying strong media platforms were necessary for Muslims to produce their own narratives and command public trust.

Muslim organisations must move beyond press statements to strategic action

Speaking on the broader impact of media narratives, Prof. Akintola argued that Muslims continue to suffer from persistent stereotyping despite Islam's contributions to peacebuilding, education, charity and national development.

According to him, stories involving Muslims are frequently viewed through prejudicial lenses, while criminal acts committed by individuals are often projected as representing an entire faith.

He cited recent examples of misleading narratives that linked insecurity and criminality to Islam, saying such reports reinforce Islamophobia and deepen public misconceptions.

"If every Muslim documented what they encounter because of these stereotypes, we would have volumes of evidence," he said.

Responding to a question on how Muslim organisations should move beyond issuing press statements, the MURIC Executive Director acknowledged that while statements remain necessary, they alone cannot change public perception.

He noted that only a fraction of Muslim organisations currently engage in sustained advocacy and urged them to embrace broader civic engagement through strategic litigation, public campaigns, advocacy programmes, community service initiatives, peaceful walks, branding exercises and continuous engagement with policymakers and the media.

Muslims must also improve how they represent Islam

Barrister Orolu-Balogun said the conversation should not focus solely on what mainstream media is doing wrong, arguing that Muslims must also examine how they portray Islam and the hijab.

She observed that many news organisations deliberately illustrate hijab-related stories with images that bear little resemblance to what Muslim women in Nigeria are actually advocating.

Recalling media coverage of campaigns for students' hijab rights and accommodation for Muslim nurses, she said photographs depicting unfamiliar or exaggerated styles of dressing were often used to create false impressions and generate unnecessary public anxiety.

Beyond mainstream media, she criticised some Islamic financial institutions, Muslim-owned businesses and Islamic corporate organisations for failing to reflect the values they publicly promote.

According to her, some organisations branding themselves as Islamic discourage female employees from wearing properly compliant hijab, thereby sending conflicting messages about Islamic identity.

"If we describe ourselves as Islamic organisations, our internal policies should reflect the values we promote," she said.

She also challenged Muslim entrepreneurs, fashion brands, social media influencers and content creators to become more intentional in projecting positive images of Muslim women.

Rather than commercialising the hijab in ways that undermine its essence, she urged Muslim-owned brands to demonstrate creativity by designing corporate uniforms, branded clothing and promotional materials that combine professionalism with Islamic modesty.

Drawing inspiration from the United Arab Emirates, she noted that the abaya has become a recognised form of professional attire, arguing that Nigerian Muslim institutions could similarly redefine corporate dressing through innovation instead of simply copying conventional Western dress codes.

Responsible journalism requires facts, not assumptions

Representing the Director of News, NTA, Hajiya Halima Musa, Mallam Talha Musa said irresponsible journalism continues to undermine public confidence because many media organisations approach stories involving Muslims with preconceived assumptions.

He stressed that journalists must go beyond merely reporting events by ensuring that facts are properly verified and that language is carefully chosen to avoid reinforcing stereotypes.

He cited a recent case in which a television station reportedly aired a skit as authentic footage relating to criminal activities before colleagues established that the video was fictitious, leading to its withdrawal.

According to him, such incidents illustrate the consequences of declining standards of research and editorial verification.

"Responsible journalism begins with research and verification. Opinions may be free, but facts are sacred," he said.

Talha Musa also encouraged Muslims to make greater use of the courts whenever their constitutional rights are violated.

He cited the successful legal challenge by a Muslim woman against Disneyland after she was penalised for wearing the hijab, noting that the court ruled that competence, not religious appearance, was the basis of her employment.

He said the judgment demonstrated that strategic litigation remains one of the most effective tools for protecting religious freedom.

The broadcaster also praised the legal victories secured by Nigerian Muslim advocates over students' hijab rights, describing them as evidence that persistence and lawful engagement produce lasting change.

He urged Muslim parents to encourage their children to study journalism, mass communication, broadcasting and other communication disciplines rather than discouraging them from entering the profession.

According to him, Muslims cannot continue to complain about media narratives while remaining underrepresented in newsrooms and editorial leadership.

"Nobody will tell our story except us. If we are absent from the media, others will continue telling our stories from perspectives that do not reflect who we are," he said.

Throughout the session, the panelists agreed that the challenge of media misrepresentation requires more than criticism of existing narratives.



13 Umar Misa: Using Technology to Promote Better Governance

Umar Misa of Adamawa State holds a B.Tech. in Industrial Chemistry from Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola. He is a freelancer, Founder and CEO of SMARTGOV AI Technologies Ltd., and a volunteer with the People & Development Team of UN SDSN Youth Nigeria.

Misa joined LGIP hoping to deepen his understanding of leadership, governance and public affairs while learning from experienced professionals and connecting with young Muslim professionals committed to making a difference.

The programme, he said, challenged him to rethink leadership as not merely a position of authority but a responsibility and a form of service to Allah, humanity and society.

Sessions on governance, constitutional literacy, statecraft, ethics, enterprise, civic advocacy, media, policy innovation, nation-building and global leadership broadened his understanding of leadership at different levels.

The case studies, group discussions and From Third World to First reading also helped him connect learning with real-world governance and development challenges.

His most important change in perspective was understanding that leadership is fundamentally about service, responsibility, integrity and turning vision into meaningful action.

Misa intends to apply these lessons through technology, sustainable development and community engagement. Through SMARTGOV AI Technologies, he hopes to develop solutions that promote transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

He described the combination of knowledge, practical learning and a community committed to service and positive change as LGIP's greatest value.



15 Maryam Muhammad Kudu: Leadership Beyond Position

Maryam Muhammad Kudu of Niger State holds a B.Sc. in Mass Communication and is pursuing an M.Sc. in Human Resource Management. She works in the Media Department of the Dawah Institute, Islamic Education Trust (IET).

Kudu joined LGIP expecting to gain leadership knowledge and build professional connections, but said the programme went beyond her expectations. She gained practical insights into leadership and governance, learnt from facilitators and fellow professionals and was exposed to diverse perspectives and experiences.

One of her biggest takeaways was the understanding that leadership is not about position, but responsibility, influence and service. She said the programme also helped her become more self-aware, listen more intentionally, communicate clearly, delegate and empower others, and approach challenges with a solution-oriented mindset.

She advised graduating students to join with an intentional mindset and a willingness to learn from people with diverse backgrounds.



17 Bilkisu Garba Ibrahim: Leadership Rooted in Islamic Values

Bilkisu Garba Ibrahim of Niger State holds a B.Tech. in Agricultural Economics and Extension Technology. She is a researcher and trainer with the Dawah Institute, Islamic Education Trust.

Ibrahim joined LGIP hoping to deepen her understanding of leadership, governance and advocacy while gaining practical skills to contribute more effectively to her organisation and community. She also looked forward to connecting with professionals from diverse backgrounds and learning from their experiences.

She said the programme exceeded her expectations, providing not only knowledge through its sessions but also direct exposure to professionals with experience in governance and leadership.

The experience challenged her to think more critically about her roles as a researcher, trainer and citizen and to recognise that meaningful leadership does not depend solely on holding a formal position of authority.

Her biggest takeaway was the importance of ethical leadership and remaining committed to Islamic values. She also highlighted the importance of building beneficial networks and intends to apply what she learnt by becoming more intentional about her responsibility as a vicegerent of Allah.

She hopes to use the skills gained from LGIP to support initiatives promoting responsible citizenship, social cohesion, inclusive participation and positive community development.



19 Abdulaziz A. Ta'ariq: Driving change through public service

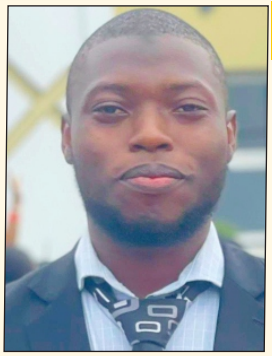
Abdulaziz A. Ta'ariq of Kogi State, who resides in Abuja, holds a B.Eng. in Mechanical Engineering from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He is a Senior Mechanical Engineer at the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA), Abuja.

Ta'ariq joined LGIP seeking a deeper understanding of governance, policy formulation and national decision making. He said the programme exceeded his expectations, particularly through practical insights from experienced leaders and practitioners.

His key takeaways were active listening, effective execution and a proactive approach to problem solving. He intends to use these skills to drive greater efficiency in his public service role and initiate high impact community projects.

He described the programme's greatest value as the opportunity to connect with leading Muslim professionals across different fields, saying the experience showed him that Muslims are actively bridging gaps in mentorship, leadership development and representation.

He encouraged other Muslim professionals to join the programme, describing it as a transformative investment in their leadership, career and community impact.



14 Adeogun Toheeb Adebowale: Governance Is Not Only for Politicians

Adeogun Toheeb Adebowale of Ogun State holds a B.Sc. in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management, a B.A. in Business Administration and is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM).

He is an intern at Human Capital Partners and the Founder/Creative Director of Toisville Wears.

Adebowale joined LGIP hoping to understand how governance works and how he could contribute from his own space.

One of his major lessons was that meaningful contribution to national governance does not require being a public figure or politician.

For him, perspective is crucial. He said understanding oneself and the people one works with can make a significant difference to success.

His biggest takeaway was meeting and learning from Muslim professionals across the country, particularly those working in public service and the private sector. He also valued connecting with participants from different states and backgrounds.

He encouraged prospective participants to come with an open mind and be ready for the change they collectively hope to achieve.



16 Yusirat Oyeleke: Connecting Advocacy With Governance

Yusirat Oyeleke of Oyo State holds a B.A. in Communication and Language Arts from the University of Ibadan and is currently serving as a corps member in Nasarawa State.

Before joining LGIP, Oyeleke was particularly interested in the public service aspect of the programme, having developed experience in advocacy as a student and hoping to build a career in public service. Although she initially selected Advocacy as her track, she said the programme helped her understand that advocacy does not exist in isolation but is connected to public service, communities, stakeholders and the systems within which decisions are made.

She said LGIP broadened her understanding of how change is created, showing her that advocacy goes beyond identifying issues and speaking up. It also requires understanding the people involved, engaging stakeholders, listening to communities and developing solutions that can work within existing systems.

One of her most important lessons was learning how to work effectively with people, stakeholders and communities to create sustainable change. She hopes to combine her background in communication and advocacy with a future career in public service, using communication to connect citizens, institutions and communities and improve public participation.

She encouraged prospective participants to come with an open mind, be willing to listen, ask questions, challenge their assumptions and learn from facilitators and fellow participants.



18 Muhammad Nasir Shehu: Leadership through education

Muhammad Nasir Shehu of Niger State holds qualifications in Mass Communication, Education, Islamic Studies and Arabic Language and Translation, including an MA in Educational Administration and Planning.

He is the Director of Rabbaniyyun Integrated Educational Services and Consultancy, Country Field Support Coordinator for the Imam Development Program in Nigeria, and a Volunteer Researcher and Trainer at the Da'wah Institute, Islamic Education Trust, Minna.

Shehu joined LGIP hoping to strengthen his understanding of leadership and governance, improve his leadership skills and connect with other young Muslim professionals. The programme, he said, exceeded his expectations by providing new perspectives, practical skills and meaningful relationships.

His major takeaway was that leadership is about responsibility, positive influence and sustainable impact, rather than simply holding a position. He also gained a deeper understanding of Nigeria's leadership challenges and how to contribute to nation building through civic advocacy and engagement.

He plans to apply the lessons in education, youth development and community engagement. He described the combination of learning, exposure and relationships as the programme's greatest value and encouraged prospective participants to approach LGIP with an open mind and a willingness to learn and grow.

LGIP 2026: 27 MPAC Fellowship Graduands Propose Solutions to Nigeria's Economic and Governance Challenges

● Projects target Islamic finance, accountability, road safety and citizen participation


Muhammed


Babatunde


Liadi


Umar Misa

Twenty seven participants of the Muslim Public Affairs Centre's Leadership and Governance Impact Programme have unveiled four practical projects aimed at tackling inflation, strengthening public accountability, reducing reckless driving and deepening citizen participation in local governance.

The projects were presented on Saturday, September 12, 2026, during the graduation ceremony of the 2026 cohort of the 13 week programme held at the Function Hall in Lagos.

Muslim News gathered that the graduands were divided into groups across four tracks and challenged to translate lessons from the programme into practical interventions addressing challenges confronting Nigerian society.

The projects were developed under the Corporate and Economic Leadership, Accountability, Ethics and Global Leadership, Civic Advocacy and Social Impact, and Public Service and Governance tracks.

Amanah group proposes Islamic finance driven response to inflation

The Amanah Economic Transformation Group, under the Corporate and Economic Leadership track, presented "Combating Inflation through Local Production: A Corporate and Policy Framework for Muslim Owned SMEs and Muslim Led Organizations in Nigeria."

The project was presented by Abdul Ganiu Babatunde Adeola on behalf of the team, comprising Abdulquadir Muhammad Jamaldeen, Lateefat Funmilola Bello Ahmed, Salako Kabirat and Fatimah Sheikh.

The group identified exchange rate volatility, high energy costs, import dependence, weak domestic production and limited access to affordable financing as major drivers of Nigeria's inflation crisis.

It cited headline inflation of 33.95 per cent, a N48 trillion financing gap for micro, small and medium enterprises and the finding that only 21 per cent of SMEs in Southwest Nigeria were aware of Islamic finance.

The group attributed the challenge to structural, institutional, behavioural and political factors, including poor infrastructure, high logistics costs, fragmented Zakat and Waqf systems, low awareness of Islamic banking and the underuse of Islamic finance in national anti2 inflation programmes.

To address the challenge, it proposed a Halal Production Syndicate to coordinate Islamic financial institutions, Muslim led organisations, policymakers, development partners and the private sector.

The proposed system would deploy Murabaha, Mudarabah, Zakat, Waqf and cooperative capital to finance productive businesses. It would also provide SME training, mentorship, financial literacy and enterprise readiness support through a digital platform for registration, financing coordination and real time monitoring.

The implementation would begin with the establishment of a governing council, partnerships and the digital platform during the first three months. Months four to six would focus on SME registration, readiness assessment, training and the creation of a financing pool, while months seven to 12 would involve Shariah compliant financing, procurement of productive assets and expansion of production.

The group proposed audits, impact reports and expansion after the first 12 months.

It identified low participation, funding gaps, misuse of funds, weak coordination and policy changes as key risks, with awareness campaigns, diversified funding, audits, digital tracking, Shariah oversight and regulatory engagement proposed as mitigation measures.

The group said its success would be measured through the number of SMEs financed, increased productive capacity, employment creation, recovery rates, output and business growth.

NCPLAF seeks to connect citizens' priorities with government action

The second project, presented under the Accountability, Ethics and Global Leadership track, was the National Citizens' Priority and Leadership Accountability Framework, known as NCPLAF.

The project was presented by the team lead, Umar Misa, alongside Aisha Haruna, Abdulraheem Abdulraheem, Toheeb Adeogun, Adam Abdulrahman, Omobolaji Naeenah Fashina, Abdullah Muhammad, Abdulaziz Abdulrahman Ta'ariq, Lateef Akinmade and Nimatullah Masuud.

The group described NCPLAF as "a citizen centred governance system for sustainable development and public accountability in Nigeria."

It argued that citizens, government and leadership accountability often operate through separate channels, creating weak visibility of citizens' priorities, inconsistent feedback and difficulty tracking whether government commitments translate into measurable action.

The group cited Open Government Partnership evidence and the 2021 Open Budget Survey, which put Nigeria's public participation score at 26 out of 100. It said participation stood at 40 out of 100 during budget formulation and 25 out of 100 during implementation.

"NCPLAF responds to the system gap rather than treating the problem as the failure of one institution," the presentation stated.

The proposed framework would connect citizens' development priorities with government planning, leadership commitments, implementation monitoring and public feedback through both offline and digital channels.

The group stressed that NCPLAF would not be a new government body, describing it instead as "a coordination and accountability framework."

Its proposed system would collect, validate, rank, aggregate, document, measure, track and report community priorities, while a leadership accountability pathway would establish specific and measurable commitments and institutional responses.

The framework would operate from ward and community levels through local governments and states to the national level, with roles for government institutions, civil society and community based organisations and citizens.

The group said implementation would begin with institutional engagement and consultations, followed by a pilot involving priority collection, validation, leadership commitments and feedback. The final phase would evaluate and refine the framework before integrating it into existing processes.

Lagos Route Watch targets reckless driving through citizen reporting

Under the Civic Advocacy and Social Impact track, Lagos Route Watch presented "See Something, Say Something," a proposal to reduce reckless driving by using existing structures in Lagos.

The project was presented by the team lead, Abdulkabir Muhammed, alongside Bilkisu Garba, Ibrahim Muhammad Nasir Sheu, Aisha Hussein and Hauwa Bala Geidam.

The group warned that "Reckless driving is killing Lagosians, and it is getting worse," citing 2,650 crashes recorded nationally in the first quarter of 2025, resulting in 1,593 deaths. It said fatalities increased by 8.3 per cent compared with the previous year.

The group noted that between 15 million and 20 million Lagosians use commercial transport daily and identified speeding, wrongful overtaking and driving against traffic as major causes of crashes.

It attributed reckless driving to money pressure, fragmented enforcement responsibilities, bad roads and political caution. According to the group, commercial drivers face daily income targets, while responsibilities shared among the FRSC, LASTMA and police can weaken coordination.

At the centre of the proposal is a simple passenger reporting system.

"These are not bad people. Most are responding to real financial pressure. Our plan works by quietly changing what is rewarded, not by blaming anyone," the presentation stated.

The group proposed placing stickers inside participating vehicles with reporting information. Passengers who witness dangerous driving could record a short video and send it, alongside the vehicle's plate number, to an FRSC or LASTMA WhatsApp line.

"A passenger notices a driver being reckless. They record a short video and send it to a WhatsApp line. The union acts. The driver faces a real, fast consequence," the group explained.

It also proposed appointing two trusted senior drivers as Route Safety Marshals in each pilot park. Their observations would be combined with passenger reports to produce monthly driver scorecards.

Drivers with clean records could receive better loading positions and public recognition, while repeated reports could result in warnings, loss of loading priority and referral to the FRSC.

The proposed pilot would cover five parks and cost between N150,000 and N300,000 over six months. The group identified union resistance, retaliation, driver anger and marshal favouritism as risks and proposed anonymous reporting, cross checking of reports and formal FRSC protection.

Its key indicators include five pilot parks, up to 1,000 vehicles with stickers, 10 trained Route Safety Marshals, school safety sessions and company visits.

Citizen's Assembly proposes continuous dialogue beyond elections

The fourth project, under the Public Service and Governance track, was titled "A Sustainable Participatory Governance Model for Strengthening Civic Engagement and Accountability in Local Government Administration in Nigeria."

The project proposed a Citizen's Assembly Framework to provide citizens with a structured platform to participate in governance between elections.

The team comprised Abulazeez Liadi (Team Lead), Sumayyah Ajani, Sodeeq Suleiman (Research Lead), Yusirat Oyeleke (Communications Lead), Maryam Muhammad Kudu and Al-Amin Bobboi Muhammad (Documentation Leads), and Yusuf Isa (Member).

"Citizens have concerns. Government has institutions. The missing link is continuous dialogue," the presentation stated.

The group identified limited dialogue, weak feedback, low participation, weak accountability, misinformation and declining trust as key governance gaps.

It attributed these challenges to limited formal feedback mechanisms, distrust in government responsiveness, election focused political engagement and unequal access to participation.

The proposed solution is a quarterly platform bringing citizens, community representatives, civil society organisations and local government officials together to identify priorities, deliberate on solutions and generate actionable recommendations.

The process would follow five stages: listen, deliberate, recommend, respond and follow up.

Participants would include local government officials, councillors, citizens, persons with disabilities, religious organisations, civil society organisations, youth, traditional leaders, women and community associations.

The group proposed a coordinating committee supported by a secretariat, councillors, civil society organisations, community development associations, traditional leaders and religious leaders.

It identified low participation, political interference, limited government commitment, unrealistic expectations and sustainability as major risks, proposing sensitisation, neutral facilitation, balanced representation, formal government endorsement and integration into existing local government structures.

"We are not creating another meeting. We are creating a feedback loop," the presentation stated.

The group estimated N925,000 for a pilot and proposed implementation through setup and mobilisation, pilot implementation, review and institutionalisation.

It called for the Citizen's Assembly Framework to be piloted in Alimosho Local Government Area of Lagos State, with success measured through citizen participation, inclusive participation, policy dialogue, government responsiveness, civic awareness and public trust.

The presentation ended with a concise message: "Listen. Deliberate. Act."

Taken together, the four projects demonstrated the range of issues addressed by the 2026 LGIP cohort of the MPAC Fellowship programme, from economic empowerment and Islamic finance to public accountability, road safety and democratic participation.

Saudi intercepts Houthi drone near Makkah as Al-Sudais condemns threat to holy sites

• Coalition says security of Two Holy Mosques, pilgrims is 'red line'; Houthis deny attack

Saudi Arabia said it intercepted and destroyed a Houthi drone south of Makkah on Tuesday, September 15, before it entered the prohibited airspace of the holy city, prompting a strong warning from the Saudi-led Coalition that the security of the Two Holy Mosques and pilgrims is a "red line".

The incident occurred at about 6:50 p.m. on Tuesday, according to Coalition spokesman Maj. Gen. Turki Al-Maliki, who said the Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces detected and destroyed the drone south of Makkah.

Saudi Gazette reported the coalition's account on Wednesday, September 16, saying the drone was destroyed before entering the prohibited airspace of Makkah. Reuters and Al Jazeera also reported the Saudi account.

Al-Maliki described the incident as a second Houthi attempt to target Makkah, following a ballistic missile incident in July 2017.

The coalition warned that the security of the Two Holy Mosques and pilgrims would remain a "red line" and vowed to take the necessary deterrent measures against the Houthis.

Al-Sudais condemns attacks

The incident also drew a response from the President of Religious Affairs at the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, Sheikh Dr Abdulrahman Al-Sudais.

Al-Sudais condemned what he described as attacks threatening the sacred sites, stressing the sanctity of the Two Holy Mosques and the need to protect worshippers and pilgrims.

He said such aggression was contrary to the teachings and principles of Islam, which call for the protection of human life and prohibit aggression, bloodshed and corruption.

Al-Sudais also stressed the importance of relying on official sources for information and avoiding rumours amid the heightened security situation.

The Saudi religious affairs chief's intervention came as authorities moved to reassure worshippers and residents following the security alert around Makkah.

Houthis deny targeting Makkah

The Houthis denied Saudi Arabia's allegation that they targeted Makkah or posed a threat to other Islamic holy sites.

A Houthi military source, speaking to the movement's Saba news agency, also rejected Saudi media claims that Yemeni missiles had struck a mosque in Saudi Arabia. The source said the damage was caused by interceptor missiles that failed to destroy the incoming projectiles and subsequently fell over Saudi cities.

The source described the Saudi claims as "fabrication, deception and misinformation", alleging that they were intended to smear the Houthis and generate sympathy against Yemen.

Security alert issued around Makkah

The attempted drone interception came amid a broader escalation in Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia.

Saudi authorities issued security warnings covering areas including Makkah, Jeddah and Taif as the attacks intensified.

On Monday, September 14, the coalition said Houthi ballistic missiles and drones had targeted Khamis Mushait, Abha and Taif, injuring 13 civilians and damaging seven residential homes and two vehicles.

The attacks formed part of a wider escalation between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis after a period of relative calm following the 2022 Yemen truce.



Masjid Al-Haram

Erdogan: Türkiye pledges continued support for Islamic world

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said the Islamic world is facing serious challenges, assuring that Türkiye will continue supporting efforts to overcome crises affecting the region.

Erdogan made the remarks on Sunday, September 13, while speaking at a special programme with young people in the northern Turkish province of Samsun.

Erdogan said developments in the Strait of Hormuz and other parts of the Gulf showed the scale of the challenges confronting the Islamic world.

"We are following what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz. And it is not only what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz; there are serious difficulties in many parts of the Gulf," he said.

The Turkish president said Ankara believed the difficulties facing Muslim countries should be addressed as soon as possible, stressing Türkiye's continued involvement in regional efforts.

"Türkiye says that we should overcome the difficulties facing the Islamic world as soon as possible. To overcome these, Türkiye has put its weight behind the region, is doing so, and will continue to do so," Erdogan said.

He added that Türkiye could not afford to take the situation lightly because of the expectations placed on the country. "We cannot take this matter lightly, because expectations from Türkiye are high," Erdogan said.

Erdogan also said his government had succeeded in keeping Türkiye away from the wars and crises affecting neighbouring countries.

"At a difficult time when our region is grappling with crises, wars and conflicts, we have kept our nation away from these dangers," he said.

He added that Türkiye had made significant progress in several areas despite the instability surrounding the country.

Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan pact

Erdogan also spoke about the new Mecca Joint Defense Agreement involving Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, describing the cooperation as a step that could send a message to the wider Islamic world.

According to remarks released on Monday, Erdogan said [illegible] had already contributed to "positive developments."

"Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Türkiye came together and took a step. With this step, let us send a signal to the Islamic world. There are positive developments, and we will succeed in this," he said.

Erdogan made the remarks while responding to a question about his long-standing call for reform of the international system, particularly his criticism of the structure of the United Nations Security Council.

The Turkish president has repeatedly used the phrase "the world is bigger than five" to argue that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council do not adequately represent the wider international community.

He reiterated Türkiye's support for reform of the international system, saying Ankara would continue advocating for what he called "a fairer world."



Erdogan

Hajj Mabrur, Dawah Corner deepen Saudi-Nigeria ties through The Souke

•Partnership expands access to Saudi Islamic books, products for Nigerians

Hajj Mabrur Ventures Limited (HMVL) has strengthened its drive to create new opportunities for Nigerians through its online marketplace, The Souke, following a partnership with international Islamic publishing outfit, Dawah Corner.

Established in 2024 under Hajj Mabrur's subsidiary, HMV Travels and Logistics, The Souke provides Nigerians with convenient access to Islamic materials and related products without having to travel to Saudi Arabia.

The platform, available at www.thesouke.com, offers Islamic books, modest fashion, home essentials, Ajwa dates, Zamzam, prophetic medicine and other Islamic products.

The new partnership is expected to expand its catalogue, particularly with Islamic books published by scholars and reputable publishers in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world.

'The Souke brings Saudi Islamic books closer to Nigerians'

Speaking on the initiative, Head of Business Development and Marketing of Hajj Mabrur Ventures Limited, Imam Adebayo Monsur, said The Souke was created to make products associated with the Muslim world more accessible to Nigerians while strengthening ties between Nigeria and Saudi Arabia.

He said Nigerians could obtain Islamic materials and other products from the comfort of their homes instead of travelling abroad to purchase them.

"The purpose is to bring Nigeria closer to Saudi Arabia through books and other products. Nigerians do not necessarily need to travel to Saudi Arabia to get these items; they can conveniently order them through The Souke," Adebayo said.

He added that the partnership would give The Souke access to Dawah Corner's established international network for Islamic books and products, creating greater opportunities for Nigerian Muslims to obtain materials that may otherwise be difficult to source locally.

Dawah Corner is an international Islamic publishing and bookstore network with a major presence in Saudi Arabia. It publishes and distributes literature covering Qur'anic studies, Hadith, Islamic spirituality and other areas of Islamic knowledge.

Hajj Mabrur expands beyond Hajj, Umrah

The Chief Executive Officer of Hajj Mabrur Ventures Limited, Alhaji Ahmed Solate, said The Souke formed part of the company's broader vision to create opportunities for Nigerians beyond its traditional Hajj and Umrah operations.

Solate said Hajj Mabrur's 25 years of experience in pilgrimage operations had helped it build relationships and networks that could support other services beneficial to Nigerians.

"We are not just looking at Hajj and Umrah. We want to create opportunities that will benefit Nigerians in different areas. The Souke is one of those initiatives, and this partnership with Dawah Corner is an important addition to what we are building," he said.

He added that the company would continue exploring opportunities to connect Nigerians to businesses, products and services from Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world.

Partnership to explore wider business opportunities

Representing Dawah Corner, Mr Faarid Abdul Wahab welcomed the partnership, saying the relationship would go beyond Islamic books.

Faarid said both organisations were exploring other areas of collaboration, including cargo and logistics, to strengthen their business relationship.

"Our relationship will go beyond books. We are looking at other areas where we can collaborate with Hajj Mabrur, including cargo and other businesses, to ensure that this partnership succeeds," he said.

He expressed optimism that the collaboration would give Nigerian Muslims greater access to authentic Islamic literature and other products while creating stronger commercial links between Nigeria and Saudi Arabia



Imam Adebayo Monsur and Mr Faarid Abdul Wahab



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