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Oriire Abduction: FG Charges Three Suspects To Court

From Ameh Ochojila and Owede Agbajileke (Abuja)

THE Federal Government on Friday charged three men, Abdulrazak Umar (a.k.a. Abu Khalifa/Abu Khalid), Yunusa Musa (a.k.a. Yunusa bin Musa), and Shamsu Adamu Sani (a.k.a. Abu Itisar), before the Federal High Court, Abuja for the recent kidnapping of children and teachers of a school in Oriire Local Council (LGA) of Oyo State.

This was even as a retired General, Ishola Williams, has backed Governor Seyi Makinde's call for an independent international investigation into the abduction and eventual rescue of the pupils and teachers.

Williams described the governor's request as consistent with precedents established during previous national security crises.

Meanwhile, the Emeritus Supreme Head of the Cherubim and Seraphim Unification Church of Nigeria, His Most Eminence, Prophet Solomon Adegboyega Alao, has said that the successful rescue of the abducted pupils and teachers renewed hope that Nigeria's security agencies possess the capacity to decisively tackle the country's security challenges.

The 10-count charge filed before the court borders on terrorism, kidnapping, concealment, incitement and illegal mining.

The defendants, all of Suleja Local Council of Niger State, are alleged to have conspired with one Muhammad Sani, Jibril Mohammed and Ibrahim Khabab between January and May 2026 to kidnap schoolchildren and teachers in Oyo State, contrary to Section 26(1) of the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

They are further alleged to have aided the kidnap of the schoolchildren and teachers, and to have concealed information regarding the identities and activities of the alleged masterminds despite knowledge of the plot, offences said to contravene Sections 26(2) and 16(1) of the Act respectively.

• Retired General Backs Makinde's Call For Int'l Probe

• Victims' Rescue Renewed Hope In Nigeria's Security Capacity, Says Cleric

The charge sheet also alleged that the trio, on or about June 2, 2026, professed membership of Darul Salam, described as an affiliate of Jamaatu Asarul Muslima Fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru), a proscribed terrorist organisation in Nigeria, contrary to Section 25(1) of the Act.

In separate counts, the first defendant, Abdulrazak Umar, is specifically accused of providing training and instructions to terrorists and inciting members to commit acts of terrorism through a WhatsApp group titled, 'The Oneness of Allah is the Foundation of Peace,' offences said to contravene Sections 15 and 2(2)(g) of the Terrorism Act as well as Section 18 of the Cyber-crime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015.

The tenth count accused Umar of engaging in unlawful gold mining at streams within Chaza area of Suleja Local Council between 2024 and 2026, contrary to Section 8(b)

of the Miscellaneous Offences Act.

Speaking on Friday during an interview on Frontline, a current affairs programme on Eagle 102.5 FM, Ilese-Ijebu, Ogun State, the retired two-star general argued that Makinde's position was neither unprecedented nor inappropriate, recalling that during the Chibok schoolgirls' abduction under former President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, international organisations were widely invited to scrutinise the situation.

According to him, criticism directed at Jonathan at the time, including calls for international involvement by members of the then-opposition, established a precedent that makes Makinde's current demand legitimate.

"Makinde is right in making that call. And why is he right? Everybody remembers that during the time of former president Goodluck Jonathan when the Chibok girls

were kidnapped, they were calling on everybody, international organisations and the rest. And the president was the head of that opposition party and he was criticising Jonathan like hell. Now, what comes around, turns around. So, that's what's happening," he said.

Williams maintained that the governor was merely following an established pattern. "So, in that way, Makinde is not doing anything that is new. He's following a precedent," he added.

He, however, pointed out that, constitutionally, a state governor lacks the authority to formally invite the United Nations to investigate a security matter.

"Now, diplomatically, Makinde cannot call on the UN as a sub-national entity of Nigeria. It's only the President, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that can tell the UN, 'I need your help. So, please come and help us.'"

"What I expected Makinde to do,

even though he mentioned it, is to call like Amnesty International, for example, that is well known all over the world, for doing independent and thorough investigation of the sort of situation Oyo state found itself."

Beyond supporting the governor's call, Williams questioned what he described as significant intelligence failures that allowed armed kidnappers to abduct dozens of schoolchildren without resistance.

He argued that the incident exposed weaknesses within Oyo State's internal security structure, particularly at the grassroots level.

According to him, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Amotekun Corps, local intelligence networks and community leadership all have questions to answer over how such a large-scale operation occurred undetected.



Gubernatorial candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Senator Solomon Olamilekan Adeola (left); former Governor of Ogun State and son-in-law of the deceased, Senator Gbeniga Daniel; Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun; and the gubernatorial candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Ladi Adebute during the burial of Princess Iborinke Opa-wole at Ibara Baptist Church, Abeokuta... on Friday

Tinubu Signs Executive Order On Virtual Assets

From Terhamba Daka, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has signed the Presidential Executive Order on Virtual Assets Coordination, 2026, establishing a co-ordinated regulatory framework for Nigeria's virtual assets ecosystem aimed at strengthening oversight, protecting investors, curbing financial crimes and promoting responsible innovation in the digital economy.

The Executive Order, signed pursuant to Section 5 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), takes immediate effect. The new framework seeks to harmonise the activities of financial, revenue and capital market regulators in response to the rapidly evolving virtual assets sector, where digital assets increasingly transcend the traditional boundaries of currencies, securities, commodities and payment systems.

The Presidency, in a statement signed by Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, on Friday, said the fragmented regulatory landscape had created overlaps, enforcement gaps and institutional silos that exposed the country to money laundering, terrorism financing, cybersecurity and data privacy threats, fraud and rev-

Sets Up Council To Tighten Regulation, Boost Digital Economy

enue leakages.

It noted that the lack of coordinated oversight had also enabled fraudulent operators to exploit unsuspecting Nigerians, resulting in significant financial losses.

To address these challenges, the Executive Order establishes a Virtual Asset Council, chaired by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), with the Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) serving as vice-chairpersons. Other members include the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) and the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA).

The Council will provide strategic policy direction, enhance collaboration among participating agencies and work with the Attorney-General of the Federation to develop a harmonised legal and institutional framework that aligns virtual asset regulation with Nigeria's national security, economic and social priorities.

The Order also creates a Virtual Asset Office, which will serve as the Council's operational arm, with its secretariat domiciled at the CBN.

The office will coordinate information sharing, regulatory applications and reporting among participating agencies through an integrated supervisory technology platform while allowing each institution to retain ownership and control of its data.

The Presidency stressed that the Executive Order does not establish a new regulator or diminish the statutory powers of existing institutions. Rather, it provides a mechanism for coordinating their responsibilities. Under the framework, regulatory oversight will be determined by the nature of the asset or activity.

The SEC will continue to regulate virtual assets that qualify as securities, while the CBN will supervise payment, settlement, custody and related services involving non-security virtual assets. Where jurisdictional questions arise, the Council will determine the appropriate regulator.

As part of the reforms, the CBN will launch a regulatory sandbox that will enable eligible operators to test virtual asset products, blockchain applications and related innovations within a controlled environment un-

der regulatory supervision.

The initiative is expected to help authorities assess potential implications for financial stability, monetary policy, market integrity, consumer protection, financial inclusion and revenue administration before such products are introduced to the wider market.

The apex bank is expected to announce further details of the sandbox in due course. The Nigeria Revenue Service will also unveil a dedicated tax policy for the virtual assets sector to clarify the application of existing tax laws, strengthen voluntary compliance and ensure that the rapidly expanding industry contributes fairly to national revenue.

In addition, the Federal Government is finalising a comprehensive Virtual Assets White Paper, which will outline Nigeria's long-term policy direction and implementation priorities for the sector.

President Tinubu further directed the newly established Council to develop a Harmonised Implementation Framework within 30 days to guide participating agencies in the effective and coordinated implementation of the Executive Order.

Shettima Urges LG Chairmen To Deepen Fight Against Malnutrition With Nutrition 774 Initiative

From Terhema Daka, Abuja

VICE PRESIDENT Kashim Shettima on Friday charged local government chairmen across the country to take ownership of the implementation of the Nutrition 774 (N-774) Initiative, describing them as the critical drivers of Nigeria's campaign against malnutrition at the grassroots.

He also directed the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) to take an active role in strengthening Local Government Committees on Food and Nutrition, insisting that the committees must become functional centres for planning, coordination, implementation and accountability in every council.

Shettima gave the charge while receiving the National Executive Committee of ALGON on a courtesy visit at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

He said President Bola Tinubu's commitment to nutrition was not merely a policy aspiration but "a governance directive" that must be translated into concrete action across all tiers of government.

"The commitment of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, to nutrition is a governance directive. Strengthening every tier of government is the pathway through which that directive becomes operational.

"National concern must become institutional action, institutional action must become measurable outcomes,

and measurable outcomes must be reflected in healthier families, stronger communities, and children whose opportunities in life are no longer constrained by preventable malnutrition," the Vice President said.

He stressed that strengthening Local Government Committees on Food and Nutrition would reinforce the country's governance framework for nutrition, urging ALGON to ensure that every council establishes functional structures capable of delivering measurable improvements in nutritional outcomes.

"I believe that strengthening the Local Government Committees on Food and Nutrition presents an important opportunity to reinforce this governance framework. These committees should become centres of planning, coordination, implementation and accountability within every Local Government Area.

"I urge ALGON to drive this process with determination so that every council develops functional structures capable of delivering measurable improvements in nutrition at the community level," he said. Shettima noted that local

government councils, being the closest tier of government to the people, occupy a strategic position in tackling malnutrition and other development challenges.

While commending state governments for their efforts to improve nutrition outcomes, he observed that the absence of a coherent nutrition agenda in many local government areas had weakened implementation where impact was needed most.

"Our state governments have made commendable contributions to improving nutrition outcomes. However, the absence of a coherent

nutrition agenda across many LGAs has created a significant gap within the governance framework established by the National Policy on Food and Nutrition.

"That gap weakens implementation where impact matters most. National ambitions cannot flourish if they lose momentum before reaching the communities they were designed to serve," he said.

Shettima maintained that the true measure of governance would be reflected in the quality of life of Nigeria's children, adding that President Tinubu's reforms were

repositioning local governments to deliver services that respond to the needs of the people.

He further urged local government chairmen to remain committed to addressing grassroots challenges, saying history would judge public office holders not by the length of their tenure but by the quality of service they rendered.

According to him, tackling insecurity, poverty and youth restiveness at the local level would significantly accelerate national development and improve the well-being of Nigerians.



Deputy National President, Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON) Ikenna Adikibe (left); ALGON National President, Bello Lawal and Vice President Kashim Shettima during the visit of members of ALGON to the Presidential Villa in Abuja... on Friday. PHOTO: NAN

FMFL Pensioners Tackle PTAD Over Unpaid Entitlements

By Moyosore Salami

RETIREES of the defunct Federal Mortgage Finance Limited (FMFL) have accused the Pension Transitional Arrangement Directorate (PTAD) of failing to pay the pensions of some verified retirees more than a year after the agency commenced payments.

Speaking at a press briefing in Lagos, Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners (NUP), Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN)/FMFL Unit, Lagos Zone, Raphael Akinniranye, said the affected retirees participated in PTAD's verification exercise conducted between August and October 2024, but had yet to be enrolled for payment despite repeated appeals to the agency.

Akinniranye explained that the retirees served both the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria and the defunct Federal Mortgage Finance Limited following the deconsolidation of the institution in the early 1990s. He added that while many verified retirees had begun receiving their pensions, about 12 others remained unpaid.

Olojo Kosoko Ruling House Alleges Palace Siege, Urges Police To Obey Court Order

By Seye Olumide

THE Olojo Kosoko Ruling House of Lagos has accused some individuals of using police officers to intimidate members of the family and enforce what it described as an unlawful siege on the Oloja of Lagos Palace, despite a subsisting court order directing the parties to maintain the status quo.

In a statement signed by the head of the ruling house, Prince Surajudeen Abiodun Olojo-Kosoko, and its secretary, Prince Theophilus Olojo-Kosoko, the family alleged that the actions were being orchestrated by some influential personalities in defiance of a July 7, 2026, ruling of the Lagos State High Court.

According to the statement, Justice Oresanya ordered all parties in the chieftaincy dispute over the Oloja of Lagos stool to maintain the *status quo ante bellum* pending the determination of the substantive suit.

Aiyedatiwa's Loyalists Sue APC NWC, INEC Over Ondo NASS Primaries

From Adewale Momoh, Akure

LOYALISTS of Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State have initiated a legal battle against the All Progressives Congress (APC) National Working Committee (NWC) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) over the outcome of the National Assembly primaries conducted ahead of the 2027 general election.

The aggrieved aspirants have engaged the law firm of Remi Olatubora (SAN) to challenge the outcome of the primaries and the list of candidates submitted by the APC to INEC.

The development comes 48 hours after a Federal High Court in Abuja directed the APC and INEC to maintain the status quo in the dispute over candidates who emerged from the Benue State primaries.

Justice I. E. Ekwo issued the order while hearing Suit No. FHC/ABJ/CS/1429/2026 filed by aggrieved APC aspirants from the state.

With the development signalling growing discontent within the ruling party after governors' preferred aspirants failed to secure tickets during the recently concluded primaries, multiple party sources confirmed that Aiyedatiwa allegedly directed the affected aspirants to seek judicial redress after they lost the party's tickets despite being regarded as his preferred candidates.

NDLEA Declares Alleged Drug Kingpin, Three Associates Wanted

By Bertram Nwannekanma

THE National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has declared an alleged drug kingpin, Nnamuka Kelvin Uchenna, also known as Odogwu, and three of his associates wanted over their alleged involvement in operating a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory, producing illicit drugs and laundering proceeds from drug trafficking.

The agency has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) aimed at strengthening collaboration against drug trafficking, copyright piracy and other forms of organised crime in Nigeria.

• Signs MoU With NCC To Combat Drug Trafficking, Copyright Piracy

The three other suspects declared wanted by the agency are Emmanuella Chinonso Iroka, Nnamuka Ifeanyi Kingsley and Ekechi Franklin Chijioke, also known as Ekene Okwunaga.

The declaration followed an order granted by Justice Nienkenimi Nicholas Oweibo of the Federal High Court in Owerri, Imo State, after an application filed by the NDLEA in Suit No. FHC/OW/CS/22/2026 on July 3, 2026.

According to the agency, the suspects went into hiding after NDLEA operatives uncovered a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory at Isiozi, Umuaka, Njaba Local Council of Imo State, on February 25, 2026.

During the operation, officers recovered 18.4 kilogrammes of methamphetamine and other incriminating items. The agency said that subsequent investigations linked the four wanted suspects to the illegal drug laboratory.

It added that forensic investigations into the syndicate led to the freezing of bank accounts linked to the suspects with a combined balance of N9,840,873,566.66.

The NDLEA also secured interim forfeiture orders over multi-billion-naira assets allegedly belonging to members of the syndicate. The assets include a filling station, multi-storey residential

buildings and four Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) with registration numbers RLU 148 AJ, KJA 563 FZ, BWR 249 DY and FST 208 HU.

Reacting to the development, NDLEA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Brig-Gen. Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd.), commended the officers involved in the operation, describing it as a major step in dismantling drug trafficking networks and disrupting their financial operations.

Marwa said the operation underscored the agency's determination to track down drug barons and their collaborators, regardless of how sophisticated their operations were or how long they attempted to evade justice.

NBC Reaffirms December 31, 2028 Deadline To Complete Digital Switch-over

By Adeyemi Adepetun

THE National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has firmly reaffirmed that the analogue signal switch-off will not take effect until December 31, 2028—a full 30-month window from July 2026.

Deputy Director and Head of the Digital Switch-Over (DSO) at the NBC, Mrs. Clementine Usman-Wamba, made this clarification during the South-West Broadcast Summit and the induction ceremony for new members of the Society of Nigerian Broadcasters (SNB).

She stressed that the reminder had become imperative following an egregious misreport by an otherwise reputable online medium, which erroneously claimed that the cut-off would occur in

• Eyes \$1b Revenue Via Spectrum Release

August 2026.

The NBC Director-General, Charles Ebuebu, had earlier confirmed the December 2028 timeline in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria, stating: "We put a timeline for analogue switch-off. Before that time, a lot of things will be put in place. This is just phase one."

After a series of postponements and missed deadlines, the NBC successfully navigated Nigeria through the initial digital switch-over phase on June 17, 2026. That date marked the nationwide launch of the commission's revised digital broadcasting framework, known as the "Big Picture" strategy—a decisive shift from years of delays and fragmented implementation

efforts.

The DSO programme itself has been a protracted saga. Conceived in 2006 to align with the International Telecommunications Union's directive for member states to migrate from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting by June 2015, Nigeria missed that deadline and several subsequent ones.

By February 2023, the project had been rolled out in only eight states—Plateau, Kwara, Kaduna, Enugu, Osun, Lagos, Kano, Rivers and Abuja and FCT—despite an estimated N68 billion budget and nearly N60 billion already spent. Challenges have included inadequate funding, infrastructure deficits, insufficient public awareness, political instabili-

ty, stakeholder disagreements and logistical hurdles in distributing set-top boxes.

The commission is now actively driving the transition through the Free TV Platform, which provides citizens with seamless access to a wide array of television channels.

Unveiled on June 17, 2026 as part of the DSO programme, FreeTV is a national digital television platform offering Nigerians access to over 100 channels at no monthly subscription cost.

Viewers can enjoy news, sports, movies, music, educational programmes, children's content, and dedicated indigenous-language channels, with coverage extending beyond major cities to rural and underserved communities via satellite and terrestrial transmission.

Special

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One Rescue, Many Questions: Why

From Maria Diamond, Isaac Taiwo and Suliyat Tella (Lagos), Rotimi Agboluaje (Ibadan), Adewale Momoh (Akure) and Ayodele Afolabi (Ado-Ekiti)

THE headlines have become painfully familiar: Another abduction, another ransom demand, another community thrown into mourning. Across Nigeria, insecurity has steadily eroded public confidence in the state's ability to protect lives and property. At a time when kidnapping has become one of the defining features of life in Nigeria and fear increasingly dictates when, where and how people travel, every successful rescue operation offers more than relief, it restores a measure of public confidence. That is why the latest success recorded by the Oriire Rescue Operation resonates nationwide. It demonstrates what is possible when intelligence, local collaboration and swift action converge.

Yet, beyond the celebration lies a sobering question: why do such victories remain exceptions in a South-West where communities continue to live under the shadow of kidnappers, bandits and armed criminals despite an expanding network of regional security outfits?

Indeed, the fear of bandits, terrorists, kidnappers and criminals is the beginning of wisdom for many who now have to think twice before travelling.

Only recently, between five to seven gunmen suspected to be bandits, heavily armed, invaded the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) Eda Oniyo, Ilejemeje Council, during an open-air revival/all-night prayer programme held on the outskirts of town. They killed a pastor and abducted 15 worshippers. The captives were released after spending about 67 days in captivity.

Recall that kidnapping and armed attacks had occurred in the Emure-Ekiti corridors where five pupils, three teachers, and driver were kidnapped. Same period, two monarchs were murdered along Ipao-Oke Ako Road in Ikole council.

About the same time, over 40 schoolchildren and teachers were abducted in Oriire area of Oyo State for 56 days before the relief came through coordinated efforts of security forces.

Lately, the preponderance of abductions and kidnappings, especially in the South West has become issue of concern given the region's multiplicity of security outfits such as Vigilante Group of Nigeria (VGN), the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), codenamed Operation Amotekun, Ogun State Community, Social Orientation, and Safety Corps (So-Safe Corps), and the Lagos State Neighbourhood Security Corps (LNSC) and others.

Established in 2020 by the six governors of the region, the Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN), codenamed Operation Amotekun, had emerged amid concerns that federal security agencies lacked the manpower, local intelligence and territorial knowledge needed to police forests, highways and remote communities vulnerable to criminal attacks.

Why The Security Outfits In Southwest Are On Flight Mode?

SUNDAY Durowade, a transporter, said from what he could deduce, it appears that the six Southern governors that came together to form the security outfit are not perfectly united with the Lagos State government not showing interest any more.

"Amotekun is ill-equipped as opposed to the insurgents who are armed with sophisticated weapons. Being ill-equipped will make them ineffective. I believe the outfit was formed to render support for the police but they are not equipped like the police.

"Many of the members today are children of hunters and it is embarrassing to see some of them carrying dane guns, which can only be fed with one bullet unlike the insurgents that have rolls of bullets around their neck.

"They lack utility vehicles and where the vehicles have not gone moribund, the ones provided are in the possession of their leaders. Many of them do not earn a salary, hence some just make



it part time job with the hope that one day, the government would do the needful.

"Some are okada riders who take out time to be members doing it as a voluntary job. It is an eye-sore to see some of them begging for money from transporters by opting to repair damaged spots on the road for money.

"The truth is that they are more reliable than the police because any time they are alerted for any problem, they run there immediately unlike the police that would come up with excuses that their vehicles do not have fuel or that they have not received orders from their boss to proceed to the point of the incident," Durowade noted.

"My advice is that the Lagos State government should wake up and play an effective role because the time we are in now, there is the need for collective effort to combat the invaders. We have too many okada riders in Lagos who need close monitoring as we no longer know who is who. Police alone cannot do it."

Also speaking, Lagos State Commander of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Oguntunde Sesan, said the organisation continues to support security operations across Lagos and other South-West states through community patrols and intelligence gathering.

According to him, the group maintains a presence across local government areas and local council development areas in the region. "We cover all the local governments and local council development areas in the South-West. We are ready to work and we are committed to protecting our communities," he said.

Sesan said vigilante members regularly patrol communities, including Badagry and Ikorodu, responding to information received from residents.

He, however, maintained that criminal groups

also benefit from information supplied by people within communities. "Insecurity is not because we are not working. The problem is that these bandits get information from people within the communities. They have informants who tell them what is happening," Sesan said.

According to him, timely information from members of the public remains one of the most important tools available to community security groups. He said the Vigilante Group works closely with the Nigeria Police Force, adding that members receive training from the police and carry out joint operations whenever necessary.

Sesan explained that the partnership enables vigilante operatives to coordinate their activities with police divisions across Lagos State.

To make the organisation more accessible to members of the public, he said he announces his telephone number on Bond FM every Tuesday, encouraging residents to contact him whenever they observe suspicious movements or security threats. "My phone number is announced on the radio every Tuesday. If anything happens anywhere, people call me directly. If I cannot go there myself, my officers will go because we have members across the local government areas," he said.

Despite the group's activities, Sesan said operational challenges continue to affect its work. According to him, members do not receive salaries and often rely on personal resources while responding to security emergencies. "We do all this work without pay," he said.

He acknowledged that the Lagos State government recently organised a two-day security seminar for uniformed personnel, including members of the Vigilante Group, but said more support is needed.

Sesan identified patrol vehicles, motorcycles

and logistics as some of the group's most pressing needs. "We need patrol vehicles, motorcycles, logistics and salaries. We have families to take care of, and we cannot continue working for many days without support," he said.

He added that most times, members use their own resources to move around communities while responding to distress calls. According to him, increased government support would improve the group's ability to respond quickly whenever security incidents occur.

The Commander of the Ondo State Security Network, otherwise known as the Amotekun Corps, Adetunji Adeleye, who also chairs the South-West Amotekun Commanders Forum, said regardless of the challenges of inadequate resources such as inadequate funding, limited manpower, insufficient logistics, and constitutional restrictions that bar operatives from carrying sophisticated firearms, the corps is far from inactive.

Adeleye disclosed that the Ondo command alone has arrested and prosecuted more than 500 suspected criminals in 2026, with several convicts currently serving jail terms.

According to him, in a major operation within the last fortnight, the corps paraded 97 suspects arrested across the state's 18 local council areas for offenses ranging from kidnapping and armed robbery to vehicle theft and violations of the anti-open grazing law.

Among those apprehended were suspected informants and logistics suppliers to criminal gangs operating in forests, as well as individuals who allegedly disguised themselves as mentally ill persons to gather intelligence for kidnappers.

In another coordinated operation, Amotekun operatives rescued 10 kidnap victims, including a pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of



Feature

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Insecurity Still Haunts Nigerians

God and a teacher, from forest hideouts in Akure North Local Government Area without paying the N30 million ransom demanded by the abductors. The rescue followed a gun battle that forced the criminals to flee.

"The swiftness with which we act is one of the major reasons we have the confidence of the people. We gather information and process it and then act on it," the Amotekun boss stated.

He also raised an alarm over what he described as a coordinated movement of people from northern Nigeria into forest communities in the state, warning that the influx posed a serious security threat.

Security experts have said that while the Oyo State Security Network Agency, codenamed Amotekun Corps has become an indispensable component of Oyo State's security architecture because of its grassroots presence and local intelligence network, its long-term success will depend on sustained government funding, continuous training, improved equipment and stronger collaboration with federal security agencies within the limits of its legal mandate.

Amotekun corps have continued to play a significant role in tackling insecurity through community-based policing and intelligence gathering, but security experts say its effectiveness remains constrained by legal limitations, inadequate access to sophisticated firearms and operational challenges.

Security analysts, however, maintain that Amotekun was established to complement, not replace, the Nigeria Police Force and the military, noting that serious criminal investigations and prosecutions remain the constitutional responsibility of federal security agencies.

They argue that the corps' operational capacity is limited by restrictions on the use of sophisticated military-grade weapons, making it difficult for operatives to confront heavily armed kidnappers, bandits and other violent criminal groups.

Commandant of the Oyo State Amotekun Corps, retired Col. Olayinka Olayanju, who spoke with The Guardian some years ago had identified the inability of the agency to obtain approval for sophisticated weapons as one of its major operational challenges.

Beyond the challenge of weapons, security experts identified funding, manpower and logistics as other factors affecting the corps' operations. The security experts noted that budgetary constraints could impact the provision of patrol vehicles, communication gadgets, personnel welfare, operational logistics and regular training programmes.

The experts also stressed the need for continuous capacity building in intelligence gathering, investigation, conflict management, human rights and modern policing techniques to enhance operational effectiveness.

They further noted that effective collaboration with the police, the military and other security agencies remain essential, warning that poor inter-agency coordination could undermine security operations.

The analysts added that Amotekun's activities are also subject to constitutional and jurisdictional limits, as the corps operates under state legislation and must function within the provi-

sions of the Nigerian Constitution and federal laws regulating policing and the use of firearms.

Despite these challenges, the Oyo State government insisted that the corps remains one of the strongest security outfits in the South-West.

The Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Prince Dotun Oyelade, recently said Oyo Amotekun is the best-funded and best-equipped corps in the region.

According to him, the agency currently has 2,509 personnel, the largest workforce among Amotekun corps in the South-West, supported by 181 operational vehicles and 450 motorcycles.

Oyelade also disclosed that more than 300 additional recruits are undergoing training to strengthen the corps' operational capacity across the state.

Security Architecture Is A Necessity

THE Executive Secretary, Nigerian Institute for Industrial Security, Wilson Esangbedo, believes that the country's security architecture point to the fact that Nigeria's is extremely weak. The former President, Association of Licensed Private Security Practitioners of Nigeria, Esangbedo said the first line of defence for every nation is the people but this system does not exist in Nigeria. "For instance, everybody in Israel goes

through military training and that is the reason it is difficult to invade or raid that country. Now come back to Nigeria. Our people are not involved in security architecture. Even when they see things going wrong, they keep on going about their businesses.

"Therefore, the first thing we need to do is to integrate them into the national security architecture. This is where the National Orientation Agency comes in. However, if they are asked to do the needful, they will complain that they are not funded. This has created a conspicuous gap. We need to get our people together to understand their role and what they need to do. Their role is very simple: 'See something, say something'. Once, the first step is handled, the second step is Private Guards.

"I used to be the President of all the private guard companies in the country and we advocated for these security guards to be integrated into the national security architecture. We have over 10,000 guards in the country. If they incorporate these people into an information sharing platform, there will be nothing happening that the government will not know.

"Now, you cannot deploy the police to all the schools. You cannot deploy Amotekun officials to all the schools. But you can deploy the private guards that are armed. They can be deployed to all the schools. If they change the private guard decree or they amend it and come up with fresh laws which empower Private Guards to carry arms. These private guards can now be deployed

to all the schools. They will now be the first line of defense. When there is a problem, they can call for back up. Backup can come from Amotekun; it can come from the Police."

Esangbedo continued: "What are we doing wrong, we are deploying those people that are supposed to serve as back up to all the schools and they don't have the manpower. Now, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu knows that they do not have the manpower and that is the reason he withdrew policemen from the VIPs, but if you go round now, those policemen are actually back. Go to the ministers, those they withdrew from them are back working with the ministers. Why, because they know the country is not stable. All those hundred thousand policemen that were initially withdrawn are actually back. They are now working with the ministers, local government chairmen. They are fully back. This is because elections are coming and the politicians need to be protected from their opponents.

"Now, the reason security architecture should work is that at the first level, it should be the people. At the second level, it should be the armed security guards. If you go to South Africa, Guards are the ones in charge of VIPs protection. Police are not involved. Private Guard companies are

going through a very rigorous screening process by SSS. So before a Private Guard company is licensed, the owners would be screened and there is a guideline from their regulatory body, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), that before any guard is employed, the guard must be vetted and trusted.

"Then we have Forest Guards that have been trained by the Department of State Security. I think they are under the control of that body. If things are properly done and the Forests Guards are deployed to the forest, things will be alright. But, I do not think they have actually done that. Kidnappers operate from the forest and if they are having a free day, it means we have not done what we should do. We have not actually rid the forests of criminals."

Governors... And The Will For State Police

Esangbedo who also questioned the will of the state governors on the establishment of state police said, "the President in his wisdom has pushed for the establishment of State Police. Though some are opposing it, I personally like the President who looks at what we need in the country and whether some people kick against it or not, he moves on. Governors can give directives to the State Commissioner of Police and can be ignored. But with the establishment of State Police, governors are the Chief Security Officers of their States and when they give directives to the State Commissioner of Police under them that they appointed, they are bound to obey.

"If the move to create State Police is actualised, things will change and we can then reclaim our

country back. This will also happen fast. The President knows that for him to win the coming election, just like the former President Jonathan Goodluck, the best thing is to put proper security in place. And the best thing is that if he sees that he cannot do it before February, the election would have to be postponed for the country to have a formidable security network. Things happen sequentially. The Inspector General of Police on ground is an experienced officer who has been involved in IRT operations. He understands the rudiment of policing. He understands what is to be done to get the bandits out of the country. The appointment of the IG is excellent, who is capable, competent, and has the strategy, one who knows what to do to make Nigeria free from crime. Of course, he cannot do it alone but with the lieutenants that will support him, back him up to make sure that Nigeria becomes a nation of peace, because without peace, the economy cannot thrive. Between now and December, a lot of things will happen very fast. When one looks at the kidnapping of those school children who were recently rescued, one can assume that they were kidnapped because of the coming election to cause distraction. This is the reason the President is in a hurry to make sure he empowers the States to protect their people, and keep them safe," Esangbedo noted.

Community Intelligence, Local Collaboration Key To Tackling Insecurity

COMMUNITY-BASED security structures and intelligence gathering have continued to play a central role in efforts to tackle insecurity across parts of Lagos State, with traditional institutions and local vigilante groups saying closer collaboration among residents and security agencies has helped improve response to criminal activities.

The Adeboluwa of Igbogbo Kingdom, Oba Semiudeen Orimadegun Kasali, said insecurity is not limited to attacks on prominent individuals but a general security problem. He attributed the challenge partly to inadequate security arrangements but stressed that communities also have a responsibility to support security agencies.

According to him, residents must be willing to volunteer information that could help prevent crimes instead of remaining silent. "We have all refused and neglected to play our role. That is why they keep saying, 'If you see something, say something.' If everybody believes they have a role to play, then things will change," he said.

Beyond encouraging residents to report suspicious activities, the monarch said Igbogbo has developed a community-based security structure involving multiple security organisations working together.

He explained that the Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Onyabo and Agbekoya operate within the community alongside a Joint Task Force established by the local council during the previous administration.

According to him, the Joint Task Force has since become the frontline security outfit within the community, while the other local security groups continue to complement its operations.

He added that all the security organisations operate under the coordination of the Divisional Police Officer responsible for the area. "The palace relates with all these bodies. The local council also holds monthly security meetings where the palace is represented. We review the security situation, and where there is need for the palace to intervene or reach out to the appropriate authorities, we do so. We coordinate our activities together," he said.

The monarch recalled that the establishment of the Joint Task Force and the Ikorodu Divisional Security Trust Fund contributed to reducing crime within the community.

The Challenge

Amid its operational successes, Amotekun's effectiveness is being undermined by structural deficiencies that security experts say leave the corps dangerously exposed.

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng





Company Secretary, Iron Capital, Christine Doris E-Ulo (left); Executive Director, Capital Markets, Iron Capital, Adedeji Adekoya; Managing Director, Iron Capital, Jubril Enakele; Non-Executive Director, Iron Capital, Kike Fajemirokun, and Head, Legal & Compliance, John Osaro, receiving the prestigious Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026 in London...on Thursday.



Programme Officer, Network of Journalists on Indigenous Issues, Akinwale Kasali (left); Facilitator, Fabian Anawo and Executive Director, Journalist for Democratic Rights, Adewale Adeoye, during a one-day media training on reporting, Indigenous Issues in Lagos.

PHOTO: SUNDAY AKINLOLU



Executive Director, Tantalizers Plc, Finance, Bamidele Oke (left); Group Deputy Managing Director, Charles Ifidon; Chairman, Adam Nuru, Company Secretary, Olamide Babawale-Mo and Director, Dr. Israel Ovirih, at the 28th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the company in Lagos.



Ambassador Sarafa Tunji Isola (left); Chief (Mrs.) Temitope Adeola; Senator Solomon Olamilekan Adeola; Chief Imam of Egbaland, Sheikh Mohammed Sa'ad Alade Bamgbola and others at Consultative Meeting held in Abeokuta... on Friday.

Metronotes

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Iron Capital Named Nigeria's Best Investment Bank For Financing Solutions

ONE of Africa's leading investment banking and asset management firms, Iron Capital, has been named Nigeria's Best Investment Bank for Financing Solutions at the prestigious Euromoney Awards for Excellence 2026.

The announcement, made globally on Friday, "recognises Iron Capital's masterful transaction architecture and its profound impact on the African financial landscape. Securing this highly coveted institutional honour just seven years into its operational history, Iron Capital has successfully displaced legacy institutions by engineering a new global standard for capital mobilisation, advisory, and asset preservation."

"This recognition validates our core philosophy of intentionality, depth, and quiet authority," stated Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Iron Capital, Mr. Jubril Enakele. "We do not measure our legacy simply by the passage of time, but by the transformative impact of the capital we structure. Over the past seven years, we have quietly and methodically built an institution capable of delivering complex, cross-border financial solutions that meet global standards while addressing the unique realities of the African market."

C'River: Diaspora Group Unveils Housing, Healthcare Agenda For 18 Councils

Froom Tina Agosi Todo, Calabar

A GROUP, Cross Riverians in the Diaspora (CRID), has unveiled an ambitious three-year development agenda for Cross River State, with plans to establish a Diaspora Estate in

Calabar, build a modern healthcare facility and commence a statewide borehole programme aimed at improving the welfare of residents in 18 local councils. CRID is global network of indigenes and

professionals working to foster unity and drive socio-economic development back home.

President of CRID, Amb. Christopher Lekan, disclosed this while delivering his inaugural address after assuming

office for a second term, saying the organisation would continue to mobilise the expertise, resources and investments of Cross Riverians living abroad to drive sustainable development in the state.

By Opeyemi Babalola

WOMEN'S Rights and Health Project (WRAHP), in partnership with the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), on Thursday, advocated the need for mental health aware-

WRAHP Pushes For Mental Health, End To Stigmatisation

ness and the promotion of laws to enhance mental health promotion, trauma healing and psychological first aid delivery in Lagos state.

The group made this advoca-

cy call during a two-day training in Lagos State for Mental Health Ambassadors.

The training with the theme, "Building Community Leadership for Mental Health Promotion, Trauma Healing,

and Psychological First Aid," equipped the women ambassadors with the knowledge and practical skills required to serve as Mental Health Ambassadors within their communities.

Expert Seeks Innovation, Sustainability In Food, Beverage Industry

By Sunday Aikulola

CHIEF Executive Officer of Bogo Beverages, Godwin Oche has disclosed the newly commissioned facility is a testament to investment in peo-

ple, innovation, sustainability and future of the nation.

Speaking during the commissioning of 80,000-capacity manufacturing facility in Ikorodu, Lagos, he said "the

investment is also aimed at expanding its footprint in the nation's fast-growing beverage industry." He added that beyond boosting production, the project is expected to gen-

erate more than 10,000 direct and indirect jobs spanning manufacturing, logistics, distribution, retail and other supporting sectors along the beverage value chain.

Wema Bank Reinforces Commitment To Nigeria's Fintech Ecosystem

By Kehinde Olafunji

WEMA Bank has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting Nigeria's growing fintech ecosystem through a strategic engagement with fintech partners and other industry stakehold-

ers aimed at deepening collaboration and advancing digital financial services.

The engagement brought together fintech founders, technology partners, payment providers and key industry

players for discussions focused on strengthening relationships, fostering innovation and shaping the future of digital banking in the country.

According to the bank, "the initiative reflects its broader

commitment to providing the infrastructure and support required for fintech businesses to scale efficiently, improve service delivery and drive innovation across the financial services sector."

Sokoto State Government Canvasses Support For Family Health

THE Special Adviser to the President on Health, Dr. Salma Anas, on Wednesday, paid an advocacy visit to the Commissioner for Health, Sokoto State, Dr. Faruk Umar Abubakar, to canvass support for the establishment of a

Department of Family Health under the Sokoto State Ministry of Health.

Speaking during the visit, Anas explained that the advocacy was aimed at strengthening maternal and child healthcare services through the cre-

ation of a dedicated Family Health Department.

She noted that the initiative became necessary following the identification of structural gaps in maternal health service delivery across the country.

According to her, there is a need for a well-defined institutional structure for maternal and family health services at the federal, state and local government levels to improve coordination and service delivery.

inDrive Provides Healthcare Coverage For 500 Drivers, Families Through Heala

By Sunday Aikulola

A GLOBAL mobility and urban services platform, inDrive, has taken a bold step in advancing driver welfare by providing healthcare coverage for 500 drivers and their families through a partnership with Heala.

This partnership signals a shift toward more accessible, technology-driven healthcare that meets people where they are. Beyond supporting the drivers directly, there is an inclusion of family coverage, which provides an added layer of reassurance, preventing the drivers from being preoccupied with concerns about how their loved ones would access care.

Through Heala's platform, drivers and their families can access medical support without the need to first visit the hospital. By bringing healthcare closer to drivers and fitting it into their daily routines, Heala is helping ensure that staying healthy does not come at the expense of earning a living.

Commenting on the initiative, Country Manager, inDrive Nigeria, Timothy Oladimeji, noted that the initiative aligns with inDrive's broader mission of challenging injustice by addressing one of the everyday challenges faced by drivers.

Roadblock 2026 Set To Transform Lagos Into “The Biggest Club On Earth” In December

By Suliyat Tella

LAGOS is preparing for one of its most ambitious music experiences as Roadblock, Africa’s definitive Afro-Electronic Dance Music (ADM) event, returns on Saturday, December 19, 2026, with its biggest and most immersive production.

Renowned for pushing the boundaries of live entertainment in Nigeria, Roadblock has become one of the country’s most anticipated dance music experiences. The event fuses Afro-inspired electronic music with world-class stage design, immersive storytelling, and high-energy crowd moments that have made it a cultural staple.

In a statement, the organisers said: “This year, Roadblock is set to live up to its bold theme: “Vibe Lagos. Vibe The World.” Over 6,000 ravers are expected to converge for one unforgettable night, dressed in the event’s signature all-white or all-black dress code, as Lagos is transformed into “The Biggest Club

on Earth.”

At the centre of Roadblock 2026 is a spectacular new stage experience. The festival will debut a 36-foot illuminated “Broken Earth” stage and a hydraulic DJ platform capable of lifting performers 30 feet into the air, creating a breathtaking “Ascension” moment designed to redefine live dance music in Africa.

Guests can also expect cinematic lighting, stunning visual effects, immersive performers, and signature confetti moments that have become synonymous with the Roadblock brand.

Roadblock has announced internationally acclaimed Afro-electronic DJ Heaven Sam as one of the headline acts for the 2026 edition.



Nollywood Star Unveils Debut Book, *Odogwu Girl*

By Opeyemi Babalola

AWARD-winning Nollywood actress and philanthropist, Rechael Okonkwo, popularly known as Nkoli Nwa Nsukka, has unveiled her debut book, ‘Odogwu Girl: From Dreams to Reality.’

Published by Inemesit Hanson, the book, launched in Lagos, marks a new chapter in her career beyond the screen.

The memoir chronicles Rechael’s personal journey from humble beginnings to becoming one of Nollywood’s most recognisable actresses, offering readers an honest account of the obstacles, setbacks and triumphs that shaped her path to success.

Speaking at the launch, the actress described the book as a message of hope for women and anyone striving to overcome life’s challenges.

“I feel proud of myself. I’m glad I have come this

far, and I’m happy to have written something that will inspire, encourage and motivate women to keep believing in themselves no matter what they are going through or where they come from. I want everyone who reads this book to leave feeling encouraged and empowered,” she said.

According to her, *Odogwu Girl* captures years of perseverance, resilience and unwavering faith, with the aim of inspiring young people, especially women, to believe that their circumstances do not define their future.

Known for her humanitarian initiatives that support women and young people, Rechael said the publication aligns with her long-standing commitment to empowering others through mentorship, education and personal development.

“This book is beyond acting. It contains my experiences, my insights about life and, most importantly, encouragement. Women are emotional by nature, and when life doesn’t go as planned, many lose hope. I want this book to remind them that the future is still bright and that they can rise above every setback,” she said.

UNILAG Students Undertake Field Trips To Study Logistics Operations

By David Emokpae

AS part of efforts to deepen town and gown relationship, Adoctorate and master’s students of Urban Logistics and Transport Management programme of the University of Lagos, has commenced its annual study field trips.

The exercise is an attempt to complement theoretical learning with practicals in order to reinforce lessons and strengthen participants’ understanding through exposing them to real logistical operations.

The participants have kicked off the visits with a stopover at the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) and the Nigerian Breweries, where they learned the nitty-gritty of logistics within the two bodies daily operations.

The students were also at Chevron, Dangote and NIMASA to understudy the organisations’ daily logistics operations. The facilitator, Dr Olayinka Agunloye, an Associate Profes-

sor of Transportation Planning and Logistics, stated that the field trip was more than just an excursion. He said that it was an opportunity for participants to listen to industry experts who can show them the relevance of what is learnt in class.

Agunloye explained that industry and academic experts facilitated classes with the participants initially, adding that the field trips offer an opportunity to update the lessons by listening to experts who currently work in the industry.

Speaking on the lessons learned during the exercise at the Nigerian Breweries, Aguloye said: “We have heard a lot of things about their 3PL operation for their outbound. We have heard about their inbound logistics.

We have heard about their production logistics, even up to the quality assurance content. In fact, they took us through, making us see what we have been doing in the classroom, as it also relates to the seven rights of logistics. We had enough

examples in the right condition and the right quality that we have studied, and we had the practical examples as we have come to the Nigerian Breweries.”

He revealed that the programme is held annually and that in previous years, the exercise had taken place in places like Shell, Free Trade Zone, and Nigerian Railway.

“But this year, we have chosen the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria, the Nigerian Breweries, Chevron, Dangote Refinery, and NIMASA. It has been overwhelming. We have really learnt a lot,” he said.

One of the students, Mr. Mubarak Gbajabiamila, explained that he and his colleagues have been able to get practical insight is relevant to their course of study.

Another participant, Mrs. Stella Iniya, said the exercise has been impactful, adding that she learnt a lot from the explanation provided by Nigerian Breweries about its logistics operation.

With Pad-Up Creations, New Generation Of Menstrual Health Advocates Underway

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

AS part of efforts to advance menstrual health advocacy and tackle period poverty across West Africa, Pad-Up Creations has trained 70 women and men selected from more than 5,300 applicants in a six-week fellowship to equip them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to become change-makers in their communities.

The Pad-Up Menstrual Change Makers Fellowship brought together participants from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia and The Gambia for intensive training in menstrual and reproductive health, advocacy, community engagement, programme design, grant writing, fundraising, leadership and self-discovery.

Founder of Pad-Up Creations, Olivia Onyemaobi, said the fellowship was created to build a network of advocates capable of transforming menstrual health outcomes at the grassroots.

“The fellowship called for applications from people who wanted to advance menstrual health and hygiene across West Africa. Over six weeks, participants were trained in different aspects of advocacy, fundraising, grant writing, community engagement and reproductive health,” she said.

Beyond classroom sessions, fellows were required to design and present community-based projects they intend to implement after graduation.

According to Onyemaobi, Pad-Up Creations provides stipends to support the projects while also connecting fellows with potential partners and funders, ensuring that the knowledge acquired translates into lasting impact.

The organisation, which produces Nigeria’s first certified reusable sanitary pads, has expanded its menstrual health programmes across several African countries. She said the fellowship reflects its commitment to reducing period poverty through education, innovation and community-led solutions.



By Gbenga Salau

THE Rotary Club of Ikoyi and other Rotary International Districts stormed the Obalende Primary School, Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi, for a Vision and Hearing Screening Programme for public primary school pupils in Lagos State under the Rotary Global Grant project.

The programme was flagged off on Monday, July 6, 2026, and is a humanitarian intervention funded through the Rotary Global Grant with support from the District Designated Fund (DDF) and strategic partners.

The intervention is aimed at detecting vision and hearing impairments at an early stage. The initiative goes beyond screening by providing lasting medical interventions, including the provision of hearing aids, prescription of eyeglasses, medications and corrective surgeries where necessary.

In its maiden phase, the project successfully screened over 350 pupils from ten public primary schools within the Ikoyi-Obalende Local Council Development Area

Rotary Moves To Eliminate Preventable Vision, Hearing Impairment Among School Children

(LCDA), marking the beginning of Rotary District 9112’s ambitious plan to reach 50,000 public school pupils across Lagos.

The event attracted an impressive gathering of government officials, education stakeholders, healthcare professionals, Rotary leaders, volunteers and development partners.

In his address, the District Governor of Rotary International District 9112, Rotarian Layi Abidoye, reaffirmed the district’s commitment to ensuring that every child diagnosed with serious hearing or vision challenges receives the necessary medical intervention.

He disclosed that the project will provide corrective surgeries, hearing aids, prescription eyeglasses, medications and other specialized treatments for children requiring advanced care, with additional support coming through the District Des-

ignated Fund (DDF).

Also, the President of Rotary Club of Ikoyi, Rotarian Christopher Ehiojie described the programme as the club’s first flagship service project of the 2026-2027 Rotary Year, noting that it reflects Rotary International’s theme, “Unite for Good to Create Lasting Impact.”

He explained that the project aligns with three key areas of focus of Rotary International—Basic Education and Literacy, Maternal and Child Health, and Disease Prevention and Treatment—and emphasized that Rotary’s objective extends beyond screening to providing lasting solutions.

The Assistant Governor and Primary Contact for the Global Grant Project, Rotarian Basirat Giwa, disclosed that Rotary International District 9112 aims to screen 50,000 public primary school pupils.

Politics

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Beyond Numbers: Can 10th House Of Reps Legislative Record Stand Up To Public Scrutiny?

Beyond the impressive figures of over 2,200 bills and 1,000 motions so far processed by the 10th House of Representatives, the real test of its achievements lies in measurable improvements in the lives of Nigerians, ADAMU ABUH writes.

AFTER processing an unprecedented number of bills, the House of Representatives is taking the unusual step of placing its performance before the court of public opinion. Through the National Assembly Open Week, the Dr. Tajudeen Abbas-led 10th House is inviting Nigerians to look beyond impressive legislative statistics and assess whether its record-breaking lawmaking, oversight interventions and institutional reforms have translated into stronger governance, improved accountability, enhanced national security and better socio-economic outcomes. More than a celebration of parliamentary achievements, the initiative represents a defining test of whether legislative productivity can earn public trust and reinforce the National Assembly's claim as truly "The People's House."

Before the National Assembly Open Week, public perception of the 10th House of Representatives remained sharply divided. While the Abbas-led House earned recognition for its record legislative output, constitutional amendment efforts and increased oversight of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), it also faced persistent criticism over what many observers described as its perceived "rubber-stamp" disposition towards the Executive.

The swift approval of several executive requests including supplementary budgets, external borrowing plans, tax reform proposals and presidential appointments fuelled criticism from sections of the opposition, civil society organisations and political analysts that the House was not exercising sufficient independence in scrutinising executive actions. Critics argued that the legislature appeared more collaborative than confrontational, raising questions about the robustness of its oversight function and constitutional role as a check on executive power.

However, the House has consistently rejected the "rubber-stamp" label, pointing to several oversight interventions that challenge that narrative. These include investigations into the implementation of the 2024 and 2025 budgets, the probe of about N34 trillion in customs duty waivers, scrutiny of revenue remittances by government agencies, investigations into abandoned federal projects and repeated summons issued to heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies over alleged financial irregularities and poor budget implementation.

Defending the cordial relationship between the National Assembly and the Executive, Deputy Speaker of the House, Dr. Benjamin Kalu, insisted that cooperation in the national interest should not be misconstrued as legislative subservience. Responding to criticisms that the 10th National Assembly has become a "rubber stamp" for the Executive, Kalu said the constitutional role of the legislature is not to engage in unnecessary confrontation but to work with the Executive in advancing policies that promote national development while maintaining its oversight responsibilities.

According to him, Nigerians should not equate legislative independence with hostility towards the Executive, stressing that collaboration remains essential where government policies are aimed at addressing the country's socio-economic and security challenges.

"Our mandate is not expressed in how many gloves we wear to box the other arm of government. It is expressed in understanding national objectives and keying into those objectives. When you see an intentional effort by the Executive to provide solutions, why box them? We would rather work with them to ensure those objectives are achieved," Kalu said.

He maintained that the House has

continued to perform its constitutional responsibilities of law-making, representation and oversight, adding that the legislature has not abdicated its duty to scrutinise executive actions despite the harmonious relationship between both arms of government. He also explained that the principle of separation of powers does not require perpetual conflict between the Executive and the Legislature, noting that both institutions have distinct constitutional responsibilities, but share a common goal of delivering democratic dividends to Nigerians.

Governance experts maintain that legislative performance should be assessed not by the frequency of disagreements with the Executive, but by the quality of laws enacted, the effectiveness of oversight and the measurable impact of parliamentary decisions on governance and citizens' welfare.

Nevertheless, public trust in the National Assembly has historically remained fragile, with surveys by organisations such as NOI Polls and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) showing that many Nigerians continue to question the legislature's independence, transparency and value for money.

Against this backdrop, the National Assembly Open Week represented more than a showcase of achievements. It was a strategic effort by the leadership of the House to confront public scepticism, defend its record, dispel perceptions of executive subservience and demonstrate that legislative productivity is being matched by accountability, institutional independence and meaningful contributions to national development.

The week-long event brought together lawmakers, members of the Executive and Judiciary, former presiding officers of the National Assembly, members of the diplomatic corps, development partners, civil society organisations, traditional rulers, youth groups, students and professional associations. The objective is clear: to narrow the gap between parliament and the people by opening legislative processes to public scrutiny while demonstrating how the House has pursued the implementation of its legislative agenda.

Unlike previous anniversary celebrations that focused largely on ceremonial activities, this year's event was conceived as a public accountability exercise. Citizens were encouraged to interrogate the performance of the legislature, engage lawmakers directly and evaluate whether the House has delivered on the promises contained in its eight-point legislative agenda unveiled at the inauguration of the 10th Assembly in June 2023.

The agenda, anchored on strengthening good governance, national security, economic growth, social sector development, inclusion, institutional reforms, parliamentary modernisation and effective oversight, has shaped the legislative direction of the House over the past three years.

Ahead of the event, Chairman of the House Committee on Rules and Business, Francis Waive, argued that the Abbas-led House has emerged as one of the most

productive legislatures since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999.

According to him, the House has received over 2,200 bills—the highest number in Nigeria's parliamentary history—with hundreds progressing through various legislative stages and many already receiving presidential assent after concurrence by the Senate.

He further disclosed that lawmakers have debated and adopted more than 1,000 motions addressing issues ranging from insecurity, tax reforms, constitutional amendments, education, healthcare, agriculture and mining to infrastructure development, climate change, youth empowerment, the digital economy and social welfare.

For the House leadership, however, the numbers tell only part of the story.

"The Open Week is an opportunity for Nigerians to see firsthand what their representatives have been doing. It is about accountability, transparency and bringing parliament closer to the people," Waive said.

Waive added that legislative output has been complemented by an aggressive oversight programme designed to improve transparency and accountability across government institutions.

"Committees of the House have investigated revenue leakages, procurement processes, abandoned federal projects, budget implementation and the operations of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), leading to policy adjustments and administrative reforms.

"Recent investigations into customs duty waivers estimated at about N34 trillion, revenue remittances by government agencies and implementation of capital projects have reinforced the House's determination to strengthen fiscal discipline and ensure prudent management of public resources," he added.

Declaring the event open, Speaker Abbas described the initiative as an important institutional reform aimed at making the parliament more accessible and responsive to citizens, adding that democracy can only flourish where citizens are adequately informed and actively involved in governance.

According to him, the House has consistently pursued reforms to improve legislative efficiency, strengthen committee oversight, modernise parliamentary operations and expand opportunities for citizens and civil society organisations to participate in lawmaking.

He reaffirmed the House's commitment to working constructively with the Executive and Judiciary while preserving the constitutional principle of separation of powers.

Similarly, Senate President Godswill Akpabio reaffirmed the resolve of the National Assembly to build a transparent, responsive and accountable legislature capable of meeting the expectations of Nigerians, noting that the 10th Assembly has prioritised legislation supporting economic reforms, institutional strengthening and national development.

According to Akpabio, opening parliament to citizens would deepen public confidence in democratic institutions and encourage greater civic participation in governance.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, represented at the ceremony, described the National Assembly as an indispensable partner in Nigeria's democratic journey and commended the leadership of the 10th Assembly for embracing transparency through the National Assembly Open Week.

He noted that the initiative demonstrates the legislature's willingness to subject its activities to public scrutiny while deepening democratic accountability.

The President urged lawmakers to sustain reforms that strengthen democratic institutions, promote national unity and support economic recovery through responsive legislation, calling for stronger collaboration among the three arms of government in addressing insecurity, unemployment, inflation and other socio-economic challenges confronting the nation.

Delivering the keynote address, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, urged lawmakers not to measure legislative success solely by the number of bills introduced or passed, arguing that the real measure of parliamentary performance lies in the quality of legislation and its impact on governance, economic growth, national security and the welfare of citizens.

Dogara particularly challenged lawmakers to continue enacting laws that strengthen institutions, promote peace, encourage investment, guarantee social justice and preserve the independence of parliament while maintaining constructive engagement with the Executive in the national interest.

Beyond legislative achievements, national security dominated discussions throughout the opening session.

Stakeholders warned that sustainable economic growth would remain difficult without peace and security. They urged the National Assembly to fast-track constitutional and legislative reforms capable of strengthening policing, intelligence gathering, internal security coordination and legislative oversight of defence spending.



Kashim Shettima...When Anxiety Dissolved Into Surety

By Is'haq Modibbo Kawu

WHEN the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) submitted Vice President Kashim Shettima's form as the running mate to President Bola Tinubu, last week, a significant banana peel was swept off the route of the party's political agenda for the 2027 elections. Party stalwarts across the country as well as the Nigerian people in general had been left on tenterhooks by the manoeuvres of the past one year. The president's candidacy was frontloaded for all to see; yet there was the frightening gulf of a deafening silence around the position of Shettima.

I was inside the Banquet Hall of the Presidential Villa last year when the endorsement campaign for President Tinubu was kick started. The assembled collection of party members, the nomenclatura and sundry stakeholders was left in a daze as every speaker underlined the qualities of the President whose second term agenda had been visible from his first day in office, without as much as a mention of or a nod in the direction of the Shettima, who was seated besides the President.

If the initial gathering inside the villa precincts felt like an unavoidable omission, the endorsement process around the geopolitical zones of the country left no one in doubt that there was a method to the unfolding process. The party hacks at the behest of certain faceless forces were working according to a plan: go everywhere, make it clear that it is all about the President; never mention the sitting vice president; make no references to a running mate!

It took the arrival of the train of endorsement in the North East geopolitical zone for the carefully inflated balloon to burst. On June 15, 2025, at the gathering of stakeholders in Gombe, irate party members harassed and attempted to attack then National Chairman of the APC, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje and the National Vice Chairman, Mustapha Salihu. The argy-bargy occurred after a public endorsement of President Bola Tinubu for a second term, again without a mention of Vice President Shettima. The gathered delegates were incensed. Ganduje and Salihu were quickly spirited out of the venue of the event.

The insensitivity of the APC leadership surprised political observers. How did that leadership come to the conclusion that it could pull through a seamless endorsement of President Tinubu for a second term in the North East and expect that party stalwarts there will not respond to a seeming snub of their own—the vice president? With hindsight, the anger of the North East party delegates in Gombe in June 2025 was going to cast a long shadow on the endorsement process over the following year, as we will soon discover.

There were salient issues that made the omission of the vice president from the spates of presidential endorsements frightening for stakeholders and observers. Many recall that President Tinubu had a troubling track record of dropping his deputies as happened during his tenure as Lagos State governor. He had three deputies during his eight-year tenure. Was the silence around Vice President Shettima a reprise of a personal tradition for President Tinubu?

Where there was no definitive explanation of a process, the space opens up for speculation. In the cloak-and-dagger world of Nigerian politics, no period offers spaces for speculation than the lead to electioneering.

One of the most persistent rumours was the alleged plan to upload a northern Christian candidate as the presidential running mate for President Tinubu's second



term. This persistent claim is validated by references to the alleged interest of the "Born Again" Christian values of the presidential spouse, Mrs. Oluremi Tinubu, on the one hand. On the other hand, it was also asserted that the president and his inner circle were worried that the Muslim majority in the North had become alienated as a result of the policy choices of the government. A Christian running mate will rally the Christian vote and let loose a cat among the pigeons in Northern Nigeria, thus potentially working to President Tinubu's advantage.

The preferred Christian candidate in that persistent speculation had been Yakubu Dogara, former Speaker of the House of Representatives from Bauchi State. He had exited the APC because of anger against the Muslim-Muslim ticket in 2022, and subsequently spent a considerable amount of time stoking Christian wrath against the APC in the lead up to the 2023 elections, and in the process, deepening the religious divide in the North.

Those who were rooting for his candidacy conveniently ignored the fact that he is actually a paperweight politician with very negligible political capital and no region wide network.

If the President had hearkened to those calling for his nomination as his running mate, he would have destroyed and lost the trust of the majority of APC supporters, as well as the majority of voters in Northern Nigeria. The former Speaker would have been an albatross, a representative of a divisive campaign, which deepened mistrust in the North. He would also be profiting from a process that he never worked for, a process that he angrily exited to campaign against.

The second point that worked against any campaign or agenda to drop Vice President Shettima was that such a move would have strengthened the opposition. They would have argued, with great veracity, that the APC administration of President Tinubu rewarded the loyalty, competence and fidelity of the vice president with a shocking drop from the

ticket for a second term. There was likely to be no way for the President, his team and the APC to undo the damage they would have suffered with such a move.

Besides, the Muslim-Muslim ticket had actually exposed the limits of emotional appeals to identity as a basis for political action in our country. What have Christians lost with the ticket in the three years of the administration? And the next relevant question is to ask just what Muslims have gained by and from the ticket? All sides can equally point to their gains and losses as members of the collective known as Nigerians. In the long run, government exists to provide the values for all citizens to realise their lawful aspirations in a country and within a political system that values every citizen, irrespective of their identities.

Thirdly, the President must have also reckoned that his own vice president is a man with a formidable political constituency all over the North. It just makes sense to retain him on the ballot to continue to harvest the goodwill of that political constituency. After all, why fix what's not broken?

In the long run, President Tinubu and the APC decided that it was better to retain the status quo ante that has worked so well in the period since 2023. As vice president, Shettima has worked with uncommon commitment to the agenda of the administration. He has been the ultimate salesman of the government, and had spoken for, argued about and competently endorsed the platforms of the president in a way that no other person within the government has been able to match or outdo.

Shettima has been very loyal in a system that sometimes appears to disdain his loyalty, his competence and charisma. He has won a lot of plaudits for the administration from his single-minded devotion to the President, even when the policies that he vigorously defends have often been very unpopular with the Nigerian people. Nevertheless, his honesty rings true and his intellect matches an emotional maturity that makes him such a formidable force for good within and for the administration.

It's at this point that I return to the argy-bargy of June 2025 in Gombe. The response of stakeholders that day sent a shock into the system. It became clearer that strategy handlers around the second term agenda had either overlooked critical values of politics or had become too arrogant in their assumptions. Gombe showed the limits of such standpoints. In the long run something had to give.

It must be admitted that President Tinubu eventually voted for the head to rule the heart with the re-nomination of Vice President Shettima as his running mate. By not overturning the applecart, he avoided a very unnecessarily divisive process that the selection of a different candidate would have amounted to. It is not often that I publicly applaud choices made by this administration, but in this case I believe the right choice was made.

Millions of people have waited anxiously for where the pendulum of choice of running mate will swing. Now that Vice President Kashim Shettima has been returned, it is clearer that many party stalwarts will certainly feel a "renewed hope" to work with greater dedication for the party in the 2027 elections. That is the reality of the influence that Shettima has carefully curated within the APC over the years. Within a few days, the situation of anxiety about the running mate for President Tinubu has, thankfully, dissolved into a most welcome surety.

• *Kawu, PhD, wrote through kawumodibo@gmail.com*

By Louis Achi

RELIGION has for centuries been recognised as a powerful force for societal development. Beyond its spiritual significance, it also shapes ethical values, strengthens social cohesion, influences economic behaviour—such as the strict prohibition of usury or interest in many faith traditions—promotes community welfare and serves as a stabilising force in society. In communities like Sokoto State, where religion occupies a central place in daily life, effective governance cannot afford to ignore this objective reality. Rather, it should harness the moral authority and social capital of faith as a catalyst for sustainable development—an approach Governor Ahmed Aliyu has consciously embraced.

Unfortunately, development is often measured only in kilometres of roads constructed, the number of schools renovated, hospitals equipped and industries established. These are visible indicators of progress and remain indispensable in evaluating the success of any government. Yet history shows that enduring development rests on foundations that are less visible but equally important: peace, trust, moral responsibility, social cohesion and a shared commitment to the common good. These values cannot be legislated into existence; they are cultivated over time through families, communities and, in many societies, religion.

Sokoto State, the revered Seat of the Caliphate and birthplace of Sheikh Usmanu Dan Fodio, occupies a unique position in Nigeria's religious and historical landscape. Here, Islam is not merely a religion but a defining cultural and social institution that permeates governance, education and communal life. It is therefore natural that an administration seeking the buy in of the people for its programmes would recognise faith not only as a spiritual guide but also as a strategic partner in advancing development.

It was against this backdrop that Governor Ahmed Aliyu contested the 2023 governorship election on his Nine-Point Smart Agenda, which explicitly pledged to preserve Sokoto's religious heritage and promote religious affairs. The vision resonated strongly with the people, who entrusted him with their mandate at the polls. Since assuming office, Aliyu has remained unwavering in implementing that commitment, demonstrating that it was not an electoral gimmick but a governance priority rooted in the state's historical identity.

While the Aliyu administration has attracted considerable attention for its infrastructure drive, economic reforms, security interventions and the 2026 budget that allocated about 70 per cent of expenditure to capital projects,

In Sokoto State Religion Is Also A Development Priority

another defining dimension of its governance philosophy has been the institutional strengthening of religious affairs. This extends well beyond building places of worship—which is a deliberate investment in the state's moral and social fabric, reinforcing ethical values, strengthening families, deepening social harmony, supporting education, expanding community welfare and promoting peaceful coexistence.

This commitment is reflected across the administration's programmes. A recent example was the commissioning of the newly remodelled Gada Central Jumu'at Mosque by the Emir of Kiyawa in Zamfara State, Major Sanusi Muhammad Asha (rtd.), who described it as a milestone in Governor Aliyu's sustained investment in religious institutions. The Gada Central Mosque is part of a broader programme to strengthen religious infrastructure across the state. Since May 2023, the administration has reconstructed or remodelled 43 Jumu'at Mosques, with 12 more under construction and further renovations planned for Isa, Sabon Birni, Binji, Bunkari and Tangaza Local Government Areas.

The value of this programme extends far beyond reconstructing the mosques themselves. Across Sokoto State, Jumu'at Mosques serve not only as places of worship, but also as centres of learning, conflict resolution, marriage engagement and humanitarian support. The reconstruction has provided worshippers with more conducive, dignified and comfortable environments for worship, while the boreholes installed at many of the mosques have improved access to clean and safe water for worshippers and surrounding communities. In addition, the installation of solar-powered streetlights has enhanced security around the mosques and adjoining neighbourhoods, making the areas safer, particularly during early morning and evening prayers. From their pulpits, Imams also promote honesty, peaceful coexistence, respect for constituted authority, compassion and shared community responsibility—values that, by extension, strengthen the social fabric and contribute to peace, stability and sustainable development.

Governor Aliyu has consistently maintained that investing in religious institutions is, in essence, an investment in responsible citizenship and moral development. Recognising the vital role religious leaders play in shaping public morality, the government has institutionalised operational grants for mosques and introduced

regular stipends for Imams and other Islamic clerics—support that helps insulate them from political pressure and enables them to serve with greater independence and dignity. The Hisbah Board has also been revitalised to strengthen moral guidance and community mediation, while government support for Islamic propagation has expanded across the state.

Education remains one of the most enduring drivers of sustainable development, and the administration has complemented its broader education reforms with renewed investment in religious schooling. Since 2023, Sokoto's annual education allocation has consistently surpassed the UNESCO benchmark. Plans have been concluded to renovate existing Islamiyya schools and build new ones, reflecting the governor's view that all children deserve learning environments that nurture academic excellence, discipline and spirituality in equal measure.

The broader goal is to transform Qur'anic education into a platform for human development and responsible citizenship. Towards this end, the administration has advanced reforms through the revitalisation of the Almajiri system and expanded support for Islamiyya schools, including placing dozens of Islamic teachers on the state payroll—measures designed to give the young learners sound

moral guidance alongside western education.

The administration regards religion not merely as a matter of faith but as an instrument of social protection and inclusive development. This is reflected in the restructuring of the Sokoto State Zakat and Endowment Agency into a more responsive institution, one that now provides expanded support to widows, orphans and other vulnerable citizens through food assistance, financial empowerment, educational support and medical interventions—demonstrating how well-managed faith-based institutions can contribute to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

Religious institutions also play a vital role in promoting peace and stability. At a time when parts of Sokoto State is facing security challenges, respected religious leaders remain among the most influential voices preaching moderation, discouraging extremism and mediating in communal disputes. Through the

Ministry of Religious Affairs, the administration has sustained close engagement with Islamic scholars, traditional institutions and community leaders, strengthening dialogue, encouraging community vigilance and enhancing resilience against emerging threats.



Osun 2026: APC Intensifies Grassroots Mobilisation For Oyebamiji

By Moyosore Salami

THE All Progressives Congress (APC) has intensified its grassroots mobilisation ahead of the August 15 governorship election in Osun State, with party leaders in Ayedire Local Council calling on members to sustain voter engagement and consolidate support for the party's candidate, Asiwaju Munirudeen Bola Oyebamiji (AMBO).

The renewed mobilisation formed the focus of a stakeholders' meeting held at the LCDA Axis, Ile Ajimogbo, Ward 02, where party leaders urged members to remain united and committed to ensuring the APC secures victory at the polls through peaceful campaigns and extensive grassroots participation.

The meeting was headlined by Bisi Ogunkale, former Senior Special Assistant to former Governor Gboyega Oyetola on Budget and Economic Planning and Chairman of the Media and Publicity Committee of the Iwo Federal Constituency Campaign Committee, who charged party faithful to intensify mobilisation across communities and polling units.

Speaking during the meeting, Ogunkale stressed that the forthcoming election would largely be determined by the strength of grassroots mobilisation, urging members to move beyond political meetings and embark on sustained door-to-door campaigns across towns and villages.

He said every eligible voter must be encouraged to collect and use their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), noting that sustained engagement with residents at the grassroots would play a decisive role in determining the outcome of the election.

According to him, Osun State remains predominantly agrarian, making rural communities central to the APC's campaign strategy.

He observed that thousands of residents depend on farming and other agricultural activities for their livelihoods, while many women across rural communities are actively engaged in palm oil production and other agro-processing businesses.

For this reason, he said, mobilising farmers, traders, artisans, women and young people, and helping them understand the

APC's development agenda should remain a priority for every party member.

Ogunkale described Oyebamiji as a visionary leader with the competence, experience and leadership qualities required to move Osun State forward.

He said the APC governorship candidate is committed to pursuing policies that would promote sustainable development through investments in education, healthcare, youth and women empowerment, agriculture, infrastructure and economic growth.

He particularly emphasised the need to improve rural infrastructure, stating that better access roads would ease the movement of farm produce, reduce transportation costs and stimulate economic activities across farming communities.

According to him, improved rural road networks would not only benefit farmers, but also enhance access to markets, schools and healthcare facilities, thereby improving the over-



Ogunkale addressing the gathering.

all standard of living in many communities.

Ogunkale also identified healthcare as one of the critical sectors requiring urgent intervention. He expressed concern over what he described as the poor condition of many primary healthcare centres across the state, citing shortage of medical personnel, inadequate medical equipment and the lack of essential drugs.

He said pregnant women, nursing mothers, children and other vulnerable residents are often the worst affected by the challenges confronting public health facilities.

He noted that an administration led by Oyebamiji would prioritise the revitalisation of the healthcare sector by improving service delivery, strengthening primary healthcare centres and expanding access to quality medical care across urban and rural communities.

Ogunkale said the APC candidate possesses the intellectual capacity, emotional intelligence, humility and administrative experience needed to provide effective leadership for the state.

He noted that Oyebamiji's experience as a seasoned banker and his record as a two-term Commissioner for Finance have equipped him with a sound understanding of governance, prudent resource management and public administration.

He maintained that the combination of public and private sector experience places the APC candidate in a strong position to deliver responsible leadership and sustainable development if elected governor.

Ogunkale urged party members not to relent in their mobilisation efforts, insisting that unity, discipline and sustained engagement with the electorate would remain crucial to the APC's success on election day.

He stated that with the commitment of party faithful across the state, the APC would record victory in the August 15 governorship election.

The meeting ended with party leaders and members reaffirming their commitment to expanding the party's grassroots structures, strengthening voter mobilisation and sustaining peaceful campaigns across wards and polling units in Ayedire Local Council.

Why Adeola Is Best Positioned To Succeed Abiodun As Ogun Governor—Akintunde

Convener of the Yayi Progressives Movement, Mr. Armstrong 'Tope Akintunde, in this interview with AZEEZ OLORUN-LOMERU speaks on the gains of the economic reforms by the administration of President Bola Tinubu as well as its efforts to curb insecurity in the country. He argues that the reforms introduced by the President are laying the foundation for Nigeria's long-term recovery. He also speaks on the 2027 Ogun governorship race, Governor Dapo Abiodun's senatorial ambition and why he believes Senator Solomon Olamilekan Adeola (Yayi) should succeed the governor.

You are regarded as a grassroots mobiliser. Lead us to your sojourn in politics?

I AM Armstrong 'Tope Akintunde from the family of the late Fowodara of Araromi, Iperu-Remo, Ogun State. I attended Wesley Primary School, Iperu, from 1988 to 1992 before proceeding to Christ Apostolic Grammar School, Iperu-Remo, where I completed my secondary education in 1998.

I later gained admission to the then University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (UNAAB), now the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), where I obtained a bachelor's degree. I began my professional career in 2009 with Suru Group Limited, a Lagos-based real estate company serving as Executive Director, Special Projects. I also served as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Aerofield Homes Limited.

Over the years, I have attended several real estate and project management courses, seminars and conferences in Nigeria, Europe and the United States. Most recently, I completed an executive real estate programme at the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford.

I am a Fellow of the Institute of Professional Managers and Administrators of Nigeria, an Associate Member of the Nigerian Institute of Management and a Certified Customer Relationship Manager. I have also received an honorary doctorate in Business Administration and Corporate Governance from the European-American University in collaboration with the Kingdom of Bunyoro-Kitara and the Republic of Panama.

My passion has always been to provide affordable housing for Nigerians, while politics has given me another platform to serve my community through grassroots mobilisation and public engagement.

As Convener of the Yayi Progressives Movement and Chairman

of Aerofield Homes Limited, how have you balanced business with politics?

Success comes from clarity of purpose. Real estate is my profession, while politics is my avenue for public service. I started both journeys early in life and by God's grace both have grown significantly. Rather than conflicting, they complement each other. Business enables me to contribute to economic development, while politics provides an opportunity to contribute socially and politically. With discipline and proper planning, I have been able to manage both.

Why did you form the Yayi Progressives Movement?

The movement evolved through different stages. Ahead of the 2023 general election, it started as the Dapo Abiodun Continuity Agenda (DACA), established to support Governor Dapo Abiodun's re-election.

As political consultations expanded, it transformed into the Omoluabi Movement, reflecting broader progressive ideals centred on inclusiveness and people-oriented leadership. Following strategic collaborations with other support groups, including artisan associations across Ogun State, it became the Yayi Progressives Movement.

The transformation reflects our determination to build a stronger grassroots political platform capable of mobilising people across Ogun State.

Nigeria is facing economic and security challenges. Do you believe President Bola Tinubu's policies will ultimately deliver the desired results?

Every nation passes through difficult periods and Nigeria is no exception. The current economic and security challenges are real, but I believe they are temporary. President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu is working to address insecurity, strengthen the economy and reposition the country for sustainable growth.

The reforms may be difficult in the short term, but I believe they are necessary to rebuild the economy. While

Nigerians are understandably concerned about the hardship, meaningful reforms often require time before their benefits become evident. My appeal is for Nigerians to remain hopeful and united. I believe the sacrifices being made today will ultimately produce posi-

Our focus is on presenting what we believe is the best candidate to the people of Ogun State. Yewa has never produced a governor since the creation of the state, and many believe 2027 presents an opportunity to promote equity and inclusiveness.

tive outcomes.

What distinguishes the Yayi Progressives Movement from other political groups in Ogun State?

The Yayi Progressives Movement has grown into one of the state's largest grassroots political organisations, with members across the 20 local councils. Our strength lies in our inclusiveness. We bring together youths, women, artisans, students, professionals, community leaders and party loyalists. Beyond politics, we focus on mentorship, leadership development and encouraging greater civic participation, especially among young people. We remain committed to supporting the APC and promoting democratic participation across Ogun State.

Governor Dapo Abiodun is expected to contest the Ogun East Senatorial seat after completing his tenure. How do you rate his chances?

I believe Governor Abiodun has strong prospects. His record in infrastructure, education, healthcare and economic development provides a basis for seeking another elective office. If elected to the Senate, I believe he would continue to represent Ogun State's interests at the national level while building on the achievements of his administration.

The opposition has criticised Senator Adeola's emergence as the APC's preferred governorship aspirant. What is your response?

Every political party is entitled to its position. Our focus is on presenting what we believe is the best candidate to the people of Ogun State. Yewa has never produced a governor since the creation of the state, and many believe 2027 presents an opportunity to promote equity and inclusiveness.

Senator Adeola has demonstrated competence through his legislative career and commitment to public service. I believe he has the experience and leadership qualities required to govern the state.

Why do you believe Senator Adeola is the right person to succeed Governor Abiodun in 2027?

Senator Adeola combines legislative experience, administrative capacity and grassroots support. Throughout his years in public office, he has built a reputation for effective representation, infrastructure development and prudent management of public resources. His vision for Ogun State centres on economic growth, industrial development, improved infrastructure, education, healthcare and youth empowerment.

He also has the ability to unite different interests within the APC while maintaining strong relationships across the state. I believe he possesses the experience and vision required to lead Ogun State.

What message do you have for the people of Ogun State towards galvanising support for Yayi?

Our commitment as members of the APC is to continue mobilising support for good governance and democratic development. The Yayi Progressives Movement will continue to deepen grassroots engagement, encourage greater political participation and support policies that promote sustainable development.

I urge the people of Ogun State to remain peaceful, united and committed to the continued progress of the state.

Akintunde

Editorial

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Benue Killings: Necessity For Justice Over Reprisals

THE killing of the Benue State Chairman of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Ardo Mohammed, and his associate, Yakubu Idaho, is yet another tragic reminder of the fragile security situation in parts of the country. Their deaths, coming shortly after attending a peace meeting involving community leaders, Fulani herders and security officials, represent not only an attack on two individuals but also a direct assault on efforts to build trust and peaceful coexistence among communities.

According to available reports, Mohammed and Idaho had participated in a peace meeting convened by the Divisional Police Officer in Gwer West Local Government Area before they were ambushed by gunmen while returning home. If indeed the attack was targeted because of the deceased's role in promoting dialogue, then it amounts to an

attempt by enemies of peace to frustrate reconciliation efforts in Benue State.

The condemnation of the killings by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator George Akume, is therefore timely. His appeal to residents not to succumb to provocation or embark on reprisals deserves the support of every Nigerian. The country has witnessed too many cycles of retaliatory violence in which innocent lives are lost while the real perpetrators often escape justice.

Retaliation has never resolved communal conflicts. Rather, it deepens mistrust, fuels hatred and creates fresh grievances that become the foundation for future violence. Once communities begin to administer justice by themselves, the rule of law gives way to anarchy. That dangerous path must be avoided.

This is why law enforcement agencies must act swiftly and professionally. The Nigeria Police Force, the State Security

Services (SSS) and other security agencies owe Nigerians the responsibility of conducting a thorough, transparent and impartial investigation. Those responsible for the killings must be identified, arrested, prosecuted and punished in accordance with the law. Justice must not only be done; it must be seen to be done.

The authorities must also recognise that delayed justice often creates fertile ground for suspicion and self-help. In many violent incidents across the country, communities complain that investigations either drag on indefinitely or produce no tangible results. Such failures weaken public confidence in the criminal justice system and encourage aggrieved persons to seek revenge. This unfortunate pattern must change.

It is equally important to avoid premature conclusions about the motive for the attack. While some may instinctively attribute the killings to longstanding communal tensions, investigators must keep an open mind. Criminal acts of this nature may be linked to several possible motives, including opposition to ongoing peace efforts, personal grievances, criminality or internal disagreements. Only a credible investigation based on evidence, not speculation can establish the truth.

Political leaders, traditional rulers, religious leaders and community organisations also have a responsibility to calm frayed nerves. Every public statement should promote restraint rather than inflame passions. Careless rhetoric or attempts to ethnicise the incident would only serve the interests of those who profit from instability.

The Fulani community, like every other community affected by violence, has a legitimate expectation that justice will be served. However, that expectation must be pursued within the framework of the law. No individual or group, regardless of the depth of its anger or sense of loss, should resort to reprisals. Collective punishment of innocent people for the actions of unknown criminals is both unlawful and morally indefensible.

Beyond the immediate investigation, governments at all levels should strengthen mechanisms for conflict prevention. Peace meetings should not become occasions that expose participants to greater danger. Individuals who actively promote reconciliation, particularly in conflict-prone areas, deserve adequate security and protection. Otherwise, others may become reluctant to participate in future dialogue initiatives, thereby undermining the very process needed to achieve lasting peace.

The murder of Ardo Mohammed and Yakubu Idaho is a painful loss. But it must not become the spark that ignites another round of bloodshed in Benue State. Instead, it should strengthen the resolve of government, security agencies and citizens to uphold the rule of law and reject violence in all its forms.

The message should be clear: those who committed this heinous crime must face justice, but justice must come through lawful institutions, not through revenge. Only by ensuring accountability, protecting innocent lives and sustaining dialogue can Benue, and indeed Nigeria, move closer to the peace its people so desperately deserve.

LETTER

Kano's Health Insurance: Practical Lesson For Universal Health Coverage

SIR: Nigeria's journey toward Universal Health Coverage has often been slowed by familiar barriers: low insurance penetration, high out-of-pocket spending, weak trust in public systems, and the difficulty of reaching poor and vulnerable households before illness pushes them deeper into poverty. Yet Kano State is showing that these barriers are not insurmountable. They can be broken when policy is matched with disciplined execution, community presence, and leadership that treats health insurance not as paperwork, but as protection for real people.

At the centre of this progress is the Kano State Contributory Healthcare Management Agency (KSCHEMA), led by Dr. Rahila Aliyu Muktar. In three years, the agency has moved from promise to measurable impact. Total enrolment rose from 497,262 in June 2023 to 1,187,119 by May 2026, a 139 percent increase that brought more than one million Kano residents into health insurance coverage. This is not a routine administrative achievement. It is a signal that Kano has built one of Nigeria's most dynamic state health insurance systems.

The evidence is striking. Under the Basic Health Care Provision Fund gateway, Kano expanded primary healthcare-linked coverage from 108,664 beneficiaries to 580,484, representing 434 percent growth. The State-funded Vulnerable Healthcare Programme grew even more dramatically, from 4,903 to 47,325 beneficiaries. These numbers matter because they speak directly to the people most likely to be excluded from formal health financing: pregnant women, children under five, persons with disabilities, sickle cell patients, low-income retirees, orphans, widows, inmates and other vulnerable

groups.

What makes Kano's story compelling is not only the scale of enrolment, but the method behind it. KSCHEMA decentralised registration through 44 local government liaison offices, café registration centres, and a self-service portal. It took enrolment closer to communities rather than waiting for communities to find their way to headquarters. That shift reduced distance, waiting time and confusion. More importantly, it turned health insurance from a distant government scheme into a local service people could understand, question and access.

Leadership also showed in Kano's willingness to innovate where conventional systems were failing. KSCHEMA established Nigeria's first State Social Health Insurance Agency Rapid Response Team, combining emergency care, same-day enrolment, facility linkage and welfare referral for vulnerable people found through distress calls, community reports and field visits. For a malnourished child, an accident survivor or a poor household with no documentation, this model removes the cold barrier between need and access. It says health insurance must meet people where vulnerability is most visible.

Kano has also opened new financing pathways for Universal Health Coverage. Through its Zakat and Waqf-linked ethical health financing model, faith-based institutions now pay premiums for indigent beneficiaries. The programme enrolled orphans, Almajiri children and pregnant women at zero personal cost, showing that domestic philanthropy can be organised into a credible health insurance financing

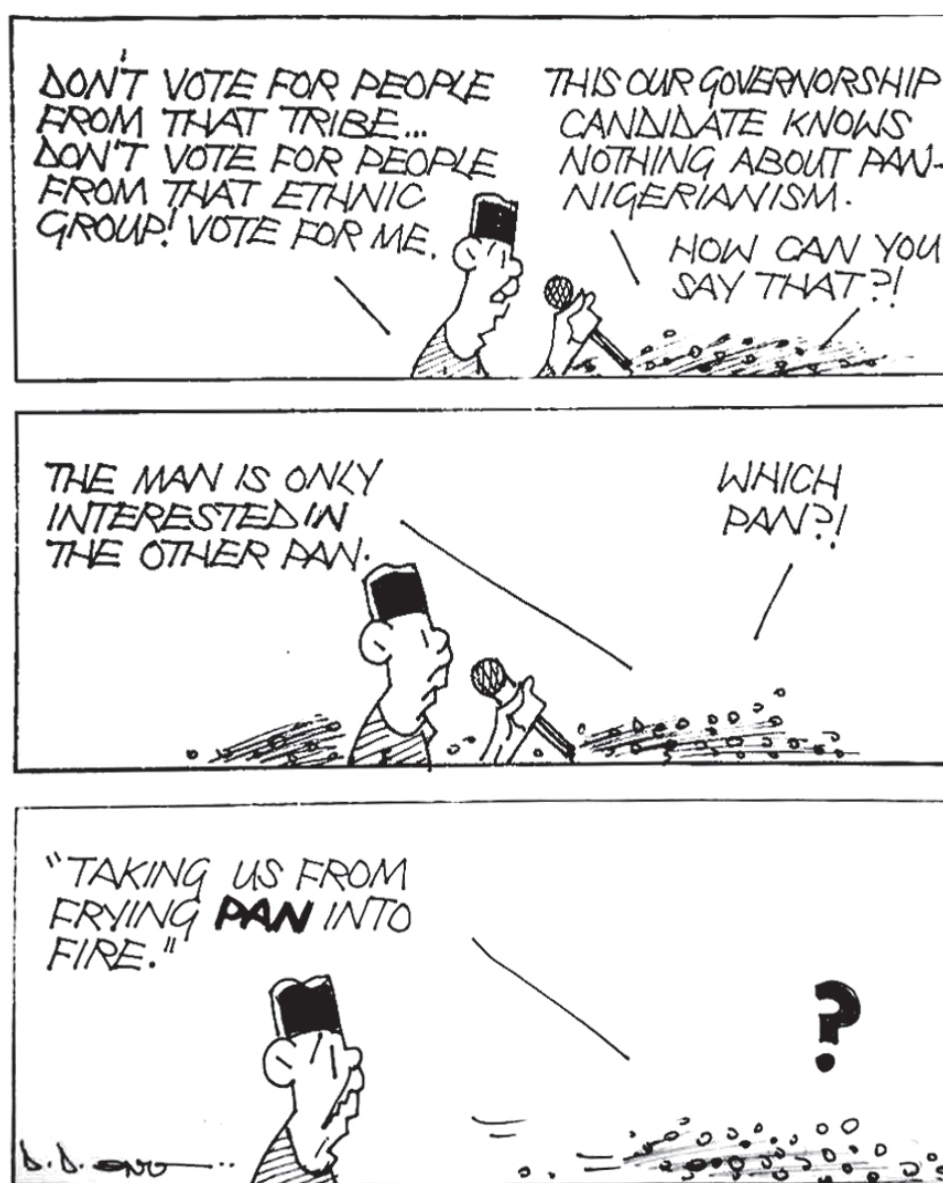
channel. In a country where government and donor resources are stretched, this is a practical lesson: local social solidarity can be converted into financial protection if institutions are trusted and transparent.

The agency's custodial health insurance model is another bold example. By enrolling inmates in correctional facilities and training facility health workers on referral pathways, KSCHEMA affirmed a simple but often ignored principle: loss of liberty should not mean loss of the right to healthcare. This rights-based approach gives Kano a national voice in inclusive health financing and offers a model other states can replicate without waiting for new legislation.

Hard work is also visible in the less glamorous reforms that make insurance credible: claims processing, fraud control, service monitoring and complaint resolution. KSCHEMA disbursed N2.9 billion in capitation to primary healthcare providers in 2025. It removed 8,875 ghost enrollees through a data-driven audit, saving N42.6 million that could be redirected to genuine beneficiaries. It cut claims processing time from about 30 days to six days and introduced online authorisation codes to control spending without delaying legitimate care. These are the systems that turn enrolment figures into functioning healthcare access.

• **Sadiq Abdullateef** is former Editor, LEADERSHIP Newspaper, member Nigerian Guild of Editors and Publisher of News Point Nigeria. He has also been a contributor to international news organizations such as the BBC and Al Jazeera. He can be reached

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Opinion

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Compromise, And The Cost Of It

By Jerome Jimoh

WE are living in what many would describe as ‘interesting times’. May be so, although I do not find it ‘interesting’ at all, more like distraughtly to me. At best, I should describe the current state of the world in terms of the Dickensian paradoxical phrase of ‘the best of times’ and ‘the worst of times’. How did mankind get to this point of confusion, of a prevalence of ‘facts’ and ‘alternative facts’, of ‘deep fake’ and ‘virtual reality’? I hereby posit that the avoidable confusion stems from the prevalence of compromise with the Truth. Let me declare quickly that in this article, ‘Truth’, embodied in God, “the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:7 NKJV) is grounded in the Christian belief system. This, needless to say, is opposed to Serpentine ‘Falsehood’ and all that Satan embodies. Because the test of our faith comes in myriad ways as also a test of our spiritual integrity, of our walk with God. Do we stand steadfast or do we compromise.

What is Compromise?

The *Merriam-Webster’s* dictionary offers a range of denotative and connotative meanings in both positive and negative senses. Compromise can, on the one hand, imply ‘concession’, ‘accommodation’, and ‘deal’. Compromise represents a “middle ground,” often described as a, “give-and-take” approach that avoids continued conflict. In these positive senses, the word carries mutually agreed settlement that produces a situation or a condition that is better than the *status quo ante bellum*.

On the other hand, compromise can also mean to ‘jeopardize’ or ‘weaken’ standard, quality, or value. In the walk of faith and matters of religious beliefs, this is precisely what compromise means. To compromise in these contexts is to change or adjust principle, standard, opinion, idea, stand, etc. in order to accommodate another (often lower) standard or principle. In this context, Compromise dilutes at best, at worst it pollutes.

In this (negative) context for example, a lady accepts or refuses to compromise her moral value in the face of a sexual proposition by her boss that can earn her a promotion and attendant benefits. Although this is an unethical demand by a superior to a hardworking staff of the opposite sex, the staff had a right of decision and stayed true to her personal moral standard by rejecting the demand - at possibly a high price.

In matters of our Faith where good and bad, right and wrong, and ultimately God and Satan are the clear, unequivocal options available to the Christian, we compromise when we dilute, undermine, or in any way concede the word of God in exchange for the values, standards, and beliefs of this world. Psalms 19:7 warns: “The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trust-

worthy, making wise the simple.”

Compromise with Satan (as the Serpent) is the main cause of the Fall of the first Man (Adam and his God-chosen wife Eve). In Genesis 3:6, Eve, “... saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.” She subsequently gave the fruit to her husband who, succumbing to the Eve-assisted temptation, did not object but ate it as well. Thus, Adam compromised on God’s instruction in Genesis 2:17 that, *inter-alia*, “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.” There is always a price for disobedience of laid down laws. Man did not die physically but spiritually as well. He was separated totally and finally from God spiritually, physically and emotionally. Having compromised with Satan the Adversary, Man’s glory was removed instantly. In essence, Man lost the presence of God in his being and became exposed to sin. This was Satan’s desires of course; but it could not have happened except that Adam and Eve, exercising their God-given freewill, acted on their (wrong) choice.

A most important point is that compromise in matters of faith provokes the anger of God. Without the omnipotent cover of God, the believer is unprotected from satanic attack in its many forms.

However, in order to undo Man’s compromise with Satan (the serpent), God immediately commenced His redemption plan for Man. Hence, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ to the Earth to restore Man to the original plan that he dwells in His presence. God achieved this through the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This resurrection, the only one in the history of the world, we celebrate every Easter. Indeed, this unique event is the reason for and the anchor of our Christian faith in a life after death.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the symbol of Man’s victory not only over death but also the age-long bondage that first separated Man from God and denied Man the pleasure of His glorious daily relationship with Him as it was “in the cool of the day.” (Genesis 3:18.) A risen Christ and all that it signifies is the very foundation of all Christians. If Christ had not defied death and outlived it, nothing worse can be imagined for the fate of mankind. Indeed, living for good or for ill, nay, the entire purpose of life would be meaningless. But with a risen Christ seated on the right hand of his Father on the throne, we are assured of not only our resurrection but into eternal life of glory - on the condition though that while here on earth, we fulfill the Christian conditions.

It is unfortunate that today, our practice of Christianity has been compromised in many ways. Take the matter of tithing. Some professed Christians say “I don’t believe in tithing, but I give alms”. There are professed Christians who serve other gods or join cults to acquire power, security or to make money

to become rich. These are compromises relinquishing spiritual power and /or material prosperity. Of course, having sold their souls to another god in exchange for these worldly acquisitions, the power and the prospect of resurrection is consequently nullified!

Several times, in the Bible, the Israelites often provoked God by compromising their faith to serve the gods of the land they were to occupy. A typical example is found in Judges 2:10-15. After the era of Moses and Joshua, “another generation (of Israelites) grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what God had done for Israel”. They were doing evils in the eyes of the Lord “and served the Baals” and various other gods - such as Ashtoreths.

In contrast to the above generation of Israelites, Jesus Christ came to the world on an uncompromised assignment to redeem mankind of the burden of Adamic sin that compromised Adam’s relationship with his Creator. Jesus Christ came to pay for the sin of Man’s compromise and restore Man to his original relationship with God.

Just as God has good plans for everyone, (Jeremiah 29:11), even while we were still in the womb, God had given this singular assignment to His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. While on earth, therefore, Jesus never lost focus, nor compromised on this assignment. When tempted by Satan the temper and adversary, Matthew 4:1-11 narrates that Jesus remained focused on the ultimate plan of His Father (God) until “the devil left him (Jesus), and angels came and attended him.” Jesus would neither negotiate for nor be settled with “the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” No compromise, period!

At Gethsemane, a Jesus in deep agony could have compromised God’s plan of redemption for Man. Instead, he only said in that unimaginable emotional state, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done.” Again, no compromise with his God-given assignment, period!

Compromise, like Satan the Deceiver, manifests -or, to put it in popular parlance, rears its ugly head- by other means. It can feature in the context of the test of our faith: what is termed ‘Evidence of Faith Testing’. It comes as tempting, juicy options put in front of the believer. To do or not to do, ‘to be or not to be, that is the question’ (Hamlet 3.1). American great poet Robert Frost, in “The Road Not taken” wrote of two roads that diverged in the woods; the one he chose to take made all the difference in his life. Similarly, two ways are ever available to Man to go: the popular, well-trodden wide and broad way ‘that leadeth to destruction’, or the ‘narrow ... which leadeth unto life’ (Matthew 7:13-14 KJV). Whereas the one offers immediate gratification here on Earth, the other grants delayed but eternal gratification on the other side of life.

• **Jerome Jimoh is a pastor with Opendoors Christian Centre. He lives in Port Harcourt.**

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SEDC: Reinventing Michael Okpara’s Agricultural And Agro-industrial Revolution

By Emmanuel Nzomiwu

ALTHOUGH Dr. Michael Iheonukara Okpara died almost 42 years ago, the mention of his name in Nigeria today, evokes memories of the agricultural and agro-industrial revolution in Eastern Nigeria in the 1950s and 60s, during his days as the Premier of former Eastern Region. During that glorious era, the Eastern Region ranked among the fastest growing economies in the world, alongside the four Asian Tigers, namely, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea.

In Okpara’s era, the vast and historically significant area known as the Eastern Region, encompassed the nine present-day states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers. In spite of the humongous size of the region, no part of it was left out in the agricultural and agro-industrial revolution.

Under Okpara, farm settlements, plantations, cattle ranches and other livestock ventures were established across the length and breadth of Eastern Nigeria. Relying on revenue from agriculture, his administration transformed Eastern part of the country into an industrial and manufacturing hub. M. I. as he was popularly called, made Aba a manufacturing and commercial hub, built a gas plant and asbestos factory in Emene, near Enugu, and established a cement factory at Nkalagu town, located in the current Ebonyi State. In the area of tourism, he built Hotel Presidential in Port Harcourt and Enugu to boost hospitality and elite tourism in both cities. That was not all.

Okpara embarked on industrial and infrastructure development in Port Harcourt. He established the Trans Amadi as the industrial hub to drive manufacturing and economic growth in the Eastern Region and facilitated the establishment of a Michelin Tyre factory in the city. He expanded and upgraded the seaport in Port Harcourt, to boost shipping, international trade and commercial output of the Eastern Region.

Unfortunately, Okpara’s vision for Eastern Region suffered a serious setback during the Nigeria-Biafra war, fought mainly in the Igbo-dominated area of Eastern Nigeria from 1967 to 1970. The war, which lasted for 30 months retarded economic growth and infrastructure development in the East. Till date, Eastern Nigeria has not fully recovered from the devastation of the war, notwithstanding the declaration of “No Victor, No Vanquished,” by the then-military government of General Yakubu Gowon and federal government’s implementation of the 3Rs policy (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction). The socio-economic and environmental impacts of the war remain visible everywhere in Eastern Nigeria, particularly in the area known as the South-East region today.

In July 2024, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu took a bold step to address the long-standing economic and infrastructure challenges in the South East region since after the war, by assenting to the bill establishing the South East Development Commission (SEDC).

He later inaugurated the pioneer board in February 2025. Six months after the inaugura-

tion of the board, the commission, working in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) produced a roadmap, containing programmes and projects to transform and position the South-East as a premier investment destination by 2035. The commission intends to achieve this mission through investments, public-private partnerships and innovating financing. A few days ago, SEDC took a critical step towards reinventing Dr. M. I. Okpara’s agricultural and agro-industrial revolution in Eastern Nigeria, by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Enugu State Government under its South East Agro-Development Programme. The programme targets investment opportunities, massive job creation, food security and sustainable agro-industrial development.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Executive Director (Projects) SEDC, Toby Okechukwu, who represented the Managing Director, Mark Okoye, described the partnership as a historic step towards transforming the region’s agricultural potential into a catalyst for economic development. According to Okechukwu, the agreement which represents more than formal signing ceremony, reflects a shared commitment by both institutions to pursue practical solutions, capable of delivering lasting prosperity for the people through strategic collaboration and disciplined implementation.

Responding on behalf of Governor Peter Mba, the Secretary to Government, Enugu State, Chidebere Onyia, expressed the administration’s commitment to building a robust agri-

cultural economy, capable of driving industrial growth and expanding the state’s wealth base. Onyia disclosed that over 52 hectares of land had already been mapped out for agricultural development in Enugu State, assuring prospective investors of government support, while protecting the interest of the host communities.

Speaking after the signing of the MoU, the Executive Director (Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development) SEDC, Dr. Cliff Ogbede, offered an insight into the South East Agro-Development Programme. Ogbede described the programme as a regional initiative led by the commission, to boost agricultural productivity, strengthen food security and stimulate agro-industrialisation. He explained that the pilot projects are rolling out across the entire South East region, starting with Enugu State.

The first phase, Ogbede said, commenced with the formal MoU between SEDC and Enugu State Government, with plans to expand to the four remaining South East states, namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi and Imo. The commission is targeting 50, 000 hectares of farmlands across all the designated states in the first phase, with each state expected to donate 10,000 hectares. The projects, Ogbede further stated, are designed to activate agricultural assets, attract private investment and create massive youth employment.

• **Nzomiwu, a public affairs commentator, wrote from Awka, Anambra State.**

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Today, we celebrate two truly remarkable individuals—beloved twins whose lives have been shining testimonies of kindness, humility, strength, and unwavering love.

Some people are remembered for what they possess; others are remembered for how they make people feel.

To our family, you have both been steady sources of encouragement and hope. To everyone privileged to know you, you have shown that true greatness is measured not by status, but by the goodness of one's heart.

As you celebrate this beautiful milestone together, our prayer is that the same God who has guided your steps these past sixty years will

continue to surround you with His grace, preserve you in perfect health, fill your hearts with peace, and bless you with many more years of happiness, fulfillment, and love.

May the years ahead be your most joyful, your most peaceful, and your most rewarding. May you continue to be a blessing to everyone whose path you cross, just as you have always been to us.

With all our love, respect, and heartfelt prayers,

Happy 60th Birthday, dear Nnaemeka and Chichi. Thank you for simply being the wonderful people that you are.

With all our love, respect, and heartfelt prayers.

Signed By:

The Obiakor Family

Mr Felix Obiakor (Akajiugo)
Chief Engr Jude Obiakor (Owelle)
Barrister Chinedu Obiakor
Lady Jane Obinwa (LSM)
Mrs Ngozi Udensi (Anwa Amuluamu)

How Esther Ikhioya Inspires Wellness Through Dance

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

ESTHER Oke Ikhioya’s journey is a compelling testament to the power of passion, resilience and purpose. While many professionals spend years searching for a career that aligns with their talents, the Nigerian-born technology expert has “successfully woven together her expertise in information technology, healthcare administration and dance to create a movement that is transforming lives in Cardiff, Wales.”

Born with a natural love for movement, she never imagined that dance would one day become the defining feature of her professional life. Although she excelled academically and pursued a career in technology, “dance has remained a constant companion from childhood. It was the one activity that brought me unmatched joy, serving as both an emotional outlet and a creative expression.”

Today, that lifelong passion has evolved into Ayaoba Fit & Dance, “a wellness initiative that is encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to embrace healthier lifestyles through music, movement and community,” she said.

Esther’s academic credentials reflect a remarkable commitment to excellence. She studied Computer Science at Covenant University, where she balanced demanding academic work with participation in the institution’s dance team. The dual commitment taught her discipline, resilience and effective time management.

Her academic journey later took her to the University of Georgia in Tbilisi, where she earned a distinction in Information Technology while simultaneously teaching at a primary school and sharing her dance skills during weekends.

“Rather than abandoning dance in pursuit of a conventional career, I found ways to integrate it into every phase of my life,” she revealed.

She believes that her work in information technology, healthcare administration and entrepreneurship complements her role as a dance fitness instructor rather than competing with it. Her technological skills enable her to manage branding, digital marketing, content creation, video editing and event coordination, while her healthcare experience gives her a deeper understanding of physical wellbeing, movement, pain management and healthy living.

“My years in Georgia proved to be a turning point. Immersed in an environment that celebrated creativity, I discovered a society where artistic talent was respected and encouraged,” she said.

Inspired by that atmosphere, Esther founded “Magic Moves,” a dance troupe that “eventually grew into a vibrant collective of African students passionate about promoting Afrobeat dance and cultural expression. The group participated in performances, cultur-

al events, modelling assignments and film productions, becoming an important platform for African representation within the Georgian community.”

Looking back, Esther describes “Magic Moves as more than a dance group. It became a community where young Africans found confidence, friendship and opportunities to showcase their talents while celebrating their heritage. The initiative also strengthened cultural understanding by introducing wider audiences to African music and dance traditions.” In October 2023, she relocated to Cardiff in the United Kingdom for a new career opportunity. As she settled into her new environment, she intentionally observed the lifestyle and routines of people around her. Conversations with colleagues, church members and residents revealed a recurring theme: many people desired healthier lifestyles but lacked the motivation, confidence or supportive environment needed to begin exercising.

She also noticed that many people spent long hours sitting at desks, commuting or standing at work before returning home exhausted. Despite the availability of gyms and fitness centres, many found traditional exercise intimidating or uninspiring.

“These observations planted the seed for Ayaoba Fit & Dance, a community-centred initiative designed to make exercise enjoyable rather than burdensome,” she said. She deliberately chose Zumba and Afrobeat as the foundation of her brand because they combine fitness with fun, rhythm and cultural expression. “Rather than focusing on perfection, the classes encourage participants to enjoy themselves while improving cardiovascular health, building endurance and relieving stress. Her philosophy is simple: people are more likely to remain physically active when exercise feels like a celebration instead of an obligation,” she admitted.

The official launch of Ayaoba Fit & Dance held on April 10, 2026, coinciding with Esther’s birthday. The event, themed “Daring Night,” attracted around 40 participants who joined an energetic Afrobeat-inspired Zumba session. For Esther, “the event represented far more than a birthday celebration. It was the culmination of years of dreaming, planning and praying. Although she initially worried that few people would attend, the enthusiastic response exceeded every expectation. Participants not only enjoyed the class but also expressed interest in future sessions, validating her vision of creating a welcoming community centred on wellness.”

Encouraged by the success of the launch, Ayaoba hosted another major event at Cardiff’s Chapter Arts Centre on May 16, 2026. “The evening blended fitness, culture and entertainment in an atmosphere described as energetic and glamorous. Supported by family, friends and dedicated volunteers, Esther witnessed participants dancing enthusiastically while encouraging one another through-

out the session. For her, the overwhelming support confirmed that Ayaoba was meeting a genuine need within the community.

Central to Ayaoba’s identity is inclusivity. Esther insists that dance fitness is for everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or previous dance experience. She actively challenges the misconception that fitness is reserved for athletic individuals, reminding participants that health is measured by wellbeing rather than appearance. In her classes, everyone is encouraged to move at their own pace, celebrate small victories and focus on personal growth rather than comparison.

Beyond physical health, Esther has witnessed remarkable emotional and mental benefits among participants. She has seen people arrive burdened by stress only to leave smiling, energised and more confident. The combination of uplifting music, group participation and movement helps participants forget their daily worries, improve their mood and develop stronger self-belief. Many proudly share the number of calories burned or express surprise at what they accomplished during a single class, reinforcing the confidence that comes from achieving personal milestones.

The name “Ayaoba” itself carries deep meaning. Derived from an African name meaning “the wife of a king” or “queen,” it symbolises dignity, confidence, strength and self-worth. Esther hopes every participant leaves her classes believing in their own value and recognising their potential to achieve more than they previously imagined. She wants Ayaoba to become a place where people from every culture feel welcomed, respected and inspired.

Her long-term ambitions extend well beyond weekly dance classes. Esther envisions Ayaoba Fit & Dance expanding across the United Kingdom and internationally, partnering with healthcare providers, rehabilitation centres, workplaces, schools and community organisations. She believes dance can play a powerful role in improving mobility, mental

health, emotional wellbeing and social connection while helping combat sedentary lifestyles.

Ultimately, Esther Ikhioya’s story is one of courage, reinvention and unwavering commitment to serving others. By integrating technology, healthcare knowledge and an enduring passion for dance, she has created far more than a fitness brand. Ayaoba Fit & Dance represents a movement dedicated to promoting healthier lifestyles, celebrating cultural diversity and strengthening communities through the universal language of music and movement. As the initiative continues to grow, Esther remains focused on empowering people to embrace wellness with confidence, joy and a sense of belonging.



Esther

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

NO fewer than 500 drummers and other cultural enthusiasts are expected to converge on Osun State later this month for a peace campaign aimed at promoting a violence-free atmosphere ahead of the state’s governorship election.

The initiative, tagged: “Drum for Peace” and themed: “Promoting Peace through Drums, Not Guns/Bombs,” is being organised by Prince Adewale Laoye of Aafin Ilu (Palace of Drums) and is scheduled to hold on July 26 at the Ede City Hall, Ede.

Prince Laoye said the campaign would deploy traditional drumming and other cultural expressions to foster unity, peaceful coexistence and civic responsibility before, during and after the governorship poll.

The event is expected to attract singers, poets, traditional chanters, drummers and other creative artists, whose performances will focus on promoting peace, tolerance and communal harmony through music, spoken word and indigenous cultural displays.

500 Ayangalu Set To Drum For Violence-free Osun Governorship Poll

Security personnel, officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), community leaders and other stakeholders are also expected to deliver addresses on peaceful electoral participation, conflict prevention and social cohesion.

According to the Ede prince, the gathering will bring together traditional rulers, youths, community leaders, women, adults and residents from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds across Osun State in a collective call for non-violence during the electoral process.

Speaking on the significance of the initiative, Prince Laoye described culture as a powerful instrument for nation-building

and social transformation, stressing that traditional institutions and cultural heritage have critical roles to play in promoting peace and stability.

He said the campaign seeks to remind citizens that sustainable development can only thrive in an atmosphere of peace, dialogue and mutual respect.

“The movement is designed to demonstrate that communities flourish when dialogue replaces conflict and that peace remains the foundation for progress. Through the universal language of drums, we hope to inspire unity and discourage every form of electoral violence,” he said.

Laoye called on residents, community-based organisations, civil society groups and peace advocates to support the initiative, saying collective action would strengthen efforts to ensure a credible, peaceful and violence-free governorship election in Osun State.

The Drum for Peace campaign is coming amid renewed appeals by stakeholders for issue-based campaigns and peaceful conduct by political actors as preparations intensify for the governorship election.

Broadcast Content Across Borders

Compiled by Shaibu Hussein

Imo International Film Festival Holds July 23

All is set for the second edition of the Imo International Film Festival (IIFF). The festival, which has quickly positioned itself as a major cultural event in Nigeria's film industry is scheduled to hold from July 23 to 28, 2026 at Havana Cinemas, New Owerri, Imo State. This year's theme, Screen to Market: Turning Stories Into Sustainable Enterprises, highlights the festival's focus on transforming creative storytelling into viable economic opportunities within the film industry. According to the President of the Imo International Film Festival, Hon. Chikezie Donatus Nkemdirim, popularly known as Don-Nkems, the IIFF was established to foster the growth and development of African films within the African context and beyond. He expressed confidence that the upcoming edition would be highly successful, providing attendees the opportunity to learn, relearn, and unlearn valuable insights in filmmaking and industry practices. The jury for the 2026 edition is led by notable filmmaker Amayo Uzo Philips. Other members of the jury include Joe Dudun, Dr. Anyamele Uchenna Samuel, Dr. Charles Okwuowulu, Chinwe Ngharamike, Dr. Gloria Ernest, and Prof. Atul Bolaji. This year's awards and prizes feature an impressive list of categories including Best Feature Film, Best Student Film, Best Short Film, Best Editing, Best Screenplay, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, Best Supporting Actress, Best Production Design, Best Makeup, Best Cinematography, Best Director, Best Score, Best Picture, Best Sound, and Best Documentary. The maiden edition held in 2024 featured a rich lineup of activities including a Master Class, Panel Discussion, Film Screening, and Awards to deserving Nigerians who have distinguished themselves in various fields. **Deadline For Applications For Tokyo Gap-Financing Market Is July 31**

THE 7th Tokyo-Gap-Financing Market (TGFM), a project market held as part of

TIFFCOM 2026 from Wednesday, October 28 to Friday, October 30, 2026, has extended its application deadline for participating projects to Friday, July 31, 2026. TGFM is a dynamic project market created to assist producers of projects in the development stage to secure funding. Through one-on-one meetings, representatives (producers and directors) of selected projects will be invited to Tokyo where they will have the opportunity to engage with a diverse array of international film industry experts such as sales agents, distributors, production companies, financiers, broadcasters, investors, and more. TGFM places a strong emphasis on funding, requiring that participating projects have secured at least 60% of their total budget. This requirement ensures that the event attracts a multitude of robust projects with significant potential for successful completion. As a result, the one-on-one meetings conducted at TGFM can be highly focused and specific, centered around the funding goals of each project. Since its first edition in 2020, TGFM has seen a steady stream of projects go on to official selections at international film festivals such as Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Annecy, Locarno, The 39th Tokyo International Film Festival holds as from October 29 to November 4 while the TIFFCOM holds as from October 28 to October 30. Information on the festival can be sourced at www.tiff-jp.net/en/

Funding Recommendation For Films From Berlinale World Cinema Fund

AT the 43rd jury session of the Berlinale World Cinema Fund (WCF), the jury made nine funding recommendations, allocating the current funding of 365,000 euros to projects from Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ecuador, Lebanon, Malaysia, Philippines, Senegal, and Turkey. Additionally, over the past months, three German cinema releases have been supported, with a total funding amount of 28,000 euros. The selection includes three

returning WCF directors: Ana Cristina Barragán whose last film *Hiedra* was awarded at the 2025 Venice International Film Festival, Amanda Nell Eu, director of the 2023 Cannes-winner *Tiger Stripes*, and Apolline Traoré whose *Sira* premiered at the 2023 Berlinale in the *Panorama* section. The selection also highlights synergies within the *Berlinale Pro* ecosystem, with five directors having participated in *Berlinale Talents*, and two projects showcased at the *Berlinale Co-Production Market* and *Talents Project Market*. This marks the first jury session presided over by Sata Cissokho who took over the leadership of the *World Cinema Fund* at the end of 2025. We have received a record-breaking number of applications and high-quality projects. While the process of recommending only nine projects for funding is not easy, it asserts the importance and relevance of the *World Cinema Fund's* support to cultural diversity through a variety of topics, perspectives and forms. We are particularly proud of accompanying six first features, while also renewing our trust in the works of previous WCF directors' says Sata Cissokho. The WCF jury made its selection from 373 submitted projects from

a total of 75 countries. The funding recommendations encompass funding in the amount of 365,000 euros. The African titles that secured funding for either production or distribution include *Fagadaga*, by Yoro Mbaye (Senegal), *Aisha Can't Fly Away* by Morad Mostafa (Egypt), and *DAO*, by Alain Gomis (Senegal). The *World Cinema Fund* is part of *Berlinale Pro*, which encompasses the *European Film Market*, the *Berlinale Co-Production Market*, *Berlinale Talents*, and the *World Cinema Fund*. *Berlinale Pro* is the festival's comprehensive industry infrastructure, serving as an incubator, promoter, and supporter of the global film industry in all phases of film development, production, as well as sales and distribution.



Takeo

Hope Uzodimma

QEDNG Creative Powerhouse Summit 2.0 To Unlock Growth Opportunities, Sustainable Development In Creative Economy

By Maria Diamond

WORKING with the theme 'Creativity, Culture and Nigeria's Next Chapter', the oncoming QEDNG Creative Powerhouse Summit 2.0 will explore how stronger partnerships among government, investors and the creative community can unlock opportunities for growth, job creation and sustainable development in the creative industry. The summit, billed to hold on Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at Radisson Blu Hotel, Ikeja GRA, Lagos, will bring together leaders from the creative industries, business, government and technology for conversations on the future of Nigeria's creative economy. Veteran actress Joke Silva, creative economy strategist Audu Maikori and advertising executive Steve Babaeko are among eight professional panellists for the second edition of the QEDNG Creative Powerhouse Summit that will

dive into discussions on the role of culture, innovation, investment and public policy in shaping the sector's next phase of growth. Also billed to speak at the summit are: technology and finance content creator Fisayo Fosudo, talent manager and music executive Efe Omorogbe, media and intellectual property lawyer Omotayo Inakoku, theatre practitioner and culture administrator Yibo Koko, and publisher Anwuli Ojogwu. Commenting on the panel, QEDNG publisher and convenor of the summit, Olumide Iyanda, said the speakers were chosen because they represent key pillars of Nigeria's creative ecosystem. "Our choice of panellists reflects a breadth that is uncommon at Digital and Creative Enterprises (iDICE) programme at the Bank of Industry, as keynote speaker.

creative industry summits. We are bringing together voices from across the creative ecosystem rather than focus on a single sector. The creative economy is much bigger than film or music. It includes publishing, advertising, technology, law, cultural tourism and several other sectors that contribute to economic growth. We have assembled a panel of accomplished professionals whose experiences reflect that diversity and whose insights will enrich the conversations we want to have at this year's summit," Iyanda said. The organisers had earlier announced Sir Demola Aladekomo, founder of Chams Holding Company Plc, as chairman of the summit, and Ife Adebayo, national coordinator of the Investment in Digital and Creative Enterprises (iDICE) programme at the Bank of Industry, as keynote speaker.



Joke Silva

Steve Babaeko



Action Against Hunger Nig/LTD Ltd
Nigeria LTD/GTE
CONSULTANCY FOR INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF FRENCH INITIATIVE FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (FIFSAN) PROJECT

Established in France in 1979, Action Against Hunger is a non-governmental, non-political, non-religious, non-profit organization. ACF Nigeria tackles the causes and effects of hunger and diseases that threaten the lives of vulnerable children, women and men.

In 2025, the North-eastern region of Nigeria faces a deepening humanitarian crisis driven by protracted conflicts, mass displacement and since January 2025, an unanticipated over 50% cut in foreign aid (USAID). The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) (Jan 2025) reported that 7.8M people are in need of humanitarian assistance, this plan was heavily impacted by the global guideline for reprioritization from an initial ask of USD 910 million to USD 298 million (33% of the HNRP ask) and significant 25% drop in people in need (PIN) (from 7.8M to 2M). In March 2025, the IOM displacement tracking matrix reported a nominal decrease of 1% in IDP population in Borno (1,704,175) while Yobe recorded 8% increase in the displaced population.

However, in May 2025, Borno and Yobe recorded a significant increase in the number of attacks by non-state armed groups (NSAGs), from the recent attack in Marte to the warning notice to communities in Yunusari-Yusufari LGAs of Yobe state, exposing communities to heightened vulnerabilities. The situation in Nganzai LGA of Borno is worse, out of the ten political wards, Gajiram is the only accessible ward hosting an estimate of 50,000 displaced persons. Reports from several humanitarian agencies underscore the critical role of food assistance in stabilizing affected communities and mitigating security threats. As access constraints tighten, ensuring the continuation of food aid programs remains essential for protecting displaced populations and maintaining relative stability in conflict-affected areas.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED RESPONSE:

Focusing entirely on improving nutrition outcomes among target populations through multi-sectoral interventions, the project will support improved access to quality nutritional services through the management of acute malnutrition to prevent widespread morbidity and mortality of the vulnerable populations in Borno (Konduga and Nganzai LGAs) and Yobe (Machina and Nguru LGAs) states. ACF and partner's proposed response focused on the first 1,000 days of life approach including pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The project supports the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in 12 OTPs (6 HFs in Borno and 6 HFs in Yobe) and including 2 stabilization centres in hotspot locations in Konduga and Nganzai LGAs for management of complicated and uncomplicated form of malnutrition. Screening for acute malnutrition is done both at the facility and community level while conducting interventions on maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) and care practices, psychosocial first aid, psychoeducation, individual and group counselling and referral for children and caregivers of malnourished children. The project also provides conditional cash to mothers of children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) at group level to access high energy dense local nutritious diets (Tom-Brown). These community led activities are linked with vaccination programs, counselling on maternal health care practices including sexual reproductive health and right such as decision on number of children to birth, when to have sexual intercourse and option for family planning. This holistic approach aims to improve the health and nutrition outcome of the pregnant and breastfeeding women.

With a major focus on the 1000 days of life and due to the high number of children <6 months in the project locations, ACF is implementing the MAMI (Management of At-risk Mothers and Infants) approach in Konduga, Nganzai, Machina and Nguru LGAs for the management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants <6 months and their mothers. At every community or health service contact point, each mother infant-pair identified either during post-natal service as the health facility or in the community will undergo a rapid screening assessment. All mother-infant pairs referred for a full assessment will receive a more thorough assessment (including IMCI clinical assessment, infant growth and feeding, maternal mental health and wellbeing) to identify specific issues to inform the type and level of care needed.

To improve knowledge, attitude and practice of Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women and Girls (PBWG), Women of Childbearing Age (WCBA) and Caregivers of children aged 0-23 months (including men/fathers) on optimum MIYCN practices through social and behavioural change communication, ACF and partner is strengthening the mother-to-mother groups and Tom-brown preparation groups which also serves as platforms for peer based psychosocial support, referral information and community resilience building in the catchment areas of the supported HFs. The women targeted under the mothers' groups receives support to livelihood and agricultural activities.

To strengthen nutrition outcomes during the first 1,000 days of life, hygiene, sanitation and the BabyWASH approach is integrated into both target health facilities and catchment communities. At the community level, the initiative promotes optimal

caregiving practices and the use of essential resources to improve household and environmental conditions through hygiene and sanitation sensitization.

ACF and partners are promoting women's economic empowerment and small-scale agro-ecological vegetable production to improve household income and nutrition. These efforts are integrated with Mother-to-Mother (MTM) groups, support for caregivers of MAM children, and households with at-risk children under the MAMI approach. Food assistance will further improve mothers' (PBW) and U2 children's nutrition for healthy growth and prevent malnutrition.

Mainstreamed into all results, ACF and partner integrate gender into capacity-building trainings conducted at health facilities, ensuring that communities, volunteers and healthcare personnel are equipped with an understanding of gender norms, challenges, and concerns specific to project locations. This approach will enable them to provide more inclusive and responsive services, addressing the distinct needs of women, men, girls, and boys effectively.

Objectives of the external evaluation:

The goal of this exercise is to evaluate the overall goal of the project in terms of effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, coherence, outcome, likelihood of sustainability and impact of interventions in the implementing locations. The primary objective of this evaluation is to assess the overall achievements of the project in line with the agreed overall results and objectives.

Geographical scope coverage: Borno state (Konduga and Nganzai LGAs) Yobe state (Machina and Nguru LGAs), North-East, Nigeria.

SCOPE OF WORK:

Specific objectives include:

- The extent to which ACF has been successful in meeting the project goal and objectives.
- Beneficiaries' perception of project achievements.
- To review the secondary data/reports produced by the project and suggest recommendations to progress on core indicators in the target communities.
- To produce SWOT analysis of the sectoral integration aspect of the project.
- Document lessons learned and best practices
- Generate data for a set of indicators from the project's logical approach
- Use collected data as a benchmark for measuring project success or failure;
- Suggest other priority areas for future support/recommendations

The evaluation exercise would be conducted in a participatory manner, ensuring meaningful and ethical participation of beneficiaries and local partners/duty bearers across all sectors.

Profile of the consultant (Qualification and Experience)

- Significant experience (5-8 years) in coordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of emergency response programs, and expertise in at least 3 relevant sectors (Nutrition and Health, Food Security & Livelihood and WASH). Experience in MHPSS will be an added advantage
- Demonstrated experience in evaluating humanitarian response projects is essential (experience in evaluating donor-funded projects is desirable)
- Fluency in English and ability to write clear and concise reports (examples of previous work will be requested)
- Relevant degree/equivalent experience related to the evaluation to be undertaken, M.Sc./Ph.D. will be an added advantage
- Ability to manage the available time and resources and to work to tight deadlines
- Understanding DAC-OECD evaluation criteria and donor specific requirements for this evaluation.

Ability to manage the available time and resources and work with tight deadlines.

All interested consultants should send Expression of Interest electronically from Friday 18th July 2026 by 9am to Monday 28th July 2026.

to: supply@ing-actionagainsthunger.org with subject "CONSULTANCY FOR PROJECT INDEPENDENT FRENCH INITIATIVE FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (FIFSAN) EVALUATION" in order to receive the full ToR.

Proposal without request of the full ToR will not be accepted. The prospective consultancy is expected to submit a brief methodology with concept note while responding to this expression of interest (Eol)

NOTE: The sending of full ToR will commence from 17th July 2026 until the deadline of the submissions to all expressions of interest from prospective consultants and submission of proposals will be on or before 28th July 2026 by 5:00PM, Nigerian time.

Udondian Spreads Fabric To Venice Biennale, Other Cities

By Ola Alowoloke

WHEN the ongoing 61st International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, in Italy, closes on November 22, 2026, Nigerian artist, Victoria-Idongesit Udondian, would have deepened Africa's presence on the global art stage. Curated by the late Koyo Kouoh, the main exhibition, titled, *In Minor Keys*, features national pavilions from 99 countries. Nigeria made its first and only official national presentation, till date at Venice Art Exhibition in 2017, but has no pavilion in the 2026 edition. Udondian is showing as an independent participant, based on the invitation of the curator, Kouoh. Before the Biennale closes, Udondian is also showing her works in other major global gatherings in Europe and America. Her works are currently on display at Medina Triennial's *All that Sustains Us*, June 6 to September 7, New York; and FITE Biennale Textile, Clermont Ferrand, France, from July 1, 2026 to January 10, 2027.

"Victoria-Idongesit Udondian confronts the complex dynamics of the second-hand clothing market in Africa in an installation that consolidates two bodies of work," Prof Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie wrote about the artist's works. "One, *Ofong Ufok*, uses second-hand clothing – the residue of consumption – to illuminate the exploited material-labour nexus in the Global North. Made in collaboration with immigrant communities, this work symbolically re-centres their often-invisible labour." Ogbechie, a Professor of History of Art and Architecture at University of California, US, added that the other work of Udondian known as *Okrika Reclaimed*, "focuses on the environmental and cultural trauma inflicted by waste colonialism in Ghana, repositioning the Global South from a pas-

sive recipient to an active site of resistance."

Ogbechie explained that under the combined title *Obroni Wawu* – "dead white man's clothes" – the works map the brutal ecological and social costs embedded within Western consumerism. Ogbechie wrote: "The piece includes of West African used-goods markets with testimonials by both diasporic and migrant collaborators in the project, thus forging an embodied link between the site of disposal and the human agents of its processing. A performance deploys the bodies of seven Black women who labour in Ghana's markets, revealing the immense burden carried by those disproportionately subjected to the global waste economy. By invoking ritual traditions of communal cleansing, the performance transforms a site of collective suffering into a space for ritualised resilience and conceptual renewal against global forces of systemic dispossession."

For the Medina Triennial's 'All that Sustains Us', Udondian is exhibiting four works from her previous body of work she themed 'How can I be nobody?' The works include *Mme Anam Utom*, made from used coats, epoximate resin, of variable dimensions, dated 2022; *Ubom Keed*, in metal, life-cast hands, used clothes, various country flags, with variable dimensions, and dated 2020 – 2022; and *Ubom Iba*, in metal, salvaged shipping pallets, used shoes, shoelaces, variable dimensions, and dated 2021.

"For more than a decade, my work has questioned the complex dynamics of the second-hand clothing market, particularly in Africa, where the continent has become a dumping ground for various forms of waste from the West," Udondian stated. "The influx of used clothing bales, notably in countries

like Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya, has led to environmental challenges, with up to 40 per cent of the clothing deemed unusable and subsequently contributing to clothing mountains that pose significant pollution threats."

Her work interrogates the second hand clothing industries, which she noted initially operated under the guise of Western humanitarianism towards the global South. What has changed? "However, the consequences have had a profound impact on the cultural identity, economy and mostly the environment in the recipient countries, necessitating the management of unwanted stock at high costs and often without proper infrastructure," Udondian argued. "Conducted in the New York area, the initial phase of the project collaborated with immigrant communities, examining their role in labor production for capitalist systems and highlighting the adverse conditions prevailing in the global South, where fast fashion is primarily manufactured. This phase culminated in intercepting bales intended for shipment to Africa and using them to create a large-scale community textile sculpture."

Specifically, Udondian's *Okrika Reclaimed* (2024-2025) revisited the issue. At this phase of the project, the artist returns the discourse to Africa as the continent most affected by second-hand clothing waste. The phase centres on collaboration with local communities and industry stakeholders in Kantamanto Market, Ghana. The market is one of the largest second-hand clothing globally. Udondian disclosed that the location of the Kantamanto market serves as a massive open-air dump for secondhand clothes, impacting the local environment significantly. "This socially engaged project raises awareness of the environmental and social impact

of clothing dumping through site-specific interventions. Working experimentally within Kantamanto Market, it treats the space as both site and subject—creating, performing, and exhibiting in real time. The project contributes to the global conversation on sustainable fashion by foregrounding voices and practices from the Global South." The indigenous contents of the *Okrika Reclaimed*, according to the artist, involved the 'kayaye' 'kayaye' (she who carries the burden) - women head porters, many of whom have migrated from northern Ghana in search of work in the south. She explained that the scale of the secondhand clothing trade bears heavily, literally and figuratively, on their bodies.

The women's collaboration with Udondian was more practical experience for both the artists and the hosts. "Five of them collaborated with me to weave sculptural headpieces that reflect their role and experience within the market. Beyond this phase, the project gestures toward a broader conversation on how we can imagine and support alternatives to this physically demanding labor."

Victoria-Idongesit Udondian received her B.A. in Fine Arts (Painting) from the University of Uyo, in 2004, and her MFA in Sculpture and New Genres from Columbia University, New York, in 2016. She is currently a Visiting Associate Professor of Art at the University at Buffalo, SUNY, New York.



Obroni Wawu (Dead white man's clothes), 2026 Site-specific installation: textile, audio, performance activations, and variable dimensions, at 61st International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, Italy. PHOTO: ANDREA AVEZZÙ

Nympha Ozougwu's *Lady Dynamique*: A Collective Anthem Of Self-reclamation For Women's Voices

By Anote Ajeluorou

LADY Dynamique: A Poetry Anthology by Women with Power to All, edited and curated by Nympha C. Ozougwu, is a collective women's anthem and manifesto of self-empowerment and self-affirmation. It's as unapologetic as it is searing in locating a place for women in a society matrix that often places them in compartments that diminish their humanity. The sub-title 'A Poetry Anthology by Women with Power to All' sets out the manifesto early: we are women with power! This defining declaration sits at the heart of a gender that finds itself at the bottom of the rung without knowing how, but determined to climb up to where it rightfully belongs: at the negotiating table alongside the men, who, consciously or unconsciously, with the help of other women like themselves, orchestrated their demotion for wrongs they are not aware of.

The poems emanate from engagements among women in Lady Dynamique Network, founded by self-styled 'Nigerian culture architect and social advocate,' Nympha C. Ozougwu. In founding the network, she'd had to ask the deeply introspective question: 'what happens when women are given a space to think, create, and speak without being pre-defined' by society's scrutinising, patriarchal lens? It's essentially a conversation hub among women for women to ventilate about their condition in a world that often tends not only to see but not inclined to notice or acknowledge women. And this mentality engenders a social conditioning where women are at the receiving end of all manners of ugliness society chooses to fling at them.

Now, these women, who have gone through society's purification fire, will have none of anything that tends to put them down any more. Emboldened by the newly forged self-awareness of their individual and collective power, they have come out stronger, like the phoenix, to live dynamically and unapologetically. They will answer to no one but themselves to whom they

owe their being: not parents, not family, not husbands, the usual euphemism for the opacity called society that conspires to stifling women's growth and aspirations.

"There was no grand blueprint," Ozougwu explained the founding philosophy or lack of it behind Lady Dynamique Network, adding, "instead, a community formed; women connecting through shared work, curiosity, and care. Today, as we write, Lady Dynamique Network includes over 500 members... has reached more than 5,000 women and girls through its programmes and collaborations. Its growth has been organic, sustained by trust, word of mouth and consistent engagement.

"At Lady Dynamique, empowerment is not treated as spectacle or promise. It's practised in small, steady ways: learning new skills, sharing personal stories, and seeing lived experiences acknowledged with respect. Creativity sits at the centre of this work. Through cultural exchange, story-

telling, and creative education, the network meets different women across different backgrounds and stages of life, using expression as tool for reflection and connection."

Ozougwu asserts that *Lady Dynamique* anthology is borne out of this reflectiveness carried out among women in this anthology as, "The network's first poetry collection. This anthology is not polished for display; it is a record of 90 female voices; honest, searching, and rooted in lived experiences. It makes room for strength and uncertainty to exist side by side, without forcing resolution."

Ozougwu is clear-eyed about the mission of the anthology in espousing gender ideals that society often glosses over and asserts strongly the place of women in it.

"Lady Dynamique Network holds that gender equality is shaped in everyday practice. When women are trusted with their own stories and supported in shaping them, change becomes durable, carried forward by the women themselves."

"In curating *Lady Dynamique*," Ozougwu further affirms the all-female group's manifesto, "the network extends its mission to the literary space, creating a tangible manifestation of its name and values. This work embodies the principles that guide women's empowerment, visibility, and agency, and we know that we have created a masterpiece that exposes the depth of women's lives for the world to see and feel with seriousness and respect."

Of course, the first poem that unarguably sets the tone for the anthology is written by the editor and curator herself, Ozougwu, titled 'The Awakening.' As the name suggests, women have lived all their lives in seeming slumber, sleep-walking their way around rather than actually living. But a time comes when they need to wake up from sleep and be cleared eyed for others to notice their presence and properly engage with them. The poet-persona has just arrived at that defining junction, where sleep has cleared off her eyes, and she's

wide awake, questioning every and all things to remove the confusion that has plagued her all along. It's indeed a moment of affirmation.

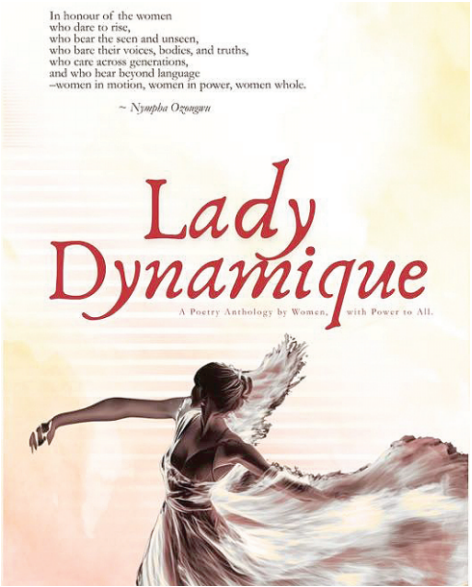
The first stanza aptly captures it thus: "By all means, my lady, affirm/ for affirmation is not arrogance,/ it is remembrance/ it is the daily roll call of your worth/ the gentle yet deliberate charging of your spirit/ away from borrowed shame/ away from rooms where your name was never meant/ to echo with purpose."

After affirming her awareness engendered by being awake, the next is to question every tradition or societal restrictions that limit her aspirations. Next is the inevitability of blooming unto beauty, as obstacles on her path have been cleared by her awareness and questioning mind that had long been silenced. It's a remarkable moment of clarity and transformation, to go from confusion to self-awareness and arrive at the junction of blooming and beauty. And as she proclaims: "Then comes The Bloom/ Suddenly, you are visible./ Your voice carries./ Your time becomes currency./ Everyone wants what you offer./ Your care, your brilliance,/ your influence wrapped in femininity."

Ozougwu concludes this aspirational poem by echoing the need for affirmation: "Affirm, my lady./ Affirm again./ For this is the beginning."

For proper perspective and context, Faith Welima Andrew's 'We Are Woman' is self-defining in intent. To understand the anthology, we need to understand what a woman is, and as Andrew says, a woman is so much more than society has permitted itself to understand: "For she is more than your traditions/ And your stories of horrendous fiction/ For she is a marvelous nation/ glorious without hesitation/ ...A woman is a masterpiece/ An epitome of creation/ An all in one being/ With a side of everything.../ ...Womanhood flows in our veins/ And adorned us with a name/ We Are Woman."

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng



WeekendBeats

Afrobeat Meets Hiplife As Rudeboy Reunites With Sarkodie On New Inspirational Anthem, *Blessed & Alive*

By Daniel Anazia

NIGERIAN singer Rudeboy has reunited with Ghanaian rap icon Sarkodie for a new single titled, *Blessed & Alive*, which is set for release on Friday, July 24. The collaboration was revealed in a lyric teaser posted by the duo on Tuesday, July 14.

The black-and-white visual features both artistes in a reflective pose, with the song title written in bold gold brush strokes. *Blessed & Alive* marks a reunion of two of Africa's most decorated acts. The track leans inspirational, a departure from club-driven releases currently dominating the charts.

The teaser has already sparked strong reactions across social media, with music lovers eager to hear what promises to be another mem-

orable collaboration between two of Africa's most celebrated artistes. The single celebrates resilience, gratitude and success, themes that have become hallmarks of both performers' musical journey.

While details of the track remain under wraps, the title has already fuelled speculation that the song will deliver an uplifting message wrapped in infectious melodies and powerful lyricism. Early lyrics scrolling across the screen suggest a message of gratitude, perseverance, and survival. It includes "From the dark to the light now I'm standing tall" and "the journey is never easy when you want to be the best."

For Rudeboy, one half of the defunct P-Square, has built a solo catalogue around Afro-fusion anthems

and street-hop melodies, the release marks another chapter in a solo career that has continued to flourish through a string of successful singles and captivating live performances.

Renowned for his soulful vocals and emotionally rich songwriting, he remains one of Nigeria's most enduring hitmakers. The single follows a quiet first half of 2026, with no major solo drop since late 2025.

Widely regarded as one of Africa's finest rappers and Ghana's most awarded rapper, known for blending Twi rap with conscious themes, Sarkodie brings his trademark lyrical dexterity and commanding delivery to the collaboration.

Over the years, the Ghanaian superstar has built a reputation for

seamlessly blending hip-hop with Afrobeats, earning acclaim both at home and on the international

stage. For him, the new offering comes after a series of features and his ongoing African tour.



Rudeboy and Sarkodie

How Gordons, Abraham, Abebe Ensured Non-stop Fun At Glo Trade Partners Night

It was a fun-packed night last week Thursday as national telecommunications company, Globacom, rolled out the drums to celebrate its trade partners.

The operator had a lineup of entertainment heavyweights who treated guests to electrifying performances at the event, tagged "2026 Glo Partners' Reward Gala", which was held at the Eko Hotel & Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Legendary Nigerian singer and live band maestro, Segun Johnson, spiced up the evening with a huge dose of musical entertainment that kept the audience rocking and vibing.

There was also nonstop laughter from master of ceremony and hilarious comedian, Godwin Komone, popularly known as Gordons, who was ably supported by TV host and brand influencer, Mo Abebe.

Brand influencer, KieKie, also added glamour to the fun-filled evening. Nollywood actor and movie producer, Toyin Aimaku, was also at the event to add colour and ensure a memorable experience for the exclusive show.

The night was not just about talk, food and drinks. It was also a blend of glamour, laughter, and top-tier entertainment. The highlight was the "Rep Your Region" Best Dressed Com-

petition, where some of the partners took to a quick runway experience in stunning attires that promoted rich Nigerian culture. At the end of the very interesting parade, Alamin Muhammed Suleiman of Benjee Communication and Anthonia Agbasi of Chicadef Global Limited emerging winners of the 500,000 prize each in the male and female categories.

Globacom organised the event to reward its partners across the country with mouth-watering prizes based on their performance within the first six month of the year and also spur them to a better performance in the years ahead.



Moet Abebe, KieKie and a guest

22Summers, Nile, Action Xtreme Enter Actionable Production Agreement

By Eniola Daniel

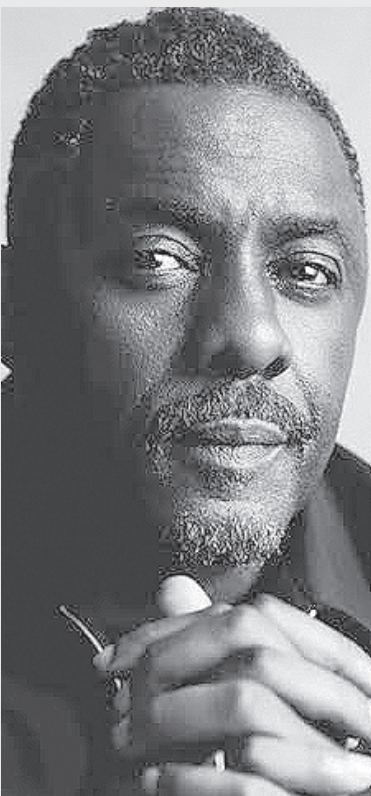
IDRIS Elba's 22summers, Moses Babatope's Nile Media Entertainment Group and Chee Keong Cheung's Action Xtreme have announced a new strategic production collaboration and partnership focused on producing a slate of action films originating from across West Africa.

The initiative aims to develop and produce a slate of high-energy, commercially driven action films rooted in African stories and talent, while creating a long-term production ecosystem designed to nurture local creatives and build globally competitive genre filmmaking from the continent. All parties have a shared commitment to supporting new talent and expanding opportunities for African storytelling on the international stage, working in parallel with training and mentorship initiatives.

The goal of the partnership is to create a sustainable pipeline of African genre content capable of reaching global theatrical and streaming audiences.

The partnership reflects a shared belief that Africa represents one of the most exciting emerging territories for globally scalable genre filmmaking. Industry observers have increasingly pointed to the action genre as one of the most globally ex-

portable forms of storytelling, capable of transcending language barriers while showcasing local culture and talent. The partners believe African action stories can resonate strongly with international audi-



Idris Elba

ences while remaining rooted in the continent's distinctive settings and perspectives.

The first film will be announced shortly and is scheduled for the fourth 2026 and the second in Q1 2027. Idris Elba and Gina Carter will exec produce, with Idris Elba set to direct a film as part of the collaboration. Chee Keong Cheung will direct the first film and produce for Action Xtreme and Moses Babatope will produce for Nile Motion Picture. African distribution will be handled by Nile Entertainment.

Group CEO, The Nile Media Entertainment Group, Moses Babatope, said: "This partnership represents a significant step in our vision of building globally competitive African cinema. Action is one of the world's most commercially powerful genres, yet Africa remains largely underrepresented in that space despite the incredible stories, talent, and creative energy that exist across the continent."

"What excites us most is that this is not simply about making films. It is about creating a sustainable ecosystem that combines production, talent honed development, and distribution to give African filmmakers the opportunity to create world class action content that can travel across borders while remaining authentically African."

From Lagos To Times Square: Charly Boy Takes Memoir '999' Campaign Global Ahead Of July 31 Launch

By Daniel Anazia

As the July 31 release date for his highly anticipated memoir, 999: The Memoir of Charly Boy, approaches, legendary entertainer and activist Charles Oputa widely known as Charly Boy or Area Fada has launched an ambitious promotional campaign that has taken the project to one of the world's most recognisable advertising locations – Times Square, New York.

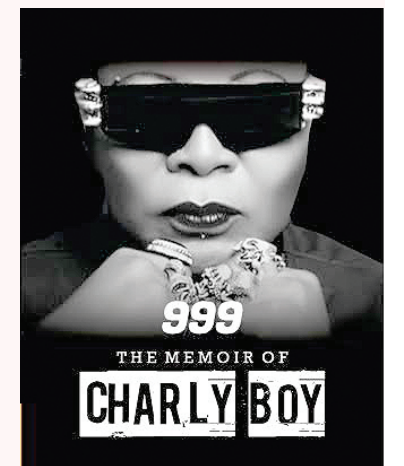
The high-profile display, which features the memoir's cover and key thematic teasers, has solidified the project's status as one of the year's most significant cultural releases by a Nigerian entertainment personality this year. The international exposure has also sparked conversations about the evolving ways Nigerian celebrities are marketing books beyond conventional launch events.

Described as a 'battleground' rather than a traditional biography, the memoir, offers an unfiltered look into the life of one of Nigeria's most complex public figures. It traverses the entirety of Charly Boy's journey: from his youth in a prominent judicial family to his evolution into the rebellious, counter-culture icon who defined the Nigerian entertainment landscape for over four decades.

Known for challenging norms and

embracing unconventional publicity strategies, Charly Boy has once again demonstrated his flair for commanding public attention. By placing 999 on the iconic Times Square screens, he has transformed the memoir's promotion into a global statement, extending its reach beyond Nigerian audiences and reinforcing the international appeal of African storytelling.

"This title, 999, symbolises the end of one phase and the beginning of another," Charly Boy shared during a recent press conference. "It is the unapologetic truth about the self-styled President of all frustrated Nigerians."



From Promise To Power: Big Magana Unleashes Double Hit 'Rule' & 'Freedom' – Naija Is Listening

ASENSATIONAL reggae powerhouse Big Magana, born Eze Onyekwere, has officially stamped his dominance on the Nigerian music scene with the explosive release of two new singles – "Rule" and "Freedom."



Big Magana

The release comes on the heel of his acclaimed smash hit "Promise" – a track that shook the airwaves and dominated terrestrial TV with a high-definition, cinematic music video that became a fan favourite across the globe.

The sound that rules and sets you free tagged – "Rule", currently trending on major radio stations and streaming platforms, is a commanding anthem of confidence, leadership, and self-belief. With its heavy bassline, conscious lyrics, and infectious reggae-dancehall fusion, the track is already becoming the soundtrack for hustlers, leaders, and music lovers who refuse to settle for less.

Its companion single, "Freedom," delivers Big Magana's signature message of liberation, resilience, and hope. The song resonates deeply in today's climate, offering listeners an escape, a prayer, and a battle cry all in one.

Both tracks showcase Big Magana's growth as a songwriter and performer – proving that his music speaks not just to reggae fans, but to all lovers of good, conscious music.

Burna Boy Makes History As First Nigerian Artiste Confirmed For 2026 FIFA World Cup Final Halftime Show

By Daniel Anazia

GRAMMY Award-winning Afrobeats star, Burna Boy, again reached another career milestone as he was confirmed as one of the headline performers for the 2026 FIFA World Cup Final Halftime Show, further cementing his place among the world's most influential music stars.

The announcement has sparked excitement across Nigeria and the global Afrobeats community, with fans celebrating what many consider a defining moment for African music on one of the biggest sporting stages in the world.

Scheduled to perform alongside an array of internationally acclaimed artistes, the African Giant and Odogwu hitmaker inclusion in the star-studded lineup highlights the remarkable rise of Afrobeats from a regional sound to a global cultural force. It also reinforces his status as one of Africa's most successful music exports, following years of

chart-topping releases, sold-out international tours and prestigious awards.

The FIFA World Cup final is watched by hundreds of millions of viewers worldwide, making the halftime show one of the most coveted performance platforms in global entertainment. For Burna Boy, the opportunity represents not only a personal triumph but also another landmark achievement for Nigerian music on the international stage.

This is as *Dai Dai* his collaboration with Colombian singer, Shakira, has also received a gold certification in France, thus, making him the most certified Nigerian artiste in the country. The song served as the official anthem of the ongoing FIFA World Cup, hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Blending Spanish and English, the upbeat track enjoyed massive commercial success and climbed to the top of global streaming charts. Burna Boy and Shakira performed the anthem during the opening cer-

emony of the mundial in Mexico and are also scheduled to headline the tournament's historic 30-minute halftime show during the final on July 19, at New York New Jersey Stadium, United States.

The latest certification further



cements his reputation as one of the most successful African artistes in the French music market. The Port Harcourt-born Afro-fusion star has now amassed 17 certification plaques in France, the highest ever by a Nigerian artist. His achievements include six diamond certifications for the hit singles *Gbona*, *On The Low*, and *Last Last*.

Over the past decade, the *Twice as Tall* crooner has played a pivotal role in expanding Afrobeats' global appeal. His Grammy-winning success, collaborations with leading international artistes and headline performances at some of the world's biggest festivals have helped introduce African music to new audiences across Europe, North America,

Asia and the Middle East.

The FIFA announcement is widely acknowledged as further evidence of the Afrobeats' growing influence within mainstream global entertainment. Once considered a niche African sound, the genre has evolved into one of the world's fastest-growing music movements, with Nigerian artistes consistently headlining major festivals, topping international charts and securing high-profile collaborations.

Fans and industry stakeholders have welcomed Burna Boy's latest achievement as a victory not only for him but also for the Nigerian creative industry, describing it as another milestone in the country's expanding cultural influence.

As anticipation builds ahead of the World Cup final, expectations are high that Burna Boy will deliver a performance worthy of the global stage, introducing the energy, rhythm and spirit of Afrobeats to one of the largest television audiences in history.

By Daniel Anazia and Eniola Daniel

THE reality television show, Big Brother Naija (BBNaija), will on Sunday, July 26, return for its 11th season with its highest prize package yet, raising the grand prize to N160 million in what promises to be another fiercely competitive edition. This life-changing package comprises a N100 million cash prize complemented by a brand-new SUV.

The announcement has since generated excitement among fans and aspiring contestants, reinforcing the show's position as one of Africa's most influential entertainment platforms and a launchpad for new stars.

The new season also comes at a time when BBNaija continues to dominate Africa's entertainment landscape, setting trends that extend beyond television into music, fashion, lifestyle and digital culture. Each edition fuels nationwide conversations, generates viral moments and provides brands with one of the continent's most valuable audience engagement platforms.

With this season's theme as: "Everything Is For The Taking," the organisers and the lead sponsors said the increased prize money marks another significant milestone in the reality show's evolution, reflecting its growing popularity, expanding commercial appeal and continued investment from sponsors.

Speaking during the official date premiere announcement on Wednesday, July 15, in Lekki, Lagos, Executive Head of Content and

BBNaija Season 11, 'Everything Is For The Taking'

Channels, West Africa, MultiChoice, Atinuke Babatunde, noted that since its revival, Big Brother Naija has consistently redefined entertainment in Africa by bringing together authentic storytelling, compelling personalities and moments that resonate with millions of viewers across television and digital platforms while dominating conversations on social media.

"Season 11 builds on that legacy with even bigger stakes, fresh twists and an exciting mix of housemates that will keep audiences engaged from premiere night through to the finale," she said.

Babatunde added that beyond the cash

reward, the show has become a career-defining platform for many former housemates, opening doors to lucrative endorsement deals, acting opportunities, music careers, entrepreneurship and brand partnerships. "Several alumni have gone on to become some of Nigeria's most recognisable entertainers and social media influencers," she stated.

This season of the reality TV show welcomes one of Africa's most popular online sports betting brands, betPawa as the headline sponsor, further signaling a season focused on rewarding loyal viewers and deepening fan engagement.

Commenting on the partnership, Borah Omary Ndanyungu, Head of Local Marketing & CSR, betPawa, said: "At betPawa, we believe in creating unforgettable experiences that bring people together through the things they are passionate about.

"Big Brother Naija is one of Africa's most celebrated entertainment properties, and we are proud to come on board as Headline Sponsor for Season 11. We look forward to rewarding fans, deepening engagement throughout the season and delivering exciting experiences that complement the energy and excitement of the show."

What to Expect

As with previous editions, industry observers say the N160 million grand prize is expected to intensify competition, with contestants likely to bring greater strategy, resilience and

entertainment value as they battle for the ultimate reward.

One of the biggest attractions will undoubtedly be the new housemates. As always, viewers can look forward to a diverse mix of personalities, from entrepreneurs and creatives to professionals and social media influencers; each bringing unique stories, ambitions and strategies into the house.

The increased prize money is also expected to raise the level of competition. Contestants are likely to be more strategic in forming alliances, navigating conflicts and winning weekly tasks, knowing that the reward is the highest in the show's history.

Viewers should also expect weeks of evolving friendships, strategic gameplay, high-stakes tasks, compelling drama, romantic relationships, heated confrontations, and emotional moments that have become the hallmark of the show.

Over the years, BBNaija has become known for its friendships, rivalries, romances and unexpected betrayals, all of which often dominate conversations on social media and fuel public debates.

Weekly Head of House (HOH) games, nomination sessions, eviction nights and surprise twists will once again form the backbone of the competition. Organisers are expected to introduce new challenges and game-changing twists to keep both housemates and viewers guessing throughout the season.

TEETH 4 TEETH ... With Justin Akpovi-Esade

And The 'Chicken' Is Inside Soup Pot At Last

WHEN what looked like the madness of Mr. Ademola Abiodun popularly known as DJ Chicken began, many including T4T just assumed it was part of the craze to be famous and cash in on the money the Internet was paying people to be crazy. Even when he was crashing cars and even allegedly crippled a middle aged woman in Ogun State, which made the state government to declare him *persona non grata*, people thought he would simmer down. DJ Chicken was obviously not contented with the popularity he may have got from all the crazy things he had done in the last four years or so even after T4T sometime ago appealed to him to calm down before he finds himself inside a pot of soup. Did he listen?

About two weeks ago, he obviously got the kicks, and fiam, took his phone, went live on Tik Tok and told the world that if Nigerian president, Asiawaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu won next year's presidential election, he would kill his popular politician son, Seyi.

Some of his followers hailed him even when others opened their mouths in total disbelief. *Wetin dis boy smoke, some asked?* Well, he was instantly arrested and a Magistrate's Court in Ogba, Lagos, remanded him in prison custody till August 3 after taking his not guilty plea on a three-count charge bordering on alleged threat to kill, conduct likely to cause a breach of peace, and other offences under the Cybercrime Act. Magistrate M.F. Onamusi however admitted DJ Chicken to bail in the sum of N1 million with two sureties in like sum. If care is not taken, this 'Chicken' may end up inside the soup pot of the government for some years and you know what that means. *Urhobo people say ear wey nor gree hear word, dem dey cut am commot.*

Kill Fake News Before Fake News Kills Us!

WHEN T4T first read the news online, he could not bring himself to believe it. He knew something was not right about it especially the way the said Reporter quoted the state Governor with so much energy and conviction. How

did a local reporter have that kind of access to a state Governor in that kind of damaging story? Then, T4T saw the retraction and apology video and the nickel dropped. "My name is Ejike Ofoegbu Experience, the owner and publisher of *Igbo Times Magazine* and *INews*. I wish to offer my deepest and most sincere apology to Professor Chukwuma Charles Soludo, the Executive Governor of Anambra State, his family, and the general public. I publicly admit that the stories I published concerning Governor Soludo and his son were completely fake, false, fabricated, and untrue. They did not come from Governor Soludo, his son, his family, or any official representative. They were not based on any verified facts or credible sources and they should never have been presented as news." The guy looking like a wet chicken in the video began. "The false posts I published included: "Breaking News: 'I will arrest anyone who calls Ozo my son. He is not my son. I disowned him years ago, and he is no longer a member of the Soludo family.'"

"Just In: I Don't Take Advice From My Father. He Was a Drunkard Who Beat My Mom When I Was Young. His Treatment of My Mother Made Me Decide Never to Take Advice From Him — 'Soludo's Son' Speaks Out."

"Breaking News: 'I ordered Ozo from Temu. He is Chinese-made, not my son. Even at the hospital when he was born, I asked the doctor, 'I hope you didn't accidentally exchange my real son.' Ozo is from Temu,' Soludo jokingly told reporters."

"Breaking News: 'They should organise a drinking competition between my father and Wike. I just want to see something. I'm willing to bet my life that my father would win. People don't understand his drinking capacity.' — Ozo."

He was not done. "I state clearly and without reservation that every one of the statements above was fake. They should not be regarded as factual reports or genuine quotations. I take full responsibility for publishing them."

Go and read the rest part of the wannabe journalist's retraction elsewhere as that is not the news here. The news is, despite the lengthy written and video apology, Soludo say, mba, you go reach court. So, he was taken to court and the court has

remanded him in Anambra state's kirikiri pending his bail perfection.

T4T gives it up for the journalist. How can someone write such a damaging fictional story like that and it looked so believable? That boy is a master of fiction writing, he should have been a hit as a novelist. But for T4T's decades of training, he would have fallen for it. Now, this is T4T's submission: Governor Soludo should not listen to any village people's plea, let the court judge the boy's case, and if it decides to free him, fine.

If no serious example is made of fake news purveyors, the thousands of people into that evil act will not stop. In fact, they will become emboldened by the day.

Akwa Ibom, But Why?

IT was not the first time T4T read about what was brewing in Akwa Ibom State, so, last week, when the news resurfaced again, it did not come as a surprise. "Sleep with married men and get 10 year jail term, Akwa Ibom deputy Governor's Bill ready to be passed," the screaming headline hit T4T online on Monday.

Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly, the news read, will on Tuesday 14th July 2026 pass into law a rule that sleeping with married men is prohibited in the state. The bill sponsored by the Deputy governor Her Excellency senator Akon Eyakenyi will on Tuesday pass into law by AKS House of Assembly.

The bill stated that any young girl, lady or woman caught sleeping with married man will go to prison for 10 years without any fine, while the man in question will pay a fine of 2 million naira.

Wait o, what if the man claims he wants to marry the said lady as second or third wife *nko*? Or has Akwa Ibom criminalised polygamy? Akwa Ibom must be declared the holy state of Nigeria where everybody must be compelled to go on pilgrimage yearly like the world goes to Mecca and Jerusalem, because only holy sites pass such laws.

But wait o, na Akwa Ibom we dey talk about so o, or is there another Akwa Ibom T4T does not know about?



With Maxi Ruched Dresses, ‘Zero Is Not A Size’

By Maria Diamond

CURVY women are the proper definition of beauty in Africa especially here in Nigeria where indigenous designers are expected to build dresses to fit all shapes and sizes. Any wonder the timeless Maxi Ruched Dress is making a fashion demand hit.

When it comes to smoothing out the silhouette of any body type to a classy fit, Maxi Ruched Dresses top the list of varieties, as the strategic folds (gathers) sculpt the body in all sizes and shapes to perfection.

African Women Agree That ‘Zero Is Not A Size’

To any African woman, having curves in the right places is an appealing delight that is admired by both men and women as opposed to the body shaming that could take place given the same circumstances in certain parts of the world.

This is where the body-positivity campaign ‘Zero is not a Size’ which emanated from the American series ‘One Tree Hills’ over two decades ago, comes to play in portraying maxi ruched dress as a perfect style built to highlight the waist, hip and curves of curvy/plus size women to fit.

‘Zero is not a Size’ fashion show episode campaign shuns body shaming of plus size

women in America by showcasing clothing that reveals the unique beauty of a curvy woman on the runway regardless of the set standard of ‘trim and fit’ in the fashion industry.

The Making of Maxi Ruched Dress

A maxi ruched dress features textured, rippled fabric made by pulling threads by drawing strings around the waist/hip while the lower part of the gown flows freely. This style which can be made with any type of durable fabric provides a flexible fit to the maxi section of the dress.



PHOTO: Pinterest

Group Donates Wheelchairs To PWDs, Others

By David Emokpae

APHILANTHROPIC organisation based in Lagos, Rajasthani Samaj, last Sunday, successfully donated wheelchairs to Persons With Disabilities (PWDs).

The event, which held at the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Igbobi, saw recipients come with their family members to collect the wheelchairs.

The donation aimed to enhance mobility and quality of life of the PWDs, and also support the foundation’s mission to aid vulnerable

community.

The event was also graced by the nursing staff, students, and hospital officials.

Recipients and their families expressed heartfelt gratitude to Rajasthani Samaj.

One of the recipient’s mother visibly became very emotional and, with tears in her eyes, thanked the group. Hospital staff also appreciated the initiative.

Speaking at the occasion, Chief Sanjay Jain, President of the Samaj (Association), stated that this project was

chosen under their charity outreach as it is the “most appropriate.”

He said, “the decision to give wheel chairs to the needy to ease out their day-to-day life looks very apt one. It was truly heartening to see the impact.”

He noted that a wheelchair helps restore a degree of independence for the recipient and significantly reduces the burden on family members.

He added, “this initiative has further motivated us to do more for those in need.



Chief Sanjay Jain, President of Rajasthani Samaj of Nigeria (with one of the several recipients of the wheel chair) flanked by nursing staff, students and hospital authorities.

Magazine To Celebrate Excellence In Human Resources

By Eno Bassey

THE HR People Magazine Awards is set to host its 11th edition in October 2026, bringing together some of the most influential HR leaders, organisations and professionals from across Nigeria and beyond.

Executive Director, HR People Magazine Awards, Dapo Saheed, reaffirmed the programme’s commitment to credibility, Integrity and transparency. “As the world of work continues to evolve, the Awards remain a symbol of excellence and a powerful reminder of the critical role that

people and culture play in shaping successful organisations and thriving economies. The sustainability and continued success of the HR People Magazine Awards over the last 11 years have been built on one fundamental principle—integrity. The credibility of the Awards remains the bedrock of the programme, and we remain committed to ensuring that excellence, innovation and impact in people management continue to be recognised and celebrated,” he said.

Saheed said since inception, more than 78 of Nigeria’s Top 100 companies have partici-

pated in the Awards and featured within the HR People Magazine platform, reflecting the growing influence and credibility of the programme within the business and HR community.

The Awards celebrate excellence across a broad range of both individual and corporate categories, recognising achievements in leadership, talent management, organisational culture, employee engagement, diversity and inclusion, learning and development, employer branding, innovation and strategic people management.

By Maria Diamond

TOWARDS seamless access to exclusive hospitality benefits and enhanced travel experiences for members, United Nigeria Airlines and Boulevard Hotels have partnered on Unity Rewards programme.

Launched early this year, Unity Rewards is United Nigeria Airlines’ loyalty programme, designed to reward customer loyalty and enhance the overall travel experience. Since its launch, the programme has grown to over 15,000 members.

United Nigeria Airlines, Boulevard Hotels Collaborate On Travels, Hospitality Benefits

The collaboration expands the Unity Rewards lifestyle network to 12 hotel partners, alongside fitness centres and other lifestyle brands that provide exclusive discounts and privileges to programme members. Under the partnership, Unity Rewards members who stay at any Boulevard Hotels property will enjoy a 25% discount.

As members progress through the programme’s four membership tiers

which are Sapphire, Emerald, Ruby, and Diamond, they unlock additional benefits, including lounge access, extra baggage allowance, priority services, and other exclusive privileges.

Speaking on the partnership, United Nigeria Airlines’ Chief Commercial Officer, Adedayo Olawuyi, said the collaboration reflects the airline’s commitment to rewarding its loyal customers.

Busha, Women In DeFi Partner To Bridge Gap In Talent Discovery

... Unveil ‘Building Tomorrow Together’

By Maria Diamond

AT a time when Africa is producing more female STEM talents than any other region globally, many women in the region continue to face barriers transitioning into technology careers.

Busha, a pan-African financial services company, and Women in DeFi (WiD), a community dedicated to advancing women’s participation in blockchain and decentralised finance have partnered to support women pursuing careers in technology, Web3, and digital finance across

Africa.

This collaboration which was officially unveiled at the Women in DeFi Summit 2026 held in Lagos recently, where five young women received laptop scholarships to support their education, career development, and entrepreneurial ambitions is targeted towards empowering and expanding women’s access to Africa’s digital economy.

The scholarship marks the first initiative under the partnership, which will deliver programmes focused on digital skills, financial empowerment, and access to emerging

technology opportunities.

According to McKinsey’s 2025 report, The Quest for Gender Parity in African Tech, women account for approximately 47 per cent of STEM graduates across Africa but occupy only 23 to 30 per cent of technology roles, highlighting a significant gap between education and workforce participation.

Thus, through this partnership, Busha and Women in DeFi aim to help close that gap by providing practical access to the tools, knowledge, communities, and opportunities women need to build successful careers in the digital economy.



Programmes Lead at WiD, Peace Onone Ega (left); Partnerships Associate at WiD, Praise Abieyuwa Alohan; Laptop scholarship beneficiaries, Head of Brand & Communications, Busha Ngozi Okonye and Head, People Operations, Busha, Ebun Adeoti.

Olu Of Warri, Queen Consort Unveil Initiative To Unite Itsekiri People Worldwide

By Adeniyi Ifetayo

HIS Majesty Ogiame Atuwatse III, the Olu of Warri, and Her Majesty Olori Atuwatse III, Mama Iwere, have spearheaded a cultural identity movement and digital platform known as #Iam Itsekiri, aimed at uniting Itsekiri people and their friends across the world around a shared heritage and sense of belonging.

The initiative, set to be launched soon under the authority of the Palace of the Warri Kingdom, is designed to connect Itsekiris at home and in the diaspora through a media-driven cultural campaign and a dedicated mobile application that serves as a digital gathering place for members of the community.

Speaking on the vision behind the project, His Majesty said the movement is built around a central truth that the name Itsekiri means “blessing surrounds us,” adding that the platform seeks to strengthen identity, pride and unity among the people while extending that sense of belonging to friends and allies of the kingdom.

According to them, the initiative redefines Itsekiri identity beyond geography and population size, stressing that history has shown that communities driven by a strong idea can grow into influential movements.



“To say ‘I am Itsekiri’ is to make an active declaration that one belongs to a people that blessing follows,” His Majesty stated.

Their Majesties explained that the movement welcomes three groups into one community those born Itsekiri, those who became part of the family through marriage, and friends of Itsekiri who identify with the values and ideals of the people.

The approach, they noted, broadens participation while preserving the cultural pride and heritage of the kingdom.

Their Majesties further disclosed that the Iam Itsekiri application functions as a digital village where users can access updates from the Palace and the kingdom, connect with

fellow Itsekiris across the globe, and engage with cultural content that promotes language, traditions, customs and indigenous cuisine. The app will soon be available on both the Apple Store and Google Play Store.

They added that the movement is being amplified through the #IamItsekiri Challenge, which encourages participants to share personal stories, testimonies and experiences that reflect the Itsekiri identity.

The Olu of Warri said the initiative is “not nostalgia, but strategy,” aimed at preserving Itsekiri heritage, strengthening community bonds and projecting the blessing and values of the Itsekiri people onto the global stage.

ShortStory

The Great War Of Love! (2) By Segun Durowaiye (08055356855)

Continued from GUARDIAN WEEKEND, July 11- 12, 2026

I RETI didn’t know how to frame a lie when the kind Mallam asked about her mum. “Yes, Mallam Bature. . .she’s okay. . .but she wants some money from you. . .” Ireti replied feeling uneasy to frame such a big lie.

“No problem Ireti. . .I’ll do anything for her so far you’ll be my wife,” he replied. The nice-looking Mallam dipped his hands in his wardrobe and counted N10,000 for the young girl without qualms. Ireti was stunned, surprised and overwhelmed at the sheer generosity of the smooth-talking Mallam.

“Thanks,” Ireti said softly, turned and headed home to give her mum the money. A few months later, the Ireti’s School Certificate Examination was around the corner. Mrs. Mamora approached Mallam Bature on a Saturday afternoon and said: “Mallam Bature, my very good in-law. I want to let you know that your wife will be sitting for her final School Certificate Examination very soon. She’ll need close to N30,000 as examination fees. I won’t mind if you contribute your own quota so that she can finish her school quickly and pack into your house.”

“My in-law, tell Ireti to come on Monday morning to collect N20,000. Nothing is too big to do for one’s wife. I love your daughter so much, and I’ll do anything to put smile on her face!” he said, with a toothy smile. The following Monday, Mallam Bature gave Ireti the said amount without batting an eyelid. Ireti was so happy that the gentle Mallam could part with such amount for her forthcoming examinations.

She thanked him profusely. Ireti sat for the School Certificate Examination and amazingly when the result were released, she passed all her papers excellently. She had the ambition of studying Medicine and becoming a Medical Doctor.

Mrs. Mamora’s unending wiles always defeat and conquer the wits of the generous Mallam who actually felt that truly she would give him the hand of her beautiful daughter in marriage. The kind-hearted Mallam had fallen hook, line and sinker for the lies, flatteries and ruse of a clever woman. She always called him mugun

and would giggle with laughter whenever she left his presence. Mugun in Yoruba parlance means a ‘fool’.

Exactly three months later, Ireti’s grandma died at the ripe age of 92. Mrs. Mamora went to Mallam Bature and told him about the development.

“My mother is dead now Mallam Bature and we have to spend huge money for the burial and every other things. Since I’m your in-law it’s either you buy me a cow or you give me worthwhile amount for the burial ceremony.”

“I’m sorry about that,” Mallam Bature said politely, “May God grant her eternal rest. I’ll give you cash to buy a big cow, though I have cows in the north but that would be stressful bringing it down here. Come tomorrow afternoon and I’ll give you some money for the cow.”

“Thank you very much my in-law,” enthused Mrs. Mamora, “Wo, my daughter will marry you immediately after this burial ceremony.” The following day Mrs. Mamora visited the amiable Mallam and instantly he gave her N200,000 cash as his own contribution. Mrs. Mamora was so happy that Mallam Bature fell for her antics once again. The Mallam even attended the burial ceremony with his friends. After the burial ceremony, exactly two weeks later, Mallam Bature called Mrs. Mamora and told her that he had invested so much in the life of his would-be wife. He said, as a matter of fact, he would be happy to take his wife home so that she could live with him, and even further her studies in his home. He explained that he had been very patient so far because of the love he had for his would-be wife.

“Ha! Haa!! Haaa!!! Ho! Ho!! Ho!!!” Mrs. Momora burst into raucous laughter, “So, since all these years you believe I’ll give you my daughter to marry? You must be sick or something! You’re the biggest fool I’ve ever seen! If you don’t leave my house I’ll shout you’re a thief! Who’ll marry an ‘animal’?!”. . .

To be continued .

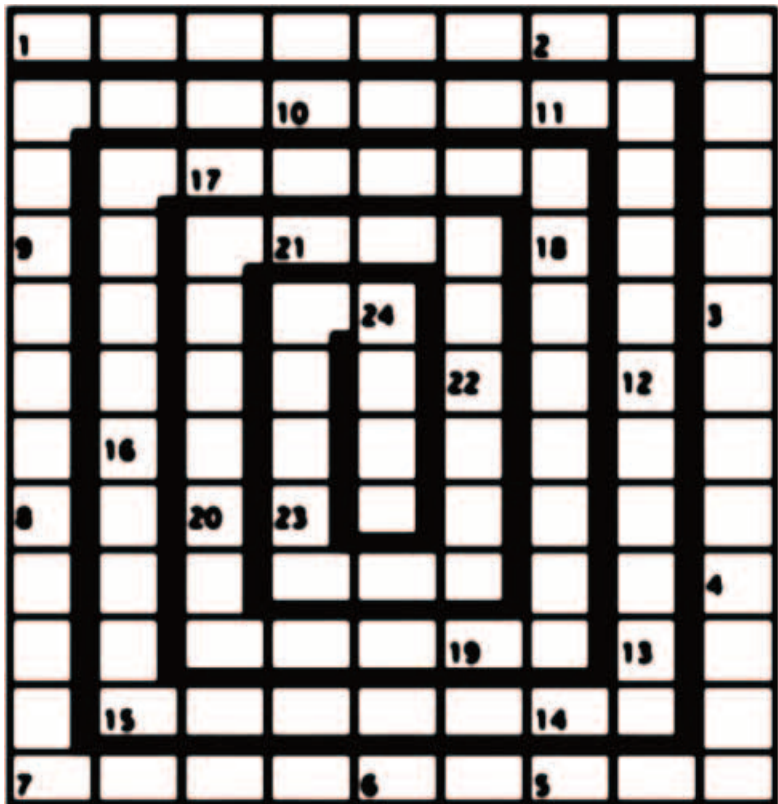
Interested sponsor/sponsors for this SHORT STORY column should please contact: 08023015115 or 08055356855.

with OLULANA KAYODE 08023183727
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Overlapping Word Game

Solution

- 1 Maiduguri
- 2 Urinate
- 3 Etinan
- 4 Another
- 5 Err
- 6 Reside
- 7 Decide
- 8 Desist
- 9 Starved
- 10 Edible
- 11 Blemish
- 12 Shrine
- 13 Neat
- 14 Atheist
- 15 Tooth
- 16 Thirst
- 17 Tremble
- 18 Legation
- 19 Nurture
- 20 Refine
- 21 Enter
- 22 Residue
- 23 Engine
- 24 Next



Overlapping Word Game

- 1 Lagos State Governor, (5, 3).
 - 2 Giving of light, (8).
 - 3 Guide, (5).
 - 4 Impatient, (7).
 - 5 Change direction, (4).
 - 6 Acting in an irregular way, (7).
 - 7 Appeal to, (6).
 - 8 Person that leads, (6).
 - 9 Knowledgeable person, (7).
 - 10 Message sent by telex, (5).
 - 11 Carry out a plan, (7).
 - 12 Show how to do something, (5).
- 13 Flexible tube, (4).
 - 14 A period of employment, (7).
 - 15 Underground storage room, (6).
 - 16 Clause in a legal document, (7).
 - 17 Material made from animal skin, (7).
 - 18 Incorrect, (10).
 - 19 Wrongful dispossession, (6).
 - 20 Keep for future use, (7).
 - 21 The carrier of a disease, (6).
 - 22 Formal public speaking, (7).
 - 23 Town in Kebbi State, (5).
 - 24 Anambra State capital, (4).

Word Search

Some Countries in Africa

Mali	Sudan	Nigeria
Niger	Zambia	Senegal
Kenya	Gabon	Lesotho
Chad	Ghana	Tanzania
Benin	Malawi	Morocco
Tunisia	Liberia	Madagascar

R	T	A	N	Z	A	N	I	A	R	G
E	G	A	I	N	W	I	L	A	M	B
K	L	I	G	O	C	F	C	N	C	R
O	I	B	E	B	H	S	J	A	B	E
C	B	M	R	A	A	T	Y	D	S	G
C	E	A	I	G	D	N	H	U	E	I
O	R	Z	A	R	E	C	A	S	N	N
R	I	D	C	K	S	E	M	H	E	I
O	A	I	S	I	N	U	T	E	G	N
M	A	L	A	W	I	M	B	D	A	E
D	A	G	O	H	T	O	S	E	L	B

(c.) Olukayode Olulana

Birthdays

FAMUYIWA, Chaplain Timothy Folarin is 80. Born into a Christian family of late Chief B.G. Famuyiwa, a merchant at Arigbajo in Ewekoro Local Council, Ogun State and Chief Alice Famuyiwa, a trader on Tuesday, July 16, 1946, he attended the United District Central School, Arigbajo from 1955 to 1960. He also did a three year course at the African Church Modern School, Arigbajo.

After leaving the Secondary Modern School, he proceeded to Lisabi Grammar School Abeokuta. He also attended Abeokuta Grammar School for just a two-year course for Higher School Certificate (HSC). He worked briefly at the Federal Ministry of Education as a Clerk in the Scholarship Department. In 1972, he gained admission into the University of Ife now Obafemi Awolowo University, where he came out with second class

honours in History.

He had his National Youth Service Programme in Kano State, after which he joined the Nigeria Police Force in Bukuru, Jos as ASP Cadet, but did not stay in the Police Force.

From there he was employed by the National Shipping Line, Lagos as Management Trainee and was sent to England to study Shipping. He studied for three years. He came back from England and worked in many departments. In 1982 he was sent to Warri Agency as a Traffic Manager. In 1984 he came from Warri and was posted to United Kingdom West Africa Line (UKWAL), as a Traffic Manager. He was there until 1985 when National Shipping Line was liquidated.

Famuyiwa also worked briefly with the Nigeria Flour Mills in the shipping department until 1992 when he finally came back home and settled in Arigbajo where he became a community leader.



Famuyiwa

He joined the African Church, where he is currently one of the Trustees of the church and an executive member of the church. He is a former People's Warden of the church. The church honoured him with a chieftaincy title of *Baba Igbagbo*. He is also a chieftain of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Arigbajo Area.

OGUNWOLE, Prof. Joshua Olalekan, soil scientist and former Vice Chancellor, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State will be 59 on July 23, 2026.

Born on July 23, 1967, in



Ogunwole

Ibadan, Oyo State, he became a professor of soil science since 2007; and has more than 20 years' experience in dry-land farming, irrigation, and agro ecology with research and expertise in soil quality improvement for raising ecosystem productivity and strengthening resilience of rural agrarian communities in North, East and West Africa.

He began his early education at St. Anne's Primary Boarding School, Kakuri, Kaduna (1972–1977), proceeded to Tafawa Balewa Memorial College, Samaru-Zonkwa (1977–1982), and later attended the School

of Basic Studies at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1983–1984). These formative years laid the foundation for his disciplined pursuit of academic excellence and his lifelong commitment to knowledge, leadership, and service.

He has a B.Sc. (Agriculture), M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Soil Science; a trinity of degrees from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Kaduna State. He has served as lecturer, researcher and administrator at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (both as Head of Department and Research Programme Leader); Adamawa State University Mubi, Federal University Dutsin-ma, where he served as Director of University Advancement and Linkages and Federal University Oye-Ekiti where he heads the Department of Water Resources and Agro-meteorology.

In 2004, he received a Research Merit Award for Sustainable Agriculture from the Schweisfurth Foundation and

Support Africa International of Germany. He was a recipient of the CSIR/TWAS Postdoctoral Award to Central Salt Marine Chemical Research Institute (CSMCRI), Bhavangar, India in 2006/2007; the prestigious J. Williams Fulbright Research Scholar Award in 2009-2010 at Pennsylvania State University, USA.

Prof. Ogunwole also secured a TWAS/UNESCO Associate-ship Award (2010-2013) to co-study soil quality changes under the Nile River Basin Challenge Programme at the International Water Management Institute in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He was a Regular Associate of the revered Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, Trieste-Italy (several visits between years 2010-2017).

Compiled by Gbenga Akdnfenwa, oluwagbenga.akdnfenwa@guardian.ng or gbenmgaherkin@yahoo.com

Read the remaining part of this story on www.guardian.ng

Events



Ekiti State Governor, Mr Biodun Oyeibanji; (left); a former member, House of representatives/son of the deceased, Bimbo Daramola; Niger State Governor, Mohammed Umaru Bago; and Senate Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele at the burial of renowned educationist, Chief Francis Adebayo Daramola at St John's Anglican Church, Ire-Ekiti, Ekiti State...last Friday



Representative of the Edo State Secondary Education Board, Gregory Anokwu (left); Chief Operations Officer (COO), Seplat Energy Plc, Samson Ezugworie; and Director, External Affairs & Social Performance, Chioma Afe, at the commissioning of the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV newly renovated classroom block and modern learning facilities for students of the Visually Impaired Unit at Ihogbe College, Benin City, Edo State ... recently.



Director General, Nigerian Tourism Development Authority, Dr. Olayiwola Awakan (left) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Megastar Media Communications, Dr. Adeniyi Ifetayo after their meeting on tourism development and communication at NTDC headquarters in Abuja



Customs Area Controller, Lagos Industrial Command, Adebola Salawu (left); Alajede of Ijedo Kingdom, Oba Adefarasin Saheed Hassan; Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Bogo Beverages Limited, Godwin Oche; representative of the Commissioner for Agric and Food Systems, Lagos State, Olushina Shobande; and Managing Director, Sanden Intercool Nigeria Limited, Azakpono Festus, during the factory commissioning of Bogo Beverages Limited in Ikorodu, Lagos recently.



The Assistant Pastor-in-Charge of Region II and Pastor-in-Charge of Lagos Province 20 of the RCCG Christ the Lord Parish, Lekki Lagos, Pastor Tunde Netufo and his wife, Pastor (Mrs) Yemisi Netufo at the second edition of the Evening of Hymns by The Lagos Province Youth Choir held at the church ...last Sunday



Executive Producer and Media Entrepreneur, Temidayo Makanjuola (left); Director-General of the National Council for Arts and Culture, Obi Asika; President of the National Delphic Council Nigeria and Founder of Women in successful Career (WISCAR), Amina Oyagbola; Veteran Actress, Joke Silva; Founder and CEO of Terra Kulture, Bolanle Austen-Peters and Ex-Official, International Delphic Council Amphictyony, Bayo Oyagbola at the Women in the Arts: Power, Voice and Economic Impact held in Lagos



Vice Consul, German Consulate, Lagos, Jochen Schindelar (left); Adviser, Association of Chinese Women in Nigeria, Loi Eng-koon; guest speaker, Managing Director, Lifelink Fertility Clinic, Dr Kemi Ailoje; President of Chioma Ajunwa Foundation, Dr Chioma Ajunwa - Oparah; and Chinese Consulate General, Lagos, Yan Yuqing, during the 2026 campaign conference against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, organised by the Chioma Ajunwa Foundation in collaboration with the Chinese Consulate General and the Chinese community in Nigeria held in Lagos.



Chairman, Research, Compliance Institute, Taiwo Sanusi (left); Chairman, Technology, Compliance Institute, Nigeria, Abigail Duopama- Obomanu; Newly elected President, Compliance Institute, Nigeria, Wence Nwoga; Registrar/CEO, Compliance Institute, Nigeria, Bawo Eg-bakumeh; Immediate Past President, Compliance Institute Nigeria, Pattison Boleigha, and Chairman, Programmes, Compliance Institute, Obinna Okafor at the 2026 yearly general meeting of the institute in Lagos.

Traditional Rulers Hail Rotary's Humanitarian Service

By Opeyemi Babalola

• As Bakare Is Installed As District Governor

TRADITIONAL rulers and other stakeholders have commended Rotary International for its humanitarian contributions, describing the organisation as a model of selfless service and community development.

The commendations were made at the installation of entrepreneur, the Chief executive of Around 'D' Clock Security Company Limited, Mrs Bukola Olabisi Bakare, as District Governor of Rotary International District 9111 at a ceremony held over the weekend.

Among those who paid tribute to Rotary International were the Owa Obokun Adim-

ula and Paramount Ruler of Ijesaland, Oba Clement Adesuyi Haastrup, Ajimoko III, and the Oniru of Iruland, Oba Abdulwasu Lawal, Abisogun III.

Oba Haastrup described Rotary members as individuals who devote their personal resources to improving the lives of others, noting that their commitment exemplifies true sacrifice.

The Oniru also praised Rotary members for their dedication to community service without seeking personal gain, urging corporate organisations to strengthen partnerships with the organisation to expand its development initiatives.

He called on traditional rulers

across the country to work more closely with Rotary, stressing that sustainable development requires collaboration among governments, traditional institutions and development partners.

According to him, traditional rulers now play broader roles in governance and community development beyond preserving culture and customs.

He cited projects attracted to Iruland through partnerships with government agencies and private organisations, saying improving people's welfare remains central to development.

"Let us build bridges instead of barriers," the monarch said,

expressing confidence that Bakare would deliver on her vision during her one-year tenure. He also made a financial donation to support Rotary's programmes.

Delivering the keynote address, former Managing Director of First Bank Plc, Dr. Adesola Adeduntan, spoke on the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Rotary's Four Way Test, stressing that technology should not replace integrity, honesty and other ethical values.

He said while AI would continue to shape society, its impact would ultimately depend on the integrity of those who develop, regulate and deploy it.

From The Rector

Ibru International Ecumenical Centre, Agbarha-Otor Delta State. www.ibrucentre.org

Measureless Mercy Of God: Called, Transformed And Run After (1)

By Stephen Wolemonwu

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness," (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Introduction: The Problem Of "Used-up" Mercy
Have you ever felt like you have finally run out of chances with God?

LIKE you have messed up too many times, prayed too few prayers or failed too often — and now heaven must be tired of hearing your name? That is a real fear many believers carry. We imagine God's mercy like a prepaid card — once you swipe too many times, the balance runs out. But Scripture tells us something radically different:

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness," (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Mercy is not a one-time event. It is measureless. It calls us when we are unqualified, sustains us when we are weak, transforms us when we are stuck, and even runs after us when we wander away.

God is declaring over your life: "I am not done with you. My mercy has no measure."

Reading through — Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 12:1-8; Psalm 119:17-32, and Luke 15:11-32; we will see four di-

mensions of this mercy:

- Mercy calls you out of old places.
- Mercy transforms you into something new.
- Mercy teaches and sustains you.
- Mercy runs after you when you fall away.

So, as we step out daily, may we step into new mercies.

Measureless mercy calls you out:

Genesis 12:1-9, "The Lord had said to Abram, 'go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you...'"

• **Mercy Interrupts**

Abram was not searching for God. He was living in Ur; a land steeped in idolatry. Joshua 24:2, tells us his family worshipped other gods. He did not qualify by right-

eousness, pedigree or performance; yet God interrupted his life with a call.

That interruption was mercy!

Mercy does not wait for you to be ready, rather it breaks into your ordinary routine and says: "I have more for you."

Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road was not looking for Jesus; he was persecuting Him. Yet mercy interrupted with a blinding light and a new direction.

• **Mercy Promises Before Performance**

Notice the order: God did not say, "Prove yourself first, then I'll bless you." He said, "Go... and I will bless you." (vv. 2-3). The promise came before Abram's obedience was perfected.

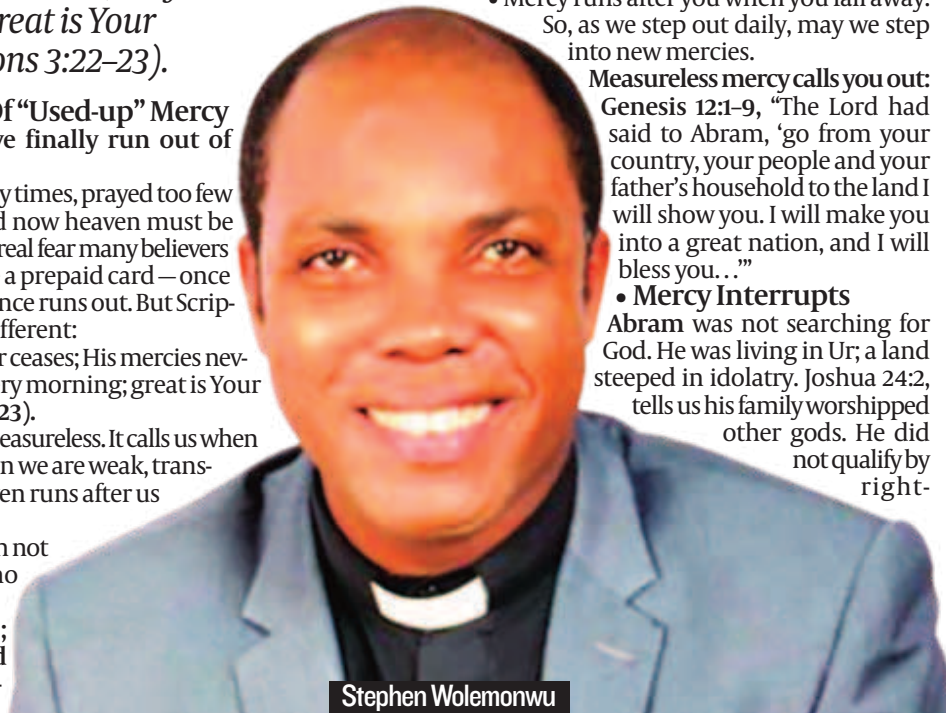
That's the nature of mercy; it gives a future before you have earned it. It declares blessing before you have built a résumé. The thief on the cross had no time to prove himself, no chance to perform; yet Jesus promised: "Today you will be with me in paradise." Mercy always speaks promise before performance.

• **Mercy Builds Altars**

Every time Abram encountered God, he built an altar (vv. 7-8). Mercy produces worship. When you realise you did not deserve the call, you cannot help, but bow in gratitude.

Altars are reminders that mercy met you where you were. They are declarations that God's call is bigger than your past. Jacob At Bethel. After mercy appeared in a dream, he built an altar and said: "Surely the Lord is in this place." Mercy always leaves us worshipping.

• **By The Ven. Stephen Wolemonwu, Rector, The Ibru Ecumenical Centre, Agbarha-Otor** stephenwolemonwu@gmail.com, 08035413812.



Stephen Wolemonwu

Preparing Now For Sex At Old Age

By Charles Ighele

APART from the spiritual union (1 Cor 6:15 and 16) and procreation, sex is real fun, which God created for humans to enjoy within the context of marriage. Couples should, therefore, deliberately enjoy it even when they are old. If you want to be physically strong to enjoy sex at old age, you have to drastically reduce a lot of those junk food and drinks that are not capable of making your body healthy. You know what I am talking about. Eat more of good stuff. Since the body of man was made from components of the soil, natural food and drinks from the earth will service the body and keep it healthier.

The body processes natural foods better than artificial stuff. By the time you add some mild exercises to non-junk food, you will be stronger for sex at old age.

Secondly, couples can start preparing for sex at old age when they start removing the cultural barriers in some cultures that make people to think that it is a taboo for grandparents or greatgrand parents to have sex. When all the children have grown and left the home, sex is one of the means of enjoyment, bonding and exercise that couples should look forward to. Spice up your old age with "sexercise."

Being psychologically too, old for sex is something young couples should psychologically guard against right from the beginning of their marriage. When the mind is fed with negative or no information about sex at old age, when old age begins to creep in, it (the mind) will not know how to respond to sex when that time comes. Such people, therefore, miss the beauty of sex at 60, sex at 70 and sex in their 80s and as far as their strength can take them. Sex at 70 may not be as regular like sex at 30. But it has been proved that the satisfaction derived by couples when they have sex at old age can be more than the satisfaction they had when they were younger if they bond more and mature with age.

Couples should psychologically prepare themselves to enjoy the old age "bottompot"

sexual satisfaction, which itself is another chapter, another experience.

For those who have not gone to the half time of life, now is the time to have the best of this wonderful God-given gift known as sex. Couples should not be ashamed at all. In fact, they should be adventurous about it. They should explore. They should use their brains to invent new ways of sexually making each other happy without necessarily being partakers of other people's sin, which they commit through pornography (Eph 5:7-13 and Rev 18:4). When you have the best of it now, your memory bank will be so full of good sexual memories that when you eventually possibly become too old for sex, you will think, gist and laugh about things you did sexually when you were younger.

By this time, you are likely to live on memories and memories can make life to be sweet, especially at old age. May your sexual memories make both of you laugh and laugh without others knowing why you are laughing. Love you!

• **Bishop Charles Ighele is the General Superintendent of Holy Spirit Mission, Lagos.**



Ighele

At Women's Conference: Familoni Tasks Mothers On Raising God Fearing Children, Christian Doctrine

By Chris Irekamba

PRESIDENT of the Mothers' Union and Women's Guild of the Missionary Diocese of Oyo South, Dr Modupe Familoni, has urged Christian mothers to intentionally raise their children in the fear of God and with unwavering Christian doctrine.

She disclosed this at the opening ceremony of the first yearly Women's Conference of the Missionary Diocese of Oyo South with the theme: "Keep Hope Alive," held recently at the Cathedral Church of St. John, Akinmorin, Oyo State.

She noted that many of the social problems confronting the nation are due to failures in family structure and called on women to remain steadfast in building strong family ties, nurturing godly children and contributing meaningfully to the development of Nigeria, despite the nation's

present socio-economic challenges.

Speaking on the theme of the conference, President, Mothers' Union, said the theme reminds believers that regardless of prevailing circumstances, God is still on the throne and remains faithful to His promises.

She said: "The situation in Nigeria today can easily discourage anyone. Every day we are confronted with disturbing reports of kidnapping, killings, rape, economic hardship, among others, such reports are capable of affecting mothers' emotionally and mentally. However, as children of God, we must not allow fear or hopelessness to define us. Our hope is in Christ, and we are confident that He will see us through every challenge."

"It is often said that when you educate a girl child, you educate a nation. Every woman is

a nation builder because she nurtures the future through the children God places in her care. The values, discipline, faith and character we instill in our children, today, will determine the quality of leadership and citizenship Nigeria will have tomorrow," she said.

Familoni called on the Oyo State Government to prioritise the health sector by upgrading healthcare facilities, recruiting medical doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, equipping hospitals with modern facilities and ensuring that every community has access to quality and affordable healthcare services.

The conference also urged the government to create an enabling environment that would reduce the continuous migration of healthcare professionals abroad, by improving the welfare of health workers.



President of the Women Organisation, Dr Modupe Familoni (left); her husband, Missioner, Diocese of Oyo South, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Rt Rev'd Olufemi Familoni; wife of the Archbishop of Ibadan Province, Mrs Catherine Aladekugbe, and wife of the Bishop of Oyo Diocese, Dr Felicia Oduntan, at the first Diocesan Women Conference at Akinmorin, Oyo State...recently

Text: Luke 14:16-17 (KJV): "Then said he unto him, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come; for all things are now ready."

THE greatest invitation ever extended to mankind is not to a palace, a position of honour or earthly riches. It is the invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ into the Kingdom of God. This invitation is not reserved for a selected few; it is extended to every man, woman, boy and girl, regardless of social status, nationality or past failures. It is an invitation of grace, mercy, forgiveness, eternal life and fellowship with God.

The Master is still calling today. His invitation is as urgent as it was when He walked upon the earth. Sadly, many people hear His voice, but choose to ignore it because they are occupied with worldly pleasures, business, wealth, ambition or sinful lifestyles. Yet the Master's invitation remains open, for His desire is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Jesus Himself declared: Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV): "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This invitation is for everyone who is weary from the burden of sin, fear, guilt, disappointment and hopelessness. Many people seek peace through money, education, entertainment or human relationships, but true peace can only be found in Christ. He alone has the power to forgive sins, heal broken hearts, and give eternal hope.

The Kingdom of God is a kingdom unlike any earthly kingdom. Earthly kingdoms rise and fall, but God's Kingdom is everlasting. Earthly rulers die, but our King lives forever. Earthly treasures fade away, but the inheritance prepared for God's children is eternal.

Jesus taught: Matthew 6:33 (KJV): "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The Lord wants His Kingdom to become our highest priority. Sadly, many people have re-

The Master's Invitation To The Kingdom

Living Waters

By Pastor Lazarus Muoka

Founder/General Overseer
The Lord's Chosen Charismatic
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• For more messages and testimonies visit: www.tlccrm.org 08056889396



versed this order. They seek wealth first, pleasure first, fame first, comfort first and only think about God when trouble comes. The Master invites us to make His Kingdom our first pursuit because everything else is temporary.

The invitation to the Kingdom is an invitation to repentance. Mark 1:14-15 (KJV): "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Repentance means turning away from sin and turning completely to God. It is not merely feeling sorry for wrongdoing, but making a deliberate decision to forsake sin and obey the Lord. God cannot welcome sin into His holy Kingdom. Therefore, everyone who accepts the invitation must come with a humble and repentant heart.

Many people rejected the invitation in the parable because they were occupied with temporary things. Luke 14:18-20 (KJV): "And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground... and another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen... and another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

Nothing has changed today. People still make excuses; some say they are too busy building their careers. Others say they want to enjoy life first before serving God. Some are held captive by sinful habits, while others fear losing friends if they become true followers of Christ. But every excuse that keeps a person away from Christ eventually leads to eternal regret.

The invitation of the Master is urgent because no one knows how long it will remain open. Life is uncertain, and tomorrow is never guaranteed.

Isaiah 55:6-7 (KJV) says: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Notice the wonderful promise: God will abundantly pardon. There is no sinner beyond the reach of God's mercy. Whether one has lived in rebellion for many years or has wandered far from the Lord, His grace is still available today. The blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse every repentant sinner.

The invitation also reminds us of God's amazing love. John 3:16 (KJV): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Cross of Christ is the greatest evidence that God desires to save mankind. Jesus willingly suffered shame, rejection, scourging, crucifixion, and death, so that sinners might become citizens of His Kingdom. His resurrection proved His victory over sin, death and hell. Therefore, everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

However, the invitation also carries a solemn warning. Those who continually reject Christ will one day face eternal separation from God.

Jesus said: John 3:36 (KJV): "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

God does not force anyone into His Kingdom. Every person must choose whether to accept or reject His gracious invitation. Sadly, many postpone their decision until it is too late. Death may come unexpectedly or the Lord Himself may return. Then the opportu-

nity to repent will be gone forever.

The Master's invitation is also an invitation to holy living. 1 Peter 1:15-16 (KJV): "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy."

Those who enter God's Kingdom are called to live differently from the world. They are to love righteousness, hate sin, forgive others, walk in humility, serve faithfully and shine as lights in a dark generation. A transformed life becomes evidence that one truly belongs to Christ.

The reward awaiting those who accept the invitation is beyond human imagination. Revelation 21:3-4 (KJV): "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

What a glorious future awaits the redeemed! Every sorrow will end. Every tear will be wiped away. There will be no sickness, no death, no fear, no disappointment and no separation from God. The saints will enjoy everlasting joy in the presence of the King.

Dear friend, the Master's invitation is sounding once again today. He is calling you, not tomorrow, not next year, but now. He is inviting you into His Kingdom of righteousness, peace and everlasting life. Do not allow the cares of this world, sinful pleasures, pride or unbelief to keep you away. Come with a repentant heart. Come in faith. Come while the door of mercy is still open.

The Lord Jesus says in Rev. 22:17 (KJV): "And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Will you answer the Master's invitation today? The banquet is prepared. The Kingdom is ready. The Saviour is waiting with open arms. Accept His invitation, surrender your life to Him completely, and become a citizen of the everlasting Kingdom where joy never ends. May none of us hear the invitation in vain, but may we respond with faith, repentance and wholehearted obedience; so that, when the King returns, we shall rejoice with Him forever. **Amen!**

Testimony Of The Lord's Doing

MY name is Christian Chimezie. I reside at Okeafa, Lagos. I became a member of The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries in 2005. I came to the church because I had serious issues with my business. My business at the initial stage was flourishing, suddenly everything nose-dived; I could not make ends meet again. Because of that, I became a beggar and was going about looking for help. So, this led me to a friend and I asked him to help me raise money, so that, I could start my business again.

Surprisingly, the friend I was relying on said, he did not have anything, but he would direct me to a place where things will be alright for me. I thought he would direct me to where I would borrow money, but he said I should go to Ijesha.

He showed me how to get to my destination and I arrived here that day. I still remembered vividly that fateful day on October 1,

2005, the church was having men's programme.

As I came in and sat down, I listened to the G.O.'s message. I was very much fascinated by the message, so I continued to come.

One day, I had the opportunity to meet G.O. one-on-one and told him that I had nothing doing and that my children were all in secondary

From Rags To Riches

school. He asked if I had paid my tithe, I said I had nothing doing. So, he brought one finger, pointed it on my forehead and said: "Go and prosper!"

When I went to my shop that day, because I still had my shop, but somehow it

was empty, even the remaining small goods there, no one asked me how much, let alone to buy. But after the G.O.'s prayer that day, I got to my shop and sold goods worth N4,500:00. The money was like one million to me; so, I started thinking

of what I would do with the money since G.O. said I should not sell alcohol again.

One day, I went to Abule-Egba, and used that N4,500 to buy pull-overs (sweaters) because that year, there was this chilling cold that Nigerians experienced. From N4,500, God helped me, and the money increased to

N200,000. Not long, I started traveling to Togo to buy shoes. Oooh, God of Chosen is so great! While, I was in that wilderness experience, my unpaid children's school fees rose to N150,000. God helped me, I cleared my debt. People were coming from different places to patronise my shoe business. **Praise the Lord!**



Testifiers in a queue to testify what God has done for them at Mgbidi 2026 Crusade, titled: "What God has determined shall be done," held recently at The Chosen International Secondary School Complex, Mgbidi, Imo State.

Forgiveness In The Father's Family (1)

THOSE who have renounced their sinful habits including wicked activities and have received salvation from Jesus Christ are born again. They are generally recognised as children of God.

Not only that, they belong to the Father's family and are expected to develop and maintain a thriving fellowship with God and His other children. Yet, there may come a time when, in a feat of mindlessness and carelessness, they act in ways that might "trespass against thee," and against other believers. Christ commands us on the way to handle such personal offences.

It does not relate to church discipline, doctrinal or ministerial offence or a person's offence in society. Rather, it refers to offences of a wife to the husband and vice versa, or a member to another member or leader of the church. If the fellow apologises, then fellowship, understanding and relationship are promptly restored. "But if (the person) will not hear thee (personally), then take with thee one or two more..." to settle with him; "that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." If the offender is your wife or husband, do not go to their parents or your in-laws. Stay within the confine of the fellowship of believers to resolve issues.

After these efforts, if the offender refuses to acknowledge his or her fault, Christ says, "tell it unto the church." This is not to report the matter before the whole congregation, but to table it before the leaders in the local assembly. Even if "he neglect to hear the church," do not become bitter in your heart or let it affect the progress of your Christian journey. Instead, "let him be unto thee as an heathen," because he does not have the grace to be a believer. However, if he needs common help such as with food and water or the gospel, give it to him. Moreover, as believers, we should not be offended at everything. We must come to maturity so that we do not consider every lit-

tle action, word or behaviour as offensive.

Everyone on earth needs conversion to get to the kingdom of God. Forgiveness by a human being is good, especially for our relationships, but it is not conversion and not good enough for heaven. Christ said: "Except ye be converted," forgiven by the Lord and your life turns around by grace, "and (you) become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." A child cannot show childlike characteristics until he is born. Similarly, you cannot show the characteristics of childlikeness until you are born into the Kingdom. Otherwise, the display of such characteristics would be artificial.

When an offending brother or sister does not think they have done anything wrong, you have to take the initiative to resolve the matter. Taking initiative is deciding to talk about it with courage. You might have to draw strength from the word of God and pray before you "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." If the person accepts his error, forgive him and let fellowship, understanding and sharing return. Interact with him as if he never offended you.

If the offender will not acknowledge his fault and apologise,

But if (the person) will not hear thee (personally), then take with thee one or two more... to settle with him; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. But "if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church," do not bear grudge in your heart.

Springs Of Wisdom

By Pastor
W. F. Kumuyi



do not stop for the sake of his soul and your peace; "take with thee one or two more" brethren who are mature and impartial, and go to him for reconciliation. But "if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church," do not bear grudge in your heart. Keep relating with the fellow as you do with everyone else.

We must forgive obstinate backsliders who have offended us. But we must also let them know that human forgiveness is not enough to take them to heaven. As evil and terrorising as Saul was, David forgave him. However, that forgiveness was not sufficient to take Saul to heaven, as he did not have the forgiveness of God that comes with a change of heart. In his unconverted nature, he persistently persecuted David and even consulted a witch when God would not respond to him. He died eventually still unconverted. David showed he had truly forgiven him by showing mercy to Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson. Whether people change or not, we should learn to forgive them from the heart.

• **Further reading (King James Version):** Matthew 18:15-35. Matthew 18:3,4; Acts 5:30,31; 26:16-18; Colossians 1:13,14. Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3,4; Ephesians 4:30-32; Colossians 3:12-17. Matthew 18:17; Ezekiel 17:12; Hosea 11:7,12; Jeremiah 8:4-9,20-22. Matthew 18:18; 16:19; Job 22:21-23, 28. Matthew 18:19,20. Matthew 18:21,22. Matthew 18:23-35. Matthew 18:32-35. Matthew 18:7,8. Ephesians 3:19-21.

By Abel Ukachi Amadi

Key verse: Galatians 4:19: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you," (KJV).

CHRISt is formed in a person through a progressive, spiritual transformation. It begins with surrendering to Jesus in faith, followed by the Holy Spirit continually shaping the believer's inner heart, mind and character, so that their daily actions and attitudes will increasingly mirror the life of Jesus Christ. Paul's desire for the Galatian brethren whom he birthed in faith is that, they will experience spiritual transformation. Paul uses the intense imagery of a mother in labour to describe his emotional and spiritual agony. He had already endured this pain to see them saved, but their drift into legalism forced him to labour for them all over again. Paul's desire is not that the Galatians become better rule-keepers, but that the very character, mind and life of Jesus Christ take shape within them. Spiritual maturity is an inside-out transformation. As noted in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we are continually being changed into His image. It is Christ living His life in and through us.

There are some roadblocks hindering believers, today, from Christ being formed in them.

That Christ Be Formed In You (6)

RESTORATION HOUR

Text: Galatians 4:8-20

One of them is legalism that is, relying on your self-effort and willpower to achieve holiness, instead of grace. Stunted spiritual growth is another roadblock. Stunted spiritual growth is primarily caused by unconfessed sin, neglect of spiritual disciplines (like prayer and scripture reading), and worldly distractions. When the heart focuses heavily on temporal pursuits, it creates a loss of intimacy with God.

Neglecting Spiritual Disciplines: Irregular prayer, infrequent study of sacred texts, and skipping community worship deprive the spirit of the necessary fuel to mature. Unresolved unforgiveness is another roadblock. This creates a severe barrier to experiencing the fullness of God's love and grace. Lack of total surrender to God is another roadblock. The inability to die to personal preferences and agendas and surrendering totally and completely to God's will for one's life.

Spiritual formation is a process of Christ being formed in us. That is the goal of spiritual maturity. This process starts with initial surrender and continues with the Holy Spirit dwelling in us to bear the fruits of the Spirit. Believers

ought to renew their mind by allowing their thought processes to align with the teachings of Christ (Romans 12:2). Always yielding to the Holy Spirit for guidance, correction and empowerment. The Holy Spirit empowers a person to put the "flesh" (selfish desires) to death while allowing Christ's nature to be expressed outwardly. Spiritual growth often involves perseverance, where trials, suffering, and challenges are used by God to shape patience, compassion and resilience.

Our character



Amadi

experiences transformation through both the instantaneous workings of the Holy Spirit and the incremental progressive workings of the Holy Spirit, so that our outer conduct can and should become a natural expression or outflow of the character and teaching of Jesus. The call to Christlikeness is that, we conform our lives into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Our transformation process into the likeness of Christ should be ever increasing (2 Corinthians 3:18). God's final eschatological purpose is that, we shall be like Him when He appears in glory (1 John 3:2). We must have an intentional partnership with God for Christ to be formed in us. It is partnership with God to work out His good pleasure in our lives (Philippians 2:12-13). We must allow our hearts to be transformed into a state of obedience to all things whatsoever that God has commanded us.

• **Today's nugget:** Work out His good pleasure. Prayer: Lord help my character to reflect Christlikeness. Prayer lines: 08033299824. Email: amadiabelukachi@gmail.com, Rev. Abel Ukachi Amadi, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God Nigeria.

The Benefits Of Adoration (cont)

(5.3) Adoration programmes our minds to meditate on wholesome materials

"FINALLY, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. 9: The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you," (Phil 4:8-9).

4:8: What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Paul tells us to programme our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praiseworthy. Do you have problems with impure thoughts and daydreams? Examine what you are putting into your mind through television, books, conversations, movies and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. Above all, read God's word and pray. Ask God to help you focus your mind on what is good and pure. It takes practice, but it can be done.

4:8: "Whatever things are pure." To experience God's peace and freedom from anxiety, believers must fix their minds on

Biblical Womanhood

By Emeritus
Prof. Mercy Olumide



Adoration (71)

those things that are true, noble, right and pure, among others.

If you do these things, says Paul, "the God of peace shall be with you" (v.9). The consequences of fixing our minds on the unholy things of the world are that the joy of God's nearness and peace are lost and our hearts are no longer guarded.

4:9: It is not enough to hear or read the Word of God or even

to know it well. We must also put it into practice. How easy it is to listen to a sermon and forget what the preacher said. How easy it is to read the Bible and not think about how to live differently. How easy it is to debate what a passage means and not live out that meaning. Exposure to God's word is not enough. It must lead to obedience.

"And He said: "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21: For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications and murders. 22: Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23: All these evil things come from within and defile a man," (Mark 7:20-23).

7:20-23: An evil action begins with a single thought. Allowing our minds to dwell on lust, envy, hatred, or revenge will lead to sin. Don't defile yourself by focusing on evil. Instead, follow Paul's advice in Philippians 4:8 and think about what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable.

7:20-23: "The heart of men." In this passage "defiles" (v.20) means being defiled spiritually because of sins that come from the heart.

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Celebrating The
5TH
CORONATION
ANNIVERSARY
 OF
HIS MAJESTY
OGIAME
ATUWATSE
III, CFR
THE OLU OF WARRI

On August 21, 2026, His Majesty, the Olu of Warri, will celebrate fifth distinguished years on the revered throne of his forefathers.

In keeping with its tradition of honouring milestones of great national and cultural significance, The Guardian will publish a Special Report on this day to commemorate His Majesty's 5th Coronation Anniversary.

We warmly invite well-wishers of the Olu of Warri and the Itsekiri Nation, as well as business associates, friends, protégés, institutions, and admirers of His Majesty, to partner with us through felicitations or congratulatory adverts in marking this royal occasion and celebrating His Majesty.

Join us in paying tribute to His Majesty's exemplary leadership, inspiring vision, and devoted service to his people.



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How Tantita’s Surveillance Operations In Niger Delta Boosts Nigeria’s \$1tr Economy Drive, Ecological Recovery

Nigeria’s vision of achieving a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 requires a stable and prosperous economy that is driven by peace and stability. The pipeline surveillance contract awarded to Tantita Security Services Nigeria Ltd (TSSNL) by the Federal Government to protect oil assets in the Niger Delta has proven to be central in achieving the target even as it has aided the region’s ecological recovery,
ONYEDIKA AGBEDO Reports.

THE Policy Advisory Council report on the national economy had set an ambitious goal of achieving a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$1 trillion, with clearly defined priority areas and strategies, which include maximising opportunities available to Nigeria in the oil sector that contributes over 75 per cent of its FX earnings.

Effectively harnessing the oil revenue requires that the Niger Delta, a region severally described as the goose that lays the golden eggs, must also be at peace and oil infrastructure across the region well secured. That is where the Federal Government’s appointment of Tantita Security Services Nigeria Ltd (TSSNL) to protect oil assets and ensure peace and stability in the Niger Delta comes to play. That singular act will contribute positively to Nigeria’s vision of achieving a \$1 trillion economy by 2030.

By the appointment, TSSNL, led by High Chief Government Oweizide Ekpemupolo, alias Tompolo, is mandated to protect Nigeria’s oil assets in the Niger Delta region through its security operations and support the national economy in getting the full benefits of oil resources.

The firm works in collaboration with other security outfits to achieve its mandate of securing oil assets and ensuring peace and stability in the Niger Delta region. And its operations has so far ensured the security of oil pipelines, paving the way for uninterrupted flow of petroleum resources and ensuring that Nigeria migrated from a position of constant loss management to stability, planning, growth and development.

The TSSNL operations have transformed the oil and gas landscape and allowed Nigeria to expand oil production quota and significantly cut rampant oil theft. Its track record in mitigating risks associated with oil pipelines has positioned it as a reliable partner in preserving Nigeria’s economic backbone.

The impact of its operations was captured in a recent survey, with the majority of the respondents attributing the de-escalation of security incidents in the Niger-Delta region to pipeline surveillance operations by the firm.

According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED), violent events declined by 20.9 per cent in the South-South geopolitical region between 2023 and 2025. The rate of fatalities arising from such violent events in the oil rich region declined by 8.3 per cent within the same period. Although the rate of similar conflicts declined by a higher margin of 26.9 per cent in the South-East region, the rate of fatalities resulting from such events increased within the region by 8.3 per cent.

The violent events tracked by ACLED within the period under review include violence against civilians, battles between the authorities and armed groups, protests, strategic developments, riots and explosions/remote violence.

The South-West recorded a decline of 14.1 per cent in the total number of incidents between 2023 and 2025. However, the fatality rate increased by 12.21 per cent.

The reports further showed that North-West incidents increased by 127.9 per cent between 2023 and 2025 and in the process, recorded an increase of 99.1 per cent in fatality rate.

What Statistics Say

THE National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Nigeria’s statistical body, had released the rebased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figure for the first time in more than a decade. It puts Nigeria’s GDP at N372.8 trillion in 2024, after the base year for calculating the figure was shifted to 2019. Investment drive, attractiveness to global financial markets and facilitating Nigeria’s quest for a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 are flashpoints for the rebased economy.

Nigeria’s Statistician-General, Adeyemi Adeniran, explained how the economy had fared in the rebased GDP report. He said: “In nominal terms, the rebased GDP for 2019 stood at N205.09tr; N213.63tr in 2020; N243.30tr in 2021; N274.23tr in 2022; N314.02tr in 2023, and N372.82tr in 2024.”

Adeniran revealed that incorporated new and emerging sectors, consumption baskets update and data collection refining methods helped produce a more complete picture of national output.

Stakeholders Speak

SPEAKING during the recent CERA Week conference hosted by S&P Global in Houston, Executive Vice President of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Ltd, Udy Ntia, said that Nigeria has transformed into an investor’s haven.

“With the Petroleum Industry Act and robust regulatory reforms, we have already attracted \$17 billion in new investments,” he revealed.

In a published report, President General, Niger Delta Progressive Alliance, Nse Victor Udoh, said pipeline protection has enabled national institutions to progress from reactive crisis management to strategic foresight, from temporary containment to durable systems-building, and from uncertainty-driven decisions to calculated national ambition.

“It is important to clarify the role of pipeline surveillance within the wider energy landscape. Energy security encompasses the full value chain, from exploration and production to refining, distribution, pricing policy, and subsidy frameworks. Pipeline surveillance does not manage these domains. “Its mandate is precise: safeguarding critical infrastructure that transports petroleum resources. Yet this single function has proven foundational. Without secure transportation channels, production targets falter, refining plans collapse, exports decline and fiscal projections become unreliable.

“Asset protection, in this context, is not a supporting activity.

Illegal refining and pipeline sabotage once left waterways polluted, farmlands infertile, and communities trapped in cycles of hazard and insecurity. With sustained surveillance operations dismantling illegal sites and preventing repeated breaches, ecological recovery has begun.

It is a precondition for economic order. In effect, the pipeline is the hinge on which the entire petroleum value chain turns. When that hinge is weak, every other link in the chain carries strain. When it is secure, the entire system gains coherence,” he said.

The immediate impact has been operational. Sustained monitoring and rapid response systems have sharply reduced pipeline breaches and illegal tapping. Receipt rates have climbed towards full recovery, with national output rising to levels not seen in recent memory.

This redirection has restored Nigeria’s credibility in international oil markets, allowing it to reclaim market share lost to Angola and Libya.

“Economic stability follows predictability. When crude flows are secure, refineries can plan feedstock intake with assurance. Export commitments can be met without fear of sudden shortfalls. Gas-to-power projects can operate without recurrent shutdown risks.

“Investors can assess Nigeria’s petroleum sector with clearer risk profiles. Surveillance therefore does more than stop theft. It reintroduces reliability into national energy planning. And reliability is the bedrock upon which sustainable economic growth is built. With predictable flows, national budgeting becomes more credible, infrastructure planning becomes more precise, and long-term contracts become easier to negotiate. Predictability is the silent currency of modern economies and pipeline surveillance has begun restoring it,” Udoh added.

Further benefits extend into public finance. Higher accounted-for production translates directly into increased export revenues, improved foreign exchange inflows, and strengthened fiscal capacity. National oil company performance in recent years illustrates this shift towards profitability and efficiency, driven in part by reduced losses and enhanced operational continuity.

AS revenues stabilise, government budgeting gains credibility. Development planning becomes less speculative. The national economy gains breathing

space to invest in infrastructure, social services and diversification. This breathing space matters. It allows policy makers to think beyond survival and begin shaping structural reforms, industrial expansion and long-term social investment. It also reduces dependence on emergency borrowing and short-term fiscal patchwork.

Against this backdrop, traditional rulers and community leaders in the Niger Delta have called for continued support for TSSNL following a vote of confidence passed on the firm by the National Assembly recently.

The leaders said the company’s involvement in securing oil and gas pipelines has led to visible improvements in oil-producing communities, particularly in reducing crime and creating jobs for youths.

President-General of the Isoko Development Union, Christopher Akpotu, had praised the joint committee of the Senate and House of Representatives for dismissing petitions filed against the firm.

He described the decision as a positive step for the Niger Delta and urged stakeholders to focus on economic gains rather than internal disagreements.

“That is the right way to go,” he said. “There are many opportunities in the oil and gas sector. We should focus on how to derive more benefits rather than fighting over what has already been allocated.”

Akpotu warned that continued disputes among communities could allow outsiders to take over opportunities meant for host communities. “At the end of the day, if we continue fighting, we give room to those who have no stake in our communities to take what rightfully belongs to us,” he added.

While acknowledging concerns over unequal distribution of benefits, he said the surveillance contract has made a clear difference in the lives of many young people.

“The truth is that many communities and youths have benefited from the surveillance contract. It may not be evenly distributed, but the impact is evident,” he said.

He urged the company to involve more stakeholders, including traditional rulers, youths and community leaders to ensure fairness and long-term success.

Similarly, the President-General of the Ughelli Descendants Union, Sam Akpemeji, said the company has improved security since it began operations, noting that both visible and intelligence-based strategies have been deployed.

“They have done very well and improved security since they began operations,” he said, adding that the firm’s activities now cover a large number of communities.

Akpemeji said the company’s presence has brought benefits to both traditional institutions and residents, and called for continued backing.

In the same vein, the Odiologbo of Ofagbe Kingdom, Ogaga Ikpoku, supported the decision of the National Assembly, describing it as timely and beneficial to peace and stability in the region.

Overall, asset protection has also produced environmental and social dividends, particularly in the Niger Delta. Illegal refining and pipeline sabotage once left waterways polluted, farmlands infertile, and communities trapped in cycles of hazard and insecurity. With sustained surveillance operations dismantling illegal sites and preventing repeated breaches, ecological recovery has begun.



Tompolo

Transforming Resource Wealth To Knowledge Wealth For National Development

By Alfred Okoigun

EVERY generation inherits a defining challenge, a question that ultimately determines whether it advances or declines. For the generation of our parents, the question was political independence, but for many third world countries that emerged after the Second World War, the question bothered on industrialisation.

For our generation, the question is different. It is more complex and calls for a more urgent and perhaps more consequential response.

The question before us is this: can Nigeria successfully transform its vast wealth of natural resources into a knowledge based wealth? This is because the future will not belong to nations that merely possess natural resources. On the contrary, it will belong to nations that possess capabilities, nations that can create, innovate, solve problems and continuously generate value through knowledge. Do we as a people belong to this category of nations with value based knowledge? That is the defining question of our time. The answer to this all encompassing question will determine whether the Nigerian nation is moving in the right or wrong direction.

When Nigeria gained independence, we were blessed with extraordinary natural endowments including oil, gas, coal and other mineral resources some of which we are getting to know of their existence buried in the ground. There were agricultural resources from the North to the South with a vast land mass. Palm produce, cocoa, cotton and groundnuts to mention a few are still there and ministering to our needs. We have a strategic geographic location. And most importantly, a large and energetic population of 242 million people, projected to rise by over 130 million by 2050, outpacing the U.S. to become the third largest population in the world, standing at between 375 and 440 million people.

For decades, our national conversation focused heavily on the resources beneath our soil. But history has taught us an important lesson. Natural resources can create opportunities for employment and as export products that add to our foreign exchange reserves. Beyond helping to cushion our import needs, they add little to our gross domestic primary products and cannot guarantee prosperity. Resources can generate income, but knowledge creates wealth. Resources can be exhausted while knowledge increases, multiplies and compounds. Resources are inherited, but knowledge is built in time and space.

Nations that fail to understand this distinction eventually discover that possessing resources and creating prosperity are not the same thing.

The countries that dominate the global economy today understood this principle early in the day, recalibrating their priorities for the future. South Korea's journey may be one of the most instructive lessons for Nigeria. In the early 1960s, South Korea was one of the poorest nations of the world, with a national economy worth only a few billion dollars and exports accounting for less than three per cent of its GDP. Its leaders made a deliberate choice. They decided that their future would not be determined by what they lacked; it would be determined by what they built. They invested heavily in education. They invested in engineering. They invested in research and in technology. Today South Korea is a nearly two-trillion-dollar economy and home to globally dominant companies such as Samsung, Hyundai, LG and the SK Group. Its exports account for more than 40 per cent of GDP, and it ranks among the world's leading nations in research and development, advanced manufacturing, semiconductors and digital technology. Sixty years ago, few people would have imagined such an outcome. That is the power of vision combined with execution.

Also, Singapore demonstrates what is possible when a nation commits itself to human capital development. At independence in 1965, Singapore was a small trading port with few natural resources and significant development challenges.

Today, it consistently ranks among the world's most competitive economies and enjoys one of the highest standards of living globally. Through sustained investments in education, institutional excellence, innovation and technology, it transformed itself into a global hub for finance, advanced manufacturing, logistics and research.

Singapore proved that a nation's greatest resource is not what lies beneath its soil, but what exists within the minds of its people.

China offers perhaps the largest example of a knowledge-driven economic transformation in modern history. Over several decades, China invested heavily in scientific research, engineering education, manufacturing capability and industrial development. Today, it possesses the world's largest manufacturing sector and has become a global leader in advanced technologies, renewable energy, robotics, artificial intelligence and high-value manufacturing.

China now spends trillions of yuan yearly on research and development, producing more engineering graduates than any nation on earth. Its rise was not accidental. It was the result of long-term investments in knowledge capability and national competitiveness.

The ARCO journey reinforced a simple belief: the most valuable asset any organisation possesses is not equipment. It is not facilities. It is not even capital. It is knowledge. Today, ARCO operates across engineering, marine services, asset integrity, aviation training and advanced technologies including drone operations.

The above cited countries parade different histories, different cultures and different political systems. Yet the pattern remains remarkably consistent. The lesson here is that nations rise when they invest in knowledge and in contrast, nations stagnate when they rely exclusively on what nature has provided.

A Personal Experience

I HAVE seen this principle firsthand. More than four decades ago, when ARCO was founded, the easy path would have been to focus solely on trading opportunities created by Nigeria's growing energy industry. Instead, a different path was chosen, a path based on learning, a path based on partnerships, and a path based on capability development.

When ARCO began operations in 1980, we started as the Nigerian representative of major international engineering companies. Some viewed those relationships simply as commercial opportunities, but there was a deeper lesson. Every interaction was an opportunity to learn and to acquire knowledge, to understand global standards, to build local competences and transfer expertise into Nigerian hands. Over time, those lessons became capabilities, which became business-

es that created jobs. And those jobs created opportunities for thousands of Nigerians.

The ARCO journey reinforced a simple belief: the most valuable asset any organisation possesses is not equipment. It is not facilities. It is not even capital. It is knowledge.

Today, ARCO operates across engineering, marine services, asset integrity, aviation training and advanced technologies including drone operations. Yet if you look closely, all of these activities have one thing in common - they are ultimately about solving problems, applying expertise and creating value through human capabilities. That is why our philosophy remains: Powering Progress Through Quality Solutions. Not through resources. Not through circumstances. Not through luck but through solutions. And solutions are born from knowledge, from innovations. They are born from people.

The Petroleum Training Institute Example

THE good news is that Nigeria is not starting from ground zero. We already have examples of institutions that were built with exactly this philosophy in mind. One such example is the Petroleum Training Institute. Established in 1973, the PTI in Effurun, Warri was created to develop the technical and engineering manpower required to support the economy's growing petroleum industry. It represented a simple but powerful idea, which is that national development requires more than natural resources. It requires people with the knowledge and skills to transform those resources

into economic value. Over the decades, the PTI has produced thousands of engineers, technologists, technicians and industry professionals who have contributed significantly to Nigeria's energy sector and broader economy. I know this firsthand because I am proud to be one of its graduates.

Nigeria's First Gas Re-injection Seminar

I ALSO had the privilege of convening Nigeria's first Gas Re-injection Seminar at PTI in 1982. At a time when gas utilisation was still an emerging national conversation, the seminar brought together stakeholders to discuss issues that would later become central to Nigeria's energy future. Looking back, the lesson remains clear: the most valuable outcome was not the event itself. It was the exchange of knowledge, the development of ideas, the strengthening of local expertise and the building of capabilities. That is what institutions such as PTI make possible, and that is why investing in knowledge remains one of the most important forms of nation building.

Nigeria, Home of Talent and Creativity

THE above sub-head brings me to what I believe is Nigeria's greatest strategic advantage: people, talented people that is, creative people, resilient and ambitious people. Those who doubt Nigeria's ability to become a scientific and technological powerhouse need only examine what Nigerians have already achieved when given the opportunity to compete on the world stage: Philip Emeagwali helped pioneer advances in high-performance computing; Bartholomew Nnaji contributed significantly to robotics, manufacturing systems and engineering innovations, earning recognition across the world before returning home to help build similar institutions in his country; Abidemi Ajiboye's groundbreaking biomedical engineering research is helping to restore movement to individuals living with paralysis;

Oluwasanmi Koyejo is helping shape the future of artificial intelligence and machine learning at the highest levels of global research; Azeez Butali's work in genetics is advancing scientific knowledge and understanding and improving healthcare outcomes for patients around the world.

•Mr. Okoigun, founder ARCO Group Plc, delivered this speech on the occasion of The Nigerian Academy of Engineering Technology dinner and awards night, recently.



Okoigun

Fire, Most Underestimated Of All Risks – Bamiduro

FIRE has been described as one of the "most underestimated risks" taken by humans, of which many individuals and organisations have paid the sad and costly price in the past.

This is because a fire can break out anywhere, anytime and without notice.

Consequently, companies, organisations, individuals and homes are always looking out for how to mitigate it through the adoption and application of new methodologies in their fire protection and fighting protocols.

To the Managing Director/CEO of Chimera Live Line Technology Nigeria Limited, Mr. Olusegun Ayobami Bamiduro, a military-trained Technical Engineer who studied

Explosives Science and Engineering while in the service of the Nigerian Army, and whose industry experience in the specialised field of "Passive Fire Protection" spans over a decade in Nigeria with many successfully executed projects to his credit, fire protection and its fighting protocols globally are categorised into two: active and passive.

Speaking at the just concluded Fire Conference in Ikeja, hosted by the Lagos State government, Bamiduro stated that while a great majority of the public are conversant with the "active" aspect of fire fighting methods, which has to do with using all available tools and human resources to fight or curtail

the outbreak or spread of fire, the "passive" aspect, which he described as equally very effective, is not very well known in Nigeria.

According to him, "that is the gap my company has come to fill."

"Our focus, in our own space, is the passive aspect of fire prevention or fire fighting. While the active aspect is generally known and is in the public domain viz-a-viz using all available tools and human resources to fight and curtail fire spread, the passive system is not very well known in Nigeria," Bamiduro said.

His company, Chimera Live Line Technology Nig Ltd, is the official representative of Live

Line Technology (RSA) Ltd, the manufacturers of Combine Dropped Out Surge Arrester Unit (COMBI UNIT) that has just been approved for use by Ikeja Electric and also being considered by other Discos operating in the country.

Bamiduro said the mission of the company is simply to "deliver innovative, problem-solving technical solutions that exceed our customers' expectations with uncompromising integrity and zero negligence in providing the life safety and property protection that companies, organisations, schools and homes need to proactively prevent fire outbreaks, and in the event of an outbreak, effectively combat it to a halt."

Inside Oba Kasali's One Decade Of Legacy, Vision For Igbogbo

By Suliyat Tella

THE story of His Royal Majesty, Oba (Barr.) Semideen Orimadegun Kasali, Emugoriade I, the Adeboluwa of Igbogbo Kingdom, did not begin in a palace. It began in Okobaba in Ebute Metta, Lagos, where he was born on October 28, 1968, to the family of late Paa Idowu Kasali and late Alhaja Sidiqat Kasali (née Odusanya).

Like many children growing up in Lagos at the time, his days revolved around school, family and the pursuit of education. Becoming a traditional ruler was not part of the picture.

Nearly six decades later, the same man now occupies one of the oldest traditional stools in Ikorodu Division, and as Igbogbo Kingdom prepares to celebrate the 10th anniversary of his ascension, the occasion has become more than a royal milestone. It is also a moment to reflect on the path that brought a lawyer and public servant to the throne, the changes witnessed in the community over the past decade and the direction he hopes the kingdom will take in the years ahead. The week-long anniversary celebration, scheduled to hold between July 19 and July 26, 2026, has been designed to reflect those priorities. The anniversary is not only limited to ceremonies and festivities, the palace has lined up activities centred on education, healthcare, community service, youth engagement, culture and religion.

The celebration itself, however, did not begin in July. On April 7, the palace organised a free Computer-Based Test (CBT) training for 500 Senior Secondary School students drawn from six public schools across Igbogbo. The programme, held at HOMAT CBT Centre, formed the first major activity marking the anniversary.

Students from Zumratul Islamiyah Grammar School, Community Secondary School, Bayeku, Lagos State Model College, Agunfoye, Reri Secondary School, Oreta, Oreyo Grammar School and Civil Service Model College received practical CBT training, examination strategies and career guidance aimed at improving their preparedness for the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination.

Addressing the students, Oba Kasali urged them to make full use of the opportunity before them.

He reminded them that examinations had become increasingly technology-driven and that mistakes during computer-based examinations could have lasting consequences.

"I want to appeal to every one of you that you have this rare opportunity that is put in place to make sure you excel. Make sure you make use of it," he told the students.

The programme featured education administrators, political office holders and community

leaders.

Among them was the Tutor-General and Permanent Secretary, Education District II, Mrs Omotayo Sanni, who said the initiative aligned with Lagos State's emphasis on youth development through education.

The Chairman of Igbogbo/Bayeku Local Council Development Area, Hon. Omo'ba Olalekan Hamed Aroyewun, also encouraged the students not to fear failure but to remain determined.

Following the CBT training, the palace unveiled the official commemorative Aso-Ebi for the anniversary in April before formally presenting the week-long programme during a press briefing held at the Adeboluwa Palace on June 27.

Representing the monarch at the briefing, Oloye Jelili Oduntan, the Balogun of Igbogbo, offered the opening prayer before community leaders outlined the significance of the celebration.

In his opening remarks, Chief Tajudeen Onasanya, the Odofin of Igbogbo, took guests through the journey that eventually brought Oba Kasali to the throne.

Long before becoming the Adeboluwa in 2016, he recalled, the monarch had already rendered important service to the community.

According to him, Oba Kasali successfully handled a legal matter on behalf of Igbogbo in 2005, years before anyone imagined he would one day become the community's traditional ruler.

Looking back, Chief Onasanya described that episode as one of the moments that demonstrated the future monarch's commitment to Igbogbo long before he occupied the throne.

The briefing also brought together prominent sons and daughters of the community, including the Vice Chairman of Igbogbo/Bayeku LCDA, Hon. Ade Ayeni, who represented the council chairman, Hon. Omo'ba Olalekan Hamed Aroyewun; Chairman of the 10th Coronation Anniversary Planning Committee and former Lagos State Head of Service, Prince Adesegun Olushola Ogunlewe; Vice Chairman of the committee, Mrs Adebimpe Akinsola; Mr Babatunde Afuwape; and the Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Tertiary Education, Prince Waheed Kasali, among others.

Addressing journalists, Prince Ogunlewe described the anniversary as an opportunity to celebrate not only the monarch but also the history of the Adeboluwa stool.

Tracing the lineage of the throne, he noted that the institution predates the 20th century and has been occupied by successive traditional rulers, including Oba Kashimawo, Oba Oso Ojuba, Oba Banjoko, Oba Bamosu, Oba Molaja Ogunlewe, Oba Omodinwajaye Odugboise, Oba Fatola Johnson and now Oba Semideen Orimadegun Kasali, the eighth Adeboluwa of Igbogbo Kingdom.

According to him, each reign has contributed to preserving the customs, identity and heritage of the ancient community, while the current monarch's decade on the throne has coincided with renewed attention to infrastructure, education and community development. He pointed to the completion of a new royal palace as one of the visible landmarks of the reign.

He also highlighted the establishment of a Nigeria Immigration Service office in Igbogbo, a development that has brought passport and immigration services closer to residents while expanding the presence of federal institutions within the community.

The committee chairman further listed improvements in healthcare, including the upgrade of the Primary Health Centre at Igbelelaara and the establishment of another Primary Health Centre supported through the Sustainable Development Goals initiative.

He also ac-

knowledge the road projects undertaken through state and federal government interventions, describing them as part of the improvements recorded within the kingdom during the past decade.

While the anniversary committee highlighted the projects completed during the past decade, Oba Kasali himself is reluctant to claim personal credit for the changes recorded in Igbogbo.

Throughout his conversation with The Guardian, he repeatedly returned to one point: that whatever progress the community has witnessed has come through collaboration among government, traditional institutions and residents.

"With all sense of humility, I want to give all the glory to God Almighty," he said. "I cannot lay claim to everything that is happening in Igbogbo. It is a manifestation of God-answered prayers at this particular period in the history of the town."

He said the relationship between the palace and different groups within the community has made it easier to pursue common goals.

Among those he acknowledged were members of the Adeboluwa-in-Council, the Igbogbo Development Association (IDEA), political leaders, youth groups and residents who have continued to work together on issues affecting the community.

According to him, that cooperation has contributed to improvements in education, healthcare and road infrastructure across Igbogbo.

He also acknowledged the support of elected representatives whose interventions have brought projects to the community.

Among them are Senator Tokunbo Abiru, representing Lagos East Senatorial District; Hon. Babajimi Adegoke Benson, representing Ikorodu Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives; and Hon. Aro Moshood Abiodun, representing Ikorodu Constituency II in the Lagos State House of Assembly.

He also recognised the contributions of former Chairman of Igbogbo/Bayeku Local Council Development Area, Bldr. Olusesan Mayokun Daini, and the current Chairman, Hon. Omo'ba Olalekan Hamed Aroyewun, for projects carried out during their administrations.

During the briefing announcing the anniversary activities, Prince Adesegun Olushola Ogunlewe, similarly acknowledged the roles played by the elected representatives and council chairmen in bringing infrastructure and social amenities to the community.

He also recognised the support of political leaders, including Chief Olorunfunmi Basorun and Senator Adeseye Ogunlewe, as well as the Igbogbo Development Association, religious organisations and community groups that have continued to work with the palace.

According to Oba Kasali, one of the most visible achievements of the last decade is the completion of a new royal palace.

Sitting at the heart of Igbogbo, the palace has become one of the landmarks of the community. He said the project was initiated during the administration of former LCDA Chairman, Bldr. Olusesan Mayokun Daini, while the present administration under Hon. Omo'ba Olalekan Hamed Aroyewun has continued work on improving facilities around the palace and supporting community development.

Road construction has equally changed parts of the community. When asked what concerned him most after ascending the throne in 2016, Oba Kasali did not hesitate.

"The major concern then was the road," he said. He expressed appreciation to government at different levels for responding to that need through road projects that have improved access within the community.

Although physical infrastructure forms part of the story of the last ten years, the monarch said development should not be measured by roads and buildings alone.

He believes investment in people is equally important. That thinking informed the decision to make education one of the first activities marking the anniversary.

According to Oba Kasali, the CBT programme is only one part of a broader plan.

He disclosed that the palace is establishing a foundation that will continue supporting education while extending assistance to market women, artisans and persons living with disabilities.

He explained that the foundation is intended to complement efforts already being made by government, private organisations and individuals.

"As part of the commemorative activities for this 10th anniversary, we are planning something as a give-back," he said.

As Oba Kasali reflected on the past 10 years, one theme ran through much of the conversation. Whenever the discussion turned to development, he was quick to mention the people and institutions he believes have helped move Igbogbo forward.

Among those he singled out was Chief Adewunmi Ogunsanya (SAN), the Odofin of Ikorodu, whose contributions, he said, extend beyond Igbogbo to the wider Ikorodu Division.

Speaking on security, healthcare and education, the monarch described Chief Ogunsanya as someone whose interventions have made a difference across communities in the division.

"At this point, I must mention the effort of an individual who has taken it upon himself to see the development of the entire division," Oba Kasali said. "His effort is second to none in terms of security, education and healthcare."

He also acknowledged the contributions of traditional rulers within Ikorodu Division, saying the relationship among the royal fathers has strengthened efforts to address issues affecting their communities.

Among those he mentioned were His Royal Majesty, Oba (Dr.) Kabiru Adewale Shotobi, the Ayangburen of Ikorodu; His Royal Majesty, Oba Mudashiru Ajibade Bakare-Agoro, Olufoworese I, the Ranodu of Imota; His Royal Majesty, Oba (Dr.) Ade-oriyomi Oluwasan Abdul-Akeem Oyibo (Ademoyebo III), the Obateru of Egbin Kingdom; and His Royal Majesty, Oba Bashir Aremu Sotonwa, the Sekumade of Ipakodo, among other monarchs within the division.

He said interaction among traditional rulers has provided opportunities to exchange ideas and jointly address matters affecting their respective communities.

Beyond the division, he recalled paying courtesy visits to senior monarchs shortly after ascending the throne.

One of the visits that remains memorable to him was his meeting with the late Awujale of Ijebu, Oba Sikiru Kayode Adetona.

According to him, the Awujale shared words of advice that have remained with him throughout his reign.

He also spoke of his interactions with the late Alaafin of Oyo and other experienced traditional rulers in Lagos State, describing those encounters as opportunities to learn from monarchs who had spent decades on their respective thrones.

For Oba Kasali, leadership is not something that ends with occupying a royal stool.

He said every opportunity to meet older monarchs became another lesson in how to manage people, preserve tradition and uphold the dignity of the institution.

Those lessons, he said, reinforced his belief that traditional rulers must earn the respect accorded to their offices.

He argued that the conduct of monarchs plays an important role in determining how traditional institutions are perceived.

"I always recommend two things: contentment and comportment," he said. "I believe that if you comport yourself as a royal father, you will get due regard for that position. When you are contented with whatever you have, you will not get yourself involved in something that will tarnish the image of that stool."

That philosophy, he said, has guided his approach throughout the past decade.

Alongside the efforts of government and elected representatives, the monarch said community development has also depended on cooperation between the palace, community associations and residents.

The monarch also pointed to the construction of the Igbogbo Stadium by the Lagos State Government, describing it as another project that has added to the community's infrastructure and created opportunities for sports and youth activities.

For the monarch, however, these projects represent only part of the work that remains.

Looking ahead, he said he hopes to see greater development in Igbogbo's coastal communities, including improvements in waterways that can support transportation and economic activities.

He believes those communities hold significant potential for the future growth of the kingdom, provided investment continues in infrastructure and public services.



Oba Kasali

Interview

SMEs Must Embrace AI To Stay Competitive – Pelumi

Pelumi Ololade Pelumi is the Founder of Pop A.I Automations, an artificial intelligence and automation company focused on helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) scale through seamless automation solutions typically available only to larger corporations. By leveraging AI-powered systems, he helps businesses automate repetitive processes, improve customer engagement, streamline operations and increase productivity without requiring extensive technical expertise. Pelumi holds a Master's degree in Business Intelligence Systems and Data Mining from De Montfort University, United Kingdom, where he graduated with distinction in 2023. Prior to this, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Babcock University, graduating with a Second Class Upper Division. He completed his secondary education at Caleb International College. In this interview with **KEHINDE OLATUNJI**, Pelumi discusses what inspired the establishment of Pop A.I Automations, how artificial intelligence is transforming business operations, the common operational challenges facing SMEs and why many businesses struggle to adopt automation.

What informed your decision to establish Pop A.I Automations?

I started with my passion for working with data. Between my academic background and experience across economics, banking, data analytics and customer service, I kept noticing the same pattern: good decisions come from good information. Yet many small business owners simply don't have the time or tools to turn their data into meaningful insights.

I realised that the same systems large corporations use to optimise operations could also help local businesses. That became the foundation of Pop A.I Automations, to make enterprise-level automation and AI solutions accessible and affordable for SMEs. My goal is to ensure that a grocery store, salon or neighbourhood business can benefit from the same operational efficiency as a much larger company without needing a technical background or a huge budget.

What business problems were you seeing repeatedly that convinced you automation was becoming essential for SMEs?

My first case study and client came from direct observation. I regularly shopped at local ethnic grocery stores and patronised other SMEs, such as hair salons in the UK, and noticed how tedious many of their day-to-day operations were. Tasks like monitoring stock levels, placing orders on time, responding to customers' frequently asked questions, tracking orders, onboarding new customers, and even booking and managing appointments were all handled manually. This often resulted in service gaps, delayed deliveries, missed leads, duplicate or conflicting appointments, and several other operational inefficiencies.

It became clear to me that founding Pop A.I Automations would enable these businesses to streamline their operations through affordable automation solutions, helping them save time, improve efficiency and deliver better customer experiences.

How is AI changing the way small and medium-sized businesses operate today?

The pace of change is honestly hard to keep up with. There seems to be a meaningful advancement in AI almost every week. For SMEs, the biggest transformation is in automating the repetitive tasks that used to consume a business owner's day, answering the same customer enquiries repeatedly while simultaneously trying to run a restaurant, barbershop, grocery store or any other business.

With the right automation in place, a small business owner can effectively have a team of AI agents working around the clock at a fraction of the cost of hiring additional staff. These can function as a receptionist, sales representative and inventory manager, all operating seamlessly in the background. A chatbot, for instance, can be trained using a business's actual FAQs, allowing it to respond accurately, schedule appointments directly into a calendar, update the CRM, process orders and confirmations, and seamlessly transfer conversations to a human agent whenever certain trigger words arise. It can also route enquiries to the appropriate AI agent based on the customer's request, ensuring businesses don't lose potential customers simply because no one responded quickly enough.

Inventory management is another area where AI is making a significant impact. Automation can continuously monitor stock levels, compare them against preset thresholds and automatically place orders with suppliers before products run out. This means business owners are less likely to discover they are out of stock through a frustrated customer.

We're still in the early stages of what's possible. AI can be applied across virtually every aspect of an SME's operations, and I believe it will only continue to make running a business easier. This is far more than a passing trend—it's the future of

business operations.

What are the biggest operational inefficiencies you encounter when working with businesses?

The same set of problems appears repeatedly, regardless of the type of business I'm working with. Manual order processing is probably the most common. Staff respond to customers one by one, check stock manually and then record everything separately afterwards. It's a slow and inefficient process.

Customer onboarding is another major challenge. New customers often receive inconsistent or delayed responses because there isn't a structured system in place—it's usually left to whoever is available at the time. Then there's the issue of disconnected customer relationship management (CRM) systems, where customer information is spread across multiple platforms that don't communicate with one another.

What ties all these challenges together is that they aren't really people problems—they are systems problems. Employees aren't necessarily doing anything wrong; they simply lack the infrastructure needed to automate repetitive tasks. That's usually the first thing I look for when I begin working with a business—not what they are doing poorly, but what they are still doing manually that should already be running automatically in the background.

Why do many businesses struggle to adopt automation successfully?

One of the biggest reasons is that people naturally prefer familiar ways of working. Asking business owners to change their existing processes, even for a proven solution, can feel stressful and risky because they often focus more on the immediate disruption than the long-term benefits in terms of time and cost savings.

Another major challenge is the initial setup cost rather than the ongoing maintenance. Many SMEs don't fully appreciate the value of automation until they see competitors achieving better results with it.

The other issue is that businesses often implement automation in isolated pieces instead of building a connected system. They might automate one stage of the customer journey while leaving everything else manual; creating a patchwork of disconnected processes that still requires significant manual intervention behind the scenes. I always try to build automation as an integrated, reusable system from the outset because that's usually the difference between automation that delivers lasting value and automation that gets abandoned after a few months.

What advice would you give business owners considering automation for the first time?

Start by identifying exactly where the bottleneck is before you start looking for tools. A lot of businesses jump straight to saying, "We need a chatbot," without first understanding what's actually slow or broken in their operations.

I always measure a process before making any changes. With Wura Foods, for example, we

found that handling customer orders manually took between eight and 12 minutes. After implementing

automation, we were able to reduce that to under 90 seconds. Having measurable results makes it much easier to demonstrate the value of automation.

I would also advise business owners to think in terms of building infrastructure rather than looking for a quick fix. Invest in systems that can grow with your business and be reused over time, rather than one-off solutions. That's where the real long-term value lies.

What is your long-term vision for Pop A.I Automations?

My long-term vision is to grow Pop A.I Automations into a full-service AI and web design agency focused on improving business operations from the ground up, rather than simply delivering one-off automation projects.

While much of our work today is centred on SMEs, the same approach—building reusable systems that solve real operational bottlenecks—can be applied just as effectively to larger organisations. The goal is to scale what we are doing with small businesses into solutions that can support larger corporations, without losing the practical, problem-first mindset that has defined our work from the beginning.

Do you think Nigeria is ready for AI, and what are the challenges and prospects of AI in Nigeria?

I'd say Nigeria isn't fully ready for AI yet, but it's much closer than many people assume. We've already seen how quickly Nigerians embraced mobile money and fintech; not because people were chasing technology, but because those solutions addressed real problems. I believe AI can follow a similar path if it's designed around local needs rather than simply replicating solutions built for the UK or the US.

The biggest challenges remain infrastructure, particularly reliable electricity and affordable internet access. There's also a trust and knowledge gap, as many business owners still don't fully understand what automation can do for their day-to-day operations.

That said, the opportunities are enormous. Nigeria has a large number of SMEs, and they are exactly the kinds of businesses that stand to benefit most from automation because they operate with limited resources, and every hour saved has a direct impact on productivity and profitability. With Diaspora Moni, for instance, part of what we addressed was the disconnect between people living abroad and businesses or families back home. Automation helped make that entire experience faster and more seamless. I believe the biggest opportunity lies in connecting professionals like myself, who have gained technical experience abroad, with the task of solving real problems at home. The future of AI in Nigeria won't be driven by flashy innovations, but by practical systems that solve everyday business challenges.



There seems to be a meaningful advancement in AI almost every week. For SMEs, the biggest transformation is in automating the repetitive tasks that used to consume a business owner's day...

A Diamond Called Bart Nnaji: The Long Shadow Of 70-Year-Old Quiet Builder

By Ifeanyi Igwebike Mbanefo

The Man Who Answers His Phone

There is a particular kind of greatness that announces itself — titles read out at the top of programmes, chieftaincy drums, motorcades. And there is another kind, rarer and more durable, that reveals itself only in the small, unwitnessed moments: a phone that gets answered when the caller has nothing to offer in return; a flight booked at personal cost to sit in a room where no cameras are rolling; a door left open long after the office that made it worth knocking on has changed hands.

Professor Bart O. Nnaji, FAS, FAEng, CON, NNOM, has spent a public life accumulating the first kind of greatness — a professorship at the University of Massachusetts by his early thirties, a chair at Pittsburgh, a postdoctoral stamp from MIT, a ministerial portfolio, a company that lit up a corner of the Niger Delta.

But it is the second kind — the quiet, unwitnessed generosity — that I want to write about here, because I have been its beneficiary, twice, at two different hinges in my own working life, and I think Enugu State needs to understand what kind of man it is failing to fully use.

From Enugu To The World And Back Again

Nnaji's story begins in Enugu State, in a household that clearly prized the mind. He went first to St John's University in New York for a first degree in physics — already an unusual path for a young Nigerian of his generation — before Virginia Tech, where he took both a Master's and a doctorate in engineering. MIT gave him a post-doctoral grounding in artificial intelligence and robotics at a time when almost nobody in Nigeria was thinking in those terms at all.

What he did with that training was not simply accumulate credentials.

At UMass Amherst, where he joined the faculty in 1983 and became a full professor within a decade, he built an Automation and Robotics Laboratory and developed what he called “geometric reasoning” — the insight that nearly everything engineers design has an underlying geometric logic that can be captured and manipulated computationally.

He is also credited as one of the originators of “e-design,” the idea, startlingly prescient for the pre-broadband era, that engineers scattered across continents could design, assemble, and test a single product together over a network. Pittsburgh later made him the William Kepler Whiteford Professor of Engineering and the founding director of a five-university National Science Foundation Center for e-Design.

By any reasonable account, a career like that

would have been a fine place to retire a résumé. Nnaji instead came home — first briefly, as pioneer Minister of Science and Technology in 1993, and then more permanently after 2007, when he founded Geometric Power Limited, Nigeria's first fully indigenous independent power company, and later served as Special Adviser to the President on Power and, from 2011 to 2012, as Federal Minister of Power, where he built the roadmap that carried Nigeria's power sector through privatisation. That last chapter did not end gently.

When he resigned in August 2012, commentary at the time suggested his departure had less to do with performance than with the fact that his reforms were inconveniencing entrenched interests — a man who had gotten in the way of other people's arrangements.

I mention this not to relitigate 2012, but because it is a pattern worth noticing: Nnaji has a long, well-documented history of being the most capable person in a room whose incentives are not built for capability. That is exactly the pattern I want Enugu State to reckon with now.

“You Can't Be In The Sea Or Fountain And Dying Of Thirst”

Enugu State holds two of Nnaji's traditional titles — Onwa Nkanu and Echeribe na Nkanu — recognitions of light and stewardship among his own

Enugu East

people. He chairs the Advisory Board of the Nigeria Prize for Science. He sits as Pro-Chancellor of Bells University of Technology. He has seven honorary doctorates and a shelf of national honours: OON, CON, NNOM. And yet the state that could most directly claim his labour — the one whose name is on his traditional titles — has not, to my knowledge, seriously asked him to come and run anything. This is the long shadow I mean.

Enugu, the old Coal City, has every reason to want the kind of prosperous, planned, industrially serious future that Nnaji has spent forty years building elsewhere — in Massachusetts labs, in Pittsburgh research centres, in Aba's power grid.

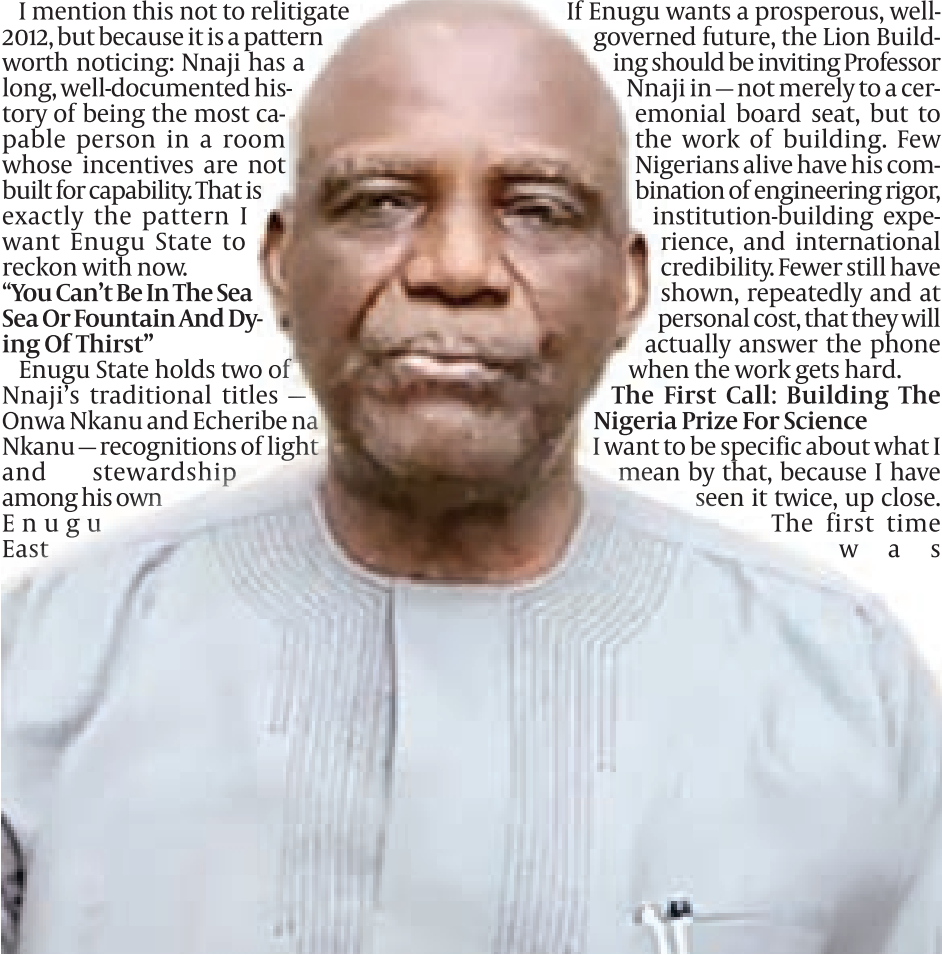
A state with a genuine claim on a mind like this, sitting idle on the sidelines of its own governance, is a state dying of thirst while standing in a fountain.

If Enugu wants a prosperous, well-governed future, the Lion Building should be inviting Professor Nnaji in — not merely to a ceremonial board seat, but to the work of building. Few Nigerians alive have his combination of engineering rigor, institution-building experience, and international credibility. Fewer still have shown, repeatedly and at personal cost, that they will actually answer the phone when the work gets hard.

The First Call: Building The Nigeria Prize For Science

I want to be specific about what I mean by that, because I have seen it twice, up close.

The first time was



Lawan Bukar Marguba: Godfather Of Nigeria's Silent Beings

By Frank Meke

He was more than a leader—he was my father and mentor. Lawan Bukar Marguba loved me deeply and intentionally, without pretence. He took pride in me, openly presenting me to friends, family, and colleagues with genuine affection.

Lawan Marguba, widely regarded as the godfather of Nigeria's conservation history, was a man driven by patriotism and an unwavering love for his country and its rich natural endowments. His legacy at the National Park Service reflects a bold vision—to give Nigeria a respected voice among global conservation leaders.

Humble, strategic, God-fearing, and profoundly nationalistic, Lawan was a gentle giant. He bore no desire to hurt anyone, yet he stood firmly against disorder and indiscipline. His life was transparent—an open book, free of ambiguity. Tall, charismatic, kind, and witty, he was also a tireless workaholic whose foresight brought tomorrow's vision into today's reality, particularly in the transformation and protection of Nigeria's vast forest ecosystems.

His personal interests revealed even more about his character. A voracious reader, he had an insatiable appetite for knowledge and self-improvement. He consistently encouraged his subordinates to break professional and academic barriers. Under his leadership, the National Park Service developed one of the most robust libraries in natural resources and forest ecosystem studies in Nigeria.

Lawan's passion for nature photography was not merely recreational—it became policy. He deliberately recruited and nurtured skilled photographers within the ecological tourism department. Across all park units, he encouraged the discovery and deployment of talented nature photographers to document Nigeria's unique flora and fauna. Leading by example, he would embark on nature trails with a camera slung around his neck, later holding debriefing sessions to review and select

the most compelling images.

An accomplished and fearless traveler, he frequently visited park units unannounced, maintaining a hands-on leadership style. Internationally, he was a respected figure and resource person in conservation management. His interest in stamp collection reflected his curiosity about history and his appreciation for humanity's shared story.

Music, too, played a role in his life—it connected him to deeper emotions and reinforced his compassion for others. His “happy hours” were not mere leisure moments but opportunities to bond, uplift, and share love with those around him.

To me, this conservation icon will forever remain alive in memory. I recall his concern for Nigeria's environmental challenges, especially desertification. As Chairman of the World Bank's Second Forestry Project, he led efforts to establish extensive tree-planting initiatives, many of which have matured into vital forest ecosystems mitigating environmental disasters across Northern Nigeria.

He was instrumental to the elevation of ecological tourism, showcasing the immense potential of Kainji Lake and Yankari National Parks to the world. He firmly believed that conservation must deliver tangible benefits to people and the nation; otherwise, it risks becoming a wasted investment.

Lawan Marguba also championed the transformation of rural communities located within or around protected areas. His initiatives attracted international attention, particularly from countries grappling with community resistance to conservation efforts. The National Park Service Support Zone Programme—one of his enduring legacies—empowered local communities and integrated them into national economic development.

He fought relentlessly to reform the park system, successfully transitioning it into a Service structure. Under his leadership, the number of parks expanded, and the institution gained strength and relevance. Notably, one of his mentees, Musa Ibrahim Goni, now serves as the Conservator General of Nige-

ria.

His reforms extended to legal and operational frameworks, strengthening the park system into a formidable security outfit through the Ranger Corps, effectively combating poaching and illegal exploitation of forest resources, particularly in border regions.

Many distinguished conservationists—both living and late—passed through his mentorship. To mention a few, Alhaji Monsur Ayoade Lamidi Ejide, George Okeyoyin, Alhaji Suleiman, late Tanko Abubakar and Alhaji Salami. His influence shaped generations of professionals who continue to uphold his vision.

Born on July 4, 1951, Lawan Bukar Marguba dedicated his life entirely to Nigeria's conservation efforts. As the founding Chief Executive and Director of the National Park Service from 1991 to 2005, he presided over what is widely regarded as the golden era of conservation in Nigeria.

On a personal note, he guided me through my formative years in journalism, particularly in reporting on conservation and rural development. Unlike many leaders, he remained deeply humble and loyal in his relationships. Whenever he visited Lagos, he chose my modest home as his place of rest, bringing along his entourage. Despite access to the finest hospitality, he preferred the warmth of our home, often praising my wife's cooking and showing grandfatherly affection to my children.

It took me nearly two months after his passing to write this tribute. The loss was deeply personal—within the National Park Service, many knew him as my father. I remain grateful for the opportunity he gave me—to grow, to learn, and to belong. Lawan Marguba was the embodiment of a detribalized Nigerian. He mentored people beyond ethnic and social boundaries, raising leaders who would surpass him. Indeed, several Conservators General who served after his retirement were products of his mentorship.

Up&Doing

Audi Abubakar: Redefining National Security Concept With Synergy, Digitisation At NSCDC

By Oladapo Sofowora

IN the quiet, methodical corridors of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), a revolution has been underway for the past few years. It is a rapid transformation that has fundamentally redefined the very concept of national security, shifting the focus from a purely defensive posture to an aggressive, intelligence-led economic shield. At the heart of this metamorphosis is Professor Ahmed Abubakar Audi, a security scholar whose tenure as Commandant General has not only reformed a government agency, but has also forged a formidable blueprint for securing Nigeria's commonwealth against vandals and economic saboteurs that have bled the nation dry for decades. His work stands as one of the most tangible and impactful pillars of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, demonstrating that security is not merely a cost to be managed but a critical investment that can yield billions in returns for the nation's treasury.

When Audi took the helm in February 2021, he inherited a corps that was underfunded, under-equipped and critically under-motivated. Officers grumbled about unpaid allowances, obsolete equipment and stunted promotions that took years to materialise. The public perception was that of a secondary agency, useful only for directing traffic at fuel stations or standing guard at public buildings during elections, but not a serious player in the national security architecture.

Audi saw something else. He saw immense potential. He understood that the legal framework of the NSCDC Act was robust. It gave the agency the power to protect critical infrastructure, but no one before him had been audacious enough to fully operationalise that mandate. His response was a three-pronged strategy: a radical digitalisation of the Corps; an aggressive pursuit of inter-agency synergy and a profound investment in the professional and ethical development of his personnel.

The evidence of this technological shift arrived with dramatic force in March 2026 when he unveiled and distributed the largest consignment of high-tech operational equipment in the Corps' history. All 36 state commands, including the FCT, received aerial surveillance drones, night-vision goggles that turn darkness into daylight, and operational backpacks fitted with mini-tablets, solar chargers, GPS trackers and situation-room connectivity packs. For the first time, a criminal's location is triangulated, his movements logged and the nearest response unit is alerted. This technological leap was a direct response to the brutal arithmetic of economic sabotage that was crippling the nation.

The solid minerals sector, a cornerstone of the Renewed Hope mandate for non-oil revenue, was languishing at a meager N6 billion yearly, a fraction of its true potential due to rampant illegal mining that was costing the country an estimated \$9 billion yearly. Audi's answer was the creation of the Mining Marshals, a specialised unit trained specifically for the unique challenges of securing extractive sites. Their mission was to infiltrate illegal mining networks, document evidence and dismantle operations from the inside. The results have been transformative.

In just two years, the Marshals dismantled over 1,000 illegal mining sites across Zamfara, Osun, Nasarawa and Kaduna states, chased out foreign-backed cartels and restored order to a sector in chaos. The revenue from solid minerals royalties exploded from N6 billion to an astonishing N38 billion with N30 billion

already recorded in 2025 alone, a six-fold increase that speaks directly to the economic logic of the President's Renewed Hope Agenda. This is security as wealth creation and fiscal policy. The Federal Government has further bolstered this success with the procurement of eight operational gun trucks for the Mining Marshals, signalling an intensified commitment to this critical fight.

The fight extended to the oil and gas industry, the historic jugular of the Nigerian economy. Nigeria loses an estimated 200,000

His strategy rested on four pillars: intelligence-led operations using a network of informants within oil-bearing communities; technology deployment including drones and GPS trackers; joint operations with other security agencies and disrupting the entire illegal value chain from the creek to the buyer.

barrels of crude oil daily to thieves who tap pipelines, cook crude in illegal refineries and sell the products in black markets. For decades, the government tried everything, from amnesties to military operations, but the theft continued. Audi approached the problem differently, understanding that oil theft is not a military problem alone; it is an intelligence, technology and corruption problem. His strategy rested on four pillars: intelligence-led operations using a network of informants within oil-bearing communities; technology deployment including drones and GPS trackers; joint operations with other security agencies and disrupting the entire illegal value chain from the creek to the buyer.

Under his watch, the NSCDC's Special Intelligence Squad has become a dreaded nightmare for oil thieves, destroying over 400 illegal refineries, arresting over 4,677 suspected economic saboteurs, securing 638 convictions and successfully foiling 48 planned school kidnappings across the country. These are not statistics of a passive agency; they are the product of aggressive, intelligence-driven operations that have demonstrably saved the

nation billions of dollars in stolen crude and contributed to increased legitimate oil production.

However, Audi's most innovative strategy is his understanding that no amount of drones or night vision goggles can succeed without the active participation of the Nigerian people. Security, he argues, is a shared responsibility and this philosophy has found concrete expression in a grassroots engagement framework that galvanises traditional rulers, market leaders, youth groups and religious bodies into a structured intelligence-sharing network. By formalising these channels, Audi has effectively multiplied the Corps' eyes and ears by millions, turning ordinary citizens into active sentinels of the nation's critical assets. This community-driven approach is further strengthened by the institutionalisation of specialised units like the Agro Rangers, who are embedded directly into the agricultural value chain to guarantee food security; and the Special Intelligence Squad for school security, which has assessed over 500 high-risk schools, providing security blueprints and training guards to prevent abductions.

This sophisticated institutional muscle would be impossible without a parallel commitment to the welfare and professionalism of personnel. Audi, drawing on his academic background, moved aggressively to clear backlogs of unpaid salary arrears and stagnated promotions, addressing grievances that had sapped the Corps of its fighting spirit. Simultaneously, he launched a sweeping ethical crackdown, warning that the new equipment and elevated status would be accompanied by zero tolerance for indiscipline. The agency has sanitised the private guard industry, registering 376 new companies. He has transitioned the NSCDC from a volunteer paramilitary organisation to a professional security service, bound

by a clear code of conduct and a performance management framework that rewards results and punishes deviance. With the establishment of the

Command and Staff College in Jos and the College of Arms Squad and Support Services in Nasarawa, along with a standardised curriculum for all training schools, he has formalised career progression and sharpened staff competence in surveillance, intelligence gathering and arms handling.

The most recent manifestation of this knowledge-driven culture came in June 2026 when the Corps launched a strategic capacity-building programme focused on research methodology and operational excellence. Officers from all commands were trained not merely in weapons handling, but in data analysis, strategic communication and evidence-based threat assessment. The message from the Commandant General was unambiguous: the future of security belongs to those who can analyse trends and develop research-driven solutions.

This modern-day training was put to the test during the just concluded Ekiti State governorship election, where the NSCDC deployed an impressive 10,000 personnel, including elite tactical units like the Special Intelligence Squad, SWAT, K9 and the Specialised Female Squad, to ensure a peaceful, credible and violence-free process. The seamless operation underscored the Corps' evolution into a professional force capable of securing Nigeria's democratic institutions and providing a shield for the nation's democratic process.

Perhaps Audi's most underappreciated achievement has been his success in fostering inter-agency cooperation. For decades, Nigeria's security agencies fought each other as often as they fought criminals, with the Police resenting the NSCDC and the Army seeing everyone else as amateurs. Audi refused to play that game. The Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre established with the Police in April 2026 is the most visible fruit of this effort. Located in Abuja, it operates 24/7 with representatives from multiple agencies sharing intelligence and coordinating operations in real-time. This synergy extends beyond intelligence. NSCDC officers now participate in joint patrols with the Police, provide security for military logistics convoys and work seamlessly with the DSS, the Navy and Operation Delta Safe to protect the nation.

Audi has repositioned the NSCDC as a leading agency in the fight for Nigeria's economic sovereignty with the support of President Bola Tinubu who is so serious about ending insecurity across the country. He has not just restructured a security agency; he has redefined the meaning of national security, proving that in the struggle for the nation's soul, the battle for its pipelines, its mines and its farms is the battle to ensure that Renewed Hope becomes a reality. As the history of Nigeria's security sector is written, Audi

will occupy a special chapter as the reformer who inherited an agency written off as irrelevant and transformed it into a force that criminals now dread; a builder who constructed a fortress around the nation's wealth and a leader who proved that with strategic thinking and an unwavering commitment to professionalism, security can truly become the bedrock of national prosperity. The era of impunity is ending and the NSCDC, under the steady hand of its scholar-commander and ever supportive President Tinubu under the Renewed Hope Mandate, stands ready to enforce the peace that Nigeria's prosperity demands.



NIMASA Introduces Accelerator Scheme To Drive Innovation, Youth Participation

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) has introduced the Blue Economy Accelerator Programme, a strategic initiative designed to identify, nurture, and accelerate innovative start-ups that will contribute to the sustainable growth of Nigeria's marine and blue economy.

The Blue Economy Accelerator Programme is aimed at attracting young, vibrant minds with innovative ideas capable of transforming Nigeria's maritime ecosystem.

The Director-General of NIMASA, Dr. Dayo Mobereola said that through the initiative, participants will receive structured business development support, industry mentorship, and technical guidance to convert promising concepts into viable ventures that address critical chal-

lenges and opportunities within the blue economy.

"The programme reflects NIMASA's commitment to supporting the implementation of the vision of the Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy in unlocking the immense potential of the blue economy by empowering young innovators, entrepreneurs, and technology-driven enterprises. We at NIMASA want to provide a platform for investors to identify young talents and invest in them".

Mobereola, who commended the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola for codifying the Marine and Blue Economy Policy as a clear roadmap for the sector's development, urged young Nigerians to embrace the programme which has the potential to transform raw talents into big investments in the maritime sector.

Sterling Bank, StarTimes Target N2b In Solar Financing

By Sulaimon Salau

IN a bid to accelerate Nigeria's clean energy transition, Sterling Bank and StarTimes Nigeria have launched Sterling Solar Financing Hubs inside StarTimes retail outlets. This initiative embeds on-the-spot solar financing at the point of purchase, with a joint target of reaching N2 billion in renewable energy financing by the end of 2026.

The initiative builds on an existing partnership that has already facilitated over N600 million in solar financing transactions over the past year. The new 2026 target represents more than a three-fold expansion, aimed at enabling thousands of Nigerian households and small businesses to transition to reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy.

By embedding Sterling's financing expertise directly within StarTimes' retail network, customers can now

walk into participating outlets, select their preferred solar solution, receive financial guidance from dedicated Sterling Solar Financing Advisors, and begin the financing process immediately, subject to the bank's credit assessment.

Speaking on the partnership, Darlington Nwankwo, Divisional Head, Renewable Energy and Mobility at Sterling Bank, said: "Sterling exists to enrich lives, and we believe that access to clean, reliable energy should be within everyone's reach. Through this partnership with StarTimes, we are democratising access to solar by bringing financing directly to the point of need, enabling more families and businesses to transition to sustainable energy without the burden of prohibitive upfront costs. This is about unlocking opportunity, improving livelihoods, and powering Nigeria's future."

APBN Collaborates With Industries To Accelerate Economic Growth

By Eno Bassey

TO accelerate the pace of growth in the economy, the Chairman, Association of Professional Bodies of Nigeria (APBN), Oyo State Branch, Professor Oluwale Akintayo, has said it is imperative to embrace inputs from patriotic professionals from policy formulation to implementation. This, he said, will ensure quality assurance consistent with sound professional practice.

He said this at the general meeting of the Association in Ibadan.

Akintayo said: "As the umbrella professional body, APBN oversees the activities of professional bodies and

seeks to resolve issues among them. It is also APBN's responsibility to synergise with the government, particularly in Oyo State, where we are domiciled, to improve service delivery. It is evident from results available so far that tremendous progress has been achieved in the various areas of governance in the state under the present administration.

Akintayo said the theme for the association's 2026 summit is 'The Role of Professionals in National Development', pointing out that the Nigerian State needs to take cognisance of the processes adopted by many of today's advanced economies.

FG Urges Electricity Operators To Avoid Actions That Could DistabiliseMarket

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Minister of Power, Chief Joseph Tegbe, has called on operators in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI) to avoid actions that could affect the decentralised electricity market.

The minister made the call at the workshop on Legal, Policy and Regulatory Harmonisation between federal and state institutions on the Decentralisation of the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI), in Abuja.

Tegbe said the Federal Government retains an

important leadership role, while state governments now have expanded responsibilities; the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) continues to regulate areas within its jurisdiction; and state regulators are emerging to supervise their respective markets.

He further stated that transmission remains a national asset; distribution companies continue to serve millions of customers; generation companies continue to supply energy into the grid; private investors provide capital; development partners pro-

vide technical support; while consumers remain at the heart of every decision.

Noting that that none of these institutions exists in isolation, he said: "Our success is interconnected. This is why collaboration must become the defining principle of our decentralised electricity market. We must ensure collaboration rather than competition between institutions. We must build alignment instead of regulatory conflict. We must practice mutual respect instead of jurisdictional rivalry."

He said the Electricity Act

did not establish parallel electricity industries, but complementary electricity markets, operating within one national framework.

"Our objective must therefore be regulatory coherence. Investors should not encounter conflicting rules. Developers should not navigate contradictory approval processes. Consumers should not become casualties of institutional uncertainty. Market participants should enjoy clarity, predictability and confidence wherever they choose to invest," he stated.



Chief Executive Officer, Uniswitch, Mayowa Owolabi (left); Executive Director, Wema Bank Plc, Tunde Mabawonku; CEO & Co-founder, Bluebulb, Lanre Daramola and Managing Director Chrisborough, Gbenga Paseda, at the Wema Bank Exclusive Fintech founders event in Lagos.

PHOTO: SUNDAY AKINLOLU

Ministry Restates Commitment To Maritime Reforms

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Federal Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy has restated its commitment to fully harness Nigeria's vast maritime assets for economic prosperity.

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Dr Adegboyega Oyetola, who made this commitment during a courtesy visit by the Alumni of the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron (AMANO), said the ministry is implementing strategic reforms designed to improve the ease of doing business

within the maritime sector, modernise critical infrastructure, strengthen regulatory efficiency, deepen local content participation and attract greater domestic and foreign investment into shipping, ports, fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism and other blue economy value chains.

Oyetola further assured that the ministry would continue to implement policies and initiatives that strengthen indigenous shipping capacity and create a more enabling operating environment for Nigerian ship own-

ers.

"We are committed to creating a level playing field where indigenous ship owners can thrive, expand their operations and participate more actively in both regional and international maritime trade.

"Our goal is to build a resilient maritime economy that empowers Nigerian businesses, creates employment, retains greater value within our economy and supports the broader objectives of the Renewed Hope Agenda," the minister added.

GEF-SGP Inaugurates Solar Powered Cold-room In Fishing Community

By Suliyat Tella

THE Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has inaugurated a 3-horsepower (hp) solar-powered cold room in Sagbokoji fishing community, Lagos State.

Sagbokoji is a riverine island community, surrounded by water and located in the Amuwo-Odofin Local Council of Lagos State, opposite Tin-Can Island.

GEF-SGP UNDP Programme Assistant, Mrs. Rose Agbo, said the project was to complement the 26kW peak solar photovoltaic power generation capacity with combined capacity of

22kVA inverter and 50kWh battery energy storage systems installed from 2024 to 2025.

It had in 2024 installed a solar-powered cold room in the community to support the women beneficiaries in the area, who formerly used charcoal and firewood to preserve their fishing produce. Agbo said that additional 3hp solar cold room engine installation became necessary due to complaints by the women that the quantity of cold products the small freezers were producing was not enough to meet their demand.

"Consequently, we went back to the drawing board with the grant beneficiary to improve

on the power supply to the cold room.

"And now, with an additional 3hp solar-powered cooling system, it is now being powered solely by 100 per cent solar power with battery energy storage and inverter systems, and the women are now able to preserve more of their products. And everyone is excited about it," she said.

The Chairman, Nigeria Energy Forum (NEF), Dr Daniel Adeyemi, said the project was the core part of the annual NEF conference. According to the chairman, the forum is not just to gather stakeholders together to exchange ideas, it is also to translate ideas into action.

LASPEC Urges Workers To Begin Retirement Plan Early, Maintain Pension Records

By Bankole Oromisan

LAGOS State Pension Commission (LASPEC) has urged public servants in the state to embrace early retirement plan aside maintaining accurate pension records throughout their careers. It warned that poor documentation remains one of the major causes of delays in the processing and payment of retirement benefits under the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS).

The commission said while regular pension contributions are critical to securing financial stability after retirement, public servants must also ensure that their personal and employment records are up-to-date with their Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) to facilitate seamless access to retirement benefits.

Speaking at a sensitisation programme on the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) for public servants in active service, the Director-General of LASPEC, Babalola Obilana, stressed that retirement planning should be a continuous process rather than an exercise undertaken only a few months before exiting the public service.

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‘Why Food Price Moderation Is Only Temporary’

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

As food prices resumed an upward trajectory after a brief period of moderation, addressing insecurity in farming communities is considered not only an option for the safety of lives and properties, and boosting agricultural output, but also for easing cost pressures in the cities.

The Chief Executive Officer, Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), Dr. Muda Yusuf, who gave the advice while reacting to the June inflation report, raised concern that the development has important economic and social implications on the country.

While emphasising that food inflation remains the greatest driver of the cost-of-living crisis, eroding household purchasing power, worsening poverty and food insecurity, and weakening the inclusiveness of the current reform programme, he said sustained moderation in food prices is therefore critical to improving welfare and strengthening public confidence in the reform process.

He said: “Headline inflation eased marginally from 15.93 per cent in May to 15.91 per cent in June, while month-on-month

inflation moderated from 1.75 per cent to 1.66 per cent. These changes indicate that headline inflation has largely plateaued.

“The dominant concern in the report is the renewed acceleration in food inflation. Year-on-year food inflation increased from 17.43 per cent to 17.52 per cent, while month-on-month food inflation rose sharply from 2.98 per cent to 3.75 per cent, the strongest monthly increase in several months. This suggests that food prices have resumed an upward trajectory after a brief period of moderation.”

Dr Yusuf said the renewed increase in food inflation reflects persistent supply-side constraints, including insecurity, high transportation and logistics costs, elevated energy prices, rising fertiliser costs, supply-chain disruptions and imported inflation arising from recent geopolitical developments, adding that they are challenges that monetary policy cannot resolve.

He stressed that report also indicates that food, transportation, housing, utilities and energy account for approximately 72 per cent of current inflationary pressures, saying the

development provides a clear policy direction – “efforts to moderate inflation should be concentrated on these sectors, where interventions are likely to yield the greatest impact.”

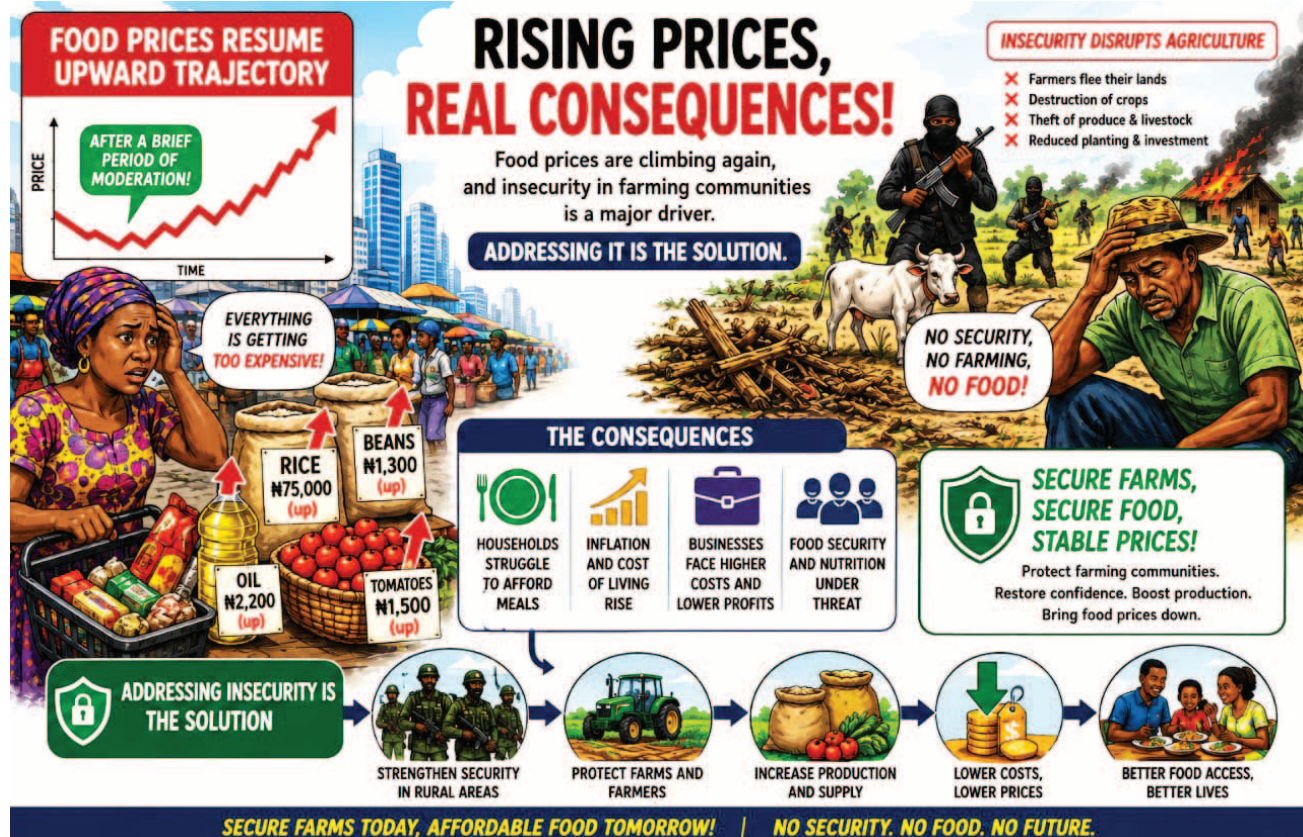
Dr Yusuf said priority interventions by the federal, states and local councils should include restoring security in farming communities, expanding irrigation and all-season agriculture, accelerating mechanisation, promoting technology adoption, improving access to affordable agricultural finance and inputs, reducing post-harvest losses through better storage infrastructure, and lowering transportation and logistics costs across the agricultural value chain.

“Equally important is making agriculture more technology-driven and commercially attractive to encourage greater youth participation.

“Government should also sustain exchange-rate stability and deepen domestic petroleum refining to reduce foreign exchange demand for fuel imports, moderate imported inflation and strengthen macroeconomic resilience.

“The rising urban inflation may partly reflect increasing population displacement from rural communities affected by insecurity. As more households migrate to urban areas, demand for housing, transportation, utilities and other essential services rises, adding to inflationary pressures and related urbanisation challenges. Addressing insecurity in farming communities is therefore important not only for the safety of lives and properties, boosting agricultural output but also for easing cost pressures in the cities,” he said.

Continuing, Dr Yusuf stressed that the June inflation data do not warrant further monetary tightening, noting that the headline inflation has largely stabilised, core inflation continues to moderate and the principal drivers of inflation remain structural rather than demand-induced.



Firms Embark On Transplantation Of 100,000 Indigenous Trees

By Eno Bassey

THE Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) and FIRST Exploration & Petroleum Development Company (FIRST E&P) Joint Venture (JV) on PML 53 and PML 54, has commenced the transplantation of 100,000 nursery-raised indigenous tree seedlings to designated restoration sites under its Afforestation, Livelihood Enhancement and Carbon Sequestration (ALEC) Project.

The initiative, in partnership with the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), is starting with Koluama 2 community in Bayelsa State, marking a significant milestone towards the JV's commitment to plant 500,000 indigenous trees across its 11 host communities over five years.

The sponsors said the project was launched to combat critical issues of deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change in Bayelsa State, while simultaneously enhancing the socio-economic well-being of the local population.

Beyond afforestation, the project integrates environmental education, biodiversity protection, youth engagement and alternative livelihood programs to ensure that conservation efforts are community-driven and sustainable.

Speaking during the exercise in Koluama 2, Executive Director, Corporate Services, FIRST E&P, Emmanuel Etomi,

represented by HSE Adviser, FIRST E&P, Oluwatosin Amida, described the transplantation of the seedlings as a defining moment in the project. “Today's milestone is a demonstration of what is possible when environmental stewardship and community development are pursued together.

“The ALEC project embodies our long-term commitment to restoring the coastal forest ecosystem, protecting biodiversity, and building a more sustainable future for our 11 host communities. By also equipping over 220 youth volunteers with new skills and livelihood opportunities, we are cultivating a generation of environmental custodians and creating lasting, shared value for our host communities.”

Also speaking, Lead, Community Relations, Asset B, NUIIMS, Mrs. Ekis Okoro, characterised the project as a strategic investment in environmental restoration and future generations.

“This project is a worthwhile investment in restoring our coastal forests. I look forward to returning to these sites in a few years to see thriving forests where people can reconnect with nature, enjoy the beauty of the coastline and appreciate the value of preserving our environment.”

For the NCF, the project represents a practical demonstration of how environmental conservation and community development can go hand in hand.

African Grain Trade Summit Unlocks Continent's Food Potential

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

IN the face of climate change and other challenges facing the agric sector in Africa, there is a renewed drive by experts to unlock the continent's potential, by improving soil health, food safety, and resilience to feed itself.

This new drive was initiated at the 11th African Grain Trade Summit (AGTS), held between October 1 to 4, 2025, in Zanzibar, Tanzania, where the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT), played a leading role through its strategic partnership with the Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC), to showcase scalable solutions designed to tackle Africa's most pressing grain market challenges.

The long-standing collaboration, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), combines IITA's agricultural research expertise with EAGC's extensive network of millers, traders, processors, and policymakers. Together, they are creating a platform that translates research

into real-world impact across the continent.

The Executive Director, Eastern Africa Grain Council, Gerald Masila, said the partnership with IITA and TAAT demonstrates the summit's core value of turning knowledge into action. “By showcasing scalable technologies, we are bridging the gap between research and markets, ensuring that Africa's grain sector is not only resilient but also competitive and inclusive.

“This collaboration reflects the very essence of the 11th AGTS, convening science, policy, and business to drive real transformation for farmers, traders, and consumers across the continent.”

Held under the theme: “Resilient grain markets: Unlocking Africa's food security potential,” the summit highlighted persistent challenges such as fragmented value chains, post-harvest losses, food safety concerns, poor infrastructure, and limited access to finance.

The IITA used the platform to advance its “Scaling for Impact” initiative, linking research-driven technologies with private sector leaders capable of taking them to scale, while also strengthening existing partnerships.

According to the Scaling & Agribusiness Specialist at IITA, Jane Kamau, scaling for

impact means moving beyond research to real change in the lives of farmers and communities. “By working together to improve soil health, food safety, and resilience, we can unlock Africa's potential to feed itself and thrive in the face of climate challenges.”

At the summit, IITA scientists and partners featured prominently across the summit agenda. On a session titled: “Food Safety Leadership”, IITA, which focused on “Grain quality and food safety: harmonising standards and combating aflatoxins for competitive trade,” Dr. George Mahuku delivered a keynote on Integrated Aflatoxin Management, addressing one of Africa's most critical food safety and trade barriers.

On Productivity Innovation, Geoffrey Nsofon presented the TAAT Private Sector E-catalogue in the “Innovating for Productivity” session, providing private enterprises with access to CGIAR technologies that promote climate-smart practices.

At the Innovation Exhibition, IITA spotlighted the Aflatoxin risk Early Warning System—a GeoAI-powered model developed by Francis Muthoni and Kamau. By combining satellite data with machine learning, the system predicts aflatoxin risks in several crops, including maize, and guides timely interventions to minimize contamination.

While the newly signed National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act 2026 has been widely celebrated for strengthening Nigeria's digital identity ecosystem, experts say its significance extends far beyond identity registration, OLUDARE RICHARDS reports.

THE promulgation of the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act 2026 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has reopened debate on the implications of the new edit on digital identity, financial inclusion, e-governance and economic development.

Government officials hailed it as a landmark reform that will modernise Nigeria's identity management framework, strengthen cybersecurity and reinforce the National Identification Number (NIN) as the country's foundational identity credential.

For experts within the criminal justice community, however, the legislation carries an even broader significance. They argue that beyond facilitating digital transactions and improving access to government services, the Act can foster an important foundation for a justice system increasingly built on authenticated identity, electronic records and scientifically credible evidence.

As criminals exploit encrypted communications, artificial intelligence, digital currencies and cross-border networks to conceal their activities, investigators are relying less on confessions and eyewitness accounts and more on digital footprints capable of withstanding judicial scrutiny. In that environment, trusted identity management is emerging as a critical component of modern policing.

Minister of Interior, Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, described the legislation as a major boost to Nigeria's security architecture, arguing that stronger integration of identity systems would significantly enhance law enforcement capabilities.

"With what we have seen today with this law, it means that our security architecture can better be enhanced," he said.

According to the minister, "when Mr. President came on board, we had a disconnected system within our identity data management system. Today, you cannot obtain a Nigerian passport without pulling data from NIMC. What you have in Immigration is what you have in NIMC."

He disclosed that integration between NIMC, Immigration and international policing systems has already produced tangible security outcomes, citing the arrest of seven suspected Boko Haram and ISWAP commanders attempting to re-enter Nigeria through Katsina.

"I'm happy to tell you that seven known commanders of Boko Haram and ISWAP

How NIMC Act 2026 Can Stimulate Evidence-based Justice

were arrested while attempting to come back through Katsina. This was possible because NIMC's identity platform now communicates directly with Immigration and Interpol," he said.

Tunji-Ojo added that the recently established Integrated Operating Centre now enables authorities to coordinate intelligence across Nigeria's air and maritime borders, while efforts are ongoing to strengthen surveillance along the country's extensive land borders.

His remarks underscore a central message of the new legislation: identity management is no longer merely an administrative exercise but an integral component of national security and criminal justice.

Identity As Evidence

Experts caution, however, that the effectiveness of the NIMC Act will ultimately depend on implementation. They said identity databases must be accurate and secure. Investigators must be equipped to collect, preserve and analyse digital evidence. Prosecutors must understand the evidential value of electronic records, while judges must continue adapting to increasingly complex questions surrounding cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and digital authentication.

Equally important is collaboration. Modern investigations rarely fall within the competence of a single institution. Cyber-enabled financial fraud, terrorism financing, kidnapping and organised crime routinely require cooperation among intelligence agencies, forensic laboratories, telecommunications providers, financial institutions, immigration authorities and prosecutors.

By strengthening Nigeria's digital identity ecosystem, experts believe the Act will make it easier to authenticate identities, verify digital transactions and establish stronger evidential links between individuals and electronic activities—capabilities that are becoming indispensable as courts confront crimes committed largely in cyberspace.

Director-General of NIMC, Engr. Abisoye Coker-Odusote, described the legislation as closing a legal gap that had persisted for almost two decades despite rapid technological change.

"For 19 years, the legal framework governing Nigeria's identity management system remained unchanged while the digital landscape evolved rapidly. Today, that gap has been closed."

She said the Act strengthens the National Identification Number as Nigeria's foundational identity credential while introducing stronger safeguards for cybersecurity, encryption, digital signatures and personal data protection.

Those safeguards are especially significant for the justice system because electronic evi-

dence derives much of its credibility from confidence that records have not been altered or manipulated. Strong identity management therefore complements forensic science by strengthening one of the most important links in the evidential chain.

Increasingly, investigators are required to establish who registered a SIM card, authenticated an online transaction, opened a bank account, accessed a digital platform or crossed an international border using specific credentials. Each of those questions ultimately revolves around identity.

A trusted digital identity system cannot secure convictions on its own, but it enables investigators to authenticate electronic records, verify ownership and lawfully connect individuals to digital activities.

From Information To Intelligence

These issues featured prominently at the 2026 Global Forensic Summit in Lagos, where judges, forensic scientists, intelligence specialists, legal scholars and technology experts examined the future of criminal investigations in an increasingly digital world.

Among the recurring themes was the growing importance of intelligence-led policing.

Founder of the International Academy of Forensics, Dr. Damilola Fagboro, argued that one of the greatest misconceptions about criminal intelligence is the assumption that intelligence is simply collected.

"People often assume intelligence is something that is simply collected. In reality, intelligence is generated."

He explained that intelligence emerges only after information has been systematically collected, analysed, interpreted and validated.

The distinction is crucial. Raw information may be incomplete or misleading, while properly analysed intelligence enables agencies to detect criminal patterns, identify emerging threats and intervene before offences escalate. That philosophy aligns closely with the objectives of the NIMC Act. A trusted national identity ecosystem strengthens investigators' ability to authenticate records, verify identities and lawfully integrate information across authorised institutions.

Fagboro also reminded participants that technological sophistication alone does not determine the value of forensic evidence.

"The law is the gatekeeper of forensic evidence. It determines whether evidence is admitted and whether a practitioner is qualified to testify as an expert," he said.

He challenged assumptions that academic qualifications alone confer expert status, arguing that competence, experience and relevance remain decisive in determining whether courts recognise individuals as expert witnesses.

Science Must Meet The Law

Retired judge and legal scholar, Justice

(Prof.) Alaba Omolaye-Ajileye, echoed similar concerns, arguing that forensic science derives its authority not only from laboratory precision but from strict compliance with constitutional safeguards.

"Evidence obtained in violation of constitutional provisions risks being rejected by the courts," he posited.

He observed that Nigeria's criminal justice system has undergone important legislative reforms, particularly through the Evidence Act 2011 and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), both of which modernised the treatment of electronic evidence and introduced safeguards against involuntary confessions.

Section 84 of the Evidence Act established a legal pathway for admitting electronically generated evidence, provided investigators satisfy statutory requirements, including certification confirming the integrity of electronic records.

Although often dismissed as technical formalities, experts argue these safeguards have become indispensable in an era when digital files can be manipulated within seconds.

Justice Omolaye-Ajileye also highlighted ACJA provisions requiring confessional statements to be video-recorded or obtained in the presence of legal counsel or another person nominated by the suspect, reforms intended to reduce allegations of torture and strengthen investigative transparency.

Despite these reforms, he noted that criminal investigations still too often depend on confessions rather than objective scientific evidence.

Experts at the summit agreed that the consequences extend beyond failed prosecutions. Weak forensic practices increase the likelihood of wrongful convictions, allow genuine offenders to evade justice and erode public confidence whenever cases collapse because evidence was contaminated, improperly preserved or rendered inadmissible.

Legal scholar Oluwatomi Ajayi argued that addressing those shortcomings requires a fundamental shift from reactive policing to intelligence-led investigations. Drawing on the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Criminal Intelligence Manual for Analysts, she noted that law enforcement agencies worldwide are increasingly seeking to prevent crime by identifying patterns, emerging threats and organised criminal networks before offences occur.

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UNICEF Commends Sokoto Gov's Child-centred Development Agenda

From Muhammad Gazali Garba

THE Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Catherine Russell, has commended Sokoto State Governor, Ahmed Aliyu, for his administration's unwavering commitment to improving the lives of children and women through strategic investments in healthcare, education, nutrition, water supply, skills development and child protection.

Russell gave the commendation during a courtesy visit to Aliyu at the Government House, Sokoto, as part of her official mission to Nigeria. She was accompanied by the UNICEF Nigeria Country Representative, Mr. Cristian Munduate, the Chief of UNICEF Field Office, Sokoto, Dr. Michael Juma, and other senior UNICEF officials.

Speaking during the visit, the UNICEF Executive Director said she was impressed by the progress recorded by the Sokoto State government in advancing child-focused programmes.

She noted that the delegation had witnessed significant efforts in literacy, vocational and life-skills training, mental health services, routine immunisation, nutrition and other initiatives designed to improve the well-being of children and young people.

Foreign Observers, Others To Monitor NBA Election As Osigwe Dismisses Rigging Fears

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

THE President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Mazi Afam Osigwe (SAN) has disclosed that the Department of State Services (DSS) and foreign observers will monitor the association's national election scheduled for July 18 to safeguard the credibility and integrity of the poll. Speaking at a press conference in Abuja on Friday, Osigwe said the involvement of security agencies and independent foreign observers was aimed at ensuring transparency and providing objective reports on the conduct of the election.

He dismissed allegations of planned rigging raised by some members of the association, insisting that the Electoral Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association (ECN-BA) would conduct a free, fair and credible election.

Osigwe also denied claims that he was backing or attempting to impose any of the three presidential candidates contesting to succeed him, stressing that he has no preferred candidate.

The contenders are Olumuyiwa Akinboro (SAN), Lateef Akangbe Omoyele (SAN).



Goodie Ibru (left); Emubo Ibru; Mike Awoyinfa; Paul Igbino; and Kunle Kasumu during pre-launch briefing on The Ibru Story Book in Lagos... on Friday. PHOTO: ENIOLA DANIEL

Supreme Court Upholds Final Forfeiture Of Emefiele's Properties, \$2.045m Assets To FG

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

THE Supreme Court, on Friday, affirmed the final forfeiture of seven landed properties, \$2.045 million and share certificates linked to former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele, to the Federal Government.

In a unanimous judgment delivered by a five-member panel led by Justice Ibrahim Mohammed Saulawa, the Supreme Court set aside the earlier decision of the Court of Appeal and restored the judgment of the Federal High Court, Lagos, which had ordered the final forfeiture of the assets.

The Supreme Court held that the assets were reasonably suspected to have been

acquired with proceeds of unlawful activities, thereby upholding the Federal High Court's decision.

Emefiele had challenged the Federal High Court's forfeiture order before the Court of Appeal, which overturned the ruling. Dissatisfied with that judgment, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) appealed to the Supreme Court, which has now reinstated the trial court's decision.

The assets forfeited to the Federal Government include a fully detached duplex at Hakeem Odumosu Street, Lekki Phase I; an undeveloped parcel of land on Oyinkan Abayomi Drive, Ikoyi; a bungalow on Oyinkan Abayomi Drive; a four-bedroom duplex

on Probyn Road, Ikoyi; an industrial complex under construction on 22 plots of land in Agbor, Delta State; eight units of apartments on Adekunle Lawal Road, Ikoyi; and a duplex on Bank Road, Ikoyi.

The Supreme Court also affirmed the forfeiture of \$2,045,000 and the share certificates of Queensdorf Global Fund Limited.

The final forfeiture order was initially granted on November 1, 2024, by Justice D.I. Dipeolu of the Federal High Court in Lagos in Suit No. FHC/L/MISC/500/24 following an application filed by the EFCC.

The anti-graft agency had relied on Section 17 of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Fraud Related Offences Act,

2006, and Section 44(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), arguing that investigations established that the properties and funds were reasonably suspected to have been acquired with proceeds of unlawful activities.

The application, supported by an affidavit sworn to by EFCC investigating officer, David Jayeoba, sought a final forfeiture order against the assets through an action in rem.

With Friday's unanimous verdict, the Supreme Court has conclusively upheld the forfeiture of the seven properties, \$2.045 million and the share certificates to the Federal Government, bringing the legal dispute over the assets to a close.

Mutfwang Pledges Sustained Security Partnership As New GOC Takes Charge

From Isa Abdulsalami Ahovi, Jos

PLATEAU State Governor, Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to deepening its strategic partnership with the Nigerian Army to consolidate peace, strengthen security and create an enabling environment for economic growth, investment and sustainable development across the state.

The governor gave the assurance while receiving the outgoing General Officer Commanding (GOC) 3 Division, Nigerian Army; and

•Gunmen Kill Eight Cattle, Injure Several Others In Fresh Attack

Commander of Operation Enduring Peace, Major General Eytayo Oyinlola, alongside the incoming GOC, Major General Maxwell Dangana, during a courtesy visit at the New Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos.

Mutfwang welcomed Dangana to Plateau State, expressing confidence in his capacity to build on the gains already recorded in the state's security architecture. He also paid glowing tribute to the outgoing GOC, Oyinlola, for his exemplary leadership and

dedicated service during his 18-month tour of duty.

The governor described Oyinlola as a courageous, professional and committed military officer whose leadership played a significant role in confronting security threats and strengthening peace-building efforts across Plateau State.

He noted that through sustained collaboration between the Plateau State government, the Nigerian Army and other security agencies, the state has witnessed remarkable

improvements in security, renewed investor confidence, increased socio-economic activities and a steady influx of visitors despite isolated security incidents.

The governor expressed confidence that Dangana would consolidate on the achievements of his predecessor, deepen military-community relations and strengthen coordinated security operations aimed at protecting lives, property and national sovereignty.

Wike Declares Abuja 'Closed' To Tinubu's Critics

From Azimazi Momoh Jimoh, Abuja

THE Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, on Friday, declared that Abuja had been "closed" to critics of President Bola Tinubu's administration, insisting that the scale of infrastructure delivered across the nation's capital had rendered opposition attacks ineffective.

Wike spoke at the commissioning of the reconstructed Arab/Gbazango Road in Kubwa, Bwari Area Council, the final project inaugurated under the FCT

•Ends 31-day Project Commissioning

Administration's 31-day commissioning and flag-off programme organised to commemorate President Tinubu's third year in office.

Represented by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, Tinubu described the completion of the road as another practical demonstration of his administration's Renewed Hope Agenda, stressing that development would no longer be concentrated within Abuja's

city centre but extended to satellite towns and underserved communities.

The president said the commissioning marked the successful conclusion of an unprecedented month-long infrastructure rollout by the FCT Administration, adding that the projects reflected his administration's determination to translate campaign promises into tangible improvements in the lives of Nigerians.

"This ceremony is not just about

opening a road. It is a practical validation of our Renewed Hope Agenda. We promised to transform governance into visible, impactful results. This completed infrastructure stands as a testament to that solemn pledge," Tinubu said.

He recalled that residents of Kubwa and adjoining communities had endured years of hardship arising from dilapidated roads, flooding and prolonged traffic congestion, which hampered economic activities and affected the quality of life.

Caritas Foundation Urges FG To Declare Banditry A Humanitarian Emergency

From Tunde Omolehin, Sokoto

THE Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria has called on the Federal Government to declare banditry a humanitarian emergency to enable a coordinated response to the growing displacement crisis in Nigeria's North-West.

The Programme Officer for Good Governance at Caritas Nigeria, Mr. Jude Akwo, made the call in Sokoto during a one-day Stakeholders' Policy Dialogue and Research Dissemination Workshop on women, conflict and peace-building.

Akwo said an official declaration would attract stronger intervention from federal authorities and international humanitarian organisations, leading to the establishment of properly managed camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in communities ravaged by banditry and terrorism.

According to him, most IDP settlements in the region are informal and lack basic infrastructure and protection, leaving displaced persons, particularly women and children, vulnerable to further abuse.

Oniru Seeks Traditional Institutions, Local Councils' Partnership On Preserving Cultural Heritage

By Gbenga Salau

THE Oniru of Iru Kingdom, Oba Abdulwasii Omogbolahan Lawal, Abisogun II, has called for a strategic partnership between traditional institutions and local councils in preserving Nigeria's rich cultural heritage.

The monarch spoke at a virtual leadership series organised by the Lagos State Office of Local Government Establishments and Training with the theme, 'Preserving Cultural Heritage While Driving Modern Governance: The Strategic Role of Traditional Rulers and Local Governments in Sustainable Community Development.' Lawal also advanced inclusive growth, effective governance and sustainable community development.

Drawing on the historical evolution of Lagos State, the complementary roles of traditional rulers, local councils and practical examples from the transformation of the Iru Kingdom, the Oniru noted that sustainable development is best achieved through collaboration, citizen participation and shared leadership.

He also stressed the importance of effective policy implementation, stakeholders' engagement.



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CORRECTION OF DATE OF BIRTH: I, Thomas Tico Onaja, that my correct DOB is 13/10/1977 not 13/10/1979 wrongly written in my BVN. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME : MY correct name is Ologwu Esther Oko not Ologwu Easter Oko. That was wrongly written on my BVN . All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Idiagbonya Evbu Annah instead of Idiagbonya Evbu Annah. All former documents remain valid. Immigration, public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Idiagbonya Treasure Emma instead of Idiagbonya Treasure Emma. All former documents remain valid. Immigration, public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Nnaji Emeka Austine instead of Nnaji Emeka Augustine. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I formerly Okoh Peter Ejeh now wish to be Jasper Ejeh Peter. Date of birth 22nd October 2001. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written on my BVN as Otitoola Bisi Sunday instead of Bisi Otitoola Timothy Sunday as in BVN. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

DESTINY: I. formerly known as Omoera Destiny now wish to be addressed as Omoera Justus Osoagie, my DOB is 07-09-1999 not 15-01-1997. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

EFFION: I, formerly known as Patience Dickson Effion now wish to be addressed as Patience Michael Francis. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

EYAGBOMARE: I formerly known as Eyagbomare Lucky Oboakporo now wish to be known as Awewu Lucky Okafor, date of birth 02/02/1980 All former documents remain valid . General Public take note

FARINMADE: I, formerly known as Farinmade Anuoluwapo Deborah now to be addressed as Sholewe Anuoluwapo Deborah Former documents remain valid. Public take note.

FREEMAN : I, formerly Florence Msurshima Freeman Mrs. now known as Freeman Florence Jande. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

IKECHUKWU : I, formerly known as Ikechukwu Paulenus Platini Ekwueme, now wish to be addressed as Okorie Ikechukwu Paulenus. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

IYOBHOBUN : I, formerly known as Miss Iyobhobun Vivian now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Kelvin Vivian, all former documents remains valid. General public take note.

LAWAL: I, formerly known as Olawale Oluwatobi Lawal now wish to be addressed as Olawale oluwatobi Wemimo. All former documents remain valid, banks, Nigerian embassy, Nigeria immigration service, passport office and general public take note

MAKANJU : I formerly known as Makanju Ajiya Iyabo now wish to be known. addressed as Alaba Dorcas Esheoiza. Former documents remain valid. Public note

NJOGA: I, formerly ThankGod Uzochukwu Njoga now addressed as ThankGod Uzochukwu McClain. All former documents remain valid. Concerned Authorities and General Public Note.

ODO: I, formerly known as Odo Blessing, now wish to be known and addressed as Odoh Blessing. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OGBONNA: I, formerly Modestus Chikodi Ogbonna now wish to be known as Mark Chika Ogbonna. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OGUNDAHUNSI: I, formerly known Ogundahunsi Fisayo Bukola now henceforth wish to be known Salako Fisayo Bukola. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OGUNDIPE: I, formerly known as Oyindamola Ojuolape Ogundipe now wish to be addressed as Oyindamola Ojuolape Wemimo. All former documents remain valid, banks, Nigerian embassy, Nigeria immigration service, passport office and general public take note.

OHAGA : I, formerly known as Miss Sylvia Ugochi Ohaga, now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Sylvia Ugochi Okocha Ibeabuchi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OJO: I, formerly known as Ojo Adedolapo Ayobamidele now wish to be addressed as Falana Adedolapo Ayobamidele. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OKUSANYA : I, formerly Babatunde Okusanya now wish to be known and addressed as Olamitunde Manuel. Former Documents Remain valid. General Public take note.

OKUSANYA : I, formerly Ryan Ayomitunde Okusanya now wish to be known and addressed as Ryan Ayomitunde Manuel. Former Documents Remain valid. General Public take note.

OKUSANYA : I, formerly Oluwakemi Adeyinka Okusanya now wish to be known and addressed as Oluwakemi Adeyinka Manuel. Former Documents Remain valid. General Public take note

OKUSANYA : I, formerly Sean Adeolu Okusanya now wish to be known and addressed as Sean Adeolu Manuel. Former Documents Remain valid. General Public take note.

OLADIPUPO: I, formerly known as Miss Oladipupo Remilekun Mercy now to be addressed as Lazeez Remilekun Mercy. All former documents remain valid. Ministry of health & Public take note.

OLANREWAJU : I, formerly known as Popoola Dorcas Olanrewaju now wish to be known as Popoola Taiwo Folasade. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OLANREWAJU: I, formerly known as miss olanrewaju esther pelumi now to be addressed as famodimu esther pelumi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OLANREWAJU: I, formerly known as Miss Olanrewaju Olamide Mosunmola, now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Kuku Olamide Mosunmola. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

OLUSOLA : I, formerly known as Olu-sola Oluwakemi Afolabi now addressed as Emola Olusola Oluwakemi Senami. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OLUWASEYITAN: I, formerly known as Alagbe Paul Oluwaseyitan now wish to be addressed as Alagbe Paul Seyi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OSUJI: I formerly known as Osuji Valentine Chukwuemeka now wish to be addressed as Osujinkume Valentine Chukwuemeka. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OZOEKWE : I formerly known as Ozoekwe Anulika Ann now wish to be addressed as Madubuchi-Ozoekwe Ann Anulika . All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

SALAKO : I, formerly known as Miss .Salako Kehinde Omowunmi is same person as Mrs. Alo Kehinde Omowunmi. . All documents bearing either name remain valid and refer to the same person. General public take note

UKPOLA: I, formerly Davina Chimdindu Ukpola now Davina Chimdindu Tracey Ukpola. Former documents remain valid. General public, NIS, NHC London, take note.

UMUNNAKWE: I, formerly Known as Miss Umunnakwe Nmesoma Angela now wishes to be addressed as Mrs Emenyonu Nmesoma Angela. All former documents remain valid general Public take note

ZAAROUR: I ,formerly known as Zaarour Ali now wish to be addressed as Ali Ibrahim Zaarour. All former documents remain valid. Banks, general public. take note.

ZAAROUR: I, formerly known as Mohamad Zaarour now wish to be addressed as Mohamad Ibrahim Zaarour. All former documents remain valid. Banks, general public, take note.

News Extra

The Ibru Story Is A Story Of Enterprise, Says Goodie

•Obasanjo To Chair Launch

By Eniola Daniel

FORMER president of the Nigerian Stock Exchange, Goodie Ibru, on Friday said the Ibru Family success is anchored on strong entrepreneurial spirit and having a good leader.

Goodie, who is the last surviving of the five Ibru brothers, said this ahead of the launch of *The Ibru Story*, An Account of a Pioneering Nigerian Business Family.

The Ibru Story, a sweeping, deeply researched book about one of Nigeria's most influential business dynasties and the extraordinary individuals who shaped it, is authored by renowned journalist and biographer, Mike Awoyinfa.

The book will be launched on July 22, 2026, at Shell Zenith Bank Hall, Muson Centre, Onikan, Lagos, at 11a.m. The event will be chaired by former president Olusegun Obasanjo.

The new book reveals the details behind the rise of the Ibrus led by the towering legacy of Olorogun Michael Ibru – visionary entrepreneur, pio-

neer of Nigeria's frozen fish industry and founder of the Ibru Organisation.

The Ibru Story traces how a family of five brothers and two sisters went from modest beginnings to national and international prominence. Through vivid interviews, first-hand testimonies and rich historical detail, Awoyinfa reconstructs the Ibru journey from multiple perspectives: family members, associates, friends and keen observers of Nigeria's economic and political evolution.

The book explores enterprise, risk-taking, innovation, family unity, rivalry, politics, philanthropy, faith and the human costs of success. More than a family biography, *The Ibru Story* is a compelling study of indigenous entrepreneurship in a challenging environment. It offers timeless lessons on leadership, resilience, succession and nation-building.

Speaking at the Sheraton Hotel, Ikeja, Lagos, Goodie, said: "This book has been long in coming and ought to have been written by my late eldest brother, Olorogun Michael Ibru of blessed memory.

Union Bank Employees Promote Cleaner Waterways, Coastlines With Beach Clean-up

By Suliya Tella

In furtherance of its commitment to building a cleaner and more sustainable environment, Union Bank of Nigeria, recently, organised a beach clean-up in partnership with the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) at Alpha Community Beach, Lekki, Lagos.

Nigeria currently generates an estimated 2.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, with Lagos alone accounting for approximately 870,000 tonnes of that figure. More than 88 per cent of this waste is never recycled, and a significant proportion finds its way into rivers, lagoons, and the ocean, posing grave consequences for marine biodiversity and coastal communities. It is against this backdrop, and in direct alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) and Life Below Water (SDG 14), that Union Bank organised this exercise.

The clean-up was held to mark the Bank's 2026 Employee Volunteer Day under its

Employee Volunteering initiative, powered by UnionCares, its Corporate Social Responsibility proposition. The event reinforced Union Bank's commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainable community development, and collective action for a cleaner future. Bringing together more than 50 Union Bank employee volunteers, representatives of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, and students from Rodan High School, Ajah, Lagos, the exercise embodied the spirit of SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, by uniting corporate, civil society, educational, and government stakeholders around a shared environmental purpose.

The Lagos State Government, through the Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA), provided critical logistical support, ensuring that all collected waste was properly sorted and disposed of in line with environmental best practices, organised into eight groups, collectively gathering in excess of 200 kilograms of waste from the beach.

Sheraton Lagos Boosts Sustainability Drive With New Gas-powered Generator

By Daniel Anazia

IKEJA Hotels, owners of the Sheraton Lagos Hotel, has reinforced its commitment to sustainability and operational efficiency with the commissioning of a new gas-powered generator, a move expected to reduce carbon emissions, lower operating costs and provide a more reliable power supply for guests. Speaking at the commissioning, the hotel's General Manager, Martins Brednoord, said the investment aligns with Sheraton Lagos' Green Key sustainability initiatives and its commitment to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) standards. "We are extremely happy about this milestone and very thankful to the owning company as well, Ikeja Hotel PLC, for seeing the worth in the investment on purchasing a gas generator. The generator is purchased outright, it's not a rental. It's completely owned by Ikeja Hotel PLC and obviously managed by us, Sheraton Lagos Hotel," he stated.

Brednoord linked the investment decision to the rising costs of electricity, diesel and the upkeep of diesel-powered engines. Early testing, he said,

has already shown a marked drop in running costs, with the hotel projecting an 18-month return on investment.

He framed the move as part of a broader industry shift. "Enough of pollution, enough of risk of health hazards," he said, adding that as a hospitality business serving guests from across the world, Sheraton Lagos has a responsibility to modernise its energy use and reduce its environmental footprint.

The hotel's sustainability efforts have already earned recognition, with Brednoord noting that Sheraton Lagos has been named Nigeria's best hotel for sustainability for three consecutive years, including an award collected just a day before the commissioning.

Outlet Manager, Feyisayo Oluwaseyi, outlined the more immediate, practical benefits of the switch. Unlike diesel generators, he said, gas-powered alternatives produce significantly less noise, soot and air pollution, a shift he described as fundamentally cleaner for both guests and the surrounding Ikeja community.

Who Wins - Spain Or Argentina?

THE curtains will be drawn on the 2026 FIFA World Cup on Sunday.

The 104 football battles fought amongst 48 countries will come to a most befitting climax. The two teams at the finish line are amongst the 7 that have previously won the World Cup, maintaining a tradition that only a few countries in the world can, and have managed to win in history.

Another useful tradition to note is that the coveted trophy is not won by the element of luck, or by accident. It is success earned through very difficult matches from start till the end.

In that vein, every previous World Cup has been won by a country on the merit of consistent performances through several different and challenging matches!

That's the simplest explanation for why Spain (2 time-winners) and Argentina (3 time-winners) are the two countries to have survived the turbulence of the past four weeks till the end, a period that held the entire world in the grip of uncommon drama, suspense, fun, exhilarating games and unpredictable matches, with many last-minute dramatic matches such as have never been experienced in World Cup history!

The past one month has been a real feast of the good, the bad and the best of football in the world.

Once again, the FIFA World Cup demonstrated its power to unite the world, totally immune from usual cultural, social, eco-

nomic, political and even religious differences. That is the power of the single most followed human activity on earth (with over 5 Billion spectators), a most lucrative project (\$11:00 Billion Dollars to be shared amongst participants), and an event that put every other global issue in the background for a period. When the matches are going on every thing else pales in significance.

So, at the end of 102 matches, Spain (current European Champions) and Argentina (defending World Cup champions), are the last two standing. We are left with an epic confrontation between the best of European football and the best of South American football.

Another unwritten tradition is that Europe does not win the championship played in the Southern hemisphere, and vice versa. This time, it is the Atlantic Ocean that separates the two countries. Both are in the same hemisphere.

So, who will win? I am consulting my 'mathematical' oracle, and placing a wager.

My calculations are simple and straightforward.

Spain played their last and best match against France, the team tipped by most to win the Championship before it started. France were brought down to earth by a team that put up a display considered by several analysts as 'perfect'. Spain played their best game in that match, without showing any weakness in any department. They outpaced, out-passed, out-ran and out-played France, winning the match rather too-easily. They are a well-oiled machine.

That performance should ordinarily make



Spain favorites to win the encounter with Argentina.

But Argentina are not France. They may not have the number and array of individually and exceptionally gifted stars like France, fully-loaded with a frontline of goalscorers in Mbape, Dembele, Oliseh, and so on, but what they have in one man may be enough to take them over the hill.

Argentina have a hardworking, organised army of endlessly running, hard-tackling, very experienced squad with a do or die attitude. The team is conducted by the most gifted football player in the world, a One-man riot squad, an aging, quiet and unassuming personality. This football genius defies all the common denominators.

Lionel Messi, makes all the difference in the Argentine team. The other ten players play for him, around him and with him as arrowhead. He struts and strolls around the field to the utter frustration of opposing coaches that have not successfully worked out how to neutralise such a player.

Read the remaining story online www.guardian.ng

Aigbovo: "Those Opposing NSC's Proposed N2m Salary For NPFL Players Are Enemies Of Football"

By Gowon Akpodonor

ONE of Nigeria's greatest goalkeepers, David Aigbovo, says anybody that is opposing the proposed 2m salary for players in the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) by the National Sports Commission (NSC) should be treated as 'true enemy' of the nation's football.

Aigbovo remains one of the veteran goalkeepers in the Nigerian professional football circle. He is best known for his time with the Shooting Stars Sports Club

(3SC) of Ibadan and the Rubber Board of Benin. He is also recognised for his vocal commentary on Nigerian football, having notably shared his thoughts on the Super Eagles.

Speaking with The Guardian, on Friday, Aigbovo, who won the 1992 CAF Cup with 3SC, said that it is disheartening to see that some Nigerians are moving against the NSC's proposed N2million monthly for NPFL players.

"First, I must commend both the NSC chairman, Shehu Dikko and Director General

Bukola Olopade for their foresight and move to bring light into the NPFL. Their proposal of N2million for players in the NPFL is commendable.

"This is how Nigeria domestic league should be. I played for many clubs in the Nigerian league, including Flash Flamingoes, Bendel United and Shooting Stars, and I can say we enjoyed a lot compared to the present day. The league is no longer what it used to be, and for the NSC to propose N2 million salary for NPFL players is the best news for our football.

Business

Echono's Recognition At ECAN's Maiden Summit: Why The Award Matters Beyond The Plaque

THE decision by the Education Correspondents Association of Nigeria (ECAN) to honour the Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Architect Sonny Echono, at its maiden national summit represents more than an addition to the growing list of accolades earned by the education administrator. It symbolises a convergence of policy, media scrutiny, stakeholders engagement and public recognition at a critical period in the history of Nigeria's education sector.

For a body that has spent nearly three decades reporting, interrogating and documenting developments in education, ECAN's first-ever summit marked a historic moment. The event brought together some of the most influential actors in the sector, including Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa; Minister of State for Education, Prof. Suwaiba Ahmad; Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Aisha Garba; representatives of the Presidency and Kaduna State government.

Hence, Echono's recognition was not merely ceremonial but journalists' assessment, having closely monitored policies, interventions and sectoral reforms over the years.

The significance of ECAN's honour lies in the identity of the awardee. Education correspondents occupy a unique position within Nigeria's media landscape by engaging daily with policy-makers, institutions, students, unions, development partners and education agencies.

As such, the recognition conveys a degree of credibility. Also, coming during ECAN's maiden summit further elevates its importance. For almost 30 years, the association has served as a specialised platform for journalists covering activities in the education sector. Yet, it had never convened a summit of this scale bringing together ministers, chief executives of education agencies, development partners and other stakeholders under one roof. Therefore, the honour repre-

sented a public acknowledgement of TETFund as one of the most visible intervention agencies in the education landscape.

ECAN Chairman, Chuks Ukwuatu, said the association considered Echono deserving of the award because of the remarkable impact of the Fund's interventions on tertiary education under his leadership.

Ukwuatu further applauded Echono for deploying TETFund's resources strategically to address long-standing challenges, going beyond construction of physical structures to investments in research, digital learning, innovation hubs, entrepreneurship development and academic publishing, initiatives that have strengthened tertiary institutions and positioned them to contribute more effectively to nation building.

Since assuming office in March 2022,

Echono has overseen an aggressive intervention in tertiary education. The Fund under him has continued to provide critical infrastructure, research support, academic staff development and innovation-driven programmes that are transforming tertiary education. One of the defining features of his tenure has been the push to reposition the country's tertiary institutions as centres of research and innovation rather than mere teaching institutions. The strengthening of the National Research Fund, support for innovation hubs, expansion of the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) and investments in academic publishing have become recurring themes of TETFund's intervention strategy.

Through partnerships with various organisations, it has promoted technology-driven solutions, entrepreneurship and research commercialisation. It has also intensified

efforts to improve academic content through its book development intervention, leading to the publication and distribution of hundreds of Nigerian-authored textbooks aimed at reducing dependence on foreign materials.

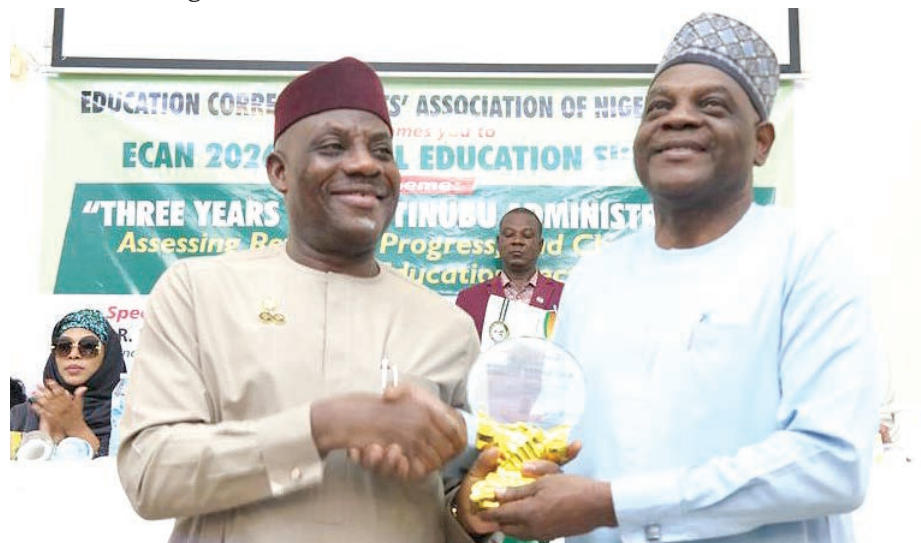
Equally important is the emphasis on accountability and project monitoring. TETFund under Echono has repeatedly highlighted prudent utilisation of intervention funds, timely project delivery and stricter monitoring mechanisms as central pillars of its operations, positioning the agency as one of the most visible government institutions within the education sector.

Beyond media recognitions, Echono's public service career earned national acknowledgement when he was conferred with the national honour of Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON), one of Nigeria's prestigious national awards. He has also received several commendations from professional bodies, educational institutions and civil society organisations for his contributions to educational development, public administration and institutional reform.

Also, the award was conferred in a summit focused on discussing the future of education in Nigeria. Unlike many award ceremonies organised primarily for celebration, ECAN's summit was designed as a policy engagement platform. The award equally underscores an often-overlooked reality – that journalists are stakeholders in educational development. Through investigative reporting, policy analysis, feature writing and news coverage, education correspondents help shape public understanding of the sector while highlighting successes, exposing shortcomings and creating platforms for accountability.

The ECAN summit demonstrated that media professionals are increasingly convening conversations, facilitating stakeholders' engagement and contributing to policy discourse.

Read the remaining story online www.guardian.ng



Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa (left), presenting an award to the Executive Secretary, TETFund, Dr Sonny Echono at the maiden yearly summit of the Education Correspondents Association of Nigeria (ECAN) in Abuja.

TheGuardianSports

www.guardian.ng

It's Time To Repair Nigeria Sports, Says NSC As Diaspora Talents Trials End In London



Basketball exhibition featured at the Nigeria Diaspora Athletes Trials in London on Friday.

PHOTO: GOWON AKPODONOR

From Gowon Akpodonor, London

THE much talked about Nigeria Diaspora Talents Trials ended in London on Friday with officials of the National Sports Commission (NSC) saying that it is to repair the nation's sports.

The Nigeria Diaspora Talents Development Committee NDTC, a multi-sports event, was attended by top Nigerian athletes, including Olympian Chioma Ajunwa, former hurdler Moses Orose Oyiki, former Table Tennis star, Funke Oshonaike and five times African Basketball champion, Dr. Sarah Ogoke.

Speaking with The Guardian at the end of the event, Chairman of the National Sports Commission (NSC), Mallam Shehu Dikko said:

"It is amazing seeing these Nigerian talents. The Commission will do everything possible to sustain this initiative. You can see the excitement on faces of the athletes and their parents. We will take this initiative to other countries, including USA and Canada, and we will keep the board together to be able to run the NDTC."

On his part, Director General on the NSC, Bukola Olopade said the time Nigerian talents were lost to other countries is over.

"I am so excited with the turnout of our athletes in the diaspora for this event. From today, the NSC won't allow our athletes to compete for other countries. We have to find a way to bring them into our sports system. A majority of these athletes have

been looking for a way to compete for Nigeria but they have not found the perfect avenue to come in. We have opened the door for them and they are glad," Olopade stated.

In one of the exhibition matches played on Friday, Nigeria Netball team, Junior Hawks, defeated their counterparts from Pakistan 33-13. Chairman of NDTC, Tunde Adalakin thanked the athletes for turning up in large number for the event.

Former captain of Nigeria's women's basketball team D'Tigresses, now a surgeon, Dr Sarah Ogoke, who led the basketball event thanked the NSC for the initiative, just as she urged the athletes to grab the opportunity with both hands.

Ogoke retired earlier this year after

a meritorious international career that saw her become the only woman in history to win five consecutive Afrobasket titles.

She said the NDTC is in the process of building a Team Diaspora for all major sports. The Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Amin Dalhatu, also attended the event on Friday.

The presence of Ajunwa, Oshonaike, Oyiki and Ogoke added so much value and helped in the actualisation of the mandate handed to the Committee by the National Sports Commission. It featured exhibitions in basketball, football, athletics, taekwondo, netball, table tennis and golf.

It's Messi Versus Yamal As Argentina Face Spain In 2026 World Cup Final

By Gowon Akpodonor

THE final that the world has waited for these past years will come up on Sunday, as reigning FIFA World Cup champion, Argentina, face Spain in the final match. It is between European and South American champion.

Argentina and Spain are the last two teams standing after the first-ever 48-team men's World Cup, the largest field in the history of the global soccer tournament.

Argentina's shining star, Lionel Messi, will go head-to-head against Spain's wunderkind, Lamine Yamal.

Should Argentina emerge victorious in the final, the three-time champion would become the first back-to-back World Cup winner since Brazil won the 1958 and 1962 titles. Spain, which is only a one-time champion, is hoping to win the second title after the triumph in 2010.

Messi, leader in the Golden Boot race, and Argentina seemed to do what is required to keep their repeat bid alive in the knockout rounds.

In Wednesday's semifinal match against England, Argentina's Enzo Fernández tied the match 1-1 in the 85th minute off a feed from Messi before Lautaro Martínez headed home a Messi cross later in stoppage time to win the 2-1 match.

The two-goal onslaught against England was just the most recent dramatic finish for Argentina, following extra-time victories over Cape Verde and Switzerland, and a two-goal comeback against Egypt.

Argentina has also sparked major controversy throughout the tournament, with some World Cup fans accusing FIFA of favouritism and alleging Argentinian fans of racist behavior in the stands. Additionally, following the match against England, the team held up a political banner saying "The Falklands Islands are Argentine," which is a violation of FIFA guidelines that prohibit the display of any political messages or slogans by players before, during or after a match.

Team Nigeria To Depart Aberdeen Camp For Glasgow July 21

From Gowon Akpodonor, London

AFTER three weeks of preparation at the Aberdeen camp, Team Nigeria will depart for Glasgow, venue of the 2026 Commonwealth Games on July 21.

Nigeria's Chief of Mission to the Games, three-time Olympian, Yusuf Alli, told The Guardian, that the three weeks camping in Aberdeen has strengthened the nation's athletes ahead of the Games.

"The purpose of having this camping in Aberdeen is to allow the athletes stay focus, relax and make corrections if possible on some of their mistakes. I can say we have realised that objective. Before our departure to Glasgow on July 21, we will continue to strategise on how to accomplish our plans of winning upto 16 gold medals or even more in Glasgow," Yusuf Alli said.

Nigeria's sprint star, Favour Ashe also expressed confidence in Team Nigeria's chances of delivering strong performances in Glasgow, saying the athletes are motivated and determined to make the country proud.

"We have prepared well and everyone is focused on giving their best. Team Nigeria has a strong tradition at the Commonwealth Games, and we are confident we can compete for medals and make Nigerians

• King Charles III To Grace Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony

proud," Ashe said.

The Opening Ceremony will take place on Thursday, July 23, at The Hydro in Glasgow, where Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla will join thousands of athletes, officials, volunteers and

spectators from across the Commonwealth to officially launch the XXIII Commonwealth Games.

The Games will feature more than 3,000 athletes representing 74 Commonwealth nations and territories competing for 215 gold

medals across 10 sports over 11 days of competition.

A major highlight of the Opening Ceremony will be the official declaration of the Games by King Charles III, who will read the message placed inside the King's Baton on

Commonwealth Day, March 10, 2025, at Buckingham Palace before the Baton Relay began. The ceremony will also feature British cycling legend Sir Chris Hoy, the first Batonbearer, celebrating the enduring spirit of the Commonwealth Games.

The King's Baton Relay has completed its historic 500-day journey through all 74 Commonwealth nations and territories, the longest relay in Commonwealth Games history.

For the first time, all 74 Batons will be reunited in Glasgow, symbolising the unity, diversity and shared values of the Commonwealth.

Throughout the relay, the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Plastics Campaign, delivered in partnership with the Royal Commonwealth Society, has engaged communities across member nations in environmental conservation efforts aimed at preventing one million pieces of plastic from entering Commonwealth waters.

Team Nigeria heads into Glasgow looking to build on its rich Commonwealth Games legacy, with athletes expected to challenge for medals across several sports and continue the nation's tradition as one of Africa's leading sporting powers.



Director General of the NSC, Bukola Olopade, former D'Tigress captain, Dr. Sarah Ogoke and chairman of the Nigeria Diaspora Athletes Committee (NDTC), Tunde Adalakin in London on Friday



INSIDE STUFF WITH MARTINS OLOJA

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Between Bola Tinubu And Lionel Messi

LET'S deconstruct an architecture of longevity, ruthlessness, and genius in two different arenas of two GOATs and two pitches.

On December 18, 2022, **Lionel Messi** lifted the World Cup in Qatar at age 35. Twenty years after his debut. After four World Cups of heartbreak. After being told he could never do it for Argentina the way Maradona did.

On February 25, 2023, **Bola Ahmed Tinubu** was declared President-elect of Nigeria at age 71. Thirty years after he first entered elected office. After being told by the sitting president of his own party that he could not win. Different games. Different stadiums. One stadium is 105 meters of grass in Lusail. The other is 923,768 square kilometers of federation, 36 states, 774 LGAs, and a voter base of more than 93 million. But the story arc is eerily similar: a man told he was too small, too late, too finished — who rewrote the ending through patience, control of space, and an almost inhuman ability to see three moves ahead.

This commentary is not about football. It is not about politics. It is about the skillset of a GOAT — Greatest Of All Time — and why certain men are impossible to replicate. Messi did it with a ball at his feet. Tinubu did it with a political machine he built brick by brick for about 30 years. Both did it by understanding one thing: the game is won before kickoff.

The core similarity: Vision, control, and timing. Let's be clinical and compare the skillsets.

SKILLSET: LIONEL MESSI vs BOLA AHMED TINUBU

Vision sees passing lanes three seconds before they open. Sees the run before the runner does. Sees political alignments three election cycles before they matter. Sees who will be governor before the party knows.

Control of space: Messi shrinks the pitch. Dribbles in tight spaces. Never loses the ball under pressure. Tinubu shrinks political space. Controls Lagos and its economy, structure, and influence as base. Never loses grip under pressure.

Dribbling/Manoeuvre: Messi beats four men with one touch. Changes direction without losing speed. Tinubu beats four power blocs with one alignment. Changes coalition without losing structure.

Free Kicks/Set Pieces: Messi wins games from dead-ball situations. Precision. Tinubu wins elections from "structure" and "ground game". Precision in delegate mathematics.

Longevity: Messi 20+ years at the top. Adapted from winger to false 9 to playmaker. Tinubu 30+ years in power. Adapted from Senator to Governor to Kingmaker to President.

Clutch Factor: World Cup Final 2022. 2 goals, 1 assist. World Cup 2026 so far 8 goals. Delivered when it mattered. 2023 Primary + General Election. Tinubu won without presidential backing. Delivered when it mattered.

Legacy Question: "Can anyone do this again for Argentina?" "Can anyone build this structure again in Nigeria?" The answer to both, for now, is: probably not. Reason: GOATs are not just talented. They are structural.

The 30-year build: How you become unbeatable: 1. **Messi:** The La Masia Project. Messi did not become Messi in 2022. He became Messi in 2000 when Barcelona bet on a 13-year-old with growth hormone deficiency and brought him to La Masia.

For 22 years, Barcelona built around him. Xavi and Iniesta were taught to play for him. The entire system — tiki-taka — was designed to put the ball at his feet in the final third. By 2022, Messi was not just a player. He was the system.

Tinubu: The Lagos project: Tinubu did not become President in 2023. He became inevitable in 1999 when he became Governor of Lagos and survived impeachment, AD collapse, and PDP federal pres-



Tinubu

sure. For 24 years, he built. From 1999-2007: He controlled Lagos economy and appointments. From 2007-2023, he produced governors: **Babatunde Fashola**, **Akinwunmi Ambode** and **Babajide Sanwo-Olu**. He controlled party structure in the Southwest. He built APC. He funded it. He staffed it. By 2023, Tinubu was not just a candidate. He was the structure. That is why the 2023 APC primary was the political equivalent of **Messi vs France** in the World Cup Final 2022. Everyone expected the "power of incumbency" — Buhari — to decide it. Just like everyone expected France's Mbappe to decide it. But Messi had the ball. And Tinubu had the delegates. The deliverable: Both refused to give it up.

Assumptions, dark deals and "impossible resources" argument: Every GOAT has mythology. For Messi: "He's only good because of Barcelona. He can't do it for Argentina." That was the narrative until Qatar 2022. For Tinubu: "His resources are inexplicable. His grip on Lagos is undemocratic. He only won because of money and structure." That is the narrative now. Let's address it directly, because this is where the comparison gets uncomfortable but necessary.

In football, genius is often accused of being "system dependent". Take Messi out of Barcelona and what do you have? Answer: Argentina 2022: A World Cup.

In politics, power is often accused of being "money dependent". Take Tinubu out of Lagos and what do you have? Answer: 2023 — presidency won against his own sitting president. The lesson is not about morality. It is about "resource conversion".

Messi converted talent + Barcelona's structure + Argentina's desperation into a World Cup. Tinubu converted 30 years of political capital + Lagos resources + national APC structure into a presidency. You can call it "dark deals". You can call it "La Masia investment". The result is the same: an infrastructure no one else has time to replicate.

That is why "who can defeat him now?" is the wrong question. The right question is: "who started building in 1999?"

The 5 GOATs Traits Both Share:

Trait 1: Patience that looks like passivity

Messi walked for 90 minutes. Critics called him lazy. Then in minute 91 he received the ball and won the game. Tinubu was "missing" during Buhari's eight years. Critics called him irrelevant as national leader. Then in 2022, he entered



Messi

the APC primary and swept it. GOATs do not waste energy. They wait for the ball to come to their foot.

Trait 2: Low centre of gravity

Messi is 5'7". Hard to knock off the ball. Tinubu survived EFCC cases, political exile, party collapse, and public criticism. But still hard to knock off balance. Both absorb pressure and keep moving forward.

Trait 3: Making others better

Messi made Alvarez, Mac Allister, and Fernandez look like world beaters in 2022.

Tinubu facilitated Fashola as a minister (because Fashola was a good governor), Professor Yemi Osinbajo a vice president, and Sanwo-Olu a governor. Then beat them all in 2023 with the help of those he had made too even in the North and presidential household. GOATs do not hoard glory. They create lieutenants. Then they outlast them.

Trait 4: Winning ugly

Messi's 2022 World Cup was not all tiki-taka. It was penalties vs Netherlands. It was grinding vs Australia. Tinubu's 2023 was not all popularity. It was Naira redesign, fuel scarcity, and a third-party wave. He still won. GOATs win even when the pitch is bad.

Trait 5: The "it's over" when I say "it's over" mentality

Down 2-0 to Saudi Arabia, Argentina did not panic. Messi said: we will come back.

Down in the polls, with no sitting president's support, Tinubu said: "Emi lokan", we will win. That presumption is not arrogance. It is data. It is 30 years of knowing you have another move.

Why it will be difficult to see 'another one'

THIS is the hard part. In football, to get another Messi, Argentina needs:

1. A generational talent at age 13
2. A club willing to invest 20 years in him
3. A national team willing to rebuild around him for 16 years
4. A World Cup window at age 35

The odds are astronomical. That is why Maradona 1986 to Messi 2022 took 36 years.

In politics, to get another Tinubu, Nigeria needs:

1. A man who becomes governor at 47 and leaves at 55
2. Who then controls a state with \$2bn+ IGR for 20 years
3. Who builds a party from opposition to ruling party
4. Who then runs and wins the presidency at 71 against his own party's president

The odds are also astronomical. Nigerian politics does not allow 30-year apprenticeships anymore.

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